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## DANUBE BULGAR ТУТХОЊ (A PLACE EITHER IDENTICAL OR NEAR TO ANKHIALO(S)/POMORIE, BULGARIA)

ТУТХОЊ (i.e., *Tutkhon'* = *Tuthon'* = *Tutxon'*) was the name (obviously not Slavic) found in some medieval Slavic texts for the coastal city known in Greek as Ἀγχίαλος or some place very near it. We can identify it as a Turkic (specifically, Danube Bulgar) translation of the Greek, composed of \**tur-* 'salt' + *t(e)g-/m/n* 'reaching' + *-i* 'of/its' ( *izafet*). Several of the details are impossible to be sure of at the present time, but most of the morphemes as well as the loss of *r* before another consonant and the syncope are obvious.

Keywords: *Linguistics, Danube Bulgar, Etymology, Tutkhon'*

What we can transliterate as *Tutkhon'* or *Tuthon'* (or, to please the general linguist and confuse everyone else, *Tutxon'*)<sup>1</sup> used to be said (e.g. Vasilevskii 1895: 114, Marquart 1903: 500, Zlatarski 1908: 25, Beševliev 1981: 320) to be the name (obviously not Slavic) found in some medieval Slavic texts for the coastal city known in Greek as Ἀγχίαλος (whence the recent Slavic Bulgarian neologism *Поморие*). More recently, there has been some doubt expressed about this precise identification, but the upshot is that, if not that very city, it was still a place very close to it (Georgiev 2009, Momchilov 2010). For our purposes that may well be close enough. For not EVERY detail matters. In fact, most details do not: the color, and cultivar, of the apple that fell at Newton's feet (if any did)—or even the fact that it was an apple and not a pear or a plum. One just has to either know, or be lucky in guessing, which details do matter and which ones do not.

For, we are interested here not in the exciting history of these locales (especially as the scene of decisive fighting in the Bulgar-Roman wars) but in whether the word really does come from the sparsely attested Danube Bulgar

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<sup>1</sup> As noted below, the final letter was surely still pronounced, as a short vowel, when the name first appeared.

language—so sparsely that every little bit could be significant. The authors cited, as it happens, either did not discuss (or even admitted that they had no idea) what the etymology of the name might be. Since then however the world has changed, and there are now at least three exciting new etymologies (and the way these things work, if one Googles long enough, surely one will find even more).

One is Ivanov's (n.d.) *ТѣУ Тѣ ГѣНѣ* 'вятър носи лодка, платноходка', literally 'the wind carries the boat, sail boat'. At first we were not able to identify the language family that this would place DBg in. But in the conclusion of his work, which by the way appears on no less than the website of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, the author reveals that:

Прабългарите са говорили език, който е бил непосредствено близък или еднакъв с първооригиналния човешки език. Езикът, който Господ е дал на човека при сътворението. И този първоизворен, божествен език те са ни оставили, вписан почти изцяло в съвременния български език.

Proto-Bulgarians spoke a language that was close to or identical to the original human language. The language that the Lord gave to Man at creation. And they left this original, divine language to us, incorporated almost as a whole into Modern Bulgarian.

Given such a buildup, one wonders why this etymology, although mentioned by Momchilov (2010), is denied an explicit endorsement there. How dare he? As for me, I have no doubt that if I decided to purchase a sailboat, that I will be able to obtain one anywhere on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast by asking for a "ТѣУ Тѣ ГѣНѣ".

Just one question, if this (and the same applies to every single etymology taught by Ivanov, who is not alone but rather one of a whole movement of authors writing about Danube Bulgar) has indeed been inherited by the modern Bulgarian language, why does he have to gloss every word in modern Bulgarian at all? Why f.ex. is a sailboat, which should be *ТѣУ Тѣ ГѣНѣ*, explained as 'платноходка', and why are each of the three words *ТѣУ Тѣ ГѣНѣ*, which supposedly still means 'wind carries boat' in Modern Bulgarian, glossed as 'вятър носи лодка'? If Modern Bulgarian has preserved all these words, then why do they need to be glossed at all? The same of course applies to the entirety of the work claiming since the 1980s that Danube Bulgar was not Turkic and that the modern Slavic language is the same language as Danube Bulgar, and moreover one so close to its new-found non-Turkic relatives that a Bulgarian can freely communicate with inhabitants of the Pamir without

an interpreter. If this is so, why does the vast literature on this subject constantly gloss the words which, if these claims were true, should be immediately comprehensible to the modern Bulgarian speaker? There must be some answer that I am simply too stupid to grasp.

To be sure, there are people with less faith than mine, who have other etymologies, not nearly as divine and typically "Iranian". Thus, another Ivanov (n.d.) gives this "Iranian etymology":

На основа на ... примери за иранските названия на вода може да се предположи, че топонимът Тутхон ще има смисъл, подобен на този на Анхиало. И наистина Тутхон може да се раздели на ТУ + ТХОН. Тук ТХОН (или ТОН) е вариант на скито-сарматското ДОН - "вода". За смисъла на началното ТУ - вариант на прабългарския (и славянски !) предлог ДО виж етимологията на прабългарската дума ДОХЪТОР (възглавница) (...). Показано е, че ДОХЪТОР = ДО + ХЪТ + ОР = ДО + ГЛАВА + НИЦА. Така че, ТУТХОН би могло да означава "до вода", което семантично е еднакво с гръцкото Анхиало и следователно е негова буквална калка. С други думи, прабългарите просто са превели гръцкото название Анхиало на своя ирански език, получавайки Тутхон.

On the basis of the ... examples of the Iranian name of water [as we will see, he means Ossetic **don**), we may assume that the toponym **Tutkhon** will have a sense similar to that of **Ankhialo**. And in point of fact Tutkhon can be divided into TU + TKHON. Here TKHON (or TON) is a variant of the Scytho-Sarmatian DON 'water'. For the sense of the initial TU-, a variant of the Proto-Bulgarian (and Slavic!) prefix DO, see the etymology of the Proto-Bulgarian word DOKHЪTOR 'pillow' (...). It has been shown that DOKHЪTOR = DO+ KHЪT + OR = DO + HEAD + -NITSA. Thus, TUTKHON could mean 'near water' [Blg. do voda], which is semantically identical to Greek Ankhialo and consequently is a literal calque thereof. In other words, the Proto-Bulgarians simply translated the Greek name of Ankhialo into their own, Iranian language, yielding Tutkhon.

Yet another but also Iranian etymology is given by *letopisec* (2015) according to whom **tutkhoni**, as he writes it,<sup>2</sup> meant 'four khoni' (the author apparently either thinks that **khoni** is a word of Bulgarian or simply fell victim to sloppy editing here), referring to the idea that some part of Bulgaria ("the

<sup>2</sup> It is quite likely that at the time the word arose the last vowel was in fact pronounced.

left sarakt”<sup>3</sup>) was itself divided into four parts, curiously one of them being controlled by the supreme ruler, Krum, while the others supposedly were ruled by three others, adding that:

очевидно Анхиало е било избрано за административен център на източната част от Крумовия саракт”.

Obviously Anchialo was selected as the administrative center of the Eastern part of Krum’s sarakt.

This being less than obvious to me than the fact that we have here two mutually exclusive “Iranian” etymologies that bear no earthly connection to any real ancient Iranian language, I decided to offer a Turkic one of my own devising—and see if it will end up being called Iranian. No one, it seems, can tell the difference anyway.

Of course, whatever language it comes from, the natural way to begin looking for an etymology of a place name is with the working hypothesis (which of course need not pan out!) that this is a calque on some other, more familiar name (often in another language). If so, our word could perhaps basically mean something like ‘Near the Sea’ and in particular perhaps ‘Near the Salt(y Sea)’—as indeed others have seen too (e.g. Ivanov n.d. cited above). Or anyway something to do with salt, which was, and still is, made in this area—which is why we just used the word ‘pan’.

Now, in fact, the Danube Bulgar language was Turkic and more specifically a member of that branch of Turkic (out of two) that I prefer to call ‘Uncommon’ or ‘Lirical’ (or at worst ‘Lir’). The speakers of these languages once rode roughshod over great swaths of Northern Eurasia from the borderlands of Mongolia and China to southern Italy and Western France but is now represented only by Chuvash and by variously numerous or sparse loanwords in other (mostly non-Turkic) languages (notably, Mongolic and Hungarian, but also in Slavic, and here especially, though not only, Bulgarian and Russian). Of course, this branch has been called many other things by other linguists, philologists, and historians, including Chuvashic, Bulgaric, r-languages, r/l-languages, but Togan’s Lir seems to me better—and mine own coinages of course the best.

However, at various times and especially ever since the 1980s a surprising number of scholars as well as amateurs, usually Bulgarian but with some

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<sup>3</sup> This is a much-debated word. It is actually attested as **saraktu**, and it is a mere conjecture that that is a Greek genitive, with the base word being **sarakt-**. This is though a universally held assumption among scholars, with me being the odd man out. Its meaning is also uncertain but from the context it would seem to be a military force and not a district (though the district sense has indeed been proposed). I discuss this word elsewhere, taking the final vowel to be part of the word itself in Turkic, not a Greek case ending.

recognition outside of Bulgaria, try to make it something else, preferably something Indo-European and more specifically often though not always Iranian (or more generally Indo-Iranian) or at least some kind of mix of Turkic with the above. Or even some sort of unique language, not Iranian and for some indigenous to the country where it is currently spoken but then (a popular idea in such circles) supposedly taken East into Asia, perhaps indeed into Iranian-speaking areas or even further, before conveniently coming back—and supposedly not all changed in the process.

For the record, while an Iranian etymology of the name of the ruler Asparukh was accepted long before these ideas came up, perhaps in the 1980's, I am not at all sure that this etymology is right either. And all other of the few etymologies of Danube Bulgar words that I accept or have developed myself are just Turkic and, where it is possible tell, from the Uncommon Turkic branch.

Now, as I said, a reasonable first guess at the origin of Tutkhon' would be it meant the same (or close to the same) as Ἀρχίαλος. Given what we know of Turkic grammar, of course, the order of elements would be the reverse of the Greek and Slavic, something corresponding to virtual Ἀλ-αρχι- (and in Slavic as море-по-). In other words, the part meaning 'sea' (or perhaps 'salt(y) sea') would be the first part (prebound as I like to say) of this compound and the part meaning 'near (to)' would be the second part (postbound).

Now, as we know, the Shaz Turkic languages have \*tūz 'salt' whereas Chuvash has тăвap (tăvar), dialectally тyap, тoap (e.g., Fedotov 1996). The correspondence of Shaz **z** : Uncommon (Lirical) **r** is (as we have seen) well-known. The vocalism seems discrepant, and seems to me<sup>4</sup> to suggest some sort of diphthong in Proto-Turkic (\*ua or \*oa). Finally, the loss of **r** before a following consonant, in particular **t** has long been known to be a feature not just of Chuvash but also of Volga Bulgar and apparently of Danube Bulgar as well (e.g. Pritsak 1981). Thus we may with some degree of confidence suppose that we are dealing with \*tur- 'salt' as the prebound. Why it is -u- and not a diphthong we cannot tell, but we know that other diphthongs are inconsistently represented between Volga Bulgar and Chuvash anyway, and as to what happens in Danube Bulgar no one can tell as yet, since so little is known about this language so far—and most of what is thought to be known is wrong.

Since Danube Bulgar certainly had some sort of vowel syncope (Pritsak 1981 again), we might then look for the postbound in some Turkic word of the rough form \*tVg/k(V)m(V). Since the relevant (8<sup>th</sup>) volume of the *Этимологический словарь тюркских языков* has not been published and no

<sup>4</sup> What is usually reconstructed as \*yunt 'horse' is actually to be reconstructed as another example of this diphthong, to wit, \*dwant (and so *prima facie* of Indo-European origin, but this is a small set of real IE borrowings in Turkic.

data from or manuscript of it is has been made available to me, I do not have access to the best source of such information. But for our purposes various older works are entirely sufficient. There is a widespread Turkic root **TEG** “properly ‘to reach (a place *Dat.*) but with various extended meanings from an early date, including ‘to attack (someone), to touch (something), to concern (someone), to be worth (i.e. to reach a price of so much)’.” (Clauson 1972: 476), found in Chuvash as **tĕk-** (e.g. Fedotov 1996). If my approach is right, this is the root of the postpound, though the exact form is difficult to be sure about. Possibly we are dealing with the derived reflexive stem **tegin-** “with a curiously wide of meanings [...] (occasionally) ‘to reach, attain [...]’” (Clauson 1972: 484).

However, too little is known as yet about this language (or other old Uncommon/Lirical Turkic languages) to identify the exact nominal form involved. It has to be some nominalization, of course, whether with a zero suffix, a mere vowel suffix, or perhaps **-Vn-** (with syncope making this impossible to be sure about). And what of the final **-b**? It is hard to be sure again but this is either itself part of the nominal suffix and/or the *izafet* marker (identical to the 3rd person possessive), which would be expected just where we find it, in a Turkic compound (though other examples of this have been consistently missed by other investigators in this language so far).

I do not insist on any of even the little that I have proposed. I do insist that the approach I am following is the only one that can lead to any robust results on this (or any other) language (or any other topic whatever in any field, not just linguistics). If someone else, following this approach but either by dint of being even more faithful to it or simply in virtue of being smarter or blessed with access to more information, reaches a different (and superior) result, I will not be at all displeased—so long as it is admitted that at least I did try to introduce into this field some of the methods of science developed since Antiquity and especially those of historical linguistics developed in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**ПОДУНАВСКО БУГАРСКИ „ТУТХОЊ“  
(МЕСТО ИДЕНТИЧНО ИЛИ БЛИЗО  
АНХИАЛОСА/ПОМОРЈЕ, БУГАРСКА)**

**Тутхоњ** је име (очигледно несловенско) које се налази у неким средњовековним словенским текстовима за приморски град познат на грчком као Ἀρχίαλος или неко место веома близу њега. Можемо га идентификовати као туркијски (тачније, подунавски бугарски) превод грчког, састављен од *\*tur-* „со“ + *t(e)g-/m/n* „достизање“ + *-i* „од/његовог“ (изафет). Неколико детаља је тренутно немогуће са сигурношћу утврдити, али већина морфема, као и губитак р испред другог сугласника и синкопа су очигледни.

Кључне речи: *лингвистика, подунавски бугарски језик, етимологија, Тутхоњ*