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## THE STATELESS NOMADS OF EARLY MEDIEVAL CENTRAL EURASIA\*

### *States and statelessness among the nomads of Central Eurasia*

Vasilij Bartol'd (W. Barthold), referencing Radlov's observations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Qazaqs<sup>1</sup>, long ago observed that nomads, normally "do not strive for political unification". Most of their needs, in that regard, are handled within the traditional order of clan and inter-clan relations, without any formal, overarching "apparatus of power". They form states only when "khans", under "favorable" and "exceptional" circumstances, are able to seize power often as the consequence of prolonged struggle. Un-appointed and unelected, the *xan* reconciles his subjects to the new order through the acquisition and redistribution of booty gained from military campaigns, combined with plundering expeditions, usually directed against sedentary society or their nomadic neighbors. Thus, continuing, successful warfare, the acquisition of booty, in particular "prestige" goods, and their redistribution to followers and underlings, were essential to the maintenance of khal authority<sup>2</sup>. The pastoral nomadic economy did not require a supreme authority beyond clan chiefs or "big men" nor a bureaucracy to function efficiently<sup>3</sup>. The dissatisfied always had the possibility, at least in theory, to

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<sup>1</sup> Radlov, 1893: 67-74, concluded that the powerbrokers of Qazaq society were the *biys* whose authority was based on personal wealth and / or hereditary position. Given favorable circumstances, a powerful *biy*, with his supporters could make himself a *xan*, a position obtained by "usurpation" and maintained by force as long as those who recognized him were able to derive some advantage for themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Bartol'd, 1968: 22-23. See also Fletcher, 1979-1980: 237-238. Kradin, 2002: 375-376.

<sup>3</sup> See Kradin, 2002: 372; Kradin, 2005: 151-153.

decamp for greener pastures or more generous chieftains<sup>4</sup>. Leaders of nomadic groups, appearing under a number of titles, could be deposed for actions that were deemed unfavorable, for changes of fortune (e.g. climate changes that produced disasters) or simply for being in office too long. Internecine strife was common<sup>5</sup>. Leadership on the local and higher (even imperial) levels was fragile and frequently contested<sup>6</sup>. In short, the default position for the nomads of Central Eurasia was most often statelessness<sup>7</sup>.

Eurasian nomadic socio-political organizations consisted of clans and tribes<sup>8</sup> (subdivided into various branches) and were often part of hierarchical tribal unions / supra-tribal confederacies. At the higher level, i.e. that of the tribal union or confederacy, they were often of complex, heterogeneous origins containing groups that linguistically and ethnically differed from one another. Ruling elites

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<sup>4</sup> The practicalities of doing so, which invariably meant infringing on the pastures of others, could make such moves more difficult (see de Crespigny, 1984: 179-180. Movement most often may have meant shifting from one *aul* or the authority of one *beg / bey / biy* to another within the same larger clan or tribal grouping. On the complexity of the rights of clans and individuals to land and water among the Qazaqs, see Masanov, 2011: 418-444. Battles for pastures, resulting from climate disasters or the displacements caused by other peoples, were not uncommon and could produce political reconfigurations. Incursions into the pasturages of another required compensation. Once Russian rule was established in Qazaq and Qırğız lands, Russian authorities frequently had to settle squabbles over lands rights (Grodekov, 2011: 99-102).

<sup>5</sup> See Taskin, 1984: 29-30, drawing on a variety of Chinese accounts. Even the Khazar sacral qağan could be toppled for similar reasons, see Golden, 2007: 167-169.

<sup>6</sup> In the Türk Qağanate, as the *Suishu* notes, family feuds pitting brother against brother and deep mistrust for one another was typical of the ruling stratum (Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, I: 46-47). This was true of tribal unions as well (Taskin, 1984: 29-30, drawing on a variety of Chinese accounts). *Xans* or other leaders could be deposed for missteps, changes of fortune (e.g. drought / famine-producing climate changes) or simply for being in office too long. Charisma could have temporal limits, Khazanov, 1984: 167-169: “nomadic chiefdoms are usually extremely unstable ... their leadership is diffuse and decentralized and their composition fluid and impermanent” (p. 169). Even in the Türk Qağanate, as the *Suishu* notes, family feuds pitting family members against one another and deep mistrust for one another was typical of the ruling stratum (see Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, I: pp. 46-47; Golden, 2007: 167-169).

<sup>7</sup> Golden, 1991: 135-136; Perdue, 2002: 373, notes that the nomads, given their “dispersed resources” and the need for empire-builders “to accumulate wealth through trade, tribute, or plunder from neighboring agrarian states”, had “only brief moments of unification”. Perdue also underscores the “tribal rivalries and fragmentation” that were typical of the pastoral nomads. As a consequence, resources for empire building had to be acquired from outside the steppe, see also Perdue, 2005: 520. One should add here that expansion beyond the steppe had to be prefaced by the unification of sufficient forces within the steppe that would make such expansion possible.

<sup>8</sup> “Clan” and “tribe” have become hotly contested terms in Anthropology and definitions vary. Baştuğ, 1998: 97-98, comments that “clan” is “haphazardly applied to any sort of group which seems to be defined in kinship terms”, its members claim “a common ancestor, but do not specify the genealogical connections to that ancestor”. Genealogies, in turn, do not necessarily reflect biological or historical realia. They are “socially constructed” and are “subject to a continual process of contestation, negotiation and redefinition”. Tribes do not fare much better. They are “flexible, adaptive and highly variable”. Moreover, “tribalism” was / is a “dynamic” not a “static social form”; one, which “undergoes and generates a range of social transformations over varying time scales” (Szuchman 2009, 4-5). Tribes arose, it has been argued, in among peoples on the borderlands of states in reaction to the latter. They were, thus, “secondary phenomena” (Fried, 1967: 168-170, Fried, 1970: 10, 30, 49, 52). On the question of “tribe” among the Pre-Çinggisid Mongols, see Atwood, 2010: 63-89. On shifting applications of the term “tribe” to nomadic peoples in medieval Chinese historiography, see Togan, 2015: 88-118.

did not necessarily speak the same language as some of their “confederated” tribes<sup>9</sup>. Over time, the ethno-linguistic components associated with a particular ethnonym could change. In effect, these were highly fluid political entities, whose names, or the names by which they become known in our sources, were influenced by external as well as internal factors. Politically, ethnyonyms had a certain malleability<sup>10</sup>. Political cohesion, when achievable, was based on ideologies promoted by the ruling clan<sup>11</sup>, kinship, real and fictive<sup>12</sup>, and successful military action that secured pastures and access to goods from the outside world.

Nomadic polities rarely met the traditional criteria of “statehood”<sup>13</sup>. In principle, a “nomadic state” should consist primarily of nomads, organized into “ruling and subordinate strata”. However, sedentary societies that have been conquered by nomads and in which nomads held political power or the ruling dynasty was of nomadic origin have also been termed “nomadic states”<sup>14</sup>. The terminology for the former and the latter varies. Barfield has posited the “imperial confederacy” as “the most stable form of nomadic state” in Eurasia, “autocratic and statelike in foreign affairs, but consultative and federally structured internally”<sup>15</sup>. Nomadic political organization, the expansion into empires or empire-like structures, he argued mirrored that of their opposition: China. Barfield terms them “shadow” or “mirror empires”, which rose and fell in consonance with the fortunes of the Chinese realms to their south<sup>16</sup>. This consonance, however, was not always present<sup>17</sup>. Kradin, terms them “super-complex chiefdoms” or “xenocracies” sometimes with imperial functions, but lacking bureaucracies and a monopoly by the ruling elite of the use of force<sup>18</sup>. Di Cosmo, summing up his views on the Xiongnu polity, argues that whether defined as a state or a super-complex chiefdom, the Xiongnu realm was an empire in that it brought under its authority lands that had not been part of its original core or “ethnic” territory and “a variety of peoples ... that may have had different types of relations with the imperial center, constituted by the imperial clan and its charismatic leader”<sup>19</sup>. In brief, nomadic “empires” differ from those of their contemporaries in the period under discussion in that they may be viewed as “stateless”, according to traditional definitions of “state”, but exercised state-like, imperial functions over more than their core groupings. Whether these state-

<sup>9</sup> Johanson, 2006: 163.

<sup>10</sup> Janhunen, 1996: 25: “Most ethnic groups have several ethnyonyms, and the ethnyonym used for a given ethnic group in historical records is normally based on some name by which it was once known to its neighbors”. Geary, 2002: 118: “Names were “renewable resources. They held the potential to convince people of continuity, even if radical discontinuity was the lived reality”. The ethnyonym *Türk* became a politonym, becoming “coextensive” with the areas and peoples under *Türk* rule (Ecsedy, 1972: 247). See also Pohl, 1991: 39-49.

<sup>11</sup> Turchin, 2009: 196-197. Whether these were based on imposed or adopted “nuclei of tradition” (*Traditionskern*) associated with a ruling house or clan (cf. Wolfram, 1988: 5-6) or not remains a much-debated subject, see the critical survey of the *Traditionskern* model by Murray: 39-68.

<sup>12</sup> Khazanov, 1984: 138-144; Barfield, 1990: 165.

<sup>13</sup> On the thorny question of “state”, see the survey of definitions in Scheidel, 2013: 5-57. The various criteria involve “demarcated” borders, an organized government with delineated institutions, i.e. a bureaucracy, a legal system and a monopoly (perhaps more a desideratum than a reality) over the means of violence. On nomads and statehood, see Scheidel, 2011: 111-120; Kradin, 2002: 372.

<sup>14</sup> Khazanov, 1984: 228.

<sup>15</sup> Barfield, 1989: 8.

<sup>16</sup> Barfield, 2001: 10, 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Turchin, 2009: 194.

<sup>18</sup> Kradin, 2007: 141-145, Kradin, 2011: 77-96 and Kradin, 2004: 506, 513.

<sup>19</sup> Di Cosmo, 2011: 45.

like polities / “xenocracies” / “empires” were “secondary formations” responding to threats from neighboring empires or arose from the need to gain access to the goods of the sedentary world, often by intimidation or conquest, or from internal crises, remains a debated question<sup>20</sup>. In reality, all of these factors could coexist and are not mutually exclusive.

Dynamic warlords, in a process of superstratification, were usually the founders of these states, conquering their nomadic neighbors and rivals, before turning their attention to the settled lands. Their clans became charismatic ruling clans, some of considerable longevity (e.g. the Ašina among the Türks, the Činggisids from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). They raided settled lands, but usually did not occupy them. Nomadic states sometimes achieved populations (including subjects) running into the millions, but retaining control over their nomadic subjects remained problematic, even more so when the ruling core considered some forms of urbanization or shifted its political center to conquered sedentary realms. As noted previously, constant military success and the redistribution of war booty and tribute among the core tribes (at the least) played a key role in maintaining political cohesion<sup>21</sup>. The process of conquest could unfold in an often relatively brief period of time. Consolidation proved to be more problematic and these states tended to be fissiparous. The history of the Seljuks or Tamerlane (Aqsaq Temür, Tīmūr-i Lang) and his successors illustrate these points<sup>22</sup>.

“Statehood” was always embryonic among the nomads. After the Xiongnu, there were traditions of state-like organization on which the nomads could draw. In essence, nomads moved along a scale ranging from structurally loose, acephalous tribal unions (often containing a number of leading clans, but no supreme leader)<sup>23</sup> to state-like confederations or states according to the nature of the “opposition” or problems of interaction and access to goods that they encountered with their sedentary state neighbors<sup>24</sup>. China was the major catalyst for state formation in the Eurasian

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<sup>20</sup> See Bartol’d, 1963-77, V: 23; Khazanov, 1984: 229-230; Di Cosmo, 1994: 1092-1126; Di Cosmo, 1999: 1-40; Di Cosmo, 2002: 128 ff., 178-181. A brief overview of the differing viewpoints can be found in the “Introduction” of Amitai and Biran 2005: 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Déer, 1938: 10-16; Fried, 1967: p. 232; Fletcher, 1979-1980: 237-238; Christian, 1998: 51, 54, 58.

<sup>22</sup> Bašan, 2010 and Manz, 1989.

<sup>23</sup> The Pečenegs and Cuman-Qıpçaqs, among others, are typical examples, see Tryjarski, 1975: 479-616; Golden, 1992: 264-282; Spinei, 2003: 93-159, 217-301. This is somewhat different from the notion of “headless states,” proposed by Sneath, 2007: 1-2 et passim, which does away with “kinship society” and privileges “aristocratic power” that produced “statelike features” of governance “a configuration of statelike power formed by the horizontal relations between power holders, rather than as a result of their mutual subordination to a political center”.

<sup>24</sup> Khazanov, 1984: 228 ff., Kradin, 2004: 504; Trepavlov, 1995: 144-151. On the various forms of nomadic polity, see Vasjutin, 2003: 50-62; Perdue, 2005: 518. Barfield, 1989: 5-9, advanced the thesis that nomadic states rose and fell “in tandem” with strong and weak ruling houses in China. A strong and hence economically prosperous China, he argues, provided the necessary stimulus for the development of powerful nomadic states. These were “shadow empires” (Barfield, 2011: 10-41). This thesis had found its critics, see Drompp, 2005: 101-111 and Turchin, 2009: 192-200. Indeed, one could argue a position opposite to that of Barfield: a weak China encouraged the nomads to create a strong force (a state) to take advantage of the situation. Pritsak, 1981: 13, 16-19, accented the role of international merchants as catalysts in state formation in the Eurasian steppe and concluded that a nomad-based state “always developed in response to the challenge of sedentary society”.

steppes<sup>25</sup>. No such catalyst existed in the western steppe zone. Iran rarely projected its power into the steppelands; Byzantium even less so and preferring to exert influence via short-termed alliances and *ententes* with steppe powers (the Oğuric tribes, Sabirs, Khazars, Pečenegs, Cumans). Kievan Rus' (later half of 9<sup>th</sup> century to ca. 1240), the only force on the western Eurasian steppe zone, periodically capable of projecting its power into the lands of the nomads, after having dealt a serious blow to the Pečenegs (1036) and the western Oğuz (1060s), itself fragmented and never provided requisite catalyst needed for state formation among the Cumans<sup>26</sup>.

It was only with the conquest of sedentary state societies that the nomads, in the post-Türk imperial era (after 742/3 in eastern Central Eurasia and after 766 in the central zone of Central Eurasia), imposing a kind of carapace of their political traditions upon the already existing governing traditions of the conquered<sup>27</sup>, took on many of the features of more traditional, sedentary states. The Qitan (Liao dynasty, 916-1125) in northern China, the Qaraxanids (992-1212) in southern central Inner Asia and the Seljuks (1040-1194 in Iran, Iraq and Syria, 1071-1307 in Anatolia) typify this kind of state evolution among the nomads. The Mongol Empire, the fullest articulation of the nomad-based state imposed on already existing empires and monarchies (China, Iran, Rus', Georgia), did much to break up the older, tribe, tribal-confederation-based system, including their own highly complex society<sup>28</sup>. Our evidence for the pre-Činggisid era is sparse in comparison with what followed. The nomadic "states" of the pre-Činggisid era only infrequently speak for themselves (e.g. the Türk, Uyğur and Qırğız runiform inscriptions) and the "stateless" tribes are silent.

#### *Terminology and the Shaping of Peoples*

Definitions are a problem. The *ἔθνη*, *gentes*, *nationes* and that appear in the Graeco-Latin sources of Late Antiquity – early Middle Ages have become the subject of an interesting and ongoing debate among Western medievalists<sup>29</sup>. No less complicated are the terms *jins*<sup>30</sup>, *jil*<sup>31</sup>, *qawm*<sup>32</sup> and

<sup>25</sup> Turchin, 2009: 197-199, in tallying up the zones of empire formation, concludes that the northern Chinese-steppe borderlands constituted the greatest center of "imperiogenesis". The nomads and China, in response to each other, created ever larger politico-military units in an "autocatalytic process" each side providing "feedback loops with causality flowing in both directions".

<sup>26</sup> Golden, 1987-1991; Golden, 1991; Turchin, 2009: 211.

<sup>27</sup> Khazanov, 1984: 230-263, discusses the various forms of organization that "nomadic statehood" adopted.

<sup>28</sup> Golden, 2000: 21-41; Morgan, 2007: 34, 79.

<sup>29</sup> See Gillet, 2002; Garipzanov, Geary, Urbańczyk, 2008. See also the challenge (on occasion misguided in my view) to the notions of "clan" and "tribe" in Inner Asia, Sneath, 2007. When comparing seemingly similar structures, care has to be taken to first understand the cultural baggage that informs and shapes the observer's perceptions, see M-ch. Poo, 2005: 12-18, 20-22.

<sup>30</sup> "Kind, sort, variety, species ... race; nation" (Cowan, 1994: 167); "rod, sort, kategorija" (Polosin, 1995: 95); "genus, kind, or generical class, comprising under it several species" (Lane, 1968) I/2: 470). Often translated as "tribe", *jins* really means "kind" or "sort", e.g. *jins min al-turk* "a kind / variety of the Turks".

<sup>31</sup> "Nation, people, race, tribe, or family of mankind ... such as the Turks and the Greeks and the Chinese" (Lane, 1968, I/2: 494).

<sup>32</sup> "A people, or body of persons composing a community ... kinsfolk ... tribe" (Lane, 1968, I/8: 2996), "Peuplade, tribu, peuple" (Kazimirski, 1860, II: 840), "certain nombre de personnes réunies, qui sont du même rang, groupe" (Dozy, 1968, II: 432); "Ijudi, plemja, sorodiči" (Polosin, 1995: 408).

*qabila*<sup>33</sup> of the medieval Arabo-Persian geographical literature dealing with nomadic Eurasia<sup>34</sup>, and Chinese terms such as *xing* 族 “clan”, *bu* 部 and *buluo* 部落, the latter two rendered as “tribe” in modern Chinese but denoting “tribe” and “tribal segments” respectively in Middle Chinese<sup>35</sup>. Complicating the imprecision of terminology is the frequent shifting of “tribal” groups, giving them an almost kaleidoscopic quality. The nomads seemed to be in constant motion<sup>36</sup>. Their “super-tribal unions” / tribal confederations comprised numbers ranging from the low thousands to 100,000<sup>37</sup>. Needless to say, population estimates for mobile populations that were rarely understood and viewed with varying degrees of prejudice by their neighbors who wrote about them, are at best, “guesstimates”.

Another complicating factor about the peoples of the imperial “tribal zones” is their internecine strife, fractionation and reconfiguration<sup>38</sup>. Neighboring sedentary states intervened, intrigued and promoted internal discord, especially among rival claimants in the ruling houses. Han China’s relations with the Xiongnu and those of the Sui and Tang dynasties with the Türks and some of their more recalcitrant subject tribes are replete with accounts of attempts at *divide et impera* – or at least intrigues to keep the nomads off balance. Beyond that, the offer or withholding of economic ties and an occasionally active marital diplomacy could also be used to keep the nomads more amenable to China<sup>39</sup>.

The costs of direct military engagement against the nomads in the steppes were high<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “Tribe”, cf. Polosin, 1995: 383, “plemja”; Kazimirski, 1860: 668, “tribu (chez les peuples nomades)”. *Qabila*, when referring to a specific subgrouping can denote “subtribe”, and is sometimes used “synonymously” with *batn* “branch”.

<sup>34</sup> See Dankoff, 1972: 23-43.

<sup>35</sup> Togan, 2015: 88, 90, 93, 96-97, 100-107. Meanings and nuance changed over time and with the dynasties under whose aegis the dynastic histories were written.

<sup>36</sup> Baştuğ, 1999: 77-109; Golden, 2001: 21-24. Cf. the musings of Agathias, 1967: 176-177, about the “Huns” (Οὐννοι) who formerly lived east of the Sea of Azov and north of the Don (Τάναϊς) and “other Barbarian peoples”: “...all of them in general are called Scythians and Huns, but individually according to their tribes (γένη), such as Κοτρίγυροι and Οὐτίγυροι. Others are Οὐλίτζυροι and others yet are Βουρούγουνδοι and others (are called) as has become customary and usual for them. After many generations they crossed into Europe ... but they were destined to remain not for long, but to disappear, as they say, root and branch. Thus, the Οὐλίτζυροι and the Βουρούγουνδοι were known up to the time of the Emperor Leo [Leo I, 457-474] and the Romans of that time and appeared to have been strong. We, however, in this day, neither know them, nor, I think, will we. Perhaps, they have perished or perhaps they have moved off to very far places”. Agathias’ *History* covers the period 552-559 (he died ca. 580), see Kazhdan 1991, I: 35-36.

<sup>37</sup> Christian, 1998: 58. According to Christian, tribes had populations ranging from 500 to the 1000s, nomadic empires ranged from the 100,000s to millions. Pritsak’s “tentative estimation” of a population of “2.8 to 3 million” for the stateless Pečeneg confederation (Pritsak, 1975: 226-227), is perhaps overdrawn. The Pečenegs dominated parts of the Pontic steppes from the mid-9th century to 1036 and then troubled Byzantium’s Danubian frontier until their massive defeat in 1092 (Golden, 1992: 264-270).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the post-Türk Oğuz polity (led by a *yabğū*, an old Inner Asian title of probable Chinese origin, see Appendix and Clauson, 1972: 873), whose 22-24 subunits frequently fought one another (Pritsak, 1952: 279-292; Sümer, 1980: 52-59, 140-141, 202 ff.; Golden, 1992: 205-211; *Hudūd*, 1962: 87; Minorsky, 1971: 101). The pre-Činggisid Tatar union, among others, was also prone to internal strife (Rašid ad-Dīn, 1994, I: 76).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. the *heqin* policy of the Han with the Xiongnu, see Yü, 1967: 10-13, 36-43; Pan, 1997: 100-107; Skaff, 2012: 203 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Barfield, 1989: 56-57, calculates that the Han campaign of 119 BCE against the Xiongnu consumed “half of the treasury’s annual receipts”.

and perilous. Momentary military triumphs rarely resolved the problem of nomadic raiding. The Byzantines were loath to venture beyond the Danube and never launched a campaign into the steppe zone<sup>41</sup>. It was much more cost efficient to employ the time-honored techniques of pitting one nomad grouping against another, a policy followed by China as well – with considerable success<sup>42</sup>. Nomad state formation or “imperiogenesis”, in the period of interest to us – when it occurred – tended to do so in close interaction with China<sup>43</sup>. Nomad-based states in the western steppes (the European Huns – if they can be classified as a state – the European Avars, the Western Türks and the Khazar empire, which emerged at the end of the period under consideration), all had roots in the East.

*Stateless Nomadic Polities*

It is in connection with the rise of the Xiongnu 匈奴 “empire” under Modun 冒頓 (r. 209-174 BCE) and the expansion of his power to some of the neighboring peoples to the north, in particular the Dingling 丁靈 (later called Tiele, see below) and Gekun 隔昆 (the early Qırğız)<sup>44</sup> both of which are subsequently clearly demarcated as Turkic-speakers<sup>45</sup>. Dingling groupings extended from Lake Baikal – Northern Mongolia to the Irtysh River region and the Qırğız were on the Yenisei<sup>46</sup>. These conquests in part consolidated Modun’s usurpation of authority<sup>47</sup>. The question of Xiongnu ethno-linguistic affiliations is unresolved. Yeneseic / Kettic, Turkic and Iranian have all been suggested<sup>48</sup>. The relationship of the Xiongnu to the European Huns, long a matter of scholarly dispute, is important to an understanding of the stateless nomadic polities that become noticeable in the course of the Hunnic era and its immediate aftermath. Many of the most recent considerations of

<sup>41</sup> Byzantine military manuals of the era contains sections on how to do battle with the “Scythians”, i.e. Avars, Turks and other “Hunnic” peoples, that are well-informed regarding the nomads’ *ars militaria*, cf. the *Stratigikon* (XI.2) attributed to the Emperor Maurice (582-602) and probably written in the late 5th – early 6th century (Maurice, 1970: 268-274; Maurice, 1984: 116-118). The perspective, however, appears to be defensive, rather than offensive.

<sup>42</sup> Yang, 1970: 33 (“fighting barbarians with barbarians”); Whittow, 1996: 48-52; see also Vasil’evskij, 1908, I: 1-117, a classic study of Byzantium’s relationship with the Pečenegs.

<sup>43</sup> Golden, 1982: 37-76 and Golden, 1987-1991: 41-81; see broad discussion in Turchin, 2009: 191-217.

<sup>44</sup> For the Han-era and Middle Chinese reconstructions of these names, see Appendix A. The Qırğır / Qırğız were, perhaps, a Palaeo-Siberian people under Turkic leadership who were in the process of Turkicization. Qırğız ethnogenesis is particularly complex. See discussion in Pulleyblank, 1990: 98-108, Pulleyblank, 2000: 72-73; Golden, 1992: 143, 176-179, 404-406; Janhunen, 1996: 186; Karaev, Žusupov, 1996.

<sup>45</sup> Sima Qian, 1993, II: 138, 140; *Hanshu*, 2004: 9, 14; Golden, 1992: 61, 94-95. Maenchen-Helfen, 1939: 77-86 has a useful summary of the data, perhaps somewhat dated in some of its conclusions. See the lengthy discussion in Ögel, 1981, I: 201 ff. of Modun’s career. On the Turkic connections of the Dingling and Qırğız, see Pulleyblank, 1983: 454-456.

<sup>46</sup> Krjukov, Perelomov, Sofronov, Čeboksarov, 1983: 62-63; Czeglédy, 1983: 62-64, 113; Yü 1990: 120; Di Cosmo, 2002: 189, Borovkova, 2001: 47-48. There were also Dingling groupings in northern China (Pulleyblank, 2000: 79). On the Qırğız, see Bartol’d, 1968: 40-42; Golden, 1992: 177-178.

<sup>47</sup> Sima Qian, 1993, II: 138.

<sup>48</sup> See Ligeti, 1950: 141-188; Pulleyblank, 1962: 206-265 (especially Appendix “The Hsiung-nu Language” 239-265). Pulleyblank, 1986: 29-71 (translation of Pulleyblank, 1962) contains some newer readings of Xiongnu forms. See also Pulleyblank, 2000: 62-65. Janhunen, 1996: 185-189, views them as “dominated by speakers of Pre-Proto-Bulgharic”. Bailey, 1982: 91-92; Bailey 1985: 25-41; Harmatta, 1997: 159-173, consider them Iranian. Vovin, 2000: 87-104, revives earlier Yeneseic theories. Horváth, 2007: 63-67, argues for Turkic, rebutted by Zieme, 2011: 37-52. Kljaštornyj, 2001: 49, suggests that the Xiongnu were not Altaic, but Turkic-speakers may have been the predominant linguistic grouping in their confederation.

the material argue for a Xiongnu-Hun connection<sup>49</sup>. What we can say with some certainty is that Han China, and its steppe allies (especially the Xianbei), defeated major groupings of the Xiongnu in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and 1<sup>st</sup> and mid-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE. Each of these defeats appears to have precipitated a series of migrations of Xiongnu groupings and some of their subject peoples westward<sup>50</sup>, a pattern in Turkic history that would be repeated throughout the Middle Ages. De la Vaissière, based on notices in the *Weishu* (551-554) and *Tongdian*<sup>51</sup>, posits a series of migrations of tribes living in the foothills of the Altay, heirs of the Northern Xiongnu and still maintaining a Xiongnu “political identity”, to Transoxiana and the Volga in the 350s-360s<sup>52</sup>. De la Vaissière’s data, however, does not exclude earlier movements of “Hunnic” peoples westward. According to Czeglédý and Harmatta, the Northern Xiongnu / Huns were already penetrating Central Eurasia before the 40s BCE. These numbers increased after a Northern Xiongnu defeat in 91 CE that brought them to Jungaria, the Ili River zone, South Kazakhstan and Kangju (康居)<sup>53</sup>, with others following from East Turkistan to Kangju in 158. The Xianbei (see below) then occupied their lands in East Turkistan in 166. Kangju, including Sogdiana, came under the Xiongnu / Xyôn / Chionitae until 370. The movement of what became the Hephthalites ca. 350, perhaps under pressure from the kindred Avars / War-Huns or part of their expansion, divided these Xiongnu; one grouping moved westward to the Volga<sup>54</sup>, setting the stage for the European Huns.

In the western steppe zone, the Huns were raiders, military hirelings and generally troublesome neighbors. Whether they actually formed a state may be debated. Under Attila, they had a number of proto-urban settlements, a stratified society and office of governance, albeit only dimly discerned<sup>55</sup>. Attila’s polity threatened the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire. He was a “nuisance,” but never a mortal danger<sup>56</sup>. The extent of his realm is uncertain. He held Pannonia and some adjoining regions (e.g. “Scythia Minor”, i.e. the Dobrudja zone) and had Slavic, Germanic and doubtless other “subjects” over which varying degrees of authority were exercised, but it is not clear that he was master of all the “Hunnic” peoples. After his death in 453, the union, dependent on his

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<sup>49</sup> Czeglédý, 1983: 32-35, 62 ff., 85 ff.; Érdy, 1995: 5-94; Wright, 1997: 77-112; Harmatta, 1997: 159-173; Pulleyblank, 2000: 60; De la Vaissière, 2005: 3-26. The current trends in Xiongnu studies, in particular the archaeological evidence, can be seen in the studies collected in Brosseder, Miller, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> See Czeglédý, 1983: 34, 92-97; Harmatta, 1997: 164-167; Pulleyblank, 2000: 59-60; Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 36-37.

<sup>51</sup> The *Weishu* authored by Wei Shou (d. 572, covering the period 386-550), compiled 551-554 and the *Tongdian* by Du You (732-812), published in 801, see Wilkinson, 2012: 626, 646.

<sup>52</sup> De la Vaissière, 2005: 21-23. They played a key role in the shaping of the Chionites and Hephthalites.

<sup>53</sup> OC *kʰaj ka*, LH *kʰaj kia* (Schuessler, 2009: 77 [3-12h], 46 [1-1c’]) = Iranian *Kangha*, *Kang*, Turk. *K(ä)ngü* = Middle Syr Darya – Talas – Ču – Taškent oasis (Kljaštornyj, 1964: 171-175). Hill, 2009: 33, 171-184, 238, based on the *Hanshu*, describes it as “the Talas Basin, Tashkent and Sogdiana”. In the Tang era, the latter was meant, see Stark, 2009: 8-9, 37 ff. After 91 CE, the Xianbei occupied the Northern Xiongnu territories and became a threat to China (Yü, 1986: 443-444).

<sup>54</sup> Czeglédý, 1983: 99-101; Harmatta, 1997: 166-169.

<sup>55</sup> Maenchen-Helfen, 1973: 190-198; Nikonorov, 2010: 281-282 for the various terms used for Hunnic commanders and leaders. It is not unlikely that their structure became more complex as a result of interaction with the Late Roman Empire. On Hunnic proto-urban settlements, see Golden, 2013: 31-38.

<sup>56</sup> Maenchen-Helfen, 1973: 126.



ability to extort tributes and other payments from the Romans, east and west, quickly unraveled<sup>57</sup>.

In the east, in Mongolia, the Xianbei (鮮卑 = \**Sārbi*, see Appendix A) who became the masters of the Xiongnu core lands by the mid-2nd century CE<sup>58</sup>, may be ranked among the stateless nomads. They derived from the *Donghu* 東胡 (“Eastern Hu”)<sup>59</sup>. According to the *Hou Hanshu*, the languages and customs of the Xianbei and Wuhuan, peoples that Modun had conquered early in his career, were similar<sup>60</sup>. The defeated *Donghu* fled to the Liaodong region and divided into the Xianbei and Wuhuan 烏桓<sup>61</sup>. Both peoples were alternately subjects of the Xiongnu and the Han<sup>62</sup>. With the fall of the Xiongnu, the Xianbei became masters of substantial parts of the Mongolian steppe. The Xianbei, like the other *Donghu*, probably consisted of a variety of peoples, including speakers of Pre-Proto-Mongolic, which divided into Proto-Mongolic and Para-Mongolic<sup>63</sup>. Despite philological arguments (see Appendix A), it is far from clear that the later Asian Avars are to be sought in the Wuhuan<sup>64</sup>. The latter were badly defeated by the Han in 207 CE and were largely absorbed by the Xianbei or took service with the Han. Elements of the Xianbei, following defeats by China, may well have moved westward in the third century CE<sup>65</sup>. Their lack of political unity permitted China to exercise some control over them<sup>66</sup>. Under the dynamic Tanshihuai (檀石槐, 131?-181), not long after the collapse of the remnants of Xiongnu power in 155, some kind of political unity was achieved; his authority was extended to their nomadic neighbors (including the Dingling) and he occasionally raided China. However, his triumphs proved to be ephemeral and his “empire” did not long survive his death – although senior leadership did become hereditary<sup>67</sup>. It is among one of the Xianbei tribal

<sup>57</sup> The history of the European Huns has produced an extensive literature, which need not detain us. In addition to Maenchen-Helfen, 1973; see Németh, 1940; Thompson, 1996; Dąbrowski, 1975: 11-146; the overview of Sinor, 1990a: 177-205 (Sinor does not accept a Xiongnu-Hun continuity); and more briefly Golden, 1992: 88-92.

<sup>58</sup> They had begun to absorb Xiongnu elements after the defeat of the latter by China in 91 CE. These Xiongnu now began to call themselves *Xianbei*, Taskin, 1984: 45. This is an example of an ethnonym becoming a politonym.

<sup>59</sup> *Hu* was a flexible term denoting in the era before the Han dynasty (pre-206 BC), “nomads”. In Han times (206 BC-221 AD) it was usually associated with the Xiongnu (Pulleyblank, 1983: 449-450; Di Cosmo, 2002: 127-130). Subsequently, in the Sui era it also denoted Central Asian Iranians, especially the Sogdians (Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, II: 490-491, n. 22, 584, n.786; see also De la Vaissière, 2005a: 57 (“populations of the Northwest”); Abramson, 2008: viii, 19-20, 87).

<sup>60</sup> Sima Qian, 1993, II: 135-136; Taskin, 1984: 63-65, 70, 296, n.1; *Hanshu*, 2004: 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> On the Wuhuan and Xianbei, see Eberhard, 1942: 35-37; Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 44-48. The ancient homeland of the Wuhuan was located in the upper Amur (Taskin, 1984: 7-9) one of the *Donghu* areas of concentration. Taskin considers them Mongolic. In the Han era, the Xianbei and Wuhuan were associated with western and southern Manchuria respectively. The Shiwei emerged from the Xianbei in the north and the Qitan from the southern Xianbei (Janhun, 1996: 184).

<sup>62</sup> Yü, 1967: 53-57.

<sup>63</sup> Janhun, 1996: 184, 190-193; Schönig, 2003: 405; Schönig, 2005: 140-141. “Para-Mongolic” languages were “collaterally related to Proto-Mongolic” (Janhun, 2003: 391-393).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Pulleyblank, 2000: 71; Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 44-48, pair the Wuhuan and Xianbei with the Avars and Säbirs and argue for a westward movement of the Xianbei (see below).

<sup>65</sup> According to the *Hou Hanshu* they were led by an elected “great man” *da ren* (大人), but had no system of hereditary rule. Following their defeat in 207, thousands of them were brought to China (Taskin, 1984: 63, 69, 85; De Crespigny, 1984: 40-41, 398-415).

<sup>66</sup> Barfield, 1989: 86-87.

<sup>67</sup> De Crespigny, 1984: 314-345; Yü, 1986: 442-446; Taskin, 1984: 80.

politics, the Qifu 乞伏, that emerged after his passing that we first encounter, in 265, the title *qağan*, a title of uncertain origin<sup>68</sup>, which subsequently supplanted Xiongnu *chanyu* (單于) as the imperial title in the steppe world. The Rouran ruler, Shelun (Chin. 社崙, r. 402-410) was the first to use it as a title superior to or supplanting *chanyu*<sup>69</sup>. The ethno-linguistic affiliations of the Rouran, who appear to have derived from the Donghu peoples, remain in murky<sup>70</sup>. What is of concern to us here is that the system of imperial titulature that we find in the Türk Qağanate and its imperial successors (the Uyğurs and Khazars) consists entirely of foreign, non-Turkic terms many of which appear to have been taken from the Rouran and not improbably from the Xianbei traditions, which are apparent among the Early Mongolic or Para-Mongolic-speaking Tabğaç<sup>71</sup> (Chin. 拓拔 Tuoba, see Appendix A). The latter had become masters of North China as the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 and their short-lived successors, the Eastern Wei, 534-550 and Western Wei, 535-556) and the Asian Avars / Rouran 柔然, who emerged contemporaneously and often in conflict with them.

The rulers of the stateless nomadic polities that emerged in the post-Türk era (after 742/744) bore titles beneath that of *qağan*: e.g. *yabğū*, *erkin*, *tüğsin* and others<sup>72</sup>. Without getting into the question of the relationship of the Rouran / Asian Avars to the European Avars<sup>73</sup>, we can note that the latter employed many of these same titles<sup>74</sup>. The Türks appear to have taken over the Rouran system<sup>75</sup>. In this sense, we can speak of a *translatio imperii*. The westward advancing Türks led by İstāmi, who bore the title *Sir Yabğū / Jabğū Qağan*<sup>76</sup>, slightly below that of his brother Bumın

<sup>68</sup> Liu, 1989: 98; Taskin, 1984: 90, 335, n.4. The Qifu later founded the Xi Qin (385-431), one of the “Sixteen Kingdoms” (Taskin, 1984: 4). On these ethnically complex statelets founded by non-Chinese (often Xianbei or Xiungnu) warlords, see Barfield, 1989: 97-118, Graff, 2002: 54-75; Vovin, 2007: 177-187. Vovin, 2011: 28, derives *qağan* from Yeniseic with a Mongolic / Para-Mongolic Tabğaç *-n* ending: \**qe* “great, big” + *qaj* “ruler” + *-n*, cf. also Tremblay, 2001: 285, n.305. See Appendix A.

<sup>69</sup> Taskin, 1986: 216.

<sup>70</sup> Previously considered Mongolic (Taskin, 1984: 47-49 suggests that the contradictory comments on Rouran origins derive from their being a Mongolic people ruling over Turkic peoples), Vovin, 2004: 127-130 and Vovin, 2011: 27-36, maintains that Rouran was not “Altaic” nor related to any other neighboring language. The data is sparse and we cannot come to any firm conclusions.

<sup>71</sup> On the Tabğaç language, see Ligeti, 1970: 265-308; Vovin, 2007a: 191-207. Doerfer, 1993: 78-86, posits titles such as *qağan*, *qatun*, *tarxan*, *tegin*, *erkin*, *tudun*, *sagun* as “all ... presumably borrowed from Xianbei”, of which Tabğaç was a dialect. *Tegin* may have come from Xiongnu via Mongolic intermediation (Pulleyblank, 2000: 64).

<sup>72</sup> See Golden, 2006: 23-61.

<sup>73</sup> For an overview, see Golden, 1992: 76-83, 106-111; Golden, 2013: 62-65; Kollautz, Miyakawa, 1970, I: 138 ff.; Grignaschi, 1984: 219-248. On the European Avars, see Pohl, 1988. Beckwith, 2009: 390-391, n.18, makes the important point that it is only after the defeat of the Rouran and the Türk “pursuit of them across Eurasia” that the title *qağan* appears outside of Mongolia, hence the European Avar “ruling clan must be equatable with the Jou-jan ruling clan or one or more legitimate heirs of it”. The Asian Avars have been associated with both Xiongnu and Xianbei groupings. The sparse remnants of the European Avar language may indicate Turkic linguistic affiliations for the latter, see Harmatta, 1983: 71-84, and Györffy, 1997: 141-144, who concludes that the bulk of late European Avar society spoke Bulğaro-Turkic (Oğuric).

<sup>74</sup> Pohl, 1988: 293-306; Róna-Tas, Berta, 2011, II: 1163.

<sup>75</sup> See a full listing of titles with references to citations in User, 2010: 254-271

<sup>76</sup> Dobrovits, 2004: 111-114

*El[l]ig Qağan*, the founder of the Türk state from the Ašina clan<sup>77</sup>, made this clear to the Byzantines. He announced that when he finished his war with the Hephthalites (who fell to the Türks between 560-567/568<sup>78</sup>) the fleeing Rouran / Avar remnants, whom he viewed as rebels, “shall not escape my might”. One of his successors, Τοῦρξανθος (a son of İstāmi) called them “our slaves”<sup>79</sup>. The fact that the Avar rulers in the West were still calling themselves *qağans* and thus claiming imperial status, was, no doubt, more than a source of irritation to the Türks.

When the Türk Qağanate fell in 742/743, it was briefly replaced by that of the Basmıl, a subject tribal union led by a branch of the Ašina who seized power with the assistance of the Uyğurs (of the Toquz Oğuz / eastern Tiele) and Qarluqs, another subject tribal union of the Türks. When the Uyğurs took the qağanate in 744<sup>80</sup>, ruling until 840, they claimed in the Terxin (ca. 753, made in the name of Eletmiş Bilgä Qağan, r. 747-759) and Tes inscriptions (762) that this was, in essence, a *restauratio imperii*, in that the Uyğur qağans had previously held the state (*el*) for three hundred years. In the Terxin inscription mention is further made of three qağans, including the Ašina, Bumın (founder of the Türk Qağanate), who ruled for two hundred years and “my ancestors” who ruled for eighty years. The Uyğurs, thus, claimed to have moved in and out of statehood / qağanal authority<sup>81</sup>. Some scholars place the “first Uyğur Qağanate” to the rulership of Tumidu 吐迷度, who following the Tang-Toquz Oğuz victory (646) over the Xueyantuo 薛延陀 was recognized at the “Great Eltäbär” by the Tang and unilaterally claimed the Qağanate (647), a status China did not grant him. Thus, the First Uyğur Qağanate would have existed from 647 until ca. 680 when the Ašina-Türks had revived<sup>82</sup>. This, however, would appear to contradict the Uyğur runiform inscriptions. When the Uyğur Qağanate fell to the Qırğız in 840, the Qarluqs, hitherto led by a *Yabğu* now claimed *qağanal* status in a further *translatio imperii*. This legacy was bequeathed to the Qaraxanids, who had Qarluq roots<sup>83</sup>.

The Uyğurs were the leading grouping within the Toquz Oğuz and we should now turn to their Oğur “kinsmen” in the western steppes. There is no trace in our sources of statehood, much less imperial consciousness among the western Dingling / Tiele / Oğuric peoples.

*Stateless Nomads of the western steppes*

A decade after the death of Attila, Priscus (d. after 472) mentions the arrival into the Pontic steppe zone and thus into the Byzantine orbit of a series of steppe nomads coming from the east ca.

<sup>77</sup> *Ašina*, see Appendix A, as well as the names of the early Türk qağans were largely East Iranian, Klyashtorny, 1994: 445-447; Golden, 1992: 121-122; Rybatzki, 2000: 206-221.

<sup>78</sup> Chavannes, 1941: 226; Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 94-95; Tremblay, 2001: 183; Frye, 1984: 327, 349-350; De la Vaissière, 2005: 200. The precise dating and degree of Sāsānid involvement as allies of the Türks (an alliance that quickly ended) remains under discussion.

<sup>79</sup> Menander, 1985: 44-47, 110-117, 174-175; Chavannes, 1941: 240. The actual identity of Τοῦρξανθος as well as his name (title?) remains uncertain. Menander says he “was one of the leaders of the Turks” whose holding were divided into eight parts.

<sup>80</sup> Liu Mau-tsai, 1958, I: 179-180 (*Jiu Tangshu*), 229-230 (*Xing Tangshu*), 260-261; Taşağıl, 1995-2004, III: 53-59, 74-79, 82-83, 91-92.

<sup>81</sup> Kljaštornyj, 2006: 157 (Tes, W, 7-8); Kljaštornyj, 2006a: 135 (Terxin, E, 16, 18); Erhan, 2011: 33 (Tes, N, 1-2), 42-43 (Terxin [Taryat], E, 1, 3); Kamalov, 2001: 58-68. The Türks, before they overthrew the Rouran (552) subjugated the Tiele who were preparing yet another revolt against the Rouran (Liu, 1958: 7; Taşağıl, 1995-2004, I: 17). The Tiele-Türk rivalry had deep roots.

<sup>82</sup> Pulleyblank, 1956: 37; Kamalov, 2001: 62-63; Cheng, 2012: 98-99; Pan, 1997: 192.

<sup>83</sup> Pritsak, 1951: 270-300; Golden, 1982: 37-76; Hunkan, 2007: 75-80.

463. These were the Σαράγουροι: \**šara*<sup>84</sup> *Oğurs* (“White” or “Yellow” *Oğurs*<sup>85</sup>), Οὔρωγοι: \**Oğurs*<sup>86</sup> and Ὀνόγουροι: *On Oğurs* (usually written *Onoğurs*, “Ten *Oğurs*”). These *Oğuric* tribes fled into the Pontic steppes from the east, most probably from the Kazakh steppes<sup>87</sup> evicted by the Sabirs<sup>88</sup>, who were set into motion by a chain of migrations initiated by the Asian Avars / Rouran to their east. The latter were pressed by “tribes who lived by the shore of the Ocean”, who were fleeing ocean mists and – with a nod to Herodotus – a flock of man-eating griffins<sup>89</sup>. In reality, these migrations were prompted by Asian Avar / Rouran-Northern Wei warfare of the 430s-458, recorded in the *Weishu*<sup>90</sup>. In many respects, this migration was the culmination of a series of movements of nomadic peoples beginning with the Sino-Xiongnu encounters. Xiongnu, or peoples deriving from the Xiongnu polity, had come to the Kazakh steppes by the late first century CE. These peoples may have included *Oğuric* tribes, which were part of the *Dingling* (see above). A later *chanyu* Zhizhi (鄯支, d. 36 BCE), in the course of Xiongnu fragmentation, moved westward and re-established or more accurately secured his dominion over the *Dingling* in the mid-first century BCE (they had broken away from Xiongnu control in 69-70 BCE). Zhizhi subsequently migrated, with considerable losses, to Kangju with which he had formed an alliance against the Wusun, an Indo-European people and ultimately Han China<sup>91</sup>. The *Dingling* remained subjects of the Xiongnu until 85 CE when they joined the Xianbei in attacking the weakening Xiongnu realm. Several years later, in 91 CE, the Northern Xiongnu grouping went to the Ili Valley. The brief Xiongnu resurgence in the “Western Regions” in the early decades of the second century ended by mid-century when the Xianbei became

<sup>84</sup> The *Oğuric* or West Old Turkic form is \**šar(i)ğ* / *šaruğ* “white” = Eastern Old Turkic (Common Turkic) \**sariğ* “yellow”, cf. Čuvaš *šurā* “white”, a loanword in Hungarian *sár* [šár], *sárga* (šárga) “yellow”. The distinctive “rhotacism” of *Oğuric* (hence *oğuz* > *oğur*) had already occurred before their arrival in the Pontic steppes, see Róna-Tas, 1999: 104; Róna-Tas, Berta, 2011, II: 691-695, 1112-1115, perhaps as early as the first century BCE. See also Dybo, 2006: 772-773, who dates the development of *Oğuric* / West Old Turkic / “Bulgaric” to the “Proto-Turkic period” sometime in the 1st century BCE.

<sup>85</sup> West Old Turkic / *Oğuric* Turkic *oğur* and Old East Turkic (“Common Turkic”) *oğuz* were probably originally technical, kinship terms denoting groupings of kindred peoples that later took on socio-political, ethnonymic status, see Golden, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> The Greek form is generally viewed as a corruption of Ὀγούροι, i.e. *Oğurs*. Róna-Tas, 1999: 210, reads this as *Uğur* (cf. Moravcsik, 1958, II: 227: Οὔρωγοι) and associates it with the family name of the founder of the Asian Avars / Rouran: 郁久闾 *Yujiulü* (see Taskin, 1984: 58-59, 267, 461) = MC *?juk kǰau lǰwo* (Schuessler, 2009: 96 [4-17a’], 95 [4-13a], 57 [1-54g]) or Early Middle Chinese (EMC) as *ɳuwk kuw’liǎ* and as *ɳiwk kiw’liǎ* / *lyǎ* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 384, 161, 204). Róna-Tas, 1999: 210-211, suggests, further, that this is a rendering of \**ugur(i)* > *Uğur*, which he considers a “secondary” form of *Oğur*. The implication is a possible connection with the *Oğur* tribes. Interestingly, Janhunen, 1996: 190, speculates that the Rouran may have been speakers of “General Turkic, a view not widely shared”.

<sup>87</sup> Gening, Xalikov, 1964: 142-147; Czeglédy, 1983: 97-103.

<sup>88</sup> Most probably \**Säβir*. On the various forms of this ethnonym, see Czeglédy, 1959: 373-383 and below. As *Sabir* is the form most frequently found in the literature, we will retain it.

<sup>89</sup> Priscus, 1981, I: 48-70; 1983, II: 344-345. For variant renderings of these ethnonyms, see Moravcsik, 1958, II: 219-220, 227-228, 230, 267-268. Herodotus, III.116.1, IV.13.1-2, IV.27.1. The griffins were mythological winged beasts with a lion’s body and an eagle’s head who guarded gold at the ends of the known lands (Dovatur, Kallistov, Šišova, 1982: 96-97, 104-105, 110-111, 257-258, n.250). Herodotus’ chain of migrations theme is taken from Aristaeas’ *Arimaspeia*, see Romm, 1992: 60-72, 118.

<sup>90</sup> Taskin, 1984: 273-276.

<sup>91</sup> The Han destroyed Zhizhi in 36 BCE, see Borovkova, 2001: 278-279, 295-310; Borovkova, 2008: 79-81.

the dominant nomadic force in Mongolia (ca. 130 – ca. 180s)<sup>92</sup>. The *Weilüe* written by Yu Huan in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE<sup>93</sup>, notes a Dingling polity, “north of Kangju”<sup>94</sup>. Subsequently, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, they appear in the Chinese sources under a variety of names, e.g. Dili 狄歷), Tele 特勒, Chile 敕勒, and subsequently Tiele 鐵勒 (see Appendix A)<sup>95</sup>, all of which may perhaps be renderings of \**tägräg* which has been interpreted to denote “cart”<sup>96</sup>. The Tiele, in any event, are not to be identified with the Töles, a Turkic people later noted within the Eastern Türk confederation<sup>97</sup>. The term *Tiele* is not without problems. If it does, indeed, represent *tägräg*, a rendering (pars pro toto) of an ethnonym that would denote “(people of the) carts”, semantically in keeping with the later Chinese usage, *Gaoche* 高車 “(people of the) High Carts”, a term used to denote the Eastern, Uyğur-led Tiele<sup>98</sup>; we are hard-pressed to find other such examples in Turkic ethnonymy.

The Tiele formed a large, important but still vaguely defined union of tribes that ultimately divided geographically into eastern (northern Mongolia and adjoining areas), southern (at the Great Wall) and western (Ponto-Caspian steppes) units that spanned the Eurasian steppes<sup>99</sup>. We have no evidence of an overarching central authority for all three groups. What is interesting for us is the usage of the term *oğur* (in West Old Turkic / Oğuric) and *oğuz* (in East Old Turkic / Common Turkic, see Appendix B), usually prefaced with a number (or adjective) as the name of some of the constituent tribes / subgroupings. In the course of the turmoil and displacements set off by the rise of the Rouran (Uar-Hun) / Asian Avar polity, the Dingling / Tiele came to southern Kazakhstan from northern Kazakhstan and the Irtysh zone. Here they remained until pushed westward ca. 460 by yet another drive initiated by the War-Huns / Rouran / Asian Avars<sup>100</sup>. Among the western Tiele peoples recorded in the Chinese accounts (cf. the *Suishu* by Wei Zheng d. 643, published ca. 629-636<sup>101</sup>), were the *Enqu* 恩屈 (LH *ʔen kʰut*, MC *ʔən kʰjwət*<sup>102</sup>) which appears to render \*Ongur = Onoğur, located near the Alans (阿蘭 MC *ʔā lān*<sup>103</sup>), “and others” to the East of *Fulin* 拂菻, the Eastern Roman / Byzantine Empire, i.e. most probably in the Caspian-Pontic steppes<sup>104</sup>.

The newly arrived Oğur (Tiele) tribes entered what was probably something of a power

<sup>92</sup> Maenchen-Helfen, 1939: 80; *Hanshu* in Taskin, 1968, 1973, II: 81-96; Yü Ying-shih, 1990: 148-149; Ögel, 1981, II: 357 ff.; Golden, 1992: 69-71; Janhunen, 1996: 184.

<sup>93</sup> Wilkinson, 2011: 732.

<sup>94</sup> *Weilüe* in Borovkova, 2008: 89-90, pointing to another grouping of Dingling, west of the Wusun.

<sup>95</sup> The *Jiu Tangshu* dates this usage to the time of the Tuoba Wei (Chavannes, 1941: 87). The ethnonym *Tiele* became particularly associated with their eastern branch, the Toquz Oğuz of which the Uyğurs were the dominant grouping. During the 7th–8th century, *Tiele* was gradually replaced by *Jiuxing* 九姓 “Nine Surnames / clans” which translated the term *Toquz Oğuz*, see Skaff, 2012: 343, n.12.

<sup>96</sup> Pulleyblank, 1956: 35-36; Pulleyblank, 1983: 448, 455.

<sup>97</sup> Czeglédy, 1951: 266-267.

<sup>98</sup> See Liu, 1958, II: 491-492, n.24; Pulleyblank, 1990a: 21-26; Kamalov, 2001: 59-60. The nomads often transported their tents on carts.

<sup>99</sup> Golden, 1992: 93-95; Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 63.

<sup>100</sup> Czeglédy, 1983: 33-36. Hamilton, 1962: 36 and Harmatta, 1992: 258-261, 265, identify these “Avars” with the Apa 阿拔 (\**ā bʷat*, Northwest Tang \**ā bʷal* = Apar, Aḅar etc.), one of the Tiele tribes, but alternate readings for this tribe are also found and the sound similarity is far from conclusive.

<sup>101</sup> It covers the period of Sui rule (581-617). The chapter on the Tiele in the slightly later *Beishi* by Li Yanshou (618-676), completed in 659, has much the same material. On the authors, see Wilkinson, 2012: 626.

<sup>102</sup> Schuessler, 2009: 319 [32-9j], 314 [31-16k]; Pulleyblank, 1991: 87, 266: EMC: *ʔən kʰut*, LMC *ʔən kʰyt*.

<sup>103</sup> Schuessler, 2009: 211 [18-1m], 246 [23-7n].

<sup>104</sup> For *Suishu* account of the Tiele, see Cheng, 2012: 104-108; Liu, 1958, I: 127-128, II: 569-570, n.663.

vacuum in the Pontic steppes following the death of Attila in 453 and the revolt of the Hunnic vassal tribes in 454<sup>105</sup>. In particular, Priscus highlights the conflicts of the Šara Oğurs who defeated the Akatirs (Ἀκάτιροι / Ἀκάτζιροι<sup>106</sup>), a people that had perhaps been under Hunnic rule and made their presence known by sending an embassy to Constantinople. The Šara Oğurs then set out to campaign against Iran (perhaps with the encouragement of Constantinople), but unable to pass through the Sāsānid-controlled “Caspian Gates”, took another route and plundered Georgia and Armenia<sup>107</sup>.

The migrations of ca. 463, their participants and their immediate aftermath have been discussed at length<sup>108</sup>. The account, regardless of its flourishes, undoubtedly depicts one or several outcomes of the ongoing warfare between the Tabgāč and the Avars / Rouran<sup>109</sup>. The migrations brought new tribal groups westward. These almost certainly included Oğuric tribes that would later become part of the Khazar Qağanate (ca. 630s/650 – ca. 968/9), centered in the lower Volga – North Caucasian steppes, but radiating out to the Middle and trans-Volga steppes, the Dnepr zone and the Crimea. Whether these included the Qasars, interpreted by some as the pre-Türk Khazars, remains an open question<sup>110</sup>.

The Sabirs, the most immediate catalyst for the Oğur migration, unless buried among other Tiele peoples<sup>111</sup>, an unlikely prospect as they were among the most powerful groups of the region, are absent not only because by the time of the *Suishu*’s composition the Khazars had largely subsumed them, but also – more importantly – because they were not part of the Tiele. Tracing the path of the Sabir migrations is not without problems. The name appears in relatively uniform transcriptions: Byzantine Greek – Σάβιροι, Σάβειροι; Latin – *Saviri*; Armenian (Ananias Širakets’i)

<sup>105</sup> Golden, 1992: 91-92.

<sup>106</sup> See Moravcsik, 1958, II: 58-59 for variant readings. The Acatziri are also recorded in: Jordanes, 1960: 72 (Russ. trans.), 136 (Latin), 221, n.116, who depicts them as a powerful nomadic people living to the south of the Aesti. This is, undoubtedly, too far to the north. Their home was in the Pontic steppes. Németh, 1991: 71-72, viewed Ἀκάτζιροι as Turk. Ağaçeri “forest people”, cf. an Oğuz Turkic grouping bearing this name noted in the eastern Anatolian-Iranian zone in the Činggisid Mongol and Qara Qoyunlu eras (13th-15th century) and later, see Sümer, 1980: 147-157, 159, 174, 646. For other readings, see Golden, 1992: 87. On the fruitless attempts to identify the Ἀκάτζιροι the \*Aq Khazars, see Pelliot, 1949, II: 210-214; Henning, 1952: 505-509; Hamilton, 1962: 34.

<sup>107</sup> Priscus, 1985, II: 352-355. Czeglédý, 1983: 98, hypothesizes that in light of the repeated clashes with the powerful Akatirs, the Šara Oğurs may have arrived in the Pontic steppes some years before 463. Priscus’s account, however, does not mention this.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Marquart, 1961: 42-43; Sinor, 1946: 1-78; Hamilton, 1962: 33 ff.; Artamonov, 2002: 86 ff.; Czeglédý, 1983: 97 ff.; Németh, 1991: 138-156; Ligeti, 1986: 341-353; Golden, 1992: 92-106; Róna-Tas, 1999: 209-213; Ziemann, 2007: 66 ff.; Salmin, 2011: 23-28.

<sup>109</sup> On Avar / Rouran – Northern Wei warfare of the 430s-458 recorded in the *Weishu*, see Taskin, 1984: 273-276.

<sup>110</sup> Dunlop, 1954: 34-38, who offers the connection “tentatively”. Czeglédý, 1983: 103-106, following Róna-Tas, 1982: 349-379 and Róna-Tas, 1983: 126-133, posits an identification of the Khazars with the Uyğur / Tiele Qasar noted in the Tes (N4) and Terxin (E2) Uyğur runiform inscriptions (Ayđın, 2011: 33-34, 42, 147); see also Kljaštornyj, 2010: 171-179. Ligeti, 1986: 347, accepts a Sabir ~ Khazar connection, but adds that the details remain unclear. Others do not accept any definite notices on the Khazars until the period 630-650, see Golden, 2007a: 52-55 and Zuckerman, 2007: 401 ff.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. the Tiele Supo 蘇婆 EMC *so ba*, LMC *suǎ p̄h̄ua* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 294, 241), located west of Hami and north of Yanqi in the Tianshan region are possible candidates, as suggested tentatively by Hamilton, 1962: 26-27 (following the *Suishu*), 53, n.16, which he reads as \**suo-b wāt* = Suḫar (?).

– Uuḏḥpp / Uuḏḥpp *Savirk' / Sawirk'*<sup>112</sup>; Syriac – *sbr* ܣܒܪ and Arabic: *klām* [s.wâz, ms. *klām*<sup>113</sup>], recte: *ilām* [s.wâr], *ilām*, [s<sup>a</sup>wâr], *ilāl ā* [s<sup>a</sup>wâr]; Hebrew – סַבִּיר (sāvîr)<sup>114</sup>. Al-Mas'ūdî in his *Tanbih* (completed in the year of his death, 956) notes “the Khazars who are called *S<sup>a</sup>bîr* (jījm) in Turkic and *Xazarân* in Persian”<sup>115</sup>. If this reconstruction by the editor is correct, it would strengthen the argument for an earlier presence of the Sabirs as a constituent and perhaps key element of the Khazar union<sup>116</sup>. Whether the name is preserved in the ethnonym Σάβαρτοι ἄσφαλοιborne by the Hungarian union while still in Levedia and allies of the Khazars<sup>117</sup>, and a people bearing the name *Sevordik'* in Armenian and *Sāwardiyya* in Arabic sources, remains problematic<sup>118</sup>. Setting aside al-Mas'ūdî's \**S<sup>a</sup>bîr* (if it is, indeed, a reference to the Sabirs), the name may be read as: *Sabîr / Savîr, Sâḫîr / Sâvîr, Sâwâr / Sâwâr* or or possibly *Savar* (although one would have expected an Arabic *ilāl ā*\* \**Ṣawâr*). The *ḍamma* (u) vocalization is an editorial interjection<sup>119</sup>. These may represent Com. Turk *sabîr / sâbîr* or perhaps Oğuric *Sâvîr / Sâvâr / Sâwâr / Sawâr* (?)<sup>120</sup>, noted as one of the subgroupings of the Oğuric-speaking Volga Bulğars: \**Sâwârs* / \**Sawârs*. Pritsak derived the name from a metathesized form of the ethnonym *Xianbei* 鮮卑\* \**Sârbi* (see Appendix A) > *Sâbîr*<sup>121</sup>. This kind of metathesis was not unknown in the ethnonymy of the Oğuric peoples, cf. the \**Quturoğur* (Κουτούργουροι and variants<sup>122</sup>) = \**Toquroğur* (“Nine Oğurs”, cf. Common Turk. *Toquzoğuz*<sup>123</sup>, the paramount tribal union among the eastern Tiele). The westward moving *Xianbei* may not necessarily have been from the core *Xianbei* tribes, but may have represented tribes associated with them who retained this prestigious name. We do not know the linguistic affiliations of these “*Xianbei*”. Some may have been Oğuric-Turkic in speech. Eastern Iranian elements cannot be excluded. It was, perhaps, in that environment that a probably Proto-Mongolic / Para-Mongolic *Xianbei / Sârbi* became *Sâbîr / Sâḫîr*.

The original meaning of the name remains obscure. Hoong Teik Toh compares *Sârbi* with Mongol *serbe* (cf. *serbei-* / *sirbei* “to prick up, bristle, stand erect”) and similar terms which may

<sup>112</sup> Širakec'i, 1992: 57, 124, n.111, places them east of the Caucasian Huns and extending to the Volga.

<sup>113</sup> Zimonyi, 1990: 42.

<sup>114</sup> See Golden, 1980, I: 256 for sources and mss.

<sup>115</sup> Al-Mas'ūdî, 1894: 83, but cf. the mss.: jīrīl, ḫēl (bšr, ysîr).

<sup>116</sup> Golden, 2007a: 52-53.

<sup>117</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 1967: 170-171. “Levedia”, the territory of the Hungarian union c. 830, after it had left its earlier territory in Baškîria, was probably located west of the Don River (Kristó, 1996: 107-112).

<sup>118</sup> Marquart, 1961: 35-40; Czeglédy, 1959: 373-385; Németh, 1991: 153, 301-305; noted in Golden, 1980, I: 256-257. Ligeti, 1986: 346-347, notes the problems, Zimonyi, 1990: 45, excludes them from his discussion.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Ms. forms in Golden, 1980, II: 129, 219, 220; Zimonyi, 1990: 42-44. Karatay, 2010: 99-100, prefers *Suvar*, based on Maḥmūd al-Kâšġarî's reading, but the latter did not know this part of the Turkic world well and misvocalized *Khazar* as *Kh<sup>h</sup>zâr*, Kâšġarî, 1941: 25, 26 (Suwâr(in), 27, 207 (Xuzâr).

<sup>120</sup> The Volga Bulğar realm included other Turkic peoples from the Khazar Qaġanate that had made their way to the Volga-Kama zone starting from the latter half of the eighth century to the late ninth-early tenth century (Zimonyi, 1990: 82, 156-157, 179-183) when the Volga Bulğars were becoming a regional economic power, albeit increasingly unhappy vassals of the Khazars.

<sup>121</sup> Pritsak, 1976: 22, 30, who speculated that the *Xianbei* mixed with Ugrians “in the Ob-Irtysh basin” to form the core of the future Hungarian union. Clauson, 2002: 20, who viewed the *Xianbei* as speakers of Oğuric, was prepared to see *Xianbei* as a rendering of *Savîr*. Karatay, 2010: 101-102, suggests that the Chinese sources do not report a *Xianbei* migration.

<sup>122</sup> Moravcsik, 1958, II: 171-172. On the *Quturğurs* (*Quturoğurs*) see below.

<sup>123</sup> Németh, 1991: 132, n.155

stem from “Altaic” \**sirp*’a “thick hair, bristle”<sup>124</sup>. This could refer to their horses. Semantically, such ethnonyms are not unknown in the Eurasian nomadic world; cf. the Yabaqu / Yapaġu people noted by Maḥmūd al-Kāšġarī<sup>125</sup>. Harmatta identified *Sabir* with the western Türk Nushibi 弩失畢 (MC *nuo śi pjiē*<sup>126</sup>), which he reconstructs as *nu śi pi.l*, \**nu śipir* = \**Nu Śābir* and derives from Iranian<sup>127</sup>. The Nushibi, together with the Dulu, formed the tworival groupings of the Western Türk *On Oq* tribal confederation<sup>128</sup>. There is no direct evidence indicating Xianbei / Sārbi or Nushibi East Iranian connections but such a possibility cannot be excluded. The Türk ruling clan and early qaġans bore names that were largely Iranian (see above n. 75). The names of the constituent tribes of the western Türks that formed the *On Oq*, for the most part, remain obscure and cannot be etymologized on the basis of Turkic<sup>129</sup>. Németh read Σάβιροι, Σάβειροι et al. as *Sabir* which he derived from Turkic *sap-* “to go off the road, lose one’s way, wander”, an ethnonym that he viewed as belonging to a category of names denoting “nomad”<sup>130</sup>. While semantically, Németh’s solution is attractive, there are problems. Among others, all of our forms indicate *sav-* or *sāv-* except, perhaps, for the Byzantine Greek variants of this ethnonym which may indicate *sab-* or *sav-* (the β, by that time pronounced *v* could be used to render the Classical *b* and hence is ambiguous) and al-Mas‘ūdī’s *sabir* (if that is the correct reading). Another possibility is \**Širvi*, one of the reconstructions of *Xianbei* suggested by Pulleyblank, cf. Class. Mong. *sirbe-*, Mod. Mong. *širvex* “to lash, whip, sweep away”<sup>131</sup>. The question remains open. The few *Sabir* names that are recorded in our sources can be explained on the basis of Turkic, but are insufficient in number to determine whether they spoke Oġuric of Common Turkic<sup>132</sup>.

Karatay associates the name with *Subar*, *Subartu* in northern Mesopotamia and argues for possible migration of the “Subar” from there to Siberia<sup>133</sup>. Whether the Sabirs are to be identified with the Σαυάροι, noted by Claudius Ptolemy (d. ca. 168 CE) in his *Geography*<sup>134</sup> among the tribes

<sup>124</sup> Hoong, 2005: 10; Starostin, Dybo, Mudrak, 2003: 1260; see also Lessing 1995: 689, 715, cf. 694, 695 *sibar* [šibar, Mod. Mong. *šavar*] “mud, slush, morass, marsh, mire”, *siber* [šiber, Mod. Mong. *šiver*] “dense shrubbery on a marsh, overgrowth on a river bank, ... dense forest, thicket”. Poppe, 1955: 123.

<sup>125</sup> Kāšġarī, 1982, 1984, 1985, I: 24; II: 166; Clauson, 1972: 874-875 “matted hair or wool ... an animal whose hair is long and matted”.

<sup>126</sup> Schuessler, 2009: 58 [1-56z], 279 [26-19a], 304 [29-42a].

<sup>127</sup> Iran. \**nu* < Old Iran. *naiba*, Middle Pers. *nēvak* “outstanding, hero” + \**śāfir* ~ \**śāfir* < Old Iran. *Aśśaḡāra* (*aśva-bāra* or \**aśśaḡārya*, cf. Saka *aśśa* “horse”, Old Indic *bhārya*, “servant, soldier”), Harmatta, 1992: 257-258, cf. Bailey, 1979: 11, 278 *aśśa-bārai* “horse-rider”, Rastorgueva, Édel’man, 2000-ongoing, I: 243-244: Old Pers. *asa*, *asa-bāra* “vsadnik” (< \**aśya-bāra* “vsadnik na lošadi”, Old Pers. *asabāra*, Middle Pers. *asvār* “vsadnik”, Bactr. *asbarō*, Class. Pers. *savār*, Mod. Pers. *Sāvār*).

<sup>128</sup> Beckwith, 1987: 210 derives Nushibi from *Nu* (?) *Šadpu*, the latter a Türk title (*šadpu*, see Clauson, 1972: 867) of uncertain function.

<sup>129</sup> Ligeti, 1986: 329-330, suggested that they could come from an unknown language, or perhaps even had connections with Rouran or Iranian.

<sup>130</sup> Németh, 1991: 93-94, 153.

<sup>131</sup> Luvsandendebea, Cerendamba, 2002, IV: 361. But, this may be an old loanword from Turkic (*sipir-* “to sweep”, Class. Mong. *Sigur* > *si’ür*, see Róna-Tas, Berta, 2011, II: 707-709, Hung. *seper* “to sweep, to broom”); Ščerbak, 1997: 144-145.

<sup>132</sup> The words are collected in Németh, 1991: 152-156; Golden, 1980, I: 257-259.

<sup>133</sup> Karatay, 2010: 104-106; Zakiev, 2003: 6-93, posits an Ancient Turkic “habitat” in the Near East and migrations thence to Central Asia. This is highly conjectural.

<sup>134</sup> Salmin, 2011: 22, makes this connection.



of “European Sarmatia” which extended up to the Rhiphaean Mountains (Ural Mountains?), remains uncertain – and probably unlikely.

As was noted above, the collapse of the Xianbei polity, like that of its Xiongnu predecessor, led to displacements and some groupings probably went westward. The early stages of Rouran / Asian Avar expansion, ca. 350, which drove one of the Tiele / Oğuric groupings to Kangju, pushed elements of the Xianbei / Särbi into the former Xiongnu holdings between the western Tianshan mountain chain / Jungaria and the Ili River zones. The second round of Rouran / Avar warfare in the first half of the fifth century, pushed them westward to the Tobol-Išim River zones in western Siberia and northern Kazakhstan, touching off the migrations described by Priscus ca. 463<sup>135</sup>. Toponymic and folkloric traces (among the Ob Ugrians and Siberian Tatars) would appear to attest to the presence of a people bearing names resembling Sābir. The suggestion has often been made that *Siberia* / *Sibir* takes its name from this people<sup>136</sup>. *Sibir* / *Šibir*, however, is only first noted in this form in the Činggisid era<sup>137</sup>.

From western Siberia and Kazakhstan, elements of the Sabirs moved westward, appearing in the lower Volga-Caspian-Pontic steppes in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. Here, ca. 506-515, the Sabirs constituted a formidable military presence, possessing a large army, sophisticated military (siege) equipment, but lacking central authority. In 515, they are noted in Byzantine accounts as fierce raiders of Armenia and Anatolia, who returned to the steppes laden with booty<sup>138</sup>. In 520, Byzantine accounts mention Ζιλγυβίς<sup>139</sup>, the “king of the Huns” (it is unclear if he was a Sabir), to whom both Justin I (518-527) of Byzantium and the Sāsānid Shah Kavād I (488-497, 499-531)<sup>140</sup> sent gifts, seeking an alliance. The Persian offer proved more tempting to the “Hun” ruler, who broke his earlier pact with Constantinople and joined the Persians with some 20,000 troops. Infuriated by this turn of events, Justin I convinced Kavād that Ζιλγυβίς was untrustworthy. Kavād had him executed, killed many of his troops and then moved against the “Huns”. Their survivors fled<sup>141</sup>. Where these confrontations took place is not mentioned by Malalas who has the fullest account of events. Somewhere in the Caucasus seems most probable, as it is hard to imagine Kavād (whose domestic program had gained him numerous enemies at home) risking all in the steppe.

Mid-6th century authors place the Sabirs in the northeastern North Caucasian – Pontic steppe

<sup>135</sup> Moravcsik, 1958, I: 68; Czeglédý, 1983: 36-37, 100-101, 103; Kafesoğlu, 2011: 151-152; Taşağıl, 2004: 15-16; Hamilton, 1962: 34, places them around the Irtysh or more generally in western Siberia. Harmatta, 1992: 257, 267, n.7, puts them in the region of the Ču or Ili Rivers or “further north between the Irtysh River and Lake Balkhash”, but noted earlier theories placing them in the Turfan region, cf. Henning, 1952: 502, n.5, who equated them with the \*s[']pyry = *Sabir-ē* in the Soğdian *Nāfnāmak* near Turfan. Sinor, 1946: 15 ff. and Ligeti, 1986: 344-345, among others, disagree. Karatay, 2010: 101 puts them in Eastern Kazakhstan.

<sup>136</sup> Patkanoff, 1900: 258-277; Németh, 1991: 149-150; Harmatta, 1992: 257-258, 266.

<sup>137</sup> *Secret History*, 2004, I: 164 (#239) “Joči conquered the ‘People of the Forest, from the Šibir, Kesdim, Bayit, Tuqas, Tenlek, Tö’eles, Tas and Bajit...”. One of Batu’s grandsons bore the name j ĩl̩m [Sābir] = Sābir (?), see Rašid al-Dīn, 1994, I: 723.

<sup>138</sup> Malalas, 1831: 406; Procopius, 1978, V: 156-161; Theophanes, 1980, I: 161; Czeglédý, 1983: 37; Hamilton, 1962: 35; Golden, 1992: 105.

<sup>139</sup> For other forms of the name, see Golden, 1980, I: 260.

<sup>140</sup> Kavād was experienced in dealing with the nomads. He had spent time at the Hephthalite court (as a hostage) and used Hephthalite forces to gain and regain his throne, Frye, 1984: 322-323.

<sup>141</sup> Malalas, 1831: 414-415; Theophanes, 1980, I: 167

zone<sup>142</sup>. A Syriac compilation known under the name of “Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor”<sup>143</sup>, composed ca. 568/9, which contains a listing of “Hunnic” peoples beyond the “Caspian Gates”, i.e. the Caspian-Pontic steppes, probably dated to ca. 555 or slightly later (the presence of the Avars would point to a slightly later date). The enumerated ethnonyms are clearly drawn from multiple sources, stemming from different times. These included the Bulgars (*Būrgārē*), the Alans, the Onoğurs (*Ūngūr*), Oğurs (*Ūgār*), Sabirs (*Saber*), Quturoğurs (*Kūrtargar*), Avars (*Ābār*), *Kāser* [KSR] (Qasars? Ἀκατίροι / Ἀκάτζιροι?<sup>144</sup>), Šara / Šari Oğurs (*Sarūrgūr*), the Hepthalites (cited in two forms, *Abdel* and *Eftaliū*<sup>145</sup>) and others. Curiously missing are the Oturoğur (Οὐτούργουροι, Οὐτίγουροι<sup>146</sup>), who were closely associated with the Quturoğurs (see below). The 7th century *Armenian Geography* (*Ašxarhac’oyc’*)<sup>147</sup>, already dealing with the Türk era, places them to the east of the “North Caucasian Huns”, extending to the Volga. The Türks (or Khazars by this time) were to their east<sup>148</sup>.

The Sabirs continued to be much courted, but fickle allies of the Sāsānids and Byzantines, their numerous rulers easily bought<sup>149</sup>. Justinian I (r. 527-565) in 528, through gifts and bribes, brought Βωαρῆξ, the formidable widow and ruler of a recently deceased Sābir leader βαλάχ, into closer cooperation with Constantinople. She captured and dispatched one troublesome “Hunnic” ruler to Justinian I and killed another who was allied with Iran. She was said to command some 100,000 people<sup>150</sup>. In 530, however, the Sabirs again passed through the “Caspian Gates” and raided Anatolia<sup>151</sup>.

The precise identity of these “Huns” in the Azov-zone – southern Pontic steppes and around Crimea is not specified. In the same year in which Justinian I was dealing with Βωαρῆξ, Malalas and Theophanes mention a “king of the Huns” (ῥῆξ τῶν Οὐννων), Γρώδ / Γορδᾶς, near the Crimean Bosphoros, who came to Constantinople, was baptized (part of a project to bring these nomads under Byzantine control), but was subsequently killed by his pagan fellow tribesmen and replaced by his brother Μοῦγελ / Μουάγερις. Justinian retaliated, sending a force against the “Huns”, driving them

<sup>142</sup> Daniel of Ṣalah (541/542), see Dickens, 2008: 29; Jordanes, 1960: 72 (Russ. trans.), 136 (Latin); Procopius, 1978, V: 74-75.

<sup>143</sup> Dickens, 2008: 19-30; Marquart, 1961: 355-356; Pigulëvskaja, 2000: 283, 286; Kmoskó, 2004: 48, 99; *Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, 2011: 65 (on dating of the work), 447-450.

<sup>144</sup> On the highly problematic association of KSR, Akat[z]ir with a conjectured \*Aq Xazar and the latter with an alleged Aq-Aqatārān, see Henning, 1952: 505-509; Hamilton, 1962: 34 and the well-placed critical comments of Maenchen-Helfen, 1973: 434-437.

<sup>145</sup> Theophylactus Simocattes, 1972: 257, remarks that the Ἀβδέλαι are also called Ἐφθαλίται, indicating that both forms of the ethnonym were known in Constantinople. Tremblay, 2001: 183-188, surveys the Hepthalite linguistic remnants and concludes that they were East Iranians – a far from certain conclusion.

<sup>146</sup> See Moravcsik, 1958, II: 238-239 for the variants of this name.

<sup>147</sup> The much-discussed *Ašxarhac’oyc’* was probably composed between 591-636 and has come down to us in the redaction of Ananias Širakec’i (c.610-685). It largely depicted Transcaucasia and the Sāsānid Empire prior to 636, but additional materials covering the 640s. Later interpolations (some from the late 8th century) were made, see Širakec’i, 1992: 15-35.

<sup>148</sup> Širakec’i, 1992: 57, 57A, 124, nn. 111, 112, 113.

<sup>149</sup> Procopius, 1978, V: 154-161 (who comments that they were “a very numerous people and properly divided among many different rulers”); Agathias, 1967: 139; Golden, 1980, I: 34-35, 256-258.

<sup>150</sup> Malalas, 1831: 430-431; Procopius, 1978, V: 156-161; Agathias, 1967: 106, 139; John of Nikiu, 1982: 140-141.

<sup>151</sup> Malalas, 1831: 472-473. A Byzantine force was able to retake some of the plunder from them as they returned.

away from Bosphoros<sup>152</sup>. Although the sources mention “kings”, these were, in all likelihood, the leaders of tribal unions. There is no evidence of higher forms of governance. Whether these “Huns” were Sabirs or other nomads, perhaps even groups that had been part of the Hunnic union led by Attila, is unclear. Sabir forces, sometimes clearly noted as mercenaries – and including infantry – are found in both Byzantine and Persian forces in the ongoing struggle between Iran and Byzantium in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>153</sup>.

The fugitive Rouran / Avars, defeated and overthrown as the hegemony in Mongolia by the Türks in 552 and their remnants trounced again by the Türks in 555, very likely with new elements added to those that had made their way westward, soon entered the Pontic steppe zone. Here, they “crushed” the Onoğurs, Sabirs and others and established contact with Constantinople by 558<sup>154</sup>. The arrival of the Avars and then the Türks in the late 550s-560s marked the end of the Sabirs as a regional power. They were last noted in 576-578 when, together with the Alans and “others”, they submitted to the armies of Tiberius (578-582) during a Byzantine campaign in Caucasian Albania. Tiberius offered to pay them more than the Persians were giving them for their services, an offer they readily accepted and then just as quickly turned on Constantinople “and joined the Persians”. Menander, our source, mentions a further attempt by the Byzantines to buy their “loyalty” coupled with a threat to “subdue them by force of arms”. Later, a force of 8000 “Saracens and Sabirs” are noted in Persian service<sup>155</sup>. These may have been Sabir fragments as it is likely that the majority of them had already been subsumed by the Türks. When the power of the latter diminished in the western steppes, the Sabirs, along with the Bulğar tribes came under the rule of the Khazars (the heirs of the Western Türks in the region). I have spent some time with the Sabirs because their history, such as it can be reconstructed, is less well-known. Although their military skills were formidable – and in demand – they never formed a state. Their polity was, in essence, an advanced confederation of chieftainships. They appear to have been content to raid Transcaucasia and Anatolia, when the opportunity arose and to participate in the Perso-Byzantine wars, siding with the highest bidder of the moment. Aside from mention made of their ingenuity in creating military devices (siege equipment), we know little else about them. They did not pose the kind of threat to Constantinople that the Quturoğurs did in the 550s.

The Türk conquest of the western steppes, brought the Sabirs and others into an empire. It is only later, after the shaping of the Volga Bulğar state, a process that appears to have begun with the movement of tribes to the Middle Volga in the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Arabo-Khazar wars, which subsequently were joined by others displaced by the migrations of the Pečenegs into the Pontic steppe zone in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The process of state formation was completed in course of the 9<sup>th</sup> – early 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>156</sup>. At an unknown period, perhaps early on, Sabirs appear to have joined the Volga Bulğar union. Within it the Sabirs retained a distinct status and were led by a *vuyriğ* (Common

<sup>152</sup> Malalas, 1831: 431-433; Theophanes, 1980: 175-176; John of Nikiu, 1982: 141 renders Γρόδ / Γορδᾶς as *Jârôks*; Chronicle of Zuqnîn, 1999: 75, calls him “Gordius, king of the Huns” who came s.a. 533-534, to Constantinople “with a large army” seeking conversion. See also Ivanov, 2003: 87-88.

<sup>153</sup> Agathias, 1967: 106-108, 139-140

<sup>154</sup> Menander, 1985: 50-51; Hamilton, 1962: 35. On the origins of the European Avars, see 71 above and Pohl, 1988: 18 ff.; Golden, 1992: 108-111; Róna Tas, 1999: 213-214, and Beckwith, 2009: 390-391, n.18, who argue that the European Avars, notwithstanding other elements brought into their union as they moved across Central Eurasia, had a ruling elite that derived from the Rouran / Asian Avar Qağans.

<sup>155</sup> Menander, 1985: 162-167, 196-199.

<sup>156</sup> Zimonyi, 1990: 82-83, 156-157, 175, 179-183.

Turk. *buyruq*, the title of an officer)<sup>157</sup>. Artamonov, followed by Novosel'cev, believed that they, as well as the Šara Oğurs and Onoğurs and other Oğuric peoples were Turkicized Ugrians. There is no evidence for such a conclusion<sup>158</sup>.

The Bulğars<sup>159</sup> make their first reliably attested appearance in the 480s in service to the Byzantine Emperor Zeno (474-491) against the Ostrogoths. Bulğar raids and involvement in internal Byzantine disturbances (the revolt of Vitalian, 513-515) quickly demonstrated that they could be a threat<sup>160</sup>. Bulğar pasturages, perhaps initially centered in the northwestern Caucasian steppes, extended westwards to the Bug and Danube. Their name is sometimes paired with that of the Onoğurs / Onoğundurs<sup>161</sup>, particularly by Byzantine historians of the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, reflecting various possible political unions<sup>162</sup>. The relationship of the Quturoğurs and Uturoğurs to the Bulğars remains uncertain. Some Bulgarian scholars regard them as the western and eastern groupings respectively of the “Hunnic” Bulğars, which had divided into two by in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Others reject any political or other connections (aside from common Oğuric origins)<sup>163</sup>. By the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century, the Quturoğurs, who ranged across the Azov-Pontic steppe zone and were recipients of Byzantine “gifts”, had been drawn into an alliance with the Gepids, ostensibly against the Lombards. However, they were soon raiding Byzantine Balkan holdings and warred with the Slavic *Antes* / Ἄνται. Justinian I incited their kinsmen, the Uturoğurs (who lived to their east), to undertake a devastating attack upon them. When the revived Quturoğurs, under their chieftain, Ζαβεργάν, again threatened the Empire, in 558/559, Justinian once more brought in the Uturoğurs, which culminated in a massive mutual slaughter. Like China, Constantinople was fighting “barbarians with barbarians”. Quturoğur-Uturoğur conflicts continued until they fell to the Avars (550s)<sup>164</sup>. Avar domination of the Pontic steppes was short-lived. By 568 (and perhaps slightly earlier), the Türks were in contact with Constantinople, which was anxious to have them as allies against Iran. Türko-Iranian relations had turned hostile. The Avars, accompanied by some Quturoğur and perhaps other elements that would be deemed “Bulğar” subsequently, had retreated to Pannonia, the old Hunnic center, from which the Avar Qağans raided (often with the Slavs as allies or subjects) the Byzantine Balkans<sup>165</sup>. How far to the east, i.e. into some areas of the Pontic steppe, the Avars

<sup>157</sup> Clauson, 1972: 387, a person “commanded by the *xağan* to perform specific duties, civil or military”; User, 2010: 257-258 (“officer, high-ranking officer”); Ibn Faḍlān, 1939: 33 (Arabic), 74-75 (Germ.); Ligeti, 1986: 375.

<sup>158</sup> Artamonov, 2002: 92-99; Novosel'cev, 1990: 72.

<sup>159</sup> Turk. *bulğā*- “to stir, disturb, ... produce a state of disorder” (Clauson, 1972: 337, Németh, 1991: 130).

<sup>160</sup> Zlatarski, 1994-2002, I: 42-47, considers them to have already been active players in events by the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century in the Pontic-Danubian steppes. See also Ziemann, 2007: 44-45, 83-85.

<sup>161</sup> Moravcsik, 1930: 53-90; Róna-Tas, 2000: 1-22.

<sup>162</sup> Golden, 1992: 102-103. Ziemann, 2007: 73-77, suggests that by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, *Bulğar* was a kind of collective name encompassing groups that had earlier appeared under the name of *Onoğur*. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 1952: 85, says that the Bulğars formerly called themselves Ὀνογουδοῦροι. Semënov, 2010: 179-186, places them in the western zone (left bank of the Middle Dnepr) of the Bulğar state of Qubrat, with Quturoğur (Κοτράγοι) groupings to their west and argues that their union formed under “under the control of the Avars”.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Dimitrov, 2011: 16-17; Beševliev, 2008: 43.

<sup>164</sup> Procopius, 1978: 86-95, 235-251; Agathias, 1967: 176-179, 180, 194-197; Menander, 1985: 42-45, 138-139; Malalas, 1831: 490 (who notes that Slavs had joined Zabergan's expedition). See discussion in Gindin, Litavrin (eds.), 1991, I: 268-272; Pohl, 1988: 21, 39.

<sup>165</sup> On Byzantine-European Avars relations, see Pohl, 1988: 58 ff. 128 ff., 205 ff.

were able to maintain some control (and during which periods) is unclear. The Türks clearly had control of the Oturoğurs in the late 570s<sup>166</sup>.

The more formal division of the Türk Qağanate into eastern and western halves (implicit in the structure of the state since its founding) is dated to the reign of İštāmi's son, Tardu (r. ca. 576-603, see Appendix A)<sup>167</sup>. The Western Türk Qağan, despite the Persian defeat of his armies (led by his son) at Herat, in 588/589, sought to gain control over the whole of the Türk Empire. These plans were brought to naught by an uprising of the revolt-prone Tiele (probably manipulated by the Sui), which forced Tardu to flee to the Tuyuhun, never again to play a role in pan-Türk politics. Tiele disturbances, among others, continued<sup>168</sup>.

Although Tardu's younger brother, Toñ Yabğu (r. 618/619?-630), Byzantium's ally in its successful wars against the Persians in Transcaucasia (627-628), subdued the Tiele (temporarily) and strengthened Western Türk rule in Transoxiana, he was killed by a kinsmen and the internal divisions of Western Türks grew, leading to their division into two rival factions each composed of five tribal unions, the *On Oq* (consolidated ca. 635-650)<sup>169</sup>. In the meantime, the Eastern Türksbeset by internal divisions, fell to the Tang in 630. The Western Türks, facing similar domestic problems, were overcome by the Tang in 657/659<sup>170</sup>.

The Tiele revolts adding to the turmoil within the Türk realm undoubtedly played a role in the emergence of the Bulğar state in the Pontic zone, and of the Khazar state (ruled by an Ašina branch) during that same period (ca. 630s - ca. 650). The weakening of Avar authority following the collapse of the Perso-Avar attack on Constantinople (626) was probably a contributing factor. Byzantine diplomacy was already at work. Qubrat of the Dulo clan<sup>171</sup>, the founder of the Bulğar state, appears to have been baptized in Constantinople, ca. 619, a preparatory move by Heraclius, probably aimed at the Avars. Qubrat threw off Avar overlordship in 635. His state was short-lived, in some respects a personal creation, coterminous with his life (he probably died ca. 665 – if not earlier). His burial site is believed to be Mala Pereščepyna (Poltava Oblast', Ukraine). His sons, unmindful of their father's admonition to maintain unity, were soon defeated by the Khazars, now the masters of the North Caucasian – Volga – eastern Pontic steppes. One son, Asparux, fled the Khazars, crossing into the Balkans in 679 and founding there the Balkan Bulgarian state. Other Bulğar groupings, moving to the Middle Volga zone, created in the course of the 8th to early 10th century the Volga Bulğar state. Yet others, took refuge in Italy, Pannonia or remained in the Pontic steppes as Khazar subjects<sup>172</sup>.

The rise and fall of Qubrat's "Magna Bulgaria" / παλαιὰ or μεγάλη Βουλγαρία is an example

<sup>166</sup> Menander, 1985: 171-179, 277-278, n. 235.

<sup>167</sup> Some scholars maintain that the break occurred in 581, cf. Wang, 1982: 124-154; Stark, 2008: 17; others place it ca. 603, cf. Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 97. Tardu was senior to his brother Τοῦρξαυθος (Menander, 1985: 178).

<sup>168</sup> Chavannes, 1941: 2-3, 47-48, 51, 89, 242-243; Liu, 1958: 49-61, 107-108; Taşağıl, 1995-2004, I: 164, 166; Wright, 1978: 188; Pan, 1997: 107. The Tuyuhun (284-685) were also Xianbei-derived (Pulleyblank, 2000: 83), ruling in Qinghai and even extending their power to southern Xinjiang. Their state comprised Xianbei and Tibeto-Burmese elements.

<sup>169</sup> Kljaštornyj, Savinov, 2005: 97-98; Dobrovits, 2004a: 101-109; Golden, 2012: 166-170.

<sup>170</sup> Chavannes, 1941: 36-38, 267-268; Pan, 1997: 176-196.

<sup>171</sup> On the various attempts to etymologize this name, see Simeonov, 2008: 108-113; none of which can be deemed successful.

<sup>172</sup> Artamonov, 2002: 176-187; Golden, 1992: 244-247, 253; Romashov, 1992-1994: 207-252; Róna-Tas, 2000: 1-22; Ziemann, 2007: 142-160; Beševliev, 2008: 45-74.

of a nomadic tribal union that briefly became a state and then reverted to tribal unions – except for Asparux’s grouping that took over an already existing Byzantine state structure in the Balkans and now ruled over a sedentary (Slavic) population (themselves recent arrivals). Balkan Bulgaria, in direct contact and conflict with Byzantium, became a state.

Disturbances in the eastern Eurasian nomadic center produced in the course of interaction with China touched off migrations, often in stages, westward. The early nomads (e.g. the “Huns” / Chionitae, the Hephthalites) that came to the borders of the Sāsānid Empire raided and traded their military services with occasionally disastrous results for those Shāhs who attempted to invade their lands<sup>173</sup>. Those that came to the Volga – North Caucasian – Pontic steppes raided Byzantium and the Near East through the Caucasus or by crossing the Danube. Iran and Byzantium often shared expenses for the upkeep of the forts guarding the Caucasian passes, until the late 6<sup>th</sup> century by which time Iran was the dominant military power in the region<sup>174</sup>. The Danubian frontier was equally hazardous. The Byzantines regularly tried to buy off the nomads with “gifts” and occasional (and sometimes uncertain) military employment. The Byzantines rarely crossed the Danube<sup>175</sup>. The absence of direct threats allowed the nomads to remain stateless. The consolidation of Khazar power, an offshoot and ultimately a successor state of the Western Türk Qaġanate brought many of the nomads of the western Eurasian steppes into a state.

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<sup>173</sup> Peroz (459-484) who seized the throne with help of the Hephthalites, later lost his life in combat with them, al-Ṭabarī, 1967-1969, II: 82-85; Procopius, 1978, I: 12-31

<sup>174</sup> Dignas, Winter, 2007: 188-195.

<sup>175</sup> The Emperor Maurice (582-602), whose campaigns against the Avars and Slavs beyond the Danube had enjoyed some success, was overthrown when he ordered his army to winter beyond the Danube. The army revolted (Skazkin (eds.), 1967, I: 46-47; Pohl, 1988: 128-162).

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## Appendix A

### Reconstructions of Inner Asian Names / Titles recorded in Chinese sources

For dating, see Schuessler, 2009: ix-xi, xv, 1-5.

OC Old Chinese (ca. 1000-200 BCE)

LH Late Han (1st-2nd centuries CE)

MC Middle Chinese ca. 600 CE (Schuessler, 2009: xv, 5)

EMC Early Middle Chinese (ca. 589-601), LMC Late Middle Chinese (Tang era, 618-907, Pulleyblank, 1991: 1-4).

*Ašina*: *Ashina* 阿史那: EMC \*ʔa ši' na', LMC ʔaʃr' na' (Pulleyblank, 1991: 23, 283, 221); Khotanese Saka (Bailey, 1979: 26-27): *āṣṣeina* “blue” = Turk. *kök*.

*Chanyu* 單于: OC *dan wa*, LH *džanwa* (Schuessler, 2009: 255 [24-21az], 50 [1-23a]) previously usually rendered as *Shanyu*. For attempts to read into these reconstructions various Inner Asian titles (*jabǵu* / *yabǵu*, *tarxan*), see Taskin, 1984: 305-306 and Taskin, 1986: 213-218; Pulleyblank, 2000: 64. Beckwith, 2009: 387, n.7 suggests that the OC reconstruction rendered \**dargwa* / \**dargā* and then \**dangā* to be compared with the later Činggisid-era Mongol title *daruǵaci* in Yuan China (*daruǵa* elsewhere), but see Endicott-West, 1989: 2-3, 16-18, who views the latter as “purely Mongolian in origin”, derives it from Mong. *daru-* “to press, press down...” (Lessing, 1995: 233), and correctly compares it with Turkic *basqaq* (*bas-* “to press, crush, oppress”, Clauson, 1972: 370-371) in Činggisid-ruled Rus’.

*Dingling* 丁靈: OC *têṅ rêṅ*, LH *teṅ leṅ* \**têṅ-rêṅ*, MC *tieṅ lieṅ* (Schuessler, 2009: 137, 140 [9-11a, 9-18i]), cf. Dybo, 2007: 113, OC \**tiēṅliṅ*. See Tiele et al.

*Gekun* 隔昆 (the early Qırǵız): OC *krêk kûn*, LH *kək kuən* (Schuessler 2009: 130 [8-2f], 333 [34-1a]; Dybo, 2007: 103 suggested OC / Presumed Western Han *krêk-kwân* = \**kirkir* / \**kirkir̄*) possibly reflecting an Oǵuric / West Old Turkic \*Qırǵır.

*Modun* 冒頓: OC *māk tuns*, LH *māk-tuən* (= \**bağtur*?) perhaps representing the well known Inner Asian title *bağatur* “picked warrior, hero” (Schuessler, 2009: 113 [5-37a], 336 [34-17j]; Clauson, 1972: 313 and Clauson, 2002: 19; Beckwith, 2009: 5, 387, n.8). Dybo, 2007: 111 reconstructed the name as \**mūh-twānh*, which does not represent \**bağtur* / *bağatur*.

*Qifu* 乞伏: LH *kʰiət buk* (Schuessler, 2009: 305 [30-1f], 113 [5-36a]).

*Rouran* 柔然: LH *nu nán*, MC *ńǰǰau ńǰǰān* (Schuessler, 2009: 180 [13-48a], 258 [24-36ab]) or EMC: *nuw nian*, LMC: *riw rian* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 267, 264; Golden, 2013a: 43-66).

*Shelun* 社崙: MC *ǰja<sup>B</sup> lwən* (Schuessler, 2009: 53 [1-36j], 339 [34-24hij]), EMC *dzia' lwən*, LMC *ǰhia` lun* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 278, 202).

*Shiwei*: see under *Xianbei*

*Tanshihuai* 檀石槐: LH *dan dʒek ɣuəi* / *ɣuəi* (Schuessler, 2009: 256 [24-23e], 69 [2-17a], 291 [28-1i]).

*Tardu* (Chin. Datou) 達頭: EMC *dat dɛw*, LMC *tʰap* / *tʰat tʰəw* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 69, 311, 299). Grk. Τάρδος (Menander, 1985: 178), Sogd. *Trd̄w* (Lurje, 2010: 389, #1239).

*Tiele*: Dili 狄歷: LH *dek lek*, MC *diek like* (Schuessler, 2009: 131 [8-10a, 8-13c]), *Tele* 特勒: OC *dǎk rǎk*, LH, MC *dǎk lǎk* (Schuessler, 2009: 98 [4-26h'], 110 [5-21f]), *Chile* 敕勒: LH *tʰik lək*, MC *tʰjək lək* (Schuessler, 2009: 109 [5-15ka], 110 [5-21f]) and subsequently *Tiele* 鐵勒: LH *tʰet lək*, MC *tʰiet lək*, EMC \**tʰet-lək* (Schuessler, 2009: 227 [20-09b], 110 [5-21f]; Pulleyblank, 1991: 308, 184). Pulleyblank's \**tägräg* follows Boodberg, 1979: 354, 356, who invoked Mongol *telegen*, *terge*, *tergen* “cart”. However, Mong. *terge(n)* < Altaic \**t'járko*: Proto-Tung. \**turki* “sleigh” and Proto-Mong. \**terge* “vehicle”, is not attested as such in Turkic, see Starostin, Dybo, Mudrak, 2003, II: 1433-1434. Old Turkic has *tägräk* “the rim of anything, ring, circle” (Clauson, 1972: 485), cf. Middle Qipčaq (Toparlı, Vural, Karaatlı, 2003: 275, 282) has: *tigrek* “toka” [“buckle”] and *tögerik* “değirmi, teker” [“round, circular”, “wheel”], cf. Turkish *teker* “wheel”, *tekerlek* “wheel of a vehicle” (Redhouse, 1974: 581). See discussion of Hung. *teker* “to wind something round, to twist” < West Old Turkic \**täkir-*, East Old Turkic \**tägir-* in Róna-Tas, Berta, 2011, II: 877-882. Clauson, 2002: 20-21, has no doubts that they were Turkic-speakers, but sounds a note of caution in that Tiele / \**Tiglig* / \**Tigrig*, as he renders it, is only noted in the Chinese sources.

*Tumidu* 吐迷度: LMC *tʰuə̃ mjiəj tʰuə̃* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 312, 213, 83).

*Tuoba* 拓拔: MC \**tʰāk bāt* (Schuessler, 2009: 69 [2-17m], 237 [21-31h]) = *Taybač* > *Tabyač* meaning “Rulers of the Earth”, Beckwith, 2005: 9-12.

*Wuhuan* 烏桓: LH *ʔa ɣuan*, MC *ʔuo ɣwān* = *ʔa-ɣuan* (Schuessler, 2009: 31 [1-28a], 267 [25-12f]; Pulleyblank, 1983: 453; EMC \**ʔo ɣwan* < \**ʔáɣwán*; Pulleyblank, 2000: 71: *ʔá-wán*) = \**Awar*.

*Wusun* 烏孫: OC *ʔá sūn*, LH *ʔa suən* (Schuessler, 2009: 51 [1-28a], 339 [34-28e]), perhaps Indo-Iranian \**Aświn* = *Aśvin* “the Cavaliers” (Beckwith, 2009: 6, 33, n.20, 41, n.50, 376). The Wusun, like their Yuezhi neighbors (and often foes) appear to have contained Tokharian and Iranian elements (Ivanov, 1992: 17). Originally located in the Gansu region between Dunhuang and the Qilian mountain range, the Wusun progressively moved westward to the Ili Valley causing displacements in the 170s-160s BCE (Borovkova, 2001: 107-113, 245-252; Ögel, 1981, I: 490). Alemany, 2000: 397-399, discusses the attempts to connect the Wusun with the Alano-As. Kangju was to their northwest (Czeplédy, 1983: 45 ff.) and Dayuan (Ferghana), to their west (Wakeman, 1990: 513-530, 539 ff. (on the Wusun and Dayuan)).

*Xianbei* 鮮卑: LH \**sian pie*, MC *sǰānpjie* (Schuessler, 2009: 248 [23-21a], 127 [7-29a]), EMC *sian pjiə̃* / *pji* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 334, 31). Pelliot, 1920-21: 326, 331, identified them with the later Shiwei 室韋 MC *šjetjwei* (Schuessler, 2009: 299 [29-15j], 192 [28-5a]), as does Pulleyblank, 1983: 452-453, Pulleyblank, 2000: 71: \**Sārbi*, \**Sārvi*, \**Širvi*. On *Xianbei* and variants, see Hoong Teik Toh, 2005: 10-12: *Xibei* 西卑 \**se* / \**sai pi*

(Schuessler, 2009: 283 [26-31a ], 248 [23-21a] LH *sei pie*, MC *siei pjie* ) and *Shibi* 師比 \**se / sai pi* (LH, MC \**ši pi*, Schuessler, 2009: 283 [26-36a], 284 [26-38g]), perhaps rendering \**šārpi*. The Shiwei appear in the Türk inscriptions as the Toquz Tatar and Otuz Tatar. For an overview of the Xianbei, see Kyčanov, 2010: 68-73. *Säfir* may be a metathecized form of this name.

*Xiongnu* 匈奴: OC *hoŋ nā*, LH *huoŋ na* (Schuessler, 2009: 164 [12-5def], 57 [1-56l]) = *hona* or *huna*, EMC \**xuawŋ nō* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 246, 227). Dybo, 2007: 103: OC *ŋōŋnhā*, *hoŋnho* = *hunga* (?). In any event, it is not Turkic. For the most recent discussion of the many forms of this ethnonym, see Atwood, 2012: 27-52, who posits an OC \**Xoŋa* / \**Xoŋai* which entered Sanskrit (*Hūṇa*) and thence to Bactrian, Sogdian et al.

*Xueyantuo* 薛延陀 : LMC *siat jian tha* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 351, 356, 314). Not to be identified with the mythical \**Sir-Tarduš*. *Siat* most probably represents *Sir* in the Türk runiform inscriptions. Kljaštornyj, 1986: 156-160, gives brief summary of the Xueyantuo history and the literature pertaining to them, concluding that the *Sir* later became know as the *Qibčaaq* (on the problems with this identification, see Golden, 2014: 194-196). Kljaštornyj also tentatively proffers an identification of the *Yantuo* with the *Yamtar* of the Orxon inscriptions. However, the latter is noted only as a personal name, *Išbara Yamtar* (Kül Tegin, E 33: User, 2010: 143, 449). The Tarduš are identified as a subgrouping of the Tölis, living west of the Altay (User, 2010: 165-166) and their identity remains problematic.

*Yabǵu* <*xi hou* 翕 候: OC *həpgo*, LH *hipgo*, MC *xjəpγəu* (Schuessler, 2009: 355 [37-1q], 146-147) a title noted among the Yuezhi in the 2nd century BCE. It later appears in the Graeco-Bactrian script as *ιαβγο* (Sims-Williams, 2003: 233, 235, who views it as of Chinese origin). Bailey, 1985: 32, considered it an Old Iranian term (\**yavuga* < \**yāvuka*) for “troop leader”, Hill, 2009: 587-590.

*Zhizhi* 鄯支: EMC *teit teiä* / *tei* (Pulleyblank, 1991: 410, 404).

## Appendix B

### The r ~ z Question in Turkic

Much of the argumentation on dating the r ~ z alternation or r > z shift in Old Turkic rests on the term for “stirrup”, Common Turk. *Izäŋi* / *üzäŋi* (*izäŋülük* “arch of the foot”, Erdal, 1991, I: 128) ~ Oğuric / West Old Turkic *iräŋi* (cf. Čuv. *yārana*), but the dating of the invention of the stirrup remains problematic. Nikonorov, 2010: 272, places its invention in the Far East, not earlier than the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE. Drews, 2004: 167, n.101, notes primitive stirrup-like contraptions (“big toe loops”) in 1<sup>st</sup> century India, but locates the earliest metal stirrups in northern China in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Schönig, 2003: 408, dates it to ca. 400-300 BCE. Róna-Tas, 1999: 101-104; Róna-Tas, 2011: 226-227; Róna-Tas, Berta, 2011, II: 1112-1114: place it to the last centuries (or century) BCE to the first century CE. While this issue remains open, it is probable that leather stirrups (and the word for them), or something similar, were in existence well before the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Since the linguistic ancestors of the Čuvaš were part of the peoples that arrived in the Caspian-Pontic steppes ca. 463, \**iräŋi* must have already been present. Mong. *dörüge* (> Tung. *duräki*, *duräŋki*) may be related to it (Sevortjan, 1974: 623-625; Cincius, 1975, I: 226), cf. Mong. *dörü* “iron or rope nose-ring (for cattle); lead rope” etc. (Lessing, 1995: 269).

П. Голден

**Не имеющие государственности номады раннесредневековой Центральной Евразии**

**Резюме**

В статье дан краткий обзор формирования и миграций ранних тюркских народов около 250-650 гг. н.э. и вопросов *translatio imperii* и *restauratio imperii*, а также анализируются вопросы их взаимоотношений с Ираном и Позднеримской и Византийской империями. Рассматривается специфика развития не имевших государственности кочевых народов западных степей Евразии. Китай являлся катализатором государственности у номадов Внутренней Азии. Сасанидская, Позднеримская и Византийская империи никогда не представляли собой достаточной угрозы соседним тюркским племенам и племенным союзам в западно-евразийских степях, поэтому последние не видели необходимости в создании государства. В общем, институт государственности в западно-евразийские степи был привнесен извне (например, Хазарский каганат).

**Ключевые слова:** турки, раннее средневековье, Центральная Евразия.

P. B. Golden

**The Stateless Nomads of Early Medieval Central Eurasia**

**Summary**

The article suggests a brief review of the shaping and the migrations of early Turkic peoples ca. 250–650 AD and the problems of *translatio imperii* and *restauratio imperii*, and also analyses the aspects of their relations with Iran and Later Roman and Byzantine Empires. The specificity of stateless nomadic peoples in western Eurasian steppes has been discussed. China was the accelerator of the statehood of Inner Asian nomads, though the Sassanide, Later Roman, and Byzantine Empires never were ample threat to Turkic tribes and tribal unions in western Eurasian steppes, which why the latter did not need their own polity. Generally, the institution of statehood was brought to western Eurasian steppes from outside (e. g. Khazar kaganate).

**Keyword:** Turks, Early Middle Ages, Central Europe.