

# Huns and Bulgars

BÁLINT KERÉNYI\*

University of Szeged, Hungary

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

The primary aim of the article is to present a different approach in the critic of sources concerning the reconstruction of „late Hunnic” and „early Bulgaric” period of steppe history. In the last half century it became a main narrative in research, that the Bulgars, appearing around the 480’s on the Balkan Peninsula, are identical with those Oguric tribes (Saragur, Ogur, Onogur), that – according to Priscus rhetor – arrived to the eastern part of the European steppe circa 463. Also it is assumed by certain authors, that in the years following the battle at Nedao river (455) the Hunnic tribes, overrun by the newcomers, fled behind the Moesian borders of the East-Roman empire and lost all the continuity of their political and ethnic existense. Analyzing however the sources providing information on this period – Jordanes’ *Getica*, the works of Cassiodorus, Ennodius, Malalas, Procopius and others –, we can let ourselves to assume differently. Although in this article I do not deal with the questions related to early Hungarian history, it is clear enough, how important the above mentioned problem is in view of these questions as well.

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### KEYWORDS

late antique and early medieval historiography, steppe history, *Getica*, Goths, Huns, origin of the Bulgars, Onogurs

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\* Corresponding author. E-mail: malevil7@gmail.com

In his article of the year 1975,<sup>1</sup> Károly Czeglédy reconsidered his former view<sup>2</sup> on the arrival of the Hungarian tribes to the East-European steppe in a radical and programmatic way, dating it at the beginning of the 9th century, similarly he changed his opinion on the possibility of connections between the Sabartoi asphaloi/Sabirs and Hungarians. On the first two pages of his article he reviewed and rejected the main results of the Hungarian research (concerning Hungarian origin) prior to WW2 referring mainly on the “denied” identification of Huns and early Bulgars. This article of Czeglédy later became more significant as Gyula Kristó in his well known book<sup>3</sup> – which determines the main narrative of early Hungarian history till today, – used it also considerably. Thanks to these works in Hungarian research of today the theorem of Hunnic political/ethnic continuity after Attila’s death and the role of the Huns in the dispute of the origin and emergence of the Bulgaric tribes is marginal, mostly cited as an already contradicted theory. In the last decades the Bulgars are originated from the Oguric tribes, first mentioned by Priscus,<sup>4</sup> being part of them, arriving to the Pontus region c. 463.<sup>5</sup>

In this article I don’t deal with the questions of early Hungarian history (the date of the arriving to the Pontic steppe, the connections between Hungarian, Bulgar and Ogur tribes, the authentic elements of the medieval Hungarian tradition, the Khazar-Kabar-Hungarian relations etc), only with the statement of Károly Czeglédy, saying: “... several times all the important datums concerning the identity of Huns and Bulgars were already examined – last time V. Beševliev did that four years ago –, still on the basis of these sources the Hun-Bulgar identification is not possible. The same is to say about different, amended variants of this theory: The sons of Attila went back to the area of the lower Danube indeed, but there they didn’t create any new political structure. Their leftover nation soon scattered and after repeated defeats became vassal of the Byzantines. Some of their fragments could perhaps unite with the newcomer Oguric tribes, but evidences of a newly emerging Hun-Bulgar tribal confederation at this moment we do not have.”<sup>6</sup> (Transl. B. K.)

<sup>1</sup>CZEGLEDY, K.: Árpád és Kurszán (az Árpád-ház megalapításához) [Árpád and Kurszán. About the Foundation of the Árpád-Dynasty]. In *Magyar őstörténeti tanulmányok*. Ed. Ö. SCHÜTZ. [Budapest Oriental Reprints, Ser. A 3]. Budapest 1985, 113–128.

<sup>2</sup>“... West from the Khazars, on the eastern shores of the sea Azov and on the lower parts of the river Don existed the empire of the Onogur-Bulgars in the 7th century, which the Hungarians were part of. The Onogur empire broke up under the strikes of the Khazars. From it seceded the branch of the danubian Bulgars and probably the volga Bulgars and the Bashkir Hungarians as well...” (Trans. B. K.). CZEGLEDY, K.: A magyarság Dél-Oroszországban [Hungarians in South-Russia]. In *A magyarság őstörténete*. Ed. L. LIGETI. Budapest 1943, 100–123.

<sup>3</sup>KRISTÓ, GY.: *Levedi törzsszövetségétől Szent István államáig* [From the Tribal Federation of Levedi till the Kingdom of Saint Stephen]. Budapest 1980.

<sup>4</sup>*Hunok és rómaiak. Priskos rhétor összes töredéke* [Huns and Romans. The Fragments of Priskos Rhetor]. Transl. (in Hung.) P. Kató, Gy. Lindner, S. Szilágyi. Máriabesnyő–Gödöllő 2017, 50 (frg. 30.); see Prisci Panitae in *FHG IV* (104).

<sup>5</sup>VÁSÁRY, I.: A régi Belső-Ázsia története [History of the Ancient Inner-Asia]. Budapest 1993, 72; RÓNA-TAS, A.: *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages. An Introduction to Early Hungarian History*. Budapest – New York 1999, 215; ZIMONYI, I.: *Muszlim források a honfoglalás előtti magyarokról. A Gayhani-hagyomány magyar fejezete* [Muslim Sources on the Conquering Hungarians. The Hungarian Chapter of the Gayhani Tradition] [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 22]. Budapest 2005, 181–196.

<sup>6</sup>CZEGLEDY, K.: Árpád és Kurszán (az Árpád-ház megalapításához) [Árpád and Kurszán. On the Foundation of the Árpád-Dynasty]. *Zalai Tükör* 1975/II, 43–58.



Our main source on the history of the Huns after the death of Attila (453) is the book of Jordanes, titled *Getica* (*De origine actibusque Getarum*), which is a compilation of earlier authors, particularly Cassiodorus' and Priscus' lost works.<sup>7</sup> The reconstruction of the fall of the Hunnic empire and the fate of the Huns is based on this source. Jordanes gives us the reason of the eastern Goths' migration and their temporary settling in Pannonia when he writes about the Huns, that after losing the battle of Nedao (c. 554–555) they returned to their Black Sea territories, which territories remained under their control even after their rule in the Carpathian Basin collapsed. The disputed text<sup>8</sup> in the newest Hungarian edition of *Getica* was translated wrongly,<sup>9</sup> although in the first Hungarian edition,<sup>10</sup> or in the Mierow-translation<sup>11</sup> it was already solved reassuringly. The sentence of Jordanes cannot be translated as: “Came to know the Goths, that the Gepids kept the lands of the Huns for themselves and occupied [?] the Huns with all their earlier territories, rather wanted to ask places from the Romans...” [transl. B. K.], since the Goths saw 1. the Gepids keeping the (Carpathian/Dacian) lands of the Huns and 2. the Huns dwelling (again) on their former (Pontic) lands.

Even if it is only one sentence, the importance of translation cannot be neglected, since the different results can lead to very different consequences; let us think on the indication of Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, concerning early Hungarian history, which has some very contradictory translations.<sup>12</sup> As for the cited lines above, that the later translation is correct can be showed even from the inner logic of the text, because earlier Jordanes himself writes, that after the defeat of Ellac at river Nedao the Huns returned to the shores of the Black Sea, where earlier the eastern Goths lived,<sup>13</sup> those, who after the death of Hermanaricus (376) and after the western Goths separated from them, stayed in their same place under Hunnic rule.<sup>14</sup> Jordanes tells us about the Gepids taking Dacian territories and about the Huns returning to Scythia, to give us the *reason* and the *direction* of the migration of the Ostrogoths. From the above

<sup>7</sup>MORAVCSIK, Gy.: *A magyar történet bizánci forrásai* [Byzantine Sources of the Hungarian History]. Budapest 1934, 53–54.

<sup>8</sup>*Gothi vero cernentes Gepidas Hunnorum sedes sibi defendere Hunnorumque populum suis antiquis sedibus occupare, maluerunt a Romano regno terras petere quam cum discrimine suo invadere alienas, accipientesque Pannoniam...* Cf. *Jordanis Romana et Getica*. Rec. TH. MOMMSEN [MGH Auctores Antiquissimi V. 1]. Berolini 1882, L 264. If the *suis antiquis sedibus* is referring to the ancient territories of the Goths, we can presume, knowing the later story of the Ostrogoths, how significant population of Huns could occupy it.

<sup>9</sup>Jordanes: *Getica. A gótok eredete és tettei*. Ed. M. KISS. (in Hung.) Budapest 2004, L 264. “A gótok pedig megtudva, hogy a gepidák a hunok földjeit megtartották maguknak, és a hunok népét egykori földjeivel együtt elfoglalták, inkább a római államtól akartak területeket kérni...”

<sup>10</sup>Jordanes: *A gótok eredete és tettei*. Trans. (in Hung.) J. BOKOR [Középkori Krónikások III]. Ed. F. A. GOMBOS. Brassó 1904.

<sup>11</sup>MIEROW, C. C.: *The Gothic History of Jordanes*. London 1915, L 264. “Now when the Goths saw the Gepidae defending for themselves the territory of the Huns and the people of the Huns dwelling again in their ancient abodes, they preferred to ask for lands from the Roman Empire...”

<sup>12</sup>See *A honfoglalás korának írott forrásai* [The Written Sources of the Conquest Period]. Ed. Gy. KRISTÓ [Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár 7]. Szeged 1995, 184 and UNGVÁRY, J.: *Magyar Őstörténet. Magyar Középkor* [Hungarian Pre-History. Hungarian Middle Age]. Pákozd 2012, 7–14.

<sup>13</sup>*Jordanis Romana et Getica* (n. 8) L 263: *fugantur iuxta litus Pontici maris, ubi prius Gothos sedisse descripsimus*. See also BURNS, T.: *A History of the Ostrogoths*. Bloomington 1984, 47–49.

<sup>14</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) XLVIII 246.



mentioned circumstances results that the Carpathian Huns did not “flee” to the Lower Danube region under East-Roman protection, but returned to the steppe region around the Dnieper river,<sup>15</sup> which territory (the northern shore of the Black Sea) can be seen as their European homeland from the time defeating the Alans and Goths.

Jordanes in the beginning chapters of *Getica*, in the description of Scythia mentions the Huns for the first time and gives a short characterisation of them (V 37).<sup>16</sup> Directly after this chapter, he mentions the three habitations of a nation, – according to the Hungarian translator –, of the Goths, which first was in Scythia, then in Moesia and Dacia, finally they returned back to Scythia (first part of V 38).<sup>17</sup> Before this place of text Jordanes wrote about the Hunnic tribes and after he started to describe the Scythian/Getaen customs and history of the “Goths” (V 39). Although in this era not the Goths, but the Huns were called Scythians systematically, as mounted nomads, and were referred by Scythian habits. The appearance of the Goths in this chapter can be simply the result of Jordanes’ compilation: Jordanes transcribed the Huns’ Scythian/Getan origination and customs of the original text to the main actors of his work, the Goths.<sup>18</sup> Mentioning the three habitations of a nation cannot be neither connected to the Goths, as we do not even have any information, that the Goths moved back to Scythia (from where?), in contrast to the Huns, about whom we know that they really moved back there after Attila’s death.<sup>19</sup> All this is important for us, because from among the Hunnic tribes Jordanes mentioned, the arrival of the Onogurs and Sabirs to the East-European steppe is rather clear for the research, contrary that of the Bulgars, about whose migration to Europe we have no sources. Jordanes describes the territory of the Bulgars from where the Huns arised and started their

<sup>15</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) LII 269.

<sup>16</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) V 37. D. ZIEMANN (*Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht. Die Entstehung Bulgariens im frühen Mittelalter (7.-9. Jahrhundert)*). Köln 2007, 53–55) use this place as an argument, that Huns and Bulgars cannot be the same people, because Jordanes mentions the names Bulgar and Hun separately. However Jordanes talks about the two branches of the Huns, the Altziagirs and Sabirs. Later he mentions the Hunugurs as well. On the basis of this description, the Huns had different tribal names. Also we cannot expect, that authors of this era could make any strict distinction between tribal relations and names, and we also know, that the name Hun was used on the base of typology and archaisation as well.

<sup>17</sup>“A hunugurusk pedig azért ismeretesek, mivel hermelinprémmeel kereskednek. Ezekről annyi bátor férfi rettegett, ... akikről (ti. a gótokról) azt olvastuk, hogy az első lakóhelyük Scythiában volt a meotisi mocsarak mentén, a második Mysiában, Thraciában, Daciában, harmadszorra ismét a Pontus fölött, Scythiában laktak. ...” *Getica* (n. 9) V 37–38. – *Hunuguri autem hinc sunt noti, quia ab ipsis pellium murianum venit commercium: quos tantorum virorum formidavit audacia. quorum mansione prima in Scythia solo iuxta paludem Meotidem... Iordanis Romana et Getica* (n. 8) V 38 and later V 39: *Ut ergo ad nostrum propositum redeamus, in prima sede Scythiae iuxta Meotidem commanentes praefati...*

<sup>18</sup>As far as I know there is no such an antique tradition which tells about the three habitations of the Scythians or the Getaes. If it cannot be connected to the Goths neither, it seems probable, that it comes from a description about the Huns/Bulgars. Also it should be studied if the story of being captive in Britannia and getting free for the price of a horse has any earlier form, or if not, can it be an oral tradition of the Goths or the Huns. An interesting summary of these questions: <https://www.helikon.ro/bejegyzesek/a-szabadsagat-loval-megvasarolo-nep-jordanes-geticajaban-gotok-vagy-hunugurok> (2022 09. 14.) [The People Freed for the Price of a Horse in Jordanes’ *Getica*: Goths or Hunugurs].

<sup>19</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) L 263 and 269. The Huns returned in the parts of Scythia were the “Danabri” river flows. Also Jordanes mentions Ernac’s territories being “a távolabbi Skythia minorban” (transl. B. K.) – *in the ulterior Scythia minor* (cf. *Getica* [n. 9] L 266), which in the antique tradition originally meant the territories north of the Black Sea, not the today Dobruđa region (see Strab. *Geogr.* VII 4. 5). In Mommsen’s edition (*Iordanis Romana et Getica* [n. 8] L 266): *in extrema minoris Skythiae sedes delegit.*



campaigns towards west. Beyond this Jordanes gives such a description on the Bulgars (*quos notissimos peccatorum nostrorum mala fecerunt*),<sup>20</sup> which had to be known all over in Byzantium and in Italy and which connects Bulgars directly to the Huns.

Before we review the other sources about the Bulgars we have to emphasise, that the name “Bulgar” was used simultaneously with the name “Hun” from its appearance (c. 480) in the sources and the territory of the nation (north of the Danube, on the shore of the Black Sea) was the same of the territory of the Huns, who “still” appeared even in 469<sup>21</sup> and 474,<sup>22</sup> likewise the politics of the Bulgars against the Goths and Eastern-Romans was continuous. Also has to be emphasised that the Oguric tribes arriving to Europe settled around the rivers Don and Volga, and neither Priscus rethor mentioned Bulgars among them, neither appeared Ogurs on the Balkan until the middle of the 6th century according to Byzantine sources. Latin sources about the Bulgars never mention Oguric tribal names. The identification of Bulgars and Ogurs is based on the chronological proximity of their appearance,<sup>23</sup> on the Ir-Turkic feature of their names<sup>24</sup> and that they created a common tribal confederation from the 7th century.<sup>25</sup>

It seems important to shortly review the first sources about the Oguric tribes to show clearly the above mentioned circumstance, so that, the Ogurs settled in the eastern part of the Pontic steppe around 463 and didn't reach the Balkan until the middle of the 6th century. Priscus writes about the Onogur, Ogur and Saragur people arriving to the European steppe c. 463. After this we read that the Saragurs around 466–467 defeated the Akatirs, who were under Hunnic rule before. From one of Priscus' fragments we know that Theodosius II (408–450) tried to bribe the Akatir tribes against the Huns, but one of their leader, Kuridac let Attila know about the scheme, who in around 445 sent his oldest son, Ellac to take control of the rebelling tribes.<sup>26</sup> In the

<sup>20</sup>“... whom our evil sins made famous” or “...those notorious for the evils of our sins”. According to the new Hungarian translator the author here referred to the beginning of the fights between East-Romans and Bulgars, although it seems dubious how this could be well known in his era (referring to this in such a short way) and secondly, whom “our sins” refers to. The expression *peccatum* in the text let us think on Christian terminology instead, in which case this is a kind of *flagellum Dei* allusion. That is to say, the Bulgars are “those Huns”, who came to punish “our sins”, by the will of God.

<sup>21</sup>Priscus: *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*. Vol. IV. Ed. K. MÜLLER. Paris 1851, 108 (38, 39).

<sup>22</sup>*The Ecclesiastical History of Euagrius in six Books*. Transl. E. WALFORD. London 1846, 120 (III. 2).

<sup>23</sup>Concerning the chronological proximity, in the research it has been already suggested that the movement of the Oguric tribes and the appearance of their names in the sources can be connected, as a result, to the disintegration of the Hunnic empire. See MORAVCSIK, GY.: *Az onogurok történetéhez* [On the History of the Onogurs]. Budapest 1930, 4–18, 89–109.

<sup>24</sup>On the suggestion that the language of the Huns was Ir-Turkic, see PRITSAK, O.: *The Hunnic Language of the Attila Clan* [Harvard Ukrainian Studies Vol. VI/4]. Cambridge, Mass. 1982, 428–476. The tribal names *Bittugur*, *Altziagir*, *Ultzinguri*(?) found among Hunnic tribal names seem to be identical to other Oguric names (Onogur, Saragur, Kutrigur). See GOLDEN, P. B.: *An Introduction to the History of Turkic Peoples*. Wiesbaden 1992, 24, on the language of the Bulgars using: “Hunno-bulgarian group”.

<sup>25</sup>There is no space here to discuss the early, Middle-Asian relations of Huns and Ogurs, although it worths to mention, that the motive of chasing a stag to find a homeland first appears with the Huns, than with the Kutrigurs and Utigurs (Procopius, *History of the Wars*. Transl. by H. B. DEWING. London 1962, VIII 85–97 (VIII 4. 7–5. 30), and finally with the Hungarians. On the basis of geographical and chronological (and linguistic) proximity this cannot be explained as a “widespread, unidentifiable” nomadic tradition appearing in connection with these tribes by chance, rather as a tradition of common origin.

<sup>26</sup>SINOR, D. (ed.): *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press 1990, 190–191; *Hunok és rómaiak* (n. 4) frg. 8 (22–23).



research, the name Akatir was connected to the Scythian people of the antiquity, Agathyrus<sup>27</sup> and later to the Khazars (aq-Khazar).<sup>28</sup> Most accepted view nowadays is, that they were tribes of the forest zone and were called by Turkic speaking people as Aqac-eri, “forest people”. Anyway Jordanes, using earlier sources writes about them as one of the most warlike people of the steppe, who have many flocks and hunts, which description is clearly against the theory, that they used to be forest people.

After defeating and absorbing their western neighbour on the Pontic steppe, the Saragurs turned to the south in alliance with Byzantium, crossed the Caucasus and raided Sasanid-held territories.<sup>29</sup> Their name appears once more in a list of steppe nations as a supplement of the work of Zacharias rhetor’s Ecclesial History (555), which goes back to older Greek source(s). The name Saragur can be found among other steppe people like Onogur, Ogur, Sabir, Bulgar, Kutrigur, Avar, Khazar/Akatzir and others.<sup>30</sup> About the Onogurs we know, as Jordanes tells, that they were famous for fur trade, which partly locates them close to the Volga region and the Crimea,<sup>31</sup> as in later sources their original habitat, Patria Onogoria, is located around the Sea of Azov.<sup>32</sup> Once, before the middle of the 6th century the Onogurs lead a raid in the Western-Caucasus against the people of Colchis/Lazika, but were defeated. The place where the battle took place was named by local people as Onogouris.<sup>33</sup> Our sources about the Onogurs, although don’t show much of their activities, show us the location of their habitat clearly. They were still on the north-eastern shores of the Black Sea when the Avars and Turks arrived to the European steppe and also an 8th century Byzantine list of churches mentions their name around the Sea Azov.<sup>34</sup> The Avars, arriving to the Pontic steppe defeated both the Onogurs and Sabirs.<sup>35</sup> The last Oguric tribal people Priscus mentioned, the Ogurs, don’t play a role in later times as a specific political entity, their name appears rather as an ethnic name. We find it in the list of steppe people before 555 and later as vassals of the Turks around the river Volga, who conquered the eastern part of the Pontic steppe in 567. Simokattes use the name Ogor, as a name of people with common origin, living around the Volga, whose two leaders were the Avar and Hun (Uarchun-Várkony).<sup>36</sup> Both the Onogurs and Ogurs at the end of the 6th century were under Turkic rule.

<sup>27</sup>ZEUSS, K.: *Die Deutschen und die Nachbarstämme*. München 1837, 714.

<sup>28</sup>See GOLDEN, P. B.: *Khazar Studies*. Budapest 1980, 51–55.

<sup>29</sup>MORAVCSIK (n. 23) 10.

<sup>30</sup>CZEGLEDY K.: Pseudo-Zacharias Rhethor on the Nomads. In LIGETI, L. (ed.): *Studia Turcica*. Budapest 1971, 133–148; KMOŠKÓ M.: *Szír írók a steppe népeiről* [Syrian writers on the People of the Steppe] [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 20]. Budapest 2004, 99.

<sup>31</sup>However this note of Jordanes can be seen also as a sign of a more archaic tradition of the Onogurs, since they arrived from Western-Siberia, where this tradition could evolve as well.

<sup>32</sup>SZÁNTÓ, R.: Ravennai Anonymus *Cosmographiája* és a korai magyar történet [The Cosmography of the Unknown Ravennese and Early Hungarian History]. *Acta Historica (Szeged)* 145 (2020) 101–125; PINDER, M. E. – PARTHEY, G.: *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia et Guidonis Geographica*. Berlin 1860, IV. I–II (168–171).

<sup>33</sup>MORAVCSIK (n. 23) 12–13.

<sup>34</sup>MORAVCSIK (n. 23) 14–15.

<sup>35</sup>SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS, S.: *Az avar történelem forrásai 557-től 806-ig* [The Sources of the History of Avars from 557 to 806] [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 12]. Budapest 1998, 19–21.

<sup>36</sup>Theophylaktos Szimokattés: *Világtörténelem* [Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiai*]. Transl. (in Hung.) T. OLAJOS [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 26]. Budapest 2012, 245–246 (VII 13–14).



Two more Oguric tribes we have to mention are the Kutrigurs and Utigurs, whom our sources mention around the middle of the 6th century, locating them on the two sides of the river Don. According to their legend of origin, which Procopius saved for us, the two people were the descendants of two brothers (Utigur and Kutrigur) who were the sons of a Hunnic king. They lived on the eastern shores of the Maeotis until a wondrous stag lead them through to conquer the Goths living on the west. After this the Utigurs returned back to the homeland while the Kutrigurs settled west of the river Don.<sup>37</sup> This tale is thought to be a variant of the legend of the Huns in Priscus' work which was held by Jordanes in *Getica*,<sup>38</sup> however the symbols of the two sons and the king, or the movement of the tribes (one is settling in the new home while the other returns) seems to be original and in some aspects are closer to the legend of the Hungarians. We do not know when they arrived to the Pontic steppe,<sup>39</sup> Priscus rhetor doesn't mention their names, but it can be possible that they arrived with the other Oguric tribes in 463. In this case they seceded from one of the kindred tribes (maybe from the Saragurs?) in the first half of the 6th century. On the other hand, if they were here earlier, we have to suggest, that first they were part of the Hunnic federation,<sup>40</sup> and later of the Bulgars.<sup>41</sup> In 551 the Kutrigurs led by Chinalon raided the Balkan territories of Byzantium in alliance with the Gepids. Emperor Justinian (527–565) could bribe the Utigurs to attack the undefended homeland of the Kutrigurs.<sup>42</sup> In 558 the Kutrigurs, maybe under the pressure of the arriving Avars, attacked Byzantium again. The sources mention that the inner war of Kutrigurs and Utigurs ended in the destruction of these tribes, which cannot be true. In Menandros' fragments the leader of the Utigurs (Sandilch) refuses to destroy the Kutrigurs because, as he says, they are of same origin, also in language and customs, even they are under different leaders, but he would take their horses not to be able to raid Roman lands again.<sup>43</sup> The Avars settling in Pannonia took

<sup>37</sup>MORAVCSIK (n. 7) 61–62; GOLDEN (n. 28) 30–34; Procopius, *History of the Wars* VIII 5. 2–24. (“... this was at a time when the Vandals had already migrated from there and established themselves in Libya while the Visigoths had taken up their abode in Spain. ... So they [Kutrigurs and Utigurs] suddenly fell upon the Goths who inhabited these plains and slew many of them and turned the rest to flight. And as many as succeeded in escaping them migrated thence with their children and wives, leaving their ancestral abodes, and by ferrying across the Ister River they came into the land of the Romans ... they were actually waging war against the Romans for no good reason, until they went off to Italy under the leadership of Theodoric.” Agathias, following Procopius, also calls them Huns and tell the story of the deer. Cf. Agathias: *The Histories*. Transl. by J. D. FREND. Berlin – New York 1975, 146 (V 11).

<sup>38</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) XXIV 123–125.

<sup>39</sup>In Procopius' story the Kutrigur/Utigur attack was the reason of the Ostrogoths' migration and the settlement of the Crimean/Tetraxitae Goths (“Now as to the manner in which the Tetraxitae settled there and whence they migrated, I shall now proceed to tell.”) after the fall of the Hunnic empire (?), but Procopius also writes that before they attacked the Goths they lived around the Maeotis long time ago.

<sup>40</sup>The Kutrigurs on the west, the Utigurs on the east.

<sup>41</sup>Procopius places their habitat, after they crossed the Don, on the western side of the Pontic sea, however the name Bulgar remains in use while the name Kutrigur fades from the sources. Procopius doesn't mention Bulgars at all. We see the name Kutrigur again in connection with Kovrat's Magna Bulgar empire.

<sup>42</sup>Procopius, *History of the wars* VIII 18. 12–24.

<sup>43</sup>*Menandrosz Protector töredékei* [Fragments of Menander Protector]. Transl. (in Hung.) B. FEHÉR. Budapest 2019, frg. 2. (*Exc. de Leg. Rom* 1) 11–14; BLOCKLEY, R. C.: *The History of Menander the Guardsman*. Liverpool 1985, 43–44.





Kutrigur fragments with them,<sup>44</sup> while the Utigurs became vassals of the Turkic khagan. We see them in the Turkic army in 576.<sup>45</sup>

Gyula Németh separated Huns and Ogurs on the basis of their language: he saw Huns as saz-Turkic speakers while the Ogurs as lir-Turkic speakers, although he realised that the sources show continuity between Huns and Bulgars.<sup>46</sup> To resolve the contradiction he used the etymology of Bulgar, saying it means “to mix, to unite”, which historically would mean that the newcomer Ogurs absorbed the Huns and created a common tribal federation, which had an Oguric name: Bulgar. However, to separate strictly these people on linguistic base is quite uncertain,<sup>47</sup> as we know, that Huns had tribes with lir-Turkic name (e. g. Bittugur). On the basis of the sources, the name Bulgar cannot be derived from the appearance of the Ogurs, which means, it must be a Hunnic name, showing, that Huns were (at least in part) lir-Turkic speaker.<sup>48</sup> I also have to mention, that before arriving to Europe around 370, Huns and Ogurs lived in the same area (Western-Siberia and today northern Kazakhstan), and Ogurs were part of the Hunnic federation.<sup>49</sup> When I talk about the different origin of Hun-Bulgars and Ogurs, I talk about the appearance of certain tribal names in Europe, not about their earlier history in Middle-Asia.

Connecting Jordanes’ description of the Bulgars (“whom the evils of our sins made famous”) and the “three dwelling places of a nation” motive to the Huns is strengthened by the characterization of the Italian Ennodius in the *Panegyricus* written to king Theodoric in 507.<sup>50</sup> The gothic armies of Theodoric in 484 and also in 504 fought against the Bulgars on the Balkan near Sirmium. ... *haec est natio, cuius ante te fuit omne quod voluit, in qua titulos obtinuit qui emit adversariorum sanguine dignitatem, apud quam campus est vulgator natalium – nam cuius plus rubuerunt tela luctamine, ille putatus est sine ambage sublimior –, quam ante dimicationem tuam non contigit agnovisse resistentem, quae prolixis temporibus solo bella consummavit excursu.*

<sup>44</sup>SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS (n. 35) 20.

<sup>45</sup>GOLDEN, P. B.: Nomads of the Western Eurasian steppes: Oygurs, Onoyurs and Khazars. In ROEMER, H. ET AL. (eds): *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta III*. Berlin 2001, 282–302.

<sup>46</sup>NÉMETH, GY.: *A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása* [The Formation of the Conquering Hungarians]. Budapest 1930, 97–98.

<sup>47</sup>The question of the Huns’ language is still not solved, and nomadic federations were always, more or less, mixed in race and language. In this sense the etimologies of personal names and titles, as they are most dependent of actual culture, are not fully convenient to show the language of the population.

<sup>48</sup>There are some ideas, that Bulgars could have an Iranian language (ZIEMANN [n. 16] 33.) This can be refused on the basis of what we know about the language of the Volga Bulgars, who came from the same territory/tribal federation (Magna Bulgaria) as the Danubian Bulgars. The descendants of the Volga Bulgars are held to be the Chuvash people, who speak a lir-Turkic language. That’s why in Hungarian research the Turkic “loanwords” can be called Bulgar-Turkic or Chuvash-type. Also the languages of Finnougric people in the area where once the Volga Bulgar state existed have many lir-Turkic loanwords from the period of the 9th century. ZIMONYI, I.: *The Origins of the Volga Bulgars* [Studia Uralo-Altica 32]. Szeged 1990, 84–88.

<sup>49</sup>CZEGLÉDY, K.: *Nomád népek vándorlása Napkelettől Napnyugatig* [Wandering of Nomads from East to West]. Budapest 1969, 17–18, 40–41, 47–52, 92–98.

<sup>50</sup>Enn. *Paneg.* V (19); cf. [http://genianet.com/content/ennodius/ennodius\\_latin.html](http://genianet.com/content/ennodius/ennodius_latin.html) (transl [in Hung.] L. NÉMETH); *MGH VII 1885. CCLXIII (203–214)*. Ennodius also mentions, that Theodoric let the captured captain of the Bulgars alive: ... *qui si sufficiens leto vulnus excepsisset, personam viceras; quod in luce substitit, submitis originem*. The expression of *submitis originem* shows also, that Bulgars had a special kind of origin in the eyes of the contemporaries, so to say, they were of Hunnic origin.





Ennodius also wrote about the Bulgars as well known people who *earlier possessed everything*, who earlier *didn't meet any resistance*, who won their battles *for a long time only by marching their armies*. This characterisation cannot refer to the Oguric tribes arriving to the Don river around 463, however fits perfectly to the Huns, about whom the contemporaries could think these, when they remembered the campaigns of the Huns against the Romans. The same Italian Cassiodorus in a letter sent to the senate in the name of king Athalaric, in which he commends a certain military leader Tuluin to make him acquire the title of a patrician, writes as follows: ... *egit de Hunnis inter alios triumphum et emeritam laudem primis congressibus auspicatus neci dedit Bulgares toto orbe terribiles*.<sup>51</sup> Cassiodorus use the names Huns and Bulgars as synonymes and call the Bulgars “dreadful in the whole world”, although this specification can be true only for the Huns. This two texts above and Procopius’ method of using names – the author at certain happenings call the nation as Hun, while separate authors call the same nation at the same happening as Bulgar – was the reason why the research from the very beginning<sup>52</sup> until today<sup>53</sup> sees the identification of Huns and Bulgars as a valid view.

Later source, but refer to an earlier period, is the Langobard story of Paulus Diaconus,<sup>54</sup> in which the Bulgars appear as the enemies of the Langobards in the Carpathian Basin, or north of it, dated at the end of the 4th century, at the beginning of the 5th.<sup>55</sup> To mean Huns under the name Bulgar in this text as well is reasonable because the first two rulers of the Langobards, as the Langobard tradition says, Agelmund and Lamissio at this time and in these regions could fight only against the Huns, which view is strengthened by the remark of Paulus Diaconus, according to whom the Langobards also met the Amazons. The Amazons belonged to the Scythian tribes, they are part of the ancient Scythian tradition which at this time was used by scholars to describe the nomadic people, particularly the Huns in this era. This story of Paulus Diaconus is cited by Veselin Beševliev – whom Károly Czeglédy mentions as well –, when he writes about “Pannonian Bulgars” in the Carpathian Basin at the beginning of the 5th century.<sup>56</sup> But these “Pannonian Bulgars”, who, as Beševliev believes, fought with Goths on the Balkan and in Pannonia, were never mentioned by contemporary authors, and the only nomadic nation lead armies against the Goths in Pannonia after Attila’s death was the Hun led by Dengizic, as Jordanes writes, defending the Sadagis people.<sup>57</sup> To prove the existence of a “Pannonian Bulgar” population in Pannonia in the Hunnic empire this text is far not enough and it is still more reasonable to think, that Paulus Diaconus wrote about Langobard-Hun fights, using the Bulgar term of his age, as it was commonly used as we saw before, to sign the Huns.

<sup>51</sup>Cassiodorus Senator, *Variae*. Rec. TH. MOMMSEN [MGH Auctores antiquissimi XII]. Berolini 1894, 240.

<sup>52</sup>ZEUSS (n. 27) 710–712.; NÉMETH (n. 46) 127–129; GOMBOCZ, Z.: A bolgár-kérdés és a magyar húnmonda [The Bulgar-Question and the Hungarian Hun-Tradition]. *Magyar Nyelv* 17.1–3 (1921) 15–26. Gombocz citates among others Wilhelm Tomaschek’s “Bulgaroi” and Max Kiessling’s “Hunni” articles from *PWRE*; ZICHY, I.: *A magyarság őstörténete és műveltsége a honfoglalásig* [The Pre-History and Culture of the Hungarians until the Conquest]. Budapest 1923, 41.

<sup>53</sup>KIM, H. J.: *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*. Cambridge, Mass. 2013, 137–155.

<sup>54</sup>Paulus Diakonus: *A longobardok története* [Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*]. Transl. (in Hung.) F. A. GOMBOS. Brassó 1901, I 16–17.

<sup>55</sup>SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS, S.: *A bolgár történelem forrásai Asparuch előtt* [The Sources of Bulgaric History before Asparuch]. Manuscript. Szeged 1979–1980, II 7.

<sup>56</sup>BEŠEVLIEV, V.: *Die Protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte*. Amsterdam 1981, 67–74, 75–90.

<sup>57</sup>*Getica* (n. 9) LIII 272.



Anyway, it is meaningful that in Beševliev's view the Bulgars were part of the Hunnic empire, who, before the Huns appeared in Europe, lived on the northern steppe side of the Caucasus mountains. This theory is based on two later sources. In a Latin chronological compilation (*Liber Generationes*), originally dated to the year 354, there is a mention concerning the origin of the Bulgars,<sup>58</sup> and in the compiled geographical description of (pseudo) Movses Korenac'i, the father of Armenian historiography, dated from the 7th to the 10th centuries, occur the tribes of the Bulgars around the river Kuban (kup'i, duc'i, olxontor, c'dar).<sup>59</sup> Identifying the name olxontor with the tribal name Onogur/Onogundur, we may think on the Onogur-Bulgar federation, although as we mentioned above, the federation itself and the dual name, appears only from the 7th century. Hence all three sources which imply an early appearance of the name Bulgar, before the years of the 480's – and could be seen as arguments, that Huns and Bulgars are different people –, are all quite late and compiled works,<sup>60</sup> which weakens their reliability in comparison with all those remarks we showed above.

After the fights of the 480's on the Balkan, the Bulgars continuously lead military campaigns against the Thracian territories of the East-Romans from the end of the 5th century, as we learn from Marcellinus Comes.<sup>61</sup> Writing in Greek, it is Malalas who reports about the presence of Bulgars in the revolt of Vitalianus in the years 514/5.<sup>62</sup> At one place the author mentions Huns and Bulgars fighting in Vitalianus' army, at another Huns, Goths and Scythians. To mention here Huns and Goths together, compared to Priscus' description of Dengizic's lost campaign in 469, is meaningful enough, since many Goths were part of Dengizic's Hun army.<sup>63</sup> We mentioned before the report of Euagrius, in which is written that emperor Zeno, at the beginning of his reign (474/5) had to face the campaigns of the Huns besides different rebellions broke out.<sup>64</sup> Relying on these information we can say, that after the battle of Nedao a part of the Ostrogoths joined to, or better to say, did not even separate from the Huns returning back to the steppe region from the Carpathian Basin, who even after the death of Dengizic (469) lead campaigns against the East-Romans (474). Only these Huns and Goths can be mentioned by Malalas at the year of the Vitalianus uprising (514/5), naming Huns, Goths and Bulgars as well. The western Latin sources meant Huns under the name Bulgar, they used the names as synonyms. These authors didn't mention the names of the Oguric (Onogur, Ogur, Saragur) tribes on the Balkan around the fights of Goths, Bulgars and East-Romans, not even Marcellinus Comes who lived and wrote in Constantinople. Neither mention these Oguric names the Greek sources on the Balkan until the middle of the 6th century. In the sources the reports about Huns and

<sup>58</sup>"Ziezi, akitől a Bolgárok (Vulgares) származnak" ("Ziezi, whom the Bulgars originate from") SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS (n. 55) II 6.

<sup>59</sup>PAULIK, Á.: "A világ bemutatása". Egy 7. századi örmény Földrajz a steppe népeiről ["Presentation of the World". An Armenian Geography from the 7th Century on the People of the Steppe]. In RÓNA-TAS, A. (ed.): *Források a korai magyar történelem ismeretéhez* [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 16]. Budapest 2001 26–36, 45.

<sup>60</sup>GOLDEN (n. 24) 103–104: "If we ignore the anachronistic notice in the History of Movses Xorenac'i noted above and an obscure reference, s.a. 354, to the *Vulgares* in a listing of peoples of the East found in a 5th century manuscript, the first clear reference to the Bulgars is dated to 480 when they served as allies of the Byzantine Emperor Zeno (474–491) against the Ostrogoths." See also ZIEMANN (n. 16) 60–66.

<sup>61</sup>*Chronica Minora: Saec. IV, V, VI, VII*. Ed. TH. MOMMSEN. Vol. II [MGH *Auctores Antiquissimi* IX]. Berolini 1894, 37–108.

<sup>62</sup>*The Chronicle of John Malalas*. A translation by E. JEFFREY, M. JEFFREY and R. SCOTT. Melbourne 1986, 225–227.

<sup>63</sup>Priscus, frg. 38, 39 (n. 21).

<sup>64</sup>*The Ecclesiastical History of Euagrius* (n. 22) 120 (III 2).



Bulgars chronologically reach together and from the end of the 5th century the sources start to use these names parallel. There is no sign that the Huns were under East-Roman rule as *foederatii*, or were overrun by Oguric tribes.<sup>65</sup>

The full identification of Huns and early Bulgars can be furthermore proved by that *post factum*<sup>66</sup> report of Priscus,<sup>67</sup> in which he mentions the prophecy, according to Attila's youngest son Ernac would keep the power of his dynasty after the empire collapsed, and that is why Ernac was the dearest to Attila. Priscus wrote the story of the European Huns until 472. In the fragments of his book remained to us that Ernac refused the call of Dengizic against the East-Romans, so after Dengizic's death in 469 the leadership of the Huns went on to Ernac, since the oldest brother, Ellac died in the battle of Nedao in 455.<sup>68</sup> This tradition can be found in the Bulgarian prince list from the 8th century,<sup>69</sup> in which Attila is the first ruler, named by Avitochol, and is followed by Ernac himself, being member of the Dulo-dynasty (Gyula), from which dynasty was originated Kubrat as well,<sup>70</sup> who in the beginning of the 7th century founded the tribal federation of Onogurs and Bulgars in Magna Bulgaria.<sup>71</sup> This shows clearly the political continuity of Huns and Bulgars.<sup>72</sup> Many etimologies were born to explain the name

<sup>65</sup>VÁCZY, P.: A hunok Európában [The Huns in Europe]. In NÉMETH, GY. (ed.): *Attila és hunjai*. Budapest 1940, 138–142; MÁNCSEN-HELFEN, O. J.: *The World of the Huns. Studies in their History and Culture*. Berkeley 1973, 165–168; BONA, I.: *A hunok és nagykirályaik* [The Huns and their Great Kings]. Budapest 1993, 191–193.

<sup>66</sup>Which means, the “prophecy” was written down after the foretold situation already happened.

<sup>67</sup>*Hunok és rómaiak* (n. 4) 34.

<sup>68</sup>Which of course denies the suggestion that the Huns “disappeared” because they lost their ruling dynasty as a power of coherence. See SCHÄFER, T.: A hun birodalom felbomlása [The Disintegration of the Hunnic Empire]. In FELFOLDI, SZ. ET AL. (eds): *Nomád népvándorlások, magyar honfoglalás* [Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 13]. Budapest 2001, 25–33.

<sup>69</sup>PRITSAK, O.: *Die bulgarischen Fürstenliste und die Sprache der Protobulgaren*. Wiesbaden 1955. There is a tendency in the research, especially in Hungarian research (see VÁSÁRY, I.: A „megalkotott hagyomány”: szittyák és hunok [The „Created Tradition”: Scythians and Huns]. *Magyar Tudomány* 174 (2014) 566–571), to relativize the importance and meaning of the prince list. ZIEMANN (n. 16) 43–44 writes it is not a special source at all, and can be compared to medieval Christian lists of monarchs using biblical patterns. He agrees, that the list could have been made in the time of Symeon the Great (893–927), as a fabrication for legitimacy. Although in the list itself there is nothing any Christian, no biblical patterns etc., and in the research it is generally supposed that has been created in the 8th century (LIGETI, L.: *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád-korban* [The Turkic Relations of the Hungarian Language before the Conquest and in the Árpadian Era]. Budapest 1986, 463–468). Also the last ruler on the list is Umor, who ruled in 766.

<sup>70</sup>The list is not a “monument” for one dynasty or for one ruler only. This is clear from the fact, that after Sevar a new ruling dynasty, the Vokil emerged and changed the Dulo. At the end of the 8th century the rulers of the Dulo dynasty could be lead back till Kubrat (first half of the 7th century) one by one, however, there was a tradition, that this dynasty comes from a more distant past. This is why the ruling dates of the rulers before Kubrat (Avitochol and Irnik) are mythical numbers: one lived for 300 years, and the other for 150. But we cannot go back so much in time from the 7th century, since the name Bulgar appears in the second half of the 5th century, the same time when the ruler of the Huns was Ernac. The identification of Ernac with Irnik (and Attila with Avitochol) is not only based on the identity/similarity of the names, but also on the authentic chronology of the list itself.

<sup>71</sup>SINOR (n. 26) 198–199.

<sup>72</sup>ZIEMANN (n. 16) 53–56 suggests a fairly unaccountable interpretation on the relation of Huns and Bulgars, saying 1. the Bulgars arrived to Europe just after the Huns, this is why nobody wrote about them at that time, 2. the Bulgars became part of the Hunnic empire, they were integrated into the Hunnic tribes, 3. and after Attila's death some of the leader tribes of the Huns organized the Bulgar tribes, 4. this is how they appeared on their own name at the end of the 5th century.



Bulgar, but in the view of the recent question the most important statement is that: after the fall of a great nomadic empire (reorganized) tribes can appear with their earlier unknown tribal names in the sources. This way appeared the name Bulgar referring to the Huns.

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