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Author(s): Gyula Moravcsik

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 5, No. 3/4 (Nov., 1946), pp. 29-45

Published by: [Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2492084>

Accessed: 29/10/2011 04:36

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BYZANTINE CHRISTIANITY AND THE MAGYARS IN THE PERIOD OF THEIR MIGRATION

BY GYULA MORAVCSIK

IN HIS account of the military organization of the Turks (= Magyars), the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Sage repeatedly compares the Magyars with the Bulgarians, and in doing so emphasises that the customs of the Magyars differed from those of the Bulgarians only in so far as the latter had embraced the Christian religion and, adapting themselves to Byzantine morals, had abandoned both their savage and nomadic characteristics and their paganism.¹ By this he alludes to the fact, on the one hand, that the Bulgarian prince Boris and his people had become Christians as early as 864, which means that they had merged in the community of Christian peoples, and to the negative fact, on the other hand, that the Magyars, whom he had come to know during the war in 894–95 but who, at the time of his work was written (between 904–912), were already living in their present country, had not as yet been converted.² Indeed, according to one or two remarks in Arabic and Persic records, the Magyars had been heathens before occupying their country. Archeologic remains and Magyar folk-traditions also seem to point in this direction. There are, however, some signs that they had come into contact with Christianity before they took possession of their land. A plate (fragment of a sabretache) was found in the cemetery of Bezdéd (Hungary) which, according to archeologists, was made in their previous residence in Levedia and on which a cross is to be seen, set in a frame of animal motives. It is probably not by mere chance that, according to our linguists, the Slavic word *kereszt* (=cross) had been brought by the Magyars from their old country. Thus the question may arise whether they really came into contact with Christianity in the course of their long wanderings and if so, when, where, and how? It is this question we wish to throw light upon.³

It has long been proved by linguistics that the Magyar language is of Finno-Ugric origin, its nearest relatives being the Voguls and Ostjaks, who belong to the Finno-Ugric group. So the Magyars formerly lived with their Ugric relatives in Western Siberia east of the Ural Mountains, by the rivers Iset, Tobol and Pysma. And, since

¹ *Tactica*, xviii. 61, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, cvii, col. 960 D.

² See Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* 1, *Die byzantinischen Quellen der Geschichte der Türkvölker* (Budapest, 1942), pp. 238–245.

³ The results of my investigations were published in Hungarian some years ago in the *Jubilee volume in memory of the Sainted King Stephen* (Budapest, 1938) 1, 171–212.

linguistics has determined that the Hungarian language at an early period adopted loanwords of Bulgaro-Turkish character, it seems probable that the Ugric Magyars had met Bulgaro-Turks in West Siberia, and moved on with them in the fifth century to the north shores of the Black Sea, where they make their first appearance in archeologic survivals and in Muslim and Byzantine records. As the early Magyar organization and ethnic character shows Turkish features, and since many of their names of tribes, persons, and dignities are of Turkish origin, we must assume that the Magyars of Finno-Ugric extraction were subject to strong Turkish influence. At the period of the formation of the Hungarian nation, that is, in the fifth to the ninth centuries, Turkish tribes and peoples largely occupied the territories through which the Magyars migrated between the West Siberian slope of the Urals and the estuary of the Danube, so it is among them that we have to look for such peoples as took part in the formation of the Hungarian nation or exercised a strong influence upon them. Therefore, in studying the most ancient history of the Magyars, the peoples which lived on the plains of South Russia before the ninth century must be taken into account. We come to the same result if we start from information supplied by Byzantine records. In these sources the Magyars are mentioned by three different names (beside some archaistic ones). These names are: Οὔγγροι, Οὔννοι, Τοῦρκοι. The first, meaning the Magyars only, comes from the *Onogur* (Greek Ὀνόγουροι), which includes the *Ogur* element. The second (Οὔννοι) refers (beside the Magyars) not strictly to the Huns only, but to other peoples as well. The same applies to Τοῦρκοι which, before referring to the Magyars, served as a name for other peoples also.⁴ Thus, whatever might have been the reason for the application of these names to the Magyars, investigations must take into consideration all peoples called Οὔννοι and Τοῦρκοι, or whose names include the element *Ogur*.

In the regions where the Magyars had been wandering from the fifth to the ninth century, when they occupied their territory, and where the peoples lived which may have taken part in the formation of the Magyar nation, or which may have had different influences on the Magyars during the process of their formation, three cultural spheres came into contact one with another. Around the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, the influence of the Muslim, Persic and Arabic predominated. From the North, the Norsemen and Slavs (= Russians) were expanding towards the South, while the Black Sea and its Northern shores belonged to the Byzantine sphere. The peoples of

⁴ See Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica II, Sprachreste der Türkvölker in den byzantinischen Quellen* (Budapest, 1943), pp. 194–196, 199–204, 269–275.

this territory were thus subject to Christian influence from Byzantium only, that is, from the peoples belonging to Byzantine Christianity. The problem whether the Magyars, or the peoples taking part in their formation were, or might be, influenced by Christianity during their wanderings can be understood only if we give an account of the story of Byzantine conversion throughout the Caucasus and along the northern shore of the Black Sea in the ninth century with particular regard to the Turkish peoples. This task seems especially interesting for, although there have been preparatory studies on minor topics of detail, no treatise discussing the entire question so far exists.

When Eusebius, in his church history written in the fourth century, enumerates the travels of converting apostles, he mentions that the apostle Andrew had also travelled in Scythia. The later Christian legend seeking to connect the spreading of Christianity in remote countries with the name of one of the apostles goes farther along this line. According to some apocryphal documents, the apostle Andrew and his companies who travelled around the Northern shore of the Black Sea had visited the Alans, the Sarmatians and even the "Man Eaters" (Anthropophagi). A later Russian church legend says that when Andrew travelled along the Dnieper, he got as far as Kiev, and visited the "Myrmidons." Thus Andrew, looked upon by Byzantine tradition as the founder of the Constantinopolitan Church, was, in later periods, considered the first converter of the various partly legendary and partly historic peoples inhabiting the Northern shores of the Black Sea, and even of the Russians.⁵

But historical research has shown that Christianity on the Northern shores of the Black Sea did not take root until well after the time of the apostles.⁶ The first traces left to us point to the end of the third century, and the most ancient Christian inscriptions in South Russia are of the fourth. Among the martyrs of the persecution under Diocletian, we find the inhabitants of the Crimea town Kherson. The Bishop of Bosphorus (= Kerch) was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325, so that several Christian Churches must have existed there at that time. In the course of the fourth century, Christianity becomes very strong on the Crimean Peninsula. We have quite a number of Chris-

⁵ See S. B. Petrovskii, "Apokrifitskija skazanija ob apostolskoj propovedi po Černomorskomy poberežju," *Zapiski Imp. Odesskago Obščestva Istorii i Drevnostej*, xx (1897), 29-148, XXI (1898), 1-184; V. G. Vasilevskii, "Choždenie apostola Andreja v strane Mirmidonjan," *Trudy*, II (1909), 213-295; A. Sedelnikov, "Drevnjaja Kievskaja legenda ob apostole Andreje," *Slavia*, III (1924-25), pp. 316-335.

⁶ See A. Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, II, 761, 797-798; K. Pieper, *Atlas orbis christiani antiqui* (Düsseldorf, 1931).

tian relics from this period from Crimean Greek towns, the oldest of them a Kerch epitaph from 304. It was under the influence of the bishopric of Bosporus that the so-called Crimean Goths — who had settled down on the Peninsula about the middle of the third century and who had, as early as the beginning of the fifth century, a separate bishopric which was to play an important role in spreading orthodox Christian faith among barbarians in later centuries — had become Christians.⁷ Christianity had taken early root on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea also. A Christian gathering at Phasis dates back to the times of the apostles, and the bishop of the town Pityus was present at the Nicaean Council.

As a result of the Apostle Paul's activity, a number of congregations had been formed in Asia Minor in the time of the apostles. On the Southern shores of the Black Sea Christianity had predominated as early as the second century, and its advanced outposts approached the foot of the Caucasus. From here its doctrines oozed into Armenia in the course of the first two centuries. The converting of the whole of the Armenian people was the work of Gregory the Illuminator. He baptized King Tiridates, who converted his people to the Christian religion about 285.⁸ The Armenian Church then spread the new faith among the neighboring peoples, so that the people of Georgia also became Christians.⁹ Thus Christianity reached the line of the Caucasus in the course of the fourth century.

In the fifth the work of conversion was for a while impeded by conflicts with the barbarians, but the next century saw great progress. Conversion-propaganda was an organic part of Emperor Justinian's political conception, which aimed at restoring the Roman World Empire.¹⁰ The efforts to assure and expand the Eastern frontiers of the empire were the natural complements of the battles fought in the West. True to old Roman traditions, the Byzantine Empire strove to build up a system of vassal-states for the defense of its frontiers. The auxiliary troops provided by these peoples increased the defensive power of the Empire, and might besides be compelled to fight against other barbarian peoples. The policy of conversion, an indispensable element of the efforts to surround the Byzantine Empire by a whole chain of allied and Christianized "frontier states," also

⁷ A. A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936) pp. 3-21.

⁸ See Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*, II, pp. 747-762; J. Markwart, "Die Entstehung der armenischen Bistümer," *Orientalia Christiana*, xxvii, 2 (1932), 141-236.

⁹ See K. Kekelidse, *Die Bekehrung Georgiens zum Christentum* (Leipzig, 1928); P. Peeters, "Les débuts du christianisme en Géorgie, d'après les sources hagiographiques," *Analecta Bollandiana*, L (1932) pp. 5-66.

¹⁰ See Ch. Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI^e siècle* (Paris, 1901).

served this defensive policy and imperialistic purpose. Thus the Byzantine missionaries were serving not only the Empire of God but also the Roman Empire which, in Byzantine opinion, meant the same thing. As a result of their activity, barbarian princes from remote countries came to the Byzantine Court to be baptized and overwhelmed with presents and distinctions from the Emperor, to return to their countries and there represent the Christian religion as well as the interests of the Byzantine Empire.

The people of the Lazis, who lived on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, between ancient Colchis, on the river Phasis, and the Caucasus, had been converted as early as the reign of Justin I, the predecessor of Justinian. Their prince Tzathius had come to Constantinople in 522–523 to be baptized. The emperor gave him a wife of distinguished family, acknowledged him as sovereign of the Lazi, and provided him with the insignia of sovereignty. So the Lazi, previously under Persian political influence, now became the allies of Byzantium. Justinian had an old, mouldering Christian church restored in their country. Phasis became the episcopal residence of the new Christian country, and in the seventh century four bishoprics belonged to the Phasis metropolitanate.¹¹ The savage people of the Tzani, who were wedged in between the Lazi and the Byzantine Empire, were conquered by the force of Justinian's arms. After their defeat by the Byzantine army they yielded and became Christians. In his novella of 535, Justinian proudly refers to them as subjects of Byzantium.¹² North of the Lazi, between the Caucasus and the Black Sea, lived the Abazgians, in whose country Christianity had taken root at an early period in the town of Pityus. But the conversion of the whole nation took place only in the time of Justinian. The Emperor sent to them Euphratas, a eunuch of Abazgian extraction, who, with some Byzantine priests, saw to the task of converting them. They adopted the Christian religion, drove away their heathen princes, and placed themselves under the protection of Byzantium. The Emperor had a church built for them and sent them priests. Abazgia became a stronghold of Christianity and took an active part in converting other peoples.¹³ Thus Christianity on its way to the North reached the

¹¹ John Malalas, ed. Dindorf, pp. 412–414; Theophanes, ed. de Boor, pp. 168–169; Procopius, *De bello Persico*, II, 15, 28, ed. Haury, I, 217, 286; see Diehl, *Justinien*, pp. 380–381.

¹² Procopius, *De bello Persico* I, 15, ed. Haury, I, 77–78, *De aedificiis*, III, 6, ed. Haury, III, 2, 97–99; See Diehl, *Justinien*, p. 385.

¹³ Procopius, *De bello Gothico*, IV, 3, ed. Haury, II, 498–500; see Diehl, *Justinien*, p. 382, V. Latyšev, "K istorii christianstva na Kavkaze," *Sbornik archeologičeskich statei podnesenyj grafu A. A. Bobrinskomu* (St. Petersburg, 1911) pp. 169–198.

Caucasus, and spread even to its northern slopes. According to apocryphal tradition it was the apostle Andrew who had planted the first seeds of the new creed among the Alans. According to Arabic and Armenian sources, Gregory the Illuminator had also obtained good results in converting them. As early as the sixth century, they are called Christians by a Byzantine authority, although the whole people seems to have been finally converted only at the end of the ninth century when the Abazgian prince had been efficiently supporting the work of Byzantine missionaries. But it is beyond doubt that at the beginning of the tenth century the prince of the Alans himself was a Christian and the High Priest was consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople.¹⁴ The Zikhi lived north of the Abazgians by the furthest hills of the Caucasus, on the shore of the Black Sea. Evidence for the spread of Christianity is provided by the fact that the bishop of Zikhi was present at the Council of Constantinople in 518 as well as at that of 536. His residence was the seaside town of Phanagoria on the Taman Peninsula. This bishopric was to do the work of converting the peoples living at the foot of the Caucasus and by the river Kuban.¹⁵ Thus, about the middle of the sixth century, we meet Christian peoples everywhere on the Northern and Southern shores of the Black Sea.

But Byzantine Christianity reached the Eastern peoples not only by official organs of the orthodox Church. Its influence on them was rivalled by that of some heresies. The tremendous conquests made by the religion of the Manichaeans are generally known. Its followers were being persecuted in the fourth century when they fled in masses to the North, and, after arriving as far as Transoxania and Turkestan, they exercised a deep cultural influence on the local peoples and in the neighborhood. Through them Manichaeism reached even China. The heresy of the Nestorians was extended from Byzantium to Persia, and was supported by the Persian sovereigns against Byzantium. We know that Chosroes II, the Persian king, had the orthodox churches destroyed in his empire, and supported Nestorianism — by now spread in Middle and Northern Asia as well — with all his might, so so that at the beginning of the seventh century Nestorian congregations are to be found even in China. The Nestorian heresy exercised a profound cultural influence of long standing on the Asiatic peoples.¹⁶

¹⁴ See Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*, II. 750, 762; J. Kulakovskii, "Christianstvo u Alan," *Vizantijskii Vremennik* 5 (1898), pp. 1-18; V. Grumel, "La date de la conversion des Alains et l'archevêché d'Alanie," *Échos d'Orient*, xxxvii (1934), pp. 57-58.

¹⁵ See Pieper, *Atlas*, p. 49 and map 14 a.

¹⁶ See W. Barthold, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel-Asien bis zur mongolischen*

Having given a rough delineation of the spreading of Christianity near the Black Sea and the Caucasus, let us examine more closely the connection of different Hun, Turkish, and other kindred peoples with Byzantine Christianity.

According to known sources, the Huns came into contact with Christianity at the time they lived near the Caucasus. Their first missionaries were the Armenians whose apostle Gregory the Illuminator (+331) himself was spreading the new religion among the neighboring peoples and the Huns.¹⁷ His work was continued by his grandson Gregory jun. who, on visiting the king of the Massagetae, leader of the Hun troops, died a martyr in 343.¹⁸ Armenian missionary work was not without good results, as seen from one of Jerome's letters: "Hunni discunt psalterium."¹⁹ This early missionary work was continued. About 523, an Armenian bishop and his priests were spreading Christianity among the Huns and translated some parts of the Holy Scripture into the Hun language.²⁰ Later (about 682) the bishop Izrael in Albania, by the Caspian Sea, pursued missionary work among the Caucasian Huns. He succeeded in converting them and their prince, and later on became their bishop.²¹ Other masses of Huns which were pressing forward to the West also came in contact with Byzantine Christianity. These, as we know, reached the Danube about the end of the fourth century, and their troops were, about 384, already pillaging and ransacking in Thrace. So it is not surprising when we read a Greek report that Theotimus, bishop of the Church of Tomi and of so-called Scythia, was looked upon by the Huns with such awe and admiration that they called him "the God of the Romans." As seen from several miraculous contemporary stories, he tamed the wild, fierce Huns, and he probably won many of them for the Christian religion.²² Later, in Attila's time, the Huns achieved even closer relations with Byzantium. Their envoys often turned up in Constantinople whereby they had — although sources make no

Eroberung (Tübingen-Leipzig, 1901); F. Nau, "L'expansion nestorienne en Asie," *Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de vulgarisation*, I (Paris, 1914), 193-383.

¹⁷ *Die Akten Gregors von Armenien*, neu herausgegeben von P. de Lagarde, [Abhandlungen der k. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, xxxv, 1.] 1888, pp. 115-116; *Agantheangelos*, neu herausgegeben von P. Lagarde, *ibidem*, p. 77.

¹⁸ *Faustus de Byzance* . . . traduit pour la première fois de l'Arménien en Français par Jean Baptiste Emine [*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, v. 2. (Paris, 1884)] p. 214.

¹⁹ Ep. 107, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, xxii, col. 870.

²⁰ *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, translated into English by F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks (London, 1899), pp. 328-330.

²¹ J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge* (Leipzig, 1903), p. 302.

²² Sozomenus *Hist. eccl.*, vii, 26., Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, lxxvii, col. 1500.

special mention of it — ample opportunity to become acquainted with Christianity.

The new faith had spread also among the Turkish peoples living farther East of the Caspian. The Iranized Turks, the so-called White Huns, or Ephthalites, northeast of Persia, were Christians as early as at the end of the fifth century, and Nestorians at that. At their request the Syrian patriarch sent them priests in the middle of the sixth century.²³ Cosmas Indicopleustes' words in his work written about 547–49 (according to which the Huns had flourishing Christian churches in their country) probably refer to them.²⁴

These are not the only records of the success of Christianity among the Turks. According to Byzantine records, the Turks taken prisoners in 591 by Chosroes, the Persian king, and sent subsequently to his confederate Emperor Maurice, had the sign of cross incised upon their foreheads. In answer to questions as to the origin of these signs, the Turks explained that their mothers had been advised by Christians to tattoo the cross in their children's skin in order to avoid their falling ill at the time of a devastating epidemic.²⁵ The Christians from whom the Turks living north of Persia had learned to employ the cross were probably the converting Nestorian monks. Several remarkable contemporary records on the spread of Nestorian heresy among Turkish peoples are left to us, and one of them, a Syriac one, is particularly interesting. According to this text Elie, the metropolite of Merve, in 644 was about to baptize a Turk prince who, however, refused to let him do so unless he worked some miracles which the Turk priests (shamans) could not perform. When the shamans evoked the devil amid thunder and lightning, Elie, with help of the sign of the cross, stopped all these phenomena. This miracle had its due effect, and the prince as well as his people adopted the Christian religion.²⁶

Conversion activity was very successful everywhere among the peoples along the frontier of the Empire, and its influence was also felt among the "Huns" on the northern shores of the Black Sea. In sixth-century Byzantine records the word "Hun" is, as we know, a collective name including different Turkish peoples, as e.g., the Ogur tribes driven from the Ural towards the Caucasus and the Sea of Azov by the great stream of migration of the nations after the collapse of Attila's empire. Thus when "Huns" living on this territory are men-

²³ See Nau, *op. cit.* pp. 244–249.

²⁴ *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, edited with geographical notes by E. O. Winstedt (Cambridge, 1909) p. 119.

²⁵ Theophylact. *Simocatta* v. 10, ed. de Boor, p. 208.

²⁶ Nau, *op. cit.*, p. 246–247.

tioned, it means primarily the Ogurs, Utigurs, Cutrigurs, Onogurs and the Bulgars.²⁷

Many foreign elements are met with in the Byzantine Empire of the sixth century. The army was full of barbarians who fought partly in separate divisions, partly dispersed in Byzantine troops. As members of the Byzantine forces they were, of course, Christians. Beside the barbarians conquered, or taken prisoners and settled in the Empire in the course of wars, many foreigners voluntarily joined the Byzantine forces, and after being christened, often rose to high positions in the army or at the Imperial court. There were some Huns among them. Some Huns serving in the forces are even mentioned by their names in contemporary records, so for example Akum, "magister militum" of Illyricum in 536. He had been lifted from the baptismal font by Emperor Justinian himself, that is, the Emperor was his godfather.²⁸

But beside Christianizing the Huns living within the frontiers of the Empire, missionary work was very successful among the different Hun tribes on the northern shores of the Black Sea. Archeological finds constitute evidence for closer contact of the Cutrigurs with Byzantine Christianity. As a result of more recent investigations, Avar finds in Hungary consist of two different components. One of them includes Byzantine traditions and Christian elements. Thus, it seems most probable that these come from the Cutrigurs whom the stream of migration had carried away to the territory between the Danube and the Tisza, but who had previously, for about a century, lived on the northern shores of the Black Sea, where they had opportunity to come into contact with Byzantine Christianity.²⁹

In Cosmas Indicopleustes' work referred to above, mention is made of the Bulgars as one of the peoples with whom Christianity found welcome.³⁰ This fact is affirmed in a later eastern record.³¹ The "Huns" — whose prince in 619 had come to Constantinople, where he was christened and where he attained the rank of *patricius* — are apparently to be identified with the Bulgars.³² This Hun prince was probably no other but Organa, whose nephew Kobrat, founder of

²⁷ Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 199–202.

²⁸ Malalas, ed. Dindorf, p. 438; Theophanes, ed. de Boor, p. 218; see Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 66.

²⁹ A. Alföldi, "Zur historischen Bestimmung der Avarenfunde," *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua*, IX (1934), 285–307.

³⁰ *The Christian Topography*, ed. Winstedt p. 119.

³¹ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien patriarche Jacobite d'Antiochie*, éditée pour la première fois et traduit en français par J. B. Chabot, II (Paris, 1901), 364.

³² Nicephorus Patriarch, ed. de Boor, p. 12.

“Great Bulgaria,” had spent his childhood at the Imperial court of Byzantium, where he became a Christian and a friend of the Emperor Heraclius.³³ A similar case is recorded later, in the eighth century, when Telerig, prince of the Danubian Bulgars, had to flee from his country in 777. He went to Constantinople where Emperor Leo IV welcomed him cordially, became his godfather, made a *patricius* of him, and married him to a relative of his wife’s.³⁴

Summing up all these data, it may be established that traces of Christian Missionary activities among Turkish peoples are to be found everywhere on the territories between the Caspian and the Danube from the fourth to the eighth century. Among the Turkish peoples living east of the Caucasus, the heresy of the Manichaeans and Nestorians made conquests while the orthodox Church converted the “Huns” living North of the Caucasus and the northern shores of the Black Sea, and the Bulgars. Since the Magyars too must have lived between the Caucasus and the Don at the time, Byzantine missionary work among “Huns” and Bulgars — who apparently played an important role in the formation of the Magyar people — makes it in itself probable that the Magyar tribes had also come into contact with Christianity. This assumption is supported by two important items of historical information which consequently must be examined more closely.

The first one has been handed down to us in several Byzantine chronicles. It was first recorded by John Malalas in the sixth century, then by Theophanes in the ninth, and by George Cedrenus in the twelfth century. John of Ephesus, in his Church History written in Syriac during the sixth century, and bishop John of Nikiu in parts of his chronicle — written originally in Greek but left to us in Ethiopic translation only — also make use of Malalas’ text.³⁵ Beside these, we know Theophanes’ work, translated into Latin by Anastasius. As we do not possess the original text of Malalas’ chronicle, and the only full Oxford MS. is but a short excerpt, the texts by Theophanes, John of Ephesus and John of Nikiu must be taken into account if we want to reconstruct the original.³⁶ This done, the part of Malalas’ information

³³ *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, translated by R. H. Charles (London-Oxford, 1916), p. 197.

³⁴ Theophanes, ed. de Boor, p. 451.

³⁵ John Malalas, ed. Dindorf, p. 431-432; Theophanes, ed. de Boor, p. 175-176; George Cedrenus, ed. Bekker, I, 644-645; F. Nau, “Analyse de la seconde partie inédite de l’Histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d’Asie patriache Jacobite de Constantinople,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, II (1897), 475, cf. *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. Chabot, II, 192; “*Chronique de Jean évêque de Nikiou*.” Texte éthiopien publié et traduit par M. H. Zotenberg, *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 24. 1. (Paris, 1883), pp. 510-511.

³⁶ Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, 184-189.

concerning us is as follows. In the first year of Justinian's reign (527/8) Gordas, prince of the Huns who lived in the neighborhood of the Crimean city of Bosporus, adopted, probably as a result of earlier Byzantine missionary work, the Christian religion in Constantinople. Being a distinguished barbarian prince, he too was granted the privilege of having the Emperor himself as godfather. After receiving the customary presents, he returned to his country where he, as godson and ally of the Emperor, was to represent the interests of the Byzantine Empire and to defend the town of Bosporus, that is, to help the Byzantine garrison there in case the enemy should attack it. But things turned out differently from what the Byzantine Court had expected. As soon as he returned, Gordas tried to convert his people by force. In order to wipe out all traces of the old faith, he had the pagan idols melted down and the metal was changed for Byzantine money in Bosporus. The heathen priests were revolted at this procedure and murdered him in connivance with his brother Muageris, who afterwards became their prince. The rebels then, being afraid of the revenge of the Byzantines, invaded Bosporus, slaughtered the Byzantine garrison, and took possession of the city. The Emperor Justinian sent a punitive expedition on land and sea against the Huns, but they escaped.

In Malalas' story, which gives an interesting picture of the political background of Byzantine conversion in the sixth century, the name of king "Muageris" (*Μουάγγελις*) is of special interest because, according to the unanimous opinion of Hungarian linguists, it involves the name "Magyar."³⁷ Of course, this does not mean that the Magyars had got their name from king Muageris — just the contrary. Similarly the name Gordas may involve the word "Ogur."³⁸ But if the explanation of the origin of the name Muageris is correct, it means that the Huns of which the chronicle speaks were either Magyars or a federation of tribes in which the Magyar elements played a role, in all probability a leading one at that. This again means that the Magyars, or part of them, had come into contact with Christianity as early as at the beginning of the sixth century, even though this first convertive experiment had, owing to the resistance of heathen elements, been unsuccessful.

There is another record about two centuries later which gives some information as to the spreading of Christianity among the Magyars in connection with the organization of Church of the peoples on the Crimean Peninsula and between the Don and the Caspian Sea. A list

³⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 168.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 108.

of bishoprics set down, according to the latest investigations, between 733 and 746, has long been known, and there is no reason whatever to doubt its authenticity.³⁹ It enumerates the bishops under the Crimean Gothic metropolitane. They are: ὁ Χοτζήρων, ὁ Ἀ{σ|τήλ, ὁ Χουάλης, ὁ Ὀνογούρων, ὁ Πετέγ, ὁ Οὔνων, ὁ Ταμάταρχα (ὁ Τυμάταρχα *cod.*). As for the meaning of the names, the first, ὁ Χοτζήρων, has not been satisfactorily explained as yet. According to a supplementary note to the list, this people lived near Phulloi and Kharasiu. And since Kharasiu (according to the correct translation of the writer of the note ("Black Water") is a southern tributary of the Crimean river Salgir, this people must have lived in the eastern parts of the Crimea. This name reads *Koçir*, or *Kaçir*, or *Köçir*, and is not mentioned in any other record. Some hold that it involves the name of a people known from the fifth century, the *Agaçeri* (Ἀκάτζιροι), others that it refers to the Khazars (Χάζαροι), who at that time had possessed a part of the Crimea.⁴⁰ We know for certain that the name is of Turkish character, and so it must refer to the bishop of one of the Turkish peoples of the Crimean Peninsula. The second, ὁ Ἀστήλ, (incorrect instead of: ὁ Ἀτήλ as the scholiast remarks) refers to the Khazar town *Itil*.⁴¹ Other records also confirm the fact that Byzantine conversion of the eighth century was remarkably successful among the Khazars. It will suffice to mention that during the reign of Emperor Constantin V (741–775) a Byzantine soldier expelled to Cherson fled to Khazaria where he became a bishop,⁴² and that about the middle of the eighth century there were numerous Christian congregations in Khazaria.⁴³ A list of bishoprics from 805–815 mentions Khazaria

³⁹ G. I. Konidares, *Αἱ μητροπόλεις καὶ ἀρχιεπισκοπαὶ τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριαρχείου καὶ ἡ "τάξις" αὐτῶν* (Athens, 1934) pp. 83–85; the text p. 100; see also A. A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, p. 97–104; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, 284; G. Vernadsky, "Byzantium and Southern Russia I, The Eparchy of Gothia," *Byzantium: International Journal of Byzantine Studies* xv (1940–41) 67–76. Vernadsky (p. 70.) came to the conclusion that "the very compilation of the list must indeed be connected with Constantine's mission to the Khazars" and "the project of the Eparchy of Gothia . . . was probably the result of the examination of Constantine's report by Patriarch Photius." Cf. G. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, I, (Second printing, New Haven 1944) pp. 345–353. Argumentation of Vernadsky, who does not know the researches of Konidares or my treatise written in Hungarian, does not seem convincing to me.

⁴⁰ See Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, p. 98; Vernadsky, *The Eparchy of Gothia*, p. 72, 75. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 289–290.

⁴¹ See Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, p. 98–99; Vernadsky, *op. cit.*, p. 71; Moravcsik, *ibid.*, II, p. 80.

⁴² Menologium Basilii II imperatoris, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, cxvii. col. 181 C–D; *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902), pp. 263–264.

⁴³ See Fr. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague, 1933), p. 164; E. Peeters, "Les Khazares dans la passion de S. Abo de Tiflis," *Analecta Bollandiana*, LII (1934), 21–56; M. I. Artamonov, "Srednevekoveye poselenija na Nižnem Donu," *Izvestija Gosud. Akademii Istorii Materialnoi Kultury*, cxxxI (1935), 85.

among the countries belonging to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.⁴⁴ The third bishop's name: ὁ Χουάλης, had been compared with the old Russian name of the Caspian Sea (*Khvaliskoye*); and with the name of a people: Χαλίσιου.⁴⁵ In our opinion it is not a topical name: ἡ Χουάλη, but an indeclinable people's name, Χουάλης, is hidden in it. The people's name: Ῥῶσσοι too is often mentioned by Byzantine authors in its indeclinable form (Ῥῶς). Thus Χουάλης in ὁ Χουάλης is genitive plural just like Χοτζήρων in the first bishop's name. The fifth name: ὁ Ῥετέγ is probably wrong instead of: ὁ Τερέγ, involving the name of the river *Terek*, or a town of a similar name (*Tarku*).⁴⁶ We do not know what people belonged to this bishopric, but we must suppose it was the Alans. The seventh name is simply the new name of Turkish origin — met with for the first time but well-known from other records — of the old Phanagoria.⁴⁷ The fourth and sixth names involve, just like ὁ Χοτζήρων, and, in our opinion, also ὁ Χουάλης, tribal application. These are: ὁ Ὀνογοῦρων and ὁ Οὔννων.

The phrase ὁ Ὀνογοῦρων means: the bishop of the Onogurs. We know this people well from Byzantine sources.⁴⁸ We know that the Onogurs appeared near the Caucasus and the river Kuban about the middle of the fifth century. They were still there during the sixth. We have good reasons to suppose that they were the predominant element in the "Great Bulgaria" formed at the beginning of the seventh. In the middle of the eighth century this country collapsed because of the advance of the Khazars. Some of the Bulgarian tribes moved towards the West, and founded the empire of the Danubian Bulgars. A Byzantine record of the eighth century calls them the "Onogur Bulgars." This shows that the Onogur element was predominant in the composition of the Danubian Bulgars. The fact that, some decades later in the list of bishoprics, mention is made again of Onogurs between the Crimean Peninsula and the Caucasus, proves that there had been Onogurs left in the old country after some of the Bulgar tribes had left. Now, since as the name *Magyars*: (Οὔγγροι) and other forms originating from it (Russian: *Vengri*, Latin: *Hungari*, English: *Hungarians*, etc.) are derivatives of the Turkish *Onogur*,

⁴⁴ *Hieroclis Synecdemus et Notiliae graecae episcopatum*, ed. G. Parthey (Berlin, 1866), p. 140; *Des Nilos Doxopates* Τάξις τῶν πατριαρχικῶν θρόνων, armenisch und griechisch herausgegeben von F. N. Finek (Tiflis, 1902), p. 29.

⁴⁵ Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, p. 99–100; Vernadsky, *The Eparchy of Gothia*, p. 71; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 284, 290.

⁴⁶ Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, p. 100; Vernadsky, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ See Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 251.

⁴⁸ See Gy. Moravcsik, "Zur Geschichte der Onoguren," *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, x (1930) 53–90.

and since these thus had, no doubt, an important role in the formation of the Hungarian people, the Onogurs mentioned in the list of bishoprics must be considered Magyars, or at least an element of the Magyar people about to be formed.

As for the "Hun" bishopric, there have been several hypotheses. It was supposed that the Huns had lived on the Crimean Peninsula, and that they were identical with the "Black Bulgars" or the Magyars.⁴⁹ In our opinion these "Huns" are to be looked for elsewhere. If we examine the list more closely, we discover that it is arranged in geographical succession. After the residence of the Gothic metropolitan, the Crimean town Doros (to-day Mankup), the bishopric of the Kočirs (living also in the Crim) is first mentioned, then that of the Itils by the Volga, the Khalisians on the western shore of the Caspian, the Terek farther southwards. The list concludes with Tamatarcha, opposite the Crimean, near the estuary of the Kuban. This is preceded by the bishopric of the Onogurs, who lived between the rivers Don and Kuban. Thus the "Huns" mentioned above must be looked for between the Terek and the land of the Onogurs, that is, between the Kuban and the Caucasus. Huns had lived here as early as the sixth century. The Sabirs who, in Byzantine records, are often mentioned as Huns, also lived here.⁵⁰ They were scattered by the Avars in 558, and groups of survivors turned up south of the Caucasus in the second half of the sixth century. But we have evidence that, besides the Huns, other Sabirs had lived here. According to one of our records, the fertile plain beyond the Caspian Gates as far as lake Meotis had been inhabited by Huns.⁵¹ When Heraclius, in the course of his war in the Caucasus (624), had to flee from the Persians, he withdrew through hardly passable roads towards the land of the Huns.⁵² Beside Abazgians and Zikhi, there had been Huns in the troops of the rebel Thomas in 820.⁵³ Thus the Hun element is to be traced near the Caucasus up to the beginning of the ninth century. In our opinion this list, also mentioned elsewhere, refers to this Caucasian Hun bishopric. The Byzantine Church celebrated the memory of Ephraim the Confessor, bishop of Hunnia, on the 10th

⁴⁹ See Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁰ See Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II, 201.

⁵¹ Procopius, *De bello Persico*, I, 10, ed. Haury, I, 46-47, *De bello Gothico*, IV, 3, ed. Haury, II, 497.

⁵² Theophanes, ed. de Boor, p. 310; see E. Gerland, "Die persischen Feldzüge des Kaisers Herakleios," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, III (1894) 354.

⁵³ Genesios, ed. Lachmann, p. 33; see A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, I (Brussels, 1935), 31.

of November.⁵⁴ The word "Hunnia" (= land of the Huns) is met with in Byzantine literature only once before this. It is Cosmas Indicopleustes who calls the land of the White Huns (Ephthalites) by this name.⁵⁵ But this cannot be identical with the Hunnia in question because the Ephthalites had been Nestorians, while Ephraim is, in our record, called "Confessor," so he must have been orthodox. Besides, the adjective 'Ομολογητής itself refers to the period of iconoclasm.

Now if we compare the data of the list referring to the bishoprics belonging to the Crimean Gothic Metropolitanate with those of other sources, the situation is this: in the second half of the seventh century a great change had set in on the northern shores of the Black Sea. The Khazars, pressing toward the East, overthrew the Bulgarian Empire by Lake Maeotis, and some of the Bulgarian tribes were compelled to move on westwards where they occupy their present country by the Danube. The Khazars occupied the town of Phanagoria (Tamataarcha) as early as about 689 and Bosphorus was the residence of the representative of the Khazar Khagan.⁵⁶ The Khazars at that time ruled not only over the land by the river Kuban but also over the eastern shores of the Crimean Peninsula. The Crimean Goths kept their independence for some time, but the Khazar Khagan took the town of Doros in 787.⁵⁷ Thus, only the western part of the peninsula remained under Byzantine rule. This probably accounts for the fact that the Patriarch of Constantinople raised the bishopric of the then independent Goths to the rank of metropolis, with seven subordinate bishoprics. Two of them (Itil and Tamataarcha) bear, as we have seen, beyond question the names of towns. A further one, Terek, is likewise a geographic name, while the rest — the bishoprics of the Kotshirs, Khvalisians, Onogurs and Huns, have tribal names. From this fact we must draw the conclusion that the four latter bishoprics had no permanent residences, and must have been active on territories of half-nomadic peoples. This again means that they were missionary bishoprics whose converting activities were directed by bishops. We have seen in one of the above mentioned records the term *ἐπίσκοπος Οὐννίας* instead of *ὁ Οὐννων* and when, in the middle of the tenth century, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch consecrates the

⁵⁴ *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902) p. 212.

⁵⁵ *The Christian Topography*, ed. Winstedt, p. 69.

⁵⁶ Theophanes, ed. de Boor, p. 373; Nicephorus Patriarch, ed. de Boor, p. 40–41.

⁵⁷ *Life of John of Gothia, Acta Sanctorum Junii*, v, 190–194; see E. Peeters, "Les Khazares dans la passion de S. Abo de Tiflis," *Analecta Bollandiana*, LII (1934), 39–40.

first bishop of the Magyars expressly in order to do missionary work among his compatriots, the Byzantine record mentions the new bishop by the name of *ἐπίσκοπος Τουρκίας*.⁵⁸ All these data prove that in the eighth century an intensive missionary work was being done among the Magyars, or, better, among the Onogurs, component elements of the later Magyars. We are not informed as to its later course and resultant, but, at any rate, we must suppose that part of the Magyars at that time had become acquainted more closely with the tenets of Christianity.

The details of the formation of the Magyar people and of the long centuries of their wanderings are unknown. After the name of king Muageris and that of the Onogur bishopric, the Magyars are not mentioned again before the thirties of the ninth century, when they were fighting at the Lower Danube. Some decades later we find a Hungarian troop in Crimea which met the apostle Cyrill in 861 near the town of Cherson. Our record gives the following account of it: "Alors qu'il faisait sa prière de la première heure, des Hongrois l'entourèrent, hurlant comme des loups et voulant le tuer. Mais lui ne se laissa pas intimider, il n'interrompit pas sa prière, et prononça seulement le "Kyrie eleison," car il avait déjà terminé l'office. Eux, l'ayant considéré, se calmèrent, sur un ordre divin, et commencèrent à s'incliner devant lui. Après avoir entendu de sa bouche des paroles d'exhortation, ils le relâchèrent avec toute sa suite."⁵⁹ This account shows the characteristics of Christian legend. Its chief motive — the holy man's miraculous escape by God's help from the Barbarians whom he had tamed with his words — is a hagiographic commonplace frequently met with. So, for example, one of the records tells the history of bishop Theotimus who had met Hun horsemen, whereupon his followers began to wail, but he dismounted and prayed to God. The Hun horsemen had not noticed him, and rode away past him. On another occasion a Hun, wanting to kill the bishop, slung a rope to catch him, but a miracle happened again: his outstretched arm became paralyzed, and it was only by Theotimus's prayer that he was rid of his invisible fetters.⁶⁰ A similar story has been recorded of a hermit, James, who had been attacked by Hun horsemen. They aimed at him with their arrows, but their outstretched arms stiffened, and became loose again only after the hermit had prayed for them.⁶¹ But all this is far from meaning that the meeting of the Magyars with

⁵⁸ John Scylitzes, ed. Bekker, p. 328.

⁵⁹ Fr. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance*, p. 360.

⁶⁰ Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.*, vii. 26, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, LXVII, col. 1500.

⁶¹ Procopius, *De bello Persico*, i. 7, ed. Haury, i, 31–32.

Cyrrill had not taken place. There is a record giving evidence that the Magyars had come into contact with the Slav apostles before the occupation of their land. It reads: "Quand le roi des Hongrois vint dans les régions danubiennes, il voulut le voir. Malgré certains qui disaient qu'il ne serait pas aisément libéré, il (Méthode) se rendit après de lui. Et ce dernier le reçut comme un prince, avec honneur, solennité et gaité. Il lui parla comme on doit parlé à de tels hommes et il le congédia affectueusement, lui disant en l'embrassant et en le comblant de dons: 'Père vénérable, souviens-toi toujours de moi dans tes prières'."⁶² As to the identity of the Magyar king, or, better, leader, or where and when the meeting took place, we can only conjecture. One thing is certain; it must have happened before 884, that is, previous to Methodius's death. We know that, before occupying their land, the Magyars repeatedly visited the western regions in 862 and 881, and so some of the Magyar leaders may have heard Slav apostles teaching the principles of Christianity. If the Magyars had really brought the word "kereszt" (=cross) into their new country, it is a further evidence that they had come into contact with Christianity — also through Slavs — before the occupation of the land.

Summing up the results of our investigations, it can be established that the Byzantine Church, in the course of its intensive missionary work among Turkish peoples, had tried, as early as the beginning of the sixth century, to convert the "Huns" who lived near Bosphorus. In the name of one of these Hun leaders we discovered the people's name: "Magyar." The fact that there had been Christians among the Bulgarian princes at the beginning of the seventh century is significant, for the Magyars had, in all probability, belonged to the Onogur-Bulgar Empire by the Maeotis. The Onogur missionary bishopric made conversions also among the Magyars in the eighth century, and at the beginning of the ninth the Magyars came into contact with young Slavic Christianity. Considering furthermore that the Magyars had been living for centuries in lands surrounded from all sides by Christian peoples and bishoprics, it seems even more probable that when they occupied their new country they had known Christianity, and thus the Byzantine Church had prepared their conversion to the Christian religion which they adopted in their new land.

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⁶² Fr. Dvorník, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance*, p. 392.