

WHERE WAS KHUVRAT'S BULGHARIA?

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Until now Khuvrat's Bulgharia, which flourished between c. 630 and 650, has been confined to the region of Kuban. The author collected all of the sources which point to the region of the Dnieper.

Key words: History of the Bulgars, Onoghurs, Khuvrat, Kuphis.

General opinion

The literature is surprisingly unanimous in its opinion regarding the geographical location of Khuvrat's Bulgharia. The general opinion, naturally not without preliminaries,¹ is based on Moravcsik's fundamental work, published in 1930 in Hungarian and German. Moravcsik first reviewed the sources relevant to the Onoghurs. Having discussed these he established that

“Wir können also, unsere bisherigen Kenntnisse über die Onoguren zusammenfassend, sagen, daß diese, angefangen von den 60er Jahren des 5. Jh. bis zum Ende des 7. Jh. dauernd nördlich vom Kaukasus, an den Ostküsten des Maiotis, in der Gegend des Flusses Kuban, gesiedelt haben”(1930a, p. 65).² In the second half of his article Moravcsik made out a convincing case for *Bulghars* actually meaning Onoghurs in the given period and sources.³ Subsequently he took a close look at 7th-century sources pertaining to the Bulgars, and wrote, “Aus all diesen Angaben geht

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¹ These preliminaries include the works of Markwart (Marquart, as he originally spelt his name) which played a significant role, especially Marquart (1898, 1903).

² In his description of the 7th-century history of the Onoghurs Moravcsik draws on two sources, the data of Geographus Ravennas and the Byzantine list of sees. These sources will be discussed in detail below.

³ Burmov holds that the Onoghurs were originally not Bulgars, but later joined them. Beševliev claims the Onoghurs to be descendants of the earlier Huns, and not to be identified with the Onoghundur-Bulgars. On later opinions see Romašov (1992–94, p. 220).

hervor, daß Kowrat, Zeitgenosse des Kaisers Herakleios, am Anfang des 7. Jh. mit byzantinischer Unterstützung ein neues bulgarisches Reich gründete. Von dessen Ausdehnung wissen wir nichts Bestimmtes, aber sein Mittelpunkt waren zweifelsohne die östlichen Ufer des Maiotis, das Gebiet zwischen dem Don und Kuban" (Moravcsik, 1930a, p. 72).⁴

The research accepted Moravcsik's views almost entirely.⁵ I would like to draw attention to the works of Artamonov (1962, p. 157, p. 165), Beševliev (1980, p. 150), Werner (1984, p. 39), Pohl (1988, p. 271, as one viewpoint), Mango (1990, note 21 to Chapter 35), Golden (1992, p. 244), and L'vova – Maršak (1997, p. 99), and to the recently published 9th volume of the *Kratkaja Evrejskaja Ėnciklopedija* (1999, p. 244).⁶ In the Hungarian literature let it suffice to refer to Németh (1930, p. 175, p. 176; 1991, p. 228) who maintained that the Magyars had borne the name of practically every people in the Kuban region since the 5th century, among others that of the Onoghurs (>> Ungar). It was this opinion that Szádeczky-Kardoss elaborated (1975, pp. 270–272), and which Ligeti (1986, p. 350) also employed. Csanád Bálint (1984, 1988) hypothesised a Bulgharia in the Kuban region. Most recently Szádeczky-Kardoss (1998, p. 212) wrote again about the centre of Khuvrat's empire in the Kuban region. There exists, however, another trend of opinions which avoids any speculation of the specific whereabouts of Khuvrat's realm (thus Zimonyi merely refers to the northern shores of the Black Sea in Kristó, 1994, p. 118). Even before Moravcsik there was another opinion in circulation (Westberg 1901, Marquart 1903, p. 126: Bessarabia, but p. 59: Kuban-Bulgaren) which, however, made no connection between the Onoghur and Bulghar ethonyms. After the paper of Moravcsik Lauterbach (1967) suggested that Khuvrat's Bulgharia was even further West,⁷ and although Pohl does mention it as one possibility (1988, p. 271, p. 272), he finally opted for both sides of the Maeotis. Romašov, who had an eye for the apparent contradictions of the sources, sought to resolve these by establishing that Great Bulgharia extended from the Kuban to the Don rivers; but because he maintained that the founding of Great Bulgharia was marked by the gain of rule over the Kutrighur, and the Kutrighur lived West of the Don in the Dnieper region, he concludes that the western frontier of Great Bulgharia must have been North of the Dnieper and the Bug estuary, along the Dnieper river (1992–94, p. 240, p. 244).

⁴ As regards the Bulgars, Moravcsik leans on the common source of Theophanes and Nicephorus. See below for details.

⁵ See Romašov (1992–94, p. 240): "Otmetim ešče raz, čto, po mneniju vseh issledovatelej, Velikaja Bolgarija raspologalas', po krajnej mere svoej čast'ju, na Kubani."

⁶ See also Romašov (1992–94, pp. 237–238) for an overview with further data.

⁷ It is a mystery why later research never subjected Lauterbach's conclusions to closer scrutiny. Beševliev (1980, p. 174) remarked that, "Der Aufsatz ... bietet nichts Bemerkenswertes". Romašov (1992–94) devoted somewhat greater attention to his work. Although many of his conclusions do not stand up today, he was undoubtedly very close to finding the right answer to many a question, including the localisation of the Kuphis, and consequently, of Khuvrat's Bulgharia. I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to István Zimonyi and Ágnes Paulik for their contribution of many literary quotations and studies to the writing of this paper.

Moravcsik, however, rightly acknowledged that the localisation of Khuvrat's Bulgharia is one of the key issues in early Hungarian history. This may be one more reason for the re-examination of the sources.

Where was Khuvrat's Bulgharia?

I have dealt with the localisation of Khuvrat's Bulgharia in a short chapter of my book (Róna-Tas 1999, pp. 215–220). This paper offers a more extended argumentation. To sum my views: Khuvrat's Bulgharia was in the Dnieper region. What we know for certain is that it was flanked to the East with the Don, and extended at least to the Bug river in the West. Next, the sources that point to the above locality will be examined one by one.

1. *Khuvrat's grave*

In 1912 the finds of a rich grave were brought to light in Mala Pereshchepino (Malaya Pereshchepina in Russian). This village is situated on the left bank of the Vorskla, one of the Dnieper's left tributaries. We shall not be concerned here with the research history of this find (for details see Bálint 1989, pp. 96–97 and Fonjakova 1997); however, it must be noted that it was accidentally discovered by locals. It is certain that not every item ultimately arrived at the Hermitage.⁸ In 1962 Artamonov (1962, pp. 174–175) suggested that the grave was one of Khuvrat's son's. In 1970 Bóna spoke of it as a royal find belonging to Khuvrat's family (Bóna, 1970). The rich treasure find was later explored by Joachim Werner (1984) who identified the person buried in the grave as Khuvrat. In 1997 L'vova and Maršak came up with three alternatives: 1. The find belongs to Khuvrat's victor; 2. the find is Khuvrat's; 3. the find belongs to one of Khuvrat's successors. There are several points which require clarification, namely:

- a. are we looking at a treasure find, a grave or a mausoleum?;
- b. how many signet rings did the find include, and what inscriptions do they bear?;
- c. when was the find interred?;
- d. whose body is in the grave?; and
- e. how did the deceased and his treasures arrive at this place?

The inscription on the signet rings has been read as PABAXATOY or ΘEΛEΠXAPOY by Benešević (1913, p. 16); and by Fink (1983/84) as BATPAXOY (communicated in a letter, see Werner 1984, p. 32). The correct answer cropped up in a letter which Seibt wrote to Werner who in his book only published the result of

⁸ Some of the treasures disappeared at the hands of antique dealers. Yet others remained in the Museum of Poltava and were destroyed in World War II, but their descriptions have come down to us (see Fonjakova 1997).

⁹ Zareczki (1912) claims it to be a treasure find; Makarenko (1912) a mausoleum (pominal'nyj hram); the Hermitage archives a grave cemetery (see L'vova – Maršak 1997, p. 87).

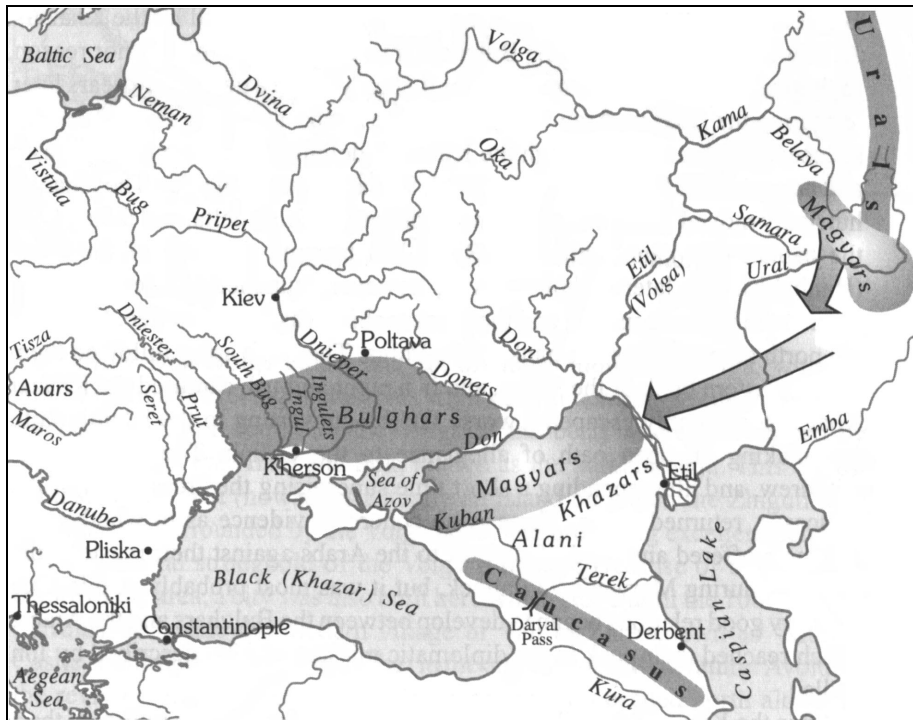


Fig. 1. The location of Khuvrat's Bulgharia and the Magyars in the middle of the 7th century (after Róna-Tas 1999, p. 219)

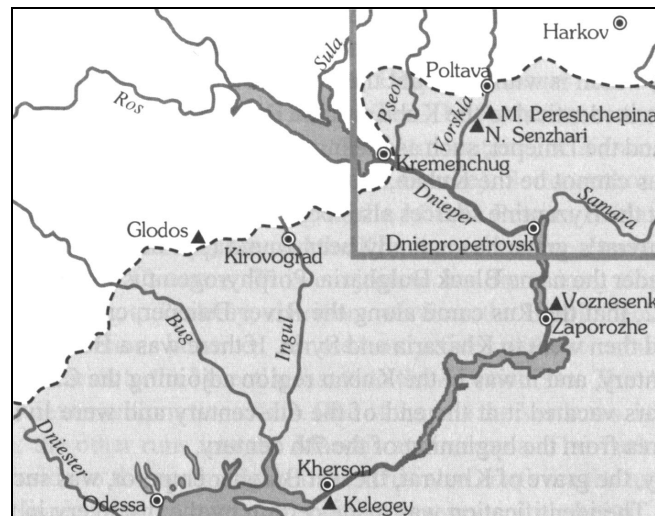


Fig. 2. The tomb of Khuvrat and other royal grave sites in the Ukrainian steppe zone (after Werner 1984, p. 8)



Fig. 3. Signet-rings from the tomb of Khuvrat (rings B, A, C, Zalesskaya et al. 1997b, p. 87)

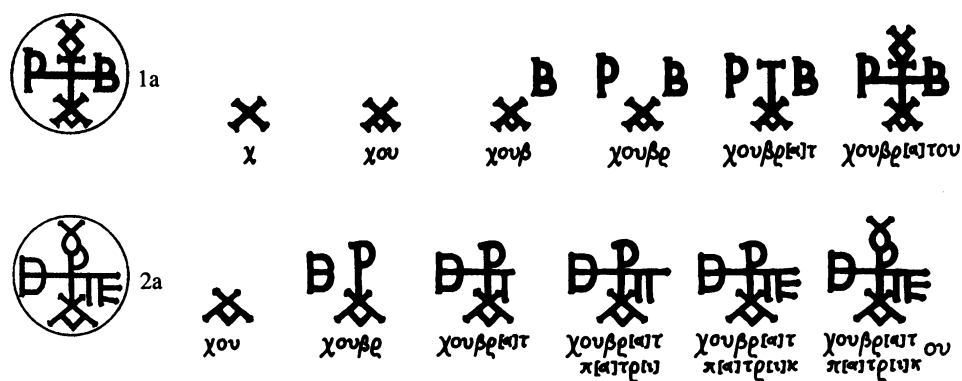


Fig. 4. Decipherment of the inscriptions on the signet rings (Róna-Tas 1999, p. 218)

the investigation. He held one of the inscriptions to be XOBPATOY or XPOBATOY (ring A), the other XOBPATOY ΠΑΤΡΙΚΟΥ (ring C). I presented the decipherment of this inscription in Szeged in 1984. In my lecture I emphasised the fact that the earliest written record of the Bulghar-Turkic sound shift $k > \chi$ could be traced even in the early Turkic loan-words of the Hungarian language. I first published the decipherment in my book in Hungarian (1996, p. 180, see 1999, p. 218).

Although Benešević (1913, 16) and later Werner only made mention of two signet rings (A and C above), the find actually contained three. Their inventory number in the Hermitage is A = ω 1052, B = 1930/187, and C = ω 1053. Zalesskaya – L’vova – Maršak et al. (1997b, pp. 120–121, cf. also Zalesskaya – L’vova – Marshak – Telyashev 1997a, pp. 86–87) is in agreement with Seibt regarding the interpretation of the inscriptions of rings A and C. Neither Werner nor Zalesskaya mentioned, however, that the inscription of ring A is not mirror-engraved, while that of ring B and C

is. The inscription of ring **B**, according to Zalesskaya, reads as BAT OPXA(N)OY ΠΑΤΡΙΚΟΥ, which would suggest it belonged to Khuvrat's uncle whose name, Zalesskaya reasoned, was Orghana; the preceding "BAT" being his title (see Bat Bayan, Theophanes). This cannot be accepted, however. Zalesskaya herself notes that the inscription can be also read as XOBΠΑΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΙΚΟΥ, and admits that the letter N is not there. Recently published excellent photographs suggest (Zalesskaya – L'vova – Marshak – Telyashev 1997a, pp. 86–87) that the inscriptions of ring **B** and **C** are identical. There are two small differences, however. The letter B in inscription **B** is an "underlined beta",¹⁰ while ring **C**'s beta is not underlined; and the two lateral lines of the kappa in inscription **B** are joined almost in a V-shape, while in inscription **C** they are well-nigh parallel. The two inscriptions are otherwise identical in every respect. Inscription **C** is perhaps a "provincial" copy of inscription **B**.¹¹ It is unclear why two copies of the second signet ring were made; nevertheless, that does not alter the facts.

The second question is that if the grave is indeed Khuvrat's, how did Khuvrat get there? First, an attempt must be made to clarify some chronological questions.

Khuvrat's anti-Avar uprising cannot have happened earlier than the Avar's catastrophic defeat under Constantinople in 627. This defeat shook the Avar empire to the foundations.¹² Nicephorus also recounts that having revolted against the Avar, Khuvrat, Orghana's nephew, made Heraclius a lifelong friend. It follows, then, that Khuvrat's uprising dates back to 641, that is, prior to the death of Heraclius. Nicephorus further narrows the interval to between the end of the Persian military campaign (630) and the Arab attack (634) (Lauterbach 1967, p. 578).

Establishing the time of Khuvrat's death is a more difficult matter. The *post quem* date is 641/642 on account of the Byzantine solidi found in the grave, the latest of which dates from the time of Constans II who reigned from late 641 or January 642 to 668. The solidi were minted between 642 and 647 (Werner 1984, p. 35; Bálint 1989, 98: pp. 641–646; Sokolova 1997, 20: pp. 642–646).¹³ The coins were perforated which suggests they were used as a necklace – probably for the funeral ceremony. Since the grave contained no solidi from later periods, Khuvrat's funeral must unquestionably have been after 642, and probably not long after 647.¹⁴ John, Bishop of

¹⁰ The "underlined beta" occurs in the so-called Buyla inscription (in Greek script) of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure; in the Byal Brag inscription found near Preslav; and a great many other finds. Grierson (1973 III, p. 187) quotes 6th-century occurrences in inscriptions, but it is known to have been used as early as the 2nd century (see Göbl – Róna-Tas 1995, p. 22).

¹¹ The name and the title on the signet ring are in the genitive case; however, the genitive of Orghana's name cannot be Orghanou.

¹² It was at this time that Samo's independent Slavic country emerged, and if we can give Constantine Porphyrogenitus credit, the independent Serbo-Croat tribal territory also appeared then (Ostrogorsky 1956/1993, p. 104).

¹³ Forty of the solidi are from the time of Heraclius, and 16 from the time of Constans II.

¹⁴ Lauterbach's conjecture is wholly unfounded (Lauterbach 1967, p. 576), namely that Asparukh's departure and settlement in the Danube delta should have occurred immediately after Khuvrat's death. It is not known for how long Khuvrat's successors fought each other. Likewise, we have no reason to believe Asparukh's migration occurred prior to 678.

Nikiu claimed (Werner 1984, p. 39) that following Heraclius' death Khuvrat supported the emperor's widow Martina and son Heraclonas against Constantine's family (in effect Constans II, that is Constans Pogonatus). These fights ended in late 641 or early 642.

Theophanes' above quoted remark concerns the date of Khuvrat's death. He wrote, "At the time of Constantine who departed to the West, Krobotos, ruler of all Bulgars and Kotrags, died."¹⁵ Constans II left Constantinople in 663 and ruled his country from Syracuse where he was eventually murdered in 668. However, the text does not state whether Kuvrat's death occurred after the departure to the West of Constans II, but rather, leaves the matter open. For it is perfectly feasible that "departed to the West" is merely an identification of Constantine–Constans. In this case the death of Khuvrat may have occurred any time between 642 and 668. This interval can be narrowed by the numismatic evidence to the years between 642 and 650.

Proposed by A.D. Angelov and accepted by Werner, the date circa 650 is consequently very likely; and the interval of 642–668 postulated by Lauterbach (1967, p. 576), Szádeczky-Kardoss (1968, p. 84) and Bóna (1970, p. 259) can be further narrowed.¹⁶ And albeit L'vova and Maršak allow for the possibility of being two Khuvrats (one in the Kuban region, the other buried at Malaya Pereshchepino), they reckon Khuvrat's death occurred between the 650s and 660s (L'vova – Maršak 1997, p. 100).

The Russian scholars were perplexed by how Constans II's money could have landed in the grave, given that Khuvrat supported Constans' enemies. The contradiction can easily be resolved if one assumes that after the tension on the home front had eased, Constans II, in an attempt to reinforce his position in power, sought to win Khuvrat over.

It is not so easy, though, to answer the question how Khuvrat came into the grave at Malaya Pereshchepino. Werner refers to the location of the grave as "die exzentrische Lage des Grabes", and reckons that its distance from the Arabs, the West Turks and the Khazars must have played a role in its choice (Werner 1984, p. 43). Its location, he reckons, was nevertheless within the zone extending from the Kuban river to the Danube estuary which Khuvrat commanded after 630, when he shook off Avar domination. Bálint (1984, p. 267), however, thinks otherwise. He holds that following his engagements with the Khazars, Khuvrat marched West in an orderly fashion, that is, his migration was a planned one. Consequently, the Khazar attack must be dated earlier, in Khuvrat's time. This conjecture, however, is contradicted by the sources, and Bálint is partly aware of that.

Let us now examine the written sources.

¹⁵ Ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων Κωνσταντίνου, τοῦ εἰς τὴν δύσιν, Κροβάτου τοῦ κυροῦ τῆς λεχθείσης Βουλγαρίας καὶ τῶν Κονραγῶν τὸν βίον μεταλλάξαντος ... (Ed. Lauterbach 1967, p. 544).

¹⁶ Romašov (1992–94, pp. 236–237) claimed that Kubrat reigned from 605 to 665, but did not occupy Kutrigur (Kotrag) territory before 635. His analysis is based on the proto-Bulghar regal list which is, however, unfit to date these events.

2. *The common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes*

Nicephorus and Theophanes shared the same source regarding the period. This, however, has not come down to us. Let us try to reconstruct the common original.

According to **Nicephorus**, “It is now time to speak of the dominion of the Huns (as they are called) and the Bulgarians and their affairs. In the area of the Maeotic lake (περὶ τὴν Μαιώτιν λίμνην), by the river Kophis (κατὰ τὸν Κώφιν ποταμὸν), lies Great Bulgaria (μεγάλη Βουλγαρία) (as it was called in olden times) and (here lived) the so-called Kotragoi¹⁷ (Κότραγοι), who are also of the same stock (as the Bulgarians). In the days of Constantine who died in the West, a certain man by the name of Kobratos became master of these tribes. On his death he left five sons, upon whom he enjoined not to part company under any circumstances, so that their dominion might be preserved thanks to their mutual friendship. But they took little account of the paternal injunction and a short time thereafter they divided, each one of them taking his own share of their people. The eldest son, called Baianos, in accordance with his father’s command, has remained until this day in his ancestral land. The second, called Kotragos, crossed the river Tanais and dwelt opposite the first. (ὁ δὲ δεύτερος λεγόμενος Κότραγος τὸν Τανάϊν διαβὰς ποταμὸν ἀπέναντι τοῦ πρώτου ὄκησεν ἀδελφοῦ.)”¹⁸

According to **Theophanes**, “From that lake (ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς αὐτῆς λίμνης)¹⁹ to the stretch of the river Kouphis, as it is called (ἐπὶ τὸν λεγόμενον Κοῦφιν ποταμὸν), where the xystos, this Bulgarian fish, is caught, lies the old, that is, Great Bulgaria (παλαιὰ Βουλγαρία), and it is there that the kinsmen (of the Bulgars), the Kotragos live. In the days of the empire of Constantine, who departed to the West, Krobatos was the master of the said Bulgaria and the Kotragos; on his death he left five sons. It was his will that under no circumstances should they part company in their adjacent dominions, for that way they might remain masters and would not become servants to other peoples. But shortly after their father’s death the five sons divided and parted, each of them taking his own share of their people. The eldest son, called Batbaian, in accordance with his father’s will, has remained until this day in his ancestral land. The second, his brother, by the name of Kotragos, crossed the river Tanais and dwelt opposite his first brother. (ὁ δὲ δεύτερος τούτου ἀδελφός ὁ λεγόμενος Κότραγος, τὸν Τανάϊν διαβὰς ποταμὸν ἀπέναντι τοῦ πρώτου ὄκησεν ἀδελφοῦ).”²⁰

¹⁷ Evidently the Kutrighur.

¹⁸ Ed. Mango (1990, cap. 35).

¹⁹ According to Romašov, “... v storone k vostoku ot ozera (Meotidskogo)” (1992–94, p. 232). Here, however, Romašov confuses this text with the previous sentence which speaks of the Jews of Fanagoria.

²⁰ Ed. Boor (1883, p. 357); Lauterbach (1967, pp. 543–544, p. 555).

It is worth perhaps quoting the Latin translation of Theophanes by Anastasius²¹ (Glossar, 211): “... *ab eisdem autem paludibus usque in amnem, qui dicitur Cuphis, ubi xystus capitur, qui est Vulgaricus piscis, antiquitus Vulgaria est magna, et hi qui dicuntur Contragi, eiusdem, cuius et ipsi, tribus existunt... temporibus autem Constantini [recte: Constantis II.], qui in Occidente regnavit, cum Crobatus, dominus iam dictae Vulgariae seu Contragorum, vitam cummutaret ac filios quinque relinqueret, testatus est, ne [n]ullo modo a mutua cohabitatione separarentur, propter quod universitati dominarentur ipsique nulli alteri nationi servirent, post breve autem tempus mortus illius in divisionem venientes quinque filii eius altrinsecus sequestrati sunt una cum populo, quem unusquisque ipsorum suae ditioni habebat subactum, et primus quidem filius eius, qui dicebatur Bathahias [recte: Batbaianas], mandatum proprii custodiens patris in progenitorum suorum terra permansit usque in praesens, secundus vero huius frater, nomine Contragus, Tanahin transiens amnem ex adverso primo habitavit fratri.”*

Analysis of the text reveals that according to the common source (Bat)Baian's²² people has, to this very day (μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο, *usque in praesens*) remained in its ancestral land. The ancestral land in Nicephorus' rendering is προγονικῆ γῆ, Theophanes speaks of a προγονικῆ αὐτοῦ γῆ, and Anastasius translates it as *in progenitorum suorum terra*. Evidently, the ancestors' land could neither have been a place where Khuvrat fled, nor one he migrated to prior to his death. And as regards the location of Great Bulgharia, the text contains three clues to go by. The first is that it lay in the area of the Maeotis, and the second that it was by the river Kophis. The third clue is Kotragos who, after his father's death, moved to the other side of the Don. Unfortunately Moravcsik's text (1930b, p. 20) speaks of Kotragos “zog an das westliche Ufer des Don”. However, neither Nicephorus nor Theophanes' text mentions anything of the kind. The other side (Theophanes: ἀπέναντι) might be either the East or West bank of the Don. The Maeotis, that is the Sea of Azov area, might be its Eastern, or Northern bank even. So we are left with Kophis which Moravcsik, as well as others before (Marquart 1898, 1903) and after him (Szádeczky-Kardoss 1998, p. 218), consistently translate as Kuban. It should be noted that the text goes on to mention Asparukh who proceeded West, in the course of which he crossed the Dnieper and the Dniester.²³ Had Khuvrat's Bulgharia been in the Kuban area, he would have had to cross the Don also. But no mention of that is made by the text.

²¹ Featuring briefly (August–September 855) as an antipope, Anastasius Bibliotecarius died between 877 and 879.

²² For a long time the “Bat” in this name was considered to be the title *Beg* which, however, is improbable. For its supposed Iranian origin (**pati*) see Beševliev 1980, p. 151.

²³ This caught Lauterbach's attention, too, but he did not think it led to the assumption that the Dnieper was the Western frontier of Khuvrat's Bulgharia, but rather, that it was Asparukh's dwelling place East of the Dnieper.

3. *Theophanes' geographical description*

Exactly which river the Kophis (Kouphis in Theophanes) denotes is determined in Theophanes thus:²⁴ “There, from where the Don and the Atel (which [the Don] branches off the Atel before the Sea of Azov) merge, springs the river Kouphis which flows in at the end of the Black Sea, near Necropela, at the cape named the Face of Aries.”²⁵ It is public knowledge that according to mediaeval geography the Don and the Volga (Atel) join where today the channel of Volgograd connects them, and part again; the Don flows into the Sea of Azov, and the Volga into the Caspian Lake. Consequently, the Kuphis must spring from the hills at the confluence of the Don and the Volga. The description as to where the Kuphis flows into the Black Sea is even more exact. This place is called Necropela or Necropyla, and was – as Lauterbach pointed out in connection with this text – on the west side of the Crimea, as was the cape Face of Aries (Κριοῦ Πρόσωπον, *Arietis Facies*).²⁶ Necropyla is mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In his *De Administrando Imperio*, proceeding from the Danube, “After the mouth of the Dnieper river comes the Adara, and there is a great gulf, called Nekropyla, where it is utterly impossible for a man to pass through” (Moravcsik – Jenkins 1967, pp. 186–187). Although Moravcsik and Jenkins, and Romašov (1992–94, p. 239), too, identify the Gulf of Necropyla with the Gulf of Karkini, it seems more likely that we are talking about the common gulf of the Bug–Dnieper estuaries. Otherwise the remark about it being utterly impossible to pass through would not make sense.²⁷ Not to mention the fact that no significant river flows into the Gulf of Karkini or Karkiniti (only the Champirlik – previously known as Chetirlak – from the South-East).

Theophanes, as well as his source, must assuredly speak of a Kuphis which flows West into the Black Sea, and which cannot be identical with the Kuban.

4. *The itinerary in Constantine Porphyrogenitus*

Pinder and Parthey (1860) already noted that the river name Kuphis crops up in *De Administrando Imperio* (DAI). Marquart (1903, p. 505), too, mentions it, but consid-

²⁴ Prior to this passage Theophanes claims that the Tanais, which flows into the great Atil river in the Caucasus, takes its source in the Iberian straight. This evidently corrupt passage does not relate to the passages that follow. For its possible source cf. Lauterbach (1967, p. 565). As Romašov (1992–94, p. 238) pointed out, Westberg was the first to call attention to this passage in Theophanes; subsequently, however, it escaped the attention of research.

²⁵ ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς μίξεως τοῦ Τάναϊ καὶ τοῦ Ἄτελ, (ἀνωθεν τῆς προλεχθεῖσης Μαιώτιδος λίμνης σχιζομένου τοῦ Ἄτελ), ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Κοῦφισ ποταμός, καὶ ἀποδίδει εἰς τὸ τέλος τῆς Ποντικῆς θαλάσσης πλησίον τῶν Νεκροπήλων εἰς τὸ ἄκρωμα τὸ λεγόμενον Κριοῦ Πρόσωπον. Ed. Lauterbach (1967, p. 543). Its Latin translation in Anastasius is: “... a mixtura vero Tanahidis et Atel, quae fit supra iam dictas Maeotides paludes, dum scinditur Atal, venit is, qui dicitur Cuchthis [recte: Cuphis], fluvius in Maeotides paludes et reddit in terminum Pontici maris iuxta Necropela in acroma, quod dicitur Arietis Facies” (Glossar, p. 256).

²⁶ Κριου μέτωπον in Ptolemaios see E. Diehl in RE Suppl. VII (1940) c. 335.

²⁷ Lauterbach (1967, p. 569) suggests the Gulf of Odessa.

ers it to be the name of another river.²⁸ In Chapter 42 of the DAI the author describes the road from the Danube to Sharkhel on the Don, in the course of which he enumerates all the little rivers that have to be crossed between the Dniester and the Dnieper. These rivers include, among the Singul, the Hybyl and the Almatai, the Kuphis. The text (Moravcsik – Jenkins 1967, p. 184) says *Kouphis ho Bogou*, which Moravcsik altered to *Kouphis kai ho Bogou*. A similar emendation had been suggested by Marquart (1903, p. 505) and Kiessling (RE 9 (1914), c. 220). It is not easy to decide whether this addition is justified. However, whether the Kuphis is identical with the Bug (which I think is more likely)²⁹ or not, what the text does say for certain is that the Kuphis flowed between the Dniester and the Dnieper. The Kuban is, therefore, out of the question. Nevertheless, the Kuphis localised by Theophanes (died 818) is identical with the Kuphis registered by Porphyrogenitus.

It is worth briefly touching upon the question of the river name Kuphis. The name first appeared in Menander Protector in the form of Κωφην (acc.: Κωφηνά) where the author recounted the diplomatic mission led by Zemarchos to the Turks. Evidently this occurrence of the name denotes the Kuban. However, the name itself had been fashioned after an identical variant of the name of the river Kabul.³⁰ Similarly named rivers and bays – for example *Kophos*, *Kuphos*, etc. – were known in Frygia, the Halkidi peninsula, etc.; see relevant entries in the RE. The name Kuphis was discussed in detail by Schramm (1973) who distinguished between the Kuphis of the South Bug and that of the Kuban, and identified Theophanes' Kuphis with the South Bug and Geographus Ravennas' Kuphis with the Kuban. Others, too, discussed the issue of the two Kuphises, most recently Romašov (1992–94, p. 239). The question that concerns us, however, is not the number of rivers the name denoted in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, but rather, which river it denotes in the examined sources. And we conclude that in the sources concerning Khuvrat's Bulgharia it meant the South Bug.

5. "Black Bulgharia"

This again raises the question of the localisation of the "Black Bulgharia" in the DAI. I do not wish to discuss here the literature of this issue.³¹ There is an odd

²⁸ I do not wish to discuss here the river name Hypanis which features as early as in Herodotus (4, 47, 52), and which has been identified with the Bug and even the Kuban. Moreover, Schramm (1973) etymologically connects the Hypanis with the Kuphis and the Kuban. Marquart (1903, p. 505) had also considered the possibility of two Kuphises.

²⁹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus often used different variants of the same river names in the DAI; for example Trullos – Danastris, or Varuh – Danapris; see Schramm (1973, p. 94).

³⁰ Old Indian Kubha, also in Strabon and Pliny, see RE 11, c. 1361.

³¹ For the earlier literature see Moravcsik – Jenkins (1967 II, p. 62), and Beševliev (1980, p. 154). Lashkin and Zlatarski thought it to have been in the Kuban region, while others (Westberg, Marquart, Vasilev) in the Dnieper and Don area. Moravcsik refuted the idea of the Black Bulgars possibly being identical with the Volga Bulgars. Only assuming a high degree of corruptness of text might one arrive at the Volga Bulgars, since they could not be approached on the Dnieper at

chapter in the DAI, number 12, entitled “Of Black Bulgharia and Chazaria”. It contains just one sentence, claiming, “The so-called Black Bulgharia (*mauré legomené Boulgharia*) can also attack the Chazars (Moravcsik – Jenkins 1967, pp. 64–65). Then Chapter 42 reads thus: “Into this same Maeotic sea run rivers many and great; on its Northern side runs the Dnieper river, from which the Russians come through Black Bulgharia and Chazaria and Syria.” (Moravcsik – Jenkins 1967, pp. 186–187). This means that the “Black Bulgharia” of the DAI is a historico-geographical name, and not a contemporaneous ethnonym; it merely indicates it is *that* place where previously Bulgars ruled. Chapter 12 of the DAI is an earlier text which remained in the DAI unchanged. Moravcsik (1930a, p. 113) claimed the Black Bulgars lived East of the Maeotis, and the name conceals a segment of the Magyars. In view of those said above, this opinion cannot be held.

6. *The Byzantine list of sees*

A list of sees has come down to us from the period between 733 and 746, according to which both the Onoghur and the Hun Bishop were subordinate to the Gothic Metropolitan. Moravcsik refers to this source when localising the Onoghur to near the Kuban. However, the list tells nothing about where the seat of the Onoghur Bishop was. Which suggests he might have been a missionary bishop, perhaps without a seat. As we shall see, Khuvrat’s Bulgharia collapsed under attacks from the Khazars in the 670s, but both among its remnants and newcomers there might have Christians, and surely many people whose conversion was important to both the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Byzantine Archbishops. No evidence supports the idea that the establishment of an Onoghur bishopric might be linked to Khuvrat’s Bulgharia, as Moravcsik suggested (1930a, p. 64); nevertheless, the possibility cannot be excluded. An Armenian source, to be discussed below, also speaks in favour of this conjecture. Later, around 850, Cyril appeared here with missionary ambitions. Nonetheless, the Byzantine list of sees can be ruled out as evidence in support of a Bulgharia on the Kuban.

7. *Geographus Ravennas*

Geographus Ravennas was compiled in the late 7th century,³² but only survived in a late 9th-century Latin translation. According to Moravcsik (1930a, p. 64) this source indicates Onogoria between the lower section of the Don and the Kuban. However, the text runs thus: “*Item iuxta mare Ponticum ponitur patria quae dicitur Onogoria,*

all. Yet one might consider why the Volga Bulgars do not feature in the DAI. Earlier on its Chapter 42 maintains that the Rus catch up with the Romans by sailing down the Dnieper.

³² Geographus Ravennas speaks of the Bulgars living in the Balkans, but notes that they are the people who wandered there from Great Scythia.

quam subtilius Livianus phylosophus vicinam paludis Maeotidae summitatis esse discernit, adserens <incolas> multitudinem piscium ex vicinantium locorum habere, sed ut barbarus mos est, insul[s]e eos perfruere” (Glossar 220, cf. also Moravcsik 1930a, p. 64). This suggests that the *patria Onogoria* was on the Black Sea, and which Livianus claimed to be in the vicinity of the swamps of the Maeotis; however, the text makes no mention whatsoever of it being *East* of the Maeotis.³³ Consequently, we must conclude that neither does the Geographus Ravennas include any evidence of a Bulgharia in the Kuban region.

8. The Armenian geography of Ananias of Shirak

The Armenian geography is an important source, and independent of the previous ones. Marquart already referred to it, and Moravcsik (1930a, p. 72) quotes it in Soukry's 1881 translation. This work has a modern translation, published in 1992 (Hewsen 1992, see Schütz 1998, p. 248). Its author is actually Ananias of Shirak. The date of the part that concerns us³⁴ cannot be doubted, on account of the fact that the text says, “Kubrat's son Asparukh lived on an island in the Danube delta, having fled from the Khazars from the *mountains of the Bulghars*, and driven out the Avars before settling there” (Hewsen 1992, p. 48). This means that the text was written after 668, and definitely before 679–680.³⁵ The question that follows is where the “Bulghar mountains”, from where Asparukh fled, were? In the same work, the description of Sarmatia informs us that “Khubrat's son fled from the ‘Horse’ mountains”. The “Horse mountains” in Ptolemy's work – which served as the ultimate source here – are called Hippikos, which the Armenian author translated as *Jiakann*, that is, “Horse”. Next, the Armenian author mentions *Krak's learn*. This one, “Crow Mountain”, is the equivalent of the Greek Corax (Pliny's Coraxici, Strabon's Korax mountain is in Greece). Some scholars reckoned the Armenian name *krak's* was borrowed from the Middle Persian *kurrag* “colt” and was consequently an equivalent of Hippikos (Yeremyan, see Hewsen 1992, p. 106, p. 109); and identified it with the Caucasus or certain parts of it.³⁶ This unfounded chain of conjectures long misled scholars. Ptolemy believed that six rivers took their source in the Hippkos; but there

³³ Marquart (1903, XXVI) was initially of the same opinion, but later decided the *patria Onoguria* was East of the Sea of Azov (1911, p. 17), a view which was almost unanimously accepted by the research (see Romašov 1992–94, pp. 222–223).

³⁴ As regards the question when the work was completed, and which of its parts were later interpolations, I cannot answer. According to some views the parts describing the Armenian areas reflects an earlier state. It is certain that the parts that concern us, as well as the final redaction of the work fell between 678 and 680. Ananias of Shirak lived between 610 and 685, and it is probable that he included earlier works in his geography. For dating it see Hewsen (1992, pp. 7–15). My pupil Ágnes Paulik is working now on the Armenian text.

³⁵ Lauterbach (1967, p. 577) claims that Asparukh had moved to the Danube Delta in 668.

³⁶ There was a Korax in the Crimea, too, (Ptol. V, 8.7, 9.1), as Diehl pointed out (RE, Suppl. 7 (1940), c. 335.)

are only five in the Armenian source. All of them flowed into the Maeotis.³⁷ However, both Ptolemy and the Armenian source distinguish from these the Vardanes which is, in this case, the name of the Kuban (Armenian *Valdanis*, Greek *Ouardanes*, Hewsens 1992, p. 109) which flows into the Maeotis at Anakopia. To the North live the Turks and the Bulgars. Accordingly the “Bulgar mountains” can only be North of the Kuban, and cannot be identical with the Caucasus range. There is, however, specific information to help identifying the “Bulgar” or “Horse” mountains. The Armenian source tells us that (Hewsens 1992, p. 55) the Volga (Ira; or Rha in Ptolemy) has two sources in the Unknown Land. These have a confluence in the land of the “Horse mountains”, from where the Don branches off and flows into the Maeotis. These “Horse mountains” (or “Horse mountain”) are at the confluence of the Don and the Volga. The Armenian source is in almost perfect agreement with Theophanes’ above quoted description which claims the Kuphis to take its source from the area where the Don and the Volga meet and part again. Which is the “Bulgar mountains” area,³⁸ or in other words, the “Horse mountains” (Artamonov, 1962, p. 172, and Lauterbach 1967, p. 612 unconvincingly came to another conclusion).³⁹

The Armenian geographer believes the Bulgars were usually named after the rivers by which they dwelt. Hence their names are Kup’i Bulgar, Duch’i Bulgar, Olxontor Bulgar, and Ch’dar Bulgar (Hewsens 1992, p. 55). The ethnonym Olxontor should be highlighted, because it is probably an equivalent of *Onoghundur*. The Kup’i, as many have assumed,⁴⁰ is the Kuphis. Other identifications are questionable.⁴¹

Nevertheless the contemporaneous Armenian source claims Khuvrat’s Bulgharia to be by the “Bulgar” or “Horse” mountains, which can hardly be other than

³⁷ The DAI, too, speaks of “the five rivers that flow unto the Maeotis from the North”. Chapter 42 of the DAI lists them: the Tanais, the Harakoul, where stureton was caught, the Bal, the Bourlik and the Hader. Four of the five rivers have clearly Turkic names: Black River (Turkic *qara köl*), Honey (Turkic *bal*), Icy (Turkic *buzlig*) and Dangerous (Turkic *qadîr*).

³⁸ Perhaps it is identical with the Pecheneg mountains in Idrisi (Ed. Jaubert, Paris 1848, p. 437, quoted by Romašov 1999, p. 22).

³⁹ They consider the mountains of the Crimea, but neither the Don, nor the Kuphis flows from there. For further opinions see Romašov (1992–94, p. 242) who identifies the mountain with the so-called Yergen heights between the Elista and Volgograd, and reckons it to be Great Bulgharia’s easternmost point.

⁴⁰ Patkanov already identified the two names (Patkanov 1883, see Romašov 1992–94, p. 224). Many believe this Kup’i to be identical with the Kuban (see Schramm 1973, p. 96); however, in view of the above, this is hardly likely. The Copa or Cupa indicated on mediaeval Italian maps is the Kuban.

⁴¹ Of the rivers Chapter 42 of the DAI claims to flow into the Sea of Azov, the river Ch(a)dar is perhaps identical with the Hader (χαδην, Marquart (1898, p. 89) believes the correct reading of the Duch’i is Kuch’i, and it denotes the Kotzager–Khutrigur. That cannot be accepted, though. This river name resembles another river name, featuring earlier in the Armenian geography, Koch’o (Hewsens 1992, p. 48), which the Armenian author holds to be one of the seven rivers that flow from the Sarmata mountains to the river Pontus. For the Koch’o missing in Ptolemy see Hewsens 1992, p. 92. For further identification of river names see Romašov (1992–94, pp. 224–226).

the mountain at the foot of which Khuvrat's grave was found.⁴² This is the Middle Russian Ridge whose spurs reach the Don–Volga straight. It is not a coincidence that the mountains where the Bulghar ruler is buried were called “Bulghar” mountains.

Ananias of Shirak's work has a long and a short version. The shorter one lacks the “Bulghar mountains”. However, the short version had a great many contemporaneous copies, and one of these manuscripts' (S 1683) description of Sarmatia says, “east of Zalura, that is, the Bulgharia of the Germans” (*yarewlic' kalov Zalura or ē Pullark' Germanoc'woc'*, Hewsen 1992, p. 244). Toumanoff could be right (in a letter to Hewsen, see Hewsen 1992, p. 244) about “Germans” meaning the Goths in this case, that is the Bulgars pertaining to the Gothic Metropolitan. This would confirm the Byzantine list of sees regarding the Onoghur bishopric. However, the date of this information – because it only occurs in a single manuscript – is uncertain. It cannot be later than the late 7th century or the early 8th.

9. *Khuvrat and the Avars, Avar parallels of Khuvrat's grave*

One other consideration, raised earlier, speaks against Khuvrat's Bulgharia in the Kuban region. Nicephorus wrote that, “At the same time Kubratos, Orghanas' cousin, master of the Onoghundur, rose against khagan of the Avar, and persecuting them, drove the men of war of him (the Avar khagan) out of his (Khuvrat's) country” (Szádeczky-Kardoss 1998, p. 213; Glossar BI, pp. 130–131). Accordingly, Khuvrat's Bulgharia was initiated by Khuvrat throwing off the Avar yoke – which cannot have been merely a loose and distant tie, as Szádeczky-Kardoss believes (*ibid.*), because the text clearly speaks of driving out “men of war”, that is, the Avar army. The date the Avars were expelled cannot be established with certainty; however, it is likely it was 627, the event taking the opportunity presented by the Avar empire's defeat under Constantinople and the subsequent weakening of power. Whether the Avar khagan held the Kuban region under occupation around 630 no other sources indicate. However, we must agree with Szádeczky-Kardoss in that this account is genuine. Only if we postulate Khuvrat's Bulgharia to be in the Dnieper region can this contradiction be resolved. For the Avar empire did extend that far.⁴³

The archaeologists analysing the grave at Malaya Pereshchepino have long pointed out that many of its finds are akin to those found in royal Avar graves. The Bócsa and Kunbábony finds have been cited as an example (see Werner 1984, Bálint 1989, p. 100, and L'vova – Maršák 1997, p. 89). This, too, confirms that Khuvrat's Bulgars initially had close ties with the Avars, and that Khuvrat did indeed rise against the Avars. Again, that could only have occurred in the region of the Dnieper.

⁴² Genning and Halikov (1964) identified the “Bulghar mountains” with the Donetsk ridge. Romašov's identifying it with the Yergen mount, and additionally the Stavropol hills, is totally unacceptable, for it rests only on the identification of the Kuphis and the Kuban.

⁴³ This contradiction has caught the attention of many. For a summary of the literature see Romašov (1992–94, pp. 233–234).

10. Sources concerning the disintegration of Khuvrat's empire, and the Khazars

The disintegration of Khuvrat's Bulgharia is related to the formation of the Khazar empire. The formation of the Khazar empire cannot be discussed here in detail. Both Theophanes' and Nicephorus' text recount how, "When this nation [Bulghar] had thus divided and scattered, the tribe of the Chazars, (issuing) from the interior of the country called Bersilia, where they had lived next to the Sarmatians, invaded with complete impunity all the places that are beyond the Euxine Sea. Among others, they subjected Baianos to paying tribute to them" (Nicephorus, see Mango 1990). Theophanes' text runs thus: μέχρι της Ποντικης θαλασσης, "right until the Black Sea".⁴⁴ Anastasius' Latin text says, "... *et dominata est omni perviae terrae usque ad mare Ponticum*" (Glossar, 79).

In agreement with him, the author of Geographus Ravennas notes, "*Item ponitur in locis plantiis longe lateque nimis spatiosissima [patria] que dicitur Chazaria, quos Chazaros super scriptus Jordanis Agaziros vocat, per quam Chazirorum patria plurima transeunt flumina inter cetera fluvius maximus qui dicitur Cuphis*" (Glossar, 82). It may be said with great probability that, here again, the Kuphis is not the Kuban, since the Bulghars were driven to the Danube. It is also clear that the place where Asparukh first settled, the Onglos (Ογκλος),⁴⁵ did not then refer to the area enclosed by the Danube and the Dniester, but directly to the "corner" formed by the Danube delta and the Black Sea.⁴⁶ This event was recounted in khagan Joseph's letter (in the longer version, see Kokovcov 1932, p. 92). His text speaks about the country where khagan Joseph now lives, and where previously the WNNTR people, that is, the Onoghundur, used to dwell. Although these outnumbered them, the Khazars defeated and pursued them to the Danube.

The Byzantine sources give a fairly detailed account of how and when the Crimean peninsula was subjected to Khazar rule. In 695 Justinian II, son of Constantine IV, was exiled to the Crimean peninsula. Soon he went from Kherson to Doros, the capital of the Crimean Goths, where he applied to meet the Khazar khagan.⁴⁷ Although we have no source as to where they met, he is known to have been granted permission to move to Fanagoria which was by then, according to Theophanes (Lau-

⁴⁴ Nicephorus' text says ὑπὲρ Πόντου τον Ἐυξεινον γῆς καὶ θαλάττης' ἐπέρασε (Ed. Mango, 1990). Mango indicates the corruption here in Nicephorus' text, but it does not affect the question what the Khazars occupied, or again, whether the area in question was above or beyond the Black Sea.

⁴⁵ Var. Nicephorus: Ογκλος, Anastasius: Onglon. Onglos is a Slavic word meaning "corner" (*ugol* in modern Russian). The area was called Bujak in Turkic, which also means "corner", and referred to the land between the Danube delta and the Dniester.

⁴⁶ See Anastasius: "*Danaprin et Danastrin transiens et Onglon adiens, boresos interiores Danubio fluvios, inter hunc et illos habitabit tutum et difficilem ad expugnandum locum inde conspiciens*" (Glossar, 247).

⁴⁷ *Iustinianus [II] superior imperator, de exilio, ad gacatum confugit Turchorum c. Andr. Dand. S.a. 704* (Glossar, A III/2, 97). For Kherson's tudun see Glossar, A III/2, 98, pp. 698–704.

terbach 1967, p. 543, p. 555), inhabited by Jews. Dunlop (1954, p. 174) believes that by at least 704 the Khazar tudun was present in Kherson.⁴⁸

Whether the defeat of the Bulghar empire was brought about by the Khazars, triggering the migration, or whether the Khazars broke into the vacuum caused by domestic feuds, and occupied the area⁴⁹ we do not know; it is certain, however, that after the fall of Khuvrat's empire the Khazars extended their influence over the entire steppe North of the Black Sea. Which again would suggest that Bulghars dwelt in the Dnieper area and to the West.

11. The early Bulghars in the West

It seems that the Bulghars appeared by the Danube a lot earlier than it has been suggested.⁵⁰ Many have quoted Michael the Syrian's story about the three brothers who had come from inland Scythia. Michael the Syrian's dates from c. 1199, but his sources include the work of John of Ephesos who died around 586. The renowned text was quoted by Marquart (1903, p. 485), based on Chabot's (1899–1924) publication; and many others followed suite (Altheim 1959–62, pp. 86–99, Lauterbach 1967, and Róna-Tas 1982). This text recounts how these Scyths came in the winter, searching for water, and eventually reached the Don (Tanais) which flows into the Maeotis (Mantios). When they arrived at the Romans' limes, one of them, Bulgarios got 10,000 men, sent an emissary to the emperor Maurikios (582–602) to ask for land where they could settle. The other two brothers, Hazarig and Wugur (about the latter name see Róna-Tas 1982, p. 356) went to Barsilia, which was then the land of the Alani, to where the Romans had built towns, to the one named Kaspia which was also called the gate of the Toraye. These people were originally Christians, but because they were subjugated by a foreign people, they were named Khazar after the eldest brother Khazarig. And they became a very strong people, and extended their power (see Marquart 1903, pp. 484–485). Czeglédy (1958) pointed out how Michael the Syrian had drawn on Persian and Greek sources, not only that of John of Ephesos. Henning (1952, pp. 504–506) believes this text originates from before the disintegration of the Khazar empire, that is, before the 10th century. This westward migration of the Bulghars was an earlier event which, nevertheless, occurred prior to 602, the death of Maurikios. Lauterbach (1967, p. 608) believes around 580. It is very probable that the Bulghars joined the Avars who in 555 passed under the Cauca-

⁴⁸ The Khazar rule in Kherson only lasted until the late 830s, because the Greek *thema* of Kherson was organised in 841 (see Zuckerman 1997b). The organisation of the *thema* is related to Petronas' mission and the date of building the city of Sharkhel. Zuckerman reconstructed the events thus: Petronas was sent to build Sharkhel in August 839, and the *thema* was set up in Kherson following his return in summer 841.

⁴⁹ For different viewpoints see Romašov (1992–94, pp. 246–247). Romašov believes Great Bulgharia disintegrated before the Khazars occupied it.

⁵⁰ See Beševliev (1980), especially pp. 183–190. He claims these early events are legendary.

sus – as pseudo Zacharias' appendix also tells us –⁵¹ and entered with them the Carpathian basin in 568. According to Paulus Diaconus (died 799, see Szádeczky-Kardoss 1998, p. 34) one group of Bulgars joined the Longobardi leaving the Carpathian Basin after 568. This, however, was the early Bulghar migration which was soon followed by the Onoghurs' migration, the outcome of which was the Onoghur-Bulgars' settling in the Dnieper region in the early 7th century. Just where, prior to 551, Jordanes mentions the Bulgars [Getica 37: "*ultra quos (Acatziros) distendunt supra mare Ponticum Bulgarum sedes*"], Lauterbach 1967, p. 585, Glossar, 235].⁵²

12. Pál Engel's hypothesis

In 1997 the Hungarian historian Pál Engel gave a detailed explanation of an earlier hypothesis of his (Engel 1990, 1997, pp. 55–63). Analysing migrations he came to the conclusion that, in some way or another, every significant migration had its consequences in the Balkans and/or Western Europe – areas which abound in good sources. The Onoghur-Bulghar migration ended around 700, and until 895, the Magyar conquest, the Western sources do not record migrations. Engel therefore assumed that, immediately after the Bulgars had left, the Magyars occupied the Onoghur-Bulghar's place, that is, they arrived in the Etlköz around 700. Had they arrived there around 830, they would have had to drive someone West – who, in turn, would surely have been mentioned by the western sources. This hypothesis deserves attention in its own right, contrary to the other hypotheses Engel presents, namely, that the late Avar were in fact the Székely, and the Székely were Magyars, and consequently the late Avar were Magyars, and so the "double conquest"⁵³ did happen after all. In itself, as *ex silentio* arguments in general, it is not especially convincing. But provided it can be supported with other information, it certainly gives food for thought. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitos the region called Etlköz (Ατελκουζου), the homeland of the Hungarians before the conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 895, extended from the Dnieper to the Danube. Then the question must be asked: if the Bulgars wandered partly West and partly North, whose place did the Magyars occupy if they arrived there in, say, 800? Also, it would be very difficult to explain the Magyars' Onoghur name (> Ongre > Ungri > Ungar) unless they took the place of the Onoghur around 700. For – and with this we return to our starting point – they cannot have acquired this name in the Kuban region. Not to mention the fact

⁵¹ Theophilactos Simocattes (582–602) mentions the Onoghur together with the Avar. According to Menandros the Avar fought the Onoghur in 558, see Szádeczky-Kardoss 1998, p. 15, p. 19.

⁵² The authenticity of the sources speaking about an early Bulghar migration have, foremost, been called into question by Burmov's paper published in 1968. For a detailed review of this paper and the debate it provoked see Romašov (1992–94), pp. 213–216. Burmov's views are extremely widespread among Bulgarian researchers, and it is his opinion that Beševliev embraced.

⁵³ According to Gyula László the first Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin was around 670, and the Conquest of 895 was the second. This theory is usually called the "double Conquest", and is not accepted by most Hungarian scholars. László believed that the Onoghur-Bulgars, who joined the Avars around 670, were in fact Hungarians.

that it was the Slavs – whom were never known to have lived in the neighbourhood of the Kuban – who called the Magyars by that name.

Summary and conclusions

We do not question Moravcsik's assumptions regarding the history of the Onoghur-Bulghar prior to the 7th century. However, as regards the whereabouts of Khuvrat's Bulgharia, his viewpoint needs to be reconsidered. It follows from the evidence that an important phase of Bulghar-Turkic history has to be re-written. The Bulghars – or more precisely, an Oghur tribal confederation led by the Bulghars – emerged in Eastern Europe at the same time as the Avars. Their history is closely linked to Avar history. Around 630, capitalising on the defeats and domestic problems of the Avar empire, the Bulghars of the Dnieper, led by Khuvrat, rose against Avar rule, and established the first Turkic empire governed by a Christian monarch. This significant but short-lived empire, which extended to the Bug (or perhaps the Danube) in the West, and the Don in the East, ecclesiastically belonged to the Crimean Gothic Metropolitan. Following Khuvrat's death around 650 the empire survived for a short time, but domestic feuds and Khazar attacks caused it to collapse. One group of Bulghars stayed or gradually moved North,⁵⁴ but was subjugated by Khazar rule. Another group set off West, and established, under Asparukh, the Danube Bulgharia;⁵⁵ yet other groups joined the Avars, or wandered further West. This created a void in power in the area of the Dnieper and the Danube, presenting the Magyars the opportunity to occupy the place of the Onoghur-Bulghars, most of whom were leaving the area. It is very probable, however, that groups of the Bulghars remained settled and joined the Magyars – under Khazar rule.

If this is confirmed by further research, the Magyars' relations with the Bulghar-Turks and the Khazars may become clearer in both space and time.

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⁵⁴ No direct source exists about the relation between the Bulghars, who stayed and gradually moved North-East, and the Magyars, who took their place. The fact that a group of Magyars joined the Bulghars migrating north-east is very telling, however. These were the East Magyars whom later both Ibn Fadlan in 922 and Julian in 1236 met, and of whom we have sources even from after the Tatar invasion. For details see Róna-Tas 1996, p. 184, p. 311, p. 330; and 1999, pp. 219–227, pp. 429–436.

⁵⁵ We do not know the exact date of Asparukh's migration. It is certain that following his victory over the Arabs, the emperor marched against Asparukh, but was defeated in 680. The Danube Bulghar empire owed its stability to this defeat. Lauterbach (1967, pp. 576–577) believes the migration occurred in 668.

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