

JÁNOS HARMATTA

## TURK AND AVAR RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS ON METAL BELT-PLATES

### I

A thorough review, collection and publication of the Turk runic inscriptions drew attention to the runic records on objects in increasing degree during the last years.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the *Res Gestae* engraved on stone pillars of the Türk and Uyyur qayans preserved their importance from historical and linguistic viewpoint, but the spread, use and function in the everyday life of the Turk runic script can only be elucidated by the inscriptions on objects.<sup>2</sup> In the collection of the runic inscriptions discovered in the Yenisey-Basin, records on bone side-stick of bit, on bronze plate of strap-end, on silver and golden vessels, on mirrors, on coins, on amulet, spindle-whorl and seal, on metal plate of belt, on horse harness and bone plate of bow permit to form a clear idea on the wide use of the runic script among the Turk tribes of that region during the 8th–10th centuries A. D.<sup>3</sup> The Avar runic inscriptions on objects, discovered so far, include records on the following types of objects: silver and earthen vessels, spindle-whorls, bone cases for needles, signet-rings, bone plates of bow, golden slip-knot of belt, closing plates of bags, bone etiquette-plate, slip-knot of stirrup strap.<sup>4</sup> This material may now be completed by the inscriptions scratched

<sup>1</sup> About the runic inscriptions on objects cf. S. G. KLYAŠTORŇIY: Древнетюркские рунические памятники. Moskva 1964. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. G. KLYAŠTORŇIY: Einige Probleme der Geschichte der alttürkischen Kultur Zentralasiens. AO 2 (1975) 126.

<sup>3</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: Корпус тюркских рунических памятников бассейна Енисея. Leningrad 1983. Inscriptions Ye 103, Ye 83, Ye 76, Ye 78, Ye 86, Ye 88, Ye 131, Ye 141.

<sup>4</sup> J. HARMATTA: On the Problem of the Language of the Avars. Antik Tanulmányok 30 (1983) 71 foll. (In Hungarian) = Avarların Dili Sorununa Dair. Erdem 3 (1987) 11 foll., Turk Runic Inscriptions in Eastern Europe. Antik Tanulmányok 30 (1983) 85 foll. (In Hungarian). = Doğu Avrupa'da Oyma Yazılı Kitabeler. Erdem 3 (1987) 57 foll., The Signet-Ring of an Avar Dignitary. Antik Tanulmányok 30 (1983) 249 foll. (In Hungarian)., The Runic Inscription of Környe from the Avar Age. Antik Tanulmányok 31 (1984) 100 foll. (In Hungarian)., Avar Runic Inscriptions on Vessel from Haithabu. Antik Tanulmányok 31 (1984) 261 foll. (In Hungarian)., Avar Runic Inscriptions on Vessels. Antik Tanulmányok 31 (1984) 272 foll. (In Hungarian)., The Avar Runic Inscriptions of the Budapest Historical Museum. Antik Tanulmányok 32 (1985–86) 46 foll. (In Hungarian)., Avar Runic Inscriptions on Objects. Antik Tanulmányok 32 (1985–86) 57 foll. (In Hungarian)., Additional Avar Runic Inscriptions on Objects. Antik Tanulmányok 32 (1985–86) 217 foll.

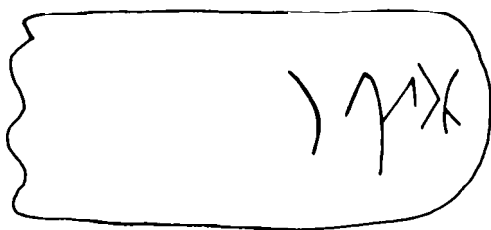


Fig. 1  
The runic inscription  
of the strap-end plate from Bellik



Fig. 2  
The runic inscription  
of the strap-end plate from barrow Aržan II

on the metal plates of straps discovered in three finds. But before we would discuss these inscriptions and make an attempt at their interpretation, it will be useful to examine the runic records on the metal plates of strap-ends found in the Yenisey region.

## II

1. Such a bronze plate of strap-end was discovered in the environs of the village Bellik (Hakas Autonomous Territory).<sup>5</sup> Its runic inscription (Fig. 1) was read by D. D. Vasil'ev as *č o/u 2r* what is surely correct, but the record consists not of three but of four characters. It is true that the fourth letter can only be identified with difficulty. This may be the reason that Vasil'ev did not give any reading of it. This character represents a vertical, a little bending in its upper part from the vertical to the left. Thus, it reminds of the form of a <sup>1</sup>*n* to a certain degree, but it differs from that by its position and by its slanting axis. It must also be taken into account that after the letter <sup>2</sup>*r* we have to await a palatal vowel. The key for the identification of the discussed character will be furnished by the observation that the individual, scratching the inscription, cut in the vertical straight strokes of the signs in bending form. Thus, the last runic letter can be regarded as the individual realization of a vertical straight stroke, *i.e.* it can be identified with the sign *s/š* of the Turk runic script. Accordingly, the correct reading of the inscription will be the following:

<sup>0</sup>*č o/u 2r 2s/š*

This spelling may represent a personal name consisting of two elements: *Aču Erš* (or perhaps *Aču Eriš*). The name *Erš* (or *Eriš*) also occurs in the spelling <sup>2</sup>*r 2š* on a vessel from Central Asia.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. Inscription Ye 80, p. 42, 73 (drawing), 120 (photo).

<sup>6</sup> K. V. TREVER: Памятники греко-бактрийского искусства. Moskva-Leningrad 1940. 81 foll., Pl. 20. The silver cup is kept in the Hermitage where I could study its inscriptions by the courtesy of V. G. Lukonin, Head of the Department. Its finding place is unknown, originally it belonged to the Collection of the Stroganovs and perhaps came to light on the territory of Province Perm.

2. The other similar bronze plate was found in the barrow Aržan II dug up on the bank of the river Uyuk.<sup>7</sup> On this, three runic signs (Fig. 2) can be observed which were read by G. Klyashtorniy as follows:

$^2l \ddot{u} ^2s$ <sup>8</sup>

In this reading, he counted with the mirror-turned form of  $\ddot{u}$ , probably because after  $^2l$  he awaited a palatal vowel. However, from among the possible interpretations of the reading  $^2l \ddot{u} ^2s$ , neither *sül* 'succulentship' nor *ülüs* 'part' give acceptable sense in the given context. In reality, the runic characters  $^2l \text{ } ^1r \text{ } ^1s \text{ } ^1š$  are to be read on the plate and of we interpret this spelling as *El Ariš* and consider it a personal name consisting of two elements, the difficulty in the vowel-harmony of the reading  $^2l \text{ } ^1r \text{ } ^1s \text{ } ^1š$  will disappear. The element *Ariš* of the name also occurs in the proper name *Kepin Al Ariš* to be read in the inscription of a spindle-whorl found in the Yenisey region.<sup>9</sup>



Fig. 3.

The runic inscription on the strap-end plate of a horse-harness from Čeremuska



Fig. 4.

The restored runic inscription from Čeremuska

3. The third inscription on metal plate of strap-end belongs to a horse-harness found at the village Čeremuška (Hakas Autonomous Territory).<sup>10</sup> D. D. Vasil'ev proposed the reading  $^2l i ^0m ^2d$  of this inscription (Fig. 3), but because of the joining of the runic characters this reading can obviously be regarded as a first attempt. First of all doubtful is the reading of *i* because its upper slanting stroke is too long and the angle formed by it with the vertical stroke is not characteristic of the runic sign *i*. On the other hand, together with the vertical stroke, joined to it from the left, the character, thought to be *i*, can be read  $s ^2t$  without any difficulty. In this case, we have again to look for the upper part of  $^0m$  to the left of the sign resembling an X. Thereafter, we can still observe an *u*, joined to the  $^0m$  which is, however, hardly possible after the letters  $^2l \text{ } ^2t \text{ } ^0m$ . On the other hand, if we suppose that the person, preparing the inscription, was not acquainted sufficiently with the Turk runic script and copied the text placed at his disposal mechanically, then joining the letters, he possibly used the upper stroke ends, crossing one another, of the  $^0m$  and the  $^2t$  for the right upper stroke of an  $^2š$  (the restored form of the inscription is illustrated by Fig. 4). In this case, instead of *u* we have to read the character  $^2š$  and the reading of the whole inscription will be the following:

$^2l \text{ } ^2t \text{ } ^0m \text{ } ^2š$

<sup>7</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. Inscription Ye 103, p. 15, 77 (drawing).

<sup>8</sup> S. G. KLYAŠTORNIY: Первобытная археология Сибири. Leningrad 1976. 184–185.

<sup>9</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. Inscription Ye 87/3, p. 116 (photo).

<sup>10</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. Inscription Ye 131, p. 45, 79 (drawing), 124 (photo).

This spelling can easily be interpreted as the personal name *El Etmiš*.<sup>11</sup>

To sum up, all Turk runic inscriptions of strap-ends known from the Yenisey region so far, represent the name of the owner of the belt. This material may now be completed by the runic inscriptions of some Avar strap-ends.

### III

1. First of all, the little strap-end from Cikó (Hungary)<sup>12</sup> should be mentioned which was inscribed with a short inscription consisting of only two letters (Fig. 5). As its position on the metal plate indicates, it was written from left to right. Its reading <sup>2</sup>*r* <sup>2</sup>*š* can be interpreted as the personal name *Erš* (or *Eriš*). Both the spelling and the letter forms are the same as those of the inscription on the silver cup of the Hermitage (Sanktpetersburg), mentioned above. Accordingly, the Avar runic inscription from Cikó also indicated the owner's name.

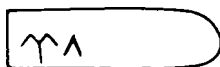


Fig. 5.

The runic inscription on the little strap-end from Cikó

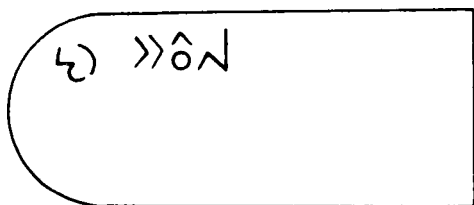


Fig. 6.

The runic inscription of the great strap-end from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta

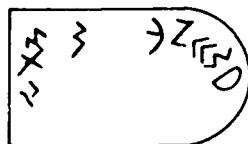


Fig. 7.

The runic inscription of the first little strap-end from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta

2. Longer and more complicated texts are represented by the runic inscriptions on the gilded silver plates of the belt, found in Grave 15 of the cemetery at Keszthely-Fenékpuszta.<sup>13</sup> Here on the rather worn back of three belt-plates can be observed traces of runic inscriptions: on the great strap-end and on two smaller metal plates.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the personal names *El Qatmiš*, *El Tergüg* etc. with similar meaning.

<sup>12</sup> I. KOVRIG: Data concerning the problem of the Avar Conquest. *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 82 (1955) Pl. VII, 3.

<sup>13</sup> L. BARKÓCZI: A 6th Century Cemetery from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta. *Acta Arch. Hung.* 20 (1968) 283.

<sup>14</sup> L. BARKÓCZI: op. cit. Pl. LXIV, 1, 4, 8.

a) On the rim of the back-plate of the great strap-end three runic characters:  $^1q$   $^1t$   $^1d$ , then in the bend of the rim further two letters:  $^1n$  and  $^0n\check{c}$  can be discerned (Fig. 6). If the reading  $^1q$   $^1t$   $^1d$  can be interpreted (in case of defective spelling) as *qutad*, this form may be either the 2nd person imperative of the verb *qutad*- 'to be lucky' and mean 'be lucky!' or the personal name *Qutad*<sup>15</sup>, identical with the quoted verbal form. Obviously, the spelling  $^1n$   $^0n\check{c}$  is to be interpreted as *inan\check{c}* and identified with the wellknown title *inan\check{c}*. Thus, the discernible signs may be interpreted as the name and the title of the owner *Qutad inan\check{c}*.

b) On the back of one of the two smaller metal plates the traces of 8–10 runic characters can be observed (Fig. 7). The inscription begins in the middle of the round end of the plate where the letters  $^1y$   $^0n\check{c}$   $^1d$   $a$   $^2k$  are rather well discernible. Thereafter faint traces of characters can be seen – the space suffices for three letters –, further again a  $^0n\check{c}$  can be seen which is followed by a  $^2r$  (the head of the letter is discernible) and a  $^2d$ , besides, the outlines of one more rhomboid shape letter can be discerned. Accordingly, the reading of the inscription will be the following:

$^1y$   $^0n\check{c}$   $^1d$   $a$   $^2k$  [...]  $^0n\check{c}$   $^2r$   $^2d$  [.]

In the fore-part of the inscription the words *ayin\check{c}* 'fear' and *ada* 'flight, escape' can be identified. Restoring the reading  $^2k$  [...] to  $^2k$  [ $^2l$   $^2r$   $^2r$ ] we arrive at the verbal form *ke[lürür]* and the resulting sentence *ayin\check{c} ada ke[lürür]* can be interpreted in the following way: "The fear brings about flight." This seems to be the first part of a maxim, the content of which requires a contrast in the continuation. In fact, interpreting the letter  $^0n\check{c}$  as *in\check{c}*, we arrive at the word *in\check{c}* 'composure, tranquillity' which can well be the semantic counterpart of the phrase *ayin\check{c}* 'fear'. Thus, the obvious restoration of the reading  $^2r$   $^2d$  will be  $^2r$   $^2d$  [ $^0m$ ] which may be interpreted as *erdäm* 'manliness, bravery, strength'. Accordingly, the text of the inscription can be restored as follows:

$^1y$   $^0n\check{c}$   $^1d$   $a$   $^2k$  [ $^2l$   $^2r$   $^2r$ ]  $^0n\check{c}$   $^2r$   $^2d$  [ $^0m$ ]

*ayin\check{c} ada ke[lürür], in\check{c} erdä[m]*

"The fear brings about flight, the composure – bravery"

c) On the back of the other small belt-plate from Keszthely-Fenekpuszta the faint traces of nine runic characters can be discerned (Fig. 8). They were scratched in circle and of them well discernible are the runic letters  $^1t$   $^1\check{s}$   $u$   $^1b$   $^1q$   $^1\check{s}$ . After the second  $^1\check{s}$ , the vertical stroke of a  $^1r$  is clearly, its head is faintly visible. Between the  $^1r$  and the  $^1t$  two characters were scratched: a faintly visible  $^1s$ / $^1\check{s}$  and a very faintly discernible  $^1y$  whose shape resembles a W turned upside down.<sup>16</sup> Thus the reading of the whole text will be the following:

$^1s$   $^1y$   $^1t$   $^1\check{s}$   $u$   $^1b$   $^1q$   $^1\check{s}$   $^1r$

In this reading, on the basis of the endings, the verbal forms *tašub* (< *tašup*) and *qašur* of the verbs *tašu*- 'bring, bring in' and *qoš*- 'to add, increase' respectively can

<sup>15</sup> Древнетюркский словарь. Leningrad 1969. 472. (= DTS)

<sup>16</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. 7 (Table of runic characters, variant 10/13).

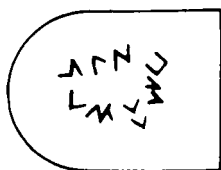


Fig. 8.

The runic inscription  
of the second little strap-end  
from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta

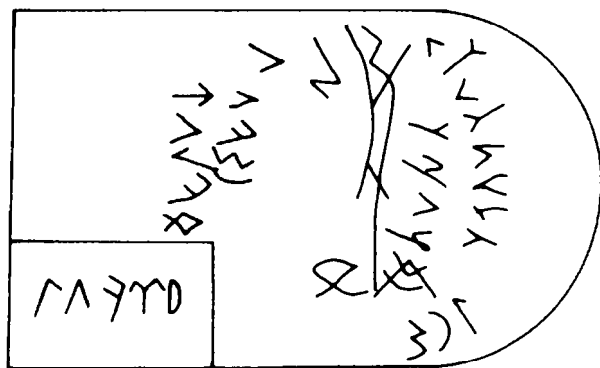


Fig. 9.

The runic inscription of the strap-end plate  
from Keszthely-Dobogó (or Alsópáhok)

easily be identified. The verb *tašu-* is used in connection with wealth, money, profit as it is exemplified by the model sentence *ol evgä yarmaq tašudi* "he brought money in the house" of Kāšgārī.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the obvious interpretation of the first two letters <sup>1</sup>s <sup>1</sup>y will be *asiy* 'profit'. The whole inscription *asiy tašub qošur* seems again to be a proverb: "bringing profit, one will increase (his wealth)".

Therefore, it seems that the name of the owner was inscribed on the great metal strap-end, while on the small belt-plates maxims or proverbs were scratched in. Perhaps we can even suppose that the other metal belt-plates were also inscribed with a maxim or a proverb each but the faintly scratched runic characters entirely disappeared by the use. In any case, the gilded silver belt, richly provided with runic inscriptions, represent a remarkable specimen and conspicuously emphasizes the social position and rank of its owner. Herewith in accordance is even the fact that Grave 15, containing the discussed belt, was the richest burial in the cemetery at Keszthely-Fenékpuszta.

3. The third strap-end plate inscribed with runic script comes again from the environs of Keszthely (from the cemetery of Keszthely-Dobogó or that of Alsópáhok).<sup>18</sup> Its surface is fully covered with scratched runic letters (Fig. 9) which can be separated into 8 inscriptions. These are the followings:

a) If we hold the angular part of the strap-end plate upward, then we can observe a rectangle-shaped space, delimited by scratchings in its upper left angle

<sup>17</sup> DTS 541.

<sup>18</sup> At present it is kept in the Hungarian National Museum. Inv. nr. 52.84.24. Its measure is 28 × 23 mm. The discovery of the runic inscriptions on it is the merit of Dr. É. Garam and A. Kiss. I thank them very much for the possibility to study and publish its runic inscriptions as well as for the excellent photos.

where five very little, hardly 1,5 mm high runic characters were inscribed. The reading of the inscription from right to left will be the following:

$$^1y\ ^2r\ ^2k\ ^2\check{s}\ i$$

This reading can be interpreted as follows:

*Ay Er keši* "The belt of Ay Er"

The peculiar position of this inscription speaks in favour of the assumption that it was the first record on the plate and Ay Er was the first owner of the belt.

b) The second inscription begins near to the line framing the first inscription and consists of the following runic signs:

$$^2b\ ^2g\ ^1l\ ^1\check{s}\ OQ$$

These can be interpreted as the personal name *Bäg Al Aşuq*. The shape of  $^2g$  is mirror-turned.

c) The third inscription was placed above the second one towards the interior of the plate. Some of its runic signs are crossing the characters of inscription 2. The reading of this inscription is the following:

$$^1n\ ^0n\check{c}\ ^2k\ ^2\check{s}\ i$$

The interpretation of this reading runs as follows:

*İnanč keši* "The belt of İnanč"

Without doubt this record, too, represents an owner's inscription.

d) Advancing further towards the round end of the plate, we see an inscription consisting of five strongly scratched, great-shaped letters, running in the same direction as inscription 1. The reading of inscription 4 is the following:

$$^2t\ ^2b\ e\ ^0z$$

These letters can be interpreted as *Tebe öz* "Tebe's own (belt)". Remarkable is the shape of *e* whose parallel only occurs in the inscriptions of the Yenisey region.<sup>19</sup> The last two signs were incised from the opposite side of the plate, i.e. their axis deviate from that of the first three letters by 180°. The shape of *z* differs from all variants known so far of this character, but another reading of this sign is scarcely possible.

e) Above inscription 4, towards the round rim of the plate is incised inscription 5 which may be earlier than inscription 4 because its first two letters were crossed by the first runic sign  $^2t$  of the latter. The reading of inscription 5 runs as follows:

$$^1n\ u\ ^1r\ ^1s/^1\check{s}\ ^1q\ ^0\eta$$

This record can be interpreted as *Unursaqaŋ* which may be the genitive case of a name *Unursaŋ*, formed from the word *unur* 'mighty'<sup>20</sup> with the suffix *-saŋ*. Thus, its sense is "Unursaŋ's (property)" and it represents again an owner's record.

<sup>19</sup> D. D. VASIL'EV: op. cit. 7 (Table of runic Characters, variant 2/8).

<sup>20</sup> DTS 612.

f) The following inscription was scratched in from the round end of the plate, accordingly its direction deviates from those of inscriptions 2, 3 and 5 by 180°. This record begins at the stroke of the *e*, occurring in inscription 4, with a little-shape *u* which is followed by the two times greater characters  $^0\check{c} \ ^2\check{s} \ ^0\eta$ . The genitive suffix point to the end of the record, even if some letters can be read after it, but these may belong to another inscription. The interpretation of the characters  $u \ ^0\check{c} \ ^2\check{s} \ ^0\eta$  may be *Uč Ešij* "(Property) of Uč Eš". The name *Uč Eš* could come into being from a phrase-typ like *uč el* 'frontier people'. As regards its character, this inscription represents again an owner's record.

g) In the continuation of inscription 6, the runic letters  $^1r \ ^1\check{s} \ ^0p \ ^0\eta$  can be read. Their interpretation may be *Ariš Apaη* "(Property) of Ariš Apa". Thus, inscription 7 also contains the name of the owner of the belt.

h) Finally, beneath letter  $^2t$  of inscription 4, on the rim of the plate, the characters *i* (or perhaps  $^1l/^0p$ ) and  $^1n$  are well discernible, while further a faint  $^0n\check{c}$  can be recognized. These letters can be interpreted as the name or title *Īnanč*. In this context, the question may arise, what is the relation between this *Īnanč* and the *Īnanč* occurring in inscription 3. There, the spelling of the name was  $^1n \ ^0n\check{c}$ , here again it is  $i \ ^1n \ ^0n\check{c}$ . This difference in the spelling speaks in favour of the assumption that we have to do not with the repetition of the same record, but two *Īnančs* might have been two different persons.

#### IV

Concluding from the varied letter forms, we can regard the runic inscriptions of the metal strap-end from Keszthely-Dobogó (or Alsópáhok) as incised by different hands at different dates. The majority of the inscriptions explicitly refers to the fact that the belt was the property of the person bearing the incised name. Thus, the eight inscriptions surely attest eight successive owners of the belt. At the same time, however, they also prove that the knowledge of the Türk runic script was rather widely spread among the Avars. There can be no doubt about the Turkic language of the inscriptions and comparing them with the 24 Avar inscriptions written in Turk runic script which became known up to now, on the basis of their territorial and chronological distribution we cannot doubt that both the Early and the Late Avar population spoke a Turkic language or Turkic languages. Even if the possibility cannot be excluded that some little Mongol groups were living among the Avars or in other Turk tribal confederation – though no evidence for it became known so far –, the presumption of the Mongol language of the Avar people led by Baianos in the Carpathian Basin does not belong to the theories which can be represented on scholarly level.

The sole alleged trace of the Mongol language among the Avars would be the name *Baianos* (\**Bayan*), if the Mongol origin could be proved. The name *Bayan* was borne, however, not only by the wellknown Avar qaγan, but also by several other Turk rulers during the VIth–VIIIth centuries A. D. Thus, about 650 A. D. the qaγan of the Bulγars, settled in the Kuban region, was Βαρβαῖαν (? \**Baiβaiān*), in the VIIIth century A. D. the name Βαῖανός was borne by the brother of the Danubian Bulγar



prince Toktos. The name also occurs in Central Asia. According to the report of the Ch'ih-fu-yüan-kuei (c. 971, p. 10 r<sup>0</sup>)<sup>21</sup> *I-mi-shih* 易米施 (Ancient Chinese *ïäk-miei-siē* < Turkic \**Yaymīš*), the ruler of Čayāniyān, sent *P'o-yen* 婆延 (Ancient Chinese *b'uâ-yān* < Turkic \**Bayan*) tarqan as envoy to the Chinese Imperial court in 733 A. D. This evidence proves that the name *Bayan* was also known and used by the Turks of Central Asia. Consequently, even if this name would be of Mongol origin, even in this case it could not furnish any evidence for the language of the person who bore it and even lesser could serve as basis for the qualification as Mongol of the language of a whole people.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest Mongol data for the use of the name *Bayan* occur in the Secret History of the Mongols, thus they are later by several centuries than the Turkic evidence. It is striking that the Turkic occurrences of the name come from the territory of the Western Türk tribal federation which even in itself proves that the origin of it should be sought on the territory of Central Asia, mostly touched by the influence of Sāsānian Iran.

In fact, it is an obvious assumption that the names *Bay* and *Bayan* are of Iranian, more precisely Middle Persian origin and they represent borrowings of the Middle Persian titles *bay* 'Lord, Majesty' (e.g. in the royal protocol of the Sāsānians *mzdysn bgy* = *mazdyasn bay* 'the Mazda-respecting Majesty') and *bayān* 'Majesty' occurring in the address *šmāh bayān* 'Your Majesty' of the Sāsānian kings.<sup>23</sup> These titles might become title and name of Turk rulers in their original meaning 'Lord, Majesty' later, however, similarly to many other titles, they have been degraded and their meaning became 'rich'. The meaning of the Bulğar name *Baybayan* (Middle Persian *bay-i bayān*) might have been still 'Lord of Lords'. An exact parallel to the semantic development of the words *bay*, *bayan* is furnished by the Proto-Iranian term *asura*- 'Lord, God' (the original meaning of Middle Persian *bay* was also 'God', cf. Old Persian *baga*- 'God') which was borrowed by the Finno-Ugrian languages and preserved its original sense 'Lord' (cf. MordvinE *azoro* 'Lord') for some time, later, however, its meaning was degraded to 'rich' (cf. Siryan V S *özir* 'rich').

<sup>21</sup> As concerns the language of the Avars, L. LIGETI expounded his opinion several times: The Turkic Relations of the Hungarian Language and what is about them. I. Budapest 1977. 307 foll. (In Hungarian), The Ethnic Pertaining and Language of the Pannonian Avars. Magyar Nyelv 82 (1986) 129 foll. (In Hungarian), The Turkic Relations of the Hungarian Language before the Conquest and in the Árpadian Age. Budapest 1986. 493 (In Hungarian). About the language of the Avars cf. recently A. RÓNA-TAS: Problems of the East European Scripts with special regard to the newly found inscriptions of Szarvas. In: Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo. XXXV. Popoli delle steppe: Unni, Avari, Ungari. Spoleto 1986. 502 foll. and Die Inschrift des Nadelbehälters von Szarvas (Ungarn). UAJb 9 (1990) 1 foll., in particular 14 foll. and note 34.

<sup>22</sup> E. CHAVANNES: Notes additionnelles sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux. Reprint. Paris without date. 54–56.

<sup>23</sup> Talking with L. Ligeti in my presence in the Café Erzsébet in 1947. O. Szemerényi raised this idea which was rejected by Ligeti with a general reference to the Mongolian data. However, since he published the Mongolian and Turkic data collected by him in Magyar Nyelv 82 (1986) 141–143 (the Turkic evidence from Central Asia, quoted above, escaped him), it became clear that the Mongolian evidence does not exclude the possibility of the Iranian origin at all. By the way, as far as I know, Szemerényi never published his idea.

It is, therefore, advisable to leave the name *Bayan* as an alleged evidence for the Mongol language of the Avars out of consideration and to base the linguistic qualification of their language on their own runic inscriptions which were written without exception in Old Turkic.

Eötvös Loránd University  
Faculty of Humanities  
H-1364 Budapest P.O.Box 107