

Father Paisii Hilendarski`s Message About the Volga Ancestral Home of the Bulgarians as a Source of Formation of National Historical Consciousness

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Abstract

Paisii Hilendarski was one of the most well-educated persons in the seventeenth century and a key Bulgarian National Revival person. He is being the most famous author of “Slavic-Bulgarian History” in which he talked about general heroic history of Bulgarians and their interaction with other Slavic peoples.

Many scientific researchers think that in Paisii Hilendarski 's book there were no real facts and history but mostly National Epos, which he wrote especially for National Revival of Bulgarian`s National Idea.

He wrote about the quite concrete and true picture of Slavic people and Bulgars resettlement, which could be proven with help of hydronyms and studies, which were carried out by modern scientists as V. Sedov, M. Zih, F. Butba, A. Novoseltsev.

This article analyses Paisii Hilendarski`s message about the ancestral home of the Volga Bulgars and their connections and interactions with Slavs. The Article also illustrates innovative theories and conclusions about the modern studies and the problems of the ethno-cultural identity of the population in “imenkovo culture”. This paper compares the hydronyms research that took place in Paisii of Hilendarski`s book with modern Volga territories geographic

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names. In the article, the authors highlight the importance of analysis the authenticity of Paisii Hilendarski 's message about the origin of Bulgarians from the ethnonym “Bolga river”.

The results show that Paisius of Hilendarski's message was not estimated enough and these results help to reconsider his message as an important piece of analyses in studies Bulgarian Middle Ages.

Keywords: Paisii Hilendarski, Bulgaria, Bulgar, ancestral home, Volga, Hydrotoponym.

Peder Paisii Hilendarski'nin Bulgarların Volga Atalarının Evi Hakkında Bir Mesaj

Paisii Hilendarski, on yedinci yüzyılda en iyi eğitilmiş kişilerden biriydi ve önemli bir Bulgar Ulusal Aydınlanmacısıydı. O genel Bulgar kahramanlarından ve onların diğer Slav insanlarla olan ilişkilerinden bahseden en ünlü Slav-Bulgar tarih yazarıdır. Birçok bilimsel araştırmacı, Paisii Hilendarski'nin kitabında gerçek olaylar ve tarih olmadığını ancak onun yazılarını çoğunlukla Bulgar Ulusal Aydınlanma Fikrinin ve Ulusal Yeniden Doğuşu fikri için yazdığı ulusal destanlar olduğunu düşünmektedir.

Bu makale Paisii Hilendarski'nin Volga Bulgarlarının atalarının evi ile ilgili mesajlarını ve bunların Slavlarla olan bağlantılarını ve etkileşimlerini analiz ediyor. Makale ayrıca, modern çalışmalar ve “İmenkovo kültüründeki” nüfusun etno-kültürel kimliğinin sorunları hakkında yenilikçi teoriler ve sonuçlar ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu makale, Paisii Hilendarski'nin kitabında yer alan hidronim araştırmalarını modern Volga bölgesi coğrafi isimleriyle karşılaştırmaktadır. Makalede, yazarlar Paisii Hilendarski'nin Bulgarların kökeniyle ilgili mesajını "Bolga nehri" etnolojisinden aldıkları gerçekliğin analizinin önemini vurgulamak peşindedirler.

Sonuçlar, Paisius Hilendarski'nin mesajının yeterince tahmin edilmediğini göstermekle birlikte onun mesajını Bulgar Ortaçağ'da yapılan çalışmalarda önemli bir analiz parçası olarak değerlendirmeye yardımcı olmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Paisii Hilendarski, Bulgaristan, Bulgar, Atalar Evi, Volga, Hydrotoponym.

Theme relevance and its coverage literature

The theme of the historical homeland of the ancestors of the Bulgarians remains the most important for the formation the historical

consciousness of the Bulgarian people and at the same time raises many questions that were tried to be answer by authors as Theophanes the Confessor and Patriarch Nicephorus in the Middle Ages [1]. Currently, many historians, archaeologists and ethnolinguists continue to put forward various hypotheses (Sedov V.V. [2; 3], Zhih M.I. [4], Butba V.F. [5] and others) about the migration of Slavs and ancestral home of the Bulgarians. However, it should be kept in mind that historical self-awareness is formed not only on the basis of witnessed and confirmed historical facts, but also on the basis of ideas that are historically volatile and very often bear an uncritical, naive, sometimes mythological character. However, the strength of their impact may be greater than the strength of scientific historical research.

The purpose of the article

To compare the historical ideas of Paisii Hilendarski about the ancestral home of the Bulgarians with how this problem is considered in modern historical science, as well as, clarify some important points, show that Father Paisii's ideas could be confirmed, and, therefore, those ideas had very real reasons.

In the XVIII century, Paisii Hilendarski (1722–1773) wrote “Slavic-Bulgarian History” [6], which became an important event in the formation of the Bulgarians historical self-awareness. It is difficult to distinguish between the historical and mythological components in his work, but the influence of this book on public consciousness is strengthened by the authority of Father Paisii, who was canonized by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1962.

In this work Paisii narrates about the ancestral home of the Bulgarians. However, the uncertainty and multiple meaning of this message allow us to build pseudo-historical and pseudo-scientific theories. In particular, the science fiction writer A.A. Bushkov builds his own concept of the identity of Russia and the Horde on the basis of the historical Father Paisii's report about the ancestral home of the Bulgarians [7]. This circumstance emphasizes how it is important to make the historical and scientific analysis of Paisii Hilendarski's message.

The Father Paisia Hilendarski's writing "Slavic-Bulgarian History" itself is quite voluminous, but we are primarily interested in the passage below. Spelling is saved in accordance with the edition in 1914 year [6].

«У Московскаѣ земля . има некоа страна зове се Скандавиа(.)
 Како се разсежли испрво . вни що били на вна страна звали ги скандавлане . Сѣни скандавлане по много лета и време кога се умножили на вна земля . дигнали се шт вна земля и штишли . кѣ западу и нашли тамо земля по краи Сѣкианѣ . море(.) Назива се . вно море Балтское и Помариское . И населили се тамо покраи Брандибура вни скандавлане а по то име осандавлане после нарекли вни родѣ славнѣ и до днесѣ (.) ... Кога се населили по вна земля краи немци и брандибури по некое време вѣстали шт нихѣ много народѣ и пошли . паки вѣ землю Московскую но москалы и руси не пускали ихѣ вѣ землю нихну и било воска и бранѣ велика(.) Ту шдолели славни на брани и влезли паки вѣ вну землю и населили се по краи великиѣ реки Болги коѣ течетѣ шт южна страна на северѣ през московска држава и входить вѣ Окианѣ море поради таѣ река Болга нарекли се болгари вни словянѣ и до днѣсѣ и били вѣ вна земля за много лета и времена до лето шт рождества Христово т о и (378)» [6, с. 11].

Translation from old Bulgarian is made by O. V. Borysova.

"There is a certain country in Moscow land, which is called Scandavia. Those who were in that country were called Scandals, at the time when there was an initial resettlement. They, the Scandavlians, as they multiplied on this territory after many years and times, moved from their land and went to the west, and found there land on the edge of the Ocean-Sea. This sea was called the Baltskoie and Pomoriskoie. The Scandavlians settled there near Brandibur, and according to this "Osandavlians" later called the gender - the Slavs, and till nowadays ... When they inhabited the land next to the Germans and the Brandiburs, a lot of people rose from them over the time, and went to the land of Moscow, but the Moscovites and Rus did not allow them to be on their land and there was a great war and battle. In that battle, the Slavs defeated and entered that land and inhabited it to the edge of the large river Bolga, which flows from the southern part to the north through the Moscow state and flows into *the Ocean -Sea*. Therefore, of that river Bolga, those Slavs were called Bulgarians, and so to this day and they were in the land for many years and times until the year 378 from the birth of Christ".

“Researchers often doubted on the reliability of this message, detecting it just as “an element of fabulous fiction”. However, we should not be confused by obvious anachronisms, as they reflect the state of historical self-awareness of the XVIII century. At the same time, we can compare the historical and geographical facts, that we know, with the Paisii Hilendarski's message.

Currently, almost no one considers the Volga region as the ancestral home of the Bulgarians (Bulgars). Adherents of the Turkic theory of the origin of the ancestors of the Bulgarians think that the Volga region is only the territory, which the nomadic Turkic-Bulgarian tribes passed on their way from the steppes of modern Kazakhstan to the Ciscaucasia. Later, after the fall of Kubrat Great Bulgaria, under the Khazar attacks, part of the Bulgarians, led by one of the sons of Kubrat Khan-Kotrag, settled in the Volga region and founded the Volga Bulgaria. This information is based on the message of several Byzantine sources, the main of which are the writings of the above mentioned Theophanes the Confessor and Patriarch Nicephorus [1].

However, Paisii Hilendarski, only for his well-known reasons, neglected the information from these sources. Instead, he proposed another version, different from the generally accepted one. In his book, the Moscovites, and the Russ, and the Slavs, and the Germans, and the Brandenburgers act jointly. At the beginning of our era, of course, these ethnonyms did not exist, but it does not mean at all that the events reported by Father Paisii could not take place. In his book, the Slavs are in conflict with the Germans, Brandenburgers, Moscovites and Russ, some of which later used the name of the Bulgarians - from the Bolga River. It is likely that Father Paisii did not mean the Volga River at all, as it might seem at first glance in assonance. It is possible that it was precisely the assonance in the name that later led to confusion.

The Paisii Hilendarski's book was written in the XVIII century. To make the figurative presentation and process of reading convenience for the reading public Father Paisii combines diverse of geographical and political concepts as well as the titles of bygone times. This partly explains some of the alleged inconsistencies. For example, this: “In Moscow land there is a certain country named Scandavia”. Exactly this name, as well as the mentioned fact that the inhabitants began to be

called Scandavals, creates confusion in the interpretation of the text. By assonance, Scandavia begins to be identified with Scandinavia. However, even here could be hesitation that in the Father Paisii Hilendarski's writing Scandavia is identical to Scandinavia or the ancient Scandia (Scandzi) of early medieval authors.

We can suppose that, using the name "Moscow land" Father Paisii intentionally avoided the word Russia (Rusia), although he could not know it, because one of the sources for writing his work was Orbini's book, published in Russia [8]. Perhaps Father Paisii tried to distinguish between the definitions of contemporary Russia and the land of the ancient people, which in the XVIII century was within Russia territory. Part of this land was Scandavia. One way or another, Paisii Hilendarski clearly distinguished between Moscow land and the country of Scandavia.

Based on the fact that they are not speaking about Scandinavia, it would be logical to look for traces of the ethnonym "Scandavia" on the map of Russia. Hydrography, or rather to say Hydrotoponymy, may provide rich material for this.

In the Volga region there are a lot of hydronyms that have the root "*cand*" or assonance to it - "*cond*".

Small Kandabulak is a river in Russia, flowing in the Samara and Orenburg regions. The estuary is located in 29 km along the left bank of the Kandabulak River. The length of the river is 12 km.

Kandabulak is a river in Russia, flowing in the Samara and Orenburg regions. The estuary is in 85 km along the left bank of the Kondurcha River. The river is 40 km long.

Kondurcha is a river in Russia, flowing along the southwestern side of the Bugulminsko-Belebeyevskaya highland, in the Samara Region and Tatarstan.

Konduzla is a river in Russia, flowing in the Samara and Orenburg regions. The estuary is in 77 km on the right bank of the Borovka River. The river is 34 km long.

Kandalka is a river in Russia, flowing in the Ulyanovsk region. The estuary is in 23 km along the left bank of the Main River. The length of the river is 21 km.

Almost all of these rivers are concentrated on the territory of the present Samara region. As you know, the Volga region and Samara region were not the indigenous lands of the Moscow state, although at the time of Paisii Hilendarski these lands already became the part of Russia. It was noted above that Father Paisii deliberately used the term "Moscow land" to distinguish within the modern Russia of the indigenous lands of the Moscovites from other territories.

The concentration of hydronyms with the root "kand" in a relatively limited territory may be the basis for the assumption that Paisii Hilendarski placed Scandavia somewhere in the territory of the present Samara region.

We find confirmation of such supposition in the V. V. Sedov's writings: "The first small group of immigrants from the Volyn territory and Upper Dniester territory appeared in the Middle Volga region as early as the 2nd century BC. The traces of their residence are the Slavkin type monuments (in one of the settlements near the village of Slavkino of the Sergievskii district of the Samara region), known in a small region of the river Kondurcha North-Easter of the Samara bend" [2, p. 246-247]. We can assume that Father Paisii writes about them: "When there was an initial resettlement, who was in this country were called Scandavals." So, it is exactly here, according to the ideas of Paisii Hilendarski, the primary focus of the settlement of the Slavs in the Volga region is localized, which coincides with the testimony of V.V. Sedov.

It is more difficult to explain the further Father Paisii's narrative about the resettlement from Scandavia territory to the West: "... and they found land there on the edge of *the Ocean-Sea*. It was called the Baltskoie Sea and the Pomoriskoie Sea." The purpose of this statement might be the explanation of the Slavs appearance in the Baltic lands. The Polish historian Kazimir Moshinskii also spoke about the movement of the Slavs from their eastern ancestral home to the Visla-Oder interfluvial area [9, p. 211, 232]. Also, the famous Maria Gimbutas writes in the first section "The Origin of the Slavs," her book "Slavs. Sons of

Perun”: “ The origins of the Slavs should be sought on the territory stretching from the Oder River basin in Central Europe, in the West to the Ural and Central Asia in the east” [10, p. 18]. The Polish researcher Stefan Varhol, in his turn, places the ancestral home of the Slavs in the upper Don and Dnieper [11, p. 561]. All of the above mentioned authors speak about an earlier, prehistoric time of the Slavic people`s migration to the West long before the appearance of the Bulgarians, but it should be borne in mind that Father Paisii could allow the displacement or combination of different historical and chronological lines in his presentation.

Let us turn to the next passage from the Father Paisii`s: book “When they inhabited the land next to the Germans and the Brandiburs, many people rose from them over time, and went to the land of Moscow ...”. That is, according to him, the Slavs and Germans lived in the neighborhood, after that the Slavs were made leave part of their territory. The reason could be the invasion of the German tribe Goths. V.V. Sedov writes about it in this way: “It is quite obviously that the spread of settlements of the Lbischenskii type in the Samara Volga region was due to a new migration wave of population. G.I. Matveieva believes that immigrants were representatives of late Zarubinetes antiquities, but does not exclude the penetration in III century Cherniakhov`s population from the Upper Dniester and Volyn regions” [2, p. 247].

According to V.V. Sedov, there was one more wave of resettlement: “The third, the most powerful wave of population migration from the Cherniakhov area to the Middle Volga region is dated the end of the IV century” [2, p. 248]. The scientist points out the ethnic kinship of various waves of immigrants.

The following lines should be highlighted in Paisii Hilendarski`s message: “They, the Scandavians, as they multiplied on this land after many years and times, moved from their land and moved west”. Paisii Hilendarski here speaks about the people resettlement, which began after the growth of their number. Due to overpopulation, some of the inhabitants were made resettle, as it was in antiquity. Those who returned, according to the Father Paisii`s report, called themselves not

Scandinavians, but Slavs. It could be supposed that Paisii Hilendarski meant that the rest of Scandinavians did not change their name.

It should be borne in mind the fact of belonging the representatives to the Zarubinet's culture as well as Chernyakhov culture, to the Slavs. It is quite controversial in modern science, but at the moment it is being recognized the presence of a Slavic element to some extent. M. I. Zhih identifies part of the Imenkovites with the ethnonym Slovene, but V.V. Sedov suggests that some Slavic-speaking Imenkovites were called the north / northerners [3, p. 197]. M. I. Zhih draws the following conclusion, regarding V.V. Sedov's assumption: "The conclusions that some groups of the Imenkovski population were called Slovenes and Northerners are quite acceptable. It is hardly ever to give any other convincing explanation for the mention of the people of *S.L. Viyun* in a letter to the Khazar Tsar Joseph, who clearly localizes them in the Middle Volga. In the same way, it is difficult to explain the Volga ethnonym *S.v.r.*, mentioned there, which appears to be "extra" — the Suvars are named in the same list of Volga peoples. If V.V. Sedov's hypothesis about the genetic connection between the Imenkovskaia and Volyntsevskaja cultures is true, then we might say that the appearance of the ethnonym is connected with the migration of the "Imenkovites". This ethnonym supplanted the ancient local Anta name in the Dnieper Left Bank region" [4, p. 142]. It is possible that the representatives of the Imenkovskaia culture were linguistically Slavs, but had different ethnonyms.

It could be assumed that on their way to the Volga region, the settlers were forced to be engaged in military clashes with the tribes, which Paisii Hilendarski calls "Rus". We are talking about those Rus whose presence in the Volga region is also reported by Ahmed ibn Fadlan the Medieval Arab author [12, p. 142].

In the anonymous Persian essay "Modzhmal at-tavarikh" ("Collection of Stories") of 1126 y., several interesting messages are given, and among them there is this: "And the Slav came to Rus to settle there. Rus answered him that this place is cramped (for the two of us). The same answer was given by Kimari and Khazar. Between them a quarrel and a battle began, and the Slav fled and reached the place

where the land of the Slavs is now. Then he said: “I’ll settle here and easily take revenge on them” [Cit. By: 13, p. 297].

In fact, the Persian source says that the Slav escaped, although Father Paisii reports that the Slavs won the battle. However, this fact does not affect the fact that in the first and in the second cases, the Slav settled on another land, and did not come back. It can also be assumed that the Rus, who are mentioned by Paisii Hilendarski, to some extent, are connected with the hypothetical Russian Kagan, whose existence is reported by Ye. S. Galkina [14].

Paisii Hilendarski tells about the events after this battle: “The Slavs won in that battle and entered that land and inhabited it to the edge of the big river Bolga, which flows from the southern country to the north through the Moscow state and flows into the *Ocean-Sea*. Because of that river of Bolga, those Slavs called themselves Bulgarians ...”. That is, the Slavs settled on the banks of the Bolga River, which flows from south to north. This refutes the identification of the Bolga River with the Volga River, as the Volga River flows from North to South.

However, the statement that the Bolga flows into *the “Ocean-Sea”* indicates it as the Volga River. If we speak about North in direction to Scandinavia, then the Slavs, going along the river, would get not to the Ocean, but only to the Baltic, which is not the same thing. In this case, according to Paisii Hilendarski *the “Ocean-Sea”* is the Caspian. And if he nonetheless claims that the Bolga River flows from South to North, then we can talk about one of the Volga tributaries, which has a northern direction.

For example, it might be Kandalka – a small shallow river, flowing from South to North, which is the left tributary of the Main River. In explaining the choice of this hydrotponym, we use the root “*cand*”, from which Father Paisii turned to the name Skanda. The Kandabulak River has the assonance name as well. In addition, its name includes the word “*bulak*” (translated from Turkic it means “river”, “brook”, “stream”). The Kandabulak River does not flow from South to North, but from South-east to North-west. These rivers are not usually as large as the Volga, but they all flow through the territory where a Slavic ethnic language component exists.

V. F. Butba writes about the possibility of the origin of the ethnonym of the Bulgar from the name of the river, in Turkic – “Bulak”: “However, the initial semantics of the basis of the “Bulga”-“Bulag” is clarified with a wider linguistic comparison: written-Mongolian bulag, Mongolian-Buryat “*bulag*”, Kalmyk “*bulg*” – it means “key”, “source”, “spring”” [5, p. 51]. Sadovnikova I. I. also writes: “This lexema is also a geographical appellative, borrowed from the Even language, where it sounds like “*bolka*”, “*bulak*” and means “*source*” [15, p. 54].

In the Turkic monuments of the X–XI centuries (“Suvarnaprabhasa”, “Qtadgu biliq”, Mahmud Kashgarskii) and subsequent centuries (Uigurskii periodicals) the same appellative is found in the form of “*bulag*” – “*source*”, “*channel*” and “*aryk*”. This appellative exists in modern Turkic languages; because of it can be assumed that the bulag / bulaq lexeme is the Turkic-Mongolian basis or an ancient borrowing from Mongolian into Turkic languages. Form “*bulga*” – “*mix*”, “*stir up*” is detected in it [5, p. 51].

Considering the V. F. Butba's opinion, it can be assumed that the hydrotoponym “Bulga” could be applied not only to the Volga River, but also to its tributary. If we take into account the widespread opinion about the pre-Türkic Huns language, then there is no reason to abandon the possible Turkic hydrotoponym “Bulga”. Moreover, the ethnonym Bulgars / Bulgars based on the “Bulg” (river) could be given to the population from the outside, and later applied by neighbors and the representatives themselves. Moreover, a change of language must not compulsory happen.

It would be interesting to take into account the message of Ahmed ibn Fadlan about the existence of three tribes in the Volga Bulgaria, which he calls as-Sakaliba, that is, the Slavs [12]. At the same time, there are some references to the Unogundurs, from which it follows that they should be distinguished from the Bulgars in the Volga region. It should also be borne in mind that after the fall of Great Bulgaria in the Volga region came a *navesu*, they are Kutrigurs, whose identity with the Bulgarians has also no consensus.

Comparing the message of Paisii Khilendarski with the opinions of some modern scholars, we can conclude that there were likely three groups of Slavic population in the Volga region during the early Middle

Ages. O. Paisii Khilendarski gave a figurative picture of the Slavic settlement of the Volga region, which partially overlaps with the judgments of modern scholars.

Unfortunately, the significance of the work of Paisii Hilendarski was underestimated in a scientific sense, and this should be reviewed. His “Slavic-Bulgarian History” is not only the result of important ideological work for the formation of the Bulgarian national idea, but also a historical document, the meaning of which should be fully rethought in the nearest future.

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