
The book by Agustí Alemany is probably the first so methodical a work dedicated to the study of the history of the Alans. The author himself admits that the state of the studies into the matter does not yet allow for the writing of a complete and objective history of this nomadic Iranian people. Thus we have **Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation**. It is a revised English version of the author’s doctoral thesis *Recull crític de fonts per a l’estudi de la història, cultura i llengua dels alans* (1997) translated from the Catalan.

One could divide the body of the work naturally into seven parts: 1) *Foreword*, by Rüdiger Schmitt (pp. xiii-xv); 2) Author’s *Preface* discussing the structure of the work and some technical and methodological questions (pp. xvii-xxi). The predecessors of this work are mentioned here: Julian Ju. Kulakovskij, Bernard S. Bachrach; 3) *Introduction*, where the two key ethnonyms *allān*- and ās- are discussed along with their etymology (pp. 1-10); 4) The main part of the work constitutes a catalogue
of sources on the Alans (pp. 11-434). It is divided into a number of sections, according to their language and epoch. 5) Chronological table (pp. 435-448); 6) Bibliography (pp. 449-461); 7) Maps (two additional pages).

Each section of the main part of the work is dedicated to the sources in one language: Latin, Greek, Medieval Latin, Byzantine Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Catalan, Georgian, Hebrew, Iranian, Mongol, Russian, Syriac and finally Chinese.

Latin sources are discussed in three subsections. The first two are dedicated to Latin literary sources (of 1st-4th c. and 4th-5th c. resp.) and contain passages by Tacitus, Lucan, Pliny, Martial, Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Claudian, Hydatius, Orosius, Paulinus of Pella and others. A significant portion of information on the Alans has been extracted by the author from Ammianus Marcellinus. The short third subsection is dedicated to Latin epigraphical sources.

In the second section we find passages on the Alans from Greek sources. After a short introduction (The Alans and the Hellenized Roman East) Dr. Alemany brings forward passages by several authors, the most extensive being those by Arrian, Josephus Flavius, Lucian, Ptolemy and Strabo. Like in case of the Latin sources, a short subsection on epigraphy follows.

The fragments discussed in the section Medieval Latin Literary sources are mostly very short, but nevertheless informative and important. Longer passages are comprised in Historia Longobardorum, De origine actibusque Getarum by Jordanes (himself an Alan or Goth by origin), Historia Mongalorum... by Friar John bon in Pian of Carpine. Four appendices are attatched to this section: on the Alans in Hungary, on Alan slaves, on the Franciscan Mission to China in the 14th c. and finally on Marco Polo and the Alans.

As far as the Byzantine Sources are concerned three periods are discussed: 6th-7th c. Alans appear in the context of their struggle with the Vandal state in Africa and the complicated relationship between Byzantium, Persia under Sassanians and the nomadic peoples from the north (Agathias, Procopius, Menander, etc.). Then in the period between 8th and 10th c. we observe less interest in the 'Alanic question' in the works of Byzantine authors. In the 10th c., however, Alans are again apparent, which reflects both Byzantine politics and the evangelization effort of this period (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Nicholas Mysticus).

Next, the author discusses Arabic sources. Although the Caucasus turned out to be an efficient barrier against the expansion of Islam for
centuries, still many Arab authors mention the powerful Alan kingdom behind the Bāb al-Lān or Gate of the Alans. The largest passages on the Alans are to be found in the works of al-Masʿūdī, at-Ṭabarī, Ibn Rustah and in Taʿrīḥ Bāb al-Abwāb.

As Armenia had been exposed to the attacks of the Alans for a considerable period of time, some data on that nomadic people is to be found in Armenian sources as well. One should mention here especially Movses Xorenacʿi, Ašxarhacʿoycʿ and Agatʿangelos.

Similarly, the direct vicinity of Georgia and the lands inhabited by the Alans resulted in the frequent appearance of the latter in Georgian sources. As Dr. Alemany notes, these are full of personal names and ‘details which often escape the attention of other sources held to be more reliable’. Various works known under the common title Kʿartʿlis Cʿxovreba are analyzed in the section entitled Georgian Sources.

Hebrew sources cited in the reviewed work are connected to the Judeo-Turkic state of the Khazars and mention the contacts between the latter and the Alans.

The Iranian sources analyzed by Dr. Alemany fall clearly into two different groups. The first comprises Middle Iranian ones, i.e. Parthian, Pahlavi (better Middle Persian – TG) and – hypothetically – Bactrian. These sources are all of an epigraphical nature. Persian literary sources from the period after the Muslim conquest (Ferdowsi, Hudūd al-ʿālam, Nezāmi, etc.) constitute the second group.

Of the Syriac sources, Bardesanes, Gregory Barhebraeus, the Chronicle of Arbela, Methodius, Michael the Great and a number of others are cited.

Shorter sections are dedicated to the passages on Alans in the Catalan (the medieval chronicle by Ramon Muntaner), Mongol (The Secret History of the Mongols, other chronicles), Old Russian (The Fall of Bēla Veža, and other sources.

The final section is dedicated to the Alans’ appearances in Chinese texts. It is divided into two parts, dedicated respectively to the sources of the Han and Yuan period.

The structure of the sections is unified. First comes a short introduction that presents the nature of the sources in question and – in some cases – the relations between the Alans and the country, society or region of a given language (e.g. Alans and Islām, Alans and Armenia, etc.). Then the passages referring to the Alans are given in translation (the original is
usually to be found in the footnotes). A critical analysis of a passage follows. In most cases an onomasticon is included at the end of the section.

The author modestly declares himself: 'The methodology for each chapter (...) has depended on my ability to accede to each particular language; however, I have always tried to acquire enough basic knowledge of them (...)'. Indeed, Dr. Alemany’s command of the sources and languages is really impressive and makes the work attractive not only to a historian but also to a linguist. Citing passages from the sources quoted in original (and in most cases in the original writing systems) increases this value. The extremely vast territory in which the sources discussed by the author were created (from Catalonia to China) gives us a unique chance to compare the adaptation and changes of some onomastical forms in a great number of languages.

[reviewed by Tomasz Gacek]