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NOMADS, NORTHMEN AND SLAVS

EASTERN EUROPE IN THE NINTH CENTURY

by

IMRE BOBA

1967

MOUTON · THE HAGUE

OTTO HARRASSOWITZ · WIESBADEN
As Volume II of this series was to appear "Tschwaschische Ortsnamen" by the late Adalbert John Burghard. The volume was already printed in the spring of 1957 (157 pp.) and was ready for distribution, when because of interference of the widow of the late author, it had to be taken out.

In its place is now appearing the monograph by Dr. Imre Boba. It was his doctoral dissertation, which in its final form was directed by me during my academic activity at the University of Washington (1961-1964).

The problems in connection with the foundations of the Old Rus state are manifold and have been studied for more than 200 years. Naturally the dissertation of Dr. Boba does not pretend to be regarded as the last word, but the author was able to present this so often discussed topic in a fresh and original way. I will always remember our long discussions during his work on his dissertation when I was able to give him some advice and help him with my experience, especially in the treatment of the Arabic sources. But even playing the role of *advocatus diaboli* I interfered only if it seemed to me to be necessary for methodological reasons. Therefore, conceptions and hypotheses expressed in the book are Dr. Boba’s own product and he takes all responsibility for them.

O. P.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to Professors Omeljan Pritsak, Peter F. Sugar, Marc Szeftel and Donald W. Treadgold of the University of Washington for their interest in my study, for their reading of several drafts, and for their profitable suggestions. While agreeing with them that many of my concepts may be considered bold and in need of further documentation, I submit this study for consideration and criticism in the belief that it may initiate a useful scholarly discussion.

I am grateful to the Far Eastern and Russian Institute of the University of Washington and to the trustees of the Agnes H. Anderson Fund (University of Washington) and of the Relm Foundation for their generous grants which facilitated the completion of this study. I also wish to express my thanks and appreciation to Miss Gladys Greenwood, editor of Far Eastern and Russian Institute University of Washington publications, and to my wife for their efforts in making the text more readable.
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The Primary Chronicle, our main source of information on Early Rus, presents the history of Eastern Europe during the ninth century in its full complexity. This history was shaped by elements of internal, external, and international developments. The first dated entries of the Chronicle already singled out the Varangians and the Khazars as two forces that continued to play important roles in these developments. The Chronicler was also aware of the participation in these events of other, non-Slavic, peoples of Eastern Europe. As the narrative of the Chronicle continues, we notice references to the Byzantine Greeks, to peoples of the western part of Europe, and, in a more dramatic context, to the various nomadic groups which moved into and disappeared from the Pontic Steppes.

The Rus Chronicler presents the history of Rus in its entirety. Setting himself the task of describing “from where the land of Rus has its beginnings”, he did not yet have a definite answer in mind, but posed the question and proceeded to give a full answer. He presented the whole history of Rus as it appeared to him, with no bias, preferences, or assumptions. We may regret that he has no answers to certain questions we should like to pose, but this only shows that for him other issues were of greater importance.

Our knowledge of contemporary Muslim, Byzantine, and Western sources confirms that the observations made by the Chronicler are in many instances strikingly accurate. Much can still be done to extract the full information contained in the Chronicle and thus to deepen our understanding of Kievan Rus.

There are in the Chronicle some ambiguities which, unfortunately, have been interpreted in modern times to support the contention that the Northmen played a dominant role in the process of formation of the Kievan State. The so-called Normanist theory, which originated in the early eighteenth century,1 explicitly or implicitly makes value judgments

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1 The so-called Normanist controversy began in the early eighteenth century, when Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer (1694-1738) published a collection of sources and some studies on the Scandinavian origin of the Varangians and of the Rurykid dynasty. The sources assembled by Bayer were used by Gerhart Friedrich Müller
on Nordic and Slavic abilities to organize and govern a state. Scholars have long devoted themselves to seeking evidence and formulating arguments for or against that concept. In fact, the various schools of historical interpretation in respect to Early Rus—the anti-Normanist, the Euro-Asiatic, the Marxist—have become but branches of the Normanist school. Instead of being rejected on methodological principles for its nonhistorical conclusions, the Normanist theory is being confronted with theories stressing the exclusiveness of Slavic\(^2\) or the preponderance of Khazar\(^3\) for a theory of a conquest of Eastern Europe by Northmen (\(= De \textit{origine gentis et nominis Russorum}\)). The theory was submitted in the Russian Imperial Academy in 1749 and was immediately repudiated by Mikhail V. Lomonosov. Since that date, the controversy has continued without signs of abating.

The Anti-Normanists are inclined to blame the origin of the controversy upon the author of the Russian Primary Chronicle. Mikhailo Hrushev’sky in his \textit{Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy}, 3rd ed. (Kiev, 1913) has stated that “no other source but the Russian Primary Chronicle speaks about a Varangian origin of Russia” (p. 385). He also added that “the theory of a Varangian state (in Eastern Europe) is based exclusively on the story of the Russian Primary Chronicle” (p. 386; cf. also p. 602). Of a similar opinion is Henryk Łowmiański in his \textit{Zagadnienie roli Normanów w genezie państw słowiańskich} (Warsaw, 1957), p. 36. Both authors are correct, insofar as the Normanists made the Primary Chronicle the main basis of their concepts, but both are mistaken in ascribing to the Chronicler the first formulation of the theory. A proper understanding of the Chronicler gives no basis for any such theory.

A modern presentation of the Normanist theory was made by V. Thomsen in \textit{The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia and the Origin of the Russian State} (Oxford-London 1877, and revised editions). There are several translations of this work: in German (Gotha, 1879); in Swedish (Stockholm, 1882); in Russian, in \textit{Chteniia v Moskovskom obshestve istorii i drevnostei} (Moscow, 1891); and in Danish, in his collected works (Copenhagen, 1919).

There are numerous surveys of the Normanist controversy, usually with some degree of engagement in favour of or against the theory. In the work of Hrushev’sky, cited above, there is a presentation of the earlier stage of the controversy on pages 602-24. The book by Łowmiański surveys the controversy up to 1936. A survey of recent opinions is given by I. P. Shaskolskii in “Normanskaia teoriia v sovremennoi burzhuaznoi istoriografii”, \textit{Istoriia SSSR}, I (1960), No. 1, pp. 223-36.


\(^2\) E.g. V. V. Mavrodin, \textit{Drevnaia Ruś, proiskhozdenie russkogo naroda i obrazovanie Kievskogo gosudarstva} (Leningrad, 1946); A. N. Nasonov, “Russkaiia Zemlia” i obrazovanie territorii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva (Moscow, 1951); B. D. Grekov, \textit{Kievskaia Ruś}, several editions, first ed., with the title \textit{Feodalnye otnosheniia v Kievskom gosudarstvie} (Moskva-Leningrad, 1935), and also English translations; P. N. Tretiaakov, \textit{Vostochnoslavianskie plemena}, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1953).

\(^3\) A positive role of the Khazars, despite the alleged subjugation of some Slavic tribes to Khazar domination, was assessed, i.a., by V. O. Kliuchevskii (1841-1911), Sochineniia, Vol. I (Moscow, 1956), pp. 125-27. Similarly A. A. Shakhatmatov in his \textit{Drevneishia sudby russkago plemen} (Petrograd, 1919), passim. For more exaggerated and less tenable views see V. A. Parkhomenko, \textit{U istokov russkoi gosudarstven-}
elements in the process of the formation of the Kievan state. There are even theories which attempt to reconcile the conflicting concepts. The whole polemic known as the Normanist controversy assumes often a nationalistic and political character instead of that of a genuine historical disputation.

There are still many open issues in the history of Eastern Europe, which, studied without recourse to theories, would help to reduce the Normanist controversy to its proper dimensions. There is still, for instance, much to be done in order to establish the real picture of the Slavic tribal institutions, which fulfilled in the Middle Ages the requirements of an organized society. The roles of Byzantium and of the Church might also be re-evaluated and their influence upon the formation of the supratribal nation of Rus elucidated. Although there is an abundance of studies on the nomads of Eastern Europe, there is little which would correlate their presence with the developments leading to the emergence of the Kievan State.

The purpose of this study is to trace the changing role of certain no-

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4 Ad. Stender-Petersen, “Das Problem der ältesten byzantinisch-russisch-nordischen Beziehungen”, Relazioni, Vol. III (International Congress of History, Rome, 1955), pp. 165-88. The main argument of Stender-Petersen is that there was a slow infiltration of Swedish agricultural population into Northern Russia. This theory is, however, contradicted by the testimony of the Muslim sources that the Northmen in Eastern Europe had no agriculture. Stender-Petersen assumes that the Swedes learned the vocation of tradesmen from the Bulgars and the Khazars. For several other studies of Ad. Stender-Petersen on the Varangians and the Slavs see his Varangica (Aarhus, 1953).


6 Ocherki istorii SSSR III-IX vv., ed. B. A. Rybakov (Moscow, 1958) and Ocherki istorii SSSR IX-XIII vv., ed. B. D. Grekov (Moscow, 1953). Both volumes have large sections devoted to the history of the nomads of the East European steppe zone and to the history of the Finno-Ugric people of the North, but there was no attempt made to integrate their histories with the developments in Slavic Eastern Europe.
matic federations and states in the developments in Eastern Europe shortly before and during the ninth century. Since Eastern Europe is divided into a zone of forests and a zone of steppes, separated by a park zone most suitable for human settlement, the autochtons of this last region were always in the past in close contact with nomadic tribes of the steppes. The formation of Slavic tribal states of the Dnieper Basin and the emergence of Kiev as a city and later as the center of a supratribal state were, in many respects, affected by the presence of those nomads. It was also certain developments in the Khazar Empire and among the nomads in the steppes that made the settlement of some Northmen in Eastern Europe possible and even, from the point of view of the Slavs, necessary and advantageous.

On the basis of relevant Muslim, Byzantine, West European, and Slavic sources, several problems connected with the emergence of Kievan Rus will be re-analyzed in the subsequent chapters, some earlier assumptions revised and new observations made. It is, for instance, our contention, that the river Dnieper, contrary to general belief, could not be fully utilized as an economically important trade route connecting Scandinavia with Byzantium because of the numerous cataracts obstructing navigation and the dangers posed by the nomads. Further, it is contended that Slavic tribal states existed in Eastern Europe during the ninth century and that their consolidation was due to the long-lasting peace secured by the Khazar Empire on the Volga. The Khazars prevented the influx into Europe of new nomadic waves, and their interest in trade stimulated the economic growth of the Slavic tribes. The emergence of Kiev as an important economic and political center is connected with its strategic location, the site having been used in the early ninth century as an Altaic – Avar or Khazar – outpost, securing and servicing the overland trade routes connecting Central Europe with the Muslim East.

The tributary affiliation of some East Slavic tribes with the Khazars is reinterpreted as a protective measure in the face of the appearance of the Northmen in the region of Lake Ilmen and of some nomadic tribes in the steppe zone. The tributary affiliation did not take place before the middle of the ninth century and did not interfere with the full self-government of the affected tribes.

In the course of the reconstruction of events of the ninth century in Eastern Europe, the opinions as to the reasons behind the Khazar defense measures against some tribes are scrutinized anew. Attempts have been made in the past to identify these tribes with the Ruses, Pechenegs or Magyars (i.e., Hungarians). The theory is here proposed that the disturbances in the Don region were caused, not by a single group, but by two independent tribal federations known in the sources as the Onogurs and the Majghari. Our contention is that the Magyars (i.e., the Hungarians) did not yet exist at that time as a nation or as a tribal federation. Accord-
ing to this theory, the Onogurs were remnants of the defeated Avaric federation escaping from the middle Danube region and the Majghari were identical with the Meshchera of the Oka-Volga region. The Meshchera/Majghari were forced out of their abodes on the Oka River by the Ruses, who established in that region their center of Arthania. The Majghari and the Onogurs merged by the end of the ninth century and moved into Hungary.

It is further reasserted here that the so-called 'invitation of the Ruses' is a historical fact: the Ruses were a professional, and not an ethnic, association of soldiers and merchants, who were invited by the people of the Ilmen region to serve as mercenaries against the inroads of the Vikings.

Subsequently the developments in Novgorod and Kiev during the decade 850-60 are related to the events in the Khazar Empire. It is contended that the tension along the borders of the Khazar Empire created conditions under which the usurpation of power by the Ruses in Novgorod was possible. In c. 880 the Pechenegs again blocked the Volga, and the repercussions of this event are related in the study to the expulsion of the Ruses from Novgorod. At that time the professional Rus organization was already a heterogeneous body composed of 'Varangians' (i.e., foreigners from the West), Slavs, and Finno-Ugors. The expelled Ruses moved against Kiev.

Furthermore, in the light of these observations, doubt is cast on the traditional interpretation of a fragment of the Primary Chronicle: The hypothesis is submitted that it was not the Slovenes, Krivichi, and Meria who paid tribute to the Ruses, but some cities along the rivers which paid tribute to the Slovenes, Krivichi, and Meria, all of whom participated in the Rus organization.

The study concludes that in Kiev there was for a long time a dualism of authority: one around the heterogenous military organization of Rus (the Druzhina), and one around the veche, the self-government of the autochthonous population. The merger of the two elements of authority was the result of the common and prolonged fight against the nomads of the steppes in self-defense and for the right of utilization of the South Russian waterways.

This study is based primarily on written sources. Our method of

7 There is an abundance of sources for the study of the history of Eastern Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries. In addition to the chronicles of Old Rus, there are the Muslim (Arabic and Persian) geographic and historical descriptions, Byzantine chronicles, sources produced in Latin in Central and Western Europe, and writings in Old English and Scandinavian languages. Although only a few of these sources have been preserved in the original, the value of the extant copies is undisputed. – The Old Rus chronicles are available in various editions and translations, the most important being the Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei of which the latest volume
Dealing with these sources is founded on the belief that the chroniclers and medieval historians knew and understood the events described by them much better than we. It is far more likely that the obscurity of certain passages in their narratives is due, not to the ignorance of a medieval scribe, but to our own inability to comprehend. Unless we can establish contact with the thought-world of the medieval chronicler and historian whose works are our main source of knowledge, we may completely fail in our attempts to understand the history of Early Rus.

In our attempts to restore the history of Early Rus, we may fail unless we are able to disassociate ourselves from modern concepts such as nation and state. A medieval state was something quite different from the territorial state of modern times, which emerged during the fifteenth and...
sixteenth centuries and is still undergoing constant change. We have to remind ourselves, among other things, that an ethnic group is not necessarily the equivalent of a nation. Whereas the first is only a biological reality, the second is the product of intellect and can encompass individuals of various different ethnic origins. Consequently, the state as an expression of nationhood should not be construed as an ethnic or biological formation.
I

THE ROLE OF THE DNIEPER RIVER IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF EASTERN EUROPE

The understanding of developments in the history of Kievan Rus has been obscured by the perseverance of opinions based on some assumptions with little or no documentation. Such is the case with the belief that the River Dnieper played a crucial role in the growth of the political and economic strength of Kievan Rus.\(^1\) In reality, the Dnieper performed at times a positive, and at times a negative, role, depending on various, constantly changing, factors. Although it may be true that the Dnieper provided economic possibilities for the growth of a state, these possibilities were never fully utilized in the Middle Ages because of insurmountable difficulties created by the very nature of the river, as well as by the political conditions along its banks.

Another opinion which persists without much recourse to sources is that there existed a waterway connecting the Scandinavian North with Byzantium along the rivers of Eastern Europe, and that this route was essential for the economic life of the Kievan State. A most frequently quoted phrase from the Primary Chronicle is the reference to a route “from the land of the Varangians to Greece” (“put’ iz Variag v Greki”). Emphasis on opinions rather than on facts caused the phrase to be translated into English as “a trade route [which] connected the Varangians with the Greeks”.\(^2\) This mistranslated phrase is often the sole argument in support of the notion that there was a large-scale trade exchange between Scandinavia and Byzantium and that the whole of Kievan Rus flourished on that trade.

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The role of the Dnieper River

A. "PUT' IZ VARIAG V GREKI"

Even today lakes and rivers offer the cheapest means of inland transportation. The role of the waterways in shaping the economic and political life of people was much more evident during the Middle Ages, when wheeled transport was difficult and time less valued than it is today. Medieval cities of economic significance grew along navigable rivers, at the mouths of such rivers, or at places where rivers and other trade routes converged, and where the adjacent region provided a sizeable market.

Eastern Europe is especially well endowed with rivers connecting the core of the continent with all of the surrounding seas. There are no big mountains to hinder overland transportation of goods between two navigable rivers. The system of portages, developed and maintained during the Middle Ages for the purpose of auxiliary traffic, made all of Russia accessible by boat. (Moscow is today a port serving five seas by means of a network of rivers and canals.)

The political unity of Eastern Europe is, in part, the result of the economic interdependence of her regions based on her rivers. The expansion of Russia across the Ural Mountains into Asia, to the shores of the Pacific, was accomplished mainly by boat along the rivers, which are connected by relatively short and flat portages.3 In this case, economic expansion was followed closely by political integration.

In the history of Kievan Rus, the most important river was obviously the Dnieper. Kiev is located in the center of a large geographic region drained by that river and its tributaries. The rivers of the Dnieper Basin provide conditions for an economically independent region, the prosperity of which depends on the political consolidation of that area and on peaceful conditions along the borders for the pursuit of trade with neighbors.

The opinion that the Dnieper was used primarily as an economically important transit route connecting the Scandinavians with the Greeks is based on the following description of East European waterways given in the Primary Chronicle:

When the Polanians lived by themselves among these hills, there was a route from the Varangians to the Greeks. And starting from the Greeks [this route proceeds] along the Dnieper. At the upper part of the Dnieper [there is] a portage to the river Lovat, and along the Lovat one may enter the great lake Ilmen. From this lake flows out the river Volkov and flows into the great lake Nevo. And the mouth of that lake opens into the Varangian Sea. Over this sea one may go to Rome and from Rome, over the same sea, one may arrive at Constantinople. And from Constantinople it is possible to enter the

3 Cf. B. H. Sumner, op. cit., p. 22; D. M. Lebedev, Ocherki po istorii geografii v Rossii XV i XVI vekov (Moscow, 1956), pp. 27-116, maps 3-12, especially map no. 4. See also article and map "Velikie geograficheskie okrytiia" in Sovetskaia istoricheskaia entsiklopediia, Vol. 3 (1963), cols. 135-39.
THE ROLE OF THE DNIEPER RIVER

Black Sea. Into this [sea] flows the Dnieper River. The Dnieper itself flows out from the Okov Forest. And from the same forest flows the River Dvina and goes northward and enters into the Varangian Sea. From the same forest flows the Volga eastward and flows into the sea of Khvalis through seventy mouths. So that from Rus it is possible to go along the Volga to the Bulgars and to the Khvalisians and [going] eastward one may arrive to the region which is the share of Shem. And along the Dvina [one may go] to the Varangians, from the Varangians to Rome, then from Rome to the tribe of Ham and the Dnieper flows into the Black Sea through a mouth. This sea is named [also] the sea of the Rus. Beside it was teaching, as it is said, St. Andrew, brother of Peter.4

At the first reading of this passage one encounters some apparent contradictions. First, traveling along the Volga, passing the Bulgars, and before reaching the sea, one should cross the land of the Khazars and not the land of the Khvalisians. Second, the actual description of “the route from the Varangians to the Greeks” starts from the south and not from the north, as implied in the opening sentence of that fragment. This route is then extended to lead around Europe to Rome and back to Greece, forming a full circle. Third, the shortest route from the Varangians to the Greeks leads not along the Volkhov and Lovat, but along the Western Dvina. Fourth, the description mentions only one portage between the Dnieper and Lovat, while in reality there are two. Finally, a serious problem is posed by the chronological inconsistency: according to the Primary Chronicle, the Varangians first appeared in Kiev only around the middle of the ninth century,5 but the description of the waterway is interpreted usually as if the route had been used by them much earlier, “when the Polanians lived by themselves”.

In order to analyze the description and understand it as it was understood by the Chronicler, we have to approach it, not as an isolated episode, but against the background given by the Chronicle itself.

The fragment of the Chronicle directly following the description of the waterways is the legend of St. Andrew. St. Andrew, according to the Chronicler, desired to return from Sinope in Asia Minor to Rome. The first part of his journey was to the Greek city of Chersonesus in the Crimea, then up the Dnieper past the hills where later Kiev was founded and up to the Slovenes “where Novgorod is now situated”. From here the saint went to the Varangians and later to Rome, obviously around Europe. After a sojourn in Rome he departed again, this time directly to Sinope.

After reading this fragment, one may immediately observe that

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5 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 20.
details of St. Andrew’s itinerary are similar to, although not identical with, the description of the route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”. A closer analysis reveals, however, that the similarity does not result from repetitiveness but that the two descriptions are complementary to each other. The first is a description of a possible route, the second of an actual journey. A close genetic relation between the two descriptions can immediately be deduced when the relevant fragments are arranged in parallel columns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF THE ROUTE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF THE JOURNEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was a route from the Varangians to the Greeks.</td>
<td>St. Andrew went from Sinope to Crimea . . . When in Chersonesus, he learned that not far from there is the mouth of the Dnieper. He journeyed up the Dnieper and climbed the hill where later Kiev was founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Greeks this route proceeds along the Dnieper</td>
<td>And he arrived to the Slovenes where now Novgorod stands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the upper part of the Dnieper a portage to the River Lovat, and along the Lovat one may enter the great lake Ilmen . . . .</td>
<td>And he went to the land of the Varangians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the mouth of the lake Neva opens into the Varangian Sea.</td>
<td>And he arrived in Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over this sea one may go to Rome . . . .</td>
<td>After a sojourn in Rome, he arrived in Sinope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Rome to Constantinople . . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Constantinople it is possible to enter the Black Sea. Into this sea flows the Dnieper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beside this sea was teaching St. Andrew.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears obvious that the Chronicler regarded the two fragments as a unit: The last sentence of the first column, “Beside this sea was teaching St. Andrew” is not the end of a separate paragraph, but a transition to the description of the actual journey undertaken by the Saint. The modern
editions of the text and translations break up the original text into convenient, but arbitrary, paragraphs reflecting the logic of the editors but not that of the Chronicler.

The joint treatment of the two descriptions allows us to draw several obvious conclusions. First of all, the description of the route is a geographic introduction to the description of the journey. The Chronicler knew the legend about St. Andrew “as it is said”, but some of the elements appeared to him to be unusual: The saint wanted to go to Rome, but instead of using the direct way, he took a roundabout route without any clear purpose. He did not encounter anybody at the spot where Kiev was subsequently built. He saw the Slovenes, but he did not talk to them. He went from there to the Varangians, i.e. the ‘foreigners around the Baltic’, but here again he did not preach or make converts. The Chronicler would not change the legend (it was done later), but he wanted, nevertheless, to explain that such an itinerary was possible. Hence, the geographic description starts not from Constantinople, as often is assumed, but from Sinope, on the southern shores of the Black Sea. This is the place where St. Andrew was teaching and to which he returned after the journey.

It also has to be noted that the geographic description is formulated in the past tense, although a present tense would have been more appropriate, if such a route had been in use at the time of the Chronicler. That the description reflects a situation in the past is indicated also by the fact that at the time to which the description refers, neither Kiev nor Novgorod existed. The Polanians “lived by themselves among these hills” and “the Slovenes (lived) where now Novgorod stands”.

The apparent inconsistency that “the route from the Varangians to the Greeks” is the longer way across the northern lakes, and not the shortest and most convenient along the western Dvina, thus becomes explained. Obviously, the geographic description was intended only as an introduction to the account of the actual journey and not as a description of the shortest trade route.

Also, the disturbing contradiction between the caption “the route from the Varangians to the Greeks” and the actual description, which starts from the Greeks rather than from the Varangians, can now be disregarded. First of all, the phrase “put’ iz Variag v Greki” refers only to the fact of the existence of a route between the Baltic Sea and Byzantium. The phrase does not say, and the Chronicler did not mean, that the route was used by the Varangians only or that it was used for commercial purposes. So even the chronological contradiction becomes irrelevant.

Finally, the observation should be made that the Russian terms *iz Variag* and *v Greki* do not refer to any ethnic groups but only to two geographic regions. *Iz Variag* means from the foreign lands around the Baltic. *Ot Variag* would mean from the Varangians. Similarly, *v Greki* means to Greece, *k Grekam* would mean to the Greeks. The so often misinterpreted and mistranslated caption *iz Variag v Greki* should actually be interpreted to read: from the foreign lands around the Baltic to Byzantium.\(^7\)

It is now possible to conclude that the description of the waterway “*iz Variag v Greki*” is part of the St. Andrew legend. The geographic elements of the route do, in fact, correspond to reality, but the description cannot be used to approximate the date when such a route was discovered or frequented by the Varangians. Consequently, the phrase “a route from the Baltic to Byzantium” cannot be used as evidence for the economic significance of the Dnieper.

### B. THEORIES BASED ON THE ANNALES BERTINIANI

Another source frequently used in connection with the problem of the use of the Dnieper River is the *Annales Bertiniani*.\(^6\) This chronicle, which originated in Western Europe, contains the first undisputed reference to the people named Rhos. The source is highly reliable, because it is contemporary with the events it describes and because it was composed – or at least the part important for the study of early Russian history – by Bishop Prudentius of Troyes.

According to Bishop Prudentius, who was probably an eye witness of the events: “Envoys of the Greeks arrived, dispatched by the Emperor Theophile.... The Emperor [Louis I] received them with honors on the 18th day of May [839] in Ingelheim.” With those envoys came “some people who said that they, that is, their people, were named Rhos”. Theophile sent Louis a letter, in which he explained the background of these Rhos people. “The king of theirs [i.e., of the Rhoses], named Chaganus, dispatched them to him [i.e., to Theophile] in the cause of friendship (*amicitia causa*).”\(^9\)

Theophile appealed to Louis I to assist the Rhos envoys in their attempt to return home on a roundabout way “because the roads on which they

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\(^7\) There are basic semantic differences between the forms v *Greki*, k *Grekam*, na *Greki*. The first form means 'into Greece', the second 'to the Greeks', and the third 'against the Greeks'.


\(^9\) *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 839.
came to him to Constantinople lead through wild, extremely ferocious tribes”.

Bishop Prudentius also recounted that Louis made some investigations of the background of the Rhos envoys and “he found out that they belonged to, or were by origin, Sueones, ("comperit, eos gentis esse Sue-<
onum"). He suspected that the envoys were not on a tour of friendship but rather on a spying mission, collecting intelligence both in Greece and in the Carolingian Empire. Louis, using the pretext of danger along the frontiers of his own empire, detained the envoys and sent a letter to Theophile explaining his suspicion. Unless the suspicion was cleared by both of them, Louis was prepared to send the envoys back to Theophile.

There is unanimous agreement among the scholars of early Russian history that the Rhos envoys were the same people known to the Greeks as ‘Ros’ and to the Arabs as ‘Rus’, and that all these names refer to the ancestors of the Russians. This consensus of scholarly opinion ends when we come to the problems of their ethnic origin and the more exact location of their abodes in the earlier part of the ninth century. The problem of the ethnic character of the Rhos envoys should not concern us here. More important for the present study are the questions from where the Rhos envoys came to Constantinople, and whether they used the Dnieper waterway.

As we learned from Bishop Prudentius, the return of the Rhos envoys to their homes by a direct route starting in Constantinople was hindered by some “wild and extremely ferocious tribes”. The name of these tribes has not been preserved in the Annales Bertiniani, but we may assume that they were nomadic groups somewhere in the steppe zone north of the Black Sea menacing the Byzantine possessions. The Rhos people must therefore have lived somewhere north, not only of the Greeks, but also north of the dangerous steppe zone.

In this general area Ibn Khurdādhbeh, a well-informed Arabian geographer of the ninth century, reported some Rus merchants who were interested in fur trade with the Arabic East. The information of Ibn Khurdādhbeh refers to a period prior to 847 (the date when his description was composed). According to his information, the Rus are “a tribe from among the as-$aqāliba [people]. They bring furs of beavers and of black foxes and swords from the most distant parts of the Ṣaqlabiya [land] to the sea of Rūm, [where] the ruler of ar-Rūm levies tithes on them. If they want, they travel on the Itil, the river of the aę-Saqaliba and pass through Khamlij, town of the Khazars...”

The river a$-Ṣaqāliba is definitely the Volga River, because on its banks

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10 Ibid., “... exploratores potius regni illius nostriere quam amicitiae petitores....”
11 Ibid.
was Khamlij, the city of the Khazars. The sea of Rum is the Mediterranean, to which a sea route led from the Baltic. For Ibn Khurdadhbeh, who lived in the Bagdad Caliphate, “the most distant part of the Šaqlabya [land]” must have been, therefore, an area in northwestern Europe, from where there was easy access both to the Volga River and to the Baltic. From such a region the Rus merchants could travel without much hindrance to the Khazars. This conclusion is in agreement with the Primary Chronicle, where the information on the Varangians in general, and on the “Varangian Ruses” in particular, connects them first with the northwest, the region around Lake Ilmen, before their appearance in Kiev in the fifties of the ninth century.¹³

There still remains the problem of the route their envoys might have used for the journey from the Lake Ilmen region to Constantinople. Traveling from the northwest to Constantinople, the Rhos had a choice of three routes: the roundabout sea route, the Dnieper, and the Volga/Don waterways. Of course, they could also have used any combination of waterways and roads, but since the people of Rus were expert boatmen, it is wholly unlikely that the envoys traveled by land. Neither is the sea route a possibility, because Bishop Prudentius explicitly stated that the envoys could not use for the return journey those roads by which they had come to Constantinople because they led through wild, extremely ferocious tribes. Of the two river routes, the connection along the Volga and Don would seem the more likely, since the use of the Volga route is attested to by Ibn Khurdadhbeh for times prior to 847 (the date of his compilation). As for the Dnieper there is no evidence that it was used before 860 for transport.

The problem of floating down the rivers to the Black Sea is rather a simple venture compared to the problem of going up the rivers, especially when the banks of a river are controlled by nomads. In case of disturbances in the Pontic Steppes, the Dnieper would be the river most exposed to dangers, because this river was far from Khazar, Byzantine, or Danubian-Bulgar military centers capable of, or interested in, fighting the nomads in that region. But it would be equally dangerous to use the Dniester or the river Don. Theoretically, the Volga, controlled by the Khazars, was still at the disposal of the Rus envoys. For the Greeks it would have been no problem to have sent the Rus envoys to the Crimea and thence to the eastern shores of the Black Sea, where the Khazars could have provided further assistance for the journey up the Volga.

A. A. Shakhmatov has suggested that at the time of the envoys’ attempted return home, the rivers were not considered for the journey because, according to him, the Rus people were plotting with the Greeks against the Khazars. Shakhmatov has entirely disregarded the possibility

¹³ Likhachev, Povesti vremennykh let, p. 18.
of dangers posed by some nomads, although he has quoted the relevant text of the *Annales Bertiniiani* in Latin and also in Russian translation. There is, however, no evidence brought forward by Shakhmatov to support his suggestion, and the theory, therefore, cannot be sustained. The theory has obvious weaknesses: The Greeks could not have expected any benefits from a conflict with the Khazars, who could have easily overrun the Byzantine grain-producing possessions on the Crimea. Furthermore, there was no cause for friction between the Khazars and the Greeks of Byzantium at this time, since both nations were exposed to the dangers of the strong and militant Arabs and, in fact, shortly before the Rus envoys' arrival, were cooperating in strengthening their defenses against new, common enemies from the steppes.\(^{14}\)

B. D. Grekov was definitely of the opinion that the Dnieper was the river on which the envoys moved down to the Black Sea and on which they intended to return. Grekov's simple argument was that the Chagan of Rus had his residence in Kiev. The aim of the mission was to enter into an alliance with the Greeks against the Pechenegs, who in Grekov's opinion were already at this time (i.e., 839) around the banks of the Dnieper.\(^{15}\) In Grekov's theory there are weak points of argumentation and also serious chronological inconsistencies:

First of all, there is no evidence that a Khagan of Ruses resided in Kiev before the middle of the ninth century. The Oriental sources, Ibn Rūsta, the anonymous Persian author of *Hudūd al-Ālam* and Gardīzī, in fact, used the title 'qāghān' for the ruler of Rus, but without definitely indicating when and where such a Khagan resided.\(^{16}\) All these Oriental sources were composed during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The fragments dealing with the Rus and other peoples of Eastern Europe reflect a situation existing in the second rather than the first part of the ninth century.

Furthermore, Grekov's identification of the nomads with the Pechenegs is a gross anachronism because the Pecheneg federation did not appear in Eastern Europe until the second half of the ninth century, probably only around the year 880. This is the date when they crossed the Volga.\(^{17}\)

The whole structure of theories presented by Grekov was demolished, actually by himself, when in the same study some pages later, he quoted the Primary Chronicle that in "915 the Pechenegs came for the first time against the land of Rus". Grekov had no reservations about the accuracy

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\(^{14}\) For A. A. Shakhmatov's opinion see his *Drevneishia sudby ruskago plemeni* (Petrograd, 1919), pp. 57-58. For the Khazar-Byzantine cooperation see below, pp. 70-71.

\(^{15}\) *Ocherki istorii SSSR III-IX vv.*, edited by B. A. Grekov (Moscow, 1958), p. 75.

\(^{16}\) *Hudūd al-Ālam, ‘The Regions of the World’*, translated and explained by V. C. Minorsky (London, 1937), p. 159. The title Kagan was applied later to Vladimir the Saint, Jaroslav the Wise, and Oleg, son of Sviatoslav.

of the Chronicle's statement, but even paraphrased the sentence, repeating that the Pechenegs lived their nomadic life between the Don and the Danube at the beginning of the tenth century.

Since all these speculations do not prove that the Ruses used the Dnieper, it must be admitted that the information contained in the *Annales Bertiniani* gives no clue to the existence of a waterway along that river which could have been used for transportation as early as 839. Only the hypothesis may be proposed that the danger in the steppes, north of Byzantium, extended from the Danube to the Volga and that it was for this reason that the Rus envoys could not utilize any of the rivers and had to return home across the lands of Louis I.

C. THE TESTIMONY OF MUSLIM SOURCES

Another document, contemporary with the *Annales Bertiniani*, which must be considered in a discussion of the chronology and utilization of the East European waterways, is the “Book of Roads and Kingdoms” by Ibn Khurdādhbeh, the author already referred to in connection with the problem of the geographic location of the earliest abodes of the Ruses in Eastern Europe.

The “Book of Roads and Kingdoms” was composed, as already indicated, in 847; hence, it has exceptional value for the chronology of developments in Eastern Europe. Ibn Khurdādhbeh was especially interested in trade routes and was able to assemble a wealth of relevant information covering Europe from Spain to the Urals and the lands of the Near and Far East.

There are two fragments in Khurdādhbeh’s book that deserve closer attention. The first fragment contains a description of the waterways used by the Rus merchants and the second deals with the routes used by the Radanite Jewish merchants for their trade between Spain and the Far East.\(^{18}\) Part of the first fragment has already been quoted,\(^ {19}\) but here the complete text of both fragments is reproduced to permit closer analysis.

“*The Route of the ar-Rūs Merchants*”

> They are a tribe from among the as-$\check{S}$aqāliba. They bring furs of beavers and of black foxes and swords from the most distant parts of the $\check{S}$aqlabiya [land] to the sea of Rūm [where] the ruler of ar-Rūm levies tithes on them. If they want, they travel on the Itīl, the river of the as-$\check{S}$aqāliba and pass through Khamlij, the town of the Kbazars, [where] the ruler of it levies tithes on them. Then they arrive at the sea of Gurjān and they land on that shore of it which they choose. The diameter of that sea is 500 farsakhs. On occasion they bring their merchandise on camels from Gurjān to Bagdad, [where] a$\check{S}$-

\(^{18}\) Lewicki, *Źródła arabskie*, pp. 76-77.

\(^{19}\) See above, p. 24.
Saqūliba eunuchs serve them as interpreters. They claim to be Christians and pay [only] head tax.

"Their [i.e., the Jewish Merchants'] Land Route"

The Jewish merchant who starts out from Spain or from the land of the Franks traverses the sea in the direction of as-Sūs al-aqṣā. [From there] he proceeds to Tanger, then to Ifríqiya, Miṣr [i.e., Egypt], Ramla, Damascus, al-Kūfa, Bagdad, al-Baṣra, al-Ahwāz, Fars, Kirman, Sind, India, and China. On occasion, [the Jewish merchants] take [the road] above Rūmiya [i.e., Byzantium], across the aṣ-Ṣaqāliba [land], thence to Khamlij, the town of the Khazars; thence in the direction of Balh and of Mā warā' an-nahr [i.e., Transoxania], thence to Wurtu [Ordu] Toghuzguz, thence to China.²⁰

The river as-Ṣaqāliba in the itineraries quoted above, as already mentioned, flows into the Caspian Sea (sea of Gurjān)²¹ and can be easily identified with the Volga. This river was used by tradesmen at least since the times of the Gothic domination over the regions north of the Black Sea. The Volga was probably used already by those Suehans who, according to Jordanes, the historian of the Goths, were engaged in fur trade with Byzantium.²² According to Jordanes, the Suehans arrived in Byzantium after having traversed lands of many peoples. J. Marquart suggested that the Suehans used the Volga, the Don, the Sea of Azov, and the Black Sea.²³ We should note here that the Suehans of Jordanes and the Sueonis-Rhoses of Bishop Prudentius seem to be the same people, or of similar ethnic extraction.

The Volga-Don route to Byzantium used by Scandinavians was discontinued at the downfall of the Gothic empire, when the fur trade with Byzantium was taken over by the nomads. The Volga was not rediscovered by Scandinavians until the earliest part of the ninth century, when it was used for contacts between the regions around the Baltic and the lands of the Arabic East.

There is less agreement as to the second route used by the Rus merchants. The problem is whether the route "from the most distant parts of the Ṣaqlabiya [land] to the Sea of Rum" led along the Dnieper or around Europe to the Mediterranean.²⁴

A sea route around Europe was known to Ibn Hauqal, another Arabic

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²² Jordanes, Getica 3, 21.
²⁴ For the complex problem of names used for various seas cf. Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. “Buntus”, “Baḥr al-Khazar”, “Baḥr ar-Rūm”.
Geographer of the middle of the tenth century. He described a connection between "the bay beyond the land of Ṣaqlaba" and Spain, which was used by merchants trading in beaver skins. For the Arabs this "bay beyond the land of Ṣaqlaba" was the Baltic. The most convenient connection from the Baltic to Spain was, of course, the one by sea.

The same author knew that the Ruses had frequented this route. According to him the Ruses used to travel from the Khazars across Byzantine possessions to Spain, and then, further on to their homelands. Travel over such a long roundabout way at the time when the Volga was already in commercial use must be explained as a necessity dictated by strictly technical requirements. It was easy for the Rus, from a base around Lake Ilmen, to float down to the Caspian, but the return up the river was difficult and sometimes dangerous.

This report of Ibn Ḥauqal describes a practice of the Ruses as observed in the tenth century, but his information adds credibility to Ibn Khurdādhbeh's report that a connection between the Baltic and the Mediterranean leading around Europe existed already before 847.

Further evidence for the existence of a sea route frequented by the Northmen can be derived from sources describing the Viking raids against the cities of Western Europe. These raids were conducted from Scandinavia and Denmark by boats. From a chronological point of view, the information related by al-Yaʿqūbī (end of the ninth century) that a people named Rus attacked Seville in H. 233 (843/4) is of importance. This raid was an extension of the yearly attacks of the Northmen against the cities of France and Germany. In 844, going up the Garonne, they plundered Toulouse. In 845, they arrived in Paris and collected seven thousand pounds of peace money.

The attack on Seville is especially significant because al-Masʿūdi (c. 950), when dealing with the same or a similar attack on Andalusia, adds the explanatory note that the attack was made by the Rus people, because they were the only sea-going people using the waterways connecting the ocean with the Maeotis (i.e., the Sea of Azov).

There is a dispute among scholars as to the identity of the Rus people attacking Seville in 843/4, but this problem is here of lesser importance. Although al-Masʿūdi has mentioned the Sea of Azov, the attack against Seville did not come from the Mediterranean. His information reflects only the fact that the Ruses were known all around the coastal line of Europe.

27 Cf. Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 93, 98.
29 Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 250-51.
30 Annales Bertiniani, s.a.
31 Various semantic meanings of the term 'Rus' will be discussed on pp. 102-108.
Both the Western and the Oriental sources provide sufficient background to identify the route “from the most distant part of ʿAqlabiyah [land] to the sea of Rum” with a roundabout sea route. The trade contacts between the lands of the Baltic and the Mediterranean were in the hands of the Northmen.

The second fragment quoted from Ibn Khurdādhbeh’s “Book of Roads and Kingdoms” describes an overland route connecting Spain across Europe with India and China. This overland route was an alternative for some other possible itineraries leading across the Mediterranean or North Africa. All these routes were used by the Radanite Jewish merchants. A trade route from Western Europe to Kiev is well attested to in medieval Hebrew sources, and it is assumed that this route formed part of a longer road leading to the Bulgars on the Volga and to the Khazars. Ibn Khurdādhbeh definitely confirms that such an overland route existed as early as the first part of the ninth century. This route was continued along the Volga to the city of the Khazars, Khamlij.

Both fragments of Ibn Khurdādhbeh analyzed here and other itineraries described by him in detail indicate his broad interest and good sources of information.

What should attract our attention is the conspicuous absence in his work of any reference to the river Dnieper. What is more, this river is unknown to any other oriental authority describing Eastern Europe in this period.

There is direct evidence that Ibn Khurdādhbeh used in his compilation also the work of al-Jarmî. This author, an educated Arab, spent some eight years in Byzantium as prisoner of war, probably in close contact with the officials of the Imperial Court. Al-Jarmî has an accurate description of the lands and peoples neighboring Byzantium. Any information on the existence of a trade route along the Dnieper, especially if used by Scandinavians or Slavs for trade with Byzantium, would have been reported by al-Jarmî. Absence of such information from al-Jarmî’s own intelligence and from other sources used by Ibn Khurdādhbeh creates a strong case for the assumption that no such route was in operation at the time of al-Jarmî’s release from captivity (845/6) or at the time when Ibn Khurdādhbeh compiled his survey of roads (847).

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32 Various roads leading from Western Europe to the Far East are described and discussed by Lewicki in his Źródła arabskie, pp. 141-52.
33 V. Minorsky in his comments on Hudud al-Ālam, p. 429, ascribes those routes also to the Rus. This view was criticized by Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 118-19.
34 Źródła hebrajskie do dziejów Słowian i niektórych innych ludów Środkowej i Wschodniej Europy, edited by Franciszek Kupfer and Tadeusz Lewicki (Wrocław-Warsaw, 1956), pp. 66-83.
D. BYZANTINE SOURCES AND THE RUSIAN PRIMARY CHRONICLE

The earliest source on which a hypothesis concerning the utilization of the Dnieper can be based is the homilies of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople. This is one of the few medieval sources of rare accuracy and authenticity. Important for our purposes is the description of an attack against Constantinople in the summer of 860. The description of the attack is part of a sermon delivered by Patriarch Photius a week or two after the enemy's departure. In accordance with medieval Byzantine practice, the sermon was probably recorded in shorthand, and hence the description is of a unique documentary value. The sermons of Photius indicate that the attack was unexpected and that the occasion was the first encounter of the Greeks with a yet unknown people. At the time of the attack and when the sermons were delivered, Photius did not yet know the name of the enemy. The impression of Photius was that the invaders came "out of the farthest north . . .  they were sundered off from us by so many lands and kingdoms, by unnavigable rivers and harborless seas". He identified the enemy as "a barbarous Scythian tribe", an epithet reserved in Greek sources for the nomads of Eastern Europe. "That nation was obscure, insignificant, and not even known until the incursion against us." "A nation ranked among slaves, unknown, but which has won a name from the expedition against us, insignificant, but now become famous . . . a nation dwelling somewhere far from our country, barbarous, nomadic. . . ." 

The identification of those who attacked Constantinople in 860 was made later by the same Photius. In an encyclical letter dated 867, he reported to the Oriental archbishops that a people named Ros had subordinated themselves to the Byzantine Empire and, instead of continuing their robberies, had become good friends of the Greeks. They changed their heathen religion for the faith of the Christians. There are entries in various Byzantine chronicles which directly identify the enemy of the year 860 with the Ruses of Eastern Europe, and even state that the attack came by way of the Black Sea.

If we turn now to the Primary Chronicle and read the passages about the arrival of the Varangian Ruses at Kiev, we have every reason to believe that the description of events given there reflects historical facts which preceded the attack on Constantinople:

38 Ibid., pp. 82, 88, 96, 98.
40 For an evaluation of other relevant sources cf. the comments of Mango to The Homilies of Photius (see note 36).
Year 856. With him [i.e., with Rurik in Novgorod] there were two men not of his clan but nevertheless boyars. And they both asked permission to go to Constantinople with their kinsmen. They both [with their families] went down along the Dnieper and, when passing by, they noticed on the hill a small burgh. And [the two] inquired, saying: “To whom does this small burgh belong?”... Askold and Dir remained in this burgh and gathered many Varangians and began to rule over the Polanian land while Rurik was reigning in Novgorod.

Year 860. Askold and Dir went against the Greeks....

This story complements the testimony of Photius and in turn, the authenticity of the Patriarch’s description enhances, in this case, the credibility of the Primary Chronicle. The Primary Chronicle is the only source describing the arrival of the Varangians in Kiev, but the information, nevertheless, should be considered reliable. There are no sources which would contradict the Kievan tradition. There should be no doubt that the two Rus leaders, Askold and Dir, arrived in Kiev only shortly before the attack on Constantinople. As the Ruses were unknown in Constantinople in 860, so were they unknown in Kiev only a few years earlier.

The combined evidence of Photius’ writings and of the Primary Chronicle allows us to draw the following conclusions: The Ruses appeared in Kiev only in 856, and they used for their exploits the Dnieper. Along the same Dnieper they moved southward and came into contact with Byzantium for the first time as late as 860. The two sources, therefore, provide the first indication that the Dnieper was used for transportation and they also explicitly state that the Ruses used or discovered the route not earlier than 856 and 860.

Commercial exploitation of the Dnieper waterway is implied for the first time only by the treaties between the Kievan Ruses and the Greeks of Byzantium. Fragments of such treaties have been preserved in the Primary Chronicle, the most complete texts being recorded in the year 912 (Treaty of 911) and in the year 945 (Treaty of 944). Both treaties regulate the legal problems arising between the Ruses from Eastern Europe on Byzantine territory and the Greeks. They stipulate the forms of reciprocal assistance for ships in distress, describe the procedure for returning prisoners, and so forth. Some of the treaties imply, others specifically state, that the Ruses were coming to Byzantium in pursuit of trade.

The treaty recorded in the Chronicle under the year 912 declares that the agreement was concluded “for the maintenance and proclamation of the long-standing amity which joins Greeks and Ruses...” This sen-
tencc may well indicate that trade contacts between the two signatories existed earlier. Terminus ab quo could be 880, the approximate date of the arrival in Kiev of those Ruses who concluded the treaties in 911 and 944.

The fragments of treaties, as they are preserved in the Primary Chronicle, provide ample details on the trade contacts between the two partners. Unfortunately, there is no indication whether the Rus trade was restricted to merchandise originating in Eastern Europe or whether there was also a transit trade between Scandinavia and Byzantium.

More facts about the trade relations, a very minute description, indeed, of technical details of transportation along the Dnieper, are furnished by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Byzantine Emperor:

The boats which come down from outer Rus to Constantinople are from Nemogardas, where Sfendosthlavos, son of Ingor, prince of Rus, had his seat, and others from the city of Miliniska and from Teljoutza and Tzernigoga and from Vousegrade. All these come down the river Dnieper and are collected together at the city of Kiev, also called Sambatas. Their Slav tributaries, the so-called Krivichians and the Lenzanines and the rest of the Slavic regions, cut the boats on their mountains in time of winter, and when they have fastened them together, as spring approaches, and the ice melts, they bring them on to the neighboring lakes. And since these lakes debouch into the river Dnieper, they enter thence onto this same river, and come down to Kiev, and draw the ships along to be fitted out and sell them to the Ruses. The Ruses buy these bottoms only, furnishing them with oars and rowlocks and other tackle from their old boats which they dismantle; and so they fit them out. And in the month of June they move off down the river Dnieper ... [when they arrive at the sea] ... they reequip their boats with such tackle as is needed, sails and masts and rudders, which they bring with them.45

Here is a contemporary description of the use of the Dnieper and its tributaries. The details recorded by Constantine Porphyrogenitus show that the activities of the Ruses centered around the rivers all year long. The Ruses spent the winter along the Slavs,46 and in the spring they returned to Kiev to prepare for the big journey to Constantinople. The travel down to Constantinople and the return up to Kiev was undertaken only once a year. Some of the Ruses, instead of returning to Kiev, spent the winter in the estuary of the Dnieper. This practice was discontinued

46 Ibid., pp. 62-63: “When the month of November begins, their chiefs, together with all the Ruses, at once leave Kiev and go off on the ‘poludie’, which means ‘rounds’, that is, the Slavonic regions.... There they are maintained throughout the winter ... when the ice of the Dnieper river melts, they come back to Kiev.”
probably by the Treaty of 944.47 The Rus merchants had to leave Constantinople immediately after the selling of their merchandise (Treaty of 944);48 they were to be provided in Constantinople with food and accommodation only for a maximum of six months (Treaty of 907).49

On the basis of the fragments quoted from Constantine Porphyrogenitus and on the basis of the treaties between the Ruses and Greeks, it is possible to conclude that not until the arrival of the Ruses in Kiev was the Dnieper used for extensive trade. The first contacts might have been established after the unsuccessful attack on Constantinople (860), but large-scale trade could not have developed until the transfer of the Varangian-Rus center from Novgorod to Kiev (c. 880).

The sources analyzed also show that the Rus-Byzantine trade was apparently only an exchange of goods from the region covered by the Dnieper’s affluents and Byzantium. Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentioned only chained slaves carried by boats along the Dnieper, but he did not provide an indication that the Dnieper was used for international transit with Scandinavia or that the Ruses, from their center in Kiev, had trading contacts with Scandinavia. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the treaties between Rus and Byzantium have no reference to Novgorod, although other cities are enumerated along with Kiev.

The reason for the absence of the name of Novgorod from the treaties might be that after about 880 Novgorod annually paid to Oleg and his successors three hundred grivnas ‘peace money’, obviously to keep the Varangian-Ruses out of the town – an arrangement which remained a permanent feature of the city’s self-government. Novgorod maintained its own treaty relationships50 and continued to play an independent role as a connecting link between the Baltic and the Volga.

It should also be noted that the Ruses known to Porphyrogenitus spent the winter among the Slavs and began their journey south immediately after the ice on the Dnieper melted. They could obviously not come from Scandinavia on a transit journey.

We may ask now why the Dnieper was not used by the Northmen, of whatever specific name, for their international trade contacts or for military adventures at an earlier date than the second half of the ninth century. For our consideration the fact that among the rivers of Eastern Europe the Dnieper is the least suitable for commercial use is of paramount importance. This river has seven stretches full of more or less dangerous

47 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 37; “The Ruses should not have the right to spend the winter at the estuary of the Dnieper. . . .”
48 Ibid., p. 37.
49 Ibid., p. 24.
50 E.g. with the German cities, with Riga and Gothland. For a detailed presentation, see Pamiatiuki prava feodalnorazdrobленноi Rusi XII-XV vv., ed. S. V. Iushkov (Moscow, 1953). pp. 54-98, 124-32.
THE ROLE OF THE DNIEPER RIVER

E. THE ROLE OF THE NOMADS

A less permanent but more dangerous obstacle to the utilization of the Dnieper was the nomads. Since they were carrying on their own trade, they were able to discourage competition by force or could impose upon the competitors conditions in the form of regular transit taxes. The arrangements with the nomads were neither permanent nor secure. The disturbance in the Pontic Steppes reported by the *Annales Bertiniani* for the year 839 was just one of the many sudden changes in the life of that region.

A most dramatic description of the various difficulties encountered in connection with the economic utilization of the Dnieper is described by Constantine Porphyrogenitus:

And in the month of June they [the Ruses] move off down the river Dnieper and come to Vitechev, which is a tributary city of the Ruses, and there they gather during two or three days; and when all the single-strakers are collected together, then they set out, and come down the said Dnieper river. And first they come to the first cataract, called Essoupi, which means in the language of the Rus and Slavonic “Do not sleep!”; the cataract itself is as narrow as the width of the Polo-ground; in the middle of it are rooted high rocks, which stand out like islands. Against these, then, comes the water and wells up and dashes down over the other side, with a mighty and terrific din. Therefore the Ruses do not venture to pass between them, but put in to the bank hard by, disembarking the men on to dry land, but leaving the rest of the goods on board the single-strakers; they then strip and, feeling with their feet to avoid striking on a rock. . . . This they do, some at the prow, some amid-ships, while others again, in the stern, punt with poles; and with all this careful procedure they pass the first cataract edging round under the river-bank. When they have passed this cataract, they re-embark the others from the dry land and sail away, and come down to the second cataract, called in the language of the Rus Oulvorsi, and in Slavonic Ostrovouniprach, which means “the Island of the Cataract”. This one is like the first, awkward and not to be passed through. Once again they disembark the men and convey the single-strakers past, as on the first occasion. Similarly they pass the third cataract also, called Gelandri, which means in Slavonic “Noise of the Cataract”, and then the fourth cataract, the big one, called in the language of the Ruses Aefor, and in

Slavonic Neasit, because the pelicans nest in the stones of the cataract. At this cataract all put into land prow foremost, and those who are deputed to keep the watch with them get out, and off they go, these men, and keep vigilant watch for the Pechenegs. The remainder, taking up the goods which they have on board the single-strakers, conduct the slaves in their chains past by land, six miles, until they are through the cataract. Then, partly dragging their single-strakers, partly porting them on their shoulders, they convey them to the far side of the cataract; and then, putting them on the river and loading up their baggage, they embark themselves, and again sail off in them. When they come to the fifth cataract, called in the language of the Ruses Varouforos, and in Slavonic Voulniprach, because it forms a large lake, they again convey their single-strakers through at the edges of the river, as at the first and second cataracts, and arrive at the sixth cataract, called in the language of the Ruses Leanti, and in Slavonic Veroutzi, that is, “the Boiling of the Water”, and this too they pass similarly. And thence they sail away to the seventh cataract, called in the language of the Ruses Stroukoun, and in Slavonic Naprezi, which means “Little Cataract”. This they pass at the so-called ford of Krarion, where the Chersonites cross over from Rus and the Pechenegs to Cherson; which ford is as wide as the Hippodrome, and is as high from below up to where the friends of the Pechenegs survey the scene as an arrow might reach of one shooting from bottom to top. It is at this point, therefore, that the Pechenegs come down and attack the Ruses. After traversing this place, they reach the island called St. Khatitse. . . . From this island onwards the Ruses do not fear the Pechenegs until they reach the river Selinas. . . . And until they are past the river Selinas, the Pechenegs keep pace with them. And if it happens that the sea casts a single-straker on shore, they all put in to land, in order to present a united opposition to the Pechenegs. But after the Selinas they fear nobody, . . . 52

This is rather a lengthy quotation, but the selected fragments are the best illustrations of the technique used and of the difficulties encountered during the travel down the river Dnieper. There is no description of a return trip, but the difficulties of traveling up the river were, no doubt, much greater. The boats had to be pulled by the crew from the banks of the river. Since the merchandise brought back from Constantinople (silk and other industrial goods) was more attractive to the marauding nomads than slaves, wax, or furs, the attacks on returning merchants were more profitable.

It has also escaped attention in many evaluations that the Rus merchants floating down the Dnieper from Kiev to Constantinople 53 used new boats

52 Cf. De administrando imperio, pp. 58-63.
53 There is no evidence that the Ruses known to Constantine Porphyrogenitus carried on also a transit trade between Scandinavia and Byzantium. A large-scale transit trade along the Dnieper was questioned by S. V. Bernstein-Kogan in “Put’ iz Variag v Greki”, Voprosy Geografii, 20 (1950), pp. 239-70. In his opinion, the trade between Scandinavia and Byzantium was carried in three stages: the first from the Baltic to
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every year (see the text quoted). The Rus merchants acquired new boats from the Slavs, but apparently used their own old oars, rowlocks, masts, and rudders. It is to be assumed that in Constantinople some of the boats were sold together with the bulky merchandise, and only a part of the boats was used for the return journey. These boats accommodated the Rus crew and carried the less bulky, but more expensive, merchandise acquired in Constantinople, as well as all the tackle from the old boats. At the mouth of the Dnieper or from the point where the river navigation became difficult, more boats were abandoned and the merchandise dragged in the remaining ones up the river.

In more peaceful regions, for instance, along the rivers approaching Novgorod, the boats were dragged by professional, well-organized teams of indigenous people. In the steppes, the Ruses had to pull the boats themselves. The difficulties of moving upstream explain also why some of the Rus expeditions from the Caspian Sea returned to the north not along the Volga or Dnieper, but on a roundabout way through the Black Sea, Mediterranean, and along the coastal line of Europe.

The analysis of sources presented so far shows that the Dnieper did not offer any special advantages which would attract the Northmen to use that river for their international trade. Considering the disadvantages of the Dnieper river route we may ask why the Ruses, nevertheless, transferred the center of their trade activities from Novgorod to Kiev. Compared to Kiev Novgorod had all the strategic and commercial advantages. Novgorod was close to the sources of several navigable rivers, had direct access to the important Volga/Don river system protected by the Khazars and was also close to the Baltic sea, a location uniquely suited for contacts between Scandinavia and the East. Novgorod had also the advantages of direct contacts by sea with Western Europe as far as Spain and the Mediterranean. On the other hand from Kiev to the Khazars, going by boat, one had to go upstream and use portages to the Oka or the Volga rivers. The other possibility was to float down the Dnieper (nomads permitting), enter the Sea of Azov from the Black Sea, go up the Don, transfer overland to the Volga, and float down to the Caspian. The return to Kiev was up the Volga to its sources and then down the Dnieper, or up the Volga to the portage, then down the Don to the Sea of Azov. From the Azov and Black Sea, because of the difficulties posed by the Dnieper

Smolensk or Novgorod, the second from Novgorod to Kiev, and the third from Kiev to Constantinople. Although his arguments are acceptable, they do not apply to the ninth century.


55 Marquart, Streifzüge, p. 474; Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 131.
and by the nomads, the route to Kiev led often around Europe to the mouth of the Western Dvina, from where the boats were dragged upstream to the portages connecting with the Dnieper. These routes are not theoretical possibilities, but were itineraries actually used.\footnote{56}

Having presented the strategic and commercial disadvantages of the river Dnieper and of Kiev from the point of view of river-bound traffic, we may now advance the opinion that the decision to move from Novgorod to Kiev was very likely not a matter of choice, but a necessity enforced upon the Ruses. An evaluation of the political developments in Eastern Europe and in the neighboring regions in the ninth century may allow us to discern some of the reasons for the move.

\footnote{56} Further evidence for the rather late utilization of the Dnieper river for trade and military expeditions may be derived from archeology. Byzantine coins found in Kiev and minted in the 9th century are all dated after 867. Whereas there is in Eastern Europe an abundance of numismatic evidence for contacts with the Muslim East, there are few Byzantine coins and rather of late provenience. Cf. R. Vasmer, "Beiträge zur muhammedanischen Münzkunde", \textit{Numismatische Zeitschrift}, LVIII (1925), pp. 49-84; A. Markov, \textit{Topografia kladov vostochnykh monet} (S. Petersburg, 1910); V. V. Kropotkin, \textit{Klady vizantiiskikh monet na territorii SSSR} (Moskva, 1962).
Of crucial importance for the history of Eastern Europe and for the emergence of the Kievan state was the period of peace, the Pax chazarica, which prevailed in the Pontic Steppes between the seventh and early ninth centuries. As the phrase "Pax chazarica" carries with it the dangers of simplification, we shall trace in detail the substance and justification for its applicability.

The Pontic Steppes and the deserts north of the Caspian Sea formed, until the late Middle Ages, the frontier land separating Europe from Asia. The steppe zone between the lower Danube and the Volga River was the place where the civilizations of the two continents met, more often under warlike conditions than in the form of a friendly encounter. The steppes north of the Black Sea, on both banks of the Dnieper, were the assembly ground for nomadic tribal federations readying themselves for the invasion of Central and Western Europe, as well as the place of refuge for defeated hordes escaping from Asia or returning from the West.

The southern part of Eastern Europe was exposed to the dangers of nomadic marauders until modern times. Permanent habitation was possible only in the more remote forested regions of the North, in the mountains of the Caucasus, and on the more easily defensible Crimean peninsula. But whenever there was a period of peace, the population of Eastern Europe made attempts to settle along the rivers leading to the Black Sea. Such efforts are attested to today by excavated remnants of rural and urban settlements dating from early prehistoric times.

1 The term "pax chazarica" was used by Ananiasz Zajączkowski in his *Ze studiów nad zagadnieniem chazarskim* (Kraków, 1947), p. 77, with reference to the term "khazarskii mir" used by Iu. V. Gote (Gauthier). The Khazars as defenders of Europe against the Arabs were presented by M. Kmoskó in "Araber und Chasaren", *Körösi Csoma Archiv*, I (1925), p. 280. Also Mikhailo Hrushevsky expressed the opinion that the strong Khazar state on the Volga prevented the nomadic hordes from moving into Europe and, thus, the Khazars facilitated the colonization of Eastern Europe by the Slavs; cf. his *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, 3rd ed. (Kiev, 1913), pp. 183 ff., 226-27.

A. NOMADIC STATE FORMATIONS IN EUROPE (SIXTH TO NINTH CENTURY)

In the sixth century, with the arrival of the Avars in the Carpathian Basin, with the consolidation of the Khazar Empire between the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea, and with the final settlement of the Bulgars along the lower Danube, the big waves of migrations traversing Eastern Europe came to a temporary standstill. The Avars, arriving from Asia, crossed the River Yaik (Ural) around the middle of the sixth century and, already in 558, became mercenary allies of the Byzantine Empire. At that time, the steppes adjoining the Greek colonies along the shores of the Black Sea were the roaming place of various splinter groups of the defeated Hunnic Federation.

A similarly dangerous neighbor for the Greeks was the so-called Antic Federation, composed of Goth-Alanic elements and probably of Slavs. Both the nomads and the Antes were in a position to plunder the Greek cities on the Black Sea, in Moesia and in Thrace. The Avars, in their capacity of allies of Byzantium, had the task of relieving those Greek regions from the danger posed by unfriendly neighbors. The Avars were successful, but in true nomadic fashion, all the defeated groups were absorbed into the military organization of the victors. Not only was the power of the Avars strengthened, but their control extended now over territories approaching the core of the Byzantine Empire in Europe. The Balkan Peninsula and Central Europe were now open to Avar invasions, and already in 562 the reinforced Avar army operated in Western Europe. The Greeks were able to secure peace only by paying large sums of peace money annually. By the end of the sixth century the Avars were settled in Pannonia, where they stayed until the ninth century.

The other large nomadic tribal federation which remained in Europe and was finally absorbed by the Slavs was the federation of the Danubian Bulgars. These Bulgars were originally also members of the Hunnic Federation. After the defeats of the Huns in Western and Central Europe, they moved to the regions between the Sea of Azov and the Caucasian Mountains, along the River Kuban. The Bulgarian federation on the Kuban was defeated by the Khazars, and most of the tribes again moved westward. Some of the Bulgars stayed with the Avars, some were brought under Khazar control, but a large contingent of them moved to the Danube around the year 680. This last group remained permanently in Europe and formed a state which became the nucleus of the medieval kingdom of Bulgaria.

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The third Altaic group in Europe, the Khazars, originally formed the westernmost part of the Asiatic Turk (Türküt) Empire. Known in the sources also as Western Turks, the Khazars emancipated themselves at the beginning of the seventh century and, already in the year 626, allied themselves with Emperor Heraklios against the Persians. After that date, the role of the Khazars was to defend Eastern Europe against invasions coming from the steppes of Central Asia or across the Caucasian Mountains. The Khazars, in alliance with Byzantium, were strong enough to hold their positions in spite of constant pressure from the east and south.

While the Khazars fought the Asiatic nomads, the Persians, and later the militant Arabs, the prosperous regions of Southern and Western Europe attracted the Avars and Bulgars. This geopolitical situation helps to explain why Eastern Europe, the region between the Danube and the Volga, enjoyed a long period of peace.

The movement of the Bulgars from the Kuban to the lower Danube in 680 is the last direct information which we have on the developments in Eastern Europe in the seventh century. The next datable reference of importance for the history of the steppe is the description by Emperor Constantinus Porphyrogenitus of the construction of the fortress Sarkel on the Don River sometime after the year 830. This conspicuous lack of information on the region north of the Black Sea has to be explained by the fact that for two centuries nothing of historical importance happened in this area. During this time, the Pontic Steppes became literally a no-man's land, a large, empty frontier zone between nomadic states.

The nomadic state is manifestly different from a modern territorial state or even from a medieval state of Western Europe. The coherence of a nomadic state depends on the effectiveness of military control. This control radiates from the center of the empire, where the main hordes dwell, and weakens with the distance from that center. The territory of the state is actually formed by spheres of diminishing influences. This character of the state results in the formation of no-man's frontier zones.

In sources describing nomadic states we encounter many references to this type of frontier. Gardızî wrote that “You travel three days from the land of the Sarir . . . and come to the Alans” and that “Burtas is between Khazar and Bulgar [on the Kama] and between Burtas and Khazar is a fifteen-days’ journey.” Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, speaking of the

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7 De administrando imperio, pp. 182-85. The fortress was constructed for the Khazars by the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus, who ruled 829-842.
Pechenegs, says that “Patzinacia is distant a five-days’ journey from Uzia and Khazaria, a six-days’ journey from Alania, a four-days’ journey from Turkia (i.e. Hungary), half a day’s journey from Bulgaria...”. The distances in these examples refer in most cases to uninhabited regions. Because of the peculiar character of divisions between nomadic states, it is most difficult to draw a linear border between two nomadic federations, and all attempts to fix a precise line between the Avars, Khazars, and Bulgars must fail. It has been suggested that the Avars, by the end of the sixth century, had extended their rule from the River Elbe to the Don. Of course, this is an unrealistic view, based only on the fact that the Avars had been seen first in the Don region and soon after in Thuringia.

We know only that in the early eighth century the Khazar and Bulgar spheres of influence approached each other somewhere in the East European steppe zone. Emperor Justinian II (705-11), returning from the Khazars to Constantinople, traveled across Bulgarian territory (“a partibus Chazariae per loca Bulgáriáé”). These spheres of influence were maintained until the early ninth century.

There are no sources which would indicate that the nomads extended their control at this time also to the forests of Eastern Europe. But we may assume that the maintenance of such control would have been a difficult task. First of all, the forest poses obstacles to nomadic penetration. A nomad on horseback can venture into woods only in the dry season, if there are cleared roads, and then with difficulty. The population of the clearings could move to the woods without difficulty for temporary protection. Unfriendly units of nomads were easily exposed to ambushes, since their routes of retreat had to be the same as those on which they had advanced.

The population of the forests was harassed only during the times of big migrations, when small units of the nomads were exploring the regions in all directions. As soon as they had occupied suitable grazing lands for their horses and cattle, their relations with the forest dwellers had to be based on some reciprocally acceptable compromise. The settled population had to provide at least some of the staples for the nomads. To assure

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9 De administrando imperio, pp. 168-69.
12 Cf. Géza Fehér, “Zur Geschichte der Steppenvölker von Südrussland im 9-10. Jahrhundert”, Studia Slavica, V (1959), p. 306. In Fehér’s opinion, the frontier between the Khazars and the Danubian Bulgars was on the river Dniester and this frontier was never disturbed between the seventh and ninth centuries.
continued services, the plundering had to cease. The nomads never raided territories under their direct control, although abuses were frequent. The autochthon-nomadic relation was regulated by an ever-changing balance of power. The distance from the main hordes to the settlement of the autochthon population was a decisive factor in reaching a compromise.

B. THE AVARS AND THE SLAVS

The presence of the Avars was indisputably a burden for many Slavs in Central Europe in regions surrounding the nomadic habitats. Less affected were the Slavs north and east of the Carpathians. Among the Eastern Slavs, only the southern tribes maintained contacts with those Avars and Bulgars who traveled along the roads used for trade contacts with the East.

From the point of view of the Slavs, the arrival of the Avars also had some long-range advantages. The Avars destroyed such strong Germanic tribes as the Gepids and the Longobards, who had lived for centuries in Central and Eastern Europe. The Swabians had to withdraw from the region between the rivers Oder and Elbe. All the areas conquered by the Avars thus became open for Slavic colonization.

In Eastern Europe the new situation allowed the Slavs to colonize fully the mixed forest-steppe zone as far as the Upper Don region and to push their settlements gradually southward along the rivers. From the point of view of the Eastern Slavs, a negative result of the appearance of the Avars was the destruction of the federation of the Antes, which, it is assumed, could have become a possible nucleus for a Slavic state along the Dnieper. On the other hand, the presence of the Avars in Central Europe strongly influenced the formation of the first historically attested, although ephemeral, Slavic state, that of Samo, followed later by the Avaro-Slavic states of Moravia and of Croatia.

The Altaic ethnic element on the territories controlled by the Avars was only a fraction of the Slavic population. Consequently, the nomads were to face not only the losses suffered in wars, but also the slow process of ethnic and linguistic assimilation into the Slavic majority.

A frequently used source for the evaluation of Eastern Slav-Avar relations is the following report of the Primary Chronicle:

While the people of the Slav tongue, as we said, dwelt on the Danube, from

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14 Arnulf Kollautz, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
the Scythians, who are named Khazars, came a people called Bulgars, and they settled on the Danube, and they became oppressors of the Slavs. Afterward came the white Ugrians, and they inherited the Slavic country. These Ugrians appeared first (pochasa byti) under the Emperor Heraclius, who was attacking Chosroes, the Emperor of Persia. The Avars lived at the same time. They carried on war against Emperor Heraclius (khodisha na Iraklia tsaria), and they nearly captured him. These Avars fought against the Slavs and they harassed the Dulebians, who were Slavs. And they did violence to the Dulebian wives. When an Avar had to make a journey, he did not allow a horse or a steer to be harnessed, but he ordered three or four or five wives to be harnessed to the cart and to pull the Avar. And this was the way they harassed the Dulebians. The Avars were large of body and proud of mind. And God destroyed them and they all have perished and not one Avar is left. And there is a proverb in the land of Rus to this day “They perished like the Avars” (pogibosha ako obre). There is no such race or successor to them.17

Parts of this report are direct borrowings from Byzantine chronicles, as, for instance, the information about the wars of Heraclius against the Persian emperor Chosroes,18 and the story of the incident which almost made Heraclius a prisoner of the Avars.19 But in the Byzantine sources there is no reference to Avar abuses which the Rus chronicler could have used as a prototype. The reference to the Dulebians, a tribe known to have existed in Volhynia, might suggest that the chronicler preserved here some East Slavic tradition. This might, in turn, suggest that the Avars lived for a considerable time not only in the Carpathian Basin, but also among the Eastern Slavs. As this fragment of the Chronicle is used as the only piece of evidence for a long-lasting oppression of the Eastern Slavs by the Avars, the source must be scrutinized more carefully. First of all, it is noteworthy that the fragment describes facts at the time “while the people of the Slav tongue . . . dwelt on the Danube”. This sounds like an anachronism, but the statement can be justified if it is assumed that the story originated with Southern or Moravian Slavs, both of which groups dwelt along the Danube. At any rate, the anachronism arises only if we insist that the story originated among the Eastern Slavs.

Furthermore, the reference to the Dulebians does not necessarily connect the events with Volhynia. There were Dulebians in Bohemia and Pannonia close to the Danube, the river mentioned by the Chronicler. These people dwelt close to the core of some anti-Avar uprisings of the Slavs during the seventh century. The uprisings were provoked by the Avar abuses, and were described by Fredegarius Scholasticus, the Frankish historian during the same century.

19 There were contemporary church-Slavonic translations of the story: cf. V. M. Istrin, Khronika Georgiia Amartola v drevnem slavianorusskom perevodie, I-III (Petrograd, 1920; Leningrad, 1930).
The whole description in the Primary Chronicle, indeed, resembles very closely the situation prevailing among the Slavs of Pannonia, Moravia, and Bohemia. In the Fourth Book of Fredegaris's Chronicle we read that in the fortieth year of Chlotar's reign (623), a certain Frank named Samo, from the district of Soignies, joined with other merchants in order to go and do business with those Slavs who are known as Wends. The Slavs had already started to rise against the [Avars called Huns] and against their ruler, the Khagan. The Wends had long since been subjected to the Huns, who used them as befulei. Whenever the Huns took the field against another people, they stayed encamped in battle array while the Wends did the fighting. If the Wends won, the Huns advanced to pillage, but if they lost, the Huns backed them up, and they resumed the fight. Every year the Huns wintered with the Slavs, sleeping with their wives and daughters, and, in addition, the Slavs paid tribute and endured many other burdens. The sons born to the Huns by the Slav's wives and daughters eventually found this shameful oppression intolerable; and so, as I said, they refused to obey their lords, and started to rise in rebellion. An astonishing number of Huns were put to the sword by the Wends.

The resemblance between the descriptions of Fredegarius and of the Russian Primary Chronicle might suggest that the Russian Chronicler knew the text of Fredegarius, but direct borrowing is rather unlikely. Although in essence the descriptions are similar, there are no verbal parallelisms between the two texts. A satisfactory conclusion may be offered, namely, that both descriptions were based, independently, on a common source: on a popular tradition preserved by the Slavs along the Danube.

Only the Rus proverb "They perished like the Avars" can be of East Slavic origin. The authenticity of this proverb is attested to by the reference to the national tradition: "There is to this day a proverb in Rus." This proverb may refer to the fact of the disappearance of the Avars, but does not necessarily reflect the memory of Avar abuses against Eastern Slavs.

Any presentation of Avaro-Slavic relations would be incomplete without due attention to the relevant opinion of A. A. Shakhmatov. He is by far the most prominent, if not the only, authority suggesting a strong positive Avaric influence upon the Eastern Slavs.

After mastering all sources pertinent to the early history of the Eastern Slavs and after long years devoted to solving controversial issues of Russian historiography, Shakhmatov formulated his views on this problem in

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20 The term befulei is still obscure.
one of his last works. According to his concept, the Eastern Slavs lived during the seventh and eighth centuries between the Middle Dnieper and the Dniester under the overall political control exercised by the Avars. Consequently, the various Slavic tribes were forced to live in peace among themselves. In Shakhmatov’s opinion, this control, exercised through a Tudun, a deputy of the Khagan, was very mild and of the same nature as the rule of the Khazars over the same Slavs in the ninth century.

A disturbing Avaric impact upon the Eastern Slavs, according to Shakhmatov, was felt only in the early years of the ninth century, when the more militant, but defeated, elements of the Avars moved from Pannonia across the Carpathians toward the east and northeast. Shakhmatov goes so far as to ascribe to that Avaric exodus the final resettlement of the Western and Eastern Slavs. In the course of that resettlement, the ‘Radimichi’ and the ‘Viatichi’, the two tribes which according to the Russian Chronicle, were “from the Lakhs” – that is, from among the Western Slavs – were forced to move to Eastern Europe. Shakhmatov relates the disappearance of the tribe of the ‘Duleby’ also to the same events. Finally, in his opinion, it was only after the defeat of the Avars that the Khazars moved across the Dnieper and, for the first time, imposed tribute upon the Slavic tribe of the Polanians.

Although many of his assumptions are built on sound logic, Shakhmatov could not provide documentary evidence to support his conjectures. First of all, the existence of a Tudun among the Eastern Slavs is improbable. The presence of Avaric functionaries is attested to only on the territories of the Western and Southern Slavs. Only in their languages do the terms pan, ban and żupan, Avaric in origin, denote certain titles or ranks. Furthermore, the movements of the Viatichi and of the Radimichi are still the subject of speculation. Although recent research places their migration in the ninth century, it is connected rather with the Magyars or Pechenegs than with the Avars.

Acceptable from Shakhmatov’s theory is the suggestion that compact Avaric settlements among Western Slavs should be connected, in fact,

22 A. A. Shakhmatov, Drevneishia sud’by russkago plemen (Petrograd, 1919).
23 Ibid., p. 22.
25 Ibid., pp. 25, 37. This opinion was also accepted by N. S. Derzhavin, Slaviane v drevnosti (n.p., n.d.), pp. 27-28.
26 A. A. Shakhmatov, op. cit., p. 53.
27 On the loan words from the Avaric see A. Brückner, Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego (Kraków, 1927), pp. 378, 393, 667. On the migration of the West Slavic tribes cf. Henryk Paszkiewicz, The Origin of Russia (London, 1954), pp. 365-80. Paszkiewicz cites various opinions on the subject of the migration of the Radimichi and of the Viatichi. He is inclined to believe that the two tribes moved toward the Northeast only during the ninth century. The reason for the migration was, in the opinion of Paszkiewicz, the appearance of the ‘Magyars’ and Pechenegs or the expansion of the Great Moravian state during that century.
with some retreating splinter groups. Shakhmatov's observation that the Khazars did not expand across the Dnieper before the defeat of the Avars is important, but it seems unlikely that the imposition of a tribute upon the Polanians has any connection with the defeat.

Except for Shakhmatov's definite opinion, the influence of the Avars on the life of the Eastern Slavs was never regarded as great. The role of the Avars in Eastern Europe was usually assessed only on the basis of the fragment from the Primary Chronicle describing the sufferings of the Dulebians. But, as already discussed, there are grounds for contesting the applicability even of that fragment to the history of the Eastern Slavs.

C. ORIGINS OF KIEV

As a result of the analysis of the sources illustrative of the Avaro-Slavic relations, it is now possible to retain our original assertion that the Eastern Slavs were not subjected to a lasting or burdensome Avaric occupation. If there were contacts between Eastern Slavs and Avars, they must have been peaceful, resulting from the interplay of various factors already discussed: distance from the main Avar hordes, respect for the Khazar sphere of influence, and the necessity for friendly cooperation to assure safety along the trade routes leading across East Slavic territories.

The main overland trade route connecting Central Europe with the Volga region and leading farther to the east had necessarily to cross the Dnieper at some convenient point. No doubt, Kiev gained its early economic importance because of its advantageous location at a place where the Dnieper could be crossed easily. According to the legend preserved in the Primary Chronicle, the origins of that city are connected with a man named Kii, who was a ferryman on the Dnieper.

Kiev's prominence is usually connected with its importance in international trade, but before Kiev developed into a trade emporium in the tenth and eleventh centuries, it was, for a long time, merely a convenient stopover for merchants traveling between the markets of Western and Central Europe and the markets of the East. In addition, Kiev was not only a good place for fording the Dnieper, but also a strategic point for controlling traffic as it entered or left the Khazar or Avar spheres of interests. The economic importance of the site made it inevitable that either the Avars or the Khazars should maintain, in the vicinity of the ferry, a garrison to provide protection against marauders and to collect custom duties from merchants. There is no need to stress the importance

29 See above, pp. 44-45.
of custom duties for nomadic states. This source of income was the economic mainstay of the Khazar Empire, and of the Volga Bulgars, as well as of all other medieval states ruled by nomads.

On the basis of these general observations, we may reanalyze the passages in the Primary Chronicle which describe the origin and early history of Kiev. The purpose of the analysis is to discern some historical reality behind the seemingly inconsistent fragments enveloped in a legendary form. The narrative of the Chronicle is based, no doubt, on some local Kievan tradition. The first relevant fragment reads as follows:

Living in the field apart and governing their families, there were Polanians before those three brothers, and they lived each with his family, on their own places, each governing over his family. And there were three brothers, one of the name Kii, the second of Shechek, and the third of Khoriv, and their sister Lybed. Kii dwelt on the hill which today is the Borichev trail, and Shechek dwelt on the hill which today is named Shchekovitsa, and Khoriv on the third hill, named after him Khorivitsa. And they built a grad (burgh) under the name of the oldest brother among them, and gave to it the name of Kiev. There was around the grad (burgh) a wood and a great pine forest, where they hunted wild beasts, and there were men wise and prudent named Polanians; from among them there are in Kiev Polanians to this day. But others, without knowing, say that Kii was a ferryman, because in Kiev there was at that time a ferry from the other side of the Dnieper, and thus they used to say: "To the ferry, of Kii" (na perevoz na Kiev). If Kii had been a ferryman, then he would not have gone to Constantinople. But he was ruling over his family, and, as it is said, when he came to the Emperor, he was received with great honor. . . . When he was coming back, he came to the Danube and he took a liking to the place. And he built a small gradok (small burgh) and he wanted to settle there with his family, but those who lived in the vicinity would not allow it. When Kii returned to his grad, Kiev, here he ended his life. And here have ended their lives his brothers, Shchek and Khoriv, and their sister Lybed. And after those brothers, their kinsmen (rod ikh) assumed the rule among the Polanians. Among the Derevlians [there was the rule] of their own (v derevliakh svoe.), and the Dregovichians of their own and the Slovenes of their own in Novgorod. . . .

This text is obviously far from clear. As usual, it is extremely difficult to provide the original manuscripts with appropriate punctuation. The printed editions of the various Rus Chronicles offer a variety of solutions: long sentences, or very short sentences. The punctuation is usually more or less guesswork, by means of which the editor tries to interpret the text according to his best judgment. But whatever the difficulties of

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31 Among others, Ibn Khurda'dhbeh and Ibn Hauqal have noted that the Khazars levied a tax of 10%. Al Gardizi noted the same about the Ruses and Ibn Rusta about the Bulgars on the Volga. Similar taxes were levied by the Byzantine Greeks. For details on the custom duties see Lewicki. Žródła arabskie, pp. 131-32.

understanding the texts, an interpretation of them should not lead to internal contradictions, which are then often blamed on the chronicler.

The first sentence of the passage quoted above will illustrate the problems of interpreting the text. The sentence when analyzed may inform us that the Polanians lived in the fields and governed themselves before and after the brothers appeared on the scene. It may also be interpreted as saying that first the Polanians governed themselves and later the brothers appeared and also governed their families independently. The first interpretation, if accepted, has to be based on the assumption that the Chronicler made a mistake and repeated twice the fact that the Polanians governed their families. The second interpretation seems to be more plausible, because each reference to self-government is applied to a different group: the first to the Polanians, the second to the families of the three brothers.

Another conclusion drawn from this sentence is that the brothers appear as a distinct group and not as part of the Polanians. There is no reference to any prominent position of Kii's clan among the Polanians. Kii even contemplated moving his family away from Kiev to the Danube. Kii was, according to the Chronicler, only head of his clan and not a prince or a ruler of the Polanians.

The sentence "And after those brothers, their kinsmen (rod) assumed the rule among the Polanians" would be confusing only if one were to insist that the brothers were Polanians. The sentence clearly sets the kinsmen of the brothers in opposition to the Polanians; consequently, the brothers could not have been members of the tribe.

A solution to this entangled situation is provided by the chronicler himself. The same source states that when the first Northmen in Kiev inquired to whom the city belonged, the inhabitants replied: "There were three brothers . . . they built this town and perished. We are sitting [here] and pay tribute to their kinsmen the Khazars" ("I my sedim platiache dan rodom ikh kozarom").

From this fragment the direct ethnic relation between the clan of Kii and the Khazars becomes obvious. Any earlier suspicion of inconsistency appears now to be unfounded. Kii, Shchek, Khoriv, and their sister Lybed were definitely not Polanians and not even Slavs, but of Altaic extraction.

Before proceeding with the investigation of the history of early Kiev, another controversy concerning the proper reading of the text of the Primary Chronicle itself has to be resolved. The text "We are sitting [here] and pay tribute to their kinsmen the Khazars" is contained in the majority of extant manuscripts of the Primary Chronicle. Indeed, this is the correct reading of the oldest manuscript, known as the Laurentian version. But A. A. Shakhmatov assumed that the text was distorted and corrected it to read: "Three brothers . . . had once built this city, but since

their deaths, their descendants have been living here as tributaries of the Khazars.\textsuperscript{34} In our opinion, this correction must be regarded as an arbitrary change of the text based on the preconceived idea that Kii and his clan must have been Polanians.

There is only one manuscript which has the text suggested by Shakhmatov to be the only correct one. This is the so-called Hypatian version, which appears to be much younger than the Laurentian.\textsuperscript{35} In addition to the original text of the Laurentian version, even the chronicles belonging to the Novgorodian group, for instance, the so-called First Sophian Chronicle, have linked Kii with the Khazars. The Novgorodian group is based on sources in some instances more authentic than those used in the Primary Chronicle. The Novgorodian group preserved the so-called Authentic Version (Nachalnyi Svod),\textsuperscript{36} the earliest compilation of popular traditions and official documents. As the Novgorodian group and the Laurentian version of the Primary Chronicle preserved independently the tradition of a kinship between the clan of Kii and the Khazars, there is no justification for accepting the correction of the relevant text suggested by Shakhmatov.

Unfortunately, Shakmatov's correction was adopted in modern editions of the Laurentian text, e.g. by D. S. Likhachev in his reconstruction of the text and in his modern Russian translation, and also by S. H. Cross in his English rendering.\textsuperscript{37}

This crucial sentence stating the kinship between the founders of Kiev and the Khazars clarifies some additional, heretofore obscure, passages of the Chronicle, for instance, the sentence: "[the brothers] built a grad... There was around the grad a wood and a great pine forest, where they hunted wild beasts, and there were men wise and prudent named Polanians; from among them there are in Kiev Polanians to this day". It was assumed until recently that the inhabitants of the city of Kiev were Polanians, but, in fact, the sentence says only that around the city were Polanians, from among whom there were some in Kiev in the Chronicler's day. It is surprising that the presence of Polanians in Kiev was, in the opinion of the Chronicler, an exception and not a natural state of affairs.

The Chronicler appears to be consistent also when he remarks: "After those brothers their kinsmen assumed the rule among the Polanians. Among the Derevlians [there was rule] of their own, and the Dregovichians of their own, and the Slovenes in Novgorod of their own...". These sentences contrast the situations prevailing among the Polanians and the neighboring tribes. Whereas the Khazars assumed the rule over the Pola-

\textsuperscript{34} A. A. Shakhmatov, \textit{Povest' vremennykh let}, Vol. I (Petrograd, 1916), \textit{s.a.} 862.
\textsuperscript{35} D. S. Likhachev, \textit{Russkie letopisi} (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), pp. 431-33.
\textsuperscript{36} A detailed discussion of the extant manuscripts is offered in D. S. Likhachev, \textit{op. cit.}, \textit{passim} and in his \textit{Povest' vremennykh let}, Vol. II, pp. 5-181.
\textsuperscript{37} Likhachev, \textit{Povest' vremennykh let}, Vol. I, pp. 18, 214; Cross, \textit{The Russian Primary Chronicle}, p. 60.
nians, the Derevlians and other tribes retained a self-government of their own. The Chronicler will later report that the Slovenes and others lost this self-government to the Northmen.

The Polanians definitely already had a self-government before the rule of the Khazars was imposed. This is evident from the often quoted fragment of the Chronicle describing the form of the tribute payment: "... subsequent to the death of the three brothers in Kiev, the Polanians were oppressed by the Derevlians and other neighbors of theirs. Then the Khazars came upon them as they lived in the hills and forests and demanded tribute from them. After consulting among themselves, the Polanians paid as tribute one sword per hearth...". Here it is noteworthy that the Khazars were dealing with an assembly of the Polanian people and not with a prince or a princely family.

Such an assembly of the heads of families, the so-called veche, was an old Slavic institution. The fact that the veche conducted the parleys with the Khazars confirms our earlier assumption that Kii and his clan did not rule over the Polanians. The change in the situation was brought about by the Khazars. The Chronicler stressed this fact by bringing into his narrative the remark that the Derevlians and others still maintained the rule of their own at the time when the kinsmen of Kii assumed supremacy in the land of the Polanians.

All the quoted fragments relating to the early history of Kiev and of the Polanians are in logical agreement. Although they are parts of different legends, there is no contradiction among the discernible facts. Insurmountable contradictions would arise only if the textual corrections suggested by Shakhmatov were accepted.

At this stage attention must be paid to the value of the legendary descriptions in the reconstruction of historical developments. Legends usually reflect some historical reality and the name of an eponym in most cases is a personification of some ethnic group. Even if we reject the historicity of the persons of Kii, Shchek, Khoriv, and Lybed, we are still in a position to retain the historical facts underlying the legends connected with these names.

These names are basically of the same nature as the names of Lech, Czech, and Rus, the three brothers of the Polish national tradition, and Honor and Magor, the two brothers who were the legendary ancestors of the Huns and the Magyars. To suggest that Kii was a Slavic prince in the sixth century who concluded an alliance with the Emperor of Byzantium is no more justified than to accept the notion that Romulus founded Rome on the 21st of April 753 B.C.

The names of Kii and his brothers and sister were long suspected to

be of non-Slavic etymons. At least some of their names can be related to some Altaic language and even corresponding tribal names can be detected.

It will be recalled that originally the names of individuals, clans, and tribes had a definite connotation expressing some characteristic. Clans, tribes, or nations could have names used by themselves and at the same time have other names used by their neighbors. The semantics of ethnic names only slowly changes towards an abstract label, but during the times covered by our study, names were, in most cases, still understood verbally. *Polane* were ‘those who lived in the fields’ (*pole* − ‘field’); *Derevlane*, ‘those who lived in the forests’ (*dereva* − ‘wood’).

One indication that the names carried a meaning is the fact that there are several instances where personal or ethnic names were used in translated forms. There is the nomadic tribe known in Turkic as ‘Qipčaq’, or ‘Quman’. In Rus they were known as ‘Polovtsy’; and in German, as ‘Falwen’ or ‘Valben’. All three names, in Turkic, in Slavic, and in German, mean ‘people of yellowish, pale, pink complexion’, connected probably with the fact that the tribe was blonde rather than dark.

If we consider now the name ‘Kii’ as an eponym reflecting in reality an ethnic name, then for such an assumption there is some supporting evidence. The linguistic analysis of the name ‘Kiev’ reveals that it is a composite noun, in which the underlying etymon is ‘Kii’, followed by a possessive or genitive ‘-ev/-ov’. According to the pattern of Slavic toponomy, the city name *Kiev* (phonetically, in Russian, *Kijov*; and in Ukrainian, *Kyiv*) is a short form for ‘Kiev gorod’, i.e., ‘city of Kii’, that is, a settlement populated, owned, or founded by a man or people of that name. In short, the name *Kiev* is grammatically a genitive form originally modifying the noun ‘gorod’ (burgh), which has been dropped in the course of time.

It may also be of interest that, in medieval Rus sources as well as in modern Ukrainian, the inhabitants of Kiev are named *Kiiane*, and not *Kievlane*, as is the case in modern Russian. The modern name is derived from the name of the city; the first, from the name *Kyï*. As an example of a similar development, we may recall that the inhabitants of Smolensk

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43 *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich. Zeszyt próbny* (Wrocław, 1958), article: Nazwy miejscowe na terenie Słowiańskszczyzny.
44 Likhachev, *Povest vremennykh let*, Vol. I., passim. One of the copies of the “Russkaia Pravda” was signed by Nikofor *Kyianin* (c. 1054-73). The city was known also as *Kiiangorod*, i.e., ‘City of the Kiians’. 
in the Middle Ages were known as Smoliane, and not as in modern times Smolenshchane. The ethnic name is derived from Smola, and from that ethnic name is formed the name of the city.

Popular tradition, obscured by legendary form, usually lacks dates and, for this reason, poses special difficulties when its analysis must be used to establish a more exact chronology. A reconstruction of the developments around Kiev from the arrival of the Avars and Khazars in Europe to the first tentative recorded date for Kiev’s history (856) must therefore be based mainly on surmises.

The absence in sources of concrete dates for the history of the Eastern Slavs from the late seventh century to the early ninth century may be inconvenient for historians, but for the people of Eastern Europe this fact could signify the blessing of relative peace during this span of time. The peace in Eastern Europe was assured by the fact that the three nomadic states, those of the Khazars, the Danubian Bulgars, and the Avars, were separated by extensive buffer zones. In the early eighth century, the Avars lost much of the vigor of a nomadic state, and the sphere of their direct control diminished. This fact led to the emancipation of a number of Slavic tribes. During the late eighth century, the Slavs east of the Elbe were already playing an independent role in historical developments. It may be expected that a similar process of emancipation took place also in areas northeast of the Carpathians.

In this region, the most advanced tribe was that of the Polanians. Across the land of the Polanians led the trade routes connecting the Avars with the East. Outposts controlling the fords across the rivers were maintained most probably by the Avars, who themselves were interested in trade. With the slow decline of the Avar power in Central Europe, a garrison on the Dnieper, on the site of the future town of Kiev, could have been retained only with the consent of the autochthonous populations of the region. By the end of the eighth century, as evidenced by results of archeology, Slavic settlements began to grow around the nomadic garrison.

The Avar Empire was finally destroyed by Charlemagne in a series of large-scale military expeditions between the years 791 and 803, and therewith the prestige and the influence of the Avars outside the Carpathian Basin came to an end. The scattered Avaric garrisons north of the Carpathians were subdued as well.

47 In a Byzantine collection entitled “Suidas” there is a story that the Bulgarian Khagan Krum asked some Avars why their nation had disappeared. The answer was that the Avars had been too much interested in trade. Cf. Suidae Lexicon, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 483-84.
48 N. N. Voronin, Drevnerusskie goroda (Moscow-Leningrad, 1945), p. 15.
PAX CHAZARICA

pathians had to come to terms with the autochthonous population. It is assumed that some defeated Avaric groups, fleeing from Pannonia, sought refuge among Western and Eastern Slavs.\(^49\)

It is our belief, and we shall discuss it in detail, that parts of the Avaric federation moved also to the Pontic Steppes, a traditional refuge place for defeated nomads,\(^50\) where they formed a new independent federation.

The normal process of disintegration of a nomadic empire is that parts of the federation, willingly or under duress, join other nomadic federations, or start to form a new federation of their own. At an early stage of the dissolution of the Avar Empire, it is quite plausible that a clan named Kii on the Dnieper lost its political and strategic importance, but was able to remain among the Polanians. Then came the final blow to the Avars. This was inflicted by the Danubian Bulgars, who, by the year c. 814, moved into Transylvania and up to the bank of the River Tisza.\(^51\) It is assumed that soon after that event the Bulgars moved also toward the Dnieper (818-20), no doubt in order to take the best advantage of the new geopolitical situation.

Probably at this stage of development, the Khazars extended a nominal protection over Kiev, or the tribe Kii recognized the Khazars as overlords. The remnants of the Avars in Kiev were from now on considered to be representatives of the Khazar Empire. This could explain why the clan of Kii was linked some forty years later to the Khazars. We may note that the Rus Chronicler did not say specifically that the clan of Kii was Khazar, but only that they were kinsmen of the Khazars (“i my sedim platiache dan rodom ikh kozarom”). Considering the variety of meanings of the old Rusian word, *rod*, we should in this case understand ‘kinsmen’, ‘race’, ‘gens’, but definitely not ‘family’.\(^52\)

The Polanians enjoyed full self-government until the middle of the ninth century. The elimination of the Avar Empire and the absorption of the Altaic garrison on the Dnieper by the Slavs, as well as the absence of a Khazar garrison in the city of Kiev, created by the middle of the ninth century a situation in which the Derevlians and other Slavic neighbors of the Polanians attempted to impose their control over the economically important ford on the Dnieper. This could be the explanation for the Chronicler’s remark that “the Polanians were oppressed by the Derevlians and other neighbors of theirs . . . then the Khazars came upon them”. The move of the Khazars is understandable. It was a race for control of the


\(^{50}\) E.g., after Attila’s death, a part of the Hunnic federation moved from the Carpathian Basin to the Pontic steppes. Cf. *Byzantinoturcica*, Vol. I, p. 36.


ford of Kiev, a race not only between the Derevlians and the Khazars: around the same time, in the years 853-56, the Northmen started their advance from Lake Ilmen southward.

From the preceding discussion, it appears that before the ninth century, in the case of the Avars, and before the middle of the tenth century, in the case of the Khazars, neither of the two nations played a significant role in the internal life of the Eastern Slavs, although the existence of two Altaic states contributed to the rule of peace in Eastern Europe and to the economic prosperity of the whole region.

Kiev, with its Altaic background, appears to be only an isolated instance of nomadic penetration into the forests of Eastern Europe. A small Altaic settlement in Kiev served only the purpose of trade contacts. There are no indications that the Polane or other East Slavic tribes bordering on the Steppe Zone, were politically subordinated or economically exploited by any of the Altaic states during the seventh, eighth, or early ninth centuries.
III

THE KHAZARS AND THE EASTERN SLAVS

A. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE TRIBUTARY AFFILIATION OF THE SLAVS

Our main source for the study of Khazar-East Slavic relations is the Primary Chronicle. The first contact between the Khazars and the Slavs known to the Chronicler is described in the following words:

... subsequent to the death of the three brothers in Kiev, the Polanians were oppressed by the Derevlians and other neighbors of theirs. Then the Khazars came upon them as they lived in the hills and forests and demanded tribute from them. After consulting among themselves, the Polanians paid as tribute one sword per hearth...

The fact of the tribute payment is confirmed by another fragment of the same Chronicle which describes the first arrival of the Northmen in Kiev. On that occasion the newcomers were told that the inhabitants of Kiev paid tribute to the Khazars. These two fragments on tribute payments also corroborate a third fragment of the same Chronicle, which records that after the death of Kii and his brothers, their kinsmen, that is, the Khazars, assumed dominion in the land of the Polanians. It must also be noted that all three fragments are parts of three independent stories presented in legendary form, without contradicting each other – a clear indication that all these legends reflect a single national tradition.

Problems are posed only by the chronology of the tributary affiliation. Legendary descriptions usually lack absolute dating, and the relative chronology is vague. But in this case, the fact of the tribute payment is confirmed also by specific entries in the Chronicle, and it is even possible to surmise the initial date of such payments. The first specific reference to a tribute payment is, in fact, the first dated reference to Eastern Slavs:

1 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 16; cf. Cross, The Russian Primary Chronicle, p. 58. Our translation follows as closely as possible that of Cross, but fragments of importance for interpretation are direct translations from the Old Russian text.
2 See above, p. 49.
3 See above, p. 51.
6367 (859). The Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Chud, the Slovenes, the Meria, the Ves, and the Krivichi. But the Khazars imposed it upon the Polane, the Severiane, and the Viatichi, and collected a white squirrelskin from each hearth.4

The next entry confirms that the Severians were tributaries of the Khazars until 884:

6392 (884). Oleg attacked the Severiane, and conquered them. He imposed a light tribute upon them and forbade their further payment of tribute to the Khazars, on the ground that there was no reason for them to pay it as long as the Khazars were his enemies.5

And again, the following year, Oleg conquered the Radimichians, who were also tributaries to the Khazars:

6393 (885). Oleg sent messengers to the Radimichi to inquire to whom they paid tribute. Upon their reply that they paid tribute to the Khazars, he directed them to render it to himself instead, and they accordingly paid him a shilling apiece, the same amount that they had paid the Khazars. Thus Oleg established his authority over the Polanie, the Derevliane, the Severiane, and the Radimichi.6

For some eighty years there were no changes (or at least none recorded by the Chronicler) in the political equilibrium between the Ruses and the Khazars which might have affected the Slavs. The next reference of the Chronicler to the tribute payment is under the year 964:

6472 (964). When Prince Sviatoslav had grown up and matured, he began to collect a numerous and valiant army.... He sent messengers to the other lands announcing his intention to attack them. He went to the Oka and to the Volga, and on coming in contact with the Viatichi, he inquired of them to whom they paid tribute. They made answer that they paid a silver piece per plowshare to the Khazars.7

The reliability of the Chronicler in respect to the tribute payments is sometimes questioned on the ground that the Radimichians appear as tributaries of the Khazars in 885, although they were not enumerated among the tributaries in 859. This reservation may be disregarded, because it is obvious that the Chronicler had only fragmentary information, at least for the ninth and tenth centuries, and gaps in his narrative may

4 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 18; cf. Cross, The Russian Primary Chronicle, p. 59. The dates preceding the entries from the Chronicle are those used in the cited editions. The chronology of the Chronicles is partly erroneous. We shall discuss the possibility of reconstructing a more precise chronology in the chapter: “The Invitation of the Ruses”.

5 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 20.

6 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

7 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
therefore be expected. The Chronicler himself was aware of the lacunose character of his narrative, especially for those two centuries, and in the original draft he entered dates with blank spaces, obviously hoping to fill the gaps should additional information become available.8

Whereas the fact of the tribute payment cannot be denied, the initial date of the tributary affiliation of the Slavs with the Khazars remains a problem to be solved. Any controversy on this issue centers around the information entered in the Chronicle under the year 6367 (859).9 If the narrative is interpreted literally, the text would indicate that the Northmen and the Khazars acted simultaneously. But the vagueness of the formulation allows us also to understand the text as indicating that in the year 859 it was only the Ruses who initiated the collection of tributes from the various tribes of the north, whereas in the east and south the Khazars had already been receiving such tributes since an earlier date.

There are various interpretations of this ambiguous text. The year 859 as the initial date for tribute payments to the Khazars, as well as the essence of the whole entry under that date, is entirely ignored by B. A. Rybakov. His contention is that the whole story of tribute payments is an invention of the Chronicler. According to his interpretation, Kii was a strong, independent Polanian prince in the sixth century, and as, according to the Chronicler, the imposition of the tribute followed immediately after Kii's death, the encounter of the Polanians with the Khazars could have happened only in the sixth or seventh century, and not around 859. In Rybakov's opinion, the Khazars failed to collect the tribute because, instead of payments, they were shown swords as a symbol of force. Rybakov concluded that the Chronicler had deliberately misinterpreted the whole incident.10

Rybakov also disregarded much of the Chronicler's testimony on the Slav-Khazar relations and thus was able to avoid the necessity of explaining why some Eastern Slavs paid tribute to the Khazars in the ninth, or even in the tenth, century, or why the Ruses had to liberate the Slavs from Khazar domination.11

8 Ibid., passim.
9 The text quoted above, p. 57.
10 B. A. Rybakov, "Rus i khazary", Akademiku Borisu Dmitrievichu Grekovu... (Moscow, 1952), p. 77. In this study Rybakov rejects any notion of tribute payment and concedes only temporary harassment of Severians and Viatichians by the Khazars, and that only at the time when the Khazars first appeared in the Steppes. In the revised version of this study, "K voprosu o roli khazarskogo khaganata v istorii Rusi", Sovetskaia Arkheologiiia, XVIII (1953), p. 135, Rybakov maintains his basic view, but admits that the Khazars could collect tribute from any Severians and Viatichians who, in the seventh and eighth centuries, infiltrated into the Steppes as settlers.
11 Some arguments used by B. A. Rybakov are based on unsupported surmises, and, therefore, any attempt to repudiate his constructions would take us back to the controversy as to whether the Ruses of the ninth century were Slavs. His argument
G. Vernadsky, in his most recent survey of early Russian history, accepts the information on the tribute payment as fairly reliable.\textsuperscript{18} He proposes only a slight adjustment: to correct the date "859" to "around 850". Nevertheless, in the same work, in a different context, he implies that some of the Eastern Slavs were dependent upon the Khazars much earlier. In his opinion, the Slavs, together with the Alans and the Magyars, were already providing auxiliary troops to the Khazar army in the early eighth century.\textsuperscript{13} The twenty-thousand prisoners taken by the Arabs during a conflict with the Khazars in 737 are assumed by Vernadsky to have been Slavs.\textsuperscript{14} The assumption of the existence of Slavic auxiliary troops in the Khazar army at such an early date is derived by Vernadsky, and others, from writings of the Arabic historian al-Balādhuri.

As our analysis of the available contemporary sources does not support the theory of such an early affiliation of the Slavs to the Khazars, we propose a detailed discussion of the relevant narratives.

B. THE TESTIMONY OF MUSLIM SOURCES

The assumption that the Eastern Slavs provided auxiliary troops to the Khazar Army in the early decades of the eighth century is based on the writings of the Arabic historian al-Baladuri, although there are also various other sources describing the same events. The assumption, as is often the case, is based on a misinterpretation of the term ‘aṣ-Šaqāliba’.

Our re-evaluation of al-Balādhuri’s narrative, in conjunction with other relevant sources, attempts to show that the ‘Ṣaqāliba’ of the Khazar Empire were definitely not Slavs, that they were not necessarily auxiliary troops, and that they were probably Bulgars.

The text of al-Balādhuri’s \textit{Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān} reads as follows:

Marwān ibn Muḥammad invaded the aṣ-Ṣaqāliba, who lived in the land of the Khazars, and removed from among them into captivity twenty thousand families, which he resettled in Khāḥīt. Later they killed their leader and escaped, but [Marwān] pursued and killed them.

It is told: as soon as [the news] about the multitude of the people with whom Marwān entered his land reached the great [ruler] of the Khazars, and with what force they were advancing against him, [that news] frightened his AGAINST THE NOTION OF THE SUBORDINATION OF THE SLAVS TO THE KHAZARS IS THAT "IBN FADLAN NOWHERE SPEAKS ABOUT THE RUSES AS A NATION DEPENDENT ON THE KHAZARS". AS THE RUSES OF THE NINTH CENTURY WERE NOT IDENTICAL WITH THE SLAVS, RYBAKOV'S ARGUMENT APPEARS TO BE ONLY AN EXERCISE IN SYLLOGISM.

\textsuperscript{18} Vernadsky, \textit{The Origins}, pp. 203-4.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 93.
heart and filled it with terror. As soon as [Marwān] drew near to him, he sent to him an envoy calling on him to accept Islam or to take flight. [The ruler of the Khazars] answered: "I accept Islam. Send to me someone who will explain it to me." He did so, and he accepted Islam, and Marwān agreed to confirm him in his kingdom. Afterwards, Marwan departed with a group of the people from among the Khazars, and settled them between as-Samūr and as-Shābirān, on the plains of the land al-Lakz.  

The war between the Arabs and the Khazars, described in this fragment, is dated 737. Marwan was at this time governor of the frontier district and later became Khalif (744-50). Vernadsky, and before him Harkavi and Barthold among others, interpreted the aš-Šaqāliba as referring to Slavs. Also Lewicki, in his translation of the Arabic text, interpreted the term as meaning "the Slavs". Zeki Validi Togan proposed three possible equivalents, namely: the Volga Bulgars, the Suwars on the Volga, or the Burtases. Artamonov, most recently, accepted the very last suggestion and equated the Șaqāliba of al-Balādhuri's narrative with the Burtases of the Middle Volga Region.

The was described by al-Balādhuri did not result in fighting, and the ruler of the Khazars capitulated before any armed encounter with the Muslim army occurred. Marwan confirmed the ruler of the Khazars in his function, and departed with a group of people "from among the Khazars". There is no evidence that Marwān, with his army, progressing into Khazar territory, ever reached Slav settlements. In the eighth century, by a liberal estimate, the Slavs could have lived only in the upper regions of the Don River, far from the Caucasus and even far from the Khazars. The 'aš-Šaqāliba', according to al-Balādhuri, lived on Khazar territory. Harkavi suggested that the captured 'aš-Šaqāliba' were Slav warriors in Khazar service, but his conjecture is contradicted by the fact that Balādhuri's text refers to families and not to warriors. Besides this, there is no indication in other sources that the Slavs ever served in compact units in

15 Cf. Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 225. Our translation deviates from Lewicki's interpretation of the original text.
16 A. Ia. Harkavi (spelled also "Garkavi"), Skazaniia musulmanskikh pisatelei o slavianakh i russikh (Sanktpeterburg, 1874), pp. 41-43; V. V. Barthold, "Slavs", Encyclopaedia of Islam.
17 Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 225 (text), 238 (comments).
20 I. I. Liapushkin, "Slaviano-russkie poseleniia IX-XII vv. na Donu i Tamani po arkheologicheskim pamiatnikam", Materialy i izsledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, VI (1941), p. 91; "the settlements of the Eastern Slavs did not go beyond the mixed forest-steppe zone (za predely lesostepi) before the second half of the tenth century ...". Cf. also Atlas istorii SSSR, I (Moscow, 1949), pp. 7, 8.
THE KHAZARS AND THE EASTERN SLAVS

the Khazar army, although such units were employed by the Avars and the Danubian Bulgars.\(^{21}\) The term ‘aş-Šaqāliba’ in al-Balādhurī’s narrative cannot therefore be interpreted as meaning ‘Slavs’. The term ‘aş-Šaqāliba’ in this case carries its original meaning and may denote any group of population of fair complexion, distinct from the Arabs and other ethnic groups of the Caliphate and also distinct from the Khazars. Since al-Balādhurī knew the Khazars under their own name, the term ‘aş-Šaqāliba’ may be applicable only to some other ethnic element of the Khazar federation, e.g., the Alans, the Burtases of the Middle Volga, or the Bulgars of the Kuban region. The tribe of the Burtases was, in fact, providing ten thousand warriors to the permanent Khazar army.\(^{22}\) The Burtases were probably Ugro-Finns, and therefore the term ‘Shaqāliba’, with its original meaning of people of fair complexion of the North, could also easily be applied to them. But al-Balādhurī speaks of families, not of soldiers, although members of a permanent army may have lived with their families. We should also consider the Alans as possible victims of the mass relocation, because they were part of the Khazar federation and lived southwest of the ethnic Khazars.

Independent evidence can be brought forward only for the assumption that the twenty thousand families were taken from among the Bulgars dwelling along the Kuban River, in the imminent neighborhood of the Caucasus. This is the region which would have been the first to have fallen into the hands of an invading army coming from the south. We have to remember that mass transfers of population were often practiced by the Arabs, Khazars, Danubian Bulgars, and also by the Byzantine Greeks. Whereas the Alans were equal partners of the Khazars in the Alan-Khazar federation, the Bulgars were more reluctant allies and could easily have fallen victim to the harsh conditions of the peace settlement.

Decisive for the supposition that the Bulgars should be understood under the term ‘aş-Šaqāliba’ is the fact that Aḥmad ibn Faḍlān, when later describing the Bulgars of the Volga-Kama region, calls them ‘Shaqāliba’ and never uses the term ‘Bulgar’. Ibn Faḍlān undertook a journey in 921-22 to the Volga-Kama region and related “what he saw in the lands of the Turks, of the Khazars, of the Ruses, of ‘Shaqāliba’, of the Bashkirs, and of other [nations]...”\(^{23}\) So reads the opening sentence of his de-

\(^{21}\) Masūdī has a statement to the effect that Ruses and aš-Šaqāliba could enter the mercenary army of the Khazar king. The information probably refers to individual volunteers only. The term aš-Šaqāliba cannot be definitely applied to the Slavs.

\(^{22}\) Compact mercenary units were provided by the Khwarezmians and by the Burtases, cf. A magyar honfoglalás kütfői, edited by Gyula Pauer and Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest, 1900), p. 258.

scription, in which, surprisingly, the name 'Bulgar' is not used although the only state formation of the region was that of the Bulgars and he visited the King of the Bulgars. In the text itself he names the king residing in the city of 'Bulgar' as ruler of as-$aqāliba. It seems obvious that $aqāliba in his description is a synonym for Bulgar. Only on one occasion did Ibn Faḍlān also use the title 'ruler of Bulgar',24 but in this context the name refers to the city of Bulgar and not to the population of the whole region.

Of a different opinion is A. P. Kovalivškyi, who, in a recent edition of "Ibn Faḍlān's Journey", expressed the opinion that the term Bulgar in the phrase 'ruler of Bulgar' must refer to the people and not to a city by the name of Bulgar. His argument is that in 921-22 the city of Bulgar did not yet exist.25 This argument cannot be accepted, however, because the city of Bulgar was a very important trading emporium in the tenth century, and most probably already in the second half of the ninth century.26

We have also some further indication that Ibn Faḍlān used the term $aqāliba exclusively for the Bulgars: "When we were at a distance of a day's and night's journey from the king of $aqāliba, he dispatched for our reception four kings who were under his rule, his brother, and his sons."27 In this sentence, the 'king of $aqāliba' is contrasted with the four kings subordinated to him. And, finally, there is the sentence according to which "the king of the $aqāliba ... gave his daughter in marriage to the king of the Eskels, [a tribe] which is under his command. ..."28 Here again, the $aqāliba is an exclusive term which does not apply to the

24 Ibid., pp. 132-33.
25 Ibid., note 390 on page 198.
26 Ibn Faḍlān uses the name Bulgar in singular form, which would be applicable only to a city of that name, cf. Omeljan Pritsak, "Kašgarīs Angaben über die Sprache der Bulgaren", Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, CIX (1959), p. 104. A. P. Smirnov is of the opinion that the city (gorod) of Bulgar existed since the ninth century, cf. A. P. Smirnov, Volzhskie Bulgary (Leningrad, 1951), pp. 228-29. See also Hudud al-Alam, pp. 163, 461.
27 A. P. Kovalivškyi, op. cit., p. 131. Of significance for the proper interpretation of the term as-$aqāliba is that Kovalivškyi translated the term as 'Slaviane' (i.e. 'Slavs'), using quotation marks consistently whenever the name occurs. In the Notes (p. 159) he explained that the term $aqāliba basically denotes the Slavs, but nevertheless is often used in a broader sense to describe, in addition to the Slavs, also the Finns, Bulgars on the Volga, and Germanic people of the North. Kovalivškyi suggested that the term $aqāliba should be interpreted in each case independently. In his opinion the term used by Ibn Faḍlān is a synonym of 'masses of the people of the North'. It may be remarked that V. Minorsky realized that the king of the Bulgars of Ibn Faḍlān's description could not be, in any case, connected with the Slavs. In order to save the consistent use of the term 'Slav' for as-$aqāliba, he interpreted the title 'malik a$-$aqāliba' to mean 'king in charge of the Slavic frontier', i.e. 'the king defending the state against the Slavs'. Minorsky's interpretation is more ingenious than convincing. Cf. V. Minorsky, A History of Sharvan and Darban in the 10th and 11th Centuries (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 109-10.
28 Kovalivškyi, op. cit., p. 141.
Eskels. In both instances, the term could not have been applied to the Slavs, because during the ninth and tenth centuries there were no Slavic settlements under Bulgar control. Since the term cannot be applied to "all people of the North" either, because the people subordinated to the Bulgars are excluded, it is reasonable to identify the $\text{Saqāliba}$ with the Bulgars only.

On the basis of the analysis of al-Balādhurī's text, in conjunction with Ibn Faḍlān's use of the term $\text{Saqāliba}$, we may now disregard the notion that the Slavs were subordinated to the Khazars already in the eighth century.

A formal independence of the Eastern Slavs in the eighth and earlier part of the ninth century can be surmised also from some fragments of the Russian Primary Chronicle. According to the date supplied by that Chronicle, the Viatichi, with some other Eastern Slav tribes, were tributaries of the Khazars in 859. As there is no written source or any circumstantial evidence which could contradict the statement of the Russian Primary Chronicle, we should interpret the relevant fragments as an indication that the tribute payments to the Khazars began only around the middle of the ninth century. Although the date rendered in the Chronicle must be adjusted because of the error in chronological computation, the relative chronology remains binding: the Khazars interfered in the self-government of the East Slavic tribes only shortly after 850, when the Northmen began their penetration into Eastern Europe, proceeding from north to south.

C. THE FORMS AND EXTENT OF THE AFFILIATION

The Khazars extended nominal political control over the Polanians, Viatichians, and Severians, and thus prevented the Northmen from subordinating those tribal territories to themselves. Violation of Khazar rights or claims might have caused a conflict that could have excluded the

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29 Between the Volga Bulgars and the Eastern Slavs (Viatichians, Krivichians) there were the tribes of the Mordvins, Meshchers etc.; cf. *Atlas istorii SSSR*, I (Moscow, 1949), p. 8.

30 The whole problem of the expedition by Marwan is still far from being solved. There are several Muslim sources on the events which should be correlated.

31 On the basis of the use by al-Balādhurī and Ibn Faḍlān of the term $\text{aş-Şaqāliba}$ we can draw the conclusion that the invasion by Marwān was the cause for the mass exodus of the Bulgars from the Kuban region. Thus we have a chronological approximation for the arrival of the Bulgars at the Kama-Volga, namely shortly after 737. We have to note that not all $\text{aş-Şaqāliba}$ were taken prisoners and even the prisoners, having killed their leader, escaped. At the time of Ibn Faḍlān the migration of the Bulgars from the Kuban to the Kama-Volga region could still be part of living tradition—hence the application of the name $\text{aş-Şaqāliba}$ with the connotation as applied by Al-Balādhurī.
Northmen from the use of the Volga River, which was the main trade route connecting Scandinavia with the East. The Polanians and other East Slavic tribes were not necessarily a passive element in the Khazar-Northman rivalry. It is possible that the Southeastern Slavs themselves sought the protection of the Khazars, when they learned that the Northmen had begun the occupation of some strategically important regions in the north.

This assumption of peaceful cooperation is supported by the fact that there is no indication of any armed conflict between the Slavs and the Khazars. In the case of the Polanians, we also know that the Khazar protection was extended at a time when the Polanians were menaced by their direct neighbors. As the Khazars did not remain on Polanian territory, the tributary affiliation was probably a better solution than a possible direct dominion by the Derevlians, Northmen, or other neighboring tribes.

Except for the fact of the tribute payments by various Slavic tribes to the Khazars and the approximate dates for the duration of such tributary affiliations, there is no direct information which gives details of the stipulations of the subordination. It is evident from the Rusian Chronicles that the tribute payments to the Khazars were relatively light: only one fur from a household per year or a silver piece per plow. We know much about the technique of tribute collections by the Northmen.\textsuperscript{32}\ We also know from the description of the Dulebians by Fredigarius how harshly the Avars treated the Western Slavs.\textsuperscript{33} But the forms of tribute payments to the Northmen or Avars were not necessarily paralleled in the relations between the Khazars and the Eastern Slavs.

One may, however, reasonably suppose that the Khazars’ relation to the Eastern Slavs resembled to some degree their relation to the Volga Bulgars, who were also tribute-paying members of the Khazar Empire at the same time. For information on this latter group, there is the account of Ibn Fadlan.

The subordination of the Bulgars to the Khazars was expressed in the form of a tax consisting of one fur from a household. Otherwise, the Bulgars enjoyed full internal self-government. They had their own king and even some non-Bulgar tribes subordinated to them. They had an independent army, and there were no Khazar garrisons on territories controlled by the Bulgars. They were free to control the trade passing through their territory, and their king was free to impose tithes on foreign merchants entering or leaving the country.\textsuperscript{34} Of course, the Bulgars were obliged not to wage wars on their own initiative or carry on an independent foreign

\textsuperscript{32} Cf. \textit{Annales Bertiniani, passim}, and \textit{De administrando imperio} on 'poludie', pp. 62-63.
\textsuperscript{33} See above, p. 45.
policy without Khazar consent. The loyalty of the Bulgars was assured by the system of hostages and dynastic marriages practiced by the Khazars and common throughout medieval Europe.  

The Bulgar-Khazar rapprochement also increased the prestige of the Bulgars somewhat, since any attack on them would automatically bring forth the help of the Khazars. The subordination of the Bulgars to the Khazars allowed the former to participate as equal partners of the latter in the benefits of trade with the Near East and Central Asia. It is significant that the Khazars did not maintain garrisons on the territory of the Bulgars. This implies that the relationship was based on consent; it was beneficial for both contracting parties and depended on reciprocal good will. There were, no doubt, occasional strains in the relations: for example, in the early tenth century the king of the Bulgars conspired with the Khalif against the Khazars. But even this case shows that the subordination to the Khazars left much room for independent action.

The facts governing Bulgar-Khazar relations may reflect the basic policy of the Khazars toward other subordinated tribes. The intention of the Khazars was, at least during the ninth to eleventh centuries, to ensure peace along the borders of Khazaria proper. The integration into the empire of the Burtases and the Bulgars, both living along the economically important Volga River, assured peace in the fur-producing regions of the European Northeast through a system of satellite buffer states. It might be added here that in the Khazar Empire the Khazars themselves were taxed. The Khazar nobility had to maintain at its own expense the mercenary troops of the state. In the Altaic states, as in other medieval states, there was no gradation of burdens or privileges according to ethnic or linguistic classifications, although there were different assessments of taxes according to the religion professed. In Altaic states anyone who did not serve in the army or in the administration had to pay taxes. The Slavs were not necessarily excluded from the armed services. For instance, the Slavs provided large contingents to the armies of the Avar and Danubian Bulgar states. But we have no evidence of mass participation of Slavs in the Khazar army or administration. The fact that the Slavs paid tribute implies that like the Bulgars of the Volga

35 A. P. Kovalivskiy, op. cit., p. 147.
36 Ibn Rusṭa: “Their king . . . has imposed taxes upon the wealthy people among them; they have to maintain a number of horsemen in proportion to their income . . .” Cf. Michael Knoskó, “Die Quellen Istachri’s in seinem Berichte über die Chasaren”, Körösi Csoma Archivium, I (1921-25), p. 146; cf. also a translation in C. A. Macartney, op. cit., p. 199.
37 E.g., in the Caliphate the fiscal policy was changing, but basically the Muslims were the ones to enjoy exceptions. Also the Jews and the Christians had some privileges. According to Ibn Khurdādhbeh, the Rus merchants arriving in Bagdad claimed to be Christians and paid only a head tax (quoted above, p. 28).
region they did not provide contingents to the Khazar army. We do know that the Burtases had to provide ten thousand warriors, but there is no evidence that they also made tax payments.\(^{38}\)

Except for the settlement associated with the name of ‘Kii’, there were no Avar or Khazar garrisons on East Slavic territory. This proposition is amply supported by evidence from the Primary Chronicle. When the first Northmen arrived at Kiev, they were informed that the town paid tribute to the Khazars. The Northmen remained in the city. There is no reference to any armed clash. This fact should not be surprising, and should not yet necessarily imply that there were no Khazar garrisons in the town. The Northmen, as tradesmen, could easily have remained as transients on the basis of an agreement with the local Slavic or Khazar authorities. But the Northmen, after inviting reinforcements from the north, imposed their rule by force over all the Polanian land.\(^ {39}\) The absence of a reference to the Khazars here is more significant; it obviously shows that there were no Khazar forces in Kiev or in the Polanian land.

Similar is the case later, when Oleg began the conquest of the tribes previously politically subordinated to the Khazars. First, in 884, he attacked the Severians and subordinated them to his own rule. In the following year (885) he did the same with the Radimichians.\(^ {40}\) In both cases Oleg had to deal with the Slavs, and not with the Khazars. It was only eighty years later that the Ruses ventured into the land of the Viatichians, who at that time were still tributaries of the Khazars:

964. Prince Sviatoslav ... went to the Oka and the Volga and on coming in contact with the Viatichians, he inquired of them to whom they paid tribute. They made answer that they paid a silver piece per plowshare to the Khazars.

965. Sviatoslav sallied forth against the Khazars. When they heard of his approach, they went out to meet him with their prince, the Khagan, and the armies came to blows. When the battle thus took place, Sviatoslav defeated the Khazars, and took their city of Bela Vezha ....

966. Sviatoslav conquered the Viatichians and made them his tributaries.\(^ {41}\)

This continuous story clearly shows that the Viatichians, although politically dependent on the Khazars, were self-governing, and like other Slavic tribes, had their own military organization to resist the Ruses.

Obviously, the Khazars were far away from their tributary tribes and were unable to render them immediate assistance. The Ruses, in order to

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\(^{38}\) Ibn Rūsta: “The Burdās are in allegiance to the king of the Khazars and he takes as tribute from the 10,000 horsemen...” Similar text by Gardīzī. Both quoted by C. A. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

\(^{39}\) Likhachev, *Povest vremennych let*, pp. 18-19.


encounter the Khazar army, had to traverse the Slavic regions and move into the territory populated by the Khazars and Alans. Sviatoslav could conquer the Viatichi only after having first defeated the Khazars completely.

All the quoted instances show that the Slavs, when subordinated to the Khazars, were self-governing and in control of their own military organizations. The Ruses had to defeat the Severians and some of the other East Slavic tribes in order to impose tribute. The Viatichians were able to resist all attempts at subordination at least until the late eleventh century. The last information about their opposition to the Ruses comes from 1080, when the Ruses had to fight the Viatichian Prince Khodota and his son.42 The expedition of the Ruses lasted two years. If tribal princes could exist in the eleventh century, then, no doubt, princes could have functioned also during the Khazar domination.

Ibn Faḍlān, in his description of the Khazar state system, remarked that "the neighboring kings obey him", i.e., the Khagan-Beh.43 Thus, we have another indication that the Khazars allowed the kings or princes to remain in charge of local affairs.

Before accepting the notion of the formal independence of the Eastern Slavs before and during the first half of the ninth century, and the notion of the mild forms of the subsequent Khazar domination, we should clarify the peculiar character of Kiev amidst the Slavic-populated regions of the middle Dnieper.

Kiev, with its Altaic background, could easily have come into existence and maintained its function as a trading post without infringement of the rights of the Polanians. Foreign trading posts, and even foreign military garrisons for the protection of trade routes across Slavic territories, could exist without being incompatible with tribal independence. Early Slavic or Germanic tribes did not know the modern concept of territorial sovereignty. A tribe claimed ‘dominium’ only over lands in actual utilization. Slavic tribes were divided by natural or artificial barriers. A trading post, used for international trade, could be established even under foreign military protection at points not claimed by any of the neighboring tribes. Here the observation should be made that Kiev is not in the center of the Polanian territories, but at the very edge of compact Polanian settlements. We should also recall the fragment already analyzed from the Russian Primary Chronicle that while the Polanians lived apart and governed their families, the founders of Kiev ruled only over their own kinsfolk.44

The penetration of Northmen into Eastern Europe began through trading posts protected by small military retinues. Such settlements were

43 A. P. Kovalivskiyi, op. cit., p. 146.
44 See above, p. 48.
established not only among the Eastern Slavs or the Ugro-Finns of the northeast (for example Murmansk i.e. ‘burgh of Norwegians’), but also on West Slavic territory.

On Polish ethnic territory there are today toponyms such as: ‘Warężyn’, ‘Waręgowice’, ‘Waręska Kuźnica’, etc. All these place names, and other similar ones, are to be found along navigable rivers or places suitable for portages. The names, of course, reflect the fact that the localities were established by ‘Varangians’ (or specifically by Ruses, in the case of place names such as: ‘Rusek’, ‘Rusocin’, etc.). The usual interpretation of these toponyms is that the places so named were used by Scandinavian merchants or military personnel securing the safety of communication lines.

Despite such obvious Scandinavian toponyms and archeological finds of Nordic character, no one seriously contends that the Western Slavs were tributaries of the Northmen. Similarities with the developments in Eastern Europe are numerous.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that Kiev could become a foreign – in our case, an Altaic – trading post without affecting the independence of the neighboring Slavs.

The trade in Eastern Europe during the ninth century was in the hands of the Northmen, the heterogeneous population of Khazaria and the Jewish merchants of Western Europe. Also the Avars remained interested in East-West trade relations. As long as the Slavic tribes could maintain peace along the trade routes, there was no need for the Khazars or Avars to interfere in their internal affairs. A Khazar intervention came only when the Polanians and Kiev were threatened by neighboring tribes, as well as by the expansion of the Northmen, shortly after the year 850 A.D.

We may conclude that, despite the political affiliation and the tribute payment to the Khazars since the middle of the ninth century, the Slavic tribes still maintained their own organization under their own princes and Veche. The Slavs were free also to maintain their own military organization.

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Between the time of the collapse of the Avar Khaganate (796-803) and the date of the first arrival of the Northmen in Kiev (c. 856), there was a half-century for which the sequence and details of events are not yet fully reconstructed, although they were of crucial importance in the history of Eastern Europe. In the east, by the year 800, the frequent wars between the Khazars and the Caliphate had ended or at least had become less evident. The Muslim lands of the Middle East and especially of Central Asia enjoyed at that time a period of economic prosperity. As a result, the cities of the Khazar Empire became important centers for trade carried on between Europe and the lands of the East, especially as the traditional trade routes across the Mediterranean, connecting Western Europe with the East, were still disrupted by the wars between the Arabs, Byzantium, and the Carolingian Empire. Merchants preferred to take the overland routes across the Slavic-populated areas of Central and Eastern Europe, and then the routes used by the Khazars.1

The opportunities offered by the prosperity of the East also attracted the Northmen of Scandinavia, who in the first decades of the ninth century became one of the most active groups of European tradesmen frequenting Oriental markets.2 Of advantage for the seagoing Northmen were the convenient waterways of Eastern Europe, connecting the Baltic with the Caspian Sea. Although Scandinavians maintained trade contacts with Eastern Europe and the lands further to the East as early as the Gothic period, it was only in the ninth century that regular and large-scale contacts were re-established.

Eastern Europe was, furthermore, not only a crossroads for trade, but also an important source of commodities, such as furs, honey, and wax, sought by foreign merchants. Both the Slavs and the Ugro-Finns benefited from this commerce, as well as from the contacts with people of different cultures. The expansion of trade stimulated the economic growth of the lands of Eastern Europe and promoted the exchange of cultural and

1 See the description of such routes by Ibn Khurdādhbeh, quoted above on p. 28; cf. also Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 141-52.
2 J. Arne, La Suède et l'Orient (Upsal, 1914), passim.
political ideas. As a result, the consciousness of national identity became stronger, and conditions were created for the emergence of political organizations as a means of self-preservation. Were it not for the abrupt end of the peace in the Pontic Steppes in the thirties of the ninth century, the first East European states would have emerged in a different form.

A. THE FORTRESS OF SARKEL ON THE DON

The tranquillity of Eastern Europe was disturbed by some nomadic tribes which were at that time unknown in the West. The danger posed by these nomads affected the Khazars from the West, the Crimean Greek cities from the North, and also the Byzantine possessions on the Balkans. Soon afterward, the nomads began the invasions of Western Europe and already in 862 were reported on German soil. Their presence was to remain the dominant political factor of the Pontic Steppes for at least another seven centuries, until the Tartars were finally absorbed into the political structure of Russia.

The names and the ethnic identity of the tribes which first created the disturbance in the early ninth century is still the subject of conjectures. Their appearance is implied in the description made by Constantine Porphyrogenitus of defense measures undertaken by the Khazars on the Don and by the Byzantine Empire in its Crimean possessions. Constantine introduced his description with the statement that in his own times (the middle of the tenth century) there was a city of the Khazars named Sarkel with a garrison of 300 men; then he presented its history, as follows:

Sarkel among them means ‘white house’, and it was built by the spatharocandidate Petronas, surnamed Camaterus, when the Khazars requested the emperor Theophilus that this city should be built for them. For that famous Khagan and the Pekh of Khazaria sent envoys to this same emperor Theophilus and begged that the city of Sarkel might be built for them, and the emperor acceded to their request and sent them the aforesaid spatharocandidate Petronas with ships of war of the imperial navy, and sent also ships of war of the captain-general of Paphlagonia. This same Petronas arrived at Chersonnes and left the ships of war at Chersonnes, and having embarked his men on ships of burden, went off to that place on the Tanais river where he was to build the city. And since the place had no stones suitable for the building of the city, he made some ovens and baked bricks in them, and with these he carried out the building of the city, making mortar out of shingle from the river.

3 Annales Bertiniani, s.a. 862: “Dani magnam regni eius [i.e., of Louis the German] partem caede et egni vastantes praedantur. Sed et hostes antes illis populis inexperti, qui Ungri vocantur, regnum eius depopulantur.”
4 De administrando imperio, pp. 182-85.
After more than a century of conjecture by historians and research by archeologists, the site of Sarkéi has been located on the lower Don, the Tanais of medieval sources. The fortress was constructed at some time around 833. It was known to the early Eastern Slavs by the name of Bela Vezha (White Tower, White Fort) (cf. the ‘aspron ospiton’ of Constantine’s Greek text).

Another fragment of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ work describes the Greek defense measures undertaken on the Crimea:

Now this aforesaid spatharocandidate Petronas, after building the city of Sarkel, went to the emperor Theophilus and said to him: “If you wish complete mastery and dominion over the city of Chersonnes and of the places in Chersonnes, and not that they should slip out of your hand, appoint your own military governor and do not trust to their primates and nobles.” For up to the time of Theophilus the emperor, there was no military governor sent from here, but all administration was in the hands of the so-called primate, with those who were called the fathers of the city. The emperor Theophilus took counsel in this matter, whether to send as military governor so-and-so or such-an-one, and at last made up his mind that the aforesaid spatharocandidate Petronas should be sent, as one who had acquired local experience and was not unskilled in affairs, and so he promoted him to be protospatharius and appointed him military governor and sent him out to Chersonnes, with orders that the then primate and everyone else were to obey him; and from that time until this day it has been the rule for military governors in Chersonnes to be appointed from here [i.e., from Constantinople].

Unfortunately, Constantine Porphyrogenitus did not specify against what enemy the fortress of Sarkéi was constructed, or who was endangering the peace around the Greek cities of the Crimea. To solve this problem, various theories have been advanced, some suggesting that the disturbance was caused by the Pechenegs, some considering the Magyars, and still others proposing the Ruses (Slavs or Normans, depending on the views of the proponent).

The theory that the Pechenegs were already in the Pontic Steppes in the thirties of the ninth century is the least acceptable, because, according to available sources and prevailing opinion, they did not cross the Volga, coming from the East, until the eighties of that century. In most recent scholarship, the Pechenegs have been suggested as the cause of Khazar

6 De administrando imperio, pp. 184-85.
and Greek anxiety, e.g., by T. Lewicki and B. A. Rybakov. The theories, as formulated by them, however, appear to be self-defeating. Lewicki is of the opinion that the Pechenegs were directly and solely responsible for the fact that Sarkel was constructed, but in the same paragraph he shares the general opinion that they did not cross the Volga before the end of the ninth century. A similar inconsistency is apparent in the formulations of Rybakov, who connects the strategic importance of the fortress with the danger posed first by the Magyars and Bulgars (Uturgurs) and later by the Pechenegs, but in the same study demolishes his otherwise plausible theory by asserting that Sarkel was constructed on the northern borders of the Khaganate as a defense measure against the Pechenegs. Unless some new piece of evidence or sound reasoning is brought forward, the presence of, or danger from, the Pechenegs around the Don and the Crimea as early as the thirties of the ninth century cannot be accepted.

Theories connecting Sarkel with the Ruses are based on information contained in the “Life of Stephan of Sugdea” and the “Life of Georg of Amastris”. According to these biographies, Ruses plundered the cities of the Crimea and along the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor as early as the end of the eighth or the first half of the ninth century (before 842). On the basis of this, it is concluded, e.g., most recently by B. D. Grekov and G. Vernadsky, that it was the same Ruses who provoked the Khazars to defense measures, such as the construction of Sarkel. The hagiographic character of the two sources makes it difficult to accept the stories at face value, especially with respect to chronology. It has been suspected that the references to the Ruses in these works are interpolations reflecting Rus attacks against the Paphlagonian and Crimean cities in the late ninth and tenth centuries. The main argument against the credibility of the “Life of Stephan of Sugdea” is that the original Greek version does not refer to Ruses. Such a reference is included only in the Russian translation dating from the fifteenth century.

8 Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 33-34; B. A. Rybakov, “K voprosu o roli khazar-skogo kaganata XX v istorii Rusi”, Sovetskaia arkeologiia, XVIII (1953), pp. 146, 149.

9 B. D. Grekov, Kievskiaia Rus (= Izbrannye trudy, Vol. II (Moscow, 1959), p. 100; Vernadsky, The Origins, pp. 180-89, where earlier opinions are cited. See also M. V. Levchenko, Ocherki po istorii russko-vizantiiskikh otnoshenii (Moscow, 1965), pp. 45-58. Levchenko is in favor of an earlier dating of the Rus attacks, but much of his argumentation is based on a mistranslation of Ibn Hurdadbeh’s description of the routes used by the Rus merchants. Where Ibn Hurdadbeh has ‘Bahr ar-Rum’, i.e., ‘the Sea of the Romans’, or ‘the Mediterranean’, Levchenko reads ‘more russkoe’ (p. 45).

10 G. da Costa Louillet, “Y eut-il des invasions russes dans l’Empire Byzantin avant 860?”, Byzantion, XV (1940-41), pp. 231-48. See also George Vernadsky’s article “The Rus in the Crimea and the Russo-Byzantine Treaty of 945” in Byzantina Meta-byzantina, I (1946), pp. 249-59. In comments on this article (on pages following the article) Henri Grégoire restated the current opinion that “the life of St. Stephen of
However, before dismissing the theories that some militant Ruses were already present in the Don region in the third decade of the ninth century or even earlier, we should explore the possibilities of a connection between the construction of Sarkel and the presence of Rus envoys in Constantinople in 838/9. This date is very close to that of the alleged Rus raids against the Black Sea cities which are supposed to have taken place sometime before 842. Between the two facts, that of the embassy and that of the raids, a direct relation is possible, especially if we recall that King Louis I of Germany had suspected that the envoys were on a spy mission.\textsuperscript{11}

Spying envoys were commonly employed both by the nomads and the Northmen as a preparation for armed invasions. But even the possibility of a sinister reason behind the Rus mission of 838/9, and the probability of Rus attacks against the Black Sea cities even before 842 will not explain the construction of Sarkel as a defense measure directed against the Ruses in the early thirties of the ninth century. There must have been some other tribes at that time in the Steppes – namely, those who in 839 prevented the Rus envoys to Constantinople from returning home.

Furthermore, a fortress such as Sarkel would scarcely have been effective against the Ruses, who used the seas and rivers for their peaceful, as well as warlike, exploits. An effective defense against the Ruses would have been a garrison at the mouth of the river Don. Khazar defenses, in fact, did exist at the mouths of rivers, and they are mentioned in the so-called Jewish Correspondence exchanged between the Jews of Spain and the Khagan of the Khazars sometime around 960. “I am defending the \textit{Mouth of the river},” writes the Khagan, “and am preventing the Ruses, who are arriving by boat, coming from the sea, from going against the Muslims….”\textsuperscript{12} Sarkel could not have served such a purpose, at it was located halfway between the mouth of the Don and the portage to the Volga, while, on the other hand, it could have served as a base for troops in control of river crossings used by the nomads.

The theories relating the upheavals of the early ninth century to the presence of the Ruses in the neighborhood of the Don and of the Crimea, therefore, cannot be sustained, unless new independent sources were to confirm the statement of the hagiographic Russian ‘Lives’ of the fifteenth century.

The third and commonly accepted theory holds that the Pax Chazarica in Eastern Europe was disrupted by the appearance of the Magyars. Most

\textsuperscript{11} See above, p. 24.

of the modern formulations of this theory are simply rephrasings of the
observation made by J. Marquart in 1903, although the original idea
was not necessarily his own. According to Marquart, there was a
connection between the construction of Sarkel and Ibn Rūsta's remark that
"in former days the land of the Khazars was surrounded by a ditch as a
defense against the 'Majgharija' and other nations adjacent to the [Khazar]
country".

On the face of it, the connection between the erection of Sarkel in the
thirties of the ninth century and the remark of Ibn Rūsta seems to be
acceptable. This theory, however, proves to be even more complex than
those already eliminated concerning the Pechenegs and the Ruses. Mar­
quart translates Ibn Rūsta's Arabic 'Majgharija' by the term 'Magyaren',
thus identifying the unruly tribes of the early ninth century with the Hun­
garians, whose own name today is 'Magyar'. Upon a close confronta­
tion of the sources, however, it appears that the theory of Marquart and those
derived from his are based on false assumptions.

With this statement we enter the most entangled controversy of Hun­
garian protohistory. Without attempting to solve the problems of the
origin of the Hungarians, it must be emphatically stated that the applica­
tion of the names 'Magyar', 'Hungarian' or 'Ungar' to any tribal forma­
tion participating in the events of the ninth century is an anachronism or
is based on an unsubstantiated assumption that the Hungarians (Magyars)
of today can be identified with a single group active in the steppe zone in
the ninth century.

B. THE PROTO-HUNGARIANS IN THE PONTIC STEPPES

In order to comprehend the dangers arising from the proposed equation
of the names 'Majgharija' and 'Magyars', the following explanation should
be made. The Hungarians of today are known in most languages by a
name which is derived from an old Slavic term '*Qgъre' (phonetically:
'Ongure'). From the Slavic form the Greeks in the ninth and tenth cen­
turies adopted the form 'Ouggroi' (phonetically: 'Ungroi'). The German-
Latin form is 'Ungari', 'Ungri'. The same name, transmitted by the Ger­
mans or the Greeks to the West, is used, inter alia, also by the English-
speaking world in the 'Hungarians'. The source of all these forms, the

14 The same concept was expressed earlier by Gyula Pauler in A magyar nemzet
története Szent Istvánig (Budapest, 1900), p. 14.
15 A most recent survey of the relevant theories is offered by Tamás Bogay,
"Forschungen zur Urgeschichte der Ungarn nach dem 2. Weltkrieg", Ural-Altaiische
Jahrbücher, XXIX (1957), pp. 93-114. For an earlier survey see A magyarság östör­
ténete, edited by Lajos Ligeti (Budapest, 1943). For a more recent study by Bogay
'Qgrē', is the old Slavic adaptation of the Altaic tribal name of the 'Onogurs'. The latter were a numerous group of nomads, active from the Hunnic invasion until the tenth century in various areas of Eastern Europe.

Although the name 'Onogur' is used today for the Hungarians by all of their neighbors, there is no derivative of that name known to the Hungarians themselves. The name which the Hungarians use to denote themselves is 'Magyar'. This name is directly related to the name 'Majghari', used by Ibn Rūsta. The two forms, 'Magyar' and 'Majghari' are derived from a '*Mogyeri' or '*Megyeri'.

After these linguistic preliminaries, it should be noted that, whereas the names 'Hungarian' (derived from '*Qgrē') and 'Magyar' (derived from 'Mogyeri') are today applied to only one nation, in the ninth century the derivatives from 'Qgrē' and from 'Mogyeri' were applied to two distinct, unrelated tribal formations. A source of primary importance, the anonymous Persian geographic work known as Hudūd al-Ālam ("The Regions of the World"), knows the Majghari and the Onogurs as two groups acting independently, but simultaneously, in the ninth century somewhere north of the Black Sea. There is also the Persian author Gardizi, who makes the same distinction.

Both the 'Mogyeri' and the '*Qgrē' participated in the final formation of the modern Hungarian (Magyar) nation, but the merger of these two ethnic groups did not take place until the end of the ninth century and, even at that time, not all the 'Qgrē' or all the 'Mogyeri' took part in the merger. A disassociation between the 'Majgharija' of the Oriental sources and the modern name 'Magyar' is, therefore, as important as a distinction between the modern 'French' and early medieval 'Frank'. Consequently, neither the name 'Magyar' nor the name 'Hungarian' (Ungarn, etc.) should be used for any tribal formation of the ninth century.

For the sake of precision, one should speak of 'Hungarians' only from the time of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin, i.e., c. 900, and even then in the political rather than ethnic sense. The "Covenant of Blood," preceding the conquest, was the formal union of the heterogeneous tribes into one political entity, but this was not yet the formation of an ethnic unity. Constantine Porphyrogenitus was correct when he observed that in his times, i.e., in the middle of the tenth century, the tribes forming the federation were learning each other's languages. The Onogur element spoke an Altaic; the Majghari, a Finno-Ugric dialect.

On the basis of the observations above, the suggestion may be made

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19 De administrando imperio, pp. 174-75.
that the theories linking the construction of Sarkel to the appearance of the 'Magyars' are to be accepted only as tentatively valid, with the condition that instead of 'Magyars' ('Hungarians', 'Ungarn'), we will understand 'Proto-Magyars', i.e., some tribes which eventually, entirely or in part, combined to produce the modern Hungarian nation. With this statement we actually have posed again the question: who were the people who disturbed the peace in Eastern Europe in the early ninth century? In our opinion the disturbances were caused both by the Onogurs and by the 'Majghari', two independent groups active in the Pontic Steppes simultaneously.
V

THE ONOGURS IN THE NINTH CENTURY

A re-evaluation of the pertinent sources will make it possible to identify the tribes roaming the Pontic Steppes in the early ninth century as the Onogurs, who, in our opinion, were remnants of the Avar Federation, and the 'Majghari', whose earlier history is obscure.

The Onogurs had a long history and played an independent role in political developments already before the coming of the Avars and the Khazars. The main abodes of the Onogurs from the middle of the fifth century on were in the Pontic Steppes, on the Kuban River, and along the shores of the Sea of Azov. In the sixth century, those closer to the Dnieper became subordinated to the Avars, but were free to remain north of the Black Sea. Other groups of the Onogurs moved with the Avars into the Carpathian Basin and formed a considerable portion of the Avar army. The Onogurs were reluctant allies of the Avars, however, and sources report that they revolted and attempted to seize power in the Avar Federation. Some of the rebellious Onogurs finally settled in Italy. The Onogurs of the Steppe Zone also revolted and were able to regain their independence. Elements of these Onogurs moved into Moesia and founded the state of the Danubian Bulgars.

The full name of the Bulgars was, on occasions, 'Onogur-Bulgar' or 'Onogundur-Bulgar' ('Onogundur' being a variant of 'Onogur'). It should not be surprising, therefore, that the same groups of nomads were sometimes called 'Bulgar' and, on other occasions, 'Onogur'. The Onogurs were a numerous people and the presence of their tribes simultaneously in the Khazar and Avar Khaganates and in the independent Onogur-Bulgar state on the Danube, as well as in the Volga-Kama region, is generally accepted.

1 Cf. Julius (Gyula) Moravcsik, "Zur Geschichte der Onoguren", Ungarische Jahrbücher, X (1930), pp. 53-90; and Hudud al-Alam, comments on 'V.n.nd.r' by V. Minorsky, pp. 465-71. For a short history of the Onogurs and of other Ogur tribes and for an up-to-date bibliography, see Byzantinoturcica, Vol. I, pp. 65-67 and Index.


3 For the variants of the name see Byzantinoturcica, Vol. II, s.v.: 'Boulgaroi', 'Onogouroi', 'Onogoundouroi', 'Ougoroi'.
After the downfall of the Onogur Federation (c. 558) the name ‘Onogur’ appears only seldom in sources, since the Onogur-Bulgars themselves became part of the new political formations either of the Khazars or of the Avars. The Danubian Onogur-Bulgars themselves, or their neighbors, used the name ‘Bulgar’ to denote the new political formation. Consequently, the name ‘Bulgar’ was applied to the heterogeneous Bulgar, Slav, Vlach, etc. population of the new state.

A. THE EVIDENCE OF BYZANTINE AND WESTERN SOURCES

The Onogurs reappeared in the ninth century in Byzantine sources for the first time in connection with a conflict between the Danubian Bulgars and Byzantium. The conflict occurred in 837/8 and was described by Symeon Logothetes, a Byzantine historian.\(^4\) His narrative has been preserved in the original Greek in various Byzantine chronicles, as well as in Slavic translations (the latter in Bulgarian, Serbian, and Russian versions).

According to the narrative, a large group of Macedonian captives, who were settled by the Bulgars north of the Danube, attempted to escape and return home and received Byzantine help. The Bulgars, unable to prevent the exodus, approached the ‘Ouggroi’ for military assistance.\(^5\) The description given by Symeon Logothetes is somewhat confused, and in addition to the Bulgars and the ‘Oungroi’, also ‘Tourkoi’ and ‘Ounnoi’ are mentioned. The two latter names are probably used as more general appellations characterizing the Bulgars and the ‘Ouggroi’. It is important that the ‘Oungroi’ were at this time (837/8) an independent tribal federation and that they must have lived somewhere close to the Danubian Bulgars, since they were promptly on the scene of the revolt.

The description provided by Symeon Logothetes is unequivocally interpreted as the first reference to the Magyars in Byzantine sources.\(^6\) But this assumption, as already implied, is based entirely on a static, modern understanding of the name ‘Oungroi’, without consideration for the semantic change in the name. The name ‘Oungroi’ in the early ninth century could have referred only to some Onogur tribes.

But there is also another point in need of reinterpretation: the assumption that the date 837/8 marks the first reference to the ‘Magyars’ (recte


\(^5\) Lewicki in his Źródła arabskie, p. 27, interpreted the Greek text as if it were the Macedonians who asked the Ouggroi for help. The mistake is based on the interpretation of the text by Marquart, Streifzüge, p. 30, who, however, corrected his mistake in one of the numerous appendices to his work, blaming Géza Kuún for the mistranslation (Ibid., p. 493).

'Proto-Magyars'). Most probably, the Onogurs reappeared in history under their own name already in 811. Onogurs are mentioned under that date in a rather neglected source, namely in the so-called Synaksarion in Bulgarian and Serbian versions. Both versions describe a war between the Danubian Bulgars and the Greeks of Byzantium. According to this source, the Bulgars were supported in 811 by the 'Ugry' (the Serb form) or 'Vęgry' (the Bulgarian form). As the manuscripts are from the fourteenth century, it has been suggested that the name 'Ugry/Vęgry' in the text is an anachronism, since in 811 the assistance to the Bulgars could have been rendered only by the Avars. But this assertion has several weak points.

No doubt there are cases where the scribe, when rewriting a chronicle, or a translator, when adapting a foreign text, changed the ethnic names to fit his own understanding of the events. In the case of the Synaksarion, however, an anachronistic use of the term 'Ugry/Vęgry' remains to be proved. If the original Greek text had used the name of the Avars, the Slav editors would not have identified the name with the 'Ugry/Vęgry' of the fourteenth century, because other Greek and Slavic sources clearly distinguished between the Avars and the 'Oungroi' (i.e., the Magyars). On the other hand, the original description of the war of 811 could easily have used the name 'Oungroi', as this term was also used in the description of the conflict of 837/8. The use of 'Ugry/Vęgry' for the 'Oungroi' was therefore a mechanical process of translation, and not a substitute of 'Ugry' for 'Avaroi'.

The suggested correction, that is, to read 'Avary' instead of 'Ugry/Vęgry', also has some other weak points. The Avars were completely defeated by 803. Remnants of them escaped or sought the protection of the Germans. The Bulgars were fighting the Avars from the south and occupied their possessions east and west of the River Tisza and the whole of Transylvania (802-12). In such circumstances, it is hardly possible that the Avars could have provided support for the Bulgars. But it is probable that precisely at this time the Onogurs reappeared on the scene of history. We have to recall that the Onogur tribes were employed by the Avars in their army, but were not the ruling element of the Khaganate. After the defeat of the Avars, the Onogurs would have been the most reluctant to accept the harsh conditions of the capitulation. It was probably the Onogurs who moved from Pannonia to Dacia in order to avoid annihilation. From Dacia they sought Bulgar support, but, instead, the territory was incorporated into the Bulgar state by the year 812.

It is possible, therefore, that in the year 811 the Bulgars received as-

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8 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 169.
sistance from those Onogurs who fled from the Avars into Dacia or into the most secure refuge place of all, the steppes north of the Black Sea close to the Danube. The same Onogurs were available later, on short notice, from the other side of the Danube, when the Bulgars needed help in 837/8. It appears, then, that the Synaksaion, and not Symeon Logothetes, should have the distinction of being the source providing for the re-appearance of the Onogurs in the ninth century.

The third piece of evidence for the presence of the Onogurs as an independent political factor is provided by the source known as “Description of the Lands North of the Danube” or the so-called “Bavarian Geographer”. This is a document entirely independent of Muslim or Byzantine sources. It describes a situation which existed in Eastern and Central Europe around the middle of the ninth century. The description deals only with independent tribal entities. Among these tribes, the Avars are not mentioned, as, at the time of the composition of the list, they were no longer independent, although some remnants of them still lived under German sovereignty.

The list includes, among others, the Khazars, Ruses, Moravians, and the Danubian Bulgars. There is also the name of the Ungari, a tribe or federation previously unknown in Western sources. As already mentioned, the name Ungari is the German-Latin form of the name Onogur and is an adaptation of the Slavic form Ogbre. The abodes of the Ungari known to the Bavarian Geographer were located east of the Uuislane and of the Unlizi (probably Qglichi, the Uglichi and Ulichi of the Russian sources) and west of the Khazars.

The Bavarian Geographer, therefore, attests to the presence of the independent Onogurs in the steppes, in a region west of the Khazars and east of the Danubian Bulgars.

The concurrent evidence of the independent sources cited so far makes acceptable the supposition that the sudden changes in Eastern Europe during the earlier part of the ninth century were caused partly or entirely by the reappearance of the Onogur-Bulgars escaping from the Danubian Basin.

11 There are numerous editions of this document, of which a recent one is by H. Łowmiański, “O pochodzeniu Geografa bawarskiego”, Roczniki Historyczne, XX (1951-2), pp. 9-55.
12 Ibid., pp. 31-45.
13 Lubor Niederle, Rukovět' slovanských starožitnosti (Prague, 1953), pp. 159-60, 163-65. Cf., Henryk Łowmiański, “O identyfikacji nazw Geografa bawarskiego”, Studia Žródłoznawcze—Commentationes, III (1958), pp. 19-20. Łowmiański is reluctant to identify the ‘Unlizi’ with the ‘Ulichi’ because in the first form there is a nasal. But precisely this nasal is the key to identification, because in the ninth and even in the tenth centuries the nasal did exist in the Old Russian. The Chronicler wrote ‘Ulichi’ when the nasal had already disappeared.
B. THE EVIDENCE OF MUSLIM SOURCES

The identification of the tribes which created the disturbances in the steppe zone during the earlier part of the ninth century with the Onogur-Bulgars may help to clarify some of the narrations of Muslim historiography which are generally assumed to be confused, entirely wrong, or, at least, unreliable.

Several Muslim authors knew that there were various kinds of Bulgars (Burgan, Burgar), of which some are occasionally identified with the Danubian Bulgars, others with the Kama/Volga Bulgars, or with both groups. In most of the cases these names still remain a source of confusion. A closer analysis of these Muslim sources may reveal that they used the term Burjan, Burgar in connection with events described also in Western sources, but where, instead, the terms Ouggroi, Ungari were used. The practice of applying two different names to one ethnic group should not be surprising, especially when both names are parts of one general appellation, namely that of ‘Onogur-Bulgar’.

The best illustration in support of the theory that the term Burgar may refer to the Ungari of Western sources is the description of the Burgars made by al-Mas'ūdi, but obviously compiled from some earlier sources:

A. There are among them [i.e. among the Ruses] merchants who visit the city of the Burgars which is situated on the shores of the Maeotis. But I think that they live in the seventh climate. They are a Turkic people. There is a constant stream of caravans moving between them and Khwaresm and Khorasan and from Khwaresm to them. But as it [the route] goes through other Turkic tribes, these caravans have to be protected (by an escort). In our times, i.e., in H. 322 (943/4 A.D.), the king of the Burgars is a Muslim, who during the days of al-Muqtadir billâh, after the year H. 310 (i.e., 922/3 A.D.) accepted Islam because of a dream he had....

B. This king makes pillaging inroads into the region of Constantinople with about 50,000 riders, and he lets loose his hordes around it and into the regions of Rome, Andalusia, Burgundy, Galicia [in Spain], and of the Franks. From him to Constantinople there is a two-month uninterrupted journey through cultivated lands and deserts. When the Muslims from the region of Tarsus ... made a pillaging expedition by boat in H. 312 and when they had passed by the entrance to the Channel of Constantinople and had come to the entrance to another Channel of the Roman Sea, which has no exit [i.e., the Adriatic], they arrived at the land of Venice. On that occasion, a band of Burgars came on land to them offering their assistance, and they told them [to the Arabs] that their king was in the neighborhood. This shows, as we have already said, that the Burgars can reach the Sea of Rum [i.e., the Mediterranean]. Some of the men from them [i.e., from among the Burgars] boarded the boats from Tarsus, and were taken over to Tarsus. The Burgars are a mighty people,
unapproachable, of impressive bravery, and the neighboring peoples are subordinated to them...\textsuperscript{14}

This description is recognizably a compilation of two separate fragments, one referring to the Bulgars of the Kama-Volga region, the other to a ‘Burgar’ people, who in the first decades of the tenth century harassed Constantinople and made inroads into Western Europe as far as Spain, being seen around Venice in 924/5 (i.e., H. 312).

The first fragment confirms the information known from Ibn Faḍlān’s description\textsuperscript{15} of the Muslim Bulgars who maintained direct caravan routes for trade with Khwarezm. Their king was Muslim. The second fragment cannot refer to the Danubian Bulgars, however, because they had been Christians since 864 and had never ventured into Western Europe, not to mention Andalusia. In addition, during the time of the ‘Burgar’ raids against Constantinople, the Danubian Bulgars were at peace with Byzantium. On the other hand, we know that precisely on the dates indicated by Mas’ūdī, the Western sources recorded that ‘Ungar’ [‘Hungari’] devastated Northern Italy and went as far as Apulia and Calabria.\textsuperscript{16} The coincidence of the dates of the Arabic and of the Western sources and the coincidence of the names ‘Ungari’ – ‘Burgar’ is therefore not accidental.

The ethnic composition of the nomads who were active in Italy was Onogur-Bulgar, as was that of their kinsmen in the Kama-Volga region. Mas’ūdī compiled the two stories into one narrative, and the fact that he did so is clearly discernible. J. Marquart, in his translation of the text added the capital letters ‘A’ and ‘B’ to indicate the two component parts of an otherwise seemingly continuous narrative.\textsuperscript{17} He, and after him all who analyzed that text, suggested a correction: namely, that instead of the name ‘Burgar’ in the original, the name ‘Magyar’ should be inserted. The graphic similarity between the two words in Arabic writing is, indeed, very striking, but the suggested change seems to be unnecessary and even misleading. The Western sources, when describing the same events, speak of ‘Ungari’, and not about ‘Magyars’. Similarly, the substitution of the name ‘Magyar’ for ‘Burgar’ in fragment A would result in utter confusion.

The decisive fact is that Mas’ūdī did not know the ‘Magyars’ under that name and that, therefore, the possibility that ‘Burgar’ was a misspelling

\textsuperscript{14} Marquart, \textit{Streifzüge}, pp. 149-50.


\textsuperscript{16} Gina Fasoli, \textit{Le incursioni ungare in Europa nel secolo X} (Florence, 1945), pp. 90-152; Marquart, \textit{Streifzüge}, pp. 156-60.

\textsuperscript{17} For Marquart’s argumentation for the subdivision and his interpretation of the text, see his \textit{Streifzüge}, p. 151 ff.
of 'Magyar' is automatically excluded. Although Mas'ūdī made the contraction of the two descriptions 'A' and 'B', he should not be accused of ignorance. The two 'Burgars' were, indeed, active in two distantly remote parts of Europe, but their contacts were not broken and even during the next century or two there were constant exchanges between these two branches of the Onogur-Bulgars.

Mas'ūdī is entirely justified in treating the two groups of Onogur-Bulgars as closely related, and even contiguous, formations. We also have to recall the several references in Muslim sources to 'Inner Bulgars' and 'Outer Bulgars', to 'Inner Magyars' and 'Outer Magyars'. In all cases, the authors refer only to geographical separation, while still implying ethnic identity.

If we can but perceive the simplicity of Mas'ūdī's report, it should be easier to disentangle the apparent confusions in other, earlier descriptions of the nomads of the steppe zone.

The same Mas'ūdī related a description made by al-Jārmī sometime between 837 and 846 as follows: "He [al-Jārmī] dwelt in the frontier fortress, and knew the Rum and their lands. He wrote on the history of the Rum [i.e., Byzantium], on their kings and dignitaries, their land, its roads and routes, the dates of the raids into it and campaigns against it, and on the neighboring kingdoms, the Burgan, Avars, Burgar, Slavs, Khazars, and others."\(^{19}\)

In the same book in which he summarized al-Jārmī's work, Mas'ūdī remarked that he himself had also made a description of the Avars, the Burgans, the Ruses, the Burgars, the Franks, the Saqaliba, and others.\(^{20}\) As we can see, the descriptions of both al-Jārmī and of Mas'ūdī refer to Burgans, as well as to Burgars. The term 'Burgars' refers to the Danubian Bulgars, and the term 'Burgars' must refer to another Bulgar group neighboring the Greek possessions, probably somewhere along the Crimea.

J. Marquart suggested that the second group of Bulgars was the group known to be on the Kuban River, east of the Sea of Azov.\(^{21}\) T. Lewicki suggested an emendation of the text to read 'B.z.g.r.' (Baskir) instead of 'B.r.g.r.' (Bulgar).\(^{22}\) Lewicki's suggestion is unacceptable, however, because the 'Baskirs' did not appear on the historical scene until much later.

Marquart's suggested location of the Burgars on the Kuban River is closer to reality, since they had been known in the Kuban region for


\(^{20}\) Ibid., pp. 153-54.


\(^{22}\) Lewicki, *Źródła arabskie*, p. 59.
centuries. From such a location, furthermore, they would have been in a position to attack the Greek possessions, especially if the Khazars themselves were also interested in unfriendly action against the Greeks. In opposition to Marquart's suggestion, however, it may be mentioned that the Kuban Bulgars, until their disappearance, were part of the Khazar Empire and would neither have been enumerated as an independent group, i.e., as equals of the Khazars, nor have menaced the Greek cities, as, at that time, the Khazars were on friendly terms with the Byzantine Empire. Consequently, the second group of 'Burgans' has to be identified with an independent group of Onogur-Bulgars which detached itself from the Avar Empire.

We should here repeat that al-Jarmī's description was a historical survey and that, therefore, the reference to Avars can be treated as a recollection of the past, although some Avars still lived (during the ninth century) as a compact ethnic group under German control.

It might be argued that the reference to the 'Burjars' could also be a recollection of a situation in the remote past, because some 'Onogurs' (i.e., Onogur-Bulgars) were known in the sixth century to have been along the borders of the Byzantine possessions on the Crimea. A confirmation of our assumption that the 'Burjars' of al-Jarmī definitely lived in the ninth century is provided by al-Khuwārizmī, who left a geographical description of Eastern Europe as it existed during his own lifetime, i.e., during the first half of the ninth century. By a rare coincidence, the date of the composition of his description (836-47) coincides with the date of the work of al-Jarmī (837-46).

The work of Khuwārizmī is based on the geography of Ptolemy, but to the strictly geographical divisions presented by the Greek scholar he added his own description of ethnic and political divisions as they existed in the ninth century. Khuwārizmī also knew two 'Burjans': one southeast from the 'Garmanija', the other neighboring the Alans, who at that time belonged to the Khazar Empire.

T. Lewicki, in his comments on a recent edition of al-Khuwārizmī's text, found the description of the two 'Burjans' puzzling, and assumed that both referred to only one political formation, namely to that of the Danubian Bulgars. Against this assumption speaks the fact that the geographic coordinates for the center of the land of the two 'Burjans' (in

24 Cf. Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 16.
26 Cf. Carlo Alfonso Nallino, Al-Huwārizmi e il suo rifacimento della Geografia di Tolomeo (Rome, 1896): "Khuwārizmī did not copy Ptolemy, but provided a work with much independence."
27 Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, pp. 24-27, 39.
THE ONOGURS IN THE NINTH CENTURY

fragment I and in fragment V of Khuwārizmi's description) are at variance.

Our understanding of the text is as follows: the geographic coordinates have to be different, since the 'Burjans' described in fragments I and V are two distinct groups. The coordinates show that one group of 'Burjans' must have been located on the Balkans (southeast of 'Garmanija'); the other group, neighbors of the Alans, must have been located closer to the Khazar Empire. Of course, that second group of 'Burjans' cannot be identified with the Kama-Volga Bulgars, as they, at that time, were not the western neighbors of the Alans.

Further evidence of the existence of independent Onogundur-Bulgars in the steppes can be derived from a new re-evaluation of the writings of Ibn Khurdadhbeh. Because he held the position of Postmaster General, as well as being in charge of the Intelligence, Hurdadhbeh undoubtedly based his descriptions on up-to-date information rather than on a collection of outdated literary sources. His testimony on the ethnic relations of the early ninth century is therefore of great importance for the identification of the people of the Steppe Zone.

In fragment III of Ibn Khurdadhbeh's report (in T. Lewicki's edition) it is stated that "Rumija, Burgan, the lands of aš-Šaqāliba and al-Abar are located to the north of al-Andalus" (i.e. the lands of Rome, of the Danubian Bulgars, of the Slavs (?) and of the Avars are located north of Spain). In fragment VIII (of the same edition) it is stated that Thrace and Macedonia border on 'Burjan', which obviously means that these two Byzantine provinces border on the state of the Danubian Bulgars. In fragment XI we read again that in the land of the North live, among others, the Khazars, the Alans, the aš-Šaqāliba and the Avars.28

What is to be noted from the analysis of these fragments is that Ibn Khurdadhbeh knows only one kind of Burjans - the Danubian Bulgars neighboring the Byzantine provinces of Thrace and Macedonia. On the other hand, he knows the Avars (al-Abar). At first glance, this fact appears to be an anachronism, because the Avars did not play any role at the time of the composition of the work. Furthermore, the Avars were not located close enough to the Khazars and Alans to justify their enumeration in fragment XI.

The question may be raised why Ibn Khurdadhbeh included the Avars in his narrative, but did not mention the Onogurs or the Burgars, parts of whom, according to our earlier analysis, were in the steppe zone at the time of, and before, the composition of his work. The tentative answer is that Ibn Khurdadhbeh applied the former political name of "Avar" to the ethnic group known as Onogundur-Bulgars, who, in fact, were earlier members of the Avar federation. This explanation is offered very hesitantly, but there are certain circumstances which make this theory plausible.

28 Ibid., pp. 67, 69-70.
We must recall that some of Ibn Khurdādhbeh’s informants were Radanite Jewish merchants, who had traveled from Western Europe to the Caliphate across or around the territories of the former Avar Empire. To these merchants the Onogundurs who appeared in the steppe zone were defectors from that Avar Empire, which had just been defeated by Charlemagne. Therefore, in the eyes of the Radanite Jews, the Onogundurs were still ‘Avars’, hence Ibn Khurdādhbeh’s seemingly anachronistic description. T. Lewicki suggested that Ibn Khurdādhbeh had based his information on the Avars on the report of al-Jarmī. This assumption is less plausible, however, since, in such a case, Ibn Khurdādhbeh would have known about two ‘Burjans’, as did al-Jarmī, and not about one ‘Burjan’ and one ‘al-Abar’.

The theory that Ibn Khurdādhbeh’s information is derived from the West European Radanite Jews may also be supported by the fact that the lands enumerated in fragment III are located, according to Khurdādhbeh, “north of Spain”. This reference to Spain is rather unexpected both from the point of view of Ibn Khurdādhbeh, who wrote his work visualizing the world from Baghdad, and also from the point of view of al-Jarmī, who took his own geographic bearings in relation to Byzantium. The phrase “north of Spain” would be a logical reference only in the case of an informant coming from the direction of Spain. As already mentioned, such information could have been provided only by the Radanite Jews traveling between Spain and the East across Central and Eastern Europe.

In view of Ibn Khurdādhbeh’s reputation as a reliable source for the history of the early ninth century, we may well consider his reference to the Avars as applicable to the Onogurs of the Steppe Zone, known to other Arabic sources by the name of ‘Bulgar’ and to the Greeks by the name of ‘Ouggroi’.

In the light of the evidence given above, derived from a variety of sources, we may be allowed to restate our theory that during the ninth century there was an independent Onogur (Onogur-Bulgar) federation active in the Pontic Steppes and that this federation was formed by defectors from the defeated Avar Empire.

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29 Cf. above, p. 28, where Khurdādhbeh’s description of the routes used by the Radanite Jewish merchants is quoted and discussed.

30 Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 91.
In an earlier part of this study the opinion was formulated that in the
ninth century the Oungroi were independent from the Majghari and that
a merger of the two took place only at the end of the century (c. 890).
In the following pages an attempt will be made to restore the early history
of the Majghari, to trace the abodes occupied by them before their ap­
ppearance in the Pontic Steppes, and to determine their role in the devel­
opments in Eastern Europe during the first half of the ninth century.

A. THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF THE MAGYARS
(I.E., HUNGARIANS)

In the past, the history of the Majghari has been obscured by various
theories which linked them directly with the modern Hungarians and sug­
gested that the latter had existed as a homogeneous conscious national
entity already in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. or even earlier. Since
there is no written evidence referring directly to the ‘Magyars’ before the
ninth century, these theories suggested that they were anonymously in­
corporated in federations bearing the names of other tribes. Consequently,
according to these theories, information on the Onogur, Turk, Sabir,
Khazar, and even Hun federations should be applied on occasion to the

1 See above, pp. 74-76.
2 For a bibliography see Byzantinoturcica, Vol. I, pp. 134-45. A short survey of
recent studies is offered by Tamás Bogay, “Forschungen zur Urgeschichte der
Ungarn nach dem 2. Weltkrieg”, Ural-Altaiische Jahrbücher, XXIX (1957), pp. 93-
114. For monographic presentations see: Gyula Németh, A honfoglaló magyarság
kialakulása (Budapest, 1930); A magyarság őstörténete, edited by Lajos Ligeti (Buda­
pest, 1943); Erik Molnár, A magyar nép őstörténete, 2nd ed. (Budapest, 1954); Gyula
László, Őstörténetünk legkorábbi szakaszai (Budapest, 1961). – Lajos Ligeti is of the
opinion that the ‘Magyar’ (i.e., Hungarian) language and nation were formed around
According to István Zichy, the Ugric ‘Magyars’ merged around the beginning of our
time reckoning with some Turkic people, but “they preserved their national identity
despite the upheavals of the great migrations” (quoted by Gyula Németh, op. cit.,
p. 122); see also p. 101, note 40, for a more recent survey by Bogay.
Magyars. These theories maintain further that the first appearance in the sources of the name *Maighari* reflects only a new and independent stage of Magyar, i.e., Hungarian, national history. As a result of this theoretical approach, unrelated and conflicting facts have been assembled as allegedly relevant to the early history of the modern Magyars.

The Hungarians have been presented as Turkicized Ugro-Finns or as Turks who had adopted an Ugric language. The symbiosis of Ugric and Turkic ethnic elements allegedly took place already before the fifth century somewhere in the northeastern part of Europe and in Western Siberia, on both sides of the Ural mountains. According to most of the theories, the Magyars moved to the Caucasus, where they spent some four hundred years before they appeared in the ninth century west of the River Don.

All attempts to reconstruct the history of the Magyars before the ninth century fail to satisfy the basic need for a reference in the sources to a people so-named. The name ‘Magyar’ itself appears in the sources for the first time only in the tenth century in the Arabic/Persian form *Majghari* and in the Byzantine Greek form *Megeri*. The sources using these terms were concerned with events which happened in the ninth century. To go beyond the facts offered by these sources, reasonable conjectures should be used.

In offering a new theory on the origin of the Hungarians and in tracing their earlier abodes, the basic principle applied here is to distinguish between the component ethnic elements of the Hungarians as long as possible. On the basis of some commonly known facts, the following observations can be made. Constantine Porphyrogenitus knew that the Hungarians in the tenth century were bilingual. It is also known that the Onogur-Bulgars spoke an Altaic language. The Hungarians of today speak an Ugric language of the Finno-Ugric group. As the Hungarians are in our opinion the result of an ethnic merger of the Altaic *Onogurs* and of *Majghari*, it is evident that the non-Altaic Magyar (Hungarian) language is a heritage of the latter. Although language and ethnic composition are not necessarily constant factors in the history of a nation, it is admissible

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3 This is the basic methodological approach. For an application of that method, see Gyula Németh, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-220. See also Elemér Moór, “Die Benennung der Ungarn in den Quellen des IX. und X. Jahrhunderts”, *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, XXXI (1959), pp. 191-229.

4 The controversy was based mostly on linguistic affinities and on the Altaic character of the military organization of the tribes entering Hungary during the last decade of the ninth century. The controversy known as “the war between the Ugors and the Turks” is summarized by Tamás Bogyay, *op. cit.*, p. 94.


6 *De administrando imperio*, p. 175: “And so to these Turks they taught also the tongue of the Khazars, and to this day they have this same language, but they have also the other tongue of the Turks.”
to assume that the masses of the Majghari, who spoke an Ugric dialect, were also of Ugric ethnic stock. This linguistic and ethnic identification of the Majghari may help in further inquiries into their proto-history.

As already quoted, Ibn Rūsta made the statement that the Khazars once had to surround themselves with a defense system against the Majghari and some other peoples.7 His report should be tentatively linked with the construction by the Khazars of the fortress of Sarkel on the Don in the thirties of the ninth century. Thus Ibn Rūsta provides the first reference to the Majghari. All other references to them in Muslim sources definitely apply to the second half of the ninth century. These sources name as neighbors of the Majghari to the west and northwest the Ruses, who did not move into the central regions of Eastern Europe before 850.

Ibn Rūsta’s information and, in fact, all other references to the Majghari in the Arabic and Persian sources were originally contained in the work of Jaihānī, a statesman and scholar of the Samanid state. His work, compiled before 903, has since been lost, but extensive fragments were preserved in compilations made by various Arabic and Persian authors. Among them, the most important are Ibn Rūsta and an anonymous Persian author, whose work is entitled Hudūd al-Ālam, i.e., “The Regions of the World”, as well as Gardīzī and al-Bakrī.

The most reliable information on the Majghari is included in the work of Ibn Rūsta, who copied almost the whole narrative of Jaihānī as early as ten years after the original was composed (i.e. in 912). The anonymous Hudūd al-Ālam (982) and Gardīzī’s work (ca 1050), both in Persian, have some important supplementary information which was omitted by Ibn Rūsta. Al-Bakrī’s compilation dates from the very end of the eleventh century (died 1094). Variations among these sources are due to the fact that none of the compilers made a complete transcript of Jaihānī; hence some sentences appear in one, some in another source. The mutations can also be explained as resulting from a changing historical perspective.

The various texts agree that the Majghari were an independent nation. Their king, whose title was K.nda, had a force of 20,000 horsemen. The Majghari also had another king with the title Jula, who was the actual commander in matters of war and defense. The land of the Majghari was located between two large rivers flowing into the Black Sea.8

According to Hudūd al-Ālam, the Majghari lived in Eastern Europe in a region delimited on the west and north by a river, which separated them from the Ruses.9 This river must have been the Dnieper in that part where it flows through the forest steppe zone, because the Ruses had been in the Kiev area since the late fifties of the ninth century, but their control

7 See above, p. 74.
did not extend into the steppes. The northern border of the Majghari could have reached the River Sula or even the River Desna, both on the northern limits of the steppe-forest zone, a natural obstacle for the nomads.

South of the Majgharija, across the bend of the Dnieper, were the Onogur-Bulgars. The Onogurs had been west of the Dnieper, in the steppe zone, since the date of their defection from the Avar Empire. The two large rivers flanking the Majghari territory, therefore, must have been the Dnieper and the Don. From the territory between these two rivers, the Majghari had direct unobstructed access to the Crimea, where, in the port of Kerch, according to Ibn Rūsta, they sold Ṣaqāliha slaves to the Byzantine merchants.

It is as yet impossible to establish the exact date of the arrival of the Majghari in the Dnieper-Don region. A relative chronology can be made, however, with reference to Ibn Rūsta’s report on the Khazar defense system, built against the Majghari, and to the fact that Sarkel, probably part of that system, was built in the thirties of the ninth century. The time when the Majghari were definitely present in the Dnieper-Don region is indicated by the reference in Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam that they were the neighbors of the Ruses, who arrived in Kiev only in the fifties of the ninth century. The Majghari were pushed westward out of this territory, across the Dnieper, by the first attack of the Pechenegs in the year 888/9. Consequently, the Majghari occupied the region between the Don and the Dnieper for a period of some sixty to seventy years, i.e. between 820/30 to 888/9.

The next, yet unsolved, problem is the question whence the Majghari came to the Pontic Steppe zone. The usual explanation is that, before 800/830, the Majghari lived anonymously as part of a Bulgar federation or of the Khazar Empire, in the region north of the Caucasian mountains, along the River Kuban. The whole theory of a Bulgar-Magyar symbiosis, however, and of a domicile of the Majghari-Magyars along the River Kuban from the sixth century on is based on a series of misinterpreted and unconvincingly edited Muslim and Byzantine sources. In order to

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10 For the identification of that place there are various alternatives suggested, i.e., Chersonesus or Kerch. Without deciding upon one or another possible location of Kerch, we may note that all suggested locations are along the seacoast between the Don and the Dnieper; cf. C. A. Macartney, op. cit., p. 69; Gyula Németh, op. cit., pp. 155-57.


12 Chronologically, the first evidence is the name of a Hunnic leader, ‘Mouageris’, who lived in the sixth century somewhere around the Sea of Azov. It was assumed
illustrate the weak foundations of the assumption of a North Caucasian provenance of the *Majghari*, it should suffice to examine critically a few of the arguments used in favor of such theories.

The main argument is derived from a fragment included in the report of al-Bakrī on the *Majghari*. Describing the frontiers of the *Majghari*, al-Bakrī, and only he, included a short description of the lands and people of the Caucasus. As it appears, the fragment on the Caucasus is the final part of al-Bakrī's description, but since the fragment has no reference to the Majghari themselves, it could easily be considered an independent fragment. The fact that al-Bakrī is chronologically the last compiler to use Jaihani is also of importance. That he should be the only one to preserve a fragment omitted by earlier compilers is rather improbable. The fragment of al-Bakrī about the Caucasus should therefore be treated as an interpolation with no source value for the ninth century. Furthermore, there is even reason to believe that the fragment on the Caucasus was taken over by al-Bakrī from another Muslim author, namely from Mas'ūdī, who indeed dealt with the lands of the Caucasus, but without reference to the *Majghari*. The observations above are enough to exclude al-Bakrī from further consideration. Consequently, the theory of a Caucasian homeland of the *Majghari* remains without supporting evidence.

Further criticism concerns the editing of the relevant texts. Al-Bakrī's own text, as presented by the proponents of the Caucasian theory, illustrates the interpretative character of the editions. Where the manuscript refers to a people named (rather illegibly) ‘... n’, the editors read ‘As’, a seldom used name of the Alans. The parallel text in Gardīzī's compilation has instead of ‘... n’, the name of the Onogurs spelled out in the plural form: ‘n.nd.r’ (Onogundur). In order to comply with the very doubt-

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14 Gyula Németh, *op. cit.*, p. 161, with reference to Marquart's *Streifzüge*. Cf. also *Hudud al-Alam*, pp. 458-60. The name *As* appeared in Muslim sources only during the Mongol period when it replaced the earlier *Alan*, cf. Minorsky's comments in *Hudud al-Alam*, pp. 456, 458. Minorsky doubted whether Marquart's conjecture was justified and suggested that, instead of the anachronistic *As*, the name *Tulas* should be read. Minorsky added that even the *Tulas* could not have been the neighbors of the Magyars and that such a neighborhood was only a surmise of al-Bakri. Minorsky, nevertheless, accepts the theory of the Caucasian (Kuban) abodes of the Magyars, cf. *Hudud al-Alam*, pp. 457-60. Even Marquart admitted that his identification of the people *As* was the only instance of the occurrence of that name in the ninth century, cf. his *Streifzüge*, pp. 164, 167, 172.
ful reading of al-Bakrī's text, this name has also been changed to read 'As'. Similarly, the name of the Moravians, 'm.d.dat', has been changed to read 'avyaz' (i.e. Abchaz).15

These textual changes, as well as the related theories, are untenable, first of all, on methodological grounds. (E.g., the Persian written forms of the names 'nnndr' and 'As', as well as the pair 'mrdat' and 'avyaz', have no graphic resemblance to one another.) But there are also many other reasons for rejecting the theory. For instance, we know that the Alans (the 'As' of the semi-anachronistic transcriptions) lived not only on the Caucasus, but also up the River Don. This makes it possible that Alan loanwords in the Hungarian language were taken over in the Don region, and not necessarily in the neighborhood of the Caucasus. Retaining the reading 'n.nd.r.' and 'm.d.dat', we have the two western neighbors of the Majghari, the Onogurs and the Moravians at a time when the former were already expanding across the Dnieper.

If al-Bakrī's fragment about the lands and people of the Caucasus is disregarded as irrelevant to the problem of the original abodes of the Majghari, and if Gardīzī's text is restored to read 'Onogur' and 'm.r.dat', then the assumption that the Majghari moved from the Kuban to the Don-Dnieper region remains unsupported. There is no source whatsoever which purports to have knowledge of the Majghari in the Kuban-Caucasus region in the ninth century or earlier. Their presence there at any time would no doubt have been noted in some Oriental or Byzantine source. A need for the reevaluation of the Caucasian or Kuban theory has been suggested recently by several Hungarian linguists and historians.16 Here we submit our own observations.

B. A NEW APPROACH TO THE CONTROVERSY;
A THEORY OF A MESHCHER—MAJGHARI CONTINUITY

In looking for the earlier abodes of the Majghari, it could be argued that they had come from beyond the Volga, across Khazar possessions, but in such a case the Muslim sources would have been more explicit and Khazar defenses would probably have been along the Volga, rather than along the Don. Since the Onogurs, the defectors from the Avar Empire, inhabited the territory west of the Dnieper, the only direction from which the Majghari could have moved into the Dnieper-Don region remains the

16 For names and opinions see note 22 in Gyula László's *Östörténetünk legkorábbi szakaszai* (Budapest, 1961), p. 30. Omitted from his list of authorities is Elemér Moór, the most outspoken opponent of the theory of a Caucasian domicile. For Moór's opinion see "Studien zur Früh- und Urgeschichte des ungarischen Volkes", *Acta Ethnographica*, II (1951), pp. 25-142.
north. Considering that the *Majghari* were linguistically an Ugric (i.e. Finno-Ugric) people, as well as that the northern part of Eastern Europe was and is the domain of Finno-Ugric tribes, the hypothesis can be posed that the *Majghari* moved to the Dnieper-Don region from the north.

Interestingly enough, in the regions of Tambov, Saratov, Penza, Simbirsk, and Kazan, there are toponymies such as ‘Mazhar’, ‘Mozhar’, and ethnic names such as ‘Meshcheriaki’ and ‘Mishery’, which were already suspected by scholars in the nineteenth century to be related to the ethnic name ‘Magyar’. Gyula Németh, in his study on the ethnogenesis of the Hungarians, expressed the view that the ethnic group known in Russian sources as ‘Mozherane’ represented a splinter group of the Magyars who had gone north to live among the Bashkirs. József Perényi, in a recent study on East Slavic-Hungarian relations, extended the possibility of Magyar origin to the ethnic groups known in Russian sources by the names: ‘Mizhery’ and ‘Meshchers’, but he retained the “Caucasian theory” of their primordial abodes. Even more specific is Elemér Moór, who asserts that the Meshchers have split off from the main body of the ‘Magyars’ only in 889, during the war with the Pechenegs. Our contention, to the contrary, is that the *Majghari* are identical with the *Meshchers*: what we know today as Meshcher Land is in fact the habitat of the Majghari before they came into contact with the Muslim world and Byzantium.

On the basis of a detailed phonetic analysis, Károly Czeglédy came to the conclusion that there was no linguistic obstacle to considering the geographic names with the root *mazhar-* as a reflection of the ethnic name of the Magyars of the pre-Conquest period. He also suggested that further studies should be devoted to the study of toponymies in the region of the Volga and in the Meshcher land.

The Meshchera land is located on historical maps on the Oka River in the region north of the city of Riazan. This region is open toward the south and allows direct access, unhampered by any river, to the steppe between the Dnieper and the Don. From such a location, a nomadic tribe with horses and cattle could move to Sarkel or the Crimea without crossing a single river or mountain range. These facts would seem to

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21 *Meshchera* means ‘all the Meshcher people’ or ‘the land of the Meshchers’, cf. *Muroma, Mordva, Rus, Chud*, etc.
provide the basis for a new theory that the Majghari moved to the steppe zone, not from the Kuban region, but from the north.

A detailed inquiry into the history of the ‘Meshchera’ reveals that whereas there is a land named today ‘Meshcherskaia nizmennost’ (‘Meshcher Lowland’), taking its name from an Ugric tribal name, the aboriginal population itself disappeared in the ninth and tenth centuries. The area was later repopulated by Slavs, known in the Russian Chronicles as Viatichi, and was subsequently occupied by the Polovtsians (Kumans), under whose rule the remnants of the Meshchera and Slavs became Turkicized.

In support of the new theory are the following facts: There is ample archaeological evidence that the aboriginal population of the land of Meshchera disappeared in the ninth and tenth centuries. The region, however, remained known as the “land of the Meshchers” (Meshchera).\(^{23}\) The new, Turkicized, population was known later as Meshcheraki, a name which is formed from the geographic name of the region (Meshchera) and not from the ethnic name ‘Meshcher’. The name Meshcher itself is a Slavicized form reflecting probably an Ugric *mants*-ˌ, *ments*-ˌ. The name ‘Magyar’ is usually related to the same root.\(^{24}\) Important is the fact that the name ‘Magyar’ has a variant in old Hungarian in the form of ‘Megyer’. The variant ‘Megyer’ has been preserved in the writings of Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the form Megeri;\(^{25}\) the variant ‘Magyar’, by Jaihani in the form Majghari.\(^{26}\)

All these observations provide strong evidence that the Ugric people, known by their Slavicized name as Meshchers, disappeared from the region of the river Oka and reappeared in the Steppe Zone under the name Majghari (in Arabic and Persian) and Megeri (in Greek).

It must be remembered, however, that ethnic names by themselves do not reveal the ethnic identity or the history of a tribe. Further, independent evidence for the theory that the original abode of the Magyars was in the Oka region can be derived from archeology. Since the theory may serve as a starting point for further re-evaluations of problems connected with the early history of Eastern Europe, it seems appropriate to present the archeological evidence in detail.

On the basis of a considerable number of publications\(^{27}\) resulting from


\(^{25}\) De administrando imperio, pp. 174-75. For a bibliography see Byzantinoturcica, Vol. II, s.v.

\(^{26}\) Károly Czeglédy, op. cit.

\(^{27}\) Here are some of the more recent works. Each of them has numerous references to earlier studies: A. P. Smirnov, Ocherki drevnei i srednevekovoi istorii narodov srednego Povolzha i Prikamia (Moscow, 1952); A. L. Mongait, op. cit., pp. 151-89;
archeological research in the Oka-Volga region, the following facts emerge: Before the settlement of the Slavs on the Oka River, the population of that region was of Finno-Ugric ethnic composition. The main occupation of these people was cattle raising. In addition, they were engaged in fishing and hunting and some primitive forms of agriculture. This form of economic life existed in the Oka region from the seventh century B.C. to the first century A.D. Between that century and the fifth century A.D., cattle raising and agriculture were the main branches of production.

Around the fifth century a change occurred in the mode of habitation of the population: the old fortified settlements (burghs) were partly abandoned and open unfortified settlements appeared. This form of settlement is more appropriate for cattle raisers, as well as for other primitive societies living under conditions of prolonged peace. The archeological complex of the first stage, up to the fifth century A.D., is called the “Culture of the burgh of Gorodetsk”, the second stage, that of the open settlements, is known as “the culture of the burial sites of the Riazan type”. The archeological complex of the second stage is represented mostly by burial sites.

For the purpose of further investigation, it is important to note that the inhabitants of the Oka region were horse-riding cattlebreeders and practiced burial rites of the so-called Riazan type. The dead were buried with their mounts and furnishings. This system of burial implies a considerable degree of influence by the nomadic population of the steppe zone upon the autochthons.

In fact, the inhabitants of the Oka region were in constant contact with the southern and southeastern regions of Eastern Europe, populated by Iranian and Turkic nomads. According to Jordanes (Getica, cap. 22), a people named Inniscaris were part of the Gothic Empire of Ermanarich. They are enumerated among other Ugro-Finnic peoples under the control of the Goths. J. Mikkola was of the opinion that these Inniscaris were the Meshchera of the Russian sources. On the territory of the Oka affluences, where the Inniscaris/Meshchera lived, coins of the Kings of Bosporus (on the Sea of Azov) from the third and fourth centuries A.D. were unearthed, a fact which implies the existence, at least, of trading contacts with remote regions of Northeastern Europe. During the Gothic period, a nomadic influence could have been exercised upon the Meshchera cattle breeders by the Alans, who were partners of the Goths. Strong contacts were especially likely during the Hunnic domination of Eastern

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28 For this and other opinions see Max Vasmar, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1950-58), s.v. ‘Meshchera’.

Europe, when the Altaic nomads took over the regions controlled earlier by the Goths. At that time, the Onogur tribes were able to extend their trade interests into the fur-producing areas of the north. The first region to be traversed by the Onogurs was, no doubt, the Oka-Volga region, inhabited by the Meshchers and other closely related Ugric tribes.

The burial of nomads with their horses was practiced in Eastern Europe by some of the tribes of the Avaric federation, by the tribes connected with the so-called Saltovo Culture of the Donets-Don region, by some elements of the tribal federation which entered the Carpathian basin in the late ninth century, and also by subsequent waves of nomads dwelling on the steppes of Eastern Europe. The Meshchers and related Ugric tribes of the North could have acquired this system of burial from some Altaic nomads as a cultural borrowing, or as the result of a prolonged symbiosis of the Ugric ethnic element with some Iranian (Alan) or Altaic (Turkic) tribal groups. The beginning of the Iranian influence can be tentatively dated in the fourth-fifth century, when, after the collapse of the Goth-Alanic Empire, some Iranian (Alan) nomadic groups were forced to seek refuge in the forests of the North. Such groups were soon followed by other nomads, probably Onogurs, remnants of the Hunnic Empire escaping from Avar or Khazar domination.

The transition from dwellings in burghs to dwellings in open settlements in the Oka region is dated in the fifth century, shortly after the defeat of the Goths and Alans at the hands of the Huns. The transition from the "culture of the Burgh of Gorodetsk" to the "culture of the burial sites of Riazan type" shows no sudden changes, and this fact implies an evolutionary development without a warlike disaster or radical exchange of population. Such a transition could have resulted only from a peaceful symbiosis.

The prerequisite for this transition from sedentary to nomadic life was that the main occupation of the autochthonous population had been predominantly cattle raising, a vocation requiring movement of herds from one grazing land to another. The transition to typical nomadic culture, including the reception of religious rites, was probably facilitated by the presence in the neighborhood, or even among the 'Meshchera', of various Iranian and Turkic nomads.

It is an accepted fact that religious beliefs form the most conservative elements in a tribe's culture and changes in them occur very slowly. Consequently, it was not necessarily everybody from the autochthonous population who adopted the new religious (burial) rites. As is usually the case,

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the new practices were first followed only by the leading social groups. In the seventh century in the Steppe Zone south of the Meschera land there were definitely some nomadic people. The archeological remnants of their culture indicate a close relation to the so-called Saltovo Culture, best illustrated by the relics unearthed from the site named "Grave of a Horseman". This grave was found near the village of Artsybashev, south of Riazan. It contained a skeleton of a man, a skeleton of a horse, various implements of a warrior, and some pottery of the Saltovo type. The equipment of the warrior is of the same character as other objects unearthed in the steppe zone between the Don and the Danube, but found also in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bohemia, the places frequented by the Avars. All these objects date from the sixth to the eighth centuries. The finds from Artsybashev can be dated more precisely, namely in the seventh century. Curiously enough, an Avaric object unearthed in Hungary is exactly like an object from Artsybashev.

According to Mongait's evaluation of the artifacts, the objects from the Artsybashev complex form a connecting link between the cultures represented by the graves of the Riazan type and of the Saltovo type. Whereas the population connected with the Artsybashev Culture lived in the steppe zone bordering on the forests of the Riazan region, the Ugric population of that region never expanded beyond the forests (at least not until their mass emigration in the ninth century). The similarity of some of the artifacts in the graves of the two ethnic groups, however, indicates that there were close economic ties between them, which in turn facilitated the exchange of cultural goods.

By the end of the first millennium A.D., the semi-nomadic population of the Oka region, the bearers of the "culture of the burial sites of the Riazan type", identified above with the Meshchers, had disappeared. P. P. Efimenko established the fact of their disappearance, but could not give any explanation as to what might have happened to them.

Efimenko has assumed that the disappearance of the population from the Oka River occurred in the seventh century. But recently A. L. Mongait, after a re-evaluation of the archeological evidence, came to the following conclusion: "Archeological evidence allows us to assert that the population connected with the burial sites of the Riazan type was autochthonous and that the disappearance of this population occurred much later than assumed by Efimenko. The disappearance was connected with the Slavic colonization of that region."

According to Mongait, it is not clear why Efimenko dated the dis-

52 Ibid., pp. 169-70.
53 Quoted by Mongait, op. cit., p. 165.
54 Ibid., p. 166.
55 Ibid., p. 165.
appearance of the Riazan burial sites in the seventh century, when several such sites were still used in the ninth and even in the tenth centuries, a fact known at the time Efimenko drew his conclusion. Mongait states that the Slavic colonization of the Oka region did not occur until the ninth to the tenth centuries, although some infiltration of Slaves could have started as early as the eighth century. In Mongait’s opinion, the first Slavic settlements in that region came into existence side by side with the autochthonous settlements. The settlements known to us from that region are, in fact, not earlier than the ninth or tenth century, and, therefore, Mongait’s assumption of a Slavic infiltration before the ninth century is unsupported.

Efimenko also made the interesting observation that in the ninth and tenth centuries Slavic settlements were established on sites abandoned earlier by the Ugric population. Although, in archeology, observations on chronology are not always very reliable, the fact remains that an exchange of population did take place without a conquest and that the Slavs moved into the region only after the area was largely evacuated.

Finally, it should be noted that, in the ninth and subsequent centuries, the River Oka served as a trade route for contacts between the Northeast and the East. Along the shores of the River Oka nineteen hoards containing Oriental coins and objects of Central Asiatic provenance have been unearthed. The dates on the coins indicate the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. Considering that trade with the East developed only during the ninth century and that the Arabic dirhems (even with dates from the eighth century) are usually in hoards from the ninth or tenth centuries, it may be assumed that the Oka River was not used for trade contacts with the East earlier than the ninth century. The use of the Oka for transport must therefore have been connected with the appearance of the Northmen on routes between the Baltic and the Volga. Surprisingly enough the evacuation of the Oka region by the Meshchers took place actually at a time when the region was gaining in economic importance.

C. MESHCHERS AND THE RUS CENTER OF 'ARTHA'

As the next step, the causes for the mass emigration of the Meschera/ Majghari from the Oka region should be explored. There are various reasons why a nomadic, or even semi-nomadic, people might change its

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36 Various opinions are cited by T. N. Nikolskaia, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-13. Mongait did not provide any evidence for the alleged presence of Slavs in the Riazan region already before the ninth century.

37 A. L. Mongait, *op. cit.*, p. 173. Oriental coins unearthed in the region of Moscow are from the ninth and tenth centuries. It is assumed that the trade connections between the population of that region and the Muslim East were carried along the Oka and Volga and not along the Don; cf. T. N. Nikolskaia, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.
place of habitation. The life of the cattle raisers in peacetime reveals a high level of organization in contrast to the popular concept of nomadism. The movements of the herd are actually restricted to a change of pasture in the spring, summer, and winter with a rather well-planned rotation within the same larger geographic area. The life of a cattle herder is as much regulated by the seasons as that of an agriculturist. An owner of a herd who lives in a city or in a permanent settlement knows exactly where to find his herdsmen at any time of the year, in spite of the distances involved.

What popular belief connects with the notion of nomadic life is actually the unexpected movement of cattlebreeders caused by sudden changes in climatic conditions or by external military pressure. In both cases, the cattle breeders can avoid economic disaster by searching for new grazing lands or can evade the enemy by withdrawing in an organized fashion. In short, the 'migrations' are not the typical but the exceptional form of nomadic life. The nomads are inclined to be warlike and aggressive only when they are forced to abandon their abode or when they lose their cattle, their main source of subsistence.

In the case of the Meshchers, the reason for the exodus could not have been a sudden climatic change. The Oka region abounds in small rivers; a drought could not have affected all pasture lands, and the forest would have provided temporary relief for the animals. Finally, a transfer of the herds, even southward, because of climatic conditions would have been considered only a temporary measure.

But the Meshchers did not return to the Oka River, nor did they even settle in a neighboring region. As Efimenko and Mongait expressed it: the Meshchera, for unknown reasons, disappeared and nobody knows where they went. This statement at least concedes that they must have gone somewhere and that they were not absorbed by some other ethnic group.

Peoples which in the past disappeared in one region of the world usually reappeared in the most unexpected places. The Vandals from Central Europe moved to Spain ('Vandalusia'-‘Andalusia’) and North Africa. The Goths and some of the Alans from Eastern Europe moved to Spain ('Goth-Alania'—‘Catalonia’). This pattern applies also to the Meshchers, who according to our theory, disappeared from the Oka region and reappeared in the steppe zone between the Don and the Dnieper.

Their emigration from the Oka River must have been brought about by some political, and not by some economic, factor. Since the archeological evidence shows that they lived in the Oka region until the ninth century, and since their appearance on the Don was the cause of anxiety on the part of the Khazars around the year 830, the migration must have been connected with some development during the first decades of the ninth century.

In the northern part of Eastern Europe in the early ninth century, by
far the most significant event was the appearance of the Northmen along the rivers connecting the Baltic Sea with the River Volga. The emigration of the Meshchers from the neighborhood of the River Oka must undoubtedly have been related to the appearance of these militant, aggressive Northmen. The Oka, as already indicated, was an important thoroughfare, as evidenced by numerous silver hoards containing Arabic dirhems unearthed along the banks of that river.

The Northmen, as part of their activities in Eastern Europe, were interested in procuring food, if necessary by force, and capturing slaves to be sold on the markets of Central Asia and the Middle East. The new methods of warfare, or rather the well-organized armed ambushes, of the Northmen, made the conventional military tactics of the Slavs or of the nomads, at least for a while, impractical. The autochthonous population could not match the strategy and tactics of the Northmen, just as, at that time, the armies of Western Europe were unable to resist the Vikings. Faced with the choice of submission or evacuation, the politically more advanced groups of the Meshchera, as is often the case with nationally conscious groups, decided in favor of a mass exodus. For such a decision, the mobility of the Meshchera population and the semi-military organization of the cattle raising tribes were important factors.

The hypothesis that, under such circumstances, the cattle herding Ugric population abandoned the Oka region finds support in the conjecture that the first Norse center in Eastern Europe was not Novgorod or Kiev, but a place somewhere along the Volga, more precisely in the Oka-Volga region. It cannot be coincidental that this first Nordic political center is normally connected with the region of Riazan. This city is located directly on the border of the Meshchera land.

The name Riazan is tentatively connected by scholars with the name of another Ugric tribe, that of the Erza, who were also forced out of the Oka River region. Today, it is unanimously accepted that the city of Riazan came into existence only at a time when the Erza had left the region and the Northmen and Slavs arrived on the River Oka. Despite its Ugric name, the archeological evidence shows that the city of Riazan was a Slavic-Norse settlement. Obviously, the Northmen established their

38 The controversy concerning the location of Artha (al-Arthania) is more than a century old. The efforts to identify the three centers of Rus are narrowing down to Kiev, Novgorod, and the tribal territory of the people named Erza. The theory of the location of Artha on the territory of the Erza was formulated by C. M. V. Frähn in 1823. The best arguments in favour of that theory were assembled by Pavlo Smirnov, Vol'kii shliakh (Kiev, 1928). A recent theory of J. Hrbek connects Artha with Arkona on the island of Rügen (Rugia). Hrbek analyzed all the available texts of importance, but his conclusions are not convincing; cf. J. Hrbek, “Der dritte Stamm der Rus”, Archiv Orientální, XXV (1957), pp. 628-52.

trading and military center on the Oka-Volga Rivers only after the autochthonous Ugric population abandoned the region.

This Norse center was known to the Muslim authors by the name of Artha, a name which is also derived from the tribal name Erza. The Erza lived originally north of the Meshchera and must have emigrated at the same time as the Meshchers. Both the names Artha and Riazan are derived from the geographic name of the region and not from the name of the tribe directly (cf. the formation of the name of the Meshcherak from the land Meshchera). It is therefore plausible that the Meshchers and the Erza abandoned their original homes simultaneously under the pressure of the Northmen. Only on the evacuated territory did the first Rus center of Artha come into existence. All these events must be dated sometime shortly before the year 830, for it was soon after that date that the Khazars built Sarkel as a defense against the Majghari.

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40 Ibid.; cf. Max Vasmer, op. cit., s.v. 'Riazan'. For a most recent survey of studies on the proto-history of the Hungarians see Tamás Bogyay, "Research into the Origin and Ancient History of the Hungarian Nation after the Second World War", The Hungarian Quarterly, III (1962). I read this study only after completing my manuscript.
According to the Primary Chronicle, the tribe of the Slovenes of the Ilmen region and several other Slavic and non-Slavic tribes of Northeastern Europe invited around the middle of the ninth century, a particular group of people called “Ruses” from overseas to rule over their land. This episode, known in historiography also as “the calling of the Varangians”, is the main written evidence used by proponents of the theory of the Nordic origins of the Rusian state. Adherents of the various branches of the anti-Normanist school, on the other hand, attempt to discredit the reliability of this and other relevant fragments of the Chronicle or, at least, to minimize their significance.

An analysis of some of the written sources relevant to the history of Western and Eastern Europe in the ninth century will make it plausible that the Rusian Chronicler derived his knowledge of the invitation and related events from reliable sources.

In our opinion, the ‘invitation’ reflects a historical fact which logically emerged from preceding events in the region, all of which were but links in the chain of a historical process. Consequently, the episode of the invitation should not be treated, analyzed, and evaluated, in and of itself, but only against the broader background of developments in Eastern Europe and the adjacent areas.

A. THE TERMS ‘VARANGIAN’ AND ‘RUS’

Before submitting our own observations on the developments leading up to the invitation of the Ruses, we should recall the description of the event as related in the Primary Chronicle.

6367. The Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Chud, the Slovene, the Meria, and Ves, and the Krivichi. But the Khazars imposed it upon the Polanians, the Severians, and the Viatichians, and collected a white squirrelskin from each hearth.

6370. They drove the Varangians back beyond the sea, and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them,
and they began to war one against another. They said to themselves, “Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the Law.” They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Ruses: these particular Varangians were known as Ruses, just as some are called Swedes, and others, Normans, Angles, and Gotlanders, for they were thus named. The Chud, the Slovene, the Krivichi, and the Ves then said to the people of Rus, “Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and govern over us.” They thus selected three brothers, with their kinsfolk, who took with them all the Ruses and migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. On account of these Varangians, the Novgorodians became known as the land of Rus. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slovenes.1

The term ‘Varangian’, as used in this fragment and throughout the Chronicle, is one of the major problems in the historiography of Early Rus. Various explanations have been offered. Among them, the more popular suggestions propose the identification of the ‘Varangians’ with some of the people of the Scandinavian north. According to Stender-Petersen the term was used in the Slavic East, particularly around Novgorod, originally with the semantic meaning ‘Nordic, Scandinavian merchant’. Max Vasmer considers a ‘Varangian’ to be a ‘member of an association of Nordic people in Russia’.2 B. D. Grekov explains the term to mean ‘Scandinavian, Norman (from Scandinavia)’. Similarly, G. Vernadsky assumes that the term is equivalent to ‘member of Norse military fraternity’ or ‘Norse’.3 In our opinion, none of the suggested solutions is fully adequate.

Irrespective of the etymology of the term ‘Varangian’, and without regard to its meaning in Old Germanic languages in the ninth to eleventh centuries, its semantic meaning in East Slavic was ‘foreigner from the Germanic West’, especially ‘foreigner from the non-Slavic regions around the Baltic’. In any case, the term ‘Varangian’ should definitely not be connected with a single ethnic or professional group, be it Norman, Swede, or even ‘Norse’. This conclusion can be deduced from the fragment quoted above, where we read that the Ruses were a particular kind of Varangians, “just as some [particular Varangians] are called Swedes, and other Normans, Angles, and Gotlanders”. In other words, the Gotlanders, Normans, and Angles were also Varangians. This meaning of the term ‘Varangian’ is maintained throughout the whole Russian Primary Chronicle.

There is also a later source, the “Treaty of Novgorod with Gothland

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1 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 18.
3 B. D. Grekov, “Kievskia Rus” in his Izbrannye trudy, vol. II (Moscow, 1959), index. Of similar opinion is Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, Vol. II, p. 211. For G. Vernadsky’s opinion see e.g. his The Origins, pp. 131, 174.
and the German Cities” (c. 1189-99), in which the term ‘Variag’ is used
interchangeably with ‘German’ and ‘Gothlander’ and even with ‘latinski
iazyk’, literally ‘Latin race’, i.e. ‘all non-Orthodox Christians’.
Consequently, the term ‘Varangian’/‘Variag’ cannot be applied exclusively to a
single ethnic group.

Summarizing our analysis, we can conclude that all references to
Varangians in the Primary Chronicle are to people of non-Slavic and
non-East European origin, who moved in, out, or across Eastern Europe.
In the Chronicle’s narrative, these peoples never appear as groups per­
manently settled on East European soil except for the invited particular
group known as Ruses.

These observations lead us to the next controversial issue of the his­
toriography of Early Rus, namely to the problem of the name and origin
of the Ruses. The generally-accepted etymology of the name Rus suggests
that it is derived from old North Germanic Rohsmenn or Rohskarlar,
both meaning ‘rower’, ‘seaman’. There have been attempts to identify
the original homeland of the ‘Ruses’ who came to East Europe with
the region of Sweden known as Roslagen. Whereas the etymology Rohsmenn
is plausible, however, the theory of the original homeland of the Ruses in
Roslagen, Sweden, is illogical and confusing. If Rohsmenn meant ‘sea­
man’, it still does not necessarily follow that all ‘seamen’ came to Eastern
Europe from one specific region, namely from Roslagen. Rohsmenn
could have come to Eastern Europe from among the Swedes, Norse, or
Danes.

We may go a step further and question the traditional identification of
the Ruses with the Swedes: the Chronicler knew the Swedes, but never
did connect the Ruses with the Swedes or Sweden. What is more, the
Ruses appear in the Chronicle side by side with the Swedes.

In Vernadsky’s theory, the name Rus is of Iranian origin and was
originally used for an Alano-Slavic-Norse population settled in Tmutora­
kan on the Sea of Azov. This population eventually moved toward
Novgorod and became leaders of a Rus-Slavic-Finnish federation. This
theory has been criticized on various grounds, but primarily because there is
little evidence for the existence of a Rus settlement on the Azov before

Cf. Pamiatniki prava feodalno-razdroblennoi Rusi XII-XV vv., ed. A. A. Zimin
(Moscow, 1953), pp. 125-26, preamble and paragraph ten of the document.
V. Thomsen, Der Ursprung des russischen Staates (Gotha, 1879), p. 99.
First suggested by J. Thunman, Untersuchungen über die älteste Geschichte der
östlichen europäischen Völker (Leipzig, 1774). His view accepted by V. Thomsen,
For a variety of opinions cf. Ad. Stender-Petersen, “Zur Rus Frage”, in his
Varangica (Aarhus, 1963), pp. 65-87; Henryk Paszkiewicz, The Making of the Rus­
Vernadsky, The Origins, pp. 175, 180, 198-201, 207.
the tenth century and the derivation of the name ‘Rus’ from Iranian is inconclusive, if not improbable.

Etymology cannot provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of origin and meaning of the term Rus. All names, especially of ethnic and ethno-political connotation, undergo constant semantic changes. Such names are easily transferred from one ethnic group to another or can be used simultaneously by various ethnic or political formations. One nation may have several names, each one used by different neighbors. The names ‘Dutch’, ‘Deutsch’ are all derivations of the same name. The name of the Romans was used as their own name by the medieval Greeks and more recently by the Moldavians and Wallachs. The name of the Germanic Franks is used by the French, and the first name of the Italian explorer Vespucci for the inhabitants of America. The etymology of each of these names only tends to obscure the modern semantic meanings.

The proper understanding of the term Rus might be approached more realistically if the term were studied only in the contexts in which it appears. We should not be disturbed by the fact that the name Rus will have several meanings as time progresses. Paszkiewicz in his book Origin of Russia traced at least five meanings for the name, some used concurrently.

If we return now to the story of the Invitation, we read, in the Laurentian version, that “these particular Varangians were known as Ruses, just as some are called Swedes, and others Norse (Urmane), Angles, and Gotlanders, for they were so named”. From this short text it appears that the Ruses were ‘Varangians’, which is a generic name for foreigners from the West; they cannot be identified with the Swedes or with the Gotlanders, etc. since all these peoples are enumerated along with the Ruses. Moreover, the name of the Ruses in this text has a similar connotation, ethnic or political, to the name of the Swedes, Gotlanders or Angles. Significantly enough, the Chronicler did not mention the Danes in his enumeration. The omission is significant, because, at the time of the Invitation and long after, the Danes were the most active people of the North both in military exploits and commercial enterprises. The deduction should be made that, apparently, the Chronicler used the term ‘Rus’ as a substitute for the name ‘Danes’.

It might be argued that the Old-Rusian term Urmane, *Murmante means not ‘Norse of Norway’, as generally accepted, but ‘Northmen’ and thus may refer, not necessarily to the Norse, but also to the Danes. Indeed, such substitution occurs in some Continental medieval Latin sources, where the general term Nordmanni, Nortmanni is used on occasion also for the Danes. On the other hand, English sources usually distinguish between the Danes and the Norse, the latter being named Nortmanni, etc.

9 Henryk Paszkiewicz, The Origin of Russia (London, 1953), chapters one, five and six.
In our source the term Urmane is used, not as a general term, but rather as a specific; excluded are the Swedes, Gotlanders and the still enigmatic Ruses, all of which, considering their geographic location, could claim to be Northmanni. If we take into account the ambiguity in the use of the term Nortmanni as presented by the divergence in the Continental and insular English annalistic practice, then the term Urmane could mean either ‘Danes’ or ‘Norse’. Consequently, the name Rus would probably be a substitute for ‘Norse’ or ‘Danes’. A point in favor of identifying the Ruses tentatively with the Danes would be the relative proximity of the Danes to Eastern Europe, as compared to the more remotely located Norse.

Vernadsky made the suggestion that the particular Varangians were indeed Danes, but that only due to a misconception of the Chronicler were they named Ruses. The misconception of the Chronicler was caused, according to Vernadsky, by the fact that Rurik, with his Danes, merged with the Ruses of Southeastern Europe. Even the conclusion has been drawn that it was the East European Ruses who expelled the Varangians. Against this theory it should be noted that in the Russian Primary Chronicle the substitution of the name ‘Rus’ for ‘Danes’ is made not only in the fragment describing the invitation of the Ruses, but also in the preamble to the Chronicle, where all the people of the inhabited world are listed. Among the Varangians, the Chronicler enumerated “the Swedes, the Urmane, the Gothlanders, the Ruses, the Angles, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Romans, the Germans, the French, the Venetians, the Genoese, and so on”. As we see, the Ruses are listed again among the people of Western Europe and the name ‘Danes’ is not included. Furthermore, the Ruses appear in this list in what would be the logical place for the Danes. A conclusive, although indirect, evidence is the heretofore unnoticed fact that, in his whole narrative covering history up to the year 1117, the Chronicler never mentioned the Danes by the name customarily used for them in the West.

Indeed, this proposed identification of the Ruses of the earlier part of the ninth century with Danes can be arrived at independently by comparing al-Ya‘qūbī’s report on the Ruses attacking Seville in Spain in 844 with some of the reports of the Annales Bertiniani for the same and subsequent years. Following are the entries from the Annales Bertiniani:

844 . . . The Northmen moved up the Garonne as far as Toulouse . . . Some of them turned even to the most distant Spain . . .

845 . . . The Danes, who in the previous year had devastated Aquitania [i.e. the lands along the Garonne], came again this year . . .

11 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, p. 10.
12 Al-Ya‘qūbī’s text in Lewicki, Žródła arabskie, p. 251. See above, p. 29.
There should be no doubt that the Northmen who were in Spain in 844 were Danes. The report of al-Ya\'qūbī, describing the same event, uses, instead, the name *Rus*.

The fact of the substitution can be explained if we perceive that the name Rus was originally not an ethnic name, but the name of a clan or of a professional group similar to the terms ‘Viking’ or ‘Kylfingr’ (*koul-piggoi* in Byzantine and *kolbiagi* in old-Rusian sources). The people of Eastern Europe apparently first came into contact with these Ruses and their frequent contacts with Denmark account for the substitution of the names.

An original confraternal or clanlike character of the Ruses, similar to the organization of the Vikings, is suggested by the Rusian Chronicler’s remark, that *all* the Ruses moved to Eastern Europe. Such a total emigration could have been possible only in the case of a confraternity or military organization. The same confraternal character of the Ruses is indicated by the contemporary description made by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, according to which *all* the Ruses used to leave Kiev for the winter. The same conclusion can be derived from the parallel reading of analogous texts preserved in the Laurentian version of the Rusian Primary Chronicle and in the Novgorodian Chronicle. The first text reads: “I izbrashasia 3 bratia s rody svoimi, poiasha po sobie vsiu rus . . .” The parallel Novgorodian text has: “Izbrashasia 3 brata s rody svoimi i poiasha so soboiu druzhinu mnogu . . .”. The Primary Chronicle reports that the three brothers took with them *all of the Rus*, whereas the Novgorodian version repeating the sentence mentions that the brothers took with them *a numerous retinue*. The conclusion is obvious that in this case the term *Rus* is used as synonym of *retinue*, the Rusian *druzhina*.

The Ruses, as a confraternity, only at the time of the Invitation would have consisted predominantly of Danes or Scandinavians. As in the case of any medieval princely retinue, the leader of the ‘Ruses’ would obviously also have employed able-bodied volunteers of other ethnic groups. Our contention is that some ten-fifteen years after the arrival of the Ruses in Eastern Europe the organization was already multinational. Such is the testimony of the Rusian Primary Chronicle where the entry under the year 882 reads:

6390. Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Chud, the Slovenes, the Meria and all the Krivichi . . . The Varangians, Slovenes, and others who accompanied him were called *Rus*. Obviously, the ‘Rus’, the confraternity of warriors, on that occasion, was

13 *De administrando imperio*, pp. 62-63.
composed not only of Varangians, i.e., of foreigners, but also of Chud, Slovenes and Krivichi.

We may now propose the theory that the Danes were known in Eastern Europe first as a confraternity of rowers engaged in trade along the rivers leading to the Volga and further to the East. They were known in Eastern Europe, Byzantium and in Muslim countries under the name of the confraternity or clan: 'Rus'. Around the middle of the ninth century an invasion of East European territory by some Vikings took place and a tribute was collected. At this stage, the population around Lake Ilmen and in the adjacent regions approached the Ruses known to them from earlier contacts, requesting them to organize the defenses of the region in the capacity of mercenary soldiers, no doubt with appropriate privileges in trade and residence. The invasion of East European territory, mentioned above, was not necessarily the first Viking raid, but it was definitely the first one known to the compiler of the Rusian Chronicle and probably remembered in local tradition.

B. THE HISTORICITY OF THE 'INVITATION'

The invitation went to a particular group of Varangians, to the Danish Ruses, because they were known in Eastern Europe better than the other merchant confraternities. Some of the Ruses traversed Eastern Europe already in 838-39, if not earlier. In Constantinople and in Ingelheim in 839, they appeared to be on a peaceful mission. They were known to Ibn Hurdadbeh around the year 847 exclusively as merchants.16 For the Ruses, the invitation was a lucrative proposition, because it gave them a privileged position on the East European waterways which were under the control of the people extending the invitation.

There have been many attempts in the past, and even currently, to reject the whole story of the invitation as a direct borrowing from some foreign tradition.17 It is argued that the legendary form of the story itself casts doubts upon it and, in addition, that there are similar descriptions in other national chronicles, a fact which warrants caution. Indeed, there do exist legends which describe the 'invitation' of Northmen by the Irish, Angles, or Saxons. In our opinion, however, the similarities in national traditions are not necessarily the results of borrowing, but can be easily explained as reflections of similar historical facts.

16 See above, pp. 27-28.
17 E.g. Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, Vol. II, pp. 234-46. Likhachev's main argument is that similar stories are known from foreign sources. In his opinion, the legend was adopted in Novgorod when the city was strong and the Varangians did not represent any longer a political power. The adoption of the 'Varangian' genealogy, in Likhachev's opinion, was the result of "similarities in the stages of historical development" in Russia and other states.
In the Middle Ages, it was normal practice for commercially important cities to engage unruly condottieri as armed forces of the merchants' guilds. It is enough to point to the histories of the city republics of Italy, where there are numerous examples of a hired mercenary military leader's taking over the government and dictating new conditions of cooperation. We have such examples even from the ninth century. In 842 the people of the region of Beneventum were carrying on a feud with some neighboring cities and invited the Saracens from North Africa to serve as mercenaries. The Saracens willingly joined in the conflict, but as soon as the fighting ended, they took over the government of the host city and of other parts of the region of Beneventum. These events in Beneventum are analogous to the chain of events in the Ilmen region following the 'invitation of the Ruses', but a borrowing of the story cannot even be suggested. That the principality of Novgorod continued to invite (and expel) princes in its subsequent history should not escape our attention. The first such invitation may well have been the one described by the Rusian Primary Chronicle in the fragment analyzed.

C. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE 'INVITATION'

As the story of the invitation of the Ruses undoubtedly reflects a historical fact, we may proceed to verify the chronology connected with it. At the same time, we should also reconstruct the geopolitical conditions in Eastern Europe which could have influenced, or could be related to, the invitation and subsequent developments.

In verifying the chronology of the first tribute payment and of the invitation, we can only confirm that the dates provided by the Chronicler seem to be correct, logically corresponding to the facts and dates derived from other, independent sources. The logic of the events makes it clear not only that the developments described by the Chronicler are historically plausible, but also that they could have taken place only on the dates indicated.

The dates supplied by the Rusian Primary Chronicle prior to the entry under the year 945 appear at first sight to be incorrect. A. A. Shakhmatov has established, however, that the apparent mistakes are the result not of a random choice of dates, but rather of a careless adaptation of the complicated Byzantine system of time-reckoning. A basic error was already present in the chronological handbook used by the compiler of the Russian

18 Annales Bertiniani, s.a. 842.
19 A short presentation of the complex problem of chronology connected with the Russian chronicles is given in Cross, The Russian Primary Chronicle, pp. 30-35. For a detailed study see the posthumously published work of I. G. Berezhkov, Khronologija russkogo letopisanija (Moscow, 1963).
Chronicle. All dates of the Chronicle prior to 945 must therefore be adjusted. Fortunately, there are a few dates in parallel Byzantine or Western sources upon which to base some of our corrections. If we convert the Chronicle’s date of the raid on Constantinople to our modern calendar system, the event would seem to have taken place in 866 A.D. But, as already discussed, the attack actually occurred in 860 A.D. As this attack on Constantinople is the third entry in the Chronicle dealing entirely with the Ruses, we may tentatively assume that all three entries are derived from the same source and that, therefore, the internal chronology of the three entries should remain correct. This means that not only the date of the attack must be adjusted by six years, but also the date of the first tribute payment to the ‘Varangians’ and the date of the invitation of the Ruses. Accepting this method of adjustment, we get the following tentative reconstruction of the dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6367</td>
<td>The imposition of tribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6368</td>
<td>no entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6369</td>
<td>no entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6370</td>
<td>Expulsion of the ‘Varangians’ and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation of the Ruses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6371</td>
<td>no entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6372</td>
<td>no entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6373</td>
<td>no entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6374</td>
<td>Attack on Constantinople</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A careful reading of the complete entries under the three dates will make it possible to introduce further adjustments in chronology by using the internal logic of the narrative. This opportunity is afforded by the fact that under the date 6370 the Chronicler actually entered the events of three, or at least of two, years. This is an exception to annalistic practice, because a given date is usually followed by the events of only one year. In extant manuscripts where the Rusian Chronicler had nothing to report, the dates are entered without any text. In our case, the entry under the year 6370, despite the deviation from the usual routine, creates no conflicts because there are no entries for the two previous years.

The main points of the entry under the year 6370 (i.e., 856), on which we shall base our conclusions, are as follows:

6370. They [the tributaries of the Varangians] drove them back beyond the sea, and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern by themselves.... They said to themselves, “Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the Law.” They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Ruses: these particular Varangians were known as Ruses.... They

20 See above, pp. 31-32.
thus selected three brothers with their kinsfolk, who took with them all the Ruses and migrated. . . . After two years, Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He assigned cities to his followers, Polotsk to one, Rostov to another, and to another Beloozero.

The fact that events of three years were summarized in this entry is obvious: the Varangians were driven back; a particular group of Varangians, the Ruses, were invited; after the lapse of two years Sineus and Truvor died; and after all those events Rurik assumed sole authority and assigned cities to his men.

The logic of events makes it evident that the Varangians were driven out immediately or within a year after the imposition of the tribute, or, at least, that the tribute payment happened only once. We may also suspect that the temporary usurpation of power by the Ruses occurred only during the third year of their stay among the Slovenes, namely after the death of Sineus and Truvor, when Rurik began to assign cities to his men. We must also note that, on this occasion, in the redistribution of cities there is no mention of the local population as a partner to the transaction.

We are now in a position to date the invitation more exactly:

853 The imposition of tribute and expulsion of the Varangians.

853/854 Invitation of the Ruses.

856 Deaths of Sineus and Truvor.
Distribution of cities.
“Rurik assumed the sole authority”.

A close confirmation of our calculation of dates is provided by the Life of Saint Ansgar.21 According to this source, some Danes sailed across the Baltic, seized a civitas of the Slavs, collected a ransom, and returned home. Vernadsky identified this civitas as Novgorod.22 The invasion took place several years before the Saint’s death in 864. Vernadsky dates the collection of ransom in 852. The events described in the Life of St. Ansgar, accordingly, would correspond to the Chronicler’s own story of the tribute payment and of the expulsion. The discrepancy of one year between the date of the raid suggested by Vernadsky and the restored date for the

22 The identification is rather bold. The Rus chronicler, in connection with the raid, did not mention the city of Novgorod, but only the Slovenes and other people of the Ilmen region. According to most recent estimates, Novgorod assumed urban characteristics only around the middle of the tenth century. Cf. B. A. Kolchkin, “Topografiia, stratigrafiia i khronologiia Nerevskogo raskopa”, Materialy i issledovaniia po arkheologii SSSR, LV (1956), p. 137.
tribute payment in the Rusian Chronicle can be explained by the fact that the Byzantine year started in September, the Western year, at various dates in the spring. What is more, the difference in dating may imply that the Rusian Chronicler's information was derived from a source independent from the source used by the compiler of the life of St. Ansgar. This fact would greatly enhance the credibility of the Rusian Chronicler. We may conclude that the 'invitation' of the Ruses followed immediately after the raid mentioned in the Life and that it was aimed at preventing new attacks coming from the sea, and not from the Khazars, as assumed by G. Vernadsky in his various presentations of the history of early Rusia.

23 In early Rus there were two systems of chronology starting in the spring, both beginning in March. The so-called Ultra-March system was one year behind the regular March system.

The ‘invitation of the Varangians’ by the tribes of the North around the middle of the ninth century has been placed by G. Vernadsky in a causal relationship with the developments in the southern part of Eastern Europe.\(^1\) His contention is that the merchant communities of the Slavs, Finno-Ugors and Ruses (Rusk-Alans) invited the Varangians to come in order to employ them against the Khazars, who, in Vernadsky’s opinion, were blocking the trade routes from Novgorod to the South and the East. According to this theory, the blockade by the Khazars resulted in a civil war fought by restless tribes of the North and some idle Nordic merchants who were unable to carry on their normal trade activities.

As an argument in favor of this theory, Vernadsky contends that the Khazars were the ones who prevented the Ruses in 839 from returning home from Constantinople. As our analysis of the events of 839 implied,\(^2\) it is improbable that the difficulties encountered by the Ruses in that year were caused by an allegedly hostile attitude on the part of the Khazars. Whatever geopolitical situation may have prevailed in 839, however, it cannot be applied to the evaluation of events after 850. There would seem to be more reason to look for a relation between the invitation of the ‘Ruses’ in 853-4 and the tribute payment to the Varangians in 853, two events which are not only chronologically and geographically closely related, but also appear to be in a logical relationship with each other.

Hiring Northmen against Northmen was a practice well attested to in sources, just as there were frequent cases of engaging nomads against nomads. Issues of ethnic, national, or political solidarities were not involved, or, at least, they were completely different from modern concepts of loyalty.

A. THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION

As long as the tribes of the Northeast could maintain the terms of the


\(^2\) See above, pp. 23 ff.
agreement with the invited Ruses, and as long as the Ruses benefited both from the agreement and from the direct participation in international trade, the relationship between the two contracting parties had to be fair. We must remember that the various tribes had their own military organizations, and later, even with princes in power, Novgorod maintained its own militia independent of the forces of the prince. This allowed the Veche, the self-government of the city, to assure a balance of power and to prevent any coup d'état by the prince, who ruled by invitation.

In spite of these circumstances, however, after the deaths of Sineus and Truvor, Rurik took over the government of the territories entrusted to the protection of the Ruses, and the impression is created that this time it was without the consent of the people who extended the invitation. An explanation of this development may be derived from an analysis of the political situation along the trade routes connecting the Baltic with the Khazars and the Muslim East.

Some sources lead us to assume that, in the early fifties of the ninth century, the Khazar Empire was involved in several conflicts in the Caucasus. The Khazar state during this period suffered a great internal crisis and the Pax chazarica in Eastern Europe underwent a new phase of deterioration. As the Khazar Empire, located between the Urals and the Black Sea, was a gateway for the trade routes between Europe and the East, any crisis in that region must have had its repercussions also in more remote areas.

A conflict between the Khazars and the Arabs, for instance, would naturally curtail the trade carried on along the Volga and the Caspian Sea across the Caucasus. Such a curtailment, whether of a shorter or longer duration, would especially affect the transport of goods carried by boat along the Volga and the Caspian Sea, and Northmen, the most numerous group of merchants relying on water-bound traffic, would be the first to feel the effects of such a disturbance. When the southern borders of the Khazar Empire were closed to trade, the Northmen, Slavs, and Finno-Ugors, who utilized the upper Volga and its tributaries, could trade, at best, only with the Khazars themselves and the Bulgars of the Kama-Volga region.

The city of Bulgar on the Volga was important not only as the converging point of several riverways (Belaia-Viatka-Kama and the Oka-Volga), but also as the terminal point of overland caravan routes connecting Central Asia with Northeastern Europe. The overland caravan routes were monopolized by Turks and Iranians, especially by those from Khwarezm. If the Northmen wanted to pursue their trade with the Arabs by diverting their caravans across Khwarezm, then it could have been done only through the mediation of the Turks and Iranians coming on caravan routes to the city of Bulgar. This procedure obviously resulted in a considerable loss of profits by the Northmen. Such a situation arose in
connection with the deterioration of Khazar-Arab relations in or before the year 854, the very time of the large-scale changes in the region of Novgorod.

Al-Balādhurī, a reliable contemporary Arabic historian (died before 893), reported in his “Book of Conquests of Countries” that, in the year of Hegira 240 (854/55 A.D.), the governor of Armenia (at this time part of the Caliphate of Baghdad) had rebuilt a deserted city and had there resettled three hundred families from Khazaria “who had left their country because of their inclination toward Islam”. We may assume that these refugees left Khazaria because of some conflict resulting from the fact that they showed an “inclination toward Islam”, whereas the ruling class in the Khazar Empire at that time professed Judaism.

Despite the traditional tolerance of, or even indifference to, religion on the part of Altaic states, the Khazar Empire could not avoid tensions among the various religious groups of its multinational populace. Khazaria was normally a haven for persecuted Jews from the Caliphate and from the Byzantine Empire. Also, Muslim sectarians found protection and employment in the Khazar army. Both the Jews and the Muslims in the Khazar Empire represented various shades of orthodoxy, and thus conflicts among the followers of the same basic creed were difficult to prevent. Whatever the immediate cause of the defection of the aforesaid “three hundred families”, their arrival in the Caliphate contributed to the tension existing between the two neighboring states. Among the Altaic peoples, rebels were considered fugitive slaves. To accord them protection could have resulted in war or, at least, in the severance of good neighborly relations.

The relations between the Khazars and the Arabs in the early fifties of the ninth century were of a definitely unfriendly, if not a warlike, character. At the time when the Khazar refugees arrived in Armenia to seek the protection of the Caliphate, the Governor of Armenia was engaged in a military expedition against the people named ‘Sanarijah’, a Christian nation living north of Tiflis. The leaders of the Sanarijah applied for military assistance to various neighboring nations, including the Khazars. The situation along the Khazar border must have been very tense, since, at one stage of the Caucasian upheavals, the Governor of Armenia, who both accepted the Khazar refugees and conducted the campaign against the Sanarijah, was removed from his post, having been suspected of maintaining treasonable contacts with the Khazars.

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5 Al-Ya‘qūbī’s text in Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 263.
6 Marquart, Streifzüge, p. 412.
The fact that the dissidents from Khazaria sought the protection of the Caliphate, the fact that the Christian Sanarijah people asked military assistance from the Khazars against the Caliphate, and, finally, the fact that the Governor of Armenia was suspected of treason because of his contacts with the same Khazars should allow us to assume that the whole region between the Urals and the Black Sea was in turmoil. During this period, moreover, there were, along the Khazar-Arab frontier, also several revolts within the Caliphate, e.g., in Albania of the Caucasus in 852 and in Armenia itself between 850 and 855. Disturbances in Georgia proper led in 853 to the liquidation of an independent Muslim state with its capital in Tiflis. Under such conditions, normal, or even only limited, trade contacts across the regions in question were impossible. Above all, this affected the Northmen.

As for the internal crisis in the Khazar Empire, we have mentioned that the cause may have been, indeed, religious, as the refugees to the Caliphate implied, but the underlying cause may well have been power politics among the ruling classes. We shall only refer to the fact that the Khazar Empire relied on mercenary troops provided mostly by the Muslim Khwarezmians, and, indeed, Khwarezmians were in charge of the armed forces. Since, as already mentioned, part of the ruling class professed Judaism and there was a constant influx of persecuted Jews into Khazaria, there were, no doubt, tensions between the various groups in the civil administration and in the military leadership. The defection of the three hundred families from the Khazars in the year 854/55 must have been connected with such internal difficulties.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus may have been describing a similar, if not the same, crisis, when he referred to the defection of a group named ‘Kavaroi’ from the Khazar Empire. The incident in Constantine’s work is undated, and there has been much speculation as to the approximate chronology of the events, as well as to the ethnic composition of the ‘Kavaroi.’ The story of the Kavars reads as follows:

The so-called ‘Kavaroi’ were of the race of the Khazars. Now it fell out that a secession was made by them from their government, and when a civil war broke out, their first government prevailed, and some of them were slain, but others escaped and came and settled with the Turks... And because in wars they showed themselves strongest and most valorous ... they have been promoted to be first clans.

Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his father, Emperor Leo the

8 V. Minorsky, “Tiflis”, in Encyclopaedia of Islam.
9 De administrando imperio, pp. 174-75.
Wise, used the term ‘Turk’ consistently for the people who, during the late ninth and early tenth century, moved into the Carpathian Basin. In our opinion, by the term ‘Turks’ the two emperors understood first the ethnic group known to us otherwise as Onogurs/Ougry and later the whole federation to which both the Onogurs and the Kavars belonged. From Western sources, we know that the ‘Cowari’ and ‘Ungari’ were on a raid in Western Europe in the year 881. They were seen simultaneously at different places, but probably as partners in a joint expedition. The ‘Kavaroi’ must have defected, therefore, sometime before 881.

Before proposing a more exact date for their exodus, we may first suggest that the ‘Kavaroi’ were originally stationed somewhere along the western northwestern frontiers of the Khazar Empire, because from such a location their defection westward to the Onogurs is more understandable. We know that the military organization of the Khazars was composed mostly of Muslims. We also know that the Muslim units had an agreement with the Khazars that they should not be employed against their co-religionists, the Arabs. All this implies that the ‘Kavaroi’, who were stationed along the western, rather than southern, frontiers of the Empire, were also Muslims, or at least under the command of Muslim military aristocracy.

We may now assume that the defection of the ‘Kavaroi’ took place around, or precisely in, the year 854. This is the date of some civil strife in the Khazar Empire, followed by the exodus of the three hundred Khazar families southward. Between these events and the civil war and exodus of the Kavars there are striking similarities. The assumption that both defections were the result of the same internal crisis inside the Khazar Empire is made plausible by the fact that al-Baladuri knows about only one such crisis and, similarly, Constantine Porphyrogenitus reports only one.

The defection of the Kavars must have considerably weakened the military power of the Khazars and diminished their international prestige. The appearance of the Kavars in the Steppes along the Don and Dnieper renewed the tension in that area, and their cooperation with the Onogurs reshaped the overall political structure of the whole of Eastern Europe. Consequently, the conditions in the Steppes and in the Caucasus could not favor trade contacts between Europe and the lands of the Muslim East. The Northmen who utilized the Volga River and those who traveled

11 “Primum bellum cum Ungaris ad Weniam. Secundum bellum cum Cowaris ad Culmite”. In the Annals of Admont, s.a. 881. Cf. Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptores, XXX/2 (1934), p. 741. This is the first dated reference to the Kavars. The Onogurs were first reported in Western Europe already in 862. Cf. Annales Bertiniani s.a. 862.


to the Khazars via the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and the Don-Volga-Caspian route were now forced to look for new enterprises.

As the normal flow of traffic from the Baltic to the Caspian was disrupted, friction arose between the idle and restless Viking warrior-merchants and the less militant autochthons. A direct consequence of the new developments was the deterioration of the situation in the region of Lake Ilmen, the hub of West-East trade. This resulted in the military coup d'état by the mercenary Ruses and the assumption of power by Rurik in 856.

B. ASKOLD AND DIR IN KIEV

The occupation of Novgorod, Polotsk, Rostov, and Belo-ozero by the Ruses changed the contractual relationship between them and the local population, above all, with respect to economic obligations. What had previously been a payment in cash or in kind for services rendered to the autochthonous population now became extortion. As the profit from trade was now, at least temporarily, restricted, the beneficiaries of the new situation were only those who had been assigned by Rurik to cities as administrators. The Chronicler explicitly stated that cities were given to individuals, who probably commanded a small military retinue. As we know from subsequent centuries of Rusian history, the distribution of towns and districts was a normal practice of the Rurik dynasty, but the recipients were members of the princely clan only. The situation must have been similar during the first distribution of towns in the region of Novgorod. Since not all aspirations could have been fulfilled, and not all prominent members of Rurik’s retinue could have been compensated with benefices, there must have been some dissatisfaction with the arrangement. In similar cases, it was customary for a free member of the retinue to look for employment with a more generous prince and such may have been the background for the departure of two men, Askold and Dir, from the retinue of Rurik:

856 . . . With him [i.e. Rurik] there were two men who did not belong to his kin, but were boyars. And they both asked permission to go to Tsargrad with their kinsmen. They sailed down the Dnieper; as they passed by, they noticed a small burgh on a hill . . . Askold and Dir remained in the burgh, and they gathered many Varangians and began to rule (vladeti) over the country of the Polanians, while Rurik exercised princely government (kniazhashchu) in Novgorod.

860. Askold and Dir attacked the Greeks during the fourteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Michael.14

The order in which the Chronicler deals with the episodes of this period is extremely significant. The departure of Askold and Dir must have followed the allocation of the cities. Similarly, they departed originally for Constantinople, but changed their minds in Kiev. The Chronicler did not feel it was necessary to point out the relationships among the various episodes, because the connections between the events were obvious to him. The logic of the events defies any attempt to discredit the historicity of Askold and Dir. It is hardly possible to have invented a story which fits the general geopolitical conditions so accurately.

Since trade along the Volga was temporarily blocked and since Askold and Dir did not participate in the benefits of the occupation of Northern Russia, they were, in fact, free to go away. Their allegiance to Rurik was conditional, and the severance of relations under the new conditions was to be expected. A free man in the Germanic tribal society was free to go anywhere, could assume services even with the enemy, without being apprehended or considered a traitor.\textsuperscript{15} Under the Rurik dynasty, up to the time of Ivan III, the practice of choosing a lord at will or severing allegiances was practiced by many of the Russian boyars. Askold and Dir were free men – the Chronicler calls them boyars – and were, therefore, in a position to depart in order to find new employment.

The two men first planned to move with their families to Constantinople, but it is clear from the Chronicler's narrative that their original plan was altered. They changed their mind after their arrival in Kiev because of the new opportunities offered by the conditions in that city. Their decision could have been influenced also by the unsettled situation along the Dnieper, resulting from the defection of the Kavars. At any rate, their families, or even clans, represented only a small force, and they could not have contemplated an occupation of Kiev by military action. A peaceful arrangement which allowed them to remain in the city is, therefore, most likely.

The arrival of the two leaders with their retinue in Kiev can be, in accordance with the adjusted chronology,\textsuperscript{16} easily dated in, or shortly after, the year 856. This is the period of the decline of Khazar prestige and of the Khazar protective military power. The Kavars had probably moved into the Steppes in 854/5 and their attitude to the Khazar Empire was certainly not friendly. As the 'Pax chazarica' was by now gone, Kiev was exposed to various pressures. The Chronicler mentioned that the city paid taxes to the Khazars, but, as we have already assumed, the Khazars themselves were not in the city.\textsuperscript{17} It is very probable that Askold and Dir

\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Jacob Grimm, \textit{Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer}, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1854), p. 286.
\textsuperscript{16} According to the internal chronology of the Russian Primary Chronicle, Askold and Dir moved from Novgorod to Kiev four years before their attack on Constantinople. The latter event took place in 860.
\textsuperscript{17} See above, pp. 53, 63-68.
offered the city their military assistance against marauders, or that the *veche* of Kiev itself offered employment to the two leaders and their retinue. The dangers faced by the Kievans and by the “Poliane” came not only from the nomads, whether Onogurs, Magyars, or Kavars, but also from the neighboring Slavic tribes of the forest zone. We refer here to the fragment already quoted from the Rusian Primary Chronicle that after the death of Kii and his brothers, but before the arrival of the Khazars, the inhabitants of Kiev were oppressed by the Derevlians.  

This episode is very plausible, since Kiev was located in the immediate neighborhood of the Derevlian tribal territory. The Derevlians present themselves throughout the Chronicle as a ferocious tribal organization. It would be rather surprising if, in the general turmoil following the Kavar defection, the Derevlians did not try again to seize the city. Under such circumstances, the services of Askold and Dir, on terms dictated by the *veche* of the city of Kiev, could have been for a while a valuable contribution to the preservation of peace.

Further developments in Kiev followed the pattern already traced in Novgorod. The Chronicler condensed the crucial events of 856 in Kiev into one sentence: “Askold and Dir remained in the city, and they gathered many Varangians, and they began to rule (*vladeti*) over the Polanian land, while Rurik exercised his princely government (*kniazhashchu*) in Novgorod.” It is noteworthy that the two leaders, when already in the city, *first* assembled many Varangians, and only then began to rule. We also must note the distinction made by the Chronicler between ‘to rule’ (*vladeti*) and ‘to exercise princely government’ (*kniazhashchu*). As we know, Askold and Dir were not from the princely clan of Rurik, and their usurpation of princely prerogatives was later to become the cause of their demise.

The extension of the rule by the Ruses over the land of the Polanians could, in turn, have shifted the balance of power inside the city, but, in the face of danger from the steppe, the Ruses were as much interested in the defense of the city as were the autochthons.

The presence of the Ruses, however, was more burdensome to the rural population. The extension of rule over the land of the Polanians meant collection of ‘dan’, a tribute, and services in the form of ‘poludie’, the housing and feeding of the Ruses in the winter. Both duties were very definite hardships, but there must have been some kind of reciprocal agreement to forestall abuses and revolts. We know that the Derevlians revolted against payments of tribute only when there were violations of the existing agreements. The payment of the ‘dan’ and the ‘poludie’ was not an infringement upon the self-government of the rural communities or upon the allodial rights of ownership. These two services could well

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have been rendered for protection against marauders of various nationalities, including Northmen.

There is little information on which to base the history of the two decades between the arrival of Askold and Dir in Kiev and the arrival of a second group of Ruses, usually connected with the names of Igor and Oleg. We know only about the unsuccessful expedition of Askold and Dir against Constantinople in 860 and a conversion of the Kievan Ruses shortly after that date.

The fiasco of the expedition very likely worked in favor of the autochthonous population of Kiev and of the Polanian land. The decimated Ruses may now have been forced to respect the terms of the original agreement, or even to accept new conditions imposed by the veche. It is fair to assume, at least, that the veche of Kiev regained much of its prestige. Such was the case in the following centuries whenever a prince returned to the city after a defeat.

No less significant an event in the life of the city was the partial conversion of the population, probably headed by the Ruses, to Christianity. Such is the unequivocal message contained in the patriarchal letter of Photius circulated among the Archbishops of the East in the year 867. In this document the Patriarch described the Ruses, 'who once were a menace to Christianity', as a nation now subordinate and friendly toward the Empire.

There can be no doubt that a Christianization at the date indicated by the letter of Photius actually took place. It was the result of the conditions existing at that time both in Kiev and in the Byzantine Empire. The Greeks needed an ally behind the nomads, the imminent neighbors of the Crimea and close to the Greek possessions on the Balkans. The Kievans themselves were interested in alliances which would strengthen their own positions against the same nomads. In such circumstances, the conversion could have been the expression of ideological identity and a confirmation of sincerity in political matters. The alliance was definitely welcomed by both parties, since it served the purpose of restoring the political equilibrium after the crisis in Khazaria and in Kiev.

The theory that Askold was a Christian is borne out by the fragment of the Rusian Primary Chronicle which says, in connection with the assassination of Askold, that subsequently a church was built on his grave. According to Canon Law, a church may be built only over the grave or other relics of a saint or Christian martyr. And Askold can, indeed, be considered a martyr, since he was killed in ambush by the heathen Oleg. The Chronicler described the local tradition of the building of the church, although, by doing so, he created a seeming contradiction.

As we know, the first conversion of Rus is connected with the acceptance of Christianity by Vladimir the Saint at the very end of the tenth century. In fact, this is the event described in detail by the Chronicler. But on closer analysis this conversion appears to be actually only the official acceptance of Christianity by the princely family of the Rurik dynasty, and not by the Rus military organization as a whole. Byzantine writers never stressed this conversion, because, for them, the acceptance of Christianity between 860 and 866 was the more significant. For them, Askold and Vladimir represented the same military or political formation and the killing of the former and a relapse to heathenism was an internal Rus affair. From the Byzantine point of view, Christianity was transplanted to Kiev already in 860-66, and, hence, the silence about the conversion at the end of the tenth century. There were Christians among the Rus signatories of the Treaty of 944 with Byzantium and, at the same time, there was already a Christian church in Kiev dedicated to St. Elias. On the issue of the conversion the Chronicler must have relayed an official tradition of the Kievian court.

C. THE RUSES: VARANGIANS AND AUTOCHTHONS

The proper understanding of the relations between the ‘Ruses’ and the local population of Eastern Europe is hampered by the ambiguity of terminology used in modern historical writings, but, above all, by the inadequate attention devoted to the semantic and syntactic changes occurring constantly in Rusian phraseology. We refer to the examples of the terms ‘Rus’ and ‘dan’ (tribute, taxation), both of which are of crucial importance for the interpretation of sources relevant to the history of Eastern Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries.

As already analyzed, the original term ‘Rus’ assumed in East Europe first a semi-ethnic connotation with the meaning ‘member of a Danish confraternity’, ‘particular foreigner from Denmark’, ‘Dane’. With the fact of their invitation to Eastern Europe, the term ‘Rus’ became synonymous with ‘military organization’, ‘military confraternity’, the Slavic ‘Druzhina’.

At the outset of the quoted text, we read that Oleg collected soldiers from among the Varangians, Chud, Slovenes, Meria and all of the Krivichi. In the same text, we read that “The Varangians, Slovenes and others who accompanied him were called Rus”.

Of importance here is not the fact that the term ‘Rus’ is used with the meaning of ‘military organization’, but that this organization includes, besides the Varangians, also the Slavs and Finno-Ugors. This conclusion should not be considered a novelty in the interpretation of the text, be-

21 Ibid., p. 39.
22 See above, p. 107.
cause it is in complete agreement, for instance, with the laws governing the Viking military organization in Jomsborg. Point two of this Viking law states that members of the organization do not need to be from the same ethnic group, but they must fight like brothers. This observation might lead us to a possible reinterpretation of the following fragment of the Chronicler’s entry under the year 6390:

poide Oleg, poim voia mnogi variagi, chiuod, slovieni, meriu i vsie krivichi, i pride k Smolensku s krivichi i priia grad, i posadi muzh svoi ... i vzia Liubech, i posadi muzh svoi ... I siede Oleg kniazha v Kievie, a reche Oleg: ‘Se budi maii gradom russkim’. Biesha u nego variazi i sloveni i prochi prozvashasia Rusu. Se zhe Oleg nacha gorody staviti, i ustavi dani slovienom, krivichem i meri, i [ustavi] variagom dan daiati ot Novograda griven 300 na leto, mira dielo. . .

The customary interpretation and translation of this fragment reads as follows:

6390 (882). Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Chud, the Slovenes, the Meria and all the Krivichi. He thus arrived with his Krivichi before Smolensk, captured the city, and set up there his men. Thence he went on and captured Liubech, where he also set up his men. . . . Oleg set himself up as prince of Kiev, and declared that it should be the mother of Rus burghs. The Varangians, Slovenes, and others who accompanied him were called Rus. Oleg began to build burghs, and set up tributes to be paid by the Slovenes, the Krivichi and the Meria. He commanded that Novgorod should pay the Varangians tribute to the amount of 300 grivny a year for the preservation of peace.

But such a translation of the original text creates internal contradictions, because it could imply that the same people who were part of Oleg’s military organization, the Slovenes, the Krivichi and the Meria, were paying tribute. On the other hand, only the Varangians were receiving tribute, and only from the city of Novgorod. The question arises as to whom, then, did the Slovenes, Krivichi, and others pay their tribute, if the translation is correct? All these questions are vital for the interpretation of early history of Eastern Europe, but not all the ambiguities can be blamed on the Chronicler. In fact, a careful rereading of the text removes the seeming contradictions and all the ambiguities appear to result from the deep-rooted Normanist concepts, observable even among the ideas of the anti-

Normanists, that the tributes were imposed upon the Slavs by a foreign ethnic group. In short, our interpretation of the text is that the tribute was not paid by the Slovenes, Krivichi and Meria, the ethnic groups in the Rus organization, but to them by the population of the regions in which the new burghs were built and the auxiliary troops of Slovenes, Krivichi and Meria were stationed.

In our opinion, the misinterpretation of the original Old Russian text appears to be the result of the ambiguity in the modern Russian syntax. Here again we quote the medieval text:

Se zhe Oleg nacha gorody staviti, i ustavi dani slovienom, krivichem i meri, i ustavi variagom dan daiati ot Novograda griven 300 na leto, mira dielo. . . .

In the modern Russian, the form ‘staviti dan Slovenom’ may mean that the Slovenes paid the tribute to someone, or that tribute was to be paid by someone else to the Slovenes, but in the syntax of the Medieval Russian or at least in the syntax used by the Chronicler, this ambiguity did not exist.26

As our interpretation of the fragment under analysis may lead to a need for re-evaluation of the problem of tribute payments in particular, and of the ‘Rus’ controversy in general, we should make some additional observations. First of all, the Slovenes, Krivichi, Meria and Chud, all of whom were mentioned in the Chronicle as members of the Rus organization, are never included among tribes paying tribute to the Rus princes. On the other hand, tribes which, according to the Russian Chronicle, paid tribute to the Khazars, or the Rus princes, the Derevlians, Severiane, Radimichi and Viatichi, surprisingly enough, were not members of ‘Rus’ and appeared to be self-governing tribal or semi-tribal principalities with their own princes and military organizations. Since the Greeks of Byzantium also happen to have been, on occasion, among the tribute-paying partners of the Ruses, we may assume that the tribute payment to the Rus organization was no more than rendering peace money “for the preservation of peace”, as mentioned in the last sentence of the text under analysis. The Derevliane, Viatichi, Radimichi and the city of Novgorod were, therefore, in the late ninth century and during the tenth century in the same relationship to the Rus princes as Byzantium. Of course, the tribute payment was exacted under duress, but the relationship established through the tribute payment excluded the direct exploitation of tribal regions by the Rus military organization and allowed for complete tribal self-government. On the other hand, the non-tribute-paying Slovenes,

26 Likhachev, Povest vremennykh let, Vol. I, passim. Similarly all the cases quoted by I. I. Sreznevskii in his Materiały dla slovaria drevnerusskago iazyka, Vol. I (Sanktpeterburg, 1893), s.v. dan. Dative form is usually used in Old Rus when an action is in favour of, or for the benefit of, somebody.
Krivichi, and Meria (and probably the Chud) were actually partners in the Rus military organization.77

To summarize, the autochthons of Eastern Europe, already around the year 880, appear to be either confederates of the Rus princes, equal with the Varangians in the Rus military organizations or tribute-paying independent tribal formations. This general pattern did not exclude the fact that segments of the population, usually along the trade routes and around the burghs, were exposed to abuses and hardships. We should also realize that in the ninth and tenth centuries the sphere of direct Rus control was limited only to a small area of Eastern Europe, probably only a narrow strip of land along the navigable rivers used for communication and in areas used for wintering (poludie).

D. THE RUSES OF OLEG AND THE SLAVS

We should now turn to the circumstances in which the relatively peaceful symbiosis of the Polanians and the Ruses under Askold and Dir was brought to an abrupt end by the arrival of Oleg and Igor in Kiev.

The events in Kiev are described by the Chronicler in the following fragment, which has already been partly analyzed:

6390 (882). Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Chud, the Slovenes, the Meria and all the Krivichi. He thus arrived with his Krivichi before Smolensk, captured the city, and set up there his men. Thence he went on and captured Liubech, where he also set up his men. He then came to the hills of Kiev, and saw how Askold and Dir reigned (kniazhiata) there. He hid his warriors in the boats, left some others behind and went forward carrying the child Igor. He thus came to the foot of the ‘Ugorskoe’, and after concealing his troops, he sent messengers to Askold and Dir, representing himself as a merchant on his way to Greece on an errand for Oleg and for Igor, the prince’s son, and requesting that they should come forth to greet them as members of their race. Askold and Dir straightway came forth. Then all the soldiery jumped out of the boats, and Oleg said to Askold and Dir, “You are not princes nor even of princely stock, but I am of princely birth.” Igor was then brought forward and Oleg announced that he was the son of Rurik. They killed Askold and Dir, and after carrying them to the hill, they buried them there, on the hill now known as ‘Ugorskoe’... Oleg set himself up as prince of Kiev, and declared that it should be the mother of Rus burghs.28


In our opinion, the whole story of the arrival of the second wave of Ruses in Kiev should be treated as a reliable source of information. There is nothing which would create the impression that the episode is an invented legend. Askold and Dir died unheroic deaths; they were not brothers, as might have been expected in a legend. The ambush is very realistic and could have been performed by any Viking leader. The killing was justified by Oleg with the claim that Askold and Dir were not from the princely clan and had assumed princely functions illegally. In Germanic legal concepts, the prince was elective, but only in a specific clan. Even the episode of the little Igor’s being lifted in the arms of Oleg and shown to the Ruses in Kiev is a ceremonial from the Germanic tribal law. In fact, the presence of the child-prince on a war expedition is a Germanic tribal practice.\textsuperscript{29} In addition to identical cases in old Germanic legal literature, we even have a similar case presented by the Russian Primary Chronicle. We refer to the following episode:

6454 (946). Olga, together with her son Sviatoslav, gathered a large and valiant army, and proceeded to attack the land of the Derevliane. The latter came out to meet her troops, and when both forces were ready for combat, Sviatoslav cast his spear against the Derevliane. But the spear barely cleared the horse’s ears, and struck against his leg, for the prince was but a child. Then Sveinald and Asmund said, “The prince has already begun battle; press on, retainers, after the prince.”\textsuperscript{30}

It is rather improbable that the compiler of the Chronicle, a monk in Kiev, with Greek education and Slavic legal concepts would be capable of inventing a story of the capture of Kiev which cannot be challenged from any angle, be it historical, legal, or chronological.

We may now pose the question as to why the Ruses from Novgorod moved against Kiev. In our opinion, the decision was not a matter of choice, but of necessity.

There is some evidence on which to base our assumption that the Ruses were forced to leave Novgorod. Although the city was still the center for international trade between the Baltic and the East, and the Dnieper offered no special advantages, Oleg occupied and remained in Kiev. The Chronicler explicitly stated that it was \textit{only after the occupation of Kiev} that “Oleg began to build burghs and set up tributes to be paid to the Slovenes, the ‘Krivichi’ and the ‘Meria’. He commanded that Novgorod should pay the Varangians, i.e. to the foreign mercenaries in the Rus organization, tribute to the amount of 300 grivny a year for the \textit{preservation of peace}.”

In our opinion, the Ruses were, in reality, expelled from Novgorod and moved south, occupying Smolensk and Liubech, both cities on the

\textsuperscript{29} Jacob Grimm, \textit{Deutsche Rechtsaltermüter}, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1854), pp. 231, 232.

Dnieper, as they went along. In Kiev Oleg reorganized his forces and began the imposition of tributes. The Novgorodians were now exposed to renewed attempts by the Ruses to return to the city. The 300 grivny "for the preservation of peace" was exactly what the Chronicler intended to say. It was a payment to keep the Ruses out of the town. Such arrangements were made, for instance, between the Vikings and the kings of Germany and of England, and also between the Emperor of Byzantium and the various nomads of the steppes, as well as with the Rus princes themselves.

The next question might be: why were the Ruses expelled from Novgorod in the first place? Here we are forced to depend upon surmises, but the fact that 'Varangians' were expelled from Novgorod for stated causes also on other occasions seems to indicate that the expulsion, in this case, was also caused by abuses on the part of the Ruses. We have also to recall that the 'Dogovory' (treaties) between Rus and Byzantium, although listing several Rus cities, do not mention Novgorod, and, in fact, the Novgorodians themselves did not consider their city to be part of the land of Rus.31

We have to relate the expulsion of the Ruses from Novgorod and their arrival in Kiev to the chain of disturbances caused by the appearance of the Pechenegs on the Volga, all of which events happened around the year 880. The Khazars were involved in a war with the Pechenegs even before the latter crossed the Volga.32 By the year 885, the Proto-Hungarians had been forced by the Pechenegs to abandon their grazing lands east of the Dnieper. The disturbed conditions in the whole of Eastern Europe lasted from the late seventies of the ninth century to the end of the century. In 881, in the same year that the Pechenegs crossed the Volga, and probably in connection with that event, the 'Ungari' and 'Covari' were seen in Western Europe33 on a raid or, as is more likely, on an exploratory scouting expedition of a defeated nomadic federation.

Because of the appearance of the Pechenegs, the Volga waterway was, for a while, inaccessible to normal traffic. Trade contacts between the Khazars and the Arabs, as well as trade between the peoples of the Baltic and the Khazars, came to a standstill. The consequent, temporary idleness of the merchant-warrior Ruses in Novgorod was undoubtedly the cause of their expulsion. With their journey along the Dnieper to Kiev, the Ruses very likely hoped to open up new trade routes toward the East and the Byzantine Empire.

In this connection, we may recall the still obscure fragment of the arrival of Oleg in Kiev, reported only in some versions of the Old Rusian

11 Cf. Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis starshego i mladshego izvodov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), s.a. 6643 and 6657.
13 See above, p. 117.
Chronicles (e.g., Eremitsazhni Spisok, the Komissionnoi Spisok of the Novgorodian Chronicle, etc.). According to this fragment, Oleg and his retinue presented themselves to the Kievnians as a group of merchants. Here are the phrases used by the Chronicler: “iako gost esm Podugorski idem v Greki”, and “tvoriashchestia podugorskymi gostmi”.34

For our purpose, the proper interpretation of the term “podugorski” is of greatest importance. In the index of Volume 25 of the Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei, the editors offered the explanation that the term “podugorski” meant “merchants traveling on trade business to the Hungarian mountains and into Hungary”.35 This explanation is obviously an anachronism, because in 880 there was no Hungary nor were there any Hungarians in that territory. Besides, Oleg stated that their destination was Byzantium. Subject to linguistic confirmation, the explanation appears to be that Oleg pretended to be a merchant in the service of, or trading with, the Onogurs of the Steppe zone. It might also mean that he was using the Dnieper with the permission of the Onogurs.

There is a further conclusion to be drawn from this fragment: we may assume that Kiev under Askold and Dir was in friendly contact with the Onogurs and that Oleg expected his claim of Onogur connections to be respected.

The arrival of Oleg shifted the balance of power between the people of Kiev and the military organization of Ruses in favor of the latter, although the elimination of Askold and Dir and the assumption of the leadership by Oleg on behalf of the young Igor could have been initially construed by the Kievnians as only a change of guard, a palace revolution inside the Rus community. In reality, however, the changes were much more crucial.

Whereas the first twenty years of Ruso-Slavic cooperation in Kiev, between the years 860 and c. 880, was a period of reciprocal adjustments of two communities, both striving to maintain peaceful conditions in and around the city, the arrival of the Ruses under Oleg brought about, in the basin of the Dnieper, the imposition of a military regime and an age of extensive exploitation of the autochthonous population. The main income of the newly arrived Ruses was from slave trade, a fact which is amply illustrated by Muslim sources and by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.36

36 De administrando imperio, pp. 60-61. During the ninth and tenth centuries there was a considerable increase in the number of Saqaliba slaves in the Muslim lands, cf. Lewicki, Źródła arabskie, p. 94. The Russian Primary Chronicle reports under the year 1067 that Iziaslav, Sviatoslav and Vsevolod, sons of Iaroslav, captured Minsk, “put the men to the sword, sold the women and children into slavery”. For
The Ruses appeared in the southern part of Eastern Europe as rivals of the various nomadic tribal federations, both in pursuing trade with the Greeks and in military exploits. The presence of an aggressive military organization in Kiev shifted the whole political equilibrium in Eastern Europe, brought the 'Rus' danger closer to Byzantium and hastened the weakening of the Khazar Empire. Only the presence of the Majghari, Onogurs, ‘Kavaroi’ Pechenegs and finally of the Mongols, prevented the Ruses from establishing a base somewhere closer to the rich Byzantine cities. The presence of these Nomads also forced the heterogenous Ruses to remain in the basically Slavic-populated North, thus speeding up their total linguistic absorption by the autochthons.

a detailed study see T. Lewicki, “Osadnictwo słowiańskie i niewolnicy słowiańscy w krajach muzułmańskich według średniowiecznych pisarzy arabskich”, Przegląd Historyczny, XLIII (1952).
The Kievan state of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the end result of a long process. In the period between the seventh and ninth centuries, the Pax Chazarica created the conditions for a peaceful Slavic colonization of large areas of Eastern Europe and for the consolidation of Slavic tribal state formations such as those of the Polanians and the Derevlians. The advantages offered by international trade facilitated the economic growth of the whole region.

The Slavic tribal state formations in Eastern Europe at that time were basically at the stage of a semi-patriarchal society, where the authority and administration were exercised by the assembly of elders, the veche, or by the tribal princes and their councils.

The movements of the Onogurs, Northmen, Majghari, and Pechenegs during the ninth century in various regions of Eastern Europe, however, also created the necessity of increased defensive measures both on the part of the Khazars and of various Slavic tribal state formations. In the case of the Slavs, new state formations came to the fore, such as those of the Radimichi and the Viatichi. These, and probably other formations, were no longer ‘tribal’ and patriarchal, but, rather, centered around a leader and his military retinue.

Furthermore, as a result of the mass movements of nomads and the inroads of the Vikings from the West, the economically-important waterways of Eastern Europe had to be protected by military force. Both the Scandinavian merchants, originally known as Ruses, and the population of the Ilmen region were interested in occupying strategically important portages and trading centers. Similar were the aims of the Khazars and nomads. The commercial communities of the Ilmen region attempted to base their security upon mercenary troops under Scandinavian leadership. The experiment with Rurik and his mercenaries failed and the Rus, or druzhina, were expelled from Novgorod. The leader of the Rus, the Rurikide prince, moved to Kiev. Thus, from the three Rus centers known to Muslim authors there remained only one: the center in Kiev.

Kiev itself and the land of the Polanians passed in a short period of time from independent status to dependence upon the Khazars and, soon
afterwards, came under the control of the Ruses of Askold and Dir. The Rus leaders, expelled from Novgorod, usurped the prerogatives of Askold and Dir and probably maintained the relations with the population of the city and of the land of the Polanians as established by the first Ruses. Around this core began the formation of the Rus nation and of the medieval Kievan state.

During the last decades of the ninth century and the larger part of the tenth century there was not yet any organized cooperation between the princely House of Rurik, which based its power on the military retinue, and the autochthonous population represented by local princes and the veche. This dualism of authority, however, did not exclude the participation of the Slavic and Finno-Ugric elements in the services of the Rurikides, nor did it prevent Varangians, i.e., foreigners from the West, from pursuing independent trade activities among the Eastern Slavs without formal membership in the princely retinue.

A closer cooperation between the Prince and the local self-government emerged only very slowly and was based on the dangers faced simultaneously by the Prince and by the population as represented through the veche. But instances of cooperation were neither the result of solidarity nor of a joint long-range policy. They were usually last-minute solutions to divert a danger faced by both socio-political formations.

As time went on, the gulf between the two centers of authority in Kievan Rus slowly diminished at the expense of the democratic self-government, although, at the same time, the princely family and the boyars were being assimilated by the Slavic majority. The retinue, the druzhina, remained for several centuries a heterogenous organization, in which, in addition to autochthons, the Varangians continued to play an important role. It also became customary to hire nomads as auxiliary mercenary troops. But such was the basic pattern of military organizations elsewhere in Europe also. The originally Nordic leadership of the ‘Druzhina’ became more and more heterogenous and finally Slavic, since replacements could not always be made from overseas.

The strongest element in changing the pattern of the Rurikide rule was the pressure of the Pechenegs, Kumans and Mongols. Instead of following an aggressive policy of expansion and exploitation, the princes were forced to organize themselves for defense at any price and to seek the cooperation of the population. As a result of this development, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the interests of the already-Slavicized princes and of the autochthonous population became more interdependent and a feeling of national solidarity began to evolve. In this process of the formation of the nation, the Church also played an important role.

The role of the nomads in the earliest history of Eastern Europe was complex, and to hold that their influence was either positive or negative
would be as absurd as to assert that the Northmen were decisive in the creation of the Kievan state. History is a complex interplay of events, and any attempt to reduce the causes of a development to only one factor or to eliminate the possible interplay of other factors is to deny that a historian's obligation is to attempt as nearly as possible to restore the past as it was.

The nomads, as well as the Northmen, the Western Slavs, the Greeks, and many other peoples, played a role in the history of Kievan Rus, as they did throughout the whole history of Russia. The Northmen were never fully masters of the situation in Eastern Europe. Their freedom of action was much more restricted by outside factors than the freedom of action of the autochthonous population. Similarly, the nomads could not avoid dispersion or absorption by the people of the surrounding areas. But both the nomads and the Northmen, on occasion, speeded up or slowed down the internal developments of the various groups of the population of Eastern Europe.
A. GEOGRAPHIC, ETHNIC AND PERSONAL NAMES

Wherever convenient, the same entry is used for a country and its population, e.g. Byzantium – Byzantine Greeks; Khazars – Khazar Khaganate. No entries are made for Nomads, Northmen, Slavs, Eastern Europe.

Alans, 41, 59, 61, 67, 84 f, 91 f, 95 f, 99, 113
Andalusia, al-Andalus, 29, 81 f, 85, 99
Andrew, St., 20-23
Angles, 103, 105 f
Antes, 40, 43
Arabs, 26, 29, 41, 59 ff, 69, 114-117, 127
Armenia, 115 f
Artha, 101; see also Erza
Arthania, 15
Asia Minor, 20, 72
Askold, 32, 118-122, 125 f, 128, 131
Asmund, 126
Avars, 14, 40-47, 53 ff, 61, 64, 68 f, 77-80, 83-86, 92, 96 f
Azov, Sea of, 28 f, 37, 40, 77, 83, 104; see also Maeotis

Bagdad, Baghdad, 25, 28, 86, 115; see also Caliphate of Baghdad
Balkan Peninsula, 40, 70, 85, 121
Baltic Sea, 22 f, 25, 28, 29 f, 34, 37, 69, 98, 100, 111, 118, 126 f
Bashkirs, Baskirs, 61, 83, 93
Bela Vezha, Belaia Vezha, 66, 71; see also Sarkel
Beloozero, Belo-ozero, 103, 111, 118
Black Sea, 20 ff, 24 ff, 28, 31, 37, 39 ff, 72 f, 75, 77, 89, 114, 116, 118
Bulgari, City on the Volga, 62, 114
Bulgars, 40 f, 59 f, 72, 81, 86, 90; see also Burgan/Burjan, Burgar/Burjar

Bulgars, Danubian, 25, 40-44, 53 f, 61, 77-84
Bulgars on the Kuban River, 84
Burgan/Burjan, Burgar/Burjar, 81-86; see also Bulgars
Burtas, Burtases, 41, 60 f, 65 f
Byzantium, 11, 13, 18-34, 40 f, 61, 69-72, 78, 82 ff, 86, 90, 93, 108, 115, 121 f, 124 f, 127 ff, 132; see also Rüm, Rümija

Caliphate of Baghdad, 25, 69, 86, 115 f; see also Bagdad
Camaterus: see Petronas Camaterus
Carolingian Empire, 24, 69
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