

The Turks in the Vita Sancti Athanasii Athonitae

Vardariota-Turks or Hungarians?*

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The biography of Athanasios Athonita - founder of the Great Lavra Monaster on Mount Athos - mentions some monks from Mount Athos who wanted to lodge a complaint against Athanasios to Byzantine emperor Basil II (976-1025). On their way to see the emperor, however, somewhere in the vicinity of Thessaloniki, they were taken captive by the *Turks* (Τουρκοί). According to the source, the Turks, who were allies of the emperor at this time, robbed and undressed the monks, and then let them go free.¹

Researchers have identified these Turks with one of two ethnic groups at various times: either Hungarians from the Carpathian Basin (who were referred to as *Turks* by several Byzantine authors in the tenth and eleventh centuries)² or the Vardar Turks living north of Thessaloniki by the Vardar river.³ Additionally, according to several researchers, the Vardar Turks were a group of Hungarians who moved from the Carpathian Basin to the Balkans and settled in the Byzan-

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¹ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, ed. J. Noret, Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 9, Brepols-Turnhout 1982, A 210₁₋₂₉, 211₁₋₂₈, B 58₁₋₅₃. cf. *La Vie de Saint Athanase l'Athonite*. Chevetogne, 1963, 77-79; Gy. Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai* [The Byzantine sources related to Árpadian Hungarian History] Budapest 1982, 74-77.

² P. Váczy, Gyula és Ajtony [Gyula and Ajtony] in *Emlékkönyv Szentpétery Imre születése hatvanadik évfordulójának ünnepére*, Budapest 1938, 506, Note 77; Хр. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения през средновековието*, София 1998, 82, 358. cf. Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, II. Zweite durchgearbeitete Auflage. Berlin 1958, 321-322.

³ В. Тълкова-Заимова, "Житие на Атанасий Атонски," in *Гръцки извори за Българската история*. VI. ed. И. Дуйчев et al. *Fontes Historiae Bulgariae* 10. София [no year] 9, Note 4; N. Oikonomidès, « Vardariotes-W.I.nd.r.-V.n.nd.r: Hongrois installés dans la vallée du Vardar en 934, » *Südost-Forschungen* 32 (1973), 2, Note 7.

tine Empire.⁴ In his compiled volume of Byzantine sources regarding Hungarian history, Gyula Moravcsik included this source as well but noted that he could not decide whether the *Turks* mentioned here were really Hungarians or not.⁵ Researchers also disagree on whether the events mentioned occurred in the 990s⁶ or around 1000–1001.⁷

Saint Athanasios's biography contains a number of details in connection with the *Turks* attacking the monks which can clarify their identity. The source contains the following:

„... [the *Turks* are the] allies of the great emperor, whose spears are so much feared that they accepted the peace (which they did not favor) out of fear.”⁸

This passage, then, notes that the *Turks* are not enemy people due to their fear of the Byzantine army but allies of the emperor, who keep to the peace treaty signed with the Empire.⁹ At a later point the source also notes that they are not violators of contract. Byzantine diplomacy regulated its relationship with states

⁴ Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, Budapest 1970, 59–60; Oikonomidès, *Vardariotes*, 1–8; Gy. Györffy *István király és műve*. [King Stephen and his work] Budapest 1977, 55; Gy. Györffy, “A 942. évi magyar vezérnévsor kérdéséhez,” [The questions of 942nd Hungarian leader-list] *Magyar Nyelv* 76 (1980), 313; Gy. Kristó, *Levedi törzsszövetségétől Szent István államáig*. [From the tribal confederation of Levedi to the state of Saint Stephen] Budapest 1980, 105–106; Gy. Györffy, “A kalandozások kora,” [The age of the conquests] in *Magyarország története. Előzmények és magyar történet 1242-ig*. ed. Gy. Székely, Budapest 1987, 676–678; Gy. Györffy, *Anonymus. Rejtély avagy történeti forrás?* [Anonymus. Mystery or historical source?] Budapest 1988, 21–22; Gy. Györffy, *Krónikáink és a magyar őstörténet. Régi kérdések – új válaszok*. [Hungarian chronicles and Hungarian proto-history. New answers to old questions] Budapest 1993, 33; Gy. Kristó–F. Makk, *A kilencedik és a tizedik század története*. [The history of the 9th and 10th centuries] Budapest 2001, 143. cf. I. Kapitány, “Vardarióták,” [Vardariots] in *Korai magyar történeti lexikon (9–14. század)*. ed. Gy. Kristó. Budapest 1994, 713.

⁵ Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet*, 75, Note 7. cf. Gy. Moravcsik, *A magyar történet bizánci forrásai*. [The byzantine sources of the Hungarian History] A Magyar Történettudomány Kézikönyve I. kötet 6/b. füzet Budapest 1934, 141; Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, 59; Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I. 555. M. Gyóni, *Magyarország és a magyarság a bizánci források tükrében*. [Hungary and the Hungarians in the mirror of the byzantine sources] *Magyar–görög Tanulmányok* 7. Budapest 1938, 49; P. Charanis, “The Transfer of Population as a Polity in the Byzantine Empire,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (1961), 148.

⁶ Moravcsik, *A magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 141; P. Lemerle–A. Guillou–N. Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*. I. Archives de l’Athos 5, Paris 1970, 46–47; Oikonomidès, *Vardariotes*, 2, Note 7.

⁷ Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения*, 82, 358.

⁸ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae* A 211₅₋₇. cf. B 58₄₀₋₄₄.

⁹ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae* A 211₅₋₇. cf. B 58₄₀₋₄₄, A 211₉.

and peoples it had contact with in a very refined way.¹⁰ The expressions for *peace treaty* and *allies* found in the source in question can only refer to a state or people independent of the Empire but loyal to it.¹¹ The Vardar Turks lived within the Empire and were subjects of the emperor: they were not allies of the emperor, and he could not sign a peace treaty with them; subjects were given orders by the emperor and they carried them out.

One of the key issues of Byzantine foreign relations in the tenth century was the defense of the East-European section of the empire's border. The usual practice in such cases had been, for centuries, to win over barbarian peoples living in the border areas to become allies.¹² A part of the contract with them would have been the granting of Byzantine court titles to the barbarian ruler, the conversion of the rulers to Christianity, and an annual sending of gifts (partly in coins) by the emperor. In return, the rulers guaranteed that their people would not attack the Empire but, if necessary, defend it.¹³ Depending on whether a given people or

¹⁰ Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, 54; L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin*. Paris 1970, 229–233. cf. I. I. Reiske, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae libri duo*. I. Bonnae 1829, 686–692.

¹¹ „... and that the position within the *Oikoumene* of these satellites, theoretically subject to the Emperor, independent in practice...” D. Obolensky, “The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy,” in *Actes XIIe Congres International d'Etudes byzantines*. I. Belgrade 1964, 58. cf. 56–58; D. A. Miller, “Byzantine treaties and treaty-making: 500–1025 AD.” *Byzantinoslavica* 32 (1971), 57; D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*. New York–Washington 1971, 200. On the Byzantine diplomacy cf. Obolensky, *The Principles and Methods*, 45–61; F. Dölger–J. Karayannopoulos, *Byzantinische Urkundenlehre*, Vol 1., München 1969, 89–107; J. Shepard, “Messages, ordres et ambassades: diplomatie centrale et frontalière à Byzance (IX^e–XI^e siècles),” in *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en occident du VI^e au XI^e siècles*, éd. par A. Dierkens et J.-M. Sansterre, Geneve 2000, 375–396; Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 229–262; *Byzantine Diplomacy*. ed. J. Shepard–S. Franklin, Aldershot 1992.

¹² Cf. D. Obolensky, “The Empire and its Northern Neighbours, 565–1018,” in *The Cambridge Medieval History*. IV, I. Cambridge 1966, 473–518; F. E. Wozniak, “Byzantium, the Pechenegs and the Rus’: The Limitations of a Great Power’s Influence on its Clients in the 10th Century Eurasian Steppe,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984) 299–316; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 163–201.

¹³ Miller, *Byzantine treaties*, 59–66; R. Scott, “Diplomacy in the sixth century the evidence of John Malalas,” in *Byzantine Diplomacy*. ed. J. Shepard–S. Franklin, Aldershot 1992, 162–163, 165. cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus *De administrando imperio*. Greek text edited by Gy. Moravcsik. English translation by R. J. H. Jenkins *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 1. Washington 1967, 48–57 (1–8. caput); *The Chronicle of John Malalas*. tr. E. Jeffreys–M. Jeffreys–R. Scott, Melbourne 1986, 233–234, 247, 249–250; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet*, 85–86; *Повесть временных лет*, I. Текст и перевод. Подготовка текста Д. С. Лихачева перевод Д. С. Лихачева и Б. А. Романова, Москва–Ленинград 1950, 28, 38, 52.

The gifts given during the contract: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 52–53 (6. caput); *Повесть временных лет* 29, 34, 44, 50–51. cf. A. V. Marey, “Socio-political Structure of the Pecheneg,” in *Alternatives of Social Evolution*, ed. N. N. Kradin et alii. Vladivostok 2000, 290.

ruler were able to loosen their ties to the Empire (or, on the contrary, tighten them), Byzantine diplomacy used different expressions to refer to them. Foreign states and peoples often sent troops or mercenaries to the Byzantine Empire as part of the contract or treaty.¹⁴

A Byzantine author, Prokopios mentions the agreement between the Ostrogoth ruler Theodatus and the Byzantine Empire. According to it, the Ostrogoths were to send 3,000 troops if Justinian I (527–565) sends a request.¹⁵ Byzantine emperor Heracleius (610–641) strengthened his army with Khazar troops around 627 (the Khazars lived under the rule of Turks at the time, and Heracleius signed a treaty with the western Turks).¹⁶ In 987 Vladimir ruler of Kievan Rus sent 6,000 troops to the Byzantine Empire in aid to emperor Basil II to aid his struggle against pretenders attacking his throne.¹⁷ In the 1150s according to the contract between Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180) and the ruler of the Raška state, 2,000 Serbian troops had to be provided to the Byzantine army for European wars, and 500 for Asian wars.¹⁸ Many more examples could be given. Sources mention that in the eleventh century soldiers of Rus, Varg, English, Frankish, German, Bulgarian, Saracen, Alan, Abazg etc. background fought in the Byzantine army.¹⁹ On the basis of the expressions referring to the relationship of the *Turks* to the Byzantine Empire as well as the general practices of Byzantine

¹⁴ Miller, *Byzantine treaties*, 62–64; Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 239, 273, 286–287, 297–298.

¹⁵ Procopius, *History of the Wars. Gothic War*, Book V & VI. tr. H. B. Dewing, New York 2007, 48–49 (V. vi. 2.); Miller, *Byzantine treaties*, 63.

¹⁶ K. Czeglédy, "Herakleios török szövetségesei," [Heraclius's the turkish allies] *Magyar Nyelv* 49 (1953) 319–323; D. M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton 1954, 28–33; P. B. Golden, *Khazar Studies. An Historico-Philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars*. I. Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica 25/1. Budapest 1980, 51, 218–219; M. Biró, "Georgian Sources on the Caucasian Campaign of Heracleios," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35 (1981) 121–132; D. Sinor, "The establishment and dissolution of the Türk empire," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*. ed. D. Sinor, Cambridge 1990, 308–309; M. Dobrovits, "Herakleios nomád szövetségeseiről," [Heraclius's the nomad allies] in *Fegyveres nomádok, nomád fegyverek*, ed. L. Balogh–L. Keller, Magyar Őstörténeti Könyvtár 21. Budapest 2004, 38–44.

¹⁷ *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*. The Chronographia of Michael Psellus, tr. E. R. A. Sewter, Harmondsworth 1966², 34–35; G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte de byzantinischen Staates*. München 1963, 252; Louis Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, Paris 1969, 185; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*. Cambridge 2002², 60.

¹⁸ Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 239.

¹⁹ *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, Vol. 5, ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannoverae 1844, 53; Lemerle–Guillou–Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra* 258, 243; V. R. Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojca. Izvolčenija iz Letopisi Jaxi Antioxijskago*, Sanktpeterburg 1883 (reprint London 1972), 32, 40. cf. 312–333, Note 272; C. Neumann, "Über zwei unerklärte Völkernamen in der byzantinischen Armee (Kulpinger und Talmatzer)," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 3 (1894), 374–375; T. Olajos, "Contingent hongrois au service de Byzance en Italie," in *Les hongrois et l'Europe: conquête et intégration*. Textes réunis par S. Csernus et K. Korompay, Paris–Szeged 1999, 223–229; D. Smythe, "Why do barbarians stand round the emperor at diplomatic receptions?" in *Byzantine Diplomacy*. ed. J. Shepard–S. Franklin, Aldershot 1992, 315–312.

diplomacy we can, then, conclude that the *Turks* mentioned by the source were troops sent in accordance with a peace treaty between emperor Basil II and a power allied to him. They came from an ethnic group who, according to the author of the source, were previously an enemy and were forced into an alliance with the Empire only out of fear of the military might ("the spears") of the emperor.²⁰

The only questions left to answer are when the alliance of the *Turks* and Basil II can be dated to, and what *Turks* were allied to the emperor?

In dating the events we are helped by the source mentioning that the monks' journey took place when emperor Basil II "was resting his army in Macedonia during the preparation for the war against the Barbarians [i.e. the Bulgarians]".²¹ Basil II started the war against the Bulgarians in 991. A Byzantine author, Joannes Skylitzes, writes that, having been freed of the civil war waged by Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas, the emperor "inspected the preparations" for the war against the Bulgarians. In the course of this, the emperor traveled through the regions of Thrace and Macedonia and went to Thessaloniki, where he prayed at the altar of Saint Demetrios.²² After this, Byzantine troops waged a successful, several years long campaign against the Bulgarians, which Basil II had to suspend only because of the offensive started in the east by the Fatimid Caliphate. In 994, after the army of the emir of Damascus Banġu-tegin defeated the troops of the Byzantine commander of Antioch and his allies, the Muslim troops started an offensive on Aleppo, whose emir had previously accepted subordination to the Byzantine Empire. At this time the emperor personally started out from near Thessaloniki to the eastern front, arriving in Antioch in April or May 995. The unexpected Byzantine troops did not only exempt Aleppo but also extended the Byzantine control over Syria and the Southern Caucasus.²³ The emperor did not personally enter in-

²⁰ Symbolic importance of the spear of the Byzantine Emperor: M. Gyóni, *A paristrioni 'államkultok' etnikai jellege*. [The nature of ethnicity of „states” of Paristrion] Budapest 1942, 10. cf. Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet*, 126; Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 51.

²¹ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae* A 210₁₋₄. cf. B 58₁₄₋₁₇; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet*, 74. cf. 76; В. Тъпкова-Заимова, Сведения за българи в житието на св. Атанасий. in *Изследвания в чест на Акад. Димитър Дечев по случай 80-годишнината му*. София 1958, 759-761.

²² Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis historiarum*, rec. Io. Thurn, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 5. Berolini-Novii Eboraci 1973, 339; Jean Skylitzes, *Empereurs de Constantinople*. tr. B. Flusin et annoté par J.-Cl. Cheynet, *Réalités Byzantines* 8. Paris 2003, 283; Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojca* 27, 29-42, 227; Г. Цанкова-Петкова, Похвално слово за Фотий Тесалийски. in *Гръцки извори за българската история*. V. *Fontes Historiae Bulgariae* 9. София 1964, 315. cf. 315, Note 4; cf. St. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London 1930, 227-228; Ст. Ангелџак, *Самуиловата държава*, Скопје 1969, 44; M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1996, 377; Д. Ангелов-Б. Чолпанов *Българска военна история от втората четвърт на X до втората половина на XV в.* София 1998, 40-41.

²³ Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojca*, 32-42; E. Honigmann, *Die ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches*. Bruxelles 1935, 105-108; Ангелов-Чолпанов, *Българска военна история*, 42; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte de byzantinischen Staates*, 255-256.

to fighting in the Balkans until 1001, at which time, returning from the eastern front, his troops first started an offensive in the direction of Philippopolis, then destroyed several fortifications in the vicinity of Serdika (Triaditza), finally retreating to Mosynopolis, where the emperor most likely spent the winter. In 1001-1002, still attacking the eastern Bulgarian territories, the Byzantine troops took Small and Great Preslav and Pliska. At this point the emperor did not join his troops but returned to Constantinople.²⁴ The monks' journey could not have taken place after this time, since Athanasios died on July 5, 1002.²⁵ It seems probable then that in 1001-1002 Byzantine troops as well as, for some time, the emperor himself were in Eastern Bulgaria, a place that the monks would have had to reach to present their grievances by crossing territories controlled by the Bulgarians - an unlikely scenario. The source mentions that one of the group of monks was Joannes Phakenos, the superior, the *protos* of the monastery.²⁶ It is known that he held this position in 991 and 996, but in 1001 the position was already held by the successor of his successor and not him.²⁷ Thus, it cannot have been in 1001-1002 that the monks made their journey to emperor Basil II, who was already fighting in other parts of the Balkans by then, and one of Athanasios's adversaries, Joannes Phakenos, was already dead.

Because of the dangers of such a trip, Athanasios warned the monks plotting against him from going to see the emperor. They, however, answered that they would take the journey by land rather than by sea, and since traveling by land was safe, they would not be subjected to danger - they argued.²⁸ Shortly before 993 a Muslim fleet of pirates was plundering around Thessaloniki. A Byzantine charter dated September 993 mentions that a group of Serbs and a monk called Kosmas were captured by the pirates on their way to Basil II. The emperor paid ransom and had them freed.²⁹ Athanasios's biography remarks that when the

²⁴ Ioannis Scylitzae, 343; Jean Skylitzes, *Empereurs de Constantinople*, 287; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 89-90; Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojca*, 42; Ангелов-Чолпанов, *Българска военна история*, 42-43.

²⁵ P. Lemerle, "La vie ancienne de Saint Athanase l'Athonite composée au début du XI^e siècle par Athanase de Lavra," in *Le millénaire du Mont Athos (963-1963)*. Études et Mélanges I. Wetteren 1963, 96-97; Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения*, 82. Other researchers an even earlier date on any unthinkable cf. A. Kazhdan-N. Patterson Ševčenko, "Athanasios of Athos," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. I. ed. in chief: A. P. Kazhdan, New York-Oxford 1991, 1219; *Byzantine Monastic Foundation documents*. I. ed. J. Thomas-A. Constantinides Hero, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 35. Washington 2000, 210.

²⁶ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae* A 209₁₂, B 588.

²⁷ J. Darrouzes, Liste des prôtes de l'Athos. in *Le millénaire du Mont Athos (963-1963)*. Études et Mélanges I. Wetteren 1963, 410. cf. Lemerle-Guillou-Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra* 118-122, 130-133.

²⁸ *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae* A 210₂₇; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 75.

²⁹ Lemerle-Guillou-Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra* 122-125; G. Ostrogorsky, "Une ambassade serbe aupres de l'empereur Basile II." *Byzantion* 19 (1949), 187-189; J. V. A. Jr. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, Ann

monks went to the emperor, "they found themselves in unexpected danger, which was no smaller than if they had gone by sea, even though they went by land." Perhaps the monks were afraid of the Muslim pirates when they opted for the land route.³⁰ But they were not spared, being robbed by Turks instead.

So, it could have been only between 991 and 994 that the monks had gone to see emperor Basil II nearby Thessaloniki. Who were then the Turks who were allied with the Byzantine Empire at this time?

The emperor strove to provide a diplomatic foundation for his war against Bulgarians. In 992 he decreased the tax on Venetian merchants (whom he considered his subjects) in a Golden Bull.³¹ Before 993 Serbian ruler Joannes Vladimir's envoys came to see the emperor, and the emperor established an alliance with them.³² The ruler of Kievan Rus, Vladimir, was an ally of the Byzantine Empire beginning with 987.³³ The Croatian ruler, Stephan Držislav received regalia and the title of *patrikios* from emperor Basil II, and trusted to him as an eparch in the defense of Dalmatian towns.³⁴ As we can see, before the attack on Bulgarians, the emperor strove to win the states and peoples of the Eastern European region over to his plan. Perhaps, an alliance with the *Turks* was a part of this process as well. The Turks may have been a people with whom the Byzantine Empire made a peace treaty. The source I am discussing, however, also claims that the *Turks* had been enemies of the Byzantine Empire before, and only the "emperor's spears", i.e. the threat of the Byzantine troops forced them to accept peace.

In the army of the emir of Damascus, Banğu-tegin, there were Turkic troops, made up of soldiers of Central Asian origin.³⁵ They would not have been considered by any Byzantine author as a power with whom the Byzantine emperor entered into a peace treaty. In addition, between 991 and 994 the emir of Damascus was an enemy rather than an ally of Basil II.³⁶ It seems then that along the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire there was no independent *Turk* power whom Byzantine authors would have considered a sovereign political factor and who could have provided Basil II with *Turk* troops.

However, tenth century Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin would have fit the description fully. Patriarch of Constantinople Nikolaos Mystikos referred to Hungarians in a letter dated before 914 as a people that the Byzantine leadership

Arbor 1989⁵, 193–194; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte de byzantinischen Staates*, 255; P. Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*, London 2003, 17.

³⁰ Cf. Lemerle–Guillou–Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, 123. cf. Lemerle–Guillou–Svoronos, *Actes de Lavra*, 124.

³¹ F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*. I. München–Berlin 1924, 100 (781. No.); Bréhier, *Les institutions*, 245; D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*. London 1988, 40–42.

³² Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, 193–194.

³³ Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte de byzantinischen Staates*, 252.

³⁴ N. Klaić, *Povijest hrvata u ranom srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb 1971, 323; Ostrogorsky, *Une ambassade serbe*, 190; Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, 274.

³⁵ Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojsca*, 29–31.

³⁶ Rozen, *Imperator Vasilij Bolgarobojsca*, 36–42. cf. 304, Note 243.

gives gifts to in order to gain their military support.³⁷ In another letter dated in 924–925 he mentions Hungarians among other peoples – the Pechenegs, the Rus, the Alans, and other *Scyths* – as ready to attack together the Bulgarians at the “emperor’s urging” and in the interests of the Byzantine Empire.³⁸ According to a Byzantine source, *Georgius Monachus Continuatus*, in 943 an attack by raiding Hungarians could only be warded off by the Byzantine court by signing a peace treaty with them. Also according to the source, this peace treaty was respected by the Hungarians for five years.³⁹ Ioannes Skylitzes mentioned that a Hungarian leader, Bulcsu converted to Christianity in Constantinople, probably in 948, received the title of *patrikios* and a sizeable sum of money, but even so he broke the treaty signed with God and attacked the Byzantine Empire several times.⁴⁰ In the middle of the tenth century, Byzantine Emperor Constantinos Porphyrogenetos and his son and co-emperor, Rómanos, sent a letter (and not an emperor’s order⁴¹) to the leaders of the Hungarians,⁴² which is indicative of them being treated, together with the Pechenegs and the Rus, among those eastern European peoples who were independent of the Empire due to their military power.⁴³

It seems then that in the biography the relationship of the *Turks* with the Empire is exactly of the kind that sources describe tenth century Hungarian–Byzantine relations to be like. The Hungarians were one of those people who were independent of the Empire due to their military power, but they were ready to fight on its side if this was requested. This had not, however, been always the case. Undoubtedly, the source’s reference to earlier attacks of the *Turks* fit the Hungarians’ several military campaigns carried out during the course of the tenth century.⁴⁴

³⁷ *Nicolas I Patriarch Constantinople. Letters.* Greek text and English translation: R. J. H. Jenkins–L. G. Westerink, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 6. Washington 1973, 514–515 (183. letter); Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 26.

³⁸ *Nicolas I Patriarch Constantinople. Letters* 160–161 (Letter 23); Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 24–26.

³⁹ *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus.* Ex recognitione Immanuelis Bekkeri, Bonnae 1838, 917_{6–10}; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 61–62, 65. cf. 68–70.

⁴⁰ Ioannis Scylitzae 239_{39–76}; Jean Skylitzes, *Empereurs de Constantinople* 202; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 85–86, 100. cf. Gy. Moravcsik, “Görögnyelvű monostorok Szent István korában,” [Greek monasteries in St. Stephen’s age] in *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kilencszázadik évfordulóján*, Vol 1. ed. J. Serédi, Budapest 1938, 391–399.

⁴¹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 56–57 (8. caput); Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 36.

⁴² *De cerimoniis* 691_{3–4}; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 34.

⁴³ *De cerimoniis* 690_{21–6917}.

⁴⁴ Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, 54–61; Kristó, *Levedi törzsszövetségétől*, 268–271, 277, 280, 293–307; Gy. Györffy, “Államszervezés,” in *Magyarország története. Előzmények és magyar történet 1242-ig.* ed. Gy. Székely, Budapest 1987², 670–672, 675, 681–684; P. T. Antonopoulos, “Byzantium, the Magyar Raids and Their Consequences,” *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993), 254–267; L. Balogh, A New Source on the Hungarian Raid against By-

Researchers have long supposed that, following their defeat at Arcadiopolis in 970, the Hungarians felt threatened by the territorial gains of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkans.⁴⁵ Contrary to this opinion, Hungarian researcher István Bóna pointed out that such a theory lacks direct support in existing sources and has been of the opinion that such a Byzantine threat did not exist.⁴⁶ Bóna's opinion can no longer be held up. Relying on a passage by Joannes Skylitzes unnoticed by Hungarian scholars until recently, Ferenc Makk has called attention to the fact that in 971 Hungarians were afraid of the Byzantine military forces advancing victoriously through the Balkans.⁴⁷ It also needs to be pointed out that it is almost

zantium in the Middle of the Tenth Century," *Chronica* 7-8 (2007-2008), 16-25. Can hardly be mere coincidence that an unknown Byzantine author of the 10th second half century Byzantine military manual mentions the need for spies to be sent to the Hungarian Principality (*Three Byzantine Military Treatises*. Text, tr. G. T. Dennis. Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 25. Washington 1985, 292-293; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 73).

- ⁴⁵ B. Hóman, "Szent István király," [St. Stephen king] in *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kilencszázadik évfordulóján*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Serédi, Budapest 1938, 7; Györffy, *István király és műve*, 68; Györffy, *Államszervezés*, 727; I. Pirigyi, "A bizánci szertartású kereszténység helyzete Magyarországon Szent István korában," [The byzantine christianity in Hungary in the St. Stephen's age] in *Szent István és kora*, ed. F. Glatz-J. Kardos, Budapest 1988, 161-162; Gy. Györffy, *Államalapító apa és fia*. [Homeless father and his son] Bukarest-Kolozsvár 1997, 20-21; F. Makk, "A turulmadártól a kettőskeresztig. A korai magyar-bizánci kapcsolatok," [From the bird Turul to the double-cross. The early Hungarian-Byzantine relations] in F. Makk, *A turulmadártól a kettőskeresztig*, Szeged 1998, 222-223; F. Makk, Magyar-bolgár kapcsolatok Géza nagyfejedelem és Szent István király korában [Hungarian-Bulgarian relations in the prince Géza and St. Stephen king's age] in F. Makk, *A turulmadártól a kettőskeresztig*, Szeged 1998, 118-119; M. Törsér, "Az arkadiopolisi csata - Az utolsó kalandozó hadjárat, 970," [The battle of Arcadiopolis. The end of the hungarian campaign, 970] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 117 (2004), 606-608.
- ⁴⁶ I. Bóna, *A magyarok és Európa a 9-10. században*. [The Hungarians and Europe in the 9-10th century] História Könyvtár Monográfiák 12. Budapest 2000, 66-71.
- ⁴⁷ F. Makk, "Új forrásadatok a X. század végi magyar-bizánci kapcsolatok értékeléséhez," [New sources on the hungarian-byzantine relationship in the 10th century] *A Nyíregyházi Jónás András Múzeum Évkönyve* 43 (2001), 271-274; F. Makk, "A bizánci fenyegetés árnyékában. Géza fejedelem politikai-vallási választása," [In the shadow of the Byzantine threat. The political-religious choice of prince Géza] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 114 (2001), 130-138. cf. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения*, 80, 358. Of course it is possible that cessation of activity hostile to the Byzantium Empire by the leadership of the Hungarian leaders have also changed the byzantine gifts (M. Törsér, "A 971. évi dorostoloni hadjárat," [The campaign of Dorostolon in 971] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 115 (2002), 348). Surviving strategos of city Morava, Adralesios Diogenes protospatharios's the seal after 971 (*Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*. I. ed. J. Nesbitt-N. Oikonomidès, Washington 1991, 195-196; Makk, *Új forrásadatok*, 272; Makk, *A bizánci fenyegetés árnyékában*, 134). Since strategos of Morava not included in the Escorial-Facticon (*Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles*. Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire par N. Oikonomidès, Paris 1972, 255-277), Nesbitt and Oikonomidès believed that creation of this post may not be

impossible to imagine that the leaders of the Hungarians would have underrated the military genius of Byzantine Emperor Joannes Tzimisces (969–976). The Byzantine emperor defeated the Bulgarian Czar, annexed its territories, took the Bulgarian Czar to Constantinople and made him abdicate; he broke the military might of Rus leader Svjatoslav and prevented him from seizing power over the northern and western shores of the Black Sea; and perhaps it was at his orders (or at least in a way favorable for him) that Pechenegs killed the Rus leader on his way back home to Kiev. If we also consider the fact that joint emperor Otto II married a relative of Joannes Tzimisces, we have to conclude that it is a fully absurd supposition that these processes did not affect the foreign relations of Hungarian leaders.⁴⁸ And if at the time of Joannes Tzimisces's campaign against the Bulgarians the leaders of the Hungarians were afraid of the proximity of the troops of the Byzantine Empire, like Joannes Skylitzes states they were,⁴⁹ then it is reasonable to suppose that at the time of Basil II's military campaign against the Bulgarians, Hungarians would have been forced to change their adversarial policy against the Byzantine Empire out of fear – since the campaign again attempted, successfully, to move the borders of the Empire up to the outer edges of the Carpathian Basin.

There are several examples of Hungarian troops fighting as part of the Byzantine army during the tenth and eleventh centuries. A troop of *Turks* sent as a part of the Byzantine army to Italy in 935 were supposed by scholars to be composed of Hungarians.⁵⁰ According to a Muslim source, the Byzantine troops fighting by the northern Syrian town of Hadat in 954 had *Turks*, i.e. Hungarians, along with Rus, Bulgarian, and Khazar soldiers.⁵¹ Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros Phokas took along Hungarian guards with him on a military campaign to Asia Minor.⁵² The troops of Hungarian king Stephen I were part of the Byzantine army fighting

expected before the completion of this work. On this basis, they was thought that between 975 and 986 the western regions of the Bulgarian Empire (or at least a portion thereof) came under byzantine control (*Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, 100–101, 195–196). Thus, the Byzantine Empire will become the Hungarian Principality bordering (Makk, *Új forrásadatok*, 272–273; Makk, *A bizánci fenyegetés árnyékában*, 134; Tóser, *Az arkadiopoli-si csata*, 606, Note 45).

⁴⁸ Cf. Makk, *A bizánci fenyegetés árnyékában*, 134–137. Jóannés Tzimiszkés's reign see Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, 166–178; Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte de byzantinischen Staates*, 243–247.

⁴⁹ Ioannis Scylitzae 305^{21–22}; Jean Skylitzes, *Empereurs de Constantinople* 255; Makk, *Új forrásadatok*, 271; Makk, *A bizánci fenyegetés árnyékában*, 135.

⁵⁰ *De cerimoniis* 661^{4–5}; Moravcsik, *Az Árpád-kori magyar történet bizánci forrásai*, 34.

⁵¹ al-Dahabī, Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uṭmān *Ta'riḥ al-islām wa-wafiyāt al-mašāhīr wa-l-a'lām*. Beyrut 1994, 217; A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes*. II. Bruxelles 1950, 243–244; Miller, *Byzantine treaties*, 62, Note 17. cf. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes* 161, 331; M. Canard, "Mutanabbi et la guerre byzantino-arabe. Intéret historique de ses poésies," in *Al-Mutanabbi*, Mémoires de l'Institut français de Damas, Beyrouth 1936, 105.

⁵² Liudprand, "Die Legatio," in *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae Historicis separatim editi*, Hannoverae–Lipsiae 1915, 199.

the Bulgarians soon after the turn of the millennium.⁵³ Basil II's troops sent to Italy before 1025 also had *Turks* among them – scholars believe them to be Hungarians.⁵⁴

The most likely conclusion, then, is that the part of the biography under investigation relates the story of monks on their way to Byzantine emperor Basil II, planning a military campaign against the Bulgarians between 991 and 994, which monks were then robbed by a troop of Hungarians fighting as part of the Byzantine army. If this interpretation of the source is correct, we can state that between 991 and 994 Basil II had a Hungarian leader for an ally whose lands were within reach of the attacking Byzantine troops. Feeling threatened by the Byzantine expansion (“the spears of the emperor”), this Hungarian leader did not only enter into an alliance with Basil II,⁵⁵ but he also supported the emperor's campaign against the Bulgarians by contributing troops.

⁵³ O. Holder-Egger, “Fundatio ecclesiae S. Albani Namucensis,” in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum XV/2*. Hannoverae 1888 (reprint: Stuttgart-New York 1963) 963–964; F. Makk, “Szent István és Bulgária [Saint Stephen and Bulgaria] *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis de Attila József nominatae. Acta Historica Különszám* 1991, 4–7; F. Makk, “Magyar–bolgár kapcsolatok Géza nagyfejedelem és Szent István király korában,” [The hungarian–byzantine relationship in Géza and Saint Stephen's age] in F. Makk, *A tululmadártól a kettőskeresztig*, Szeged 1998, 120–125; F. Ferenc, “Une époque décisive: la Hongrie au milieu du XI^e siècle,” in *Les hongrois et l'Europe: conquête et intégration*. Textes réunis par S. Csernus et K. Korompay, Paris–Szeged 1999, 314–315.

⁵⁴ Olajos, *Contingent hongrois*, 227–229.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, Vol. 2. ed. E. Szentpétery, Budapest 1938, 379, 381.