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THE GOLDEN TREASURE OF THE BULGARIAN KHANS FROM ATILLA TO SIMEON

We take back a priceless Bulgarian treasure
with golden jugs from khan Kubrat,
khan Asparukh's golden dinner dish
and tsar Boris's golden christening cup

At long last,
after a number of fruitless attemps
of prominent Bulgarian and foreign scholars
a unique proto-Bulgarian inscription
has been spelt out and translated

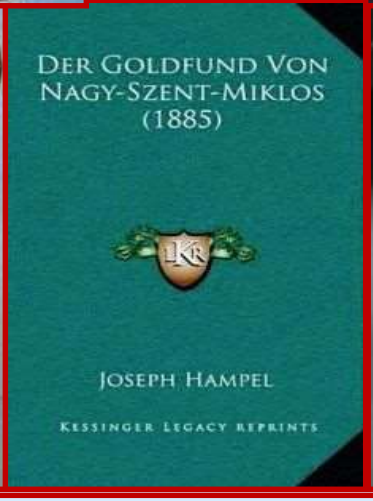
Translated by: Vladimir Marinov

The Golden treasure of the Bulgarian khans from Atilla to Simeon the Great is better known by the name of The Golden Treasure of Nagy Szent-Miklós, because it was found on 3.07.1799 in the small Hungarian town of Nagy Szent-Miklós populated mainly with Hungarians, Bulgarians and Roumanians, and located very near the left, south bank of the river Maros, Roumanian Mureş, being within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire at that time. The golden treasure was transferred to Wien immediately after its discovery, where it has been kept and shown to visitors to Kunsthistorisches Museum with the inscription of 'The treasure of Nagyszentmiklos.The gold treasure found in 1799 in Nagyszentmiklos (now Sinnicolaul in Roumania) consists of 23 pure gold vessels weighing a total of 10 kg. A cross on a gold plate dates the treasure from the time of Christianization of Bulgars.'

The Treasure itself consists of 23 vessels of different shapes and sizes manufactured out of a very high standard of gold, mostly 21 and 22 carat - 7 large jugs, 1 dish, 4 basin-like shallow cups or small bowls with a clasp for hanging, 4 cups, 3 zoomorphic bowls, but more likely cups or goblets, 2 paters, i.e. flat-shallow ladles, 1 golden horn for drinking, 1 soup bowl, with an overall weight of 9,926, i.e. almost 10 kg.

After a more detailed acqaintance with the Treasure, art experts, historians, linguists, culture experts and others convey their impressions of it in only superior terms, such as 'a notable treasure', 'a golden treasure belonging to one of the richest archaelogical finds', 'the most marvellous heritage', 'an inimitable golden treasure', 'the renowned treasure of Nagy Szent-Miklós', 'the magnificent find', also 'the striking find', 'the richest collection of metal art works', 'the world famous collection of goldware', 'one of the most remarkable finds of the early European Middle Ages', 'the famous treasure on which the most famous works with fantastic images have been engraved' and many more.

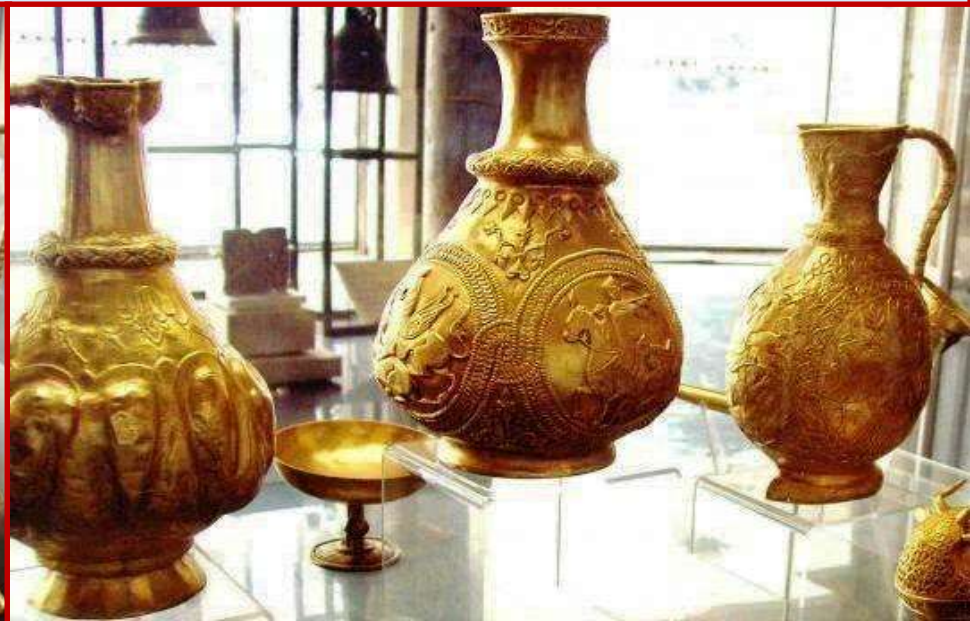
Ever since the first attempts for a scientific analysys of the Treasure every scholar without exception on mediaeval European history, archaelogy, linguistics, epigraphy, culture studies, arts studies and what have you felt obliged to take a stand and to offer his/her viewpoint or opinion on the multitude of issues existing or arising all the time in connection with it, so that only the scientific literature upon the Treasure is already immense.



Of the Bulgarian scientists, the world renowned linguist Academician Prof. Stefan Mladenov, the art critic Prof. Nikola Mavrodinov and the historian and art critic Prof. Stefan Vaklinov carefully studied the Treasure, but the first more serious attempt for a scientific research and description of the Golden Treasure of Nagy Szent-Miklós is from 1885 of the Austrian Prof. Hampel, while its fullest and most detailed description with a referenced description of most of the theses and hypotheses promoted until then was made by two Hungarian scientists whose treatise was first published in Hungarian in 1977 and then, in 1984, also in English.

As a result, the golden treasure of Nagy Szent-Miklós is the only treasure in the world about which so many hypotheses, opinions and viewpoints have been suggested according to which in terms of origin and nationality it is simultaneously:

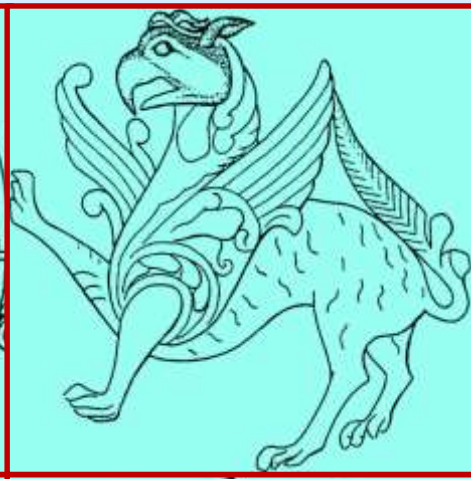
-Bactrian, Sassanidian, Iranian-of the Huns, Turanian, North Pontian, Byzantine, West Huns, Avarian, Avaro-Bulgarian, or it belonged to the first great and famous on European soil Bulgarian Avitohol, better known to all late ancient and mediaeval Europe under his of Gothic origin name Atilla;

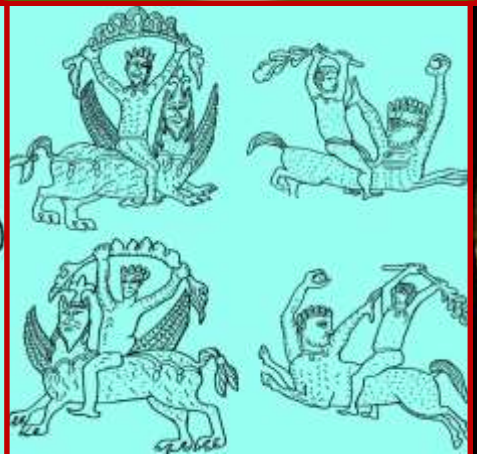


-Bulgarian belonging to Khan Asparukh having been stolen from his tomb and buried in the ground in 896 during a Magyar invasion in the area of Banat or only Bulgarian belonging to the Bulgarian khans; Bulgarian belonging to a proto-Bulgarian boil for the western part of the country, as well as proto-Bulgarian belonging to a ruler from that age; it is because of this that it is usually called A proto-Bulgarian Ruler's Treasure;

-Hungarian belonging to a Bulgarian layer in the Hungarian ethnos and culture; the result of western conquest of the Bulgarians, of the Huns-Bulgarian with Aitony the most likely last owner; Bolgar or Pecheneg, Hazar-Hungarian, Pecheneg, Koumanian, Pecheneg-Koumanian or Pecheneg-Kupchag; Turkic, Turkic-Pecheneg, Kupchag-Pecheneg; Hungarian, Avar-Hungarian, Avar, Hungarian with the Magyar prince Aitony whose predecessor was Boila from the Greek language inscription;

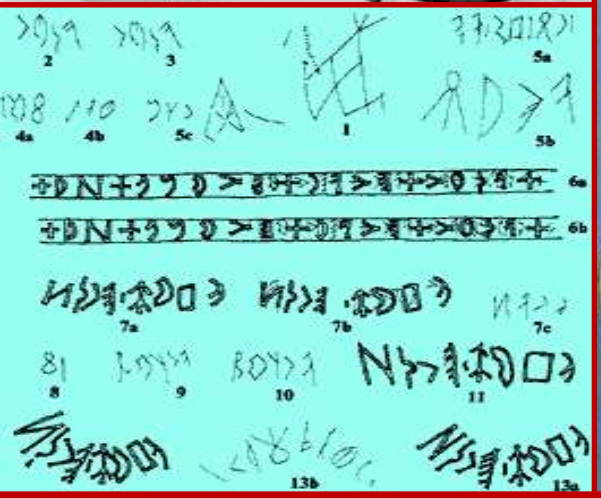
From a third viewpoint, the Treasure was manufactured by the Bulgarian people in present-day Northern Bulgaria who had gone the way from east to west and had just adopted Christinanity, and, more specifically, by Bulgarian goldsmithhs; the vessels in their entirety were from the treasure of a monastery and were acquired either from goldsmith's workshops in Vidin or from endowments of ready-made vessels manufactured a long time before that in a number of other places; it was the product of a Bactrian, Sassanido-Persian and Byzantine art shool; the eastern shapes are a consequence of the resumption of trade between East and West in the second half of the first millenium; the vessels are the works of diferent workshops and artisans; it was manufactuered by the Hazar tribe of the Cabars who headed the Magyar migration in the west and were skilled with silver and gold; it was manufactured by the Pechenegs with part of the Sassanidian vessels being manufactured in Levedia, etc.





There are three kinds of inscriptions on the vessels of the Treasure - Greek, proto-Bulgarian using Greek characters and runic proto-Bulgarian, while various very beautiful representations of people and animals are engraved on their walls and bottoms; they are united in scenes and plots; plant and geometric ornaments or motifs are interwoven around them; the ornaments are classic Greek, Byzantine, Scythian or Sassanido-Persian with deeper roots and basis in the Ahemenidian from the VI century B.C. and the Assyrian art of the VIII centtury B.C.

The most successful and convincing translation of the Greek language inscription on two of the golden cups was made by Bulgarian Academician Prof. Stefan Mladenov and, partly edited stylistically by us, it reads 'Jesus Christ, through the Holy Water reassure this servant of Yours, setting him free of his sin.' Therefore they was used for christening to Tsar Boris the Baptist and his family.



Definitely successful and convincing is the spelling out of the proto-Bulgarian runic inscription on the part of the Turkish professor Talat Tekin and according to him it reads 'Asparukh's drinking cup' which translation, having in mind the specific morphological structure of the proto-Bulgarian language and the longtime existing already specific Bulgarian traditional practice of one-type inscribing of similar vessels, we correct and specify to 'Asparukh to drink'. On the analogy of this, the inscription of Khan Asparukh's golden dinner dish have to translate like 'Asparukh to eat'.

Some of the golden jugs with classical Greek and Sassanido-Persian plots and motifs were presented as a gift for the aid given him by Emperor Irakliy to Khan Kubrat after their joint military campaign in Persia in 628 when both the temple in Shiza and the king's residence Dastakerd were seized.

Still, as yet the proto-Bulgarian inscription No. 21 in Greek characters, also called Buila's Inscription, excites the most publicity in scientific circles for the present; it is above all the largest, fullest, correct as to its formal content and even exquisitely beautiful, specific and (for the time being) the only known coherent text in the language of Asparukh's Bulgarians, or, in a nutshell, this inscription, as well as the Treasure itself, is unique:

† ΒΟΥΗΛΑ·ΖΟΑΠΑΝ·ΤЄСΗ·ΔΥΓЄΤΟΙΓΗ·ΒΟΥΤΑΟΥΛ·ΖωΑΠΑΝ·ΤΑΓΡΟΓΗ·ΗΤΖΙΓΗ·ΤΑΙСΗ †

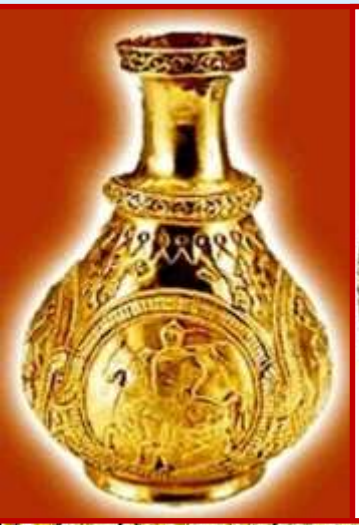
†Βουηλα·ζοαπαν·τεση·δυγετοιγη·Βουταουλ·ζωαπαν·ταγρογη·ητζίγη·ταιση†

Buila žoăpan tešeji dugetojgi Butaul žoăpan tagrogi ičigi täjši

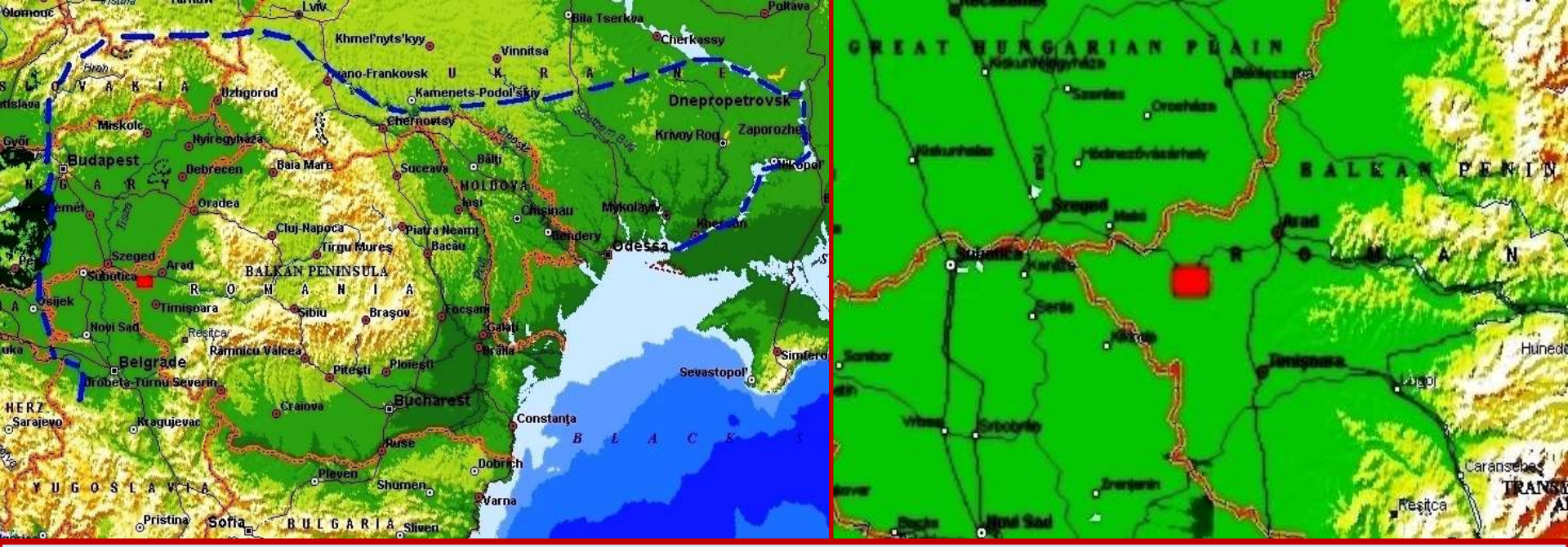
Great names of world linguistics try the spelling out and translation of Inscription No. 21 such as Danish Professor Wilhelm Tomsen: Jupan Boila completed the bowl, this bowl for drinking, which jupan Butaul adapted for hanging; Bulgarian Academician Prof. Stefan Mladenov: Boila zoapan engraved the struggle, Butaul zoapan engraved the inner cross; Hungarian Academician Prof. Gula Nemet: The bowl of Buila which he gave them to cast in a mould and here it is now the bowl for drinking of Butaul Tchaban who ordered them to make a handle for it; Karachai-Balkar Professor Sjuleiman Baitchorov: The bowl of Boila Zopan, it was manufactured by Botaul and it is a cup for drinking for Zopan's relatives; American Professor Omeljan Pritsak and the Turkish Professor Talat Tekin: Tchoban Buila filled the basin, Tchoban Butaul attached it to the tomb (=hung it). This is a basin for drinks.

In my opinion the translation of Inscription No. 21 have to be: The cup for which jupan Buila ordered after coating it, to inscribe, and from jupan Butaul to drink for his health.

The Golden Treasure of Nagy Szent-Miklós is Bulgarian in terms of origin and belonging; it was collected, kept and guarded in the dining-room and treasury of the Bulgarian khans and tsars ever since their migration across the Caucasus; it was exhibited and kept last in the throne-room of the king's palace built and lived in first by Tsar Simeon the Great after the transfer of the Bulgarian capital-city from Pliska to Preslav in 893; it was taken out of here in 971 during the siege and seizure of the capital of Great Preslav by the Byzantine army which was immediately before the falling of Eastern Bulgaria under Byzantine rule; it was kept in Bulgaria-Beyond-the Danube by the Bulgarian jupans princes Gilyad, Butaul and Akhtum; it was buried in 1008 by the proto-Bulgarian hamlet with the later name of Nagy Szent-Miklós during the continuing seizure of the beyond-the-Danube Bulgarian lands by the Magyars and more specifically during their cruel outrage upon the Bulgarian nationality and statehood in the area of Prince Akhtum jupan where it was found in 1799.



Jug No. 2 was manufactured by a Bulgarian goldsmith in Pliska upon the order of a high Bulgarian dignitary and was presented to Khan Omurtag in honour of his victorious war against the Franks and the Panonian Slavs around 826-827. Khan Omurtag himself is engraved on one of the sides of the jug at the moment of his most brilliant triumph and celebration.



Ever since the time of Khan Krum (803-814) and Khan Omurtag (814-831) the north-western border of the First Bulgarian Kingdom ran to the west of the town of Srem, today the Serbian town of Sremska Mitrovitsa, along the Sava, turned at a right angle in the north under the great bend of the Danube in the east, came out and ran up the Danube a little to the west from Budapest, before its great bend in the south, and after that in a direct line it went north upstream the Khron until it reached the Carpathian Mountains.

The northern border across the Danube ran along the ridge of the Carpathian range which makes a wide arc from west to south-east; it left it somewhere around the present-day Ukrainian town of Borislav and continued along upperstream Dnestr; it ran downstream until the great bend a little after the town of Kamenets-Podolsk; it changed direction to the north-east and reached the Dnepr to the north of the town of Kremenchug; it ran downstream and came out at the northernmost point of the Black Sea - the Bay of Kherson, to the east of the present-day town of Odessa.