

THE MYSTERY OF THE ONOGURIS FORTRESS

Borbála Obrusánszky

PhD in History

Karoli Gaspar University, Budapest, Hungary

borbala.obrusanszky@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8654-1796>

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Abstract: The names Honagur/Onogur etc. referring to the Huns and later to the Hungarians appear in the sources of the Caucasus region, which indicates that the Huns and their descendants played an important role in the region in the 5th-6th centuries. In my present study, I examine the name of the fortress, Onoguris, which often appeared in the Byzantine-Persian war, and which played an important role in the battles.

In my present study, I examine the name of the fortress, Onoguris, which reminds us the name Hungarians and appeared in the Byzantine-Persian, especially in the Lazica war, and which played an important role in the battles.

Keywords: *Caucasus, Lazica, Lazic war, Honagur, Onoguris, Huns, Hungarians*

INTRODUCTION

Onoguris was one of the important fortresses of the western Caucasus in ancient Lazica, for which there was a fierce struggle between the Byzantines and the Persians in the middle of the 6th century. From the 1st century BC onwards battles raged already for the possession of this area between the two neighboring great powers, the Roman and Parthian Empires. Later on there was a competition for the control of this geopolitically extremely important area between the Persian Sassanids, who later replaced the Parthians, and the Eastern Roman Empire after the division of the Roman Empire in 395. There are many records of the centuries-old battles. The most interesting out of these for us are the events recorded by the historians Procopius¹, Agathias² and Menandros Protector³, which the Byzantine sources call the Lazica War and the Georgians call the Egrisi War. Not only the armies of the two empires, but also mercenaries took part in the battles, for example the Huns living in the region, who fought sometimes on the Persian side, sometimes on the Byzantine side. The war in Lazica is also of particular importance to us, because in the historical sources reporting on it, the Huns who were believed to have disappeared appear again. A town called Onoguris also appeared, which contemporaries believe was the town of the Huns, and the name of which may be related to the Hungarians, Onogur/Hungarus. The Byzantine sources provide a new addition to the history of the European Huns, as well as the early, possible presence of Hungarians in the Caucasus.

¹ Procopius Caesarea (around 500–565) 6th century historian. His main work is the History of the Wars, in which he summarized the Goth, Vandal and Persian wars of Emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565).

² Agathian Myrine (around 530–582/594?) Continued the work of Procopius

³ Continued the work of Agathias. He wrote his chronicle at the time of Emperor Mauricos (r. 582–602.)

The large-scale eastern wars were closely related to the large-scale plan of the then emperor, Justinian I (r. 527–565), who wanted to revive the Roman Empire after his accession to the throne. According to the Byzantine historian Agathias, the ruler could have decided very early on to reunite the former Roman territories, which is also supported by the fact that at the beginning of his reign he declared that the Gepids, Longobards, Franks and Alemanni settled in the territory of the former Roman Empire were all his subjects. [Agathias (1975): book I, 4] With this, he foreshadowed his claim to the old Roman lands. However, to implement his plan, he needed a well-trained force, so in addition to the imperial military, mercenaries were also employed, usually Huns, who were sometimes referred to as Sabirs, and who received significant support for their service. Procopius disapprovingly remarked that Justinian had supported the Huns too much: “For the loss of the empire he gave large sums to anyone among the Huns who came before him; as a result, the Roman land was exposed to frequent raids, because the barbarians who tasted the wealth of the Romans could no longer forget the road leading here.” [Prokopios (1984): 48] The Byzantine ruler had plans for Attila's successors. He successfully used their forces in the war against the Vandals (533–534) and the Goths (535–554), and after that he went to war with the Persians in several places in the east, one of the sites of which was the Second Lazica War (541–562).

LAZICA

Colkis, an ancient state on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, had rich gold deposits. Gold was washed from the mountain streams. The ancient Hellenic Argonaut expedition was aimed at obtaining this region wanting to acquire the "golden fleece", i.e. the gold treasures of the region. A section of the famous Eurasian trade route, the Silk Road led through this area that connected Byzantium with Iran, Central Asia and China. This was a significant source of income for the powers that controlled the region. In the early Middle Ages, this area was called Egrisi by the locals, and Greek sources called it Lazica. Due to its strategic position, both regional powers wanted to extend their influence in the area, so there were almost continuous wars here from the 1st century AD. A determinative peace took place in Lazica in 387, in which the Romans and Persians divided the region between them: Iberia and most of Armenia came under Persian influence, while Lazica (formerly: Colkis) and a small part of Armenia belonged to Rome. In the first half of the 5th century, Christian persecution overshadowed the relationship between the two empires, and there was another change as well as the eastern half of the Roman Empire, known as Byzantium, took over these areas of the divided Roman Empire. The attack of the Persians subsided in the 440s, because they clashed several times with their eastern neighbors, the Hephthalites (White Huns), who were so successful that in 484 they captured and executed Shah Peroz I himself (457–484). The Persians paused their attack in the direction of the Caucasus for a while, then at the very beginning of the 6th century, during the reign of Shah Kavād I (488–531), the war between Byzantium and Persia started again for the possession of Armenia, and then in 520 they made peace. A significant change took place in the region when in 520/521, the king of Lazica, Tzath I (521/522–527), was baptized in Byzantium and married a Christian woman, which the Persians regarded as a threat. In response, the Persians wanted to forcibly convert

Christian Iberia to the Zoroastrian faith, at which point Gurganes⁴ asked Emperor Justinian for help. A war raged between the two great powers until 532 when they made peace, in which they agreed on the influence of the region: Lazica went to Byzantium, but the Roman successor state had to pay 11 pounds of gold annually to the Persians. However, Khosrow I (531-579) broke this agreement called "the eternal peace" and in 540 launched an attack against the Byzantine Empire led by Justinian I and its vassal states on several fronts, including the Caucasus.

THE LAZICA WARS

Due to its geographical location, Lazica was closely linked to the states of the Black Sea region, and in fact, the area was a Byzantine vassal state from the 6th century. The king of Lazica Gubazes II (541–555) wanted to change this. He rebelled against Justinian I and the Byzantine rule, because Tzibus the military commander sent to the area who was holding the title of magister militum, made the salt trade and other products a Roman monopoly [Procopius (1914): II, XV, 8–12], which sensitively affected the local merchants and the treasury of Lazica. As a result, the locals lost a significant amount of income. Gubazes therefore approached the Persian Shah Khosrow I with the proposal that Lazica would join them. [Procopius (1914): II, XVII, 1; Agathias (1975): II, XV, 17–18] The offer came in handy for the Persian ruler, because after he had gained authority over Iberia in the Caucasus in the peace treaty of 532, he wanted to expand further westward in order to reach the Black Sea, to control the caravan trade in the region and to increase the Persian treasury with its income. It came in handy for him that the Lazicians approached him and promised to surrender to him if he freed them from Tzibus. Shah Khosrow therefore took advantage of the opportunity. In 540 he canceled the eternal peace treaty that he concluded with the Byzantines in 532 and in 541 he launched his army against Lazica. At the border, Gubazes surrendered to him [Procopius (1914): II, XVII, 1] and handed over Petra, the Byzantine fortress on the Black Sea coast. However, the Persian alliance did not live up to the expectations. The Persian Shah settled Persians in Petra, and the Zoroastrian priests, the magus, wanted to forcefully convert the Christians to their own faith, which met with great resistance. When they wanted to resettle some of the people living in Petra into Persia, and at the same time Gubazes had found out that they wanted to kill him, he turned away from the Persians and turned to his old ally. In 548, he approached Emperor Justinian I, who sent 7,000 Roman soldiers and 1,000 Tzan (relatives of the Lazica) auxiliaries to protect the Lazicans. He appointed Dagisthaeus as general and ordered him to besiege and take Petra. The Byzantine forces marched towards Lazica in 549, scoring several victories against Persian forces, but failed to take the key fortress of Petra.⁵ The Byzantine general did not pay attention to the defense of the mountain passes in the east, so the relief army led by the Persian Mihr-Mihroe⁶ easily passed through the passes and relieved the besieged Petra. After that,

⁴ Vakhtang I. Gorgasali 447–522, King of Iberia

⁵ Kobulteï, Adjara

⁶ In the Byzantine Chronicles: *Mermeroes*

Mihr-Mihroe left 3000 men in the fortress and retreated to Armenia. Gubazes and Dagisthaeus⁷ made a repeated attack at Petra, causing great damage to the fortress, but failed to take it. At the same time, the Persian general Chorianes was killed in the battle by Phasis. Another large force under the command of the Byzantine Rhecithancus also appeared in the area, to whom the Lazicians and the Sabirs had joined. [Teall (1965): 62] Because of the failure, in 550 there was a change in the military leadership, Dagisthaeus was sent home and Bessas took over. The siege of Petra continued, and at the same time the two empires sat down to negotiate a truce. Bessas managed to take Petra in the spring of 551. As a result, Gubazes rejected Mihr-Mihroe's peace offer in 551. Then the Persian general, Mihr-Mihroe, besieged the capital of Lazica, Archaeopolis, and other nearby strongholds, including Onoguris, as well as some smaller strongholds on the right bank of the Phasis river. Onoguris fell, but he could not take Archaeopolis, and the Persian army suffered significant losses. The Byzantines mobilized more than 12 thousand people there, [Teall (1965): 63] so the Persian army retreated. Between 552–554 the Persians were only able to occupy small strongholds in Lazica. In 554, general Mihr-Mihroe retired due to illness and died later that year. He was replaced by Nachoragan, who repelled the Byzantine attack at Onoguris. In 555, the Persians continued to attack in the direction of the Phasis River, but were defeated by the new Byzantine general, Martin, who rectified with this the defeat at Onoguris. An elite unit fought on the side of the Persians, the Dajlamites, whom the Byzantines called Dilimnitas. This was a group of non-Persian, possibly mostly horsemen from the steppes, who lived in the southwestern part of the Caspian Sea, near the Albroz Mountains. According to Agathias, they lived on the banks of the Tigris River, on the border of Persia, and by the 6th century they played a significant role in the Persian army. [Agathias (1975): IV. 17. 6] They took part in the Lazica war (for example, at the siege of Archaeopolis), but the Sabirs, the Byzantine mercenaries inflicted such a defeat on them that they retreated. Further problems arose in the Lazica War. The Byzantine generals' trust in King Gubazes was shaken. The Byzantine commanders Bessas, Martin and Rusticus accused him of conniving with the Persians. Rusticus sent his brother Ionnes to Emperor Justinian to tell him that the ruler of Lazica wanted to change sides and go over to the Persians. The ruler ordered that if this was proven to be true, he could be killed. Rusticus and Ionnes then quickly murdered Gubazes. Some nobles from Lazica persuaded the emperor to nominate Tzates, Gubazes' younger brother, as their new king. In the meantime Senator Athanasius investigated the assassination. It turned out that Gubazes did not negotiate with the Persians after all and that the above Byzantine military leaders killed him purely for the sake of power. Therefore, Rusticus and Ionnes were arrested, tried and executed. In 556, the allies recaptured Archaeopolis and defeated Nachoragan. In 557, a truce was concluded and hostilities between the Byzantines and the Persians in the Caucasus were ended, and with the "Fifty Years' Peace" of Dara in 562, Khosrow I recognized Lazica as a Byzantine vassal state, but the Byzantines had to pay a certain amount of gold annually as tribute. The Persian shah made peace quickly supposedly in order to have enough forces to fight the Hephtalites, the White Huns living in the eastern borderland. The peace treaty consisted of 13 points, which were preserved for us by protector Menandros. The first

⁷ The highest military rank

point was that the Persians promised that they would not allow Huns, Alans or other barbarians to pass through the Derbent Straits⁸ and the Caspian Gate in the direction of the Roman Empire, and that the Romans would not send an army against the Persians. The second point was about the Saracens, who were allies of both empires. The third point was about the support of trade and the fourth point was about the protection of ambassadors. The sixth point provided for the free return of people who remained in each other's territory during the war, and in the eighth point it was forbidden to build border fortresses, with the exception of Daras. [Fragments of Menandros Protector (2019): 3]

THE ROLE OF THE HUNS

As I mentioned above, the Lazica war is significant for us because the Huns appear again in the historical records, about whom only fragmentary texts survived after the death of Attila, i.e. from the second half of the 5th century, therefore some historians believed that the Huns disappeared from history after 453. According to some old theories, the Caucasian Huns were swept away by a migration that occurred in 463, which was confirmed to have happened only about a hundred years later,⁹ [Obrusánszky (2013)] so Attila's people continued to play a decisive role in the region. The Huns, as can be seen from the source data below, did not disappear, and from the first half of the 6th century they often appear in Byzantine historical chronicles as the emperors needed their military forces. Procopius regularly mentions them in his works “The Secret Story” and “The History of Wars”, and Agathias mentions the people living in the Caucasus region, namely the Sabirs, and mentions the fortress of Onoguris,¹⁰ the siege of which he reports on. Another interesting fact is that Agathias also provides a brief summary of the Huns, according to which they once lived on the eastern shore of Lake Meotis, north of the Don River, exactly where the Hungarian chronicles described the residence of the Huns and Hungarians. [Pictorial Chronicle (1993): 4-5] Agathias himself also mentions that the other barbarian peoples who founded Asia near Mount Imaeus also lived there.¹¹ These people are called Scythians and Huns in general, but some tribes have their own names, such as Kutrigur, Utigur, Ultizur, Burugundi, etc. [Agathias (1975): Book V. 11. 2] With their sudden and unexpected attacks, they caused incalculable damage to the local people, over whom they extended their authority and occupied their territories. According to Agathias, some Hun tribes quickly disappeared from the region, citing the example of the Ultizurs and the Burungi, who were well-known at the time of Emperor Leo (r. 457-474),

⁸ In the original text: Tzón

⁹ Not a single source from the Caucasus writes about the migration of peoples in 463. The population movement following the Huns only occurred at the end of the 550s, when the Avars appeared in the foreground of the Caucasus. Modern literary summaries do not mention it either that new people arrived in 463.

¹⁰ Onoguris, which was renamed Stephanopolis during the Byzantine period, was a town in Lazica (in present-day West Georgia, probably in the modern village of Khuntsi). It was recorded by the Byzantine historian Agathias in his account of the Lazica War between the Byzantine Empire and the Persian Empire. The exact location of the Sasan Empire is still under investigation.

¹¹ Caucasus

but not today. [Jordanes (1904): 50]¹² He considered it conceivable that they migrated, and with this the author also indicates that some Hun tribes played an important role in the second half of the 5th century, but only very few sources remain for us. Mention is also made of Anastasius' (491–518) "Long Wall", built on the western edge of the capital, which was strengthened at the end of the 5th century to stop the attacks of the Huns.¹³ Agathias continued the brief historical summary of the Huns: during the Great Plague (541–543), there were Hun tribes with different names, they lived at the height of their power, most of them moved south and camped not far away, on the banks of the Danube. [Agathias (1975): Book V. 11. 2]. In the Byzantine work, we can read about the Central Asian White Huns, the Hephthalites, who fought mainly with the Persians: in 488, they defeated the Persian Shah Peroz's army, and killed him. Later on, there was a lot of mention of the Sabirs, who fought as mercenaries on either the Byzantine or the Persian side. Agathias also remarks on them that they were Huns and that they provided heavy cavalry for the Roman (Byzantine) army. He estimated their number at 2,000. They served under their main leaders Balmach, Cutilizis and Iliger Hun generals. [Agathias (1975): Book III. 17. 5] The author described them as particularly feisty people, always ready to attack foreign lands. They helped the Romans a lot against the Persians. At the siege of Onoguris around 554–555 the Sabir mercenaries killed many Dilimnites, who were the elite unit of the Persian army.¹⁴ Later, another city, Rhodopolis, was taken by Elminzur, a Hun leader, with two thousand horsemen. [Agathias (1975): Book IV. 15]

THE IDENTIFICATION OF ONOGURIS

Agathias made only a brief description of the fortress of Onoguris, and unfortunately he did not give its exact location, so there is still a debate about where this fortress might have been. The author only wrote that it was close to Cotais (Kutaisi) and Mucheirisis, from where the Persians sent reinforcements to help the besieged. [Agathias (1975): Book III. 9. 6] Unfortunately, ever since, none has been able to clearly determine where the city bearing the name of the Huns was, only assumptions were made about it. Determining the location was somewhat helped by the fact that the identification and subsequent excavation of the former capital of Lazica began in the 1930s with the participation of German archaeologists in the modern Georgian settlement of Nokalakevi¹⁵ which is 52 kilometers from Cotais, modern Kutaisi. By the beginning of the 21st century, it was proven that the ruins found in Nokalakevi really belonged to the capital of Lazica.¹⁶ The researchers believed that the Onoguris fortress must be nearby, and they are currently marking several places as possible locations. First, the Georgian

¹² Attila's son, Hernac, chose a place for himself and his people also on the edge of Little Scythia. His relatives Emnetzur and Ultzindur occupied Utus, Hiscus and Almus in coastal Dacia, and many of the Huns flocked here from all sides to Romania, after whom the Sacromontisians and Fossatisians are still named.

¹³ The 56-kilometer-long fortress system built between the Marmara- and the Black Sea, which was used until the 7th century AD. According to assumptions, it already stood in the time of Leo I, around 469.

¹⁴ Note L. 17

¹⁵ It is located in Jikha, Samegrelo-Svaneti county, half way between Kutaisi (ancient name: Cotais) and Poti (Phasis).

¹⁶ www.nokalakevi.org

translator of Agathias' work, Kauhchishvili, [Kauhchishvili (1936): 59–62. 1] tried to identify the settlement. Based on historical sources, he concluded that the fortress could be in the eastern part of Lazica, halfway between Archaeopolis and modern Kutaisi. Kauhchishvili identified Onoguris with the Ukimerion fortress,¹⁷ which was in the vicinity of Kutaisi. Berdzenishvili [Berdzenishvili (1975): 463–65] believed to have found the settlement near the Unagira Mountain and located the fortress in the vicinity of Bandza¹⁸ and Nokalakevi. In the 1980s, excavations were carried out in the Abedati fortress, in the Martivil district, which was also a late antique fortress. Its construction was dated to the 4th century and it is just 13 kilometers north of the Nokalakevi fortress. This fortress is 50 kilometers from Kutaisi. Some have identified this fortress with Onoguris. [Zakaraia, P., Kapanadze, T. (1991); Lekvinadze (1993)] In the 2000s, after studying the work of Agathias, Pailodze believed that Abedati could not be identified with Onoguris due to the distance from Kutaisi. According to Braund, [Braund (1994): 306] the fortress could have been in the village of Sepieti, which is 70 kilometers from Kutaisi, so further than Abedati. He based her theory on the fact that the St. Stephen's Basilica stood in the settlement, after which Onoguris was later named. [Braund, D. & T. Sinclair (2000): 3-4. 9] Authors Braund and Sinclair [Braund, D. & T. Sinclair (2000)] also believed to have found the early medieval fortress at Sepieti, citing that an inscription from the 6th- 7th century was found, which contained the name Saint Stephen Basilica. [Everill et alii (2017): 356] The church in the settlement was built in the 5th-6th century and is currently dedicated to the archangels.

Pailodze [Pailodze (2003)] believed that the ruins near the settlement of Khuntsi could hide the fortress of Onoguris. This place is between Khoni and Martveli, 40 kilometers northwest of Kutaisi. In 2014, a Georgian-English archaeological expedition excavated the upper part of Khuntsi fortress and found many building remains. The expedition continued the excavation in 2015 and based on the samples taken from the excavated monuments, it was found that the age of the fortress is 646 (+/-160) years. Chronologically and because of the distance to Kutaisi, it is possible that the fortress of Onoguris once stood at this place. It is strange that Maksymink, who depicted the sites of the Byzantine-Persian war on a map, placed the fortress of Onoguris to the west of Archaeopolis, but did not add a textual comment to it. [Maksymink (2015)]

THE NAME ONOGUR IN THE CAUCASUS

The Onogurs, who were members of the Hun confederation, populated the Caucasus region for at least four centuries and played a decisive role in political processes. Despite all this, no archaeological sites or culture have been linked to them, and many conflicting theories have come to light regarding the origin of the people. In the last nearly two hundred years, countless studies have been written about the Onogors. Foreign and Hungarian researchers have sometimes linked them to the Bulgarians and other times to

¹⁷ Ukimerion Hill is in Kutaisi, the Bagrati Cathedral was built on it.

¹⁸ The settlement is located east of Nokalakevi, approx. 10 kilometers away. To the southeast of the village of Bandza, in the neighborhood, there is a village called Onoghia, which name may be related to the early medieval fortress.

the Hungarians. There is still a debate among researchers today as to whether the name Onogur refers to Bulgarians or Hungarians.¹⁹

The ethnicity of the people referred to as Onogur in Byzantine sources remains unresolved to this day. Researchers, primarily linguists, agree that in Byzantine sources the name onogur, in Latin sources the Hunuguri/Hungarus, etc. names are closely related to the Hungarians, however, there have been many conflicting theories about the relationship between the Hungarians and the Onogurs. The most significant publications on the subject were published by József Thúry, Gyula Németh, Gyula Moravcsik and Samu Szádeczky-Kardoss. Thúry²⁰ and Moravcsik²¹ considered it possible that the name Onogur originally meant the Hungarians, while other researchers drew the conclusion from the data of the late chronicles (Theophanes and Nikephoros) that the Onogurs were Bulgarians. In this study, I searched for the answer to what historical sources of the time mention the Onogurs/Hunguris/Hungarus, and with whom and which peoples they were associated with in the 6th to 8th centuries. From this we can perhaps get an answer to who the contemporary chroniclers meant by onogurs. The very first data comes from the fragments of the rhetorician Priscos, who wrote an eight-volume work on the Huns in the 5th century, which was lost, but some fragments survived in later Byzantine works, so it was included in the Suidas lexicon compiled in the 10th century, in connection with the history of the Avars. C. de Boor [de Boor (1915)] questioned whether the part about the Avars was Priscus' original text, but Gyula Moravcsik rejected this suggestion. [Moravcsik (1930): 7] However, C. de Boor was right, because rhetor Priscus was not a contemporary of the Avars. He died in 471, so he could not possibly write about the migration that occurred in the middle of the 6th century. That is why it is a big mistake that historians and linguists use these fragments of Priscus, especially those written about the Avars, as primary sources, excluding source criticism. Priscus' fragment says that in 463 the Onogurs, Saragurs, etc. sent ambassadors to Byzantium. This happened while Priscus was still alive, but here this text was merely about the ambassadors. [Györffy (1986): 53] However, the second sentence is about the attacks of the Avars, which the Eastern Roman author Priscus no longer lived through. It must have been a late insertion, someone else's entry, which was unfortunately washed together with the first sentence. It cannot be ruled out that these two sentences were joined later, and the researchers created a migration from the ambassadors in 463. A migration that never happened, since the

¹⁹ It is known that the Hungarians called themselves Hungária. It is known through researchers József Thúry, Halasi-Kun, Péter Király, etc. that the Hungarus/Hunugri etc. names always referred to Hungarians.

²⁰ Thúry (1896), 8: „The fact that he mentions the Hungarians by three names at the same time eloquently proves how well the later Byzantine writers knew their older historical literature, because the V., VI. and VII. century Byzantine writers were the first among Europeans to call the Hungarians Ungroi, or the older, full form of this name Unuguroi, Onoguroi and they also clearly stated that they were people from among the Un, that is the Hun people. (pl. Agathias and Theo-phylactus).”

²¹ Moravcsik (1930), 4: „When researching the prehistory of the Hungarian and Bulgarian people, it is equally important to examine the people's movements that took place in the Caucasus and on the northern coast of the Black Sea during the five centuries from the appearance of the Huns to the Hungarian conquest. The oldest traces that can be inferred from the written sources that remained for us lead back to the mentioned area and age for both peoples.”

Avars only appeared in the Caucasus region at the very end of the 550s. Apart from this data, no other historical source knows about large population movements or migrations.

The following source comes from the 6th-century Gothic-Alan historian Jordanes, who wrote the following about them in his work called *Getica*: „Farther from these, over the Pontus Sea, lies the residence of the Bulgars, who have been made very famous by our misdemeanors. Here sprouted in two places, the sprawling trunk of the bravest nation, the Huns, the danger of the peoples. One is called the Altziagirus, the other the Savirus (Sabír), because their places of residence are nevertheless separate from each other: that of the Altziagirus is near Chersona, where merchants longing for the treasures of Asia transport their goods. In the summer, they wander the fields and set up homesteads where the herd's food lures them, and in the winter they retreat above the Pontic Sea. And the Hunugurs are known because they trade in ermine fur.” [Jordanes (1904) 33–37]. Jordanes's description is important because he mentions the Onogurs very early on, whom he calls “Hunuguros” starting with h. This name is very similar to the name the Hungarians use: *Hungarus*, and moreover, the place of residence of this people was given in the same region as the Hungarian historical chronicles. The historian describes the Bulgarians (*Bulgares*) and the Hunugurs as separate peoples. After that, the third, fourth and fifth chapters of Agathias' 6th-century work talks about the Onoguris fortress in Lazica. In this the author also gave a brief explanation of the name of the place. He described that Onoguris is an ancient name that came from the Huns, which is why the settlement was named Onoguris. He then added that nowadays (in the time of Agathias) they no longer used this name, because the city was renamed after Saint Stephen their patron saint. [Agathias (1975): Book III. 5. 6]. It is possible that by the 6th century the Onogurs had already moved from the area, because there is no more mention of them in the area. Another report can be found in the 6th century work of the rhetor Zacharias, who wrote that beyond the Caspian Gates is the land of the Huns, where 13 Hun tent-dwelling peoples live, such as the Ungurs (Onogurs), Ugars, Sabirs, Kutrigurs, Avars, Kasers (Khazars), Dirmars, Saragurs, Barsils, Kulas (Hvárezmians) and the Hephthalites. The author did not connect the Bulgarians with the Onogurs, but classified them also among the Huns, and then noted that they were a pagan and barbarian nation with a separate language. [Kmoskó (2004): 99] This source also considers Bulgarians and Onogurs to be separate peoples within the Huns.

Movses Kalankatuyk, in his work entitled *Caucasian Albania* that he compiled in the 8th century, mentions Honagur, who came from the land of the Huns and attacked the Persians in the time of Sapur. At the very end of the 6th century, Menandros protector talks about the onogurs as “uniguros”, and he calls the Sabirs as “Sabéros”. [Fragments of Menandros Protector (2019): Gent.2] A fragment of Menandros claims that in 558 the Avars went to war with the Onogurs and at the same time destroyed the Sabirs. [Fragments of Menandros Protector (2019): 4438] Gyula Moravcsik assumed that these battles did not have serious consequences for the Onogurs, as they did not disappear from written sources. We meet them again two decades later, even then they were strong and powerful. [Moravcsik (1930): 14] They appear once again in a fragment of Menander, when a Byzantine embassy went to the Turkish Khagan in 576. The ruler of the Turks was threatening saying that his rule extended from the east to the west. In addition to the Alans he cited the Onogur tribes as an example, which - although they opposed the

invincible Turks - did not achieve anything, and like other peoples, they too ended up in his servitude. [Fragments of Menandros Protector (2019): 206] According to Theophylaktos Simokattes, [Simokattae (1887): VII. 8. 13] the Onogurs once had a city called Bakath, which was destroyed by an earthquake. We have no other sources about this settlement, its identification is still unclear. Despite this, a whole migration theory was born about when the event could have happened and what kind of population movements it could have started. According to János Harmatta, the “Sogd kad” i.e. meaning “city”, is hidden in the name. [Harmatta (1992): 257] According to the Hungarian researcher, the settlement can be identified with the Usruxana/Ustrushana region, the capital of which is Bunjikat. The district is located in Transoxania, Central Asia and is related to the Hunnic Kidarites and the White Huns (Hephthalites). Apart from this single piece of data, there is no other source for the fact that Onogurs actually lived in the city, but it can be verified that the Huns lived there for hundreds of years. Around 680, the Ravenna Geographer mentioned that there was a “patria Onogoria” in the Black Sea area, in the same place the 8th century Byzantine episcopal list contains a bishopric called Onogur, which is in the Azov Sea area. This is the same place that the Hungarian chronicles refer to as the Meotis Swamp, the early dwelling area of the Huns and Hungarians. [Moravcsik (1930): 14–15] The researchers were confused by the work of Theophanes,²² who in the 6th–9th centuries summarized the history of Byzantium and the neighboring peoples. The author consistently called the Bulgarians as Bulgares from 513 until 812/813, with only one exception. At the year 678/679 he says: “In this year the Bulgars invaded Thrace. It is necessary to tell how the Onogundur Bulgarians relate to the ancient history of the Kotrigurs.” [The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor (1997)] Based on this single late 9th century record, most researchers believe that the Onogurs were actually Bulgarians. Only József Thúry [Thúry (1896): 8] believed that “Onogundur Bulgarian” means “Bulgarians belonging to the Onogurs”, which indicates that the Bulgarians lived under Onogur rule for a while in a certain period of history, from which only Kuvra freed them. If we look at other Slavic, Byzantine and Frankish sources, we find that the “Hungarus/ Hungaria” etc. expressions applied exclusively to Hungarians.

The Latin name of the Kingdom of Hungary was Hungaria, which again confirms that the Byzantine version: “onogur” was also related to us Hungarians.

CONCLUSION

The appearance of the Onoguris fortress and the Hun people living in the area in Byzantine and contemporary Caucasian sources indicates that the steppe people settled in many places in the region. The historical sources of the time show that the Huns played a decisive role in the Caucasus even after the death of Attila (453). Their forces were also used by the great powers of the region (Persians, Byzantines). In addition to the Hun name, onogur, honagur, hunuguri, etc. stand out, and it refers to the Hungarians. The contemporary documents also prove that steppe peoples, namely Sabirs and Onogurs, also lived in the western region of today's Georgia, which can open new perspectives in further research into the early history of the region.

²² Theophanes, the Hivalló (approx. 758–817) His work called *Anni Mundi* summarized the history of the 6th–9th century

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