

THE FIRST TURKIC TRIBES TO SETTLE IN THE BALKANS BETWEEN THE IVTH AND VIITH CENTURIES

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Abstract

As of the IVth century, the Turks were forced to leave their homeland in the Turkestan region due to various reasons including natural disasters, population increase, insufficient grazing lands, political disputes, severe external pressure and the idea of world dominance. The Turkic tribes who departed from Asia towards the west have asserted their dominance on the steppes of the northern Black Sea region for a long time. Especially after the arrival of the Huns to the region, numerous tribes had to leave their homeland, which led to the “Great Migration of the Peoples”. Between the IVth and VIIth centuries, the Huns, Sabars, Carpathians, Ogur groups, Avars and Bulgars have founded great states in the large geography that also includes the Danube River basin. The Turks have continued their rule in Eastern Europe for a long time and made a great contribution to the transformation in the socio-cultural structure of the region. Since they found the Balkan Region suitable for their social, economic and political life, they wanted to settle here permanently. In this study, we would like to present information about the Turkish tribes, who settled in the area between the IVth and VIIth centuries.

Keywords: *Turk, History, Geography, Eastern Europe, Balkans*

Method

The primary focus of our study is the migration of the Turks. Secondly, the brief political history, chronology of the settlements and the military activities of the Turkic tribes who have arrived in this region have been studied in a chronological manner. Finally, our work is concluded with a general discussion and evaluation on the origins of the traces of the Turks in the Balkan Region.

The archaeological studies, which have come a long way since the dawn of the XXth century, have supplied us important evidence about the Turkish settlements. With the help of the archaeological findings, we can trace and locate the historical settlements of the Huns, Avars and Bulgars, who have founded powerful political states in the past. It is already known that the Turks desired to become permanent in every place they migrated to. Thus, they have undertaken intense construction activities (Barkan, 2002) as a token of this effort and reached agreements in line with their own basic principles in order to cohabit with the local tribes. As we all know, turning a piece of land into one's own country and founding a state on this land depends on certain conditions. First of all, there must be cultivable and fertile agricultural lands, together with a group of people who will cultivate these lands in order to fulfil the need for basic nourishment and financially support the state with the taxes they pay. In addition, a strong army (Pritsak, 2002) to protect all these is indispensable for the political power to survive. Indeed, the number of the Turkish states reaching one hundred and twenty throughout the history proves the importance assigned by the tribes of the steppe to the state and organisation.

Certain authors specialised in Turkish history state that certain Turkic groups had arrived in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the centuries BC. The Turkish origins of the Etruscans who once lived in Italy are still debated in the studies. The existence of certain Turkic groups within this state is pointed out by certain linguistic, epigraphic, cultural and economic comparisons. However, it would not be accurate to regard them as the first Turkish state to be founded in the Balkans or Europe (Gürsoy, 2008). Among these tribes, the most prominent ones are the Scythians. If the Scythians who were active in a geography comprising Eastern Europe and partly the Balkans in the centuries BC were of Turkish origin is yet to be cleared. Based on the archaeological data and the similarities in the language and art, some authors claim that they were of Turkish origin. Other scientists accept the fact that the Scythians were a tribe from the steppes of Asia, but reject their connection with the Turks due to the differences in the racial features, attitude and the differences in the political organisation of the state. However, it is certain that there was a large Turkish population within the Scythian state and the studies support this idea (Grakov, 2002). Thus, if we accept the Scythian tribe to be of Turkic origin, we may claim that the Scythians were the first to arrive in the above-mentioned regions. However, when we consider the lack of evidence proving the Turkic origins of the Scythians, we may focus on the Huns as the first tribe of Turkic origin to arrive in the region.

Within the scope of our study, the first group to appear in the whole of Europe were the Huns. A tribe of Turkic origin (Kafesoğlu, 2007), the Huns were present in the

political geography of Europe with the European Huns as of 375 and they had threatened the west with their dominance. In the records of Marcellinus, the Huns are described as wild and shapeless, monstrous people (Marcellinus, 1952). This information supplied by the Byzantine source describes a fearsome enemy faced for the first time and it is obviously deliberately exaggerated. In fact, the Huns have not even stayed for a century in the region. The reflections of the profound influence of the Huns, who had the dominant state of the region for approximately 80 to 90 years, on the ruling classes and the intelligentsia of Byzantium and even the West are still surviving today.

When the Huns arrived on the banks of the Volga River in the IVth century, the Goths - a Germanic tribe - were already in the region. The Eastern Goths (Ostrogoths) were settled between the Don and Dnieper Rivers, while the Western Goths (Visigoths) were settled more westwards (Howorth, 1873). Further west, the Gepids were residing in Transylvania and Galicia, and the Vandals had their settlements in today's Hungary. Defeating first the Huns, they have overcome the Alans (Czeledy, 1998) followed by the Eastern Goths and Western Goths. Soon, they managed to become the single dominant power in the vast lands in northern Black Sea region. These successes helped the Huns to move rapidly westwards to attack the Roman provinces around the Danube, which were their real rivals (Pritsak, 2002).

Chased by the Huns, the Goths were scattered around Thrace and the Balkans for some time. They gained the hostility of Byzantium since they pillaged their lands and destroyed the whole Thrace in the year 377. In 378, cooperating with the Huns in the battle of Hadrianopolis, the Hun-Goth-Alan triumvirate took the control of the Balkans for a year. Being the Roman Emperor in 379, Theodosius I struggled with these tribes for a year and managed to disperse them. In the era when these incidents occurred, a part of the Huns were settled in Pannonia. During the 400s, the Huns captured the Carpathian basin and their power was felt between the Danube and Tisza rivers. However, the centre of the Hun state was still in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea. Defeated in their struggle with the Persians in 420, the Huns took benefit of the conflict between Byzantium and the Persians and entered Thrace. They took the central Danube and western Carpathian regions under their dominance (Heather, 1995). In the year 425, the centre of the Hun State was in the region between the rivers Körös and Maros. As of this date, Attila's uncle Rua became the ruler. In 430, the main headquarters of the Huns was located in the lower Danube region.

In the year 433, in return to Rua's assistance to Aethius and the warm relations established, Aethius gave the Pannonia Secunda region of Pannonia to the Huns.

This was an important diplomatic victory on behalf of the Huns, because this place had become a permanent home for their nomadic people. This was also a region that had a great influence on their culture and lifestyle (Howarth). As we can see, due to the people who were spread over a large area, the borders of the lands forming the western wing of the Hun State had reached the Danube in the south and Transylvania in the west. The Hun state reached its widest borders during the reign of Oktar (dec. 434) and Rua (dec. 435). Attila and his brother Bleda inherited this legacy. The main centre of the area under the rule of the Huns, which had already started to expand during the reign of Uldin at the beginning of the Vth century, is described as today's Ukraine (Baştav, 2002).

In the year 438, the Huns supporting Litorius of Gallia, who was fighting against the Visigoths, besieged the city of Toulouse together with his army. Nevertheless, the army disintegrated. In 441, Attila captured south-eastern Europe until Thrace in the Balkans (Davis, 1999) and widened the borders of his lands until the Rhine and Vistula rivers (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002). Following the death of Bleda, Attila became the sole ruler in 445 (Orkun, 1933). During his first campaign to the Balkans (441), he took Singidunum (Belgrade), Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), Pannonia Secunda and Naissus (Niš) under his command (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002). It is reported in the sources that after capturing Pannonia, Attila had a residence surrounded by high walls built for himself in the Danube region and this place was called Budavár in Hungarian, and Etzelburg in German (Rady). After conquering Ratiaria during his second campaign to the Balkans (447), following the battles fought within the borders of today's Bulgaria, he went on to capture Serdica (Sofia), Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Durostorum (Silistra), Marcianapolis (Preslav), Arcadiapolis (Luleburgaz), Kallipolis (Gallipoli) and Sestos (Akbas Port) (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002).

During his Roman campaign (451) (Goffart, 2009), Attila also took important fortresses and towns under his sovereignty, among which Aquileia and Altinum can be mentioned. He also destroyed cities like Padua or Concordia. Soon after, he continued to Ticinum (Pavia) via Vicentia (Vicenza), Verona, Brexia (Brescia), Bergomum (Bergamo) and Mediolanum (Milan). This rapid progress of the Hun army had frightened the Gauls so much, that Emperor Valentinianus fled his palace in Ravenna. However, when Attila was at the point where the Po and Mincio rivers intersected, he accepted the Roman envoys. And although he was probably on the eve of great glory and power, the envoys convinced him to retreat, which was a great victory on behalf of the Romans (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002).

Only Paris and Troyes remained unaffected from Attila's conquests in the Gallia region. According to a legend, Paris was saved thanks to the prayers of a maiden (Davis, 1999). Laying siege to the well-fortified city of Metz in Gallia, Attila

crossed the Rhine on the 7th of April in 451 and conquered the town. In the chronicles of Grégoire de Tours, the Huns who arrived in Metz after leaving Pannonia are mentioned to have entered and destroyed Metz the night before Easter. Increasing his pace with his army, Attila arrived in Reims only to see that the inhabitants of the city had deserted their homes and fled in fear. Thus, he captured the city without any resistance. Soon after, he besieged the south-western town of Orleans near river Loire, but he could not get past the fortified castle of this strategically important city (Barthélemy, 1870). He lifted the siege on 14th April 451 and set forth towards the Catalaunum valley to prepare for a battle. This region is on the banks of the river Seine, close to the Champagne plains and a short distance away from the town of Troyes (Davis, 1999). Neither the Roman-Visigothic alliance, nor Attila's army managed to win the battle fought here.

In 452, Attila attacked the province of Venetia in Italy and captured and pillaged the town of Aquileia, which was surrounded by a great wall (Le Goff, 2000). From here, he progressed to Altinum, Padua, Brescia, Bergamo and Milan. However, when Byzantium started to threaten the centre of the Huns on the Hungarian plains, he had to return home. As Attila was preparing a great campaign against the Sassanids, he suddenly passed away due to a severe bleeding from his nose and mouth as he was in his tent during his wedding night in the spring of the year 453. After Attila, the foreign elements of the state have rebelled and left the Hun alliance. Thus, the state of the Huns broke down under the intense pressures and attacks. Attila's elder son Dengizich was killed in the course of these clashes. The remaining Huns, who had united under the leadership of Attila's younger son Irnek, had to withdraw to the regions they came from 80 years ago. During the reign of Attila, the commercial relations with Byzantium were developed and the Moravian valley of Silesia and the city of Viminakion in the Danube basin had become important commercial centres (Baştav, 2002). Although Bleda became the ruler after Rua's death, the Hun state was practically ruled by Attila and his encampment was in this location between Bucharest and Ploesti within the borders of today's Romania. The borders of the state extended to the Alps in the west and the Baltic Sea in the north. The era between the years 433–471 was the highlight of Attila's reign and the Hun state. The borders of the state reached their apex during this period (Gracanin, 2003).

As the Huns started to dominate the region, other ethnic groups and their subordinate tribes started to settle in Pannonia at an increased pace. They initially settled on the right banks of river Tisza, followed by Banat (Baştav, 2002). Due to the inadequacy of the sources and studies focussing on the history of the Huns, the exact location of the capital of the Huns during the reign of Attila is yet to be

discovered. As briefly mentioned above, the common view of the authors is that the capital was located in the region between the Tisza and Körös rivers in Hungary (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002). In the light of the archaeological data, it has been suggested that Rua's, Bleda's or Attila's headquarters was in the Middle Tisza region, between the southern bank of the Körös River and the north of Maros (Bona, 2002). However, it is known for sure that the main headquarters of the Huns was in the central Danube region. During this period, the Ostrogoths were settled in Pannonia in the west of the Danube, while the Gepids were in the east of the River. In the western wing of the empire, the Thuringians, Saxons and the Allemands, Burgunds and Ripuarians - unitedly known as the Franks - were taken under the sovereignty of the Huns. Thus, the area of the political sovereignty of the state had reached the Rhine. Between 454 and 464, the Hun army is known to have settled in the region between today's Bucharest, Ploesti and river Buzău (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2002).

The first home of the Huns in Europe was probably along the banks of the River Dnieper. The first settlement of the Huns in Eastern Europe as of 270 AD was today's Romania, Moldova and Transylvania where the Visigoths lived. This region is observed to have hosted various Turkic tribes for centuries beginning from this date. The Carpathian Mountains-Transylvania-Danube basin can be emphasized as the most important centre for the Turkization of this region and the preservation of the traces remaining from the Turkic tribes, because these regions are primarily on migration routes. Also, there are areas adorned with wide and fertile plains and long rivers. Consequently, the region has been a focus of interest for the Turkic tribes, and the Turks swung between Europe and the Caucasus for centuries.

After the Huns, another Turkic tribe called the Sabars started to show its presence in the borders of Eastern Europe reaching the Caucasus. The Sabars, who are mentioned in the records of Priscus between the years 461-465 for the first time, gained power in 503 by taking the groups of Bulgars in the north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus under their sovereignty. Towards the end 515, when the Sabars settled along the Kuban River under the leadership of their ruler Balak (dec. around 520), the attention of both Byzantine and the Sassanids was drawn towards them. It has to be underlined that according to the information given by Byzantine historians, the high-quality technique and the efficiency of the Sabar warfare caused such an interest in the west that they saw an alliance with this tribe as indispensable (Golden, 2002). Thus, the Sabars took advantage of this opportunity and formed alternate alliances with Byzantium or the Sassanids according to their own interests. In the year 528, with the help of various gifts, Byzantine Emperor Justinianus (527-565) made a pact with Balak's widow Boaris - the female commander of an army of 100,000 soldiers - against the Sassanids. After this date, the Sabars were observed to

sustain great losses in the struggles they engaged in and have lost their quality as a military force in time. In 557, the Avar armies progressing from the east towards the west dealt a strong blow to the Sabars and their living areas came under the control of the Gokturks. The Sabars in southern Russia were also destroyed by the Byzantines in 576 (Karatay, 2010).

The first information on the Avars, who were another Turkic tribe settled in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, are found in the work of Priskos in relation with the events of 461-465 (Priskos, Fr.40) and in the source of Zacharias Rhetor from the year 550. In the mid-VIth century, the Avars migrated from Asia towards the west and crossed the Yayik (Ural) River (Boya, 1967). Escaping from the Gokturks in the wake of their victory against the Juan-Juans in 552, the Avars became neighbours with Byzantium. A group of 20,000 Avars who refused to accept the sovereignty of the Gokturks marched towards the west (Mangaltepe, 2009-1) until they reached the Azak-Northern Caucasus region. In line with the ancient Turkic mentality, they became organised to found a state and establish the peace in the geography they lived in.

Indeed, the Avars reached this target in a very short time and wanted to become neighbours with Byzantium, probably aiming to increase their power by sharing a border with a powerful state. Therefore, with the help of Sarosius, who was the king of the Alans (During this era, the Alans were living in the north-western part of the Caucasian Mountains), they established contact with emperor Justinianus I and requested an area to settle (558) (Mangaltepe, 2009-1). Although this request was initially refused, due to the border violations of certain small groups, Byzantium had to make a pact with the Avars. In return, they were given the duty to establish security in this area. During this time, the Avars were joined by the resident Turkic groups remaining from the Ogurs such as Kutrigurs, Utrigurs and others; while they recruited numerous people of Mongolian, Alan or Slavic origins.

Beginning from 560 and after a long struggle, the Avars managed to settle the regions between two powerful states - Byzantium in the east and the empire of the Franks in the west - that were the dominant economic and military powers of the region. Considering the conditions of the era, this region would give the Avars the opportunity to become a large state or even an empire. In 562, the Avars sent envoys to Justinianus in order to request an area to make their homeland. The Emperor wanted to settle the Avars in the region called Second Pannonia where the Heruls were living. The Avars refused this offer, since they had their eyes set on the Little Scythia region. However, this spot could put the Thracian part of Byzantium in peril and accelerate the occupation of these regions. The Avars' secret intention was to cross the Danube in order to attack Byzantine lands with a large army, but

thanks to the warning of the young commander Justinos, Justinianus ordered the Avar envoys to be detained and thus destroyed their plans and prevented their attack (Mangaltepe, 2009-1).

Bayan Khagan proved himself with the victory won against the Frank king Sigibert in 565 (Mangaltepe, 2009-2). In the year 568, when the new emperor Justinos (565-578) delayed the tax he had to pay, the Mid-Carpathian region was captured by the Avars (Pavillon des Arts, 1986). Thus, the Avars completed the conquest of the Central Danube region in 568 (Kardoss, 1990). Immediately afterwards, they first took the Gepids under their command, and within the same year, forced the Langobards - who were their allies against the Gepids - to migrate to Italy. In the same period, Sirmium was besieged for the first time, but the Avars had to leave the region without any gain after the Khagan's negotiation with Bonos (568).

The fertility of the lands under Avar sovereignty, their location on the trade routes in the east-west and north-south axes, and a possible Gokturk attack from the north-east led the Avars to think on a larger scale. Bayan, the Khagan of the Avars, moved the capital of the state to a location between the Danube and Tisza rivers (Moravcsik, 1958), which would have a great strategic importance in the conquests he would embark on in the future. In accordance with the covenant they made with Byzantium, the southern parts of the Danube were left to the Avars in 571 (Chaliand, 1998). Thus, they established their sovereignty on the greater part of the lands that belong to Hungary and Serbia today. Indeed, the recent discovery of more than 15,000 Avar graves in Central Europe also supports this theory (Rasonyi, 2006). Especially the archaeological studies in Hungary are of utmost importance in order to discover the Avar settlements and their culture (Liptak, 1983). It is observed that certain towns in the Danube basin frequently changed hands between 570 and 582. After long struggles, the Avars finally captured the vitally important Singidinum (Belgrade) and Sirmium (Sremska-Mitrovica/Serbia)¹ where the majority of the archaeological remains from late Avar period originate from. Thus, they made Pannonia, where they would live until the IXth century, their homeland (Pohl, 2002). Sirmium was a region with great strategic importance for the Avars. The vicinity was sheltered and secure. The place was at a central location that the Avars could use as their base during their raids on Byzantium and carry out their military activities (Mangaltepe, 2009-1). So, this gigantic fortress protected by the

¹ The meaning of Sirmium, which takes its name from River Sava, is close to "fluent, trickling, flowing". This place was located in the region known as Lower Pannonia and later as Pannonia Secunda. The population of the city, which is within the borders of Serbia today, is approximately 40,000. The American archaeologists who made excavations in the region after 1970 applied pressure on the administrators of the town to move the residents outside the city in order to fully reveal the old city and expand the excavation site.

Sava, Danube and Drava rivers and the Vuka marshlands fell into the hands of solely the Avars. In the year 584, they captured the cities of Singidinum, Viminacium (Kostolac/Serbia) and Augusta (Stara Zagora/Bulgaria) (Mangaltepe, 2009-1). From this date on, the new master of the Balkans, the Khagan, would live here. In the autumn of 586, Khagan and his army went on to capture the important settlements of Rataria (Archar/Bulgaria), Bononia (Vidin), Aquis (Gamzigrad/Serbia), Durostorum (Silistra), Zaldapa (a town near Laznica on the border between Romania and Bulgaria), Panassa (probably Kamcija at River Pannysus), Marcianopolis (Devnya/Bulgaria) and Tropaion (between Durostorum and Constanza/Romania). The Avars laid siege to Thessalonica in 586 and captured Macedonia and its vicinity, and Thessalonica together with the Slavs (Moravcsik, 1958). In 588, the Avars passed Drizipera (a fortress near today's Buyuk Karistiran in Thrace) and progressed until Perinthus (Heraclea Thraciae). A while later, they retreated in return to a high annual tax (Mangaltepe, 2009-1). During the reign of Bayan Khagan, the borders of the state expanded from river Dnieper to Elba; from the shores of the North Sea to the Adriatic. In 617, The Avar-Slav troops moving from the Balkans towards the south ransacked and plundered every single city on their route. Especially Thessaly, Epirus, Thrace and Thessalonica faced great danger. Together with the Slavs, the Avars went so far as to reach Dalmatia and the central regions of Greece (Moravcsik, 1958). These united Avar-Slav troops have returned with thousands of prisoners and great bounty, and presented these to the khagan of the Avars (Baynes, 1912).

The most important milestone in the history of Avars is their siege of Istanbul in allegiance with the Sassanids in 626 (Mangaltepe, 2006). During this event which terrorised Byzantium, the emperor contemplated escaping to Carthage, while the people took refuge in the churches and prayed and sang hymns for days. However, the lack of the much-needed naval support to the Avar army which was successful in the ground operations (Maurice, 1984) and the inefficiency of the Slavic navy paved the way for their defeat. In consequence, the Avar State lost its power, the dependent tribes left the allegiance. The Bulgars took action in order to found an independent state. Still, the Avars continued their presence until the year 805 and were subjected to the ruthless religious wars of the Frank king Carl the Great, which led to the total surrender of the country and its capital. The scattered groups of the Avars advanced partly towards Great Bulgaria and partly to eastern Hungary and the Balkans. Consequently, these groups were assimilated within the dominant ethnic groups, lost their Turk identity and converted to Christianity.

The influence and culture of the Avars has been living in the Balkan countries for centuries. The highest military titles of "Ban", "Boyar" and "Yugruş" in Croatia and

the names of the cities such as “Navarino” (Avarino) in Greece and “Antivari” in Albania carry the traces of the Avars. But the Avars have not only influenced the allied ethnic groups in the political and administrative aspects, but they also contributed to their artistic, economic and military advancement. Especially the introduction of the stirrup to the west has opened a new era in the military sense. Besides, they helped the Slavic and Germanic groups to adopt a settled lifestyle and get organised, already drawing the ethnic map of Central and Eastern Europe during the VIth -VIIth centuries. Indeed, as Johannes of Syria stated in 584: “The Slavs, who once feared to leave the forest, now got used to fighting and have gold, silver and herds of horses thanks to the Avars...”.

Another Turkic tribe active in Eastern Europe were the Bulgars. The main elements of the state founded by Kubrat (Fine, 2011) around 635 consisted of Ogur groups. During the clashes that followed Attila’s death, his second son Dengizich was slain. Subsequently, a group of Huns under the command of his younger brother Irnek left Central Europe and united with the other Turkic tribes on the shores of the Black Sea. These Turks, who were living in the steppes of the northern Black Sea region in the tribes called Saragurs, Bittigurs, Ultingurs, Kutrigurs, Onugurs and Utigurs and were known under the general name of “Ogur” until then, have come to be known as “Bulgars after this. The Ogurs in the west are the kins of the Oguz in the east. The difference in the names occurred due to the transformation of the Z-sound in Turkish, into R in the Ogur dialect (Kafesoğlu, 2007).

It is generally believed that the Ogurs had joined forces with the Huns that remained in Central Asia after the Chinese dominance intensified in the region, and migrated to the west together with them beginning from the IInd century. Accordingly, due to the active role of the Saragurs during Attila’s reign and the disintegration of the European Hun army between 460-70, they united around Attila’s younger son Irnek to found the Bulgarian state. In the VIth century, the Bulgars came under the sovereignty of the Avars. Following the Avars’ unsuccessful Siege of Istanbul (626), the dispute over the next khagan began in 630. Probably since the Bulgars thought they had the upper hand in terms of number and political influence, they claimed that the khagan should be one of theirs and waged war against the Avars with an army of 9,000. However, the leader of the Bulgars and his army were defeated and banished from Pannonia. They escaped to Bavaria and demanded refuge from Dagobert, the king of the Franks. Although Dagobert initially accepted this request, he later ordered the Bulgars to be slain and therefore they had to leave Bavaria too. The Bulgarian rulers did not give up their fight, and uniting the other Ogur tribes in the Carpathian region and the Caucasus, they established the Great Bulgarian State (Magna Bulgaria) around Lake Maeotis (Azak Sea) (Rona-Tas,

2000) in 635 (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2007). This state founded by Kubrat crumbled due to the pressure from the Khazars after Kubrat's death in 665. Following this, they founded a new state under the rule of a khagan named Asparukh.

According to their known history, the longest-lived political structure of the Ogur Turks was the Danube Bulgarian State founded by Asparukh (679-702). It is important that the state was founded in the southern part of Dobruja, between Byzantium and the Avars, which were two great political powers of the age. Because, considering the conditions of the age, it should have been a difficult task to survive against these states and dare to enter political and military conflicts with them. Besides the political relations with Byzantium, they have also played a role in the coronation of Justinianus II, who had the support of Tervel Khan (702-718) (Karatay, 2010). As the Avars continued to exist in a scattered political order in Eastern Europe during the IXth century, they were defeated by the Frank army under the command of Charles the Great and were erased from the historical scene. Following this defeat, the scattered elements of the Huns, Avars, Ogurs and other Turkish tribes came under the patronage of the Danube Bulgarian State. During this time, Khan Krum (803-814), who was a charismatic personality with a political and military genius, came to the throne. Fearing a powerful ruler, Byzantine emperor Nikephoros I besieged and pillaged the capital Pereiaslav (Preslav, northwest of Shumen, close to the Catalar village). However, the army of Nikephoros sustained a severe defeat and he was killed in this war against Khan Krum.

Khan Krum took control of the trade routes that passed through the Balkans and the Thrace by conquering Sardica (Sofia), Niš and Belgrade region in 809 and thus gained great financial benefits (Kafesoğlu, 2007). Later in 813, he laid siege to Plovdiv and Hadrianopolis, and took an oath to conquer Istanbul. However, while the clashes continued, Khan Krum - exactly like Attila - died due to a bleeding from his nose and mouth (814). Following this hapless incident, his son Khan Omurtag (814-831) assumed the command and was immediately forced to sign a trade agreement with Byzantium. When Khan Krum died, he had left a powerful Bulgarian state with borders reaching from the northern Carpathians to the Rhodope Mountains and from River Tisza to Dniester (Aydın, 2002). During the reign of Khan Omurtag, the Danube Bulgarian State reached its most glorious and prosperous era due to the trade privileges obtained from Byzantium, the established salt mines and the taxes charged from the passage routes (Tekin, 1987). Indeed, the Madara tablet on which Khan Krum's relief on a horse is depicted reflects the glory of the age. During the reign of Khan Omurtag, the intense Christian propaganda began to show its effect and the Slavisation process continued during the reigns of Malamir (831-836), Presian (836-852) and Boris Khan (852-889). Finally, Boris

Khan officially accepted Orthodoxy in 864 (Wolf, 1949) and the Christianisation of the Bulgarian Turks was complete.

Conclusion

- 1- The tribes who migrated from Middle Asia to Eastern Europe and the Balkans due to natural disasters and economic, political and military causes were the Huns, Ogur tribes, Sabars, Avars and Bulgars.(IVth-VIIIth centuries)
- 2- Describing and interpreting the attitude and actions of the Turkish groups, which began with the migration and were observed in the regions that were turned into a homeland in the wake of great conquests, as invasion, tyranny or plunder is incompliant with the historical facts.
- 3- It is an important observation that the Turks insisted on controlling large and irrigated grazing areas with plenty of fodder they needed for the horses, cattle and sheep that supported their economic life. The fact that the plants that grew in Central Asia and were consumed by the herds were also found in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Anatolia points out that they acted upon their interests.
- 4- The Turks who settled in the Balkans turned these places into their homeland by establishing long-lived states.
- 5- Based on the archaeological data, it can be claimed that a 5-6 thousand kilometres area from the east to the west formed the Turkish settlement. Beginning from the Volga River, archaeological remains of the Turkic tribes can be found along the Dnieper, Dniester, Carpathian basin, Danube basin, the Balkans and certain areas in Western Europe. Indeed, Hun settlements have been discovered in numerous excavation sites towards the Alps and in the south of Vienna.
- 6- When these remains are studied, similarities are observed with the findings in Turkmenistan, and some are even found to be identical. This proves that the union among the various Turkic tribes continued not only in terms of the ancestry, but also in arts, culture, organisation and other fields, and that preserved its vitality over time.
- 7- The burial sites and the bones, objects, jewellery and military items remaining from the era between the IVth and VIIIth centuries and found within the graves bear witness to the Turkish culture and civilisation in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
- 8- The Carpathian Mountains-Transylvania-Danube basin can be emphasized as the most important centre for the Turkization of this region and the preservation of the traces remaining from the Turkic tribes, because these regions are primarily on migration routes. Also, there are areas adorned with

wide and fertile plains and long rivers. Consequently, the region has been a focus of interest for the Turkic tribes, and the Turks swung between Europe and the Caucasus for centuries.

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