

The Appearance of the Khazars in the Caucasus*

Hazarların Kafkaslara İlk Gelişleri

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Abstract

The early history of the Khazars is still to be thoroughly investigated. When they came to the Caucasus is lesser known than their origins. The original land of the Khazar tribe, a member of the T'ieh-le union, was likely in the South Siberian belt. They, together with the comrade tribes Suvars and Barsils, if not still others, were attacked by the Uyghurs, another T'ieh-le member, possibly in cooperation with the Avar and Türk alliance in the mid-5th century. The trio migrated to the north of the Caucasus, after expelling the Ogurs. So, the Khazars came to the west in company with the Suvars, who represented and led the interim union towards the outer world. The Suvars were closer to Persia on the Darband Gate, and the Khazars were to their north. The formers were more active in the early generations, but this meant also the speedier melting of their human source. So the Khazars became relatively more crowded. In contrast to the Romans referring only to the name 'Suvar' (Sabir), the Persians were able to separate between the Suvars and Khazars. Their sources have not survived to us, but were abundantly used by early medieval Muslim authors, that need to be checked for anachronism. This helped construct this paper in a certain logic, according to which the appearance of the Khazars in the Caucasus can be taken to the beginning of the 6th century, if not a little earlier.

Key Words: Khazar, Uyghur, Suvar/Sabir, Barsil, Caucasus, Persia, Byzantium

Öz

Hazarların erken tarihi halen ayrıntılı çalışmalar gerektiriyor. Kafkaslara ne zaman geldikleri, kökenlerinden daha az bilinen bir konudur. T'ieh-le birliğinin bir üyesi olan Hazar boyunun asıl yurdu muhtemelen Güney Sibirya kuşağındaydı. Yoldaş boylar Suvar ve Barsiller ve belki başkalarıyla birlikte, 5. yy ortalarında Hazarlar muhtemelen, bir diğer T'ieh-le üyesi boy olan, Avar ve Kök Türk işbirliği içindeki Uygurların saldırısına uğradılar. Bu üçlü yollarındaki Oğurları sürdükten sonra Kafkasların kuzeyine göçtüler. Dolayısıyla Hazarlar dış dünyada bu geçici birliğin yöneticisi olarak görülen Suvarlarla birlikte batıya geldiler. Suvarlar Derbent Geçidi üzerinden İran'a daha yakındılar, Hazarlar ise hemen kuzeylerindeydi. Suvarlar erken dönemlerde daha etkindiler fakat bu aynı zamanda insan kaynaklarının hızlı erimesi anlamına geldi. Böylece Hazarlar nispeten kalabalık hale geldiler. Hepsine Suvar ismini kullanan Roma kaynaklarının aksine, İranlılar Hazar ve Suvarları ayıramıyorlardı. Kaynakları günümüze ulaşmadıysa da, bazen zaman uyumsuzluğu içermekle birlikte, erken dönem Müslüman yazarlarca bolca kullanıldı. Bu sayede

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Makale Geliş Tarihi: 13.11.2024. Makale Kabul Tarihi: 10.05.2025.

Araştırma Makalesi / Künye: KARATAY, Osman. "The Appearance of the Khazars in the Caucasus". Gazi Akademik Bakış Dergisi (GABD), 18/36, (Haziran 2025): s. 1-22. DOI: 10.19060/gav.1717306

* I'm indepted to Prof. Peter B. Golden, who carefully read and corrected my paper and who advised many additions.

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bu makalenin mantıki yapısı kurulmuştur. Buna göre Hazarların gelişi bir parça daha erken değilse eğer, 5. yy başlarına götürülebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hazar, Uygur, Suvar, Barsil, İran, Kafkaslar, Bizans

The beginnings of the Khazar state on the Caspian shores is a most difficult question in regard to the very scarcity of the sources. However, how the local K k T rk political organisation turned to produce a new state -Khazaria- on the western extensions of the wide empire after 630 is a problem related to the political affairs in the region, but the answer does not necessarily contribute to the ethnic history of the Khazars. Namely, the history of the Khazars and that of Khazaria are not the same thing for the early period. The latter was an organisation of the K k T rk elites over the population of the Khazars and other peoples in the region. This can be formulated briefly in such a way: The cadre representing the T rk administration in the westernmost regions of the empire continued to rule over the region after 630, when the T rk empire collapsed, and they were associated with the subject mass in the course of time; that is, they became “the rulers of the local population”, and not “the T rk rulers of the region” as it was in olden times. When the tribesmen of the Khazar group became the most outstanding ethnic formation within the -new- state, which seemingly continued to be called “of the T rks” in its first generations, then the K k T rk elites and their officers came to be known mostly as the “rulers of the Khazars”. It was a kind of inter-Turkic assimilation. When did the Khazar tribesmen, and not the K k T rk administration, come to the region is the issue of this paper.

Besides numerous external sources, an internal record of Khazaria lists the Khazars among a group of West Eurasian Turkic tribes in equal gravity with them. The qagan Joseph of Khazaria says in his *Reply* to Hasdai ben Shaprut of Andalusia: “... I am of the Sons of Japheth, from the seed of Togarmah... Togarmah had ten sons and these are their names: the firstborn (was) 'wywr/'gywr (*Uygur/ *Oğur), the second Twrys/Tyrs, the third 'wwz/'wwr (Avar), the fourth 'wgwz/'wgyn (Oğuz), the fifth Byzl (Barzilia), the sixth Trn', the seventh Khazar, the eighth Ynwr/Znwr (Sinarites?), the ninth Blgr (Bulğar), the tenth S'wyr (Sawir). I am / we are of the sons of Khazar, who is the seventh.”¹

As seen, the tribes descending from Togarmah of Joseph constitute indeed a Turkic family. According to the anonymous medieval book *Mujmal al-Taw r h*, the third son of Japheth was Khazar.² Dinawar  repeats the same, only by replacing the orders.³ According to Gardiz , such Turkic peoples as the

1 Pavel K. Kokovcov, *Jevrejsko-Hazarskaja Perepiska v X veke*, Izd. Akademii Nauk, Leningrad 1932, p. 74, 91. The translation is the courtesy of Prof. Dan D.Y. Shapira, who sent me an unpublished work of him.

2 Ramazan Şeşen, *İslam Coğrafiyacılarına G re T rkler ve T rk  lkeleri*, 2nd ed, TKAE, Ankara 1998, p. 30.

3 Dinever , *El-Ahb r'ut-Tiv l*. *Eskilerin Haberleri*, (tr. Z. Akman – H. S. Aytem r), Ankara Okulu, Ankara 2017, p. 51.

Oghuz, Karluk and Khazar descended from the Japheth lineage.⁴ Tabarî repeats the same story, followed by Ibn al-Athîr.⁵ These outsider genealogies also classify the Khazars as a people, as done by Ya'qubî: "Born to him (Japheth) were Gomer, Tubal, Mâsh, Meshech, and Magog... Mâsh begot the Turks and the Khazars."⁶ And, Mas'ûdî poses the extreme case: "Les Francs, les Slaves, les Lombards, les Echbân, les Yadjoudj et les Madjoudj, les Turcs, les Khazar, les Bordjân (Bulgares), les Alan, les Galiciens et tous les autres peuples ... descendent de Japhet."⁷

The anonymous *Cambridge Khazar Document* of the mid-10th century mentions about a Khazar people before the state of the Khazars was not founded, circa or just before the year 630: "... Armenia, and [our] fathers fled before them... and [the people of Khazari]a received them. For the pe[ople] of Khazaria were at first without Torah, while [their neighbour Armenia] remained without Torah and writing. They intermarried with the inhabitants of the land, in[termingled with the gent]iles, learned their practices and would continually go out with them to w[ar]; [and] they became one people."⁸

In contrast to the Islamic genealogies, the *Reply* of Joseph has no 'Turk' on the list. The listed peoples are Turkic, and non-Turkic people around like the Alans were not included. This should be for the term 'Turk' alluded to a supra-identity in the eyes of the Khazarian ruler Joseph.⁹ This approach of Joseph can be compared to the list of Zachariah Rhetor written four centuries before him: "There are the Onogur, a tent-dwelling people, the Ogur, the Sabir, the Burgar, the Korthrigror (Kutrigur, O.K.), the Avar, the Khasir, the Dirmar, the Sarurgur, the Bagarsik, the Khulas, the Abdel, the Epthalite."¹⁰

There are no Hun people among them, because Hun was then a generic name. The Caspian Gates are referred to as in the Hunnic land in Zachariah, but the people just beyond the Gates are the Bulgars. His leaning of the name Hun while telling about an invasion of Persia in c.503 is also seemingly of the same kind, because those invaders should be the Suvars.¹¹ Well, this note in

- 4 A. P. Martinez, "Gardîzî's Two Chapters on the Turks", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 2, 1982, p. 117.
- 5 Tabarî, *The History of al-Ṭabarî -II-*, (tr. William M. Brinner), SUNY, New York 1987, p. 14; İbn'ül-Esir, *İslam Tarihi -I-*, Bahar, İstanbul 1986, p. 73.
- 6 Ya'qubî, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍih al-Ya'qūbî -II-*, M. S. Gordon et al (eds.), Brill, Leiden – Boston 2018, p. 271.
- 7 Maçoudi, *Les Prairies d'Or -III-*, (tr. C. Barbier de Meynard – Pavet de Courteille), Société Asiatique, Paris 1864, p. 66. For a survey of Khazar genealogies, see A. P. Novosel'cev, *Hazarskoe gosudarstvo i ego rol' v istorii vostočnoj Evropy i Kavkaza*, Nauka, Moskva 1990, p. 77-78.
- 8 Norman Golb – Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 1982, p. 107.
- 9 Actually, Togarmah in medieval Jewish texts (borrowed into some Arabo-Persian genealogies) denotes the ancestor of the Turks. Joseph in saying that he is a descendant of Togarmah proclaims his Türk heritage. Note of P. B. Golden.
- 10 Zachariah, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor. Church and War in Late Antiquity*, G. Greatrex et al (eds.), Liverpool University Press, Liverpool 2011, p. 448-451; Károly Czeglédy, "Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor on the Nomads", L. Ligeti (ed.), *Studia Turcica, Akadémiai Kiadó*, Budapest 1971, p. 137.
- 11 Zachariah, op. cit., p. 232, 447.

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Zachariah is to be the first mention of the Khazars (*K^asⁱr* [*Kās^ar*/*Khasir*] (**Xa-sar*) *ksr*/*χsr*).

The Terkhin (or Tariat, just after 753) inscription of the Uyghurs might be mentioning the Khazars: "...Yoliiy-qagan... Bumîn-qagan, (these) three qagans have sat on the throne. They have sat on the throne for two hundred years... their peoples, having become enraged, perished... because of two high-born (people) it became weary and perished. Qadîr Qasar and Bâdi Bârsil, the glorius (?) Oghuz... my ancestors have sat on the throne for eighty years."¹²

Likewise, the Uyghur Tes inscription that was erected a little later (761-762) is in better conditions and partly repeats the same text: "...Earlier, when... came into existence [or: was created]... the Uyghur Qaghan sat [on the throne]; [they were] wise and great Qaghans. They sat on the throne. For three hundred year they ruled over many [lit. thousand] *els*. Then, their people perished... Revolted by the instigations of the leaders of the Buzuq [their people?] perished, [their people?] perished because of the incitements of the petty Kül and of the Distinguished Two... Bedi Bersil and Qadîr Qasar then perished. That people of mine widely quarrelled with each other..."¹³

The original of the line North-10 is "bâdi bârsil : qadîr : qasar anta : barmîş : ol bodunım : kân kârişdi..." in Kliashtornyj. O. Mert reads the same, but for the last letters he suggests "k(e)ngk(e)r(e)sde", which means "in Kengeres". That is the abode of the Pechenegs then on the east of lower Sir Darya.¹⁴ Mert reads *barmîş* as "went, reached" as expected, instead of the "perished" by Kliashtornyj and Tekin.¹⁵ It is indeed the correction of Róna-Tas for Kliashtornyj and Tekin. But he changed the proper names: "ebir/ibir people, the aqadîr qasar went there. My people are there at Kengkeres..."¹⁶ The reading of Mert seems to be the truest one, because "Bedi Bersil" occurs also in the Terkhin, and is not a hapax. Then we have a clear meaning: "Bedi Bersil (and) Kadir Kasar went there (anta barmîş). My that people is in Kengeres".

For the relevant line of the Terkhin inscription also we need the same: "...went by attacking. (He) poured (them) into the Uçuz lake (to destroy). Kadir Kasar, Ebdi Bersil, Yatız Oğuz..." So, we have the Kengeres land, Oghuz and Bersil, all pointing to the western parts of Central Asia, and thus, there is no room to suspect about equating the *Qasar* with Khazar. The Uyghurs never acted in the western regions of Central Asia during their known history. The political culture of those ages indeed explains the case. The idiom "my people" is well-known from the Türk inscriptions.¹⁷ The relative peoples are designed so.

- 12 Sergej K. Klyashtorny, "The Terkhin Inscription", *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae*, 36/1-3, 1982, p. 345.
- 13 Sergej K. Klyashtorny, "The Tes Inscription of the Uighur Böğü Qaghan", *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae*, 39/1, 1985, p. 153.
- 14 Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1968, p. 269.
- 15 Osman Mert, *Ötüken Uyğur Dönemi Yazıtlarından Tes, Tariat, Şine Us, Belen*, Ankara 2009, p. 128.
- 16 András Róna-Tas, "Újabb adatok a Kazár népnév történetéhez", *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 85/1, 1983, p. 129.
- 17 Louis Bazin, "Pour une nouvelle hypothèse sur l'origine des Khazar", *Materialia Turcica*,

The Uyghur qagan describes the Kasar and Bersil as his own people in the inscription, regardless of whether it indicates an ethnic relation or a co-membership in a union. The Uyghurs, likely with their allies not known to us, seem to have attacked the other two or maybe three, the Oghuz being the third enemy. An account in Chinese sources implies likely this case. The K k T rks always used to use the Uyghurs to subdue the northern -South Siberian- tribes.¹⁸

Those sentences in the Uyghur inscriptions imply some events that happened two or three centuries earlier.¹⁹ Three centuries would mean the 450's. The events seem to be an inter-T'ieh-le conflict, if there were no outer participants, and the space was likely the forest-steppe belt of the northern Central Eurasia. Those troubles might have reflected in the Constantinopolitan Priscus, who says for the year c.463: "At this time the Saraguri, Urogi and Onoguri sent envoys to the Eastern Romans. These tribes had left their native lands when the Sabiri attacked them. The latter had been driven out by the Avars who had in turn been displaced by the tribes who lived by the shore of the Ocean."²⁰

T'ieh-le is a vague and generic term referring to the peoples of the northern Central Asia. Despite they occasionally showed some common reflexes, it is difficult to mention a state-level organisation among them. And we should include the Suvars (Sabiri) living originally on the Tobol-Irtish basin in the T'ieh-le union. The accounts of the Uyghur inscriptions and Priscus can be unified in such a reconstruction for the mid-5th century: The Juan-juans (Avars), possibly in support of the K k T rks, attacked the T'ieh-le from the east. The Uyghurs coacted with the Avars and T rks, because they were the aggressors according to the texts. Then the T'ieh-le members Bersils and Kasars were defeated and expelled, a group of the Kasars being captured. The latter were included in the Uyghur union as shown by the Chinese sources. Simultaneously with the Uyghurs, dealing with the Bersils and Kasars, the Avars were busy with the Suvars, as told by Priscus. We may surmise that the Bersils and Kasars constituted a union represented and led by the Suvars.²¹

Therefore, a considerable population of the Suvars, in company with the Kasar and Bersil tribes, and perhaps with some others, migrated towards the west. Czegl dy puts the latter within the Ogur union expelled by the Suvars,²²

7-8, 1981-1982, p. 58.

18  douard Chavannes, Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) Occidentaux, Acad mie imp riale des sciences, Petersburg 1903, p. 131.

19 Although Sergej K. Kliashtornyj ("Hazarskie zametki", Tjurkologičeskij sbornik 2003-2004, Vostočnaja Literatura RAN, Moskva 2005, p. 113) thinks the content is about the internecine strife in the Western T rk Empire between 582 and 603. The news from the Western sources do not agree with such a late date for the coming of the Khazars and Barsils.

20 R. C. Blockley, The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eupapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus -II-, Francis Cairns, Liverpool 1983, p. 345.

21 Mihail I. Artamonov, Istorija Hazar, Izd. Gosudarstvennogo  rmitaža, Leningrad 1962, p. 78; K roly Czegl dy, "A szav rd k rd s Thury J zsef el tt   s ut n", Magyar  st rt neti Tanulm nyok, K r si Csoma T rsas g, Budapest 1985, p. 80; Novosel'cev, op. cit., p. 83.

22 K roly Czegl dy, "A Terhin-i u gur rov s r s s felirat t r k  s magyar t rt neti  s nyelv szeti vonatkoz sai", Magyar  st rt neti Tanulm nyok, K r si Csoma T rsas g, Budapest 1985, p. 146-147.

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however, there seems no evidence to associate them with the Ogurs. This migration of several tribes led the Suvars caused a pressure on the area between the Urals and Aral, where the Ogurs, constituting the west wing of the T'ieh-le, had their abodes.²³ So, "a considerable group of the T'ieh-le tribes migrated to the West, to the steppes of South-Eastern Europe."²⁴ Therefore, the Kasars were not Uyghurs, rather they and the Uyghurs were separate members of the T'ieh-le group.²⁵

There is not a solid account about the migration of the Khazars to the Caucasus, except for the Byzantine and Syriac legends about the three brothers from 'Barsaliya'. According to Theophanes: "When they (Bulgars) had thus divided into five parts and been reduced to a paltry estate, the great nation of the Khazars issued forth from the inner depths of Berzilia, that is from the First Sarmatia, and conquered all the country beyond the sea as far as the Sea of Pontos."²⁶

Those happened after the Bulgar khan Kubrat died (660s). Nikephoros repeats the same story of the same time with the location "from the interior of the country called Bersilia".²⁷ This informs us only about the rise of Khazaria in the Caucasus and does not contain a migration story. The Syriac books of Michael Syrus and Bar Hebraus, the latter citing the former, mention about the migration of three brothers (Khazar, Bulgar and Ogur?) from Inner Scythia with their 30,000 troops, however in the days of the Byzantine emperor Mauricios (582-602): "At this time there went forth from Inner Scythia three brothers with 30,000 Scythians... And when they arrived at the frontier of the Rhomaye, one of them whose name was Bulgaris took ten ships and crossed the river Tanis (Don)... Then these two other brothers came to the country of Alan, which is Barsalia, that is to say to the towns of the Caspian, which the Bulgarians and the Pangurians call the 'Gate of the Turks'; they were once Christians and are now called 'Kazaraye' after the name of the eldest brother."²⁸

The most probable source of this fabricated account is the chronicle of Dionysius of Tel Mahre.²⁹ The both dates are absurd in terms of looking for a

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- 23 Fangyi Cheng, "The Research on the Identification Between Tiele (鐵勒) and the Oyuric Tribes", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 19, 2012, p. 83-88; Mihail Dobrovits, "The Ogur Turks in Chinese Records", Á. B. Apatóczy (ed.), *Ideas behind Symbols—Languages behind Scripts Proceedings of the 60th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) August 27 – September 1, 2017, University of Szeged, Szeged 2018*, p. 35-37.
- 24 Klyashtorny, "The Tes Inscription", p. 150.
- 25 Toru Senga ("The Toquz Oghuz Problem and the Origin of the Khazars", *Journal of Asian History*, 24/1, 1990, p. 62-64) prefers to say that the Khazars were once members of the T'ieh-le union, from which the Uyghurs were also born, instead of making the Khazars directly members of the Uyghur union.
- 26 Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, (tr. C. Mango & R. Scott), Clarendon, Oxford 1997, p. 498.
- 27 Nikephoros, *Short History*, (tr. C. Mango), DOP, Washington 1990, p. 89.
- 28 Ernest A. Wallis Budge (ed.), *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l-Faraj 1225-1286*, Vol.I (rep. of 1932), Apa-Philo Press, Amsterdam 1976, p. 84; Michel le Syrien, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche*, (tr. J. B. Chabot), Vol.III, Ernest Leroux, Paris 1905, p. 363-364.
- 29 Mark Dickens, "The Three Scythian Brothers: An Extract from the Chronicle of Michael the Great", *Parole de l'Orient*, 35, 2010, p. 16-17.

Khazarian connection, but the Syriac date can be commented as pointing to the K k T rks indeed. The depiction “interior regions” or east of the Volga delta is not a helpful information to find a geographical clue, if we do not go further away. Zuckerman locates it, based on the account in the *Armenian Geography* (cf. below), to the Samarra elbow of Volga.³⁰ This agrees with the later Volga Bulgar mention of the Barsils.

It is unlikely that a Siberian tribe migrated to the Caucasus when the K k T rks controlled everything in the region,³¹ if the Khazars were not resettled or exiled to the Caspian shores then by the T rks. The Byzantine date (660’s) would be more plausible, because the Western T rk realm was in turmoil in those days and the steppe was open to all kinds of human movements, if there would not be earlier accounts about the Khazars in the Caucasus.

Movses of Khorenaci,³² followed by Step’anos Taronaci, says, “in the days of this man (Valar  son of Tigran, 180-200 AD)... the Khazars and Basil , and passing through the Chor Gate, under the leadership of their king, a certain Vnasep Surhap, they crossed to this side of the river Kura. Valar  opposed them with a great force of warlike soldiers... Pursuing them for a long distance, he pushed them back through the Chor Pass. There once again the enemy united ... Valar  died at the hands of their expert archers.”³³

This happened in 200 AD. No need even to speak on the anachronism. Those events were, however, real and they were the Alans.³⁴ The same repeats Movses for a similar scene about one century later, now only the Barsils being on the scene.³⁵ The story is anachronistic for the Barsils as well, for not only we need to connect them to the T’ieh-le migrants before 463, but also for the story

30 Constantine Zuckerman, “The Khazars and Byzantium — The First Encounter”, P. B. Golden – H. Ben-Shammai – A. R na-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2007, p. 424.

31 Despite Douglas M. Dunlop (*The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Shocken Books, New York 1967, p. 5), who believes in the authenticity of the Syriac news.

32 Much has been written about the authenticity of the work of Movses from Khoren, honoured usually to be the father/Herodotus of Armenian historiography. Movses claims he was a pupil of the Armenian saint-scholar Mesrob, and the chronology of the book ends in 440. However, many controversies sprinkled in the book reveal that it cannot have been written before the 8th century (see for instance, Hans Levy, “The Date and Purpose of Moses of Chorene’s History”, *Byzantion*, XI, 1936, p. 81-96; also Cyrill Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, Georgetown University Press, Washington 1963, p. 331-333, for a severe critique of Movses). But the content is not that of a novel. Having the utmost reservations while using it, I trust the words of Sarkissian: “Moses of Khoren was the first of his race to conceive and execute the plan of a complete history of Armenia, from the earliest times to about the middle of the 5th century A.D. Whether he be considered a 5th or a 9th century writer, to him belongs that distinct priority... In addition, the *History* has certain literary qualities which place it among the best works of classical Armenian literature.” (Arshag O. Sarkissian, “On the Authenticity of Moses of Khoren’s History”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 60/1, 1940, p. 80-81).

33 Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, (tr. Robert W. Thomson), Harvard University Press, Cambridge – London 1978, p. 211; Tim Greenwood (ed.), *The Universal History of Step’anos Tar nec’i*, OUP, Oxford 2017, p. 130.

34 K roly Czegl dy, “Kauk zusi Hunok, Kauk zusi Avarok”, *Magyar  st rt neti Tanulm nyok, K r si Csoma T rsas g*, Budapest 1985, p. 290; Dan D. Y. Shapira, “Armenian and Georgian Sources on the Khazars”, P. B. Golden – H. Ben-Shammai – A. R na-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2007, p. 312-313.

35 Moses Khorenats’i, a.g.e, 237; Greenwood, op. cit., p. 134.

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is indeed a historical event likewise on the condition that the Alans attacked Albania (or rather 'Media') in those days.³⁶

Movses Dasxuranci mentions an incursion of the Khazars c.340, but the context is so confused that the Massagets, Huns and Barsils are also on the scene in those days. The true actors should be the Massagets,³⁷ but the Sassanian court clearly exaggerated the case, if it happened so, by mobilising almost all human beings in the south of the Caucasus. Step'anos Orbelian shares the same text: "Then news reached the court that the Khazars had emerged in large numbers through the gate of Cholay into our country, and Shapuh assembled a numberless army of men from Asorestan, Xorasan, Xorazm... Atr-patakan, and Armenians, Georgians, Albanians, and the twelve tribes of the Caucasus, and with these countless forces he marched against them."³⁸ Cf. the news in Agathangelos,³⁹ who refers to the Huns as the invading force from the north in those days. In an account dating to c.532, in the first days of the Sasanian Khosroe I Anushirvan (531-579), Dasxuranci says that Albania was captured by the Khazars, who destroyed the churches also. Thus, the Albanian patriarchate was transferred from Cholay (Darband) to the Albanian capital Partaw (Bardaa).⁴⁰ Those were the days of the Suvars, who firstly attacked the Roman territories in alliance with the Persians, and then turned their anger towards the latter.⁴¹ Gadlo suggests the Suvars and Maskuts did it together.⁴²

The problem in this account is whether we should take it as an anachronism. It is more probable that, albeit containing some troops from the Khazar clans, the bulk of the Suvar contingents in the 550s were ethnic Suvars, because they settled around Qabala a little later.⁴³ The Albanians of the second half of the 7th century, who were sandwiched between the Khazars and Arabs, associated their Suvar neighbours living in Northern Albanian regions for more than one century with the current hegemonic Khazars, because there

36 William A. M. Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus -II-*, J. P. Lippincott and Co, Philadelphia 1856, p. 458.

37 In the 4th century there was the kingdom of Maskuts dependent to the Albanians (Novosel'cev, op. cit., p. 92).

38 Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, (tr. C. J. F. Dowsett), OUP, London 1961, p. 62.

39 Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, SUNY Press, Albany 1976, p. 37.

40 Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, op. cit., p. 70.

41 Malalas, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, tr. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott, Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, Melbourne 1986, p. 274-275; Prokopios, *The Wars of Justinian*, tr. H. B. Dewing – A. Kaldellis, Hackett, Indianapolis 2014, p. 38, 104.

42 A. V. Gadlo, *Etničeskaja istorija Severnogo Kavkaza (IV-X vv.)*, Sankt-Peterburgskij Gosudarstvennyj Universitet, Leningrad 1979, p. 93.

43 Although Islamic sources claim that Kavad and then Khosroe Anushirvan settled some Bulgar (indeed Burjan), Balanjar and Khazar groups there (Balādhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State. Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān -I-*, (tr. Philip Khūrī Ḥitti), Columbia University Press, New York 1916, p. 306; repeated by Ibn al-Faḥl (Y. Ziya Yörükân, *Müslüman Coğrafyacıların Gözüyle Ortaçağ'da Türkler, Gelenek*, İstanbul 2004, p. 245-246); Tabarī, *The History of al-Tabarī -V-*, (tr. C. E. Bosworth), SUNY, New York 1999, p. 151; repeated by Ibn al-Athīr (İbn'ül-Esir, op. cit., p. 423), Byzantine armies invading Western Albania in c.575 found newly settled Suvars beyond the river Kura (Menander Protector, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, (tr. R. C. Blockley), Francis Cairns, Liverpool 1985, p. 163).

was no any difference between them except for their tribal names and, furthermore, the Albanians likely transferred this conception of them to the Arabs, their new lords. This is what seems to me. Because of it, the Albanian history of Dasxuranci, written at the end of the 7th century (for the early parts), has no Suvars, in contrast to the Byzantine Procopius, who was almost witness of those events in the first half of the 6th century. And because of it again, the Arab and Persian authors of the later ages usually define the Khazars, even for the days of Kavad (488-531) and Khosroe I, as the essential power of the north. Therefore, the Arabs were misled by the Albanians on this matter and nor their accounts are anachronistic at this point. We need simply to replace 'Khazar' with 'Suvar', although there were many exceptional cases.

As for anachronistic naming and timing, no source can contest the first two, or even three chapters (indeed separate books) of the Georgian chronicle *Kartlis Cxovreba*, covering the period between the 4th century BC and 7th century AD. The Khazars were a great threat to the Caucasian peoples even in the days of Nimrod according to it. The Caucasian natives, including the Armenians and Georgians, defeated them only by unifying their forces, but that success was temporary.⁴⁴ Shapira thinks the date is anachronistic, but the events belong to the frame of the 7th and 8th centuries.⁴⁵ Georgia was accepting refugees from the Greeks, Syrians and Khazars, when the prophet Moses was crossing the river Nile, and six languages were spoken in Georgia in the days of Alexander the Macedonian: Armenian, Khazarian, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek and lastly Georgian being a mixture of the other five. Azon, the representative of Alexander in the region, made the Khazars pay tribute.⁴⁶ According to the Persian author Dinawarî, Alexander did it directly, and subdued the people living in Khazaria.⁴⁷

During the early days of the Sassanians (240s), Armenians and Georgians enjoyed Khazar assistance in their struggle with the Persians, *Kartlis* writes. In the 290's, the Georgians were defending not only the South Caucasus, but also Persia against the Khazars.⁴⁸ Those alleged events can be compared with some historical events, and we may easily identify those Khazars with the Massagets. We can do it for the events in 456 with the Huns proper, described by contemporary Armenian authors. In that year, according to *Kartlis*, the famous Georgian king Vaxtang Gorgasali made a punishment expedition onto the Ossetians having a Khazar auxiliary with them, and severely crushed the allied forces, by taking the revenge of their aggression in 450.⁴⁹

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44 Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles*, OUP, Oxford 1996, p. 13-15.

45 Shapira, op. cit., p. 322.

46 Thomson, op. cit., p. 19-20, 23, 26.

47 Dineverî, op. cit., p. 89.

48 Thomson, op. cit., p. 75, 78-80.

49 D. Gamq'relidze – R. Met'reveli – S. Jones (eds.), *Kartlis Tskhovreba: A History of Georgia*, Artanuji, Tbilisi 2014, p. 84; Thomson, op. cit., p. 166-169, 171. See Osman Karatay ("Hunno-Bulgars in Georgia: A Proposal of Correction in the Georgian Chronicle History of King Vaxt'ang Gorgasali", *Bulgarian Historical Review / Revue Bulgare d'Histoire*, 51/3-4, Dec.2023, p. 3-34) for a thorough explanation of the Georgian account.

A debate in Mas'ûdî mentions a trick of Ardashir (224-240?) thanks to which he defeated the Khazars. Moreover, his source and reference is Khosroe Anushirvan.⁵⁰ If historical, it is understandable that the Sassanian court produced or transported stories or histories about their distant past, updating the foreign players. The presence of Ardashir would make the content agree with the Georgian account above. The more important point is that Khosroe speaks about the Khazars in his days, roughly in the third quarter of the 6th century. Again, if true and historical, because Mas'ûdî saw original pre-Islamic Persian books as well, this would strengthen the stance that the Persians referred to the name Khazar, rather than Suvar in those times. In another place, he repeats that Khosroe fought the Khazars until he built the Darband wall.⁵¹

Mas'ûdî's contemporary Ibn al-Faqîh relates that, after building the well-known cities of Azerbaijan and the Darband Pass, Khosroe I wondered about the north of the Caspian Sea, and sailed to an adventurous journey. Then, the northern regions were Khazaria.⁵²

Tabarî mentions about the Khazars first on the occasion of the famous Mesopotamian expedition of Julianus in 363, which ended in his death. According to him, the Roman army contained Khazar troops, besides the Arab allies.⁵³ The text of Tabarî is indeed an admirable transmission of a Greek text into Arabic, and was likely fed with some Pahlavî records. We may try to replace the Khazars with the Huns, who appeared in the west of Central Asia in the mid-4th century. The Persians might have hired a contingent of them against the Romans.

For an unknown reason, the word Hun almost never takes place in Muslim sources,⁵⁴ Arabic and Persian, and it is replaced with a known ethnic name. The same is true for the Georgian annals as well. However, Byzantine and Armenian sources continued using that name even after the 10th century. Besides, when the Islamic armies began to try jumping behind the Caspian Gates during the second half of the 7th century, the first people they met were the Huns, as given by the contemporary *Armenian Geography*.

Balâdhuri tells about incursions of the Khazars in the days of Kavad.⁵⁵ Once they went as far as Dînavar. Kavad sent an army and defeated them. Then he built the border towns Barda'a and Beylaqan.⁵⁶ This account does not occur in Tabarî. Its chronology sets after the Byzantine wars ended. The war ended only after Kavad died and Khosroe was enthroned in 531. Thus, it might be related to the above cited account of the *History of the Albanians* mentioning about the transfer of the Albanian patriarchate from Chor to Barda'a. On the other hand, there is a chronological distance between the Khazar expedition and the death of Kavad. Thus, the greater probability is that, if it is real, the

50 Maçoudî, a.g.e. -VI-, p. 125.

51 Maçoudî, a.g.e. -II-, p. 197.

52 Yörükan, a.g.e., 247.

53 Tabarî, a.g.e. -V-, p. 59-60; İbn'ül-Esir, a.g.e. -I-, p. 382.

54 Czeplédy, "Kaukázusi Hunok", p. 297.

55 Balâdhuri, op. cit., p. 305.

56 Balâdhuri, op. cit., p. 305-306; İbn'ül-Esir, a.g.e., p. 403.

news mentions about the anonymous northern attack onto Persia in 505.⁵⁷ If so, the suggestions to identify them with the Suvars⁵⁸ gains a support with this news in Ibn al-Athîr.

A similar text was produced by Ya'qubî, apparently based on the same source(s). However, its chronology is clear: "The Khazars, who had taken over most the territory of Armenia, had a king called Khâqân; he had a deputy called Yazîd Balâsh in charge of al-Rân, Jurzân, al-Basfurrajân, and al-Sîsajân. These districts were called Armenia IV, which Qubâdh, the king of the Persians, conquered... Then, the Khazars retook what the Persians had taken from them, and it remained in their hands for a time."⁵⁹

The apparently Persian name *Yazîd Balâsh* is thought to be distorted from the Turkic *Yelik Bay*.⁶⁰ So, the second conquest of the Khazars should be the one in 627, and the first conquest, thus, goes to the 505 incursion, that we should attribute to the Suvars. Taken altogether, these accounts show that the situation was very serious for the Persians, so they had to make a peace with the Romans in order to turn back to defend their own lands. Ibn Khordadbeh also says that those regions were under the Khazars then, and the Persians conquered the lands as far as Sharvân. Kavad and Khosroe I built the cities Beylaqan, Barda'a, Qabala, Shabiran and Bâb al-Abwâb among others.⁶¹ So, the Khazar invasion days should be before the conquest of Kavad according to him.

The Western Türk ruler Istemi "won over the Abkhaz, the B.n.j.r and the Balanjar to his side, and they vouchsafed him their obedience."⁶² The name B.n.j.r (بنجر) is repeated just a few sentences later in the same way. There seems no alternative way except for reconstructing it to B.r.j.n (برجن), i.e. Burjan. Referring to the case that four northern peoples attacked Persia, Ibn al-Athîr gives the same people plus the Alans. The name of the second people is written likewise B.n.j.r.⁶³ But, when he repeats in the succeeding page the above cited passage of Tabarî, he says instead, "(Istemi) won over the Abkhaz, the Khazar and the Balanjar to his side, and they vouchsafed him their obedience."⁶⁴ If it is the choice of Ibn al-Athîr, then he locates the Khazars as the stuntmen of the Suvars in the scene c.560s; if he transfers the original form in Tabarî, then the latter mentions the Khazars in the 560s. In any case, the lack of Suvars and/or Khazars in this account is very troublesome.

Tabarî mentions an expedition of Khosroe I to Khazaria after he com-

57 Kavad attacked and started the war with Rome in 502, but an unexpected aggression from the north forced him to seek an urgent treaty (Procopius, op. cit., p. 22-23).

58 Artamonov, op. cit., p. 70.

59 Ya'qubî, a.g.e. -II-, p. 480.

60 Peter B. Golden, "The Qazaro-Hungarian Title/Personal Name يلك - Iélex", Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi, I, 1975, p. 40; Fərda Əsədov, Xəzərlər və Azərbaycan, Elm və Təhsil, Bakı 2018, p. 65.

61 İbn Hurdazbih, Yollar ve Ülkeler Kitabı, (tr. M. Ağar), Kitabevi, İstanbul 2008, p. 106; Dunlop, op. cit., p. 20-21.

62 Tabarî, op. cit., p. 153.

63 İbn'ül-Esir, op. cit., p. 423.

64 İbn'ül-Esir, op. cit., p. 424.

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pleted his works in the Roman front,⁶⁵ seemingly the 540-543 wars, but this text comes after the above sentences about his relations with Istemi that should have taken place in the 560s. Clearly the Suvars were on the scene according to the Roman eyes. However, Tabarî used the pre-Islamic Persian records,⁶⁶ and not the Roman annals. Can we envisage that the Persians called the same people Khazar, in contrast to the Romans referring to the name Suvar (Sabiroi) for them?⁶⁷ Otherwise, the very lack of 'Suvar' in Tabarî is by no means comprehensible. This might be the source of the knowledge of Mas'udî about the equality of the Persian *Khazarân* with the Turkic *Sabir* in his book *Kitâb al-Tanbih wa al-Ishrâf*.⁶⁸ We need to keep in mind that Mas'udî in his youth might have attended the courses of Tabarî in Baghdad, and, furthermore, he says that he saw a marvellous history book of the Persians belonging to a magnate family, and that book had a rich content uncomparable with *Khwaday-namag* and other history books that he saw then.⁶⁹ Then he might have realised that the Persians did not know about the name Suvar.

The Persian preference of utilising Khazar is visible in Balâdhurî as well. He wrote earlier than Tabarî. As we quoted above, he calls the dwellers around Qabala Khazars, while they were indeed ethnic Suvars as reflected on the contemporary Byzantine sources and on the toponymi of the region, implying that the supplanting of the name Khazar was only nominal in the South Caucasus.⁷⁰ Balâdhurî also says that Georgia and Albania were held by the Khazars,⁷¹ without a time restriction, reserving in mind that he might have pointed to the 627-630 invasion of the Kök Türks, as before stated. Dunlop and Artamonov think in parallel with Togan at that point, without that reservation.⁷² Togan assumes that the Suvars held the Northern Azerbaijan from the mid-6th century on, and Qabala was their capital settlement. It is meaningful that Muslim geographers of the 10th century continued that perception. For instance, Ibn al-Faqîh says Arran (Albania, i.e. Northern Azerbaijan) was in the country of the Khazars.⁷³

Tabarî names the Khazars again when he glorifies Khosroe Anushirvan: "Thus Kisra enjoyed an unbroken run of victories and conquests; all the nations were in awe of him; and numerous delegations from the Turks, the Chinese-

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- 65 Tabarî, op. cit., p. 159; bn'ül-Esir, op. cit., p. 425.
- 66 More precisely, the *Khwaday-namag* "Book of the Kings". See Novosel'cev, op. cit., p. 85.
- 67 For the various forms of this ethnonym, see Peter B. Golden, "Some Notes on the Etymology of Sabir", Alexander A. Sinitsyn – Maxim M. Kholod (eds.), KOINON ΔΩPON Studies and Essays in Honour of Valery P. Nikonorov, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg 2013, p. 49-55.
- 68 Mesûdî, *Kitâbü't-Tenbih ve'l-Işraf*, (tr. R. Şeşen), Bilge, İstanbul 2018, p. 70; Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies: An Historico-Philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars -I-*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1980, p. 36.
- 69 Mesûdî, op. cit., p. 83.
- 70 This does not mean that the region lacks Khazar related place names. *Xəzər-yaylaq* in the Lerik district (rayon), *Xəzər-yurd* in the Ordubad district, and *Xəzər-dağ* in the Fuzuli district are considered to be the reminiscences of the Khazars in Azerbaijan (Əsədov, op. cit., p. 90).
- 71 Balâdhurî, op. cit., p. 305.
- 72 Zeki V. Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 3rd ed., Enderun, İstanbul 1981, p. 172; Vladimir Minorsky, *A History of Sharvân and Darband*, W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge 1958, p. 83; Dunlop, op. cit., p. 23; Artamonov, op. cit., p. 116, 124, 137.
- 73 Yörükân, op. cit., p. 246.

se, the Khazars, and similar [distant] nations thronged his court.”⁷⁴ Despite he knew that the great qagan of the K k T rks conquered the territories behind the Gates, he does not care how and when those Turks became Khazars, thus he mentions the latter as an independent formation. This is concerning with the gradual replacement of the name ‘T rk’ with the ‘Khazar’ during the 7th century. Tabar  knew both pre-Islamic Persian sources and early Islamic records and traditions, and seems to have observed well that transition to Khazar.

According to D navar , Ya’qub  and Tabar , followed as usual by Ibn al-Ath r: “The Turks marched out against Hurmuz. Other authorities state that, in the 11th year of his reign, Shabah, the supreme ruler of the Turks, advanced against him with 300,000 warriors until he reached Badhghis and Harat; that the king of the Byzantines moved into the outer districts of his empire with 80,000 warriors heading toward him; and that the king of the Khazars moved with large army toward al-Bab wa-al-Abwab (i.e. Darband), wreaking damage and destruction.”⁷⁵

Only the very rationalist Mas’ d  differs himself from them at this point by composing the rulers of the Turks and Khazars into one, but the invaders in the Caucasus were Khazars in any case.⁷⁶ Ibn al-Ath r says “in the 16th year”. Then it is in c.600 or a little later. ‘Shabah’ is the Western T rk yabgu Tardu, who died or disappeared in 603; so the date of Tabar  is more plausible.⁷⁷ This appeal of the Western T rks should be compared to the parallel Albanian news. Not only the continuity of the news about Khazaria, but also the gradual shift from ‘T rk’ to ‘Khazar’ while the T rk empire was still alive would tell a lot about the etno-political situation in this westernmost province of the K k T rks. Briefly, except for the year 363 news of Tabar , Islamic sources do not have such an attitude so as to be blamed for anachronism.

It seems the Khazar tribe was recorded firstly in the mid-6th century, after the appearance of the Suvars. According to Czegl dy it was the book of Zachariah that firstly mentioned the Khazars (567) (cf. above), but with the invention of the Uyghur inscriptions (outstandingly the Terkhin in his view), they became the first records for that.⁷⁸ The attributions to the years earlier than the 6th century are clearly anachronistic. Just as no contemporary Armenian source mentions them for the pre-6th century times (believing that Movses Khorenaci did not write in the 5th century), and the Georgian, Arabic and Persian books containing anachronism were written quite late. For the solid

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74 Tabar , op. cit., p. 160.

75 Dinever , op. cit., p. 133-134; Ya’qub , op. cit., p. 463; Tabar , op. cit., p. 298-299; Ibn’ l-Esir, op. cit., p. 454). Dunlop’s view that this news contains nothing on the Khazars’ dependence on the K k T rks (Dunlop, op. cit., p. 26) is not true, and is not supported by the contemporary Byzantine and other Christian sources. A little later, by speaking on the common Turko-Byzantine attack to Persia/Albania, he says the Khazars acted under the auspices of the T rk qagan (op. cit., p. 31).

76 Ma oudi, a.g.e. -II-, p. 211-212.

77 Several Islamic sources mention Sh bah in almost the same form. It is a corrupt form of the title *yabgu*. For a thorough investigation see Peter B. Golden, “The Great King of the T rks”, *Turkic Languages*, 20/1, 2016, p. 28-38.

78 Czegl dy, “A Terhin-i u gur”, p. 147.

news referring to the times of Kavad and Khosroe I, the Islamic sources rely on Pahlavî records and they do not contain anachronism.⁷⁹ Dunlop believes, in reference to Bailey, that the Avestan text *Bahman Yasht* composed in those days also mentions the Khazars.⁸⁰ I scanned that text, however could not find the Khazars there as alleged, unless we replace some letters.

Briefly, the appearance of the Khazars seems chronologically related to the Suvar presence in the region, and the alternately references to the same events in various sources show that Khazar was a spare name of Suvar, pointing to the fact that Khazars were within the Suvar units in significant numbers. What we can say for sure is that the Khazar tribe had been elevated to the rank of internationally significant peoples, when the Suvars were enjoying their latest great adventures in the south in the 550's. The Syriac author Zachariah Rhetor gives the name of the *Ksr* people, together with the aforementioned *Sbr*, among the 13 nomadic peoples, as before quoted. This is meaningful, perhaps, in indicating that the Suvar contingents in the Lazica wars of the 550's also contained Khazar troops, to approve the *History of the Albanians*.

Zachariah drew his basic information from Priscus, as seen in his listing Ogur, Saragur and Onogur as separate peoples, but not the entire text is from the latter. Cf. He mentions the same people under two different forms of the same name: Abdal and Hephthalite. That is not all. Before the thirteen of Zachariah, the Bulgars living in towns behind the Caspian Gates are mentioned. They are counted again among the thirteen. But Priscus has no Bulgars in the surviving fragments. If we suppose that the lost parts of his book contained the name Bulgar, then it would be a revolutionary information. It is more probable, however, that Zachariah took it from the same source as Movses Khorenaci, if it was not a common knowledge among the men of literature and state in Armenia, as reflected in the *Armenian Geography*.

The case of *Ksr* also seems to be in the same position. Czeglédý suggests that Zachariah took it from Priscus, with a middle Persian mediation, dropping the initial vocal of the original Akatziri. So, *Ksr* is not Khazar, according to him, but the mysterious people mentioned both in the brilliant days of the Huns and in their last days (460's).⁸¹ What happened later to the Akatziri is a good question, of course, however, from where the Khazars stemmed is a more important problem.⁸²

79 Dunlop, op. cit., p. 32; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, p. 62-63; M. G. Magomedov, *Obrazovanie hazarskogo kaganata*, Nauka, Moskva 1983, p. 176. Despite Dan D. Y. Shapira ("Iranian Sources on the Khazars", P. B. Golden – H. Ben-Shammai – A. Róna-Tas (eds.), *The World of the Khazars*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2007, p. 300), who asks whether the name of the Khazars were "inserted into the Arabic version by the translator(s) of the Sasanian Book of Kings instead of the Turks, whose very early appearance in Persian traditions is well-attested". That is possible, but I do not think there was a reason to do it. The heyday of the name Khazar was not the dark age of the ethnonym Turk. Rather, the latter spread and got fame to be a generic name in the last centuries of the first millennium, coinciding with the presence of the 'Khazarian Empire'.

80 Dunlop, op. cit., p. 22 d.93; Shapira, op. cit., p. 296-297.

81 Czeglédý, "Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor", p. 139.

82 Dunlop (op. cit., p. 7) accepts it as denoting to the Khazars, precisely to the Ak Khazars (=Akatziri). Golden (op. cit., p. 132) also accepts that reference, but rejects the equation of the Akatziri and Ak Khazars. According to Gadlo (op. cit., p. 60-61, 69) the Khazars are simply the

The Akatziri are first mentioned by Priscus, if we disregard the Agathirsi of the Herodotian tradition: “A Scythian people that had submitted to Attila.” They would easily contact the Romans. So, they should have been near the Black Sea coasts. Just in another place he says they are on the shores.⁸³ They were a Hunnic people and subdued by Attila, who assigned his eldest son Illek to rule over them, after the wars in 445.⁸⁴ The Saraguri defeated the Akatziri when they came to the region c.463, and then came into contact with the Romans.⁸⁵ If the Akatziri were in the east of Azov and lower Don in the time of Attila, then they should have been expelled (westward) by the Saraguri. This explains their quite vague location given by Jordanes in the next century: “But on the shore of Ocean, where the floods of the river Vistula empty from three mouths, the Vidivarii dwell... Beyond them the Aesti, a subject race, likewise hold the shore of Ocean. To the south dwell the *Acatziri* a very brave tribe ignorant of agriculture, who subsist on their flocks and by hunting. Farther away and above the Sea of Pontus are the abodes of the Bulgares...”⁸⁶

This would take us somewhere at the best to the north of modern Ukraine. That new position agrees with the abodes of the ancient Agathirsi. It might be the case that Jordanes was influenced by the Herodotian tradition at this point. He was accustomed of connecting different peoples with each other by relying on simple phonetic resemblances (i.e. *Get* to *Goth*, for example), and by fabricating a relevant history. Perhaps he did the same for these people as well. This paragraph of Jordanes reflects likely the pre-530 days, when the Kutrigurs and Utigurs were not yet on the scene, although he wrote the book in c.551. He was a good reader of Priscus and surely kept in mind the name of the Akatziri, later to associate with the Agathirsi. The latter might well have been destroyed and annexed by the newly coming Ogur tribes. Maybe Jordanes looked for a home for a non-existent entity. Because of it, the geographical description is so indefinite.

This is my assumption and reconstruction of the Jordanes account. Henning dismisses his authority on the geographical location of the Akatziri, and relies purely on the “proximity to the Bulgars”; this is enough for him to equate the Akatziri lands with the later Khazars.⁸⁷ Whether they were present or absent in the mid-6th century, we have to look for them in the northwest corner of the Caucasus isthmus, as the easternmost point, and even in a westerly position in the modern Ukraine regarding the Saragur attack. Thus, they cannot be equated with the later Khazars, who appeared in the Northeastern

transformed, i.e. steppe version of the forester Akatziri.

83 Blockley, op. cit., p. 259, 275.

84 Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns. Studies in Their History and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1973, p. 105.

85 Blockley, op. cit., p. 345, 353.

86 Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, (tr. C. C. Mierow), Humphrey Milford, London 1915, p. 60.

87 W. B. Henning, “A Farewell to the Khagan of the Aq-Aqatārān”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 14, 1952, p. 503-504. furthermore, he reinforces his idea with a reference to the Syrian stories of issuing from Berzilia in the North Caucasus. Thus, in his opinion, the Khazars came to the North Caucasus from the North Caucasus.

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Caucasus.⁸⁸ The anonymous Geographer of Ravenna says that Jordanes called the Khazars ‘Agazaros’ (“ipsosque Chazaros Agazaros nominavit”).⁸⁹ In another place he repeats the same with a little change in the name: “quos Chazaros supra scriptus Iordanis Agaziros vocat”.⁹⁰ Jordanes does not have such an allegation of him; merely the anonymous author connects them, likely relying on the resemblance of the names.⁹¹ This also gives no idea of the whereabouts of the Akatziri in the 7th century.

This is not the place to deal with the etymology of the name ‘Akatzir’. Maenchen-Helfen rejects the suggestions of Henning and Hamilton, connecting it to *Ak Khazar* (“White Khazar”), on plausible grounds, together with the *ağaç eri* “forest people” of the Tomaschek line and the *aka çerig* “older army” of Gumilëv.⁹² My additional rejection is about the application of the notions White and Black Khazars recorded by two Muslim authors who wrote in the aftermath of the decline of Khazaria (Ibn Khawqal and Istakhrî; later Qazvinî and Yaqut copied them).⁹³ Misemployed by the authors so as to claim that the Black Khazars were like the Indians, those notions clearly refer to the social stratification in the last days of Khazaria. The misfortune of the Muslim authors is that they did not know about that usage of the Turkic peoples. Even today, in the 21st century, the upper and lower strata of Turkic societies are described with the words black and white. In the cases when a people was divided into two, the same was applied also to them, the separating and moving part becoming the ‘white’ and the remaining mass usually becoming the ‘black’. The Khazars did not divide into two during the 10th century or earlier. Besides, as Róna-Tas explicitly wrote, we need to find the Turkic adjective *sarı* and not *ak* in those days. Thus, Akatziri can by no means be Ak Khazar.⁹⁴

It would be troublesome for many people that Jordanes, having produced his text almost in the same days as Zachariah, has no Khazars in his list.⁹⁵ The notes used by Jordanes belong likely to the time of the previous generation, as aforesaid. This is not the true answer of the question, I’m aware of it, but Jordanes does not mention the Barsils either. The latter were prominent in the eyes of the Armenian authors mentioning about the same days, but the early Roman authors did not know about them. This case is related to the priorities. Nor Procopius, again of the same days, has any mention of the Khazars or Barsils, despite that his works are voluminous. He mentions, on the other hand, about the Kutrigurs and Utigurs in detail, because they were in touch

88 Maenchen-Helfen, op. cit., p. 437.

89 M. Pinder – G. Parthey (eds.), *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia et Gvidonis Geographica*, Friderici Nicolai, Berolini 1860, p. 552.

90 Pinden ve Parthey, op. cit., p. 168.

91 Golden, op. cit., p. 55.

92 Maenchen-Helfen, op. cit., p. 427-428, 434-436; see also Golden, op. cit., p. 54-55; Dunlop, op. cit., p. 7.

93 Şeşen, op. cit., p. 139, 149, 158, 167.

94 András Róna-Tas, “A kazár népnévről”, *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 84/2, 1982, p. 357; Peter B. Golden, “*Nomads of the Western Eurasian Steppes: Oyurs, Onoyurs and Khazars*”, C. Hriban (ed.), *Studies on the Peoples and Cultures of the Eurasian Steppes*, Ed. Academiei Române, Bucureşti – Braila 2011, p. 136.

95 But only “Saviri”: Jordanes op. cit., p. 60.

with the Romans under their own names. It can be said, Jordanes and Procopius, among other contemporary writers, mention about the Khazars under the name “Suvar”.

Indeed, the same does also Ananias of Širak. There is the princeling of the Huns just behind the Caspian Gates, and after that extends the land of the “Savirk” up to the delta of Volga in his words. Referred alternately with the Khazars in the long and short versions of the book, the ruler of the Savirk was called ‘qagan’ and his wife, of Barsil origin, was ‘khatun’.⁹⁶ So, no need to blame Jordanes or other Roman writers; the name Suvar was enough to denote all those, including the Khazars, in the north-west Caspian shores.

The stance of Mas’ûdî might be inspiring in terms of the prevalence of the two ethnonyms. He clearly had several courses on the ancient/pre-Islamic Persia and had also close access to the Jewish intellectual circles likely not only in Baghdad, his born-city, where was the most prominent Jewish authority then in the world, the gaon of the Baghdad Academy, but also in Egypt, where he spent his last and most fruitful years. Together with the contemporary fame of the name ‘Khazar’ during his lifetime, this should have made him sure of the originality of that name. However, he learned also about the Suvars likely from the Greek sources, and by no means from Armenian or Persian books, because he refers to the unusual form “Sabir”, which was collectively valid in Greek books, and because the Armenian and Persian sources utilised the name Khazar rather than or instead of Suvar. There are countless examples approving his close access to the Greek sources, and it would not be a difficult task to learn about the ‘Sabir’ records of the Byzantines for a man informing us about the names of Varangian chiefs of Kiev, who lived 100 years ago than the time when he wrote, and about whom there is no news surviving to us except for the *Primary Chronicle of the Rus’*, written much later than Mas’ûdî.

So, what about his attributing the name ‘Sabir’ only to the usage of Turks? In his terms, if Khazar was referred both by the Khazars themselves and by the international community, and if there was an alternative name for them such as ‘Sabir’, then logically it would be used by the Turks. Unfortunately, there is no any Turkic source mentioning the Khazars during the 320 years between the Uyghur inscriptions (750s) and Mahmud of Kashgar (completed in 1076), and we cannot definitely say how the Turkic peoples of those days called Khazaria. The Chinese records for that period were based on Turkic sources or intermediaries with great likelihood, and the usage ‘Türk Khazar’ is very meaningful in pointing to the prevalence of the name ‘Türk’ for them.⁹⁷

The name Khazar is absent both in Mahmud of Kashgar and in the Saljukid origin myths recorded by Islamic books. The former does not mention

96 Robert H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhaç’oyc’)*. The Long and Short Recensions. Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Ludwig Reichert, Wiesbaden 1992, p. 57.

97 The proper Khazars in the west are mentioned as *K’o-sa t’u-chüe* or *T’u-chüe ho-sa* (Türk Khazars) (Chavannes, op. cit., p. 145, 170; Dunlop, op. cit., p. 34-35; Senga, op. cit., p. 64). Shiota suggests the Chinese records on the Khazars are based on an account by a Chinese, Du Huan, who had been captured at the Battle of Talas (751) (Shun Shiota, “The Chinese Chronicles of the Khazars: Notes on Khazaria in Tang Period Texts”, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 14, 2005, p. 231-261).

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such a people as Khazar, but makes it only “a place name in Turkic lands”,⁹⁸ and the latter narrations, which have survived not in its original version, but as scattered in several books, curiously speak about the same: The Oghuz supreme ruler and a bulk of the magnates wanted to attack a Turkic or Muslim people, but our hero Saljuk opposed them. Only Michael Syrus followed ordinarily by Bar Hebraus names that Turkic country as Khazaria: “Now I have seen ... in a certain Persian book called ‘Mulk-Nâmah’: I have heard from a great Amir ... Inaig (Inanag?) Bag, who saith: When the qagan of the Khazars burst forth, he had with him in his service a certain warrior whose name was Tukak, who, because of his strength, was called Temuryalig, that is to say ‘Iron Bow’. There was a son born to this man and he was called by the name of Saljuk...”⁹⁹

The lack of Suvar and Barsil among the Uyghur tribes, the absence of the Suvars from the Uyghur inscriptions, and the presence of the Khazars in both remind one that these three tribes had no special relation between themselves in the Siberian days. They were simply semi-independent T'ieh-le tribes.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps we can make a reservation for the Suvars so as to represent the leadership of a sub-union within the supra-union T'iele-le. Regardless of their status, a common fate brought them altogether in the Caucasus.

Thus, during their North Caucasian days, the Suvars represented the union towards the outer world, but they could not assimilate the comrade tribes into their tribal identity. Rather, the Suvars were the most melting component, considering their losses in the Romano-Persian (also perhaps Avar) wars and the large-scale migrations to Northern Albania.¹⁰¹ Therefore, while their population was decreasing in the north of Darband, the Khazars increased relatively, becoming the most prominent tribe in that quarter of the Caucasus. But they were in common acts towards the outer world. Because of it, we start to hear about the Khazars for the same occasions, instead of the previous Suvars.¹⁰² This process of gaining prominence included at least one clash with their brothers Barsils, as mentioned by Širakaci,¹⁰³ while the minor Suvar remnants were replacing their rank now to be a member of the union led by the Khazars.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the concerning scholarship almost entirely premise a relation of continuity and successorship between the Suvars and Khazars.¹⁰⁵ Under those conditions the K  k T  rks came to rule over the trio in the 560's.

The case that the name and, thus, the identity of Khazar supplanted that of Suvar is an ordinary ethnic process in the steppe world, and is an example of countless similar developments. It does not matter whether the two tribes are

98 Ma  mud Al-K      , Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (D  v  n al-Luy  t at-Turk) -I-, tr. R. Dankoff, Harvard University Press, Harvard 1982, p. 312.

99 Budge, op. cit., p. 195.

100 Kliashtrnyj (“Hazarskie zametki”, p. 114) posits that the fates of the Barsils and Khazars were firmly connected to each other in their Asia days.

101 Magomedov, op. cit., p. 176.

102 Golden, op. cit., p. 50, 52.

103 Hewsen, op. cit., p. 57.

104 Artamonov, op. cit., p. 128.

105 Artamonov, op. cit., p. 127-128; Gyula N  meth, A Honfoglal   Magyar  s  g Kialakul  sa, Horny  nszky Viktor, Budapest 1930, p. 192, 204; Peter B. Golden, An Introduction to the History of Turkic Peoples, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1992, p. 236.

from different origins or one was born from the other. We know nothing about the deep relation of the Khazar and Suvar tribes, except for identifying them as Turkic peoples of the same surroundings in South Siberia. As for the 10th century, however, the qagan Joseph presents them as two equal formations allegedly from the same origin. The Salgur tribe of the Oghuz begat the Avshar, for example, and all later genealogies listed them as equal ethnic groups.¹⁰⁶ In the cases of the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu, the name of the clan rises above the name of the tribe to which it belongs. The best example is the Hungarians. They now call themselves ‘Magyars’, but that was originally the name of one of the seven (or more) tribes of the union likely called ‘Türk’.

This is the ethno-sociological story of the Khazars for the period when they were under first the Suvars and then the Türks. The rest of the story makes from c.635 on the Khazars the principal and hegemonic power within the empire bearing their name. This is not the independence of the Khazars from the Kök Türks, as alleged by Dunlop, but simply the “Khazarisation” process of the latter, while the Kök Türks were keeping their lordship.

In such a case it is difficult to learn about the precise borders of the Khazars, Suvars and Barsils in the early generations in the Caucasus. The *Armenian Geography*, our only careful source, alternates between the names Suvar and Khazar (and even Khazar and Türk) in its long and short recenscions. Indeed, there is no mention of the location of the Khazars at all. They are only one of the nations inhabiting Sarmatia, according to the short recenscion. The long recenscion locates the Huns to the north of Darband, and, after them, “On the east dwell the Sabeiroi, as far as the rivel Etil, which separates the countries of Sarmatia and Scythia, who are (the people called) Apaxt’ark’, that is, the Turkestanians. The qagan is their king and khatun their queen, the wife of the qagan.”¹⁰⁷

For this text, the short recenscion has only “The king of the north is the qagan, who is lord of the Khazars. The queen, or khatun, the wife of the qagan, is of the Barsilk’ nation”.¹⁰⁸ No need to debate which one represent the original form; the significant point here is that the copiers of the text were seemingly confused about the identities of the Suvars and Khazars, being unable to separate between them. And the river Etil, i.e. Volga was then the border between Sarmatia and Scythia, and not between the Turks and the Suvars. The authors get rid of the problem by utilising the generic terms Apaxt’ark’ and Turkestanian, the former meaning “Nordic”.¹⁰⁹ We may surmise that the lands of the Khazars proper started on the mouth of Volga in the north, and extended as far as the borders of the Huns in the southern part of modern coastal Dagestan, leaving a tiny territory to the Suvars, whose population should have been

106 Abu’l-Ghâzi Bahadur Khan of the 17th century, who compiled books and traditions among the Turkmens provides this information: “The sons (i.e. tribe) of Avshar are the Turkman Salurs”. He gives a genealogy in order to support his claim: “The name of a son of the Salur chief Ögürçik is called Avshar” (Ebülğazi Bahadır Han, Şecere-i Terakime, (tr. Z. Ölmez), Simurg, İstanbul 1996, p. 267-268).

107 Hewsen, op. cit., p. 57.

108 Hewsen, op. cit., p. 57A.

109 Novosel’cev, op. cit., p. 82; Shapira, “Armenian and Georgian Sources”, p. 317.

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diminished after their migrations to Azerbaijan. The western borders were simply the elevations of the Caucasus ranges. It is very significant in this term that the valley of the Sulak river, which is situated in the middle of the “to be” Khazarian lands, was the most densely populated territory of those parts of the Caspian shores.¹¹⁰

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