

# The Great Town – Man Kermen in *The Secret History of the Mongols*

ZIMONYI, ISTVÁN\*

MTA–ELTE–SZTE Silk Road Research Group, University of Szeged,  
Egyetem u. 2. 6722, Szeged, Hungary

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## ABSTRACT

The city name Man Kermen in *The Secret History of the Mongols* is identified with Kiev in the chapters concerning the great western Mongol campaign against Eastern Europe. It is based on the datum of Rashīd al-Dīn: ‘the great city of the Rus, which was called Man-Kermen.’ It is beyond doubt that the Cumans called Kiev as Man Kermen meaning Great Town in Turkic as the spiritual and ecclesiastic center of Kievan Rus. However, there is another possibility. The capital of the Volga Bulgars in the first decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century has been excavated near to village Biljarsk. It is called by the contemporary sources as *Velikij Gorod* in the Russian annals, *magna civitas* in the work of the Hungarian friar, Julian both meaning Great Town.

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## KEYWORDS

Volga Bulgars, The Secret History of the Mongols, Man Kermen, Kiev, Mongol invasions, Cumans

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: zimonyi@hist.u-szeged.hu

In *The Secret History of the Mongols*, three chapters deal with the Mongols' western campaigns against Europe, and in these chapters, the city of Man Kermen is recorded.<sup>1</sup> It was widely accepted that the city can be identified with the town of Kiev, the ecclesiastical centre of the Kievan Rus' in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century (Pristak 1955: 1–13; Róna-Tas 1992: 121–126; 1994: 175–180; Dobrodomov 2009: 154–157; de Rachewiltz 2006: 960). This paper aims to call attention to the possibility that Man Kermen might denote not only Kiev but also another city, the capital of the Volga Bulgars, called the Rus Great Town, *Velikij Gorod*.

*The Secret History of the Mongols* contains the following information:

262§ 'Further, he sent Sübe'etei Ba'atur northwards to campaign as far as the countries and peoples of these eleven tribes: Qanglin, Kibča'ut, Bajigit, Orusut, Maĵarat, Asut, Sesüt, Serkesüt, Kešimir, Bolar and Keler; and, making him cross the rivers Idil and Ĵayaq rich in waters, he sent Sübe'etei Ba'atur to campaign as far as the city of Kiwa *Menkermen*<sup>2</sup> (Ligeti 1971: 235–6; de Rachewiltz 2006: 194). This chapter also contains a description of the Mongols' 1223 campaign against Eastern Europe led by Sübödei and Jebe. The next information also refers to the same campaign:

270§ 'Earlier on, Sübe'etei Ba'atur, campaigning against Meket, *Menkermen* Keyibe and other cities, had crossed the rivers Adil and Ĵayaq rich in water, and had reached as far as Qanglin, Kibča'ut, Bajigit, Orusut, Asut, Sesüt, Maĵar, Kešimir, Sergesüt, Buqar and Keler [Kerel] peoples' (Ligeti 1971: 243–244 ; de Rachewiltz 2006: 201–202). After the death of Chinggis Kan, Ögödei Qa'an decided to launch an attack against Eastern Europe, and he convoked a *quriltay* in 1235 to organise the campaign:

274§ 'Batu, Büri, Güyük, Möngge and several other princes who had gone on a campaign in support of Sübe'etei Ba'atur brought the Qanglin, Kibča'ut and Bajigit people under submission. They crossed the rivers Ejil and Ĵayaq, destroyed the city of Meget, slew the Orosut and plundered them until they were utterly crushed. They ravaged and brought under submission the peoples of Asut, Sesüt, Bolar, *Mankerman* Kiwa and other cities. Having established resident commissioners and garrison troops they returned home' (Ligeti 1971: 247–8; de Rachewiltz 2006: 205–206). Batu commanded the army that invaded Eastern Europe during 1235–1242.<sup>3</sup> The complete list of the conquered peoples and geographical names, however, can be connected with only the later campaign, so it was inserted anachronistically into the earlier campaign events of Sübödei and Jebe.

The list of peoples – Qanglin, Kibča'ut, Bajigit, Orusut, Maĵarat, Asut, Sesüt, Serkesüt, Kešimir, Bolar and Keler – has been identified. The Kangli was the eastern part of the Kipchak tribes, and the Kipchaks were known as Cumans and Polovec according to western and Slavic sources inhabiting the steppes of South Russia. Bajigit meant the Bashkirs who lived in the Volga region. Orosut denoted the Kievan Rus, one of the main powers in Eastern Europe. The self-designation of the Hungarians was Maĵar, whose ruler was called *király* or 'king' reflected in Keler. Asut referred to the As or Alans, Serkesüt to Cherkas in the Caucasus, and Sesüt can be identified with the Saxons in Transylvania. Kešimir might denote Kashmir, which was interpolated here by mistake.<sup>4</sup> The rivers Ejil and Ĵayaq are respectively the Volga and the Ural (de Rachewiltz 2006: 960–961).

<sup>1</sup> Critical text: Ligeti 1971; English translation with historical and philological commentary: de Rachewiltz 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The form *Men* is secondary, the original Turkic may have been *Man*: Róna-Tas 1994: 176.

<sup>3</sup> On the western campaigns: Göckenjan 1991: 35–75; Sinor 1999: 1–44; Zimonyi 2014: 325–352; Jackson 2005: 58–74.

<sup>4</sup> De Rachewiltz 2006: 959–960; Ligeti 1964: 385–404; other interpretations connect the name with Poland and Bashkir: de Rachewiltz 2013: 122.



As for the three cities, Meget/Meket<sup>5</sup> is Magas, the capital of the Alans in the Caucasus (Nižnij Arhyz on the bank of Bolšoj Zelenčuk) captured after a three-month siege during the first months of 1240 (Minorsky 1952: 232; Allsen 1991: 18–21). Kiwa/Keyibe is Kiev, the mother of Rus' cities, the political and ecclesiastic centre of Kievan Rus symbolising its unity (de Rachewiltz 2006: 960–961). However, after the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Kievan Rus consisted of a number of principalities, and the most powerful was that of Vladimir-Suzdal' (Fenell 1983: 1–62; Dimnik 2006: 98–126).

The third name of Man-Kermen is considered the Turkic name of Kiev, based on the identification of Rashīd al-Dīn: 'the great city of the Rus, which was called Man-Kermen (منكرقان MNK-RQAN, منكوفا MNKUQA)'.<sup>6</sup>

Pritsak collected later medieval data for Man Kermen (1955: 1–13), and in the works of Nižām al-Dīn Šāmī (†1404) and Šeref al-Dīn Yazdī (†1454), it is mentioned in connection with the campaign of Timur against Tokhtamiš in 1395 (Tiesenhausen 1941: 121, 179). The Venetian traveller Ambrosio Contarini stayed in Kiev in 1474, and he called it *Magraman* (Barbaro 1873: 111–112). Two Genovese envoys went to Kiev in 1481 and called it *Mancreman* (Kołodziejczyk 2011: 235 note 39). The towns of the Ukrainian Kosacks such as *Mān Kermān* (Kiev), *Čerkes Kermān* (Čerkasy), *Qān Evi* (Kaniv) and *Brāslāw* (Braclav) are recorded from March 1578 in Murad III. Sultan's letter to Báthory (Şenkowski 1825: 303; Pritsak 1955: 3–4). Another letter of Murad III. Sultan's letter to Báthory from April–May 1578, preserved in a copy in Saint Petersburg, contains references to *Brāslā*, *Ġān Kermān* (Očakiv) and *Čerkes Kermā*, *Qān Evi* (Tveritina 1974: 298, 302). Confusion of *Mān Kermān* with *Ġān Kermān* is possible. But there are other Osman data on Man Kermen (Abrahamovič 1969: 78, 90: note 12, 94). Jankowski recorded the place name Man Kermen in the Crimea during the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries; it can be identified with the village Lazarevka east from Simferopol (2006: 689). Beyond a doubt, *Man Kermen* was used as the Turkic-Kipchak name for Kiev. The Muslim traveller Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnaṭī visited a town called *Ġūr Kūmān* غور کومان in 1150 (Dubler 1953: 25). Pritsak identified the second element as *Kermān* while the first part is *Ġūr* ~ *Kūr*, which meant 'great' and 'universal' in Karakitay.<sup>7</sup> Dobrodomov preferred the original *Ġūr Kūmān*, which can be two ethnonyms. The first one is the Chuvash type Turkic version of the *Ġūz* ~ Turkic Oguz, and the second, *Kūmān* is the western designation of the Qipchaqs. He was inclined to accept the Pritsak correction of the second element to *K.rmān*. Because Russian sources called the Guz/Oguz Torki, Dobrodomov identified the town with Torchesk in Russian annals (2009: 155–157). Róna-Tas called attention to the possibility of reconstructing the geographical name in the work of Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnaṭī as مون کرمان *Mūn K.rmān* ~ *Mon Kermen*, which is the Chuvash type name of *Man Kermen* referring to Kiev (Róna-Tas 1992: 123; 1994: 177).

As for the Kipchak *man* and its Chuvash pair *mon*, Róna-Tas discovered that they are independent copies from Chinese *wan* 'ten thousand'. In the Old Turkic *ban* 'ten thousand' became *man* 'big'. The Old Chuvash *man* is an earlier copy from Chinese, which became regularly *mon* (Róna-Tas 1992: 124–125; 1994: 179). The Chuvash form is attested in Volga Bulghar tomb in-

<sup>5</sup> The final *-t* is the Mongol plural instead of *-s* in case of ethnonyms, it is rare in connection with geographical names.

<sup>6</sup> Persian text: Ali-Zade 1980: 163; English translation: Thackston 1999: 331, cf. Boyle 1971: 69; Russian translation: Verhovskij 1960: 45.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Naiman and Mongol compound: *gur xan* (Pritsak 1955: 11–12).



scriptions from 1308: مون سوار *Mon Suwar* (Hakimzjanov 1986: 177: 6<sup>th</sup> line) and from 1329: بلر مون *Mon Bular* (Khakimzjanov 1978: 126–7: 2<sup>nd</sup> line).

As for *Kermen*, it is from the Turkic verb *kär-* ‘embrace’. From this verb comes the Turkic *kärim* or ‘fortress’, which was copied by the Mongol as *kerem*, and it was borrowed by the Manju as *keremu*. Another term from the same verb is *kärmän* or ‘fortress’, which in Middle Kipchak is *Kermen*; it became *kirmen* in Tatar, and it was copied as *kermen* by the Chuvash. However, the Old Turkic *kärmän* became regularly *karman* in Chuvash, copied in Cheremis as *karman*. The Middle Kipchak *kermen* was borrowed by the Persian as *kirmän* and the Russian as *keremen’*, while the Persian *kirmän* was copied in Osman as *kirman* (TMEN IV: 302; Levickaja, Dybo, Rassadin 1997: 52–53).

Turkic *kär-* ‘embrace’

*kärim* ‘fortress’ → Mongol *kerem* → Manchu *keremu*  
*kärmän* ‘fortress’ > Middle Kipchak *Kermen* > Tatar *kirmen* → Chuvash *kermen*  
 > Chuvash *karman* → Cheremis *karman*  
 → Persian *kirmän* → Osman *kirman*  
 → Russian *keremen’*

Pritsak collected medieval Kipchak data on *kermen*: According to Tarjuman of Leiden from 1245, its Persian translation is *šahr*; in the Codex Cumanicus from 1303, the Latin equivalent is *civitas*; according to Abū Ḥayyān from 1312, the Arabic translation is *madīna* (Pritsak 1955: 4).

The Kipchak *kermen* is widely used as the second element of geographical terms in the territory of Ukraine (Pritsak 1955: 6–7).

*Akčakerman/Akkerman* or ‘White fortress/town’ can be identified with Belgorod, Belgorod-Dnestrovskij on the estuary of Dniester (Egorov 2010: 79–80). There are newly found dirhams struck in *Aqčā K.rmān* from the time of Nogai (Kazarov, Krivenko 2013: 91–95) and Özbek (Gončarov, Krivenko 2015: 109–110). Abū-l-Fidā’ and al-‘Umari had the same form (Golden 1987: 77). Recently, the history of the fortress has been studied in detail (Krasnožon 2012).

The *Čerkes Kermän* or ‘Cherkes fortress’ can be connected with three places: Čerkassy on the right bank of the Dnieper; Čerkassk on the lower Don; and a fortress in Crimea in the vicinity of Cherson/Sevastopol (Abragamovič 1969: 77–78, 90: notes 10, 11).

*Islam Kermän* was built by Mengli Girey c. 1504 on the left of the Dnieper at the river crossing Tavan, but the Cossacks destroyed it in 1556 (Kołodziejczyk 2011: 507, 578, note 31).

*Ġāzī Kermän* is Tjahynka on the right bank of the Dnieper (Pritsak 1955: 7).

*Ġān Kermän* or ‘New fortress’ ~ *Yengi Saray*, or as another name Turkish *Özi Qal’esi*, ‘the Dnieper fortress’ was constructed by the Tatars in the 1490s. Its Slavic name is Očakov in the vicinity of the Bug estuary (Abragamovič 1969: 79–80; Kołodziejczyk 2011: 508–509, 600, note 22).

*Qara Kerman* or the ‘Black fortress’ lay at the estuary of the Dnieper, and from 1442, its contemporary Polish name was Czarnigród (Pritsak 1955: 7).

The basic studies of Keppen (1837) and Jankowski (2006) are sources for the collection of the names of *Kermen* in the Crimea:

*Ferah Kermän* or ‘Happy fortress’ is identical with the Turkish *Or Kal’esi*, the ‘Ditch fortress’ and the Russian *Perekop* on the Crimean isthmus (Kołodziejczyk 2011: 419–420, 611: note 21; Jankowski 2006: 748–750).



*Šāri-Kermān* or the ‘Yellow fortress’ is east of *Aqčāk.rmān* (fifteen days travel), according to Abū-l-Fidā’ (Golden 1987: 69, 71, 77). Keppen identified it with Cherson and mentioned it as *Sarigermen* for Latin sources in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1837: 231, note 339).

*Alma Kermān* was the Khan’s residence on the Alma river to the north of Bahčiseray, mentioned in two documents in 1592 (Kołodziejczyk 2011: 419; Jankowski 2006: 158–161).

*Dewlet Kermān* or ‘Fortress/town of prosperity’ was built from 1500–1503 as the khan’s new residence in Saladjik near Qirg Yer (Kołodziejczyk 2011: 418–419, 565: note 43).

*In Kermān* or the ‘Cave fortress’ lay on the bay of Sevastopol, recorded from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Abragamovič 1969: 77, 90: note 7; Jankowski 2006: 557–558).

*Tepe Kermān* or the ‘Hill fortress’ lies east to Bahčiseray (Keppen 1873: 301–304). *Bej Kirman* or the ‘Price fortress’ was a village southeast of *In Kerman* (circa 6 kilometres), and *Kyz Kermen* or the ‘Girl fortress’ lay northeast to *Čerkes Kermān* of the Crimea (Keppen 1873: 246–247). *Kermen Kaja* or the ‘Fortress Rock’ lay on the river upper Kača (Keppen 1873: 296–300).

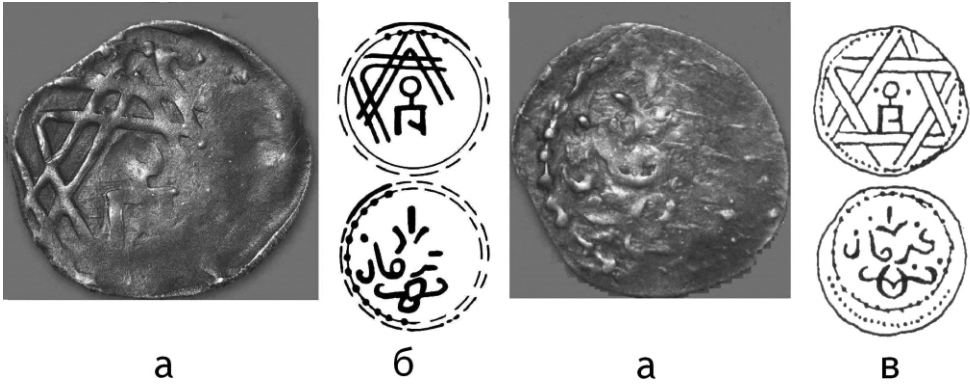
*Kermenčik* or the ‘Small fortress’ is the diminutive of *Kermen*. Keppen identified three places with this name in the Crimea (Keppen 1873: 300, 305, 325; Jankowski 2006: 607–608). Another town of the same name on the Dnieper preserved its name as *Kremenčug* in Slavic (Dobrodomov 2009: 154).

Russian annals mentioned the town *Kermenčuk* at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Gorskij preferred the date 1399 to 1395 in comparing data of different traditions when the Moscovite grand prince sent his army to the Volga region to take *Velikie Bolgary*, *Žukotin*, *Kazan’* and *Kermenčuk*. He plundered their territory and killed many Besermens and Tatars (Gorskij 2004: 82–93). Špilevskij located the town *Kermenčuk* on the bank of the river *Kirmen* (Russian: *Kirmjanka* ← Tatar: *Kirmen* + *-ka* Russian diminutive) on the right of the Kama in the vicinity of *Žukotin*, where three villages can be found with the names in Russian *Malie Kirmeni* ~ Tatar: *Keče Kirmen* ‘Small Kirmen’ or *Kirmenbaš*, and *Srednie Kirmeni* in Russian ~ Tatar: *Urta Kirmen* ‘Middle Kirmen’ and *Russkie Kirmeni*. Still, he offered another interpretation: It means ‘small fortress’, which can be identical with *Žukotin*, mentioned earlier in 1359 and 1391 when Russian freebooters attacked it (Špilevskij 1877: 422–423). Comparing Russian annals, Dobrodomov concluded that instead of the *Bulgary*, *Žukotin*, *Kazan* and *Kermenčuk*, the text can be read as ‘he took the town *Bulgary* and *Žukotin* and *Kazan-kermenčuk*, in which the latter is not the name of a town/fortress, but a common noun connected with the geographical term *Kazan* (2009: 157–161). From 1995 to 2003, Nigamaev excavated *Kirmenskoje gorodišče* which, on the basis of archaeological material, was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it was identified with *Kermenčuk* of Russian sources. He concluded that it was not a large Bulghar town, the trade-centre of the region, but it was a fortified settlement with a small number of permanent inhabitants including craftsmen and traders with a military function. The cultural layer was rather poor, without any traces of stone and brick buildings. The nearby suburban settlement has already been completely destroyed. Only the cemetery with tombstones from the 14<sup>th</sup> century has survived (Nigamaev 2004: 62–92).

Coins from the period of the Golden Horde were minted in Kerman. The Al’menevo hoard contains 210 coins, including 130 with the name کرمان *K.rmān* ~ *Kermen*. Al’menevo is in the Kozlovskij district on the border of Tatarstan and Chuvashia in the basin of the Sviyaga, where a medium-sized Bulghar town (34 ha) was excavated. The coins are from the year 673 A.H. = 1274/5 A.D., corresponding with the rule of Mengü Temür (1267–1280). Singatullina identified Kerman with the local Bulghar town (Singatullina 2003: 48–50, 119). According to Lebedev and Bugarcčev, the coins of Kerman can be dated from 1266 to 1275, and the mint of Kerman might



have been in the vicinity of the modern village of Stary Nohraty in the Alkejevsky District of Tatarstan (Lebedev, Bugarčev 2015: 28–32). The coins of Mengü Temür, i.e. the early coins of the Golden Horde, were found in Bulghar, Biler and Kermen. In these localities, coins were struck at that time in the Volga region. As ‘Kermen’ means ‘town, fortress’, the possibility that it referred to one of these two towns cannot be excluded.



Photographs and drawings of dirham from K.r.mān; а and а are snapshots of a find at the Kokrjat mound; В is a drawing of the dirham; в are drawn reconstructions of dirhems from the Al'menovo treasure by A. Z. Singatullina: <http://muzeydeneg.ru/research/vremennyye-monetnyie-dvoryi-i-nepredelyonnyie-montnyie-vyipuski-bulgarskogo-ulusa-zolotoy-ordyi-v-xiii-v/> (downloaded on 30.12.2018).



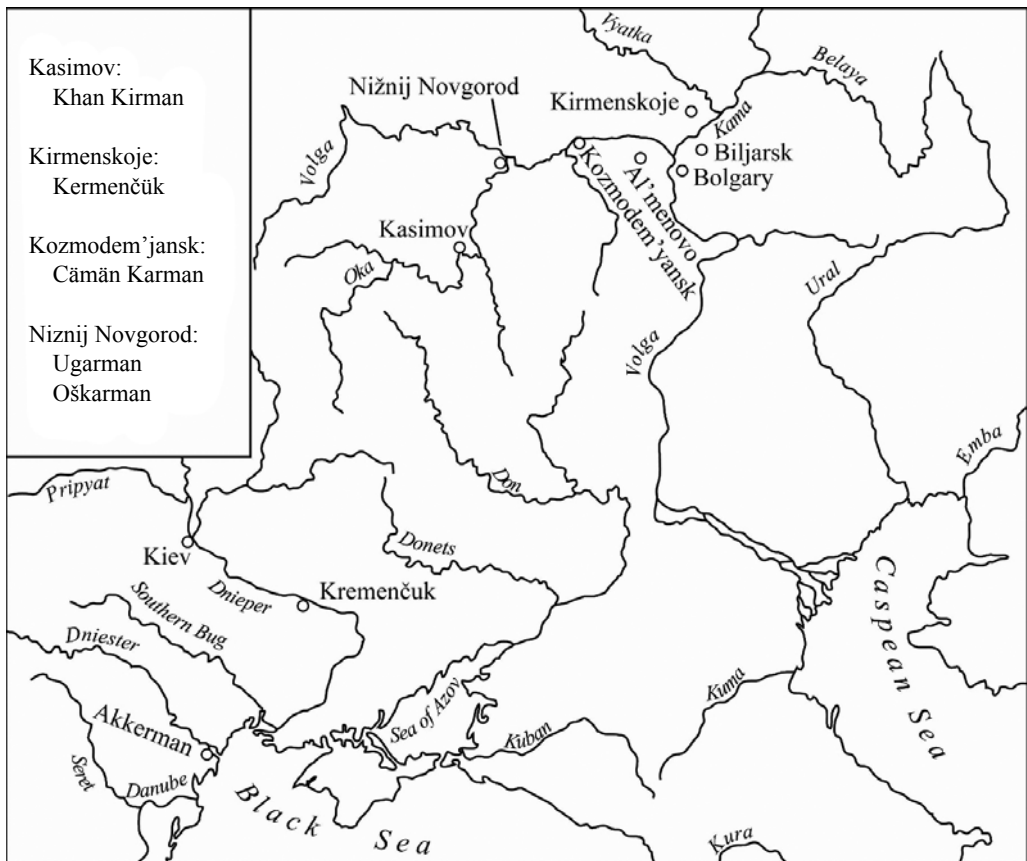
Singatullina 2003: 182.



One of the successor states of the Golden Horde, the Kasimov Khanate, was a Muscovite vassal from 1467 to 1694, and it was used to influence the political life of the Kazan Khanate until its subjugation in 1552. Its capital was Gorodec Meščerskij, known as Kasimov, but Tatar sources called it *Khan Kirman* (Rahimzjanov 2009: 78–79).

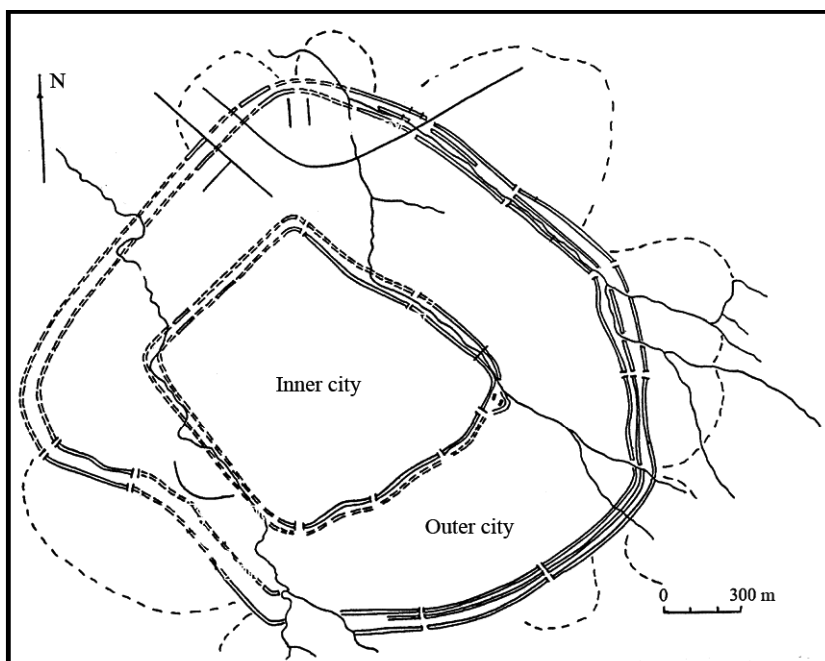
In his 1877 book, Špilevskij collected data on ancient towns of the Kazan province. The three villages, mentioned above, on the bank of the Kirmjanka and other place names with Kirmen are: Tat. *Taškirmen* on the confluence of the Volga and Kama, Tat. *Tau Kirmen*, Chuvash *Karman-du* ‘townhill, tower hill’ and *Karman* (Špilevskij 1877: 390, 401, 509, 531).

The Chuvash *karman* was copied by the Mari, and the names of Nižnij Novgorod in Mari are *Uyarman* ‘New Town’ and *Oškarman* ‘White Town’, whereas Kozmodem’jansk is *Cämänkarman* ‘Town surrounded by wattle’ in Mari (Dobrodomov 2009: 152–153). The geographical term ‘Kermen’ has been widespread since the early Middle Ages north of the Black Sea, in the Crimea and the Middle Volga region.



Returning to identification of Man Kermen in the *Secret History*, data and the siege of the Volga Bulghar capital were recorded in Russian, Latin and Persian sources.

In 1236, Russian annals recorded: ‘In autumn the godless Tatars arrived at the land of the Bulghars from their eastern country and captured the glorious Great Town (*Velikij Gorod*) of the Bulghars and they slaughtered everybody from old men to children and babies, most of the goods were carried away and the town was set to fire and the whole land was subjugated’ (PSRL I: 460). The designation *Velikij Gorod* was mentioned in Russian annals in 1184, 1220, 1229, 1232 and 1236. Its identification is unequivocal Biljarsk/Biler (Zimonyi 2014: 43).



Biljarsk (Huzin 1995: 169).

The Hungarian friar Julian, visiting the Volga Bulghars in 1235, mentioned: ‘In one great town of this country (*in una magna eiusdem provincie civitate*) which is said to be armed [with] fifty thousand warriors, the friar found a Hungarian woman who was married in this region /coming/ from the land he was looking for’ (SRH, II: 539). It is generally accepted that this ‘great town’ can be connected with the capital of the Volga Bulghars, i.e. Biljarsk. Julian made a second journey to the Volga region, but he learned of the conquest of the Volga region in Suzdal’ in 1237 and gave further details on the Mongol campaign: ‘They [the Mongols] turned to the west after defeating them [the eastern Hungarians] and they occupied five great pagan countries in one year or a little more: Saksin,<sup>8</sup> Merovia,<sup>9</sup> conquered the country of the Bulghars and captured sixty strong for-

<sup>8</sup> Saksin on the lower Volga was a significant trade centre cf. Göckenjan and Sweeney 1985: 115, note 17.

<sup>9</sup> Merja in the Russian annals cf. Mari i.e. Cheremis cf. Göckenjan and Sweeney 1985: 115, note 18.





tresses (*castra*), which were so populous that one of them could mobilise fifty thousand warriors. In addition, they conquered Vedin,<sup>10</sup> Merovia, [and] Pojdovia, the country of the Mordvins, which had two princes' (SRH II: 717).<sup>11</sup> The *castrum* 'fortress' and its context resembles the earlier information, and both can refer to the capital of the Volga Bulgars.

Juwaynī described the Mongol invasion against the Volga Bulgars as follows: 'The princes departed each to his own place of residence in order to organize their forces and armies; and in spring each of them set forth from his own territory and hastened to carry out this undertaking. They came together in the territory of the Bulghar (Bulğār). The earth echoed and reverberated from the multitude of their armies, and at the size and tumult of their forces the very beasts stood amazed. First they took by storm the city (*šahr*) of Bulghar (Bulğār), famous throughout the world for the strength of its position and its ample sources; and as a warning to others they slew the people or led them captive' (Qazwini 1912: 224; Boyle 1958 I: 269). Juwaynī mentioned the common Turkic name of the capital Bulghar and not the Old Chuvash form Biler. The modern name Biljarsk can be derived from the Chuvash form of Biler. The source of misunderstanding of Juwaynī was that the town Bolgary/Bulghar on the Volga, which controlled trade on the river, was also an important town of the Volga Bulgars, but it became the region's central town only later, during the rule of the Golden Horde. This can be seen from the archaeological, numismatic and written sources treated below.

Rashīd al-Dīn gave a detailed description of the campaign against the Volga Bulgars, inserting events of the raid against the Hungarian king: 'They all set out together in the spring of the *bičīn yīl*, that is, the Year of the Monkey, falling in Jumādā II of the year 633 /12<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1236/. Having travelled throughout the summer, in the autumn, in the region of Bulghar, they joined the family /of Jochi/, Batu, Orda, Shiban, and Tangqut, who had also been deputed to that region ... (Raid against the Hungarian).... After this,<sup>12</sup> in the winter, the princes and emirs gathered together on the River Jaman<sup>13</sup> and sent the emir Sübedei with an army into the country of the Ās and the region of the Bulghar. They /themselves/ went as far as the town of *Kūy.k*.<sup>14</sup> The emirs /of the town/, Bayan and Chīqu, came and paid homage to the princes. They were received with honor, but upon their return /Bayan and Chīqu/ again rose in revolt, and Sübedei Bahadur was sent /against them/ for the second time in order to take them prisoner.'<sup>15</sup> Identification of the town *Kūy.k*, written as كوك KWYK and كرنك KRNK in other manuscripts, is debated, but Tiesenhausen identified it with the Great City without any explanation (Tiesenhausen 1941: 35). Smirnov, following Berezin, reconstructed it as Kermenčük (1951: 268). Fahrutdinov rejected that idea on the ground that the town was located north of the Kama River, whereas Biljarsk, the greatest centre of the Volga Bulgars, was south of the Kama. Fahrutdinov reconstructed the name of the town as the Turkic *kermen* 'town, fortress' (1984: 101–102). Accordingly, the capital of the Volga Bulgars, i.e. Biljarsk, was also called Kermen. After the Mongol conquest, Bulghar on the Volga became the northern seat of the khan of the Golden Horde. That it was the region's centre is reflected in the new buildings, and most of the coins were from the Bulghar mint. Perhaps the name (Man) Kermen, Velikij Gorod was transferred to Bolgary. Russian annals mentioned the term *Bol-*

<sup>10</sup> Veda is the capital of the Burtas in Riccardus' report, cf. Göckenjan and Sweeney 1985: 87, note 21, 115, note 21.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dörrie 1956: 172–173; Göckenjan and Sweeney 1985: 38, 115; Fennell 1983: 77.

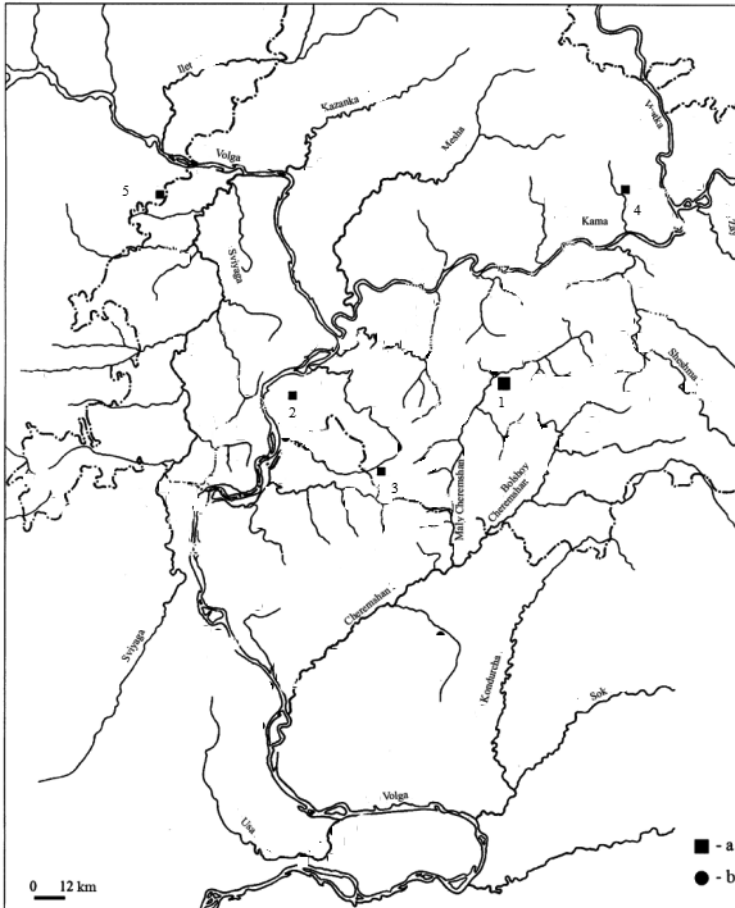
<sup>12</sup> After describing the campaign against Hungary, the sequence of events is discussed: Minorsky 1952: 228.

<sup>13</sup> Yayiq~Ural river: Minorsky 1952: 239.

<sup>14</sup> Ali-Zade 1980: 128: the variants of the manuscripts: كويك KWYK, كوك KWYK, كرنك KRNK.

<sup>15</sup> The date of the revolt is uncertain, cf. Smirnov 1951: 53–54; Fahrutdinov 1984: 100–102.





1. Biljar 620 ha; area with the suburbs: 800 ha; 2. Bulgar, Bolgary in the 12<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, 24–25 ha; 3. Suvar c. 90 ha; 4. Kirmenskoje ancient town; 5. Almenevskoje ancient town (34 ha).

*gary Velikie* or ‘Great Bulghar’ in 1396/1399 in connection with Bolgary, and a Volga Bulghar inscription from 1329 contains the term *Mon Bular* ‘Great Bular/Biler’ referring to Biljarsk. The use of *Man Kermen* for capitals was taken over by the Kasimov Khanate, and the term was changed, i.e. the word ‘great’ to ‘khan’ or ‘sovereign ruler’ so the capital was called Khan Kermen. Worth mentioning is that the opposition pair *Man Kermen*–*Kermenčuk* or ‘Great-Small Town’ existed on the Dnieper between Kiev and Kremenčuk in the Crimea and in the Volga region.

In conclusion, the term *Man Kermen* is a Kipchak version of an original old Turkic *Man Kärman*, and the Chuvash type form was *Mon Kärman* > *Män Karman*. The Cumans/Qipchaqs/Polovec of Eastern Europe used this geographical term for both Kiev, the ecclesiastical centre of Kievan Rus, and the capital of the Volga Bulgars. In other compounds or with the diminutive suffix, *Kermen* is widespread in Eastern Europe and especially in the Volga region. The designation *Kermen* may have been used by Rashid al-Dīn for the capital *Biljarsk*. The Russian *Velikij Go-*



*rod* and the Latin *magna civitas* can be regarded as direct translations of *Man Kermen*. Therefore, I prefer to identify the designation *Man Kermen* in the *The Secret History of the Mongols* with the capital of the Volga Bulgars because it was a capital city, which had significant political powers, that the Mongols planned to conquer. The Mongol aim was to attack the Volga Bulgars, Kievan Rus and Alans plus the nomadic Cumans. As the latter had no symbolic capital, *Biljarsk/Biler* ~ *Man Kermen*, Kiev and Magas were strategic targets.

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