

## BLACK BULGARIA AND THE BLACK BULGARS

### I.

Only a few studies of the Black Bulgars have been conducted, so it is necessary to give some explanations about their homeland, their origins and their role in the history of Eastern Europe. The Black Bulgars are mentioned by name only in two sources and a few allusions have been made to them. Two sources which do so are the *De administrando imperio* (DAI) and the *Russian Primary Chronicle*. Black Bulgaria is also mentioned in Chapter 12 of the *De administrando imperio*: „*The so-called Black Bulgaria can also attack the Chazars*” and in Chapter 42: „*Into this same Maeotic sea run rivers many and great; on its northern side runs the Dnieper river, from which the Russians come through to Black Bulgaria and Chazaria and Syria.*”<sup>2</sup> In the Russian translation of the DAI is „Mordia” in place of Syria.<sup>3</sup>

The Black Bulgars are also mentioned in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, with reference to the treaty of 944 between the Kievan Prince Igor and the Byzantine emperor Romanos Lekapenos: „*Regarding the Black Bulgarians, who come and ravage the Kherson district, we join the Prince of Rus' not to allow them to injure that region.*”<sup>4</sup> The use of the ethnonym *Black Bulgars* in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* originates from a Byzantine source. The treaty was drafted in Byzantium, and the translation which has mostly been used up until now was from the Greek. Thus, the ethnonym *Black Bulgars* is of Byzantine origin in this source. It seems that it first appeared in Byzantium in the tenth century (although it was probably not originally a Byzantine term). The three passages quoted above have three different senses: in Chapter 12, Black Bulgaria is said to be a country and a political unit, in Chapter 42 it is a geographical name and in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* it is a people. I would like to emphasize that is worth separating the geographical name *Black Bulgaria* from the ethnonym *Black Bulgars*, in spite of the fact that it is self-evident that the terms are closely related. The Black Bulgarians were the inhabitants of Black Bulgaria. It could be that this geographical name was already an archaism in the DAI. It may be that in the seventh to eighth centuries, it had been the name of a great territory which existed before the time of emperor Constantine Por-

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2 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, DAI c. 12. p. 64, 65; c. 42. p. 186, 187.

3 Litavrin – Novoselcev 1991, 175, 403, note 49.

4 *Povest' vremennyh let*, T. I, p. 37; Engl. translation: Cross – Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953, 76.

phyrogennetos (who reigned in middle of tenth century). Also, although the ethnonym could be an archaism, but because of the nature of the sources it can certainly be theorised that the Black Bulgars still existed at the time of the compilation of the DAI.

The evidence from the DAI suggests that the geographical location of Black Bulgaria may have consisted of the steppe between the Dnieper and the Don or Kuban rivers. This should be clear, but another passage from the DAI refers to the Pechenegs living in the territory between the Dnieper and Don rivers in the middle of the tenth century.<sup>5</sup> As regards the location of Black Bulgaria there are four main views: 1. Black Bulgaria was the same as Danubian Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup> 2. Black Bulgaria was the Bulgaria of the Volga – Kama region (Volga Bulgaria).<sup>7</sup> 3. Black Bulgaria was in the territory between the Azov sea and Lower Kuban.<sup>8</sup> 4. Black Bulgaria lay between the Dnieper and Don rivers.<sup>9</sup>

The identification with Danubian Bulgaria is the least credible one. It is based on an interpretation of the sentence in Chapter 42 which indicates that Bulgaria, Khazaria and Syria might exist in different locations, rather than being stations on one route. On the other hand there is no evidence that the Danubian Bulgars threatened Kherson in the tenth century and in the DAI attribute *black* is never mentioned in connection with the Danubian Bulgars.<sup>10</sup>

There are arguments for and against the identification of Black Bulgaria with Volga Bulgaria. On one hand, the reconstruction of the route mentioned in Chapter 42 of the DAI might include the Upper Dnieper – the Volga, where the Volga Bulgars lived – Khazaria, on the Lower Volga – the Caspian sea or the Caucasus. The sentence in Chapter 12 might be referring to the Volga Bulgars, who had the capacity to attack the Khazars. It could be added to this that in the tenth century the territory between the Dnieper and the Don was in the possession of the Pechenegs. Thus, Black Bulgaria could not have been there. But on the other hand it is hard to explain that the Volga Bulgars could threaten the Crimea (Kherson), which was situated about 1700 kilometers away. It could be added to this that, from the tenth century (or earlier) there were no reports of Volga Bulgars in the Byzantine sources. It seems that the Volga – Kama region was

5 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, DAI c. 42. pp. 182–183; pp. 184–185; cf. c. 37. pp. 168–169.

6 E. g. Karamzin 1815/2006, 109; Bulgarin 1839, 142; a province of Danubian Bulgaria, north of the Danube Delta: Gadlo 2004, 176–192.

7 E. g. D' Ohsson 1828, 213; Köppen 1836, 13; Grigor'ev 1876 (1836), 90; Ašmarin 1902, 9 (=2000, 15); Macartney 1930, 150–158 (=1999, 32–40); Howard-Johnston 2000, 330; Szabados 2011a, 17; Szabados 2011b, 111; Zimonyi 2005, 48; Zimonyi 2006, 188.

8 E. g. Ilovajskij 1875/2003, 369–390; Zlatarski 1918, 114; Moravcsik 1930, 85, note 107; Artamonov 1962, 172, 374, 378, 381–382; Gorelik 2002, 56 (Azov region); Romašov 2004, 253–255; Black Bulgaria as Tmutorokan: Knjaz'kij 2002, 51–53.

9 E. g. Vestberg (Westberg) 1910, 83–84; Marquart 1903, 503; Vasiliev 1936, 101; Merpert 1953, 586–615; Wozniak 1979, 115–126; Huxley 1984, 86 (Lower Donets, Don region); Novoselcev 1990, 210; Róna-Tas 2000, 11–12; Tóth 2010, 156.

10 Gadlo's hypothesis was first time published in the 1960's years. His theory was refused by Božilov in 1979: Božilov 1979, 163–167.

out of the horizon of the Byzantine authors. The basis of Byzantine geography was the tradition of the antiquity and the ancient geographical names were also in use in the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> Apart from this there were indirect contacts between the Volga Bulgaria and Byzantium. For example, Ibn Fadlan wrote that the throne of the Volga Bulgar king was covered in Byzantine brocade.<sup>12</sup>

The third and fourth identifications seem more likely. According to Chapter 12 of the DAI, the Black Bulgars lived somewhere in the vicinity of Khazaria. In Chapter 42, four geographical names are given: *Dnieper*, *Black Bulgaria*, *Khazaria* and *Syria*. The last name seems as if it is unexpected in this context, but a number of hypotheses have been made to explain this: 1. As stated above it could be that *Mordia* exists in the text in place of *Syria*, and that is the name *Syria* is a mistake.<sup>13</sup> 2. The name *Syria* in fact here refers to *Zikhia* on the western slopes of the Caucasus and was mistaken inserted into the text.<sup>14</sup> 3. The reference to *Syria* is not an error, but the name of the well known country, which was widely used in Byzantine geographical terminology to refer to the neighbouring territories eastward of the Byzantine empire.<sup>15</sup> As for the first hypothesis, there is not a shred of evidence in its favour, at least, or rather the routes which were reconstructed because the text does not give this conception. In turn, both the latter interpretations suggest that this *Syria* may actually be in the Caucasus region or Transcaucasia. In this case two alternatives might be suggested: 1. The above mentioned northern route of the Russians: from Upper Dnieper to the Volga Bulgaria, Khazaria and Transcaucasia (or the Caspian sea). 2. From the Lower Dnieper to eastward by the Black sea, along the beach of the Crimean peninsula, via the Azov sea to the Don river, from the Don overland to the Volga, and from the Lower Volga to the Caspian sea. Because the text refers to the mouth of the Dnieper when is mentioned on the Maeotis (Azov) sea, so it seems more likely that is the description of the 'southern' route, rather, than the 'northern' route (from the Upper Volga). There is an other reconstruction: from the middle or lower Dnieper to the Azov (or Taman) region by land route.<sup>16</sup> Also, Chapter 42 describes the territory between the Danube and the Caucasus, including the northern beach of the Black sea. The Black Bulgars are localized in this zone. It is worth comparing the above mentioned route, beginning from the Dnieper, with the route of the Russian merchants described by Ibn Khurdādhbih a hundred years earlier.<sup>17</sup> They hardly differ each from other. The text of the Russian Primary Chronicle also supports this interpretation. The Kherson district may have been under threat of attack from the

11 Borodin – Gukova 2000, 111.

12 Frye 2006, 55.

13 E. g. Litavrin – Novoselcev 1991, 403, note 49. (the editors accept a suggestion of W. Tomaschek)

14 E. g. Laskin, Kunik: see Levčenko 1956, 191–192; Romašov 2004, 252.

15 Huxley 1984, 85–86; Howard-Johnston 2000, 330; Konovalova 2010, 223, note 27.

16 E. g. Huxley 1984, 86. C. f. the itinerary of rabbi Petachia in the twelfth century: Kalinina – Konovalova – Petruhin 2009, 208–210.

17 C. f. Pritsak 1970.

Black Bulgars, so the territories in the vicinity of the Crimea may also be considered as a possible location. Thus, it can be stated that the country of the Black Bulgars around 950 was east of the Dnieper, between the Rus' and Khazaria. Finally, the geographical and ethnic description of the Pechenegs in Chapter 37 of the DAI may also mean that they are under consideration. Because the extension of the territory of the Pechenegs precludes the possibility that the Dnieper – Don region or the Crimean steppe could then be considered as locations, from the beginning of the tenth century the territory of Black Bulgaria could be situated east of the Don, in the lowlands of the Kuban river. The possibility, mentioned point 3, can comply with the requirements of the sources. But earlier, from the end of the seventh century (the dissolution of Magna Bulgaria) to the invasion of the Pechenegs (cca. 894–895) Black Bulgaria probably included the Dnieper – Kuban region.

The geographical identification is actually the easier aspect of the problem, whereas the question of the origin of the Black Bulgars is more difficult. The ethnonym *Black Bulgar* only exists in Byzantine sources, but it is uncertain whether it was of Byzantine origin or was borrowed from other sources.

*Black Bulgar* is an ethnonym with particular attributes. Similar ethnonyms (with such attributes) can be found in medieval Byzantine and other sources.<sup>18</sup> Among the Altaic peoples the attribute 'black' might be connected with the points of the compass. In the Eurasian steppe it was widely used to mark the points of the compass with colours: the colour of the north was black. According to this system, it is possible that the term *Black Bulgar* pointed to the Volga Bulgars or 'northern' Bulgars.<sup>19</sup> But according to the above, the Black Bulgars could not to identify (or be very problematic) with regard to the Volga Bulgars. Therefore, it may be necessary to explain this ethnonym in another way. The attribute 'black' (in pairs with the attribute 'white') could be used in connection with the social hierarchy: 'black' is the symbol of the subjects or servants while 'white' represents the monarchy and the nobility.<sup>20</sup> If the ethnonym came from Khazaria, it could indicate the social status of the Bulgars who lived under Khazar rule. The mention of this ethnonym is unexpected in the middle of the tenth century. The last mention of the Bulgars (north of the Black sea region) was in the eighth century and they are also absent in the ethnic composition of the zone between the Dnieper and the Caucasus in the tenth century or later.

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<sup>18</sup> Ethnonyms with names of colours are frequently used among the Turkic speaking peoples, but the meaning and the role of the colour names in the formation of the compounds is not always clear. (Németh 1991, 103–104).

<sup>19</sup> Zimanyi 2005, 48; Gadlo (2004, 191) refers to the Bulgar province north of the Danube Delta.

<sup>20</sup> Pritsak 1954, 383.

## II.

If we accept that the Black Bulgaria was originally located between the Dnieper and the Kuban region, the origin of the Black Bulgars might be connected to the Kutrigurs, Onogurs, the Onogundurs or the Eastern European Proto-Bulgars. This might include those who, after the fall of the steppe empire of Kuvrat, lived in their original homeland under Khazar control.<sup>21</sup> This means that they became part of the Khazar empire. In the period before the middle of the sixth century, the Proto-Bulgars and Kutrigurs lived west of the Don, and the Utigurs, Ogurs, Onogurs, Saragurs and the Sabirs lived to the east of it. Many scholars think that the ethnonym Bulgar was a common name for the Oguric tribes (Ogurs, Onogurs, Saragurs, Kutrigurs, Utigurs).<sup>22</sup> The Bulgars are mentioned in the sources from the end of the fifth century and their land was localized by Iordanes as being partly in the territory of the Kutrigurs.<sup>23</sup> The ethnonyms *Kotzagir* (*Altziagir*), *Kuturgur* and *Kotrag* were usually connected with the Kutrigurs, but there are scholars who separate these ethnonyms by identifying them as indicating single peoples.<sup>24</sup> Considering all these above mentioned ethnonyms as one, the territory of the Kutrigurs extended westward from the Dnieper, including the northern Crimea, while the eastern border was the Don. The participation of the Kutrigurs in the war of the Gepids against the Langobards in 550 demonstrated that the Kutrigur influence extended westwards.<sup>25</sup> Their attacks against the Byzantine Empire also refer to the Dnieper region (the greatest attack was in 559). The eastern border of the Kutrigur territory was the Don, and their northern neighbours were the Antas. The Kutrigurs were weakened by the attack of the Utigurs, and in the middle of the sixth century were conquered by the Avars. At this time their tribal system was reorganized by the Avars, a group of Kutrigurs may have migrated into the Carpathian basin. The history of the rest of the Kutrigurs is unknown, but they may have stayed in the homeland. In 569 the khagan of the Avars, Bayan mentioned that they were his subjects.<sup>26</sup> In 568 the Avars migrated to the Carpathian basin and the Volga, Don and Northern Caucasus regions were conquered by the Turks. The Utigurs then became subjects of the Turks. Whether the Turk ruled the territory of the Kutrigurs is questionable. Around 600 the Turk rule collapsed

21 Kutrigurs: Marquart 1903, 503; Bibikov 2009, 247.

22 E. g. Moravcsik 1930, 80, 82.

23 Iordanes, *Getica*, V, 37. ed. Mommsen, p. 63.

24 Marquart 1903, 503; Lauterbach 1967, 585, 586, 591, 593, 594; Beševliev 1981, 98. According to G. Vékony (2007, 158–170) they are different peoples.

25 Procopius, *De bello Gothico* IV, 18, 13–15, pp. 581–582. Although in this passage the Kutrigur territory was located in the sea of Azov region, according to Procopius the territory between the Crimea and the Danube was inhabited by 'barbarians' (Procopius, *De bello Gothico* IV, 5, 30, p. 508). It might be that they were Kutrigurs. (Romašov 1994, 217).

26 Menander Protector, *EL*, 12, 6 ed. Blockley 1985, 138–139. On the Kutrigurs see: e. g. Moravcsik 1930, 107–109; Szádeczky-Kardoss 1970, 516–520; Lauterbach 1967, 585–588; Romašov 1994, 209–218; Komar 2004; Nagy 2007, 106–109; Ziemann 2007, 95–103.

in the Don – Azov region. In 602–603 the Avars, starting from the Carpathian basin or the Lower Danube region, conquered the Dnieper region, the former land of the Kutrigurs. Locating the eastern border of the Avar rule (which may have been the Dnieper, the Azov sea, or the Don) is problematical. The Avar presence in the Dnieper – Azov region came to an end around 635 when the Avars were expelled by Kuvrat's Bulgars.<sup>27</sup> According to Theophanes the Confessor (cca. 758–818) and Patriarch Nicephorus (cca. 758–828) Kuvrat's Bulgaria included the Don – Dnieper region, the former Kutrigur territory.<sup>28</sup> Around this time (second half of the seventh century) the ethnonym *Kotrag* appears, to describe one of vassals Kuvrat's Bulgaria. The Kotrags are usually identified with the Kutrigurs.<sup>29</sup> In this case it might be that the Kutrigurs survived. Certainly the ethnonym did not disappear.<sup>30</sup> There is a view that in the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus the Kotrags were in fact creatures of fantasy with no actual connection to the Kutrigurs of the sixth century, who finally disappeared from the history of Eastern Europe after the Avar conquest.<sup>31</sup> In the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus the Kotrags are in two episodes: once they are mentioned as the vassals and 'relatives' of Kuvrat's Bulgars. On the second occasion the Kotrags appear in the story of Kuvrat's sons. Here *Kotrag* refers not to a people but to one of the sons of Kuvrat who crossed over the Tanais (Don) river with his own people and remained on the opposite bank of the river.<sup>32</sup> In the first episode the mention of the Kotrags may be authentic, as it refers to the historical tradition of the Danubian Bulgars (descendants of Bulgars of Kuvrat's empire). In the second case the appearance of the *heros eponymus* can reflect the epical tradition or transformation of the Byzantine author. It is hard to track the 'prehistory' of this passage, as the above mentioned reports of the Byzantine chronicles are literary paraphrases of the history of the Bulgars. The story of the crossing of the Tanais by *Kotrag* provides can be interpreted in a number of different ways: 1. The story only a fiction, and is based on the story on the earlier migration of the Kutrigurs recorded by Byzantine authors;<sup>33</sup> 2. The story is based on historical fact, as the Kotrags took part in the migration after the collapse of Kuvrat's empire, but their migration was short and they occupied a new territory in the vicinity of Kuvrat's former empire (Magna Bulgaria) or in a territory from which one of the Bulgar tribes had migrated.<sup>34</sup> After the dissolution of Kuvrat's empire (cca. 670) there are no references to the Kotrags. It is interesting

27 Szádeczky-Kardoss 1975, 270–271; Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986, 93; Farkas 2001, 61–65.

28 Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. Čičurov, 36–37 (text), 61 (transl.); ed. Mango – Scott 1997, 498; Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, ed. Čičurov, 153–154 (text), 162 (transl.), Mango 1990, p. 88, p. 89. Róna-Tas 2000.

29 Moravcsik 1930, 75.; Seměnov 2010, 183, 184.

30 Moravcsik 1930, 80.

31 Komar 2001, 149–151; Komar 2006, 163–165.

32 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, op. cit.; Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, op. cit.

33 Moravcsik 1930, 79.; Seměnov 2010, 183.

34 The territory either east or west of the Don may be referred to here. According to a widespread hypothesis *Kotrag*'s people were ancestors of the Volga Bulgars (Romašov 1994, 250).

that in the ninth century the ethnonym *Ungr(i)*, which was derived from the ethnonym *Onogur*, appeared west of the Don – Azov region.<sup>35</sup> The homeland of the Onogurs was originally east of the Don, in the lowland of the Kuban river.<sup>36</sup> The ethnonym *Onogur* was not mentioned west of the Don region before the dissolution of Kuvrat's empire. The appearance of the ethnonym *Ungr(i)* may indicate a migration from the east to the Don – Dnieper region in the seventh–eighth centuries and this fact became the basis of report of Byzantine authors.

Disregarding the problems of the story on Kotrag, we can be sure of that in the territory of Kuvrat's former empire, Bulgars made up most of the population. In the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus there are two mentions of the first son of Kuvrat, Batbayan, remaining with his own people in the homeland. Both mention that Batbayan „remained until this day in his ancestral land” but in the other passage Theophanes wrote that the Khazars from Batbayan pay „exact tribute to this day” (although Nicephorus stated that this occurred in the past).<sup>37</sup> The phrase „remained until this day” is commonly used in both of chronicles, which indicates that both of authors used a common source (probably the chronicle of Traianus Patricius), and that this term refers to the origin of this common source around the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries. Theophanes' statement „they exact tribute to this day” may be a paraphrase composed at the beginning of the ninth century, but it seems more probable that is not necessary to explain how Batbayan paid tribute to the Khazars (more precisely, the question only applies to his successors).<sup>38</sup> There is no record of these 'Pontic' Bulgars from the beginning of the eighth century, or may be that they are not described as Bulgars. It is possible that they were inserted in the Khazar tribal system and only appeared in the external sources under the name of the leader tribe, the Khazar.

It is also necessary to examine the reports of the above mentioned Ungri. At the end of the seventh century *Onogoria* was localised in the vicinity of the Azov sea by

35 There is a widespread view that the ethnonym *Onogur* changed into *\*Onğur* in the Old Turkic and was spread by Common Slavic mediation in Europe (in Byzantium also) (Németh 1991, 148–149; Gyóni 1943, 99–100; Róna-Tas 1999, 284; Harmatta 1997, 127; summing up of the question with historiography see: Király 1977, 12–24; Németh 2001, 149–152). Later the Slavic languages developed a protetic *u-* (*ugr-*) in place of the nasal *\*ǫ-* or *\*y-* (cf. Harmatta 1997, 127). However, it is problematic why the ethnonym *\*Onğur* came in to Byzantium by (Common) Slavic mediation when the Byzantines were in immediate connection with the Onogurs in the Crimea or Taman region. The ethnonyms *Ungri*, *Ungare* appeared in the 50s and 60s of the ninth century, with initial *u-*, which is not needed to take for certain as result of Slavic denasalization. It might be that it is necessary to presume a Common Slavic initial *\*y-*, or a variant *\*Unğur* of the ethnonym *Onğur*. The origin of the Common Slavic *\*ǫgǫr-* was brought into connection with the ethnonym *Ugur* (Darkó 1910, 22). In connection with the toponym *Yugria* see: Róna-Tas 1996, 265–269, and with the Proto-Hungarians see: Róna-Tas 1998, 222–223 Makk 1998, 230–231.

36 Moravcsik 1930, 62.

37 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Čičurov 1980, 36–37 (text), 61 (transl.); ed. Mango – Scott 1997, 498; Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, ed. Čičurov, 1980, 153–154 (text), 162 (transl.), Mango 1990, p. 88, p. 89.

38 Čičurov 1980, 113, note 270, 118, note 284; Mango – Scott 1997, 501, note 18.

Anonyme of Ravenna.<sup>39</sup> At the end of the eighth or in the first half of the ninth century in Byzantium there was a project to establish a missionary episcopate in the territory of the Onogurs (and other peoples).<sup>40</sup> In a few Old Bulgarian manuscripts the *Ugri* (*Ūgry*, *vŏgry*) are mentioned as the allies of the Danubian Bulgars against Byzantium in 811. This is problematic, as the Byzantine sources mention *Avars* in place of *Ugri*.<sup>41</sup> There are only a few events in the sources which are related to the ninth century in the eastern European steppe, one of which is the building of the Sharkel fortress on the bank of the Don (cca. 840), which is in the territory of the former Magna Bulgaria.<sup>42</sup> From this time the ethnonym *Ungri* appears on several occasions (in Old High German, Old Slavic, or Latin forms).<sup>43</sup> This ethnonym *Ungri* later became a synonym for the ethnonym *Magyar*, but originally the *Ungri* were not identified with the *Magyars*.<sup>44</sup> It is problematic as to when and where the term *Ungri* changed to 'Magyars'.<sup>45</sup> It seems (as supported by the archaeological topography) that the majority of the Pontic Bulgars (*Ungri*) who were under Khazar rule lived in the northern zone of the steppe and in the southern zone of the forest steppe.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately there are barely any reports of this territory in the sources from ninth and tenth centuries.

The first mention of the ethnonym *Magyar* (Proto-Hungarians) (*al-m.ğf.rīya*, *\*al-mağğariya*) in this region appears in the second half of the ninth century.<sup>47</sup> To the north and west of the *Magyars* were the Slavic speaking tribes (Radimichians, Ulichians, Tivercians) and to the east of the *Magyars* were the successors of the Pontic Bulgars who were under Khazar power.

In the 890s the migration of the Pechenegs into the Don – Dnieper region radically changed the political relationships within this region. The *Magyars* (Proto-Hungarians) migrated westward and conquered the Carpathian basin, the Slavic tribes remained and the fate of the Pontic Bulgars is unknown. Because the territory between the Don and Dnieper came under Pecheneg rule and several Pecheneg tribes settled down there, it is needed to support that the Bulgars who lived there, came under Pecheneg power or left the territory. The territory of the Pontic Bulgars east of the Don remained under Khazar control and became a border zone. The Pecheneg – Khazar relations are ques-

39 Anonymus Ravennatis, *Cosmographia* IV, 2, p. 45.

40 *Notitia episcopatum* (Not. 3), 242.

41 Király, 1977; Boba 1967, 79.

42 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *DAI* c. 42 pp. 182–185.

43 *Descriptio civitatum*, p. 221.; *Vita Constantini VIII.*, p. 45; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 862, p. 60.

44 Boba 1967, 74–75.

45 E. g. Vásáry 1999, 159–162.

46 In the forest steppe region between the Don and Donec there are archaeological finds which might show some connection with the 'Pontic' Bulgars: the burials of Zlivka-type (Netailovka, Rzhevka – Mandrovo; Sidorovo – Lisohorovka groups). In another zone is the northern bank of the Sea of Azov (Paganrog bay), in the region of Sambek, Kalmius, Mius, Ez, Kugo-ey, Sosyki rivers (Pletneva 2000, 66–83, 84–129, 132–136; Türk 2010, 274–276; Atavin 1996 (Azov region).

47 Zimonyi 2006.

tionable. To the Muslim authors they were enemies, while the Hebrew sources (based on the Khazar historical tradition) the Pechenegs (or some of them) paid tribute to the Khazars (according to the 'Joseph-letter' the western border zone of the Khazar power was in the Dnieper region).<sup>48</sup> Anyway, the Don region became a border zone, and this situation opened the door to the emancipation from the Khazar rule. It might be that this occurred in the 920s or 930s. There is a doubtful source which may be connected to the Pontic (Black) Bulgars: one member of an anti-Khazar alliance mentioned by the so-called Cambridge Document (Schechter-Text) was identified with the Black Bulgars.<sup>49</sup> They took part in the war with the Pechenegs, Oghuzes, and probably the 'Northern' Alans (the Alans on the Don and Donec rivers) but were defeated by the 'Southern' Alan - Khazar alliance. It may be credible that the Khazars and Alans overcame them, because they were neighbouring peoples and there are reports of Muslim authors on Khazar - Pecheneg and Khazar - Oghuz conflicts. All this is only a hypothesis, because the identification of the ethnonym 'BM (\**Qubam* < *Quban*, i. e. 'Kuban/ian/ [Bulgars])' with the Pontic ('Kubanian') Bulgars is problematic.<sup>50</sup> We need to focus again on those sources which were the starting point of this inquiry, the DAI and the Russian Primary Chronicle. These point to the fact that in the middle of the tenth century the Black (Pontic) Bulgars were independent of the Khazars, unless they could to attack the Khazars or Byzantians.<sup>51</sup> There are a few problematic sources from this period: the report of al-Mas'ūdi on the Caucasus and the 'Eastern European' chapter of the *Hudūd al-Ālam*. But in these sources the reports about the Volga, Danubian and what may be the Pontic (Black) Bulgars are mixed, so it is hard to assert that they are reliable.<sup>52</sup>

### III.

Finally I would like to mention the possible connections of the Black Bulgars with the Magyars (Proto-Hungarians). The migration of the Pechenegs seriously affected the role of the Pontic Bulgars west of the Don. On the basis of the DAI it seems that the eastern European steppe, including the northern part of the Crimea, was conquered up to the coast of the Black sea. What happened to the Pontic Bulgars? Finding the answer is problematic, as the sources are missing. There may be two possibilities: 1. The Bulgars living here remained and were assimilated by the Pechenegs and 2. The Bulgars left

48 Zimonyi 2006; Göckenjan - Zimonyi 2001, 54, 167; Kokovcov 1932, 102, 110, note 32. The mention of the Dnieper region (ex-Khazar territory) as a Khazar possession in the present (tenth century) reflects the traditional idea of the empires of the Eurasian steppe (Artamonov 1962, 386-387).

49 Golb - Pritsak 1982, 113 (text), 133 (transl.)

50 Andras Róna-Tas refuses Pritsak's hypothesis. In the manuscript the ethnonym in question is hardly readable and adds to this Pritsak's correction, with the aid of which he reconstructs the initial Q- (Róna-Tas 2001, 20.)

51 Artamonov 1962, 381, 382, note 65. They might have some autonomy, with their own chief, as in the period of Batbayan.

52 Vestberg (Westberg) 1908, 388; Minorsky 1937, 439-440.

their territory. Where might they have migrated to? The land of the Magyars (Proto-Hungarians) is one possibility. It is well known that the Kavars joined the Magyars before the conquest of the Carpathian basin. According to the DAI, at 950 this group of the Kavars was relatively large and their three tribes were united by the Magyars.<sup>53</sup> Of course, the Kavars are not identical with the Pontic (Black) Bulgars, but the tribes of the Kavars were not an ethnically homogeneous group.<sup>54</sup> It may well be that the Kavars were the dominant group and that they were made up of various ethnic groups including the Pontic Bulgars.

To sum up: 1. the toponym *Black Bulgaria* appeared in the middle of the tenth century in Byzantium, but the origin of this term is unknown. According to the DAI, Black Bulgaria was in the territory between the Dnieper and the Lower Kuban. However, this localization reflects an earlier situation before the tenth century, because this territory, between the Dnieper and the Don (Azov sea) was at this time the land of the Pechenegs.

2. The toponym and original geographical site of Black Bulgaria might be connected with the former Bulgaria of Kuvrat. The territory between the Dnieper and the Don was inhabited by the Kutrigurs in the sixth century. The Kutrigurs became vassals of Kuvrat in the 630s. After the dissolution of Kuvrat's Bulgaria, the Khazars occupied the former Kutrigur territory. Some of the Bulgars of Kuvrat (Onogundur-Bulgars and Onogurs) remained in the original homeland at the end of the seventh century. The attribute 'black' probably comes from this situation: these Bulgars were subordinated to the Khazars. The ethnic situation in the steppe zone between the Dnieper and the Don is questionable in the eighth century, when the Kutrigurs disappeared. In the ninth century new ethnonyms appear in this region: Ungri, Magyars (from the Volga region), Kavars (came from Khazaria). The ethnonym *Ungri* comes from the ethnonym *Onogur*. The Onogur territory was originally in the plain of the Kuban River, and after the dissolution of Kuvrat's Bulgaria some of the Onogurs probably migrated into the territory west of the Don. It may be that the Ungri people were connected to the Kubanian Onogurs. Originally the Ungri and Magyars were different ethnic groups, while the ethnonym *Ungri* later became a synonym of the *Magyar*.

3. The former 'Black Bulgaria' was divided into two parts by the Pecheneg migration in the middle of the ninth decade of the ninth century. The territory west of the Don belonged to the Pechenegs, while the territory east of the Don was under Khazar rule. In this latter territory the Black Bulgars and Black Bulgaria appeared in the middle of the tenth century. Probably they strove for emancipation from Khazar rule when it became weaker.

<sup>53</sup> Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, DAI c. 39. c. 40. op. cit. pp. 174–176.

<sup>54</sup> E. g. Gorelik 2002, 50–54.

4. In the territory west of the Don the ethnonym *Ungri* disappeared after the migration of the Pechenegs. Some of them probably joined the Pecheneg tribal system, and it may be that others joined the Magyars and Kavars and migrated into the Carpathian basin.

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### FEKETE BULGÁRIA ÉS A FEKETE BULGÁROK

Fekete Bulgária és a fekete bulgárok a 10. század közepén jelentek meg a *De administrando imperio*ban és 940-es években kötött bizánci–rusz szerződésben. A tanulmányban három kérdésre kerestem választ: 1. Fekete Bulgária földrajzi elhelyezkedése; 2. A fekete bulgárok eredete; 3. a fekete bulgárok és a honfoglaló magyarok lehetséges kapcsolata.

A DAI és a PVL alapján Fekete Bulgária a Dnyeper és a Kubáni alföld közötti területen volt. A terület a 7. század második harmadától kezdve politikai-hatalmi szempontból egységes volt, a 7. század elejétől körülbelül 670-ig Kuvrat, utána pedig a 890-es évek közepéig a kazárok uralma alatt volt. A 10. század kezdetétől viszont a Don és a Dnyeper közötti részt a besenyők foglalták el, a Dontól keletre továbbra is kazár fennhatóság volt. A fekete bulgárok lakóhelye az említett források tanúsága és a hatalmi változások figyelembevételével a 10. század közepén inkább már csak az Azov–Kubány-vidék lehetett.

A népnév 'fekete' jelzője valószínűleg nem a bizánciaktól származik, hanem a steppéről, a kazárok nevezhették így a legyőzött és alattvalóikká lett bulgárokat. A Dnyeper és a Don közötti steppén és erdős steppén a 6–7. században a kutrigurok laktak. Kuvrat birodalmának felbomlása után a kutrigurokról (kotragok) nincsenek híradások. A 9. században az egykori kutrigur területen az *ungr(i)* < *onogur* népnév tűnik fel. Ez a népnév a *magyar* szinonímája lett, de hogy mikor, miért és hogyan történt ez, arról nincsenek biztos forrásaink. A magyarokról az első híradás a 9. század utolsó harmadából származik. Az *ungr(i)* (*onogur*) népnév megjelenése a Dontól nyugatra a 9. században etnikai változásra is utalhat, lehetséges, hogy az onogurok egy csoportja a Kubány-vidékről ide települt át.

A besenyők uralma alá került területen az ungrok eltűntek a forrásokból és bulgárokról sincs híradás. A lakosság egy része helyben maradt, de egy csoport esetleg a magyarokhoz csatlakozott (ezek a csatlakozók nem azonosak a kavarakkal, de később talán a kavar törzsekhez tartoztak).