

Archaeological Realia in Tarnovo Inscription of Khan Omurtag (Part II)

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Continuing his comment on the inscription, the author identifies the so-called „most glorious mound“, i.e. the central fortification in the „Land of the hundred hills“, with fortresses along the road from Devnya lowland to the Danube. A conclusion is made that the three building projects from the inscription have been launched along the administrative border between the Romano-Byzantine provinces Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor. This fact is supported by early written sources about the settling of the Protobulgars along the Lower Danube in the late 7th century AD. They mention that the Protobulgars settled permanently „in burgoi“ at the inner administrative borders of the Empire. These fortresses were called „mounds, hills“ in the by the (Proto)Bulgarian chronicles. In a sense, the earliest centers of the Bulgarian kingdom were already existing Roman and Byzantine fortresses along the administrative border between the two provinces, which became part of Asparukh's Bulgaria. This fact supports the identification of „the Old home“ with the fortress near the village of Ezerovo, which seems to be the fortified center of „the so-called Varna“ in the late 7th century AD. The first „Home on the Danube“ is identified with the base of the river fleet of Moesia Secunda at Altinum on the Oltina Lake, mentioned by Anna Comnena as Ozolimna. The so-called „most glorious mound“ should be the middle point of the road (limus) between the above mentioned locations, and the most probable site is the fortress of Tylikium (the modern village of Dryanovets, near Dobrich) mentioned for the first time by Procopius of Caesarea.

The transfer of the state capital from Devnya lowland to Aboba field necessitated a shift of the three traditional centers on the (Proto)Bulgarian ethnic territory, which could be identified with the „inner land“ mentioned in the sources. The rise of Plisk oba to a leading state center caused a western shift of the „structural“ axis of the inner territory. At that time, as early as the late 8th century AD, the Home on the Danube was transferred near to the Romano-Byzantine Durostorum-Dorostol, most probably in its vicinity, near the bay at the Garlitsa Lake. The role of „the most glorious mound“, i.e. the main center of the „Land of the hundred hills“ in this period, was performed by the anony-

mous Byzantine fortress near the village of Voinikovo (former Kavurga, Kavrug). The establishment of the Khan's residence at Plisk oba, evidenced by the Chatalar Inscription of Khan Omurtag, made in 821-822 AD, led to a new shift of the satellite state centers. „The home“ on the Danube was transferred behind the walls of the late Roman/early Byzantine Durostorum-Dorostol; the earthen fortifications near the village of Kladentsi, built probably as early as the late 8th century AD and situated also in the middle of the road between the capital Plisk oba and Drastar became the center of the „Land of the hundred hills“. In the 10th or the first decades of 11th century AD, the stone fortress at the village of Skala was built in a close proximity, which could be identified with Glavinitsa mentioned in the written sources.

After a study on the epithets-titles accompanying Khan Omurtag's constructions, the author concludes that „glorious“ or „the most glorious“ were the ones, which were ruler's residences and functioned as state centers. The actual capital, bearing its own sacred name, was not called „glorious“ or „the most glorious“. According to the old Turkic tradition it was designated as „home“ of the ruler, together with the auxiliary residence on the Danube. Omurtag's „avlin on the Ticha river“ was neither designated as „home“ nor called „glorious“ or „the most glorious“. This epithet was attributed, although later on, to the other center on the Ticha river - Veliki Preslav - which, as early as it was established a second state center, seems to be given epithets embedded in its own Slavic name.

The final conclusion of the article stresses on the fact that both Tarnovo and Chatalar Inscriptions of Khan Omurtag were not only inscriptions related to architectural events but also texts reflecting important changes in the organization of the Bulgarian state in the first half of the Khan's reign. Tarnovo inscription was aimed at immortalization of the historical heritage of the ruler, who settled permanent and established new state centers in Aboba field and on the Danube. Chatalar inscription, which was cut on a column, stressed on the newly constructed „avlin on the Ticha river“ near Khan's permanent residence; an event, which seemed to open a new stage of the administrative organization of the Bulgarian state.