

Dan Shapira

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Bulgar-Khazar Rivalry: Njnts on Etnical Historio-Psychology (Judaeo-Turkica VII)

*Dolgaja pamjat' xuzhe chem sifilis –
osobenno, v uzkom krugu
(BG)*

Many scholars believe now that the Bulgars were Turkicized Ugrians, whose ancestors came to Europe with the Huns. The name of the Bulgars apparently means «Mixed Ugrians» [Compare P.B. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, Budapest 1982, Vol. I p. 42 and note 115 there]. They were first attested as Ziezi ex quo vulgares in the Northern Caucasus cr. 354CE (though Mommsen was of the opinion that this is an interpolation made cr. 539CE). Earlier references to them found in Armenian sources are anachronistic [Cf. D. Shapira, «Armenian and Georgian Sources on the Khazars: A Re-Evaluation», *Proceedings of the First International Colloquium In Jerusalem* (forthcoming)].

According to the tradition recorded by the author of the Hebrew Letter of the Khazar King Joseph to Hisdai Ibn Shaprut in Spain written in the mid-10th century. Togarmah had ten sons, with Khazar being the seventh and Bulgar the ninth. Indeed, the Khazar-Bulgar cultural and linguistic closeness is unparallel — both entities arose on the ruins of the Western Türk Qaganate about the same time, in the mid-7th century; the Khazar and Bulgar languages, according to many scholars, belonged to the same unique branch of the Turkic languages labeled «Ogur Turkic», opposed to the «Common Turkic»; and there are numerous parallels in the historical development of both polities. The preservice of old steppe traditions in both entities is amazing: these states came to existence at the same time, and it was from a blood conflict between the two tribes that both their states arose. However, there are serious differences, too: it is strange how long the Danuban Bulgars kept to be pagan, while living side by side with Christian Byzantium; it is also strange how unstable were Bulgar royal dynasties, compared with the sacred Khazar kingship.

The beginnings of both Khazar and Bulgar states was a fraternal feud. With the help of the Lord, the few Khazars fought numerous neighboring nations, overcame them and inherited their country, having been expelled them away (the Biblical verb used, GRŠ, has both meanings of «to inherit the land / to expel her former possessors»). It was how the short-living Magna or Palaia Bulgaria in the steppes of Southern Russia collapsed, after her founder, Khan Qubrat of the Dulo charismatic clan — who revolted

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635 against his Avar overlords — died cr. 642 CE or later. A horde of the Bulgars led Asparukh fled to the Danube, where they conquered a country inhabited by Slavs and gave her their name. Another horde migrated northwards to the Upper Volga, where they founded a principality known as Volgan Bulgaria, which has been for a considerable period of her existence vassal to the Khazars. Other groups migrated toannonia (and later to Macedonia) and Italy, while some — known as the Black Bulgars — remained in the Pontic steppes subjugated to the Khazars.

This expulsion of the Bulgars by the Khazars was seen by King Joseph even 300 years later as the molding event of the Khazar history, more important than the discovery of Judaism:

«The land wherein I live was formerly inhabited by Wnnt; our forefathers, the Khazars, came and fought with them, and, although the Wnnt were as numerous as the sand on the shores of the sea, they could not withstand the Khazars, they left their country and fled while the Khazars pursued them as far as the Danube river. Up to this very day they (the Wnnt) camp along the Danube river and are close to Constantinople, while the Khazars inherited / conquered their (the Wnnt)s country up to this day». There can be no doubt that the author of this text knew the Eastern and Danubian Bulgars as Wnnt, i. e., Onogundur, which should be compared to the late Armenian form Vanand. The implications of this fraternal feud lasted for centuries and were of crucial importance for both polities.

After having established themselves on the estuary of the Danube, in the territory known as ogglos (Ongol, Ugol), the horde of Asparukh crossed the river southwards and between 679—681 conquered the country which now bears their name [on the Bulgar state in the Balkans as a typical nomadic conquest state, see P.B. Golden, «The Typology of Medieval Eurasia: An Example of Stateless Adaptation in the Steppes,» *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 141]. Asparukh's first capital on the other side of the Danube was Asuka, near Shumen / Aboba; we should remember that the Bulgars already had a state, and that their nomadizing horde could also be seen as a state-like polity. As in many other cases, the nomads represented the cohesive military power, easily subjugating the sedentary Slavic population. When Asparukh died in 701, the supreme power passed to Tervel, his son or grandson.

Since the early 80s of the 7th century the Khazars were preoccupied with fighting in Transcaucasia against the Muslims and their local allies. In 688 the young Byzantine Emperor Justinian II (669—711) defeated the Bulgars and Slavs and was the first Byzantine Emperor to settle the captured Slav prisoners of war in Asia Minor. The treason of these Slavs was the main reason for Justinian's own defeat by the Muslims in 692 in Cilicia, which brought about the Arab siege put on Carthago, on the one side, and the Armenian revolt against the Empire, led by Smbat Bagratuni, on the other, and in 695 Justinian was overturned in a plot, had his nose cut off — hence his nickname Rhinotmetus — and was sent into exile to Chersones in the Crimea. Living there, he did not hide his desire to return back to Constantinople and regain his throne. The Chersonites, feeling afraid of possible troubles, decided to kill the dethroned Emperor and to send him back to the capital. After having learned of this new plot against him, Justinian fled to Daras (apparently, Dori-Mangup on the Byzantine-Khazar frontier in the Crimea), where he expressed his wish to have an personal interview with the



Khazar qagan. The Khazar qagan received the fugitive with the due respect, allowed him to take refuge with the Khazars, and even gave the exiled Emperor his lawful sister as wife. One may ask whether these dealings with the exiled Emperor could be seen as sapping the normal course of the Byzantine-Khazar relations in the early 8th century. However, after a while, apparently, after some interference from Constantinople, the qagan asked Justinian to leave to Phanagoria, on the Caucasian side of the Kerch Straits, where the ex-emperor lived with his Khazar wife Christened Theodora. One might guess that this Phanagorian period was a sort of the internal exile, a *ssylka*. Nevertheless, the incumbent Emperor, Apsimar, after having heard of the whole affair in Khazaria, sent an embassy to the qagan, promising him many gifts, if he would send him Justinian alive, or, at least, his head. The qagan accepted the offer and ordered Papatzis, apparently, the qagan's warden appointed to watch Justinian's steps, and Balgitzis, the ruler of Bosphorus (Kerch), to kill the exile. But qagan's sister and Justinian's wife, Theodora, learned about this treacherous plan from one of the qagan's men, and so Justinian was able to over-trick the plotters, has both Papatzis and Balgitzis killed, sent off Theodora to Khazaria, and he himself fled to Tomis, where from sailed in a small boat to Cymbalo (Balaklava). He called upon his supporters in Chersones (this is of interest that one of them was possibly of Georgian and the other of Syrian origin). After many troubles, in which the exiled Emperor had demonstrated his courage and determination to take revenge from his enemies, the company arrived to the Danube. And so it happened that in 705 the exiled Byzantine Emperor, married to the sister of the Khazar qagan, sought assistance at Tervel's court at Pliska. Having received the support needed, with all the Bulgars and Slavs assembled, Justinian regained his throne. Khan Tervel was enthroned by Justinian's side and was granted the title of «Caesar», a honor never made to a Barbarian.

One of the reasons for Justinian's escape to the Khazars could be the traditional relationship between his dynasty and the Khazars, relationship going back to the founder of dynasty, Heracleus, himself. The qagan gave to the exiled emperor his sister as a wife, probably having in mind installing his new relative back in Constantinople. But the qagan did nothing to help Justinian to regain his throne and even gave in to the Byzantine pressure to extradite him or kill him; the reason for this default could be seen in dire straits in the Caucasus. So Justinian fled to the Khazars traditional enemies, the Danubian Bulgars, with whose support he was successful to regain his throne. One can be certain that this plan was meticulously calculated by the exile; moreover, one might be certain that even to the Khazars Justinian had fled having already a plan to regain his throne with the help of the Barbarians. The only difference between the two plans — the one which was never carried out completely (and about the mere existence of which we can but speculate, albeit with a degree of certainty) and the one which succeeded — was the choice of the Barbarians to make the job.

Almost immediately after his return to his capital, Justinian charged a fleet to take his wife from Khazaria. However, many ships have drawn. When the qagan has heard about that, he sent a message to the Emperor: «O fool, why did you send so many ships having caused to this senseless death of so many people? Or did you imagine to be able to take your wife back by war? Here you have a son born, send, take them.» No doubt the qagan was upset by his own unwise policy towards Justinian and outraged by Tervel's ascend to the title of «Caesar». However, he made a move in the right direction and returned his sister and nephew to their husband and father, believing — not without reason — that Justinian will appreciate it and draw the right conclusions.



the emperor has brought Theodora and her son Tiberius to Constantinople, crowned them and they reigned together with him. This time it was Tervel's turn to be envious and upset — a descendent of the Khazar royal clan was sitting on the throne of the Caspian. Indeed, in 708 Justinian, probably hoping to receive some assistance from the Khazars, turned against Tervel and landed in Anchialus (Pomorje), but was defeated by Tervel.

One of important tendencies of Justinian's new policy was reconciliation with the Bulgars, who visited New Rome in 710—711. Meanwhile the Muslims were successful in capturing Cilicia and Commagene, but Justinian, having a long memory, sent a fleet to destroy the treacherous people of Chersones, Bosphorus and the neighboring Climata. Apparently this was an anti-Khazar action, for these areas were under some form of Byzantine-Khazar protectorate and a Khazar tudun (Bulgar 'Turun, cf. Turnovo) was sitting in Chersones. In Chersones the Byzantine punishing expedition executed unspeakable atrocities, while the qagan's tudun, the first citizen Zoulos and other dignitaries were sent, with their families, to Constantinople. Justinian, nevertheless, sent crazy for his orders were not carried out with all due atrocities and the executors spared lives of some. The new fleet was sent to the Crimea, to punish the punishers, but it sailed in October and was drowned in the Black Sea. Justinian however promised to send a greater fleet and to exterminate everything alive. When the people of the frontiers, apparently, in the Climata frontier region, have heard of this, being afraid for their lives they send an embassy to Khazaria, asking protection. Meanwhile a mutiny occurred in Chersones among Justinian's forces faced with punishment for the lack of atrocities. The mutiny was led by the exiled Armenian general Bardanes and by the spatharius Elias. Having understood his dangerous situation — having against him the Khazars and the rebel fleet — Justinian sent back to Chersones the Khazar tudun and Zoulos with his people, asking the Khazars to accept his apology and extradict to him Elias and Bardanes. The Chersonites, however, killed the Emperor's commanders, and sent Zoulos, the tudun and Justinian's soldiers to the qagan. But unfortunately, the tudun died on the way and then the still pagan Khazars sacrificed the 300 Byzantine prisoners for the sake of the tudun's soul. Then the people of Chersones and the Climata anathematized Justinian and Bardanes was proclaimed Emperor Philippicos, or his own Armenian name, 'Vartan, sounded not suitable for an Emperor. The rebels fled to the capital, captured the city and killed Justinian and the qagan's nephew Tiberius — having thus put an end to the Heraclian dynasty.

In 716, under continuing Muslim military pressure, the weak Emperor Theodosius III (715—717) sought to neutralize the Bulgar menace by a treaty with Tervel, and indeed, during the second Arab siege on Constantinople, Tervel saved the Byzantines by swooping down the Muslim encampment. Tervel died in 718/9, and we don't know the name of his successor, who ruled until 725. Then came Khan Sevar, who ruled until 732, and was the last Khan of the Dulo clan. He died about the time when the Khazar qagan accepted, for a short time, Ilsam. The new Khan was Kormisosh of the Vokil or Bil clan. So serious ideological crises happened in both Khazaria and Danubian Bulgaria about the same time. It is of interest, in the Khazar aspect, to note that the Bulgars were led, according to V. Beshevljiev, by a dual qaganate as was the case with the Khazars, at least beginning from the mid-8th century. In 732, the 14 years old Constantin V (Constantine V) married the Khazar qagan's daughter Irine. This was one of the most aggressive iconoclast and anti-Bulgar — emperors, who has provoked



later on a series of coups d'état in Danubian Bulgaria. Meanwhile, a bishop seat was established in Khazaria, at Itil (ho Astel), between 733-746, probably as a consequence to the dynastic marriage.

The Bulgars invaded the empire, but their Khan Kormisosh was defeated in 755 and died the next year; his son Vinex succeeded him and lost battles to the Byzantines, and was overturned by the Bulgars, who installed Telec of the Ugain clan instead, but in 763 the Bulgars were again defeated. A few months later Telec and his bolgars were assassinated. It seems like the Bulgars were unable to act without a leader from a charismatic clan. Anarchy followed, but the accession of Khan Telerig in 770 stemmed the tide of defeat. Albeit defeated once in 772, Telerig was an able organizer.

Leo IV Khazar b. 25.01.750 was crowned by his father Constantine as infant in 751 and ruled between 775—780. He was faced with the consequences of the Abbasid revolution in 752 and certainly was aware of the ups and downs in the Khazaro-Muslim relations in the Caucasus in the 760s. A scion to qagans, Leo IV accepted generously the old enemy of Byzantium the Bulgar Khan Telerig, who fled his country in 777, was baptized and given a cousin of Empress Irene as wife. Leo IV Khazar himself was married to the Athenaeian Irene. Constantin VI, their son, was defeated by Khan Kardam (777—802/3) in 792 at Marcellae, and was deposed and blinded by his mother Irene. In 803 the new Khan arose, Krum the Conqueror, who sprung from the Bulgar khans of Pannonia. In 804 Charlemagne and the Bulgars destroyed finally the Avar qaganate in Pannonia, and Krum turned southwards. After having inflicted defeats on the Byzantines, Krum has lined the scull of the Emperor Nicephorus with silver and used it as a drinking cup, in the old steppe fashion. In 813 Krum put siege on Constantinople and demanded to be allowed to fix his lance to the Golden Gate. But on Holy Thursday, 13 April 814, Krum died suddenly, with his death seen as a miracle by the demoralized Byzantines. Krum was an able ruler and a Gorbachev of sorts: having learnt that the Avar qaganate fell as a result of heavy drinking, he ordered the rooting up of all the vines in Bulgaria. In addition, Krum demonstrated certain interest in Islam, which would be only natural for an enemy of Byzantium: al-Nadim noted that the Khalifa al-Ma'mun (813-833) penned a book «Answers to the Questions of the Kings of the Burghar addressed to him about Islam and the Unity»; under the same Khalifa, a Khazar embassy visited Bagdad.

Krum was succeeded by his son Omurtag (814—831), who has firmly established himself at Pliska by the end of 815. Omurtag built a new capital, a mausoleum for himself and invaded Pannonia. He adopted the title of «archon by the grace of God» but persecuted heavily the Christians. Especially bad-disposed towards Christianity were the Bulgar Boliars. Omurtag's inscriptions found at the Church of the Forty Martyrs at Great Turnovo recalls the old steppe style («Man dies, even though he lives nobly, and another is born; and let the latest born, seeing this, remember him who made it. The name of the prince is Omurtag, the Sublime Khan. God grant that he live a hundred years»). Persecutions of the Christians in Danubian Bulgaria are at contrast with the khazar tolerance to which sources at our disposal testify: In St. Abo's Georgian Vita we find the first-hand description of the Khazar ways of life in 780-1 [Cf. D. Shapira, «Armenian and Georgian Sources on the Khazars: A Re-Evaluation». Proceedings of the First International Colloquium In Jerusalem (forthcoming)]. This should be noted by those who still believe that the Khazars were already converted to one of the monotheistic religions. Description of the Khazars found in this source as «having no religious law» and «eating blood» hardly characterizes Judaism (or, even



native Biblical Mosaism») and Islam. We do read in our text about Khazar religious stance («there are towns and villages in the Land of the North, whose inhabitants freely in the faith of Christ»), but we hear nothing about Khazar Jews in our Vita. They were Christians in Khazaria, and it was possible for St. Abo, a Muslim refugee from Tbilisi, to convert to Christianity in Khazaria. There was a bishop at Itil, and Abo probably converted there, while he was staying with his master, Narse, at «the camp of the seat of the Sons of Magog the Khazars,» by which probably the Qagan's horde, Itil, meant.

A new era in the Byzantino-Bulgar relations has begun with the accession of Khan Boris (853—888).

In 860 the Byzantines sent two Thessalonical brothers, Constatine the Philosopher (known later as St. Cyril) and Methodius, with a mission to the Khazar qagan. According to the Byzantine source surviving in Slavonic, the initiative came from the Khazars, remembering the old friendship between them and the Byzantines, sent an embassy to Constantinople to ask the Caesar's advice and a learned man able to participate in religious dispute between Jews, Christians and Muslims. This is at odds with the Jewish version of the events, according to which the Byzantines and the Muslims, having heard of the progress of Judaism in Khazaria, sent embassies to the qagan urging each to win him to their side. We hear, however, of some religious troubles in Khazaria circa 854, with Muslims escaping from the Qaganate as a result (cf. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, I, p. 134).

The choice of Constantine, an experienced polemicist with knowledge of Arabic — was known as translator of parts of the Qur'an into Greek, during his Arab mission 51/2 — and Slavic was natural. During the sojourn in the Crimea, the embassy was involved in incidents with a Khazar general and with a Magyar horde; at the same time, Constantine found at Chersones, on January 30, 861, the relics of St. Clement of Rome, and the discovery was described in a special discourse, translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius in Rome, but which is partly preserved now in Slavonic. Not wasting his time, the missionary was also learning Hebrew. What was the practical reason — leaving along the intellectual curiosity — to do that, before entering pagan Khazaria? The combination of the fact that Constantine learned Hebrew before leaving for Khazaria with the fact of his previous knowledge of Arabic brings us to suggest that such double qualification was in need for carrying out his mission in Khazaria successfully and that he was indeed preparing himself to the dispute — which is implicitly mentioned as the reason for his mission and which is described in detail in the account about his embassy. This makes us to believe that the information about the fact of the dispute found in the Slavonic account, in Hebrew documents and in Arabic is basically correct.

The embassy proceeded from Chersones via the Straits of Kerch to the Azov Sea, and then up along the Don, meeting the envoys of the Khazar qagan apparently in Itil. The envoys took the embassy to the Kaspiskaja Vrata, perhaps Semender.

The account of the embassy and the dispute between Constantine and the Khazars contains several elements probably testifying to a certain degree of Judaization — or, at least, awareness of monotheist teachings, such as Islamic, for example — of the Khazars (or, of some of them) as early as the time when the dispute was taking place.



During the dinner, the qagan drinks «in the name of the unique God, creator of every created». This should not necessarily be taken as an evidence of some sort of «Judaism» professed by the qagan — it is sufficient to remind that the Khazars were well informed of Muslims customs and beliefs, and, after all, in the mid-8th century the qagan himself has been Muslim for a while, so this usage might reflect a certain acquaintance of the Khazars with monotheistic views, not more than that.

According to Muslim authors, first of all, al-Kūfi, in 737 Marwān defeated the Khazars on the nahr al-Saqāliba (identified by many scholars with the Volga) and attacked Serir, and consequently, the qagan converted — though for a short period of time — to Islam. Marwān left Transcaucasia, in all probability, in 743; however, according to Dunlop (*Jewish Khazars*, p. 170), the religious dispute in which a rabbi prevailed over a monk and an Imam took place circa 740, and subsequently, it was after that date that the so-called «first stage of the Judaization» of the Khazars, into a «primitive Biblical Mosaism» occurred. Indeed, archeologists find a breakage in Khazar religious practices in mid-8th century as reflected in the material available. In addition, one should note the newly found Khazar coins with the inscription «Moses is God's Messenger» in Arabic, which date from 730—740. However, as I have suggested elsewhere, the traditions found in the Hebrew-Khazar Correspondence about the «first stage of the Judaization» might veil the short-living and forced conversion to Islam in 737 (however, the first of these «two stages of the Judaization» may be ascribed as well to the Jewish-Khazar re-interpretation of the Tengri-cult as a form of primitive Monotheism seen as equal to Judaism, see now D. Shapira, «Judaization of Central Asian Traditions as Reflected in the so-called Jewish-Khazar Correspondence ...», *Proceedings of the Second International Khazar Colloquium in Koroliov, February 2002.*). And so we hear the qagan saying to Constantine the Philosopher (compare Judah Halevy's *fataylasūf*) that «We all speak about the same thing and the only difference is that you — the Christians — praise the Trinity, while we do this to the Only God, as we are taught by the Books». This reconciling intonation can reflect the well-known tolerance of the Khazars, as admitted by both sources describing the Khazars in 780s or in the 10th century (when Judaism was already well established).

The mere reference to the Books (which play such a prominent — though not entirely clear — role in the native Khazar traditions about their Judaization — or, about their rediscovery of their Judaism, as reflected in the Letter of King Joseph and in the Schechter Document) together with rejection of the Trinity and the insistence on the belief in the Only God as taught by the Books — look really Jewish. But probably does this reflect the conditions current after the dispute, i. e., after the mission of Constantine had failed? One may recall that the Khazars in Constantine's account took pride about their keeping their wisdom in their bellies, and not reading it from books, like the Greeks, thus contradicting the qagan's words about the knowledge taught by the Books.

Constantine's account contains an interesting piece of information about the Khazar pride in their strong royal (qagan's) power: the Khazars boast that they have their lord (cesar'), unlike the Byzantines, from one family (rod). On the other hand, the first advisor of the qagan is referred to in expressions that cause one to believe that the status of this first advisor ('bek?) was basically different from that of all other subjects. However, Constantine's religious mission failed, though one of the results of the embassy was the renewal of the alliance between the Empire and the Khazars. Constantine does not tell us that the dispute was finished with the Khazars' conversion to Judaism, on



contrary, he tells us that it was he who won the dispute, but looking at the numbers the converts given in his account one feels that for him, the dispute was a disaster. According to Zuckerman («On the Date of the Khazars» Conversion to Judaism and Chronology of the Kings of the Rus' Oleg and Igor,» Revue des études Byzantines (1995), pp. 237—270), the Khazars converted to Judaism after and as the result of a dispute of 861, and consequently, there was only one «stage in Judaization.» But why Constantine failed in Khazaria? Was it because the Jews were better-placed and more convicting than he or the Imam? Because the Khazars realized that they should keep distance from both the Caesar and the Khalifa?

It is strange that it was not articulated by the scholars that the story of Constantine's mission, the religious dispute at the royal yurt of the Khazar qagan, Khazar conversion to Judaism and the Christianization of the Slavs and the beginnings of the Slavonic letters and alphabet, the transfer to the Danuban-Bulgarian and Khazar traditions and cultural patterns to Rus' and the ultimate destruction of both Jewish Khazaria and the First Bulgarian Empire is basically one story.

If we turn westwards, we will see that about the year in which Constantine's mission took place, Khan Boris of Danuban Bulgaria embraced Christianity, first through the Franks. After Pope Nicholas I (858-67) refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Constantinople Patriarch Photius, a serious rift inside the Church Universal occurred and both clerics excommunicated each other in 863.

About the same time, the Moravian Prince Rostislav sent envoys to the Emperor Michael III asking alliance against the pushing Franks. The Emperor's choice to be his envoys to Rostislav fell — again — on two Thessalonical brothers, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, who had just returned from their Khazar mission.

But in 864 Boris of Danuban Bulgaria however received baptism for the second time, through the Byzantine priests, taking the Emperor's name, Michael, who was his father (in the Bulgar Prince List under 907 we are said that Boris baptized the Bulgars in the year[s] etxū bexti, explained by Marquart as Turkic ædǵū + Persian «Gutes Glück»). Boris also abandoned his royal title of Khan for the Slavic (of German origin) knjaz' (the title comes probably from Pannonia bordering on the Frankish Empire). One can ask whether there was a Khazar connection in this choice — probably in 864 the office of khan = qagan began to decline in Khazaria, as a result of Judaization? Did this office become burdened with too Jewish semantics?

In any case, after the Danuban Bulgars converted to Christianity — either Roman Catholic or Greek — they left thus no alternative to their Khazar foes but Judaism — accepting the same religion as their fugitive slaves would be seen by the Khazars as humiliating and disgrace, and this is of interest that the interrelationship between the simultaneous Khazar Judaization and Bulgar Christianization was seen necessary to contrast by Adalmar of Aquitaine (1840-864), a Benedictine monk at Corvey in Westphalia, who wrote his «Expositio in Matthaëum Evangelistam» (ed. by J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae Graecae completus, Series Latina, Vol. 106, Paris 1864, col. 1456) circa 864.

However, in 866 Boris renewed his contacts with the Western Church and the First Bulgarian Empire. This could be seen, to some degree, as the result of the new understanding that having subjugated himself to Constantinople religiously — while the Khazars did not — he humiliated himself and his people in the eyes of the Khazars.



In passing, one should observe that it is rather obvious that the Islamization of the Volgan Bulgars some 80 years later was an act of misloyalty towards their Jewish Khazar overlords.

Circa 866 we hear of a Jew (from Khazaria?) trying to convert Danuban Bulgars to Judaism, and circa 880, a Jew coming from Khazaria, Eldad ha-Dani, visited Maghrib Jewish communities. The activities of both men might reflect some missionary tendencies among the newly established Khazar Jewry; noteworthy is the possible Khazar interest in the events in Danuban Bulgaria; one should also note in passing the fact that writing a century later, Joseph the Khazar king ignores completely the fact that his fugitive slaves, the Danuban Bulgars, had dared to accept Christianity.

It is of interest to compare the parallel Kievan Rus' traditions as preserved in the Russian Primary Chronicle (*Povest' Vremenyx Let*; henceforth PVL), a composite source with strong Danuban Bulgarian Vorlage in its most ancient parts. The PVL knows of the flight of the Bulgars to the Danube from the Khazars, but combines this event with the two centuries later Magyar «Conquest of the Motherland» (896-900), for it says (p. 14): «slovensn»sku zhe jazyku ... zhivyshchju na Dunai pridoshia ot skuf' rekshe ot kozaru rekomii bolgare i sedoshia po Dunaevi i naselnici slovenom bysha; posem pridoshia ugri belii i nasledisha zeml' sloven'sku». The purpose of this tradition was to appropriate the Danuban Bulgar traditions and to equate «Slavonic» and «Rus»ian». The same appropriation of the Danuban Bulgar traditions can be seen in the information about the beginnings of the Rus' (PVL, p. 17): «v 6360 leto 15 indikta den» nachenshju Mixailu carstvovati nacha sja prozyvati Ruska zemlja o sem' bo uvedaxom jako pri sem' cari prixodisha Rus' na Car'gorod, jako zhe pishetsja v letopisan'i grech'stem». In fact, the date meant refers probably to the Bulgar conversion or to the religious dispute at the court of the Khazar qagan and the Khazar conversion to Judaism, for, according to the PVL, in 858 the Bulgars, seeing themselves unable to resist the army of the Emperor Michael, asked peace and baptism.

Under the next year the PVL tells of the Viking tribute put on the Chjud' and the Slovenes, on Merja, and Ves', Krivichians, and of the Khazar tribute put on the Polians, Severians, Viatichi.

Again the PVL tells of the christianization of the entire Bulgar land under 869.

Under 884 Oleg put tribute on the Severians prevented them from paying the Khazar tribute and said to them: «I am an enemy of theirs, and there is no need for you to pay them» (az im protiven, a vam ne k chemu). The next year he prevented the Radimichi from paying the Khazars the tribute.

The story of the embassy of the Moravian princes Rostislav, Svjatopolk and Kocel to the Emperor Michael is told under 898. There is no earlier reference to the Thessalonian brothers at all, and no reference to the Khazar mission appears in the PVL; however, our source tells us that Methodius stayed in Moravia, while Constantine returned back, to study the Bulgar language — reflecting thus, in a blurred-up form, the tradition of the Hebrew studies of the Illuminator of the Slavs before his travel to the Khazar stavka. So we can see clearly that under the «nachalo zemli russkaja» is meant the Christianization of the Slavs, keeping in mind the tendency of the redactor of the PVL to equate Rus' and Slavs.



The PVL enters a tradition about a religious dispute at the court of the Kievan Rus' only prior to the date of the Rus' Christianization, under 986: «pridosha bol'gary v zakon nash i poklonisja Boxmitu». I reche Volodimer: «Kako jest vera vasha?». I reche resha: «Veruem bogu, a Boxmit ny učit glagolja: obrezati udy tajnyja, i zheniny ne jasti, vina ne piti, a po smerti zhe, reche, so zhenami poxot» tvoriti bludnuju. I reche Boxmit komuzhdo po semidesjat zhen krasnyx, isberet jedinu krasnu, i vsex zasotu v'zlozhit na jedinu, ta budet jemu zheni. Zde zhe, reche, dostoin blud tvoriti zjak. Na sem' svete ashche budet kto ubog, to i tam», i ina mnoga lest', jeja zhe ne zhe psati srama radi. Volodimer zhe slushashe ix, be bo sam ljubja zheny i bluzhenie mnogoe, poslushashe sladko. No se emu be neljubo — obrezanje udov i o nejadenji zjas svinyx, a o pitji otnud', reka: «Rusi jest» veselje pitje, ne mozhem bes togo byti». It is well known that this tradition belongs to the common stock of the traditions about the religious dispute at the royal court, as found in the Hebrew, Slavonic, Muslim and Byzantine sources; what is interesting is that no parallel tradition is known coming from Danubian Bulgaria! However, the transfer of the Danubian Bulgar traditions to the Kievan Rus' needs a further investigation. My aim here was rather to call attention to the ethno-psychological aspects of the complicated relationships in the Khazar — Danubian-Bulgar — Byzantine triangle.

Appendix

We will now quote the information from the PVL relevant for the Bulgar-Khazar-Rus'ian-Byzantine relations combining this with dates of events in the Khazar history.

- 1) Khazars, unsuccessfully, attacked Darband.
- 2) Leon hired the Magyars against the Bulgars and they captured Semion.
- 3) Oleg attacked the Greeks. He hung his shield on the Gate of the Byzantine capital, clearly referring here to Krum's example.
- 4) or 912: Khazars, Saririans and Shandans defeated the Amir of Darband and the Shirwan-Shah.
- 5) or 912 or 914: Rus' attacks on the Caspian Sea, acting as the Khazar allies; slaughtered by the Khazar Muslims on their return with booty.
- 6) Patzinaks came to the Rus', made peace with Igor' and preceded to the Danube. Greeks tried to hire the Patzinaks against the Bulgars.
- 7) the traditional date of Oleg's death.
- 8) 990, Hisdai Ibn Shaprut in Muslim Spain; began his career circa 930 under Abd al-Rahman and continued under al-Hakam (961-976).
- 9) December 944, Roman I Lecapenus, Constantine's father-in-law.
- 10) 960?: King Joseph's rule in Khazaria.
- 11) 930: Oghuzs and Khazars at war.
- 12) Enmity between Khazars and Volgan Bulgars; Ibn-Fadlan's embassy to the Volga; Volgan Bulgars embrace Islam; the son of the king of Volgan Bulgaria goes on hajj to Mecca before 932.
- 13) Semion put siege on Constantinople and made peace with Roman.
- 14) 930: The Hebrew Letter from Kiev.
- 15) Magyars put siege on Constantinople and made peace with Roman.
- 16) Persecutions of Jews in Byzantium; Jewish emigration to Khazaria.
- 17) 940: The Black Bulgars freed themselves from the Khazars.

- 941: After having seized Kiev, Igor' attacked Byzantium; Bulgars informed the Byzantines about the approaching force.
- 942 Semion died, Peter rose in Bulgaria.
- 943: Magyars put siege on Constantinople and made peace with Roman.
- 943-4: Persecutions of Jews in Byzantium; Jewish emigration to Khazaria.
- 944: Igor' with the Patzinaks attacked Byzantium; Chersonites and Bulgars informed the Byzantines about the approaching force. Igor' turned back, but let the Patzinaks to attack Danubian Bulgaria. Roman normalized the situation with the Bulgar Car Peter.
- 945: Rus' campaign against Barda'ah.
- 943-947: al-Mas'udi composes his Murusj al-Dhahab; Ahmad b. Kuya, Khazarian vezier.
- 945-959: Helene and Constantine rule in Byzantium.
- circa 945 (334h): Constantine's embassy to Cordoba.
- 948: Constantine composes De Administration Imperio.
- 951: Magyars campaigned in Northern Spain.
- 953-4 (342h): German embassy to Cordoba.
- 953 Aharon the Khazar subjugates the rebelous Alans, promotes Judaism among them and takes an Alan princess for his son Joseph.
- 955: Magyars defeated at Augsburg.
- 955: Another German embassy to Cordoba.
- 958: Rus' short-living conversion to Roman Christianity.
- 960-992, Mieszko of Poland, converted in 966.
- circa 960, Ibn Shaprut's letter to Joseph the Khazar.
- 960: First Persian prose.
- 964: Svjatoslav went to the Oka and Volga and found the Vjatichians paying the tribute to the Khazars. The next year
- 965: Sarkel and perhaps Itil overrun by the Rus'. The qagan converted to Islam (but, according to Ibn al-Athir, «Khazars, except their king»): «ide Svjatoslav na kozary slyshavshe zhe kozari izidosha protivu s knjazem svoim kaganom i sustupishasja bitisja i byvshi brani odole Svjatoslav kozarom i grad ix i Belu Vezhju vzja i jasy pobedi i kasogi». There is too few references to the Khazars and the rout of the campaign seems to be more directed southwards.
- 966 or 973: The Jews Ibrahim b. Ya'qub al-Yahudi al-Turtushi noted Jews coming from Hungary to Prague; no information on the Khazar destruction a couple of years earlier.
- 966: Svjatoslav defeated the Vjatichians and put on them tribute.
- 967-8: Svjatoslav went off against the Danubian Bulgars, as a Byzantine ally.
- 968-9: Supposed to be the year of the «End of the Days», according to the Jewish authority Sadia Gaon.
- 968 The Patzinaks came first against Rus'.
- 970: Second Rus' campaign against Danubian Bulgaria.
- 980: Ghuzs crossed the Volga and appeared in the vicinity of Kiev; served as Igor's allies in his wars against the Black Bulgars.
- 986: The PVL tradition on the Muslim Bulgars asking Volodimer to accept their religion.
- 987: Rus' came to Darband on 18 ships to assist Maimun.
- 988: Volodimer of Kiev converts to Greek Christianity at Chersones.

