

As promised, after the appearance of *Crusaders, Missionaries and Eurasian Nomads in the 13th - 14th Centuries: A Century of Interaction*, Hautala did indeed publish an anthology of annotated Russian translations of the Latin texts.<sup>10</sup> In his introduction, Spinei observes that “unlike West-European authors who often ignore works published

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<sup>10</sup> *Ot “Davida, tsaria Indii” do “nenavistnogo plebsa satany”: antologiya rannikh latinskikh svedenii o tataro-mongolakh* (Kazan’: Mardzhani institut AN RT, 2018).

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**István Zimonyi. *Medieval Nomads in Eastern Europe: Collected Studies*. Ed. Victor Spinei. București: Editoru Academiei Române, Braïla: Editura Istros a Muzueului Braïlei, 2014. 298 pp. Abbreviations.**

This anthology by the distinguished Hungarian scholar of the University of Szeged István Zimonyi contains twenty-eight articles, twenty-seven of them previously published between 1985 and 2013. Seventeen are in English, six in Russian, four in German, and one in French, demonstrating his adherence to his own maxim that without translation from Hungarian, research by Hungarian scholars “will not become part of the international literature” (230). The five thematic sections of the anthology reflect Zimonyi’s evolving research interests, as outlined in the introduction by András Róna-Tas, “István Zimonyi—A Concise Portrayal” (11-12). Although the “Parts” are numbered, the articles are not. The book concludes with a list of “Abbreviations” (397). A full-page color photograph of Zimonyi graces the volume (5).

These are not facsimiles but reproductions. Neither the author nor the editor, the Romanian specialist on steppe-sedentary relations Victor Spinei, has attempted to standardize the apparatus, so in some articles book and article titles in Hungarian are translated, in others they are not. Different spellings of the same Inner Asian or Oriental names, such as Bulgar and Bulghar, remain unrationalized, but specialists will not be confused, and the lack of an index, a standard omission in an anthology, will not affect the utility of the volume. Aside from the instances mentioned below, the number of typographical and format errors in the English- and French-language articles is puny.

in Slavic or Balkan languages, or Russian authors who confine themselves to bibliography in their own mother tongue,” Hautala’s linguistic capabilities enabled him to become conversant with the entire field of Mongol studies (14), for which all specialists in the Mongols, and indeed all medievalists, should be grateful.

- Charles J. Halperin

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Part I, “Volga Bulgars,” the subject of Zimonyi’s English-language monograph,<sup>1</sup> contains eight articles. In “The First Mongol Raids against the Volga-Bulgars” (15-23), Zimonyi confirms the report of ibn-Athir that the Mongols, after defeating the Kipchaks and the Rus’ in 1223, were themselves defeated by the Volga Bolgars, whose triumph lasted only until 1236, when the Mongols crushed Volga Bolgar resistance.

In “Volga Bulgars between Wind and Water (1220-1236)” (25-33), Zimonyi explores the pre-conquest period of Bulgar-Mongol relations further. The Bulgars defeated the Mongols not only in 1223 but also in 1229 and 1232. However, during this period the Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus’ princes annexed Mordvin territory that was part of the Bulgar realm. Zimonyi argues that the Bulgars considered the Mongols a greater threat than the Rus’ and therefore did not respond to the Rus’ territorial advance. Given Bulgar connections to Central Asia, their knowledge of the Mongols would indeed have given them a better appreciation of the Mongol danger than the Rus’ had; after 1223 the Rus’ thought that the Mongols had gone away for good. Unbeknownst to me, “between the wind and the water” is a nautical expression for “at a vulnerable point” or “in the crossfire.” This article is enhanced by maps showing Eastern European trade and campaign routes and a “Chronology” which serves as an appendix.

In “Volga Bulghars and Islam” (35-40), Zimonyi writes that “The adoption of a world religion is always a political decision” (25). Here he analyzes

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<sup>1</sup> István Zimonyi, *The Origins of the Volga Bulghars* (Szeged: University of Szeged Press, 1990).

the internal and external factors that led the Bulgars to choose Islam. Their connections to Central Asia and desire to distinguish themselves from the Khazars, whose official religion was Judaism, figured prominently in their choice.

“The Towns of the Volga Bulgars in the Sources (10-13th Century)” (41-47) discusses Latin, Muslim, and Rus’ sources. The towns of the Bulgar Empire arose from commerce and Islamization, but did not reach their height until the fourteenth century under Mongol rule. The sources do not permit conclusive identification of the Bulgar capital cities; the correlation of urban names in different sources and languages also cannot be definitively established. Zimonyi points out that the Volga Bulgars developed no written or oral historical tradition, so Volga Bulgar history must be written from foreign written sources.

“Volzhskaia Bolgariia i volzhskii put” (49-55) analyzes the western Eurasian river system, the names given the Volga River and its other rivers in various, especially Turkic, languages, and information on Volga Bulgar commercial ties to Central Asia conveyed in legends associated with the Volga River.

“Znachenie volzhskogo puti v istorii volzhskikh bolgar” (57-63) continues the study of the connection between the Volga Bulgars and the Volga River. Zimonyi labels the name of the “Danube Bulgars” a misnomer because the Danube Bulgars arrived in the Balkans not from Volga Bulgaria but from north of the Black Sea. The Volga Bulgars were tied to the Volga River not just by name; the entire history of the Volga Bulgars depended upon Volga trade. The key turning point in that trade was the shift in trade routes by the Saminids of Khorezm from the lower Volga through Khazar territory to overland from Central Asia to the Middle Volga River and the Volga Bulgars. After the influence of the Khazars declined, Volga Bulgars established a colony on the

lower Volga.

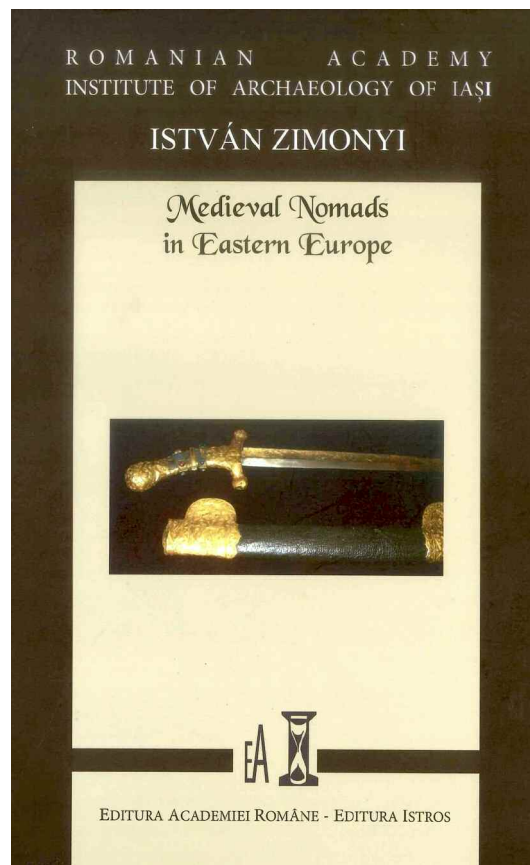
“Zarubezhnaia istoriografiia” (65-77) (of the history of the Volga Bulgars) appeared in *Istoriia tatars drevneishkikh vremen*, v. II (Kazan’, 2006), which is now also available in English. It is a masterful survey which includes scholarship in Polish, Turkish, and Bulgarian, in addition to the usual suspects. He includes studies of archaeology and linguistics. Zimonyi details all complete or partial publications and translations of all relevant sources in all languages. Not only did the Volga Bulgars not patronize their own written histories; in fact, no written sources from Volga Bulgars survive from the tenth to the twelfth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

“Zapadnoevropeiskie pis’mennye istochniki o Bulgarakh” (79-82) covers some of the material in the previous article on Latin sources but also discusses Constantine Porphyrogenitus in Greek.

Part II, “Early Hungarians,” contains ten articles, the most of any “Part,” over a third of the articles in the anthology and over 40% of the pages of the anthology (83-248, 166 of 397 pages).

“Préhistoire hongroise: méthodes de recherche et vue d’ensemble” (85-98), translated from Hungarian by Chantal Philippe, elaborates Zimonyi’s methodological premises. He emphasizes the

limitations of historical linguistics, physical anthropology, and ethnography in examining the pre-history of the Magyars. The linguistic and archaeological evidence does not correlate. In passing he alludes to the major focus of several of his source studies, the inextant “Geography” of Dja-



<sup>2</sup> Zimonyi notes that a University of Szeged dissertation on eighth- to tenth-century Eastern European trade by Szabolcs Polgár (*Medieval Nomads in Eastern Europe* provides only the Russian transliteration of the author’s name, S. Polgar) will soon be published in Hungarian. I wish to thank Professor Zimonyi for kindly providing me with the author’s name in Hungarian.

jhani (Ġayhānī, Gayhani), a tenth-century Samanid wazier, which can be reconstructed from later Arabic and Persian sources, Ibn Rusta, Gardizi, Marvai, and al-Bakri, which he terms the “Ġayhānī tradition.”<sup>3</sup> Zimonyi observes that the Hungarians could not have asserted their independence from the Khazars at the time of their invasion of Pannonia because they had not yet elevated their rulers to the status of khaqan, the imperial title of the Khazar monarch.

“The Concept of Nomadic Polity in the Hungarian Chapter of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ *De Administrando imperio*” (99-108) compares Porphyrogenitus’s terminology to that in the Orkhon inscriptions from the Second Türk Empire. With the assistance of S. Szadeczky-Kardos of the University of Szeged, he pays due attention to the appearance of the Slavic loan word *zakon* (law) in the Greek text, meaning Turkic *törü*, “way of life.” The political institutions of the Türk Empire passed down to the Hungarians via the Khazars. The Hungarian relocation to Pannonia broke their close ties to the Turkic peoples.

The answer to the question of “Why were the Hungarians Referred to as Turks in the Early Muslim Sources?” (109-21) is because the Byzantine sources referred to the Hungarians as Turks. From the name of the Türk Empire the word “Turk” began as an ethnic term, then expanded to cover all peoples speaking Turkic languages living the same lifestyle. Because a small group of Hungarians lived together with the Turkic Bashkirs, they became known as Turks, and then Bashkirs as well, in Muslim and Latin sources.

“Vengry v Volgo-Kamskom basseine?” (123-63) is the longest article in the anthology (41 pages). It is actually a series of separate studies united around the subject of the early history or pre-history of the Hungarians. Zimonyi impugns any attempt to locate the Hungarian Urheimat (*prarodina*) because the “Hungarians” did not yet exist at the time they supposedly lived in those regions. He therefore calls the area the Volga-Kama Basin instead. Ninth-century written sources locate the Hungarians north of the Black Sea, but no archeological evidence confirms that location. Linguistics sup-

posedly shows that ca. 500 BCE the Hungarians lived between the Ob’ and Middle Volga Region, but the “Hungarians” did not become a people until over a thousand years later when the stability of Khazar Pax and the pressure of the Pechenegs forced the formation of a Hungarian people and compelled their migration to the Carpathian basin. Linguistic groups, no more than archaeological cultures, should not be confused with ethnic groups; the peoples who spoke a Hungarian language were not the Hungarian “people.” Neither the Yugra region in Rus’ sources nor the Volga-Ob’ estuary were the Urheimat of the Hungarians. The only link between the Bulgars and the Hungarians is that both lived near the Khazars.

“A New Muslim Source on the Hungarians in the Second Half of the 10th Century” (165-73) returns to Gayhani, as preserved in a Muslim source from tenth-century Spain. Zimonyi details the role of Muslim merchants in Cordoba in Andalusia, which would have enabled al-Bakri to have access to a Samanid source. A Hungarian raid in Spain in 942 would have inspired interest in them by Muslims in Spain.

“Voennye sily vengrov pri obretenii rodiny: kolichestvo voinov srednevekovykh kochevykh evraziskikh stepei” (175-89) utilizes data on the size of medieval Inner Asian nomadic armies to evaluate the size of the army deployed by the Hungarians, summarized in tabular form. A reference to the two *tümen* of the Hungarians cannot be taken literally as indicating they disposed of 20,000 warriors, because later Mongol evidence attests that a *tümen* did not always mobilize 10,000 troops. However, it is clear that the Hungarians mobilized enough soldiers to conquer the Carpathian basin, to stand off the Franks and periodically the Byzantines, and after their conversion to Christianity, to constitute a major power in Europe for centuries. This article contains a very confusing reference to an army of King Bela IV of Hungary of “60-70 men (*chelovek*)” (183), a typographical error. The word “thousand” (*tysiach*) was omitted.<sup>4</sup>

“Das eingegrabene Land. Ein arabische Volksetymologie der ungarischen Selbstbezeichnung” (191-

<sup>3</sup>This source complex also illuminates the history of the Pechenegs; see below.

<sup>4</sup>I am grateful to Professor Zimonyi for providing the correct wording.



203) takes a primarily linguistic approach to the various forms of the word “Magyar.” Muslim writers interpreted the Hungarian self-identification by invoking a phonetic similarity to the Arabic word for “to dig,” and, drawing upon the legend of Gog and Magog and the Alexander the Great legend, turned the homeland of the Magyars into the “Buried Land” (my approximate translation).

“The Hungarian Passage of the Ğayhānī-Tradition” (205-13) constitutes a comprehensive textual analysis of the Persian, Arabic, and Turkic versions of Ğayhānī’s description of the Hungarians, examining the variations in each version individually and then reconstructing the original text and identifying all interpolations. Ğayhānī presented geographic, political, and sociological information, including the Hungarians’ dual kingship, 20,000 warriors, and a tribal confederation consisting of seven to ten tribes and affiliated peoples. This article is severely marred by the omission of the last 35 lines of its original publication.<sup>5</sup>

“The State of the Research on the Prehistory of the Hungarians. Historiography (Oriental Sources, History of the Steppe)” (215-37) is another superb synthesis of the sources and historiography on the early Hungarians that abounds in rich insights and observations. The main channels from which sources about the Hungarians emanated were Samanid Transoxiana, the Caucasus (especially after the Khazars made peace with the Muslim world in 750), and Cordova in Andalusia. Zimonyi discusses Muslim (Arabic, New-Persian, and Turkic in Arabic script), Armenian, Hebrew, and runic Turkic sources. He emphasizes that the Hungarians are a people speaking a Uralic-Altai language, not a “Uralic-Altai people,” which misleadingly mixes linguistics and ethnography. The formation of the Hungarian people was a long process that lasted from the fourth to the ninth centuries, beginning, according to different scholars, in one of three settlement areas, the North shore of the Black Sea, in proximity to the Caucasus,<sup>6</sup> or the Volga-Kama basin (as indicated above, Zimonyi’s choice). In the second half of the nineteenth cen-

tury, Hungarian historians debated the Turkic Hunnic or Finno-Ugrian ethnogenesis of the Hungarians, a debate strongly influenced by the pretensions of the Hungarian nobility to be the Hungarian people, which influenced the views of opponents of the nobility and proponents of capitalist development in Hungary. By the 1960s Hungarian Marxism was purely formal. Zimonyi concludes incontrovertibly that early Hungarian history is inseparable from the history of Eurasian nomads, to which Hungarian scholars have made major contributions.

“Von Ural ins Karpaten-Becken. Die Grundzüge der ungarischen Frühgeschichte” (239-48), the last article on early Hungarians, opines *inter alia* that stereotypes of the pagan barbarian nomads still persist in German scholarship and that the issue of the Judaism of the Khazars has been politicized (which is an understatement). The main features of early Hungarian history include the roles of the Khazars and Pechenegs. The homogenization of the Hungarian people could not and would not have occurred without Khazar political stability and Pecheneg pressure.

Part III, “Nomads of Eastern Europe,” contains four articles. Zimonyi begins “Bulgars and Oghurs” (251-69) by noting that these two ethnonyms are used as collective terms for the two principle Turkic-language groups, Common Turkic and Chuvash type, but that their cognate languages do not make the Bulgars and Oghurs kindred peoples. Moreover, an ethnonym cannot determine the language of the people it designates. Therefore it is erroneous to infer that ethnonyms which include Oguz or Ogur, such as the White Ogurs (Saragur), Ten Ogurs (Onogur), Nine Ogurs (Kutrigur), or Thirty Ogurs (Utigur) all spoke Chuvash/Bulgar Turkic. He then proceeds to a highly detailed narrative of both peoples from the 5th century to the arrival of the Mongols. Zimonyi characterizes the Volga Bulgars as the only Eastern European Muslim state before the Golden Horde, an intriguing observation that rests upon an unspoken definition of the eastern geographic boundary of “Europe.”

“The Nomadic Factor in Medieval European History” (271-80) succinctly and effectively makes the point that historiography has neglected the role of nomadic tribal confederacies in European history.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Chronica: Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged* 5 (2005), 170 for the missing text.

<sup>6</sup> Zimonyi’s text (225) reads “pre-Caucasus,” which I take to be a hyper-literal translation from Russian *prikavkaz’e*, the “near-Caucasus region.”

The Roman and Germanic peoples dominated only the first phase of European history; the nomads, Slavs, and Vikings dominated the second. Europe consisted not only of the Mediterranean coast and the forest but also the steppe.

“Islam and Medieval Eastern Europe” (281-86) is a concise narrative overview of the competition of the three Mediterranean religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) for adherents in Eastern Europe. Zimonyi might have indicated that Muslims continued to influence early modern and modern Eastern Europe too, certainly in Lithuania and Muscovy/Russia, and if the concept of “Eastern Europe” is broadened to include the Balkans, Bosnia in particular, and all areas conquered by the Ottomans in general.

“The Chapter on the Jayhānī-tradition on the Pechenegs” (287-301) is a companion piece to “The Hungarian Passage of the Ġayhānī-Tradition,” analyzing each text in the tradition individually and then reconstructing the original, in this case in two redactions, short and long. Ġayhānī’s “Geography” discussed the road from Khwarezm to the Pechenegs, their nomadic way of life, the size of their “country,” their neighbors, goods, and weapons, and the road from the Pechenegs to the Khazars. Because Ġayhānī located the Pechenegs east of the Volga River, he must have written before 894. Zimonyi makes the astute observation that Ġayhānī’s description of Pecheneg nomadism projects bedouin nomadic elements onto the Eurasian steppe, namely following rain in the winter and navigating by the stars, as well as applying Quranic references inappropriate for the non-Muslim Pechenegs. That the Pechenegs made war on all their neighbors testifies to the fact that they were independent. Eventually the Pechenegs were assimilated by other nomadic peoples.

Part IV, “Mongols,” contains three articles. “Die Aussage eines mongolischen Kriegsgefangenen zur Zeit der Belagerung von Kiev in Jahre 1240” (305-17) addresses the list in a Rus’ chronicle of Chinggisids and Mongol generals besieging Kiev (Kyiv) in 1240 as given by a Mongol captive, Tovrul (Tavrul). Zimonyi provides a genealogical stemma of the Chinggisids, traces this passage in all Rus’ chronicles, and compares their names in Slavonic, Arabic, Persian, and Latin sources. He infers that Tovrul may have been a Kipchak, like Plano

Carpini’s interpreter.<sup>7</sup> Zimonyi’s comments that the generosity of the Mongols toward the defeated and wounded commander of the Kiev garrison, Dmitro, whose life was spared, was conspicuously absent in the Mongol treatment of defeated rulers, who were mercilessly pursued unto death. Of course, the defeated rulers had run away, hardly a demonstration of courage.

A previous and un-cited discussion of this passage did not incorporate Latin and Oriental sources on these names.<sup>8</sup> Zimonyi reproduced Plano Carpini’s observation that only 200 houses were left standing in Kiev after its capture without citing or taking into account Donald Ostrowski’s argument that this figure was interpolated into the second redaction of Plano Carpini’s work.<sup>9</sup> Zimonyi referred to the correspondence between the Mongols and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, which has since been the subject of considerable research by Aleksandr Maiorov.<sup>10</sup> However, Maiorov accepts the credibility of a narrative in which the Mongols offered Frederick an alliance instead of the usual Mongol ultimatum of submission or death, which severely impugns its credibility. Zimonyi does not consider the possibility that the respect the Mongols showed Dmitro, even if consistent with that of Batu toward Evpatii in the “Tale of the Destruction of Riazan,” might be a literary flourish.<sup>11</sup>

“Ibn Batuta on the First Wife of Özbek Khan” (319-24) concludes that ibn Batuta’s informant linked the ring in Taybughi’s vagina to Solomon’s ring of wisdom and to Quranic and Islamic legend.

The previously unpublished “The Mongol Campaigns against Eastern Europe” (325-52) is written in a very clear narrative and capped by a “Chronology” appendix. Zimonyi observes that the Mongols

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<sup>7</sup>Therefore “Mongol” in the title of the article (Mongol prisoner-of-war) was not a narrow ethnic term but refers to everyone in the Mongol (in the Rus’ chronicle, “Tatar”) army.

<sup>8</sup>Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, Inc. 1986), 44-45. In 2001, Zimonyi could not cite the second edition of this book from 2009.

<sup>9</sup>Donald Ostrowski, “Second-Redaction Additions to Carpini’s *Ystoria Mongolorum*,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* XIV:3/4 (1990): 522-50.

<sup>10</sup>Aleksandr Maiorov, “Zavoevatel’nyi pokhod v Tsentral’nuiu Evropu: voennaia sila i tainaia diplomatiia,” in *Zolotaia orda v mirovoi istorii* (Kazan: Institut istorii im. S. Mardzhani AN RT, 2016), 113-37.

<sup>11</sup>Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke*, 39-43.

attacked the steppe in summer and the forest in winter when they could easily traverse frozen rivers. He agrees with scholars who have concluded that the Mongol campaign west of the Dnieper (Dniro) River into Poland, Silesia, and Hungary was not part of their original plan, but was added to the Mongol agenda after 1240. He relates the “anti-Tatar tone” of the Novgorod chronicle to the fact that the city was not captured by the Mongols. He argues that the conquest of Galicia and Volhynia was not important in and of itself but merely necessary to achieve the “most important goal” (341) of the campaign, the invasion of Hungary, to chase both refugee Kipchaks<sup>12</sup> and Grand Prince Mikhail of Kiev (later martyred at the Golden Horde after he returned from exile). The Golden Horde became a determining factor in the history of Eastern Europe for the next two centuries.

Novgorod was never captured because the Mongols did not need to capture it. The first Mongols to arrive in Novgorod were census-takers and tax-collectors, not scouts ahead of a Mongol army, which means that the city had already capitulated to Mongol rule. Zimonyi is certainly correct that possession of Galicia-Volynia facilitated the invasion of Hungary, but just as importantly it also helped establish a buffer zone between the forest and the Mongol nomadic base in the Pontic steppe.

Part V, “Miscellanea,” contains three articles. “The Concept of Nation as Interpreted by Jenö Szüces” (355-61) is an intriguing and stimulating “think piece.” It explores the contrast between medieval and modern concepts of “nation” through the lens of the “pioneering” publications of Jenö Szüces. Before the modern period a person could belong to different nations, there was no equality before the law of all members of a nation, the concept did not depend on a political organization or state, and loyalty to the nation was subordinated to various political and religious loyalties. In the early Middle Ages society was relatively homogeneous, stratified but with a free majority population, ruled by a strong monarch, and sharing a common language.

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<sup>12</sup>Zimonyi does not cite Charles J. Halperin, “The Kipchak Connection: the Ilkhans, the Mamluks, and Ayn Jalut,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63:2 (2000): 229-45, which presumably appeared before Zimonyi wrote his article.

Szüces drew a distinction between “politically organized societies” and “political societies.” The medieval “nation” was comprised only of nobility. The most significant contribution of Szüces to the study of the “nation” was not his conclusions, but his premise that “nationalism” is an historical category, and “nation” and “nationalism” needed to be studied from the historical point of view.

“*Bodun* and *El* im Frühmittelalter” (363-86) explores two key concepts of medieval Turkic polities, using primarily the Orkhon Türk inscriptions.<sup>13</sup> Both terms carried multiple meanings. The primary meaning of *bodun* was *Gentilverband*, an organized tribal community, nomadic confederation, or ethnic community; the word derives from the Latin *gens* and *gentium*, hence the noun *gentilism*. A *bodun* fused political limits with ethnic kinship. Its secondary meaning was *Volk*, people. An *el* was a distinct political realm, *Reich*, to which one or more *bodun* were subordinated, usually ruled by a kagan. Zimonyi meticulously enumerates other definitions ascribed to these terms; to *bodun*, clan, ulus, elite; to *el*, Pax, imperium. Following Szüces, Zimonyi rejects a translation of *el* as “state,” because the concept is an abstraction, and abstraction was alien to the medieval Türks. He relates *bodun* to legends of descent from a common ancestor and *el* to the concept of *törü*. Another secondary meaning of *bodun* was “subjects,” so it could be equivalent to *el*. Zimonyi conceptualizes the history of the Türks on the basis of the evolving applicability of the two concepts to different periods of Türk history.

The final article in this “Part” and in the anthology, “Notes on the Difference between Bedouin and Inner Asiatic Nomadism” (387-95) tries to explain a basic contrast: Arabs and nomads each created empires, but only the Arabs created a new civilization and a new world religion (the bedouin role in the creation of Islam was minimal). Khazanov insisted that there were only quantitative, not qualitative differences between Near East bedouins and Eurasian nomads, but Zimonyi apparently disagrees. Nomads lost their ethnic affiliation when

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<sup>13</sup>I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to Peter Golden for consultation on these concepts and for providing me with a text of a later article by Zimonyi, “Changing Perceptions of Türk Identity among the Medieval Nomads of Central Asia,” *Studie Orientalia Electronica* 6 (2018), 879-89, which greatly improved by understanding of *bodun*.



they moved to cities, but bedouins did not. Bedouins were not self-sufficient, so they had to trade with cities or conquer them, but the situation for nomads was more complicated. Nomads at the tribal level and sedentary people at the village level were self-sufficient except during plagues and famines. However, unlike bedouins, nomads had a third option, the forest. Nomads could build forest-steppe empires, and sedentarize only in extreme situations. However, when the Arabs settled down, they could reach a “higher cultural level” (393).

This is a thought-provoking article which deserves wide discussion. I will confine myself to a few tentative remarks. I distrust notions of “higher” and “lower” cultural levels. Certainly, Thomas Allsen and others have shown that the Mongols, who created the largest and most successful Eurasian nomadic empire in history, created their own material imperial culture. The Rus’ lived in the forest, where their cities were located, so the distinction between forest and city that Zimonyi seems to

be espousing might require qualification. I would suggest that the difference between Inner Asian empires and the bedouin/Arab empire is that the founders of the former, including Chinggis, like the bedouin, did not found a religion, but Muhammed did. This contrast may have been more important than the geographic factors that Zimonyi adumbrates.

Clearly, the question Zimonyi raises in his final article further illustrates the premise of the anthology, that the history of Eurasian nomads sheds light on the history of the sedentary societies surrounding the steppe.

*Medieval Nomads in Eastern Europe: Collected Studies* is a first-rate collection of articles by a first-rate scholar. Everyone in Inner Asian studies should be familiar with István Zimonyi’s publications. One hopes that this anthology will make it more convenient for scholars in Inner Asian studies to access his research.

- Charles J. Halperin

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**Christoph Baumer and Mirko Novák, eds.**  
*Urban Cultures of Central Asia from the Bronze Age to the Karakhanids: Learnings and Conclusions from New Archaeological Investigations and Discoveries. Proceedings of the First International Congress on Central Asian Archaeology Held at the University of Bern, 4-6 February 2016.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019 x + 464 pp.

This richly illustrated volume, published by Harrassowitz Verlag, represents the proceedings of an international conference held in Bern in 2016. The conference, jointly organized by the Society for the Exploration of EurAsia (Switzerland) and the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the University of Bern, brought together thirty-five archaeologists who work in different countries of Central Asia.

The twenty-six conference papers are organized according to modern political geography into four sections encompassing five countries that were formerly Soviet republics: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan/Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The

boundaries of prehistoric and historic cultures and modern political borders rarely coincide, and the latter often prevent scholars from obtaining a broader perspective. However the editors’ intention in this case was to offer an opportunity to see a cross-section of much of the current research.

The origins and characteristics of urbanism, urban places, and the associated problem of the origins of the state in prehistoric times are issues that have attracted scholarly attention for well over a century. The development of archaeological research in Central Asia certainly provides a good basis for discussion of similar issues from a regional perspective. However, it is still difficult to define an individual archaeological site (not only Central Asian) as an urban or non-urban settlement because the size, form, and function of cities vary among different traditions, as well as within individual past urban traditions. Some scholars, including F.T. Hiebert and Ph.L.Kohl, have even questioned the application of the concept of urbanism in Central Asia. Hiebert (1992: 111) suggests that a special, regionally specific definition of urbanism should instead be used for Central Asia,