The Ethnonyms Turci, Turchi in the Medieval (western) European Latin Sources

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The aim of this paper is to summarize the various pieces of information on the ethnonym *Turci* recorded by western authors in the Latin sources. I attempted to put the available data in chronological order and to answer several questions: how the various messages could be interpreted, are they authentic or not, and how the authors had an acces to the information? The paper consists of seven parts: 1) the *Turci* as the Central Asian Kök-Türks, 2) the *Turci* of Aethicus Ister, 3) the *Turci* in the Gesta of Adam of Bremen, 4) the *Turci* as the Hungarians, 5) the *Turci* as Khazars, 6) the *Turci* as Saljuqs and Ottoman Turks, 7) the *Turci* on the medieval maps.

I.

One of the earliest mention of the Turks in Western Europe is the story of the socalled Fredegar chronicle on the origin of the Franks. The chronicle is an important source of the events of the sixth and seventh centuries. It was compiled by one or two authors and it consists of two parts: the first was compiled around 613, the second in 624. The report on the origin of the Franks is in the second book:

"Tradition confirms that there was a third tribe from the same origin, the Turks, and that when the Franks in their travels and many battles crossed over and entered Europe, a group of them settled in the same place, above the bank of the river Danube between the ocean and Thrace. They elected from their midst a king named Torquotus from whom they got their name 'Turks'. The Franks, (...) since their numbers were diminished by Torquotus, when settled near the Rhine a small band remained."

¹ Chronicarum quae dicitur Fredegari scholastici libri IV. ed. B. Krusch, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (=MGH) Script. Rer. Merov., Hannover 1888. English transl. Cf. Ch. I.

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And in the third book is a short passage:

"The remaining group of them, who stayed on the bank of the Danube, elected a king from among themselves named Torcoth, after whom they were called 'Turks' and after Francio the others were called 'Franks'."²

The story of course is a fiction, the Troian origin was important for the demonstration of the glory, nimbus of the Franks. The mention of the Turks, however, is unexpected in this story. The name Torquotus at first was identified with the ancient name Torgatus, but from the end of the nineteenth century another view arose emphasizing that this name refers to the Inner Asian Turks. There was a view that the name is a deformed variant of Turxanthos of the Byzantine sources, that is Turk shad, probably Tardu (ruled from 575 to 603). But this interpretation is not precise. Christopher Beckwith suggested that name Torquotus is identical with a form *Turkwath (Turkwač) that is 'Turk ruler'.3 This etymology seems adequate and may confirm the identification of the Turks of the chronicle with the Inner Asian Turks. The localization of these Turks is, nonetheless, problematic. The term 'ocean' reminds of an ancient topos, the periphery of the oikumene, that is the world. Thrace is probably the so-called later Roman Thracia diocesis, and the Danube is unambiguous. That is the territory of the settlement of these Turks is the Danube region and the land east of it. But there is a contradiction. The Turks never conquered the middle or lower Danube region. There are two possible interpretations: 1) The Fredegar chronicle has preserved that moment, when the Turkic power almost extended to the lower Danube. This situation can be observed in 584 and 585.4 2) The other possible interpretation can be connected with the approach of the Turks of the imperial power. By their idea the Avars in the Danube region were their slaves, who escaped from them. Probably the envoys of the Turks spreaded this view abroad, for example in Constantinople. The Frank envoys of king Dagobert could meet Turks in Constantinople. The pieces of information later were deformed in Burgundia, perhaps by the chroniclers themselves. It was not important because the aim of the author was to compile the story of the origin of the Franks. Nevertheless, the name of the Turks got into the western literature and later rooted into it.5

Beckwith, "The Frankish Name of the King of the Turks," Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi 15 (2006/2007), 6.

² Ch. I. Beckwith, "The Frankish Name," 6.

³ Ch. I. Beckwith, "The Frankish Name," 8, E. Ewig: Le mythe troyen et l'histoire des Francs. in M. Rouche ed. *Clovis: Histoire et mèmoire.* Vol. I. Le baptéme de Clovis. Paris 1997, 845–847. doubts: M. Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought.* Cambridge (MA), 2008, 50; other identifications: op. cit. 49–50. (Huns, Avars, Torcilings [C. Cahen], Proto-Bulghars [N. Wagner]).

⁴ S. Szádeczky-Kardoss, Avarica. Über die Awarengeschichte und ihre Quellen. Opuscula Byzantina VIII. Szeged 1986.

⁵ A. Eckhardt, "La légende de l'origine troyenne des Turcs," Körösi Csoma Archivum 2 (1932), 422-433.

11.

There are other sources on the Turks from the period prior to the Crusades, in which the identification of the Turks is doubtful. It is an interesting description on the Turks in the Cosmographia of the so-called Aethicus Ister. The identity of the author of this work is debated (he was probably Bishop Virgil of Salzburg, and born in Ireland), the date of the compilation is the eight century. The sources of Aethicus first of all were the classical authors, such as Pomponius Mela, Plinius maior, Iulius Solinus, but he often borrowed not directly, but by the mediation of Isidorus Hispalensis. Aethicus characterized the Turks as wild, ugly barbarians, and they pursue terrible way of life. They were descendants of Gog and Magog.6 It is interesting that the author wrote on the Scythians, and in this case he used positive phrases. In the last sentence of the work he attributed to himself Scythian origin. The Turks of Aethicus might be identified with the Khazars. Nevertheless, the name *Turci* has a character of collective term: the people of the barbarian world, the nomads of Western Eurasia. It is a difficult question to point out the source for the name Turci in the work of Aethicus. The name could be taken from contemporary sources, because in south Germania were direct pieces of information from Eastern Europe.7 Or it might be Aethicus who borrowed the term Turcae of the classical authors, such as Pomponius Mela or Plinius. This name is a deformed variant of the ethnonym Iurcae, which is in the form Iurkai in the historical work of Herodotos.8

III.

The Turks are included in the work of Adam of Bremen. They are mentioned two times: once in the enumeration of the peoples of the Baltic region. The second time they are in the description of Eastern Europe, the Turks belong to the peoples, living north of the Black sea (that is "Scythians", the author combined the contemporary information with phrases from classical authors). According to Adam, they were in the vicinity of the Rus. These Turks could be identified with the eastern European nomads of the eleventh century, the Pechenegs, Oghuzes

¹⁰ Schmeidler, Magistri Adam, 245 (Lib. IV. schol. 122.).

⁶ Die Kosmographie des Aethicus. Hrsg. O. Prinz, München 1993, 119-120. T. Nótári, A salzburgi historiográfia kezdetei. Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár 23. Szeged 2007, 42-49. (in English: Bavarian Historiography in Early Mediaval Salzburg. Passau 2010.); T. Nótári, "Az univerzum képe Aethicus Ister Cosmographiájában" [The Universe in the Cosmography of Aethicus Ister] Belvedere 17/5-6. (2005), 38-52.

⁷ E. g. A. V. Nazarenko, "Ob imeni Rus' v nemeckih istočnikah 9–11 vv." Voprosy Jazyko-znanija 5 (1980), 53–54; A. V. Nazarenko, "Južnonemeckie zemli v evropejskih svjazjah 9–10 vv." Srednie Veka 53. Moskva 1990, 134–135.

⁸ Herodotus, The Histories. Transl., R. Waterfield, notes, C. Dewald, Oxford 1998, 242. J. Marquart, Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge. Leipzig 1903, 55.

⁹ B. Schmeidler, ed. *Magistri Adam Bremensis gesta hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. Editio tertia, SRG in usum scholarum. Hannover-Leipzig 1917, 242 (Lib. IV., cap. XIV.).

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(Russians called them *Torci*) or the Cumans.¹¹ But the *Turci* of this passage of Adam in this case seems to be collective term.

IV.

The Hungarians called Turci in the work titled "Antapodosis" of Liutprand of Cremona in the tenth century. 12 In 949 and 968 he stayed in Constantinople and had trustworthy information on the neighbors of the Byzantine Empire. In the "Antapodosis" he applied the terms of the Byzantine authors. In another source, the south Italian Bari Chronicle mentioned Turks as allies of the Byzantine Emperor Basileios II in 1077. These Turks could be identified with Hungarians. 13 The use of term Turci for the Hungarians was a Byzantine influence. In Byzantium the Hungarians were called Tourki or Oungri. The latter name was well known in the West, in the western sources the Hungarians were mentioned as *Ungari*, *Hungari*, but the name Turks in the meaning of Hungarians was not in use in the Latin West, while the western Muslim sources were mentioned the Hungarians as Turks in the tenth and eleventh centuries, for example in the works of Ibrāhim ibn Ya'qūb, al-Bakrī, Ibn Hayyān and al-Maqdisī. Moreover, the name Turk of the Hungarians was known in the Muslim East also. The term was use in connection with the Central Asian Turkic speaking tribes as a collective term. In the geographical work compiled by al-Gaihānī in the first quarter of the tenth century is mentioned the Hungarians (Magars) as a people from the Turks. This might have related to the geographical location of the Hungarians in the ninth century, that is they came from the territory east of the Volga river, where was the western periphery of the Turks of the Muslim authors. It reflected the view of the Muslim geographers.14

¹¹ Turci are Torks (i. e. Oghuzes) of the Russian chronicles, E. g. Drevnjaja Rus' v svete zarubežnyh istočnikov. T. IV. Sost., per., komment., A. V. Nazarenko, Moskva 2010, 145, note 133.

¹² J. Becker, ed. *Die Werke Liutprandis von Cremona (Liutprandi opera*). SRG in usum scholarum. Hannover-Leipzig 1915, 38 (Lib. II., 4.), 50 (Lib. II., 26.).

¹³ Annales Barenses, MGH scriptorum T. V. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 53. T. Olajos, "Contingent hongrois au service de Byzance en Italie," in Les hongrois et l'Europe. Conquète et integration, ed. S. Csernus – K. Korompay, Paris-Szeged 1999, 227-228. T. Olajos, "Contribution a l'histoire des raports entre Constantin Monomaque et le roi André Ier," in G. Printzig – M. Salamon, eds. Byzanz und Ostmitteleuropa 950-1543. Wiesbaden 1999, 92-93.

¹⁴ I. Zimonyi, "Why were the Hungarians Referred to as Turks in the Early Muslim Sources?" in Néptörténet, nyelvtörténet. A 70 éves Róna-Tas András köszöntése, ed. L. Károly - É. Kincses Nagy, Szeged 2001, 206-209. H. Göckenjan - I. Zimonyi, Orientalische Berichte über die Völker Osteuropas und Zentralasiens im Mittelalter. Die Ğayhānī-Tradition. Wiesbaden 2001, 67, n. 81.

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V.

The next characteristic presence of the name Turci was also in connection with Byzantium. The Turks were mentioned many times in the historical compilation of Landolfus Sagax (Landolfo Sagace), a Langobard historian in the beginning of the eleventh century. The relevant passages were translated or borrowed from Byzantine sources, and these *Turci* were Central Asian Turks or East European Khazars. Their mentions were in connection with the history of the wars between Byzantium and Persia in the sixth-seventh centuries or that of the wars between the Arabs and the Khazars in the eighth century. 15 The source of Landolfus could be the world chronicle of Theophanes Confessor which was translated into Latin in the ninth century by Anastasius Bibliothecarius. In many western chronicles only two short passages have preserved on the wars of the Turks in the middle of the eight century (for example Ekkehard of Aura, Sigebert of Gembloux, Annalista Saxo, Auctarium Mellicense etc.). 16 The first passage dealt with the invasion of the Turks in Armenia, while the second reported the battle of the Turks with the Avars. They were probably copied from Landolf's chronicle but the final source was Anastasius Biliothecarius.¹⁷ He wrote on the invasion of the Turks in the year seven hundred sixty two and on the war between the Turks and the Avars in the year seven hundred sixty four. 18 This work is a translation of the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. If we throw a glance at the second passage of the original text of Theophanes, it can be noticed that here are not Avars but Arabs. 19 This passage refers to the war between the Khazars and Arabs in Transcaucasia and on this war have preserved a few reports in the works of Muslim and

Landolfus Sagax, Historia miscella. ed. F. Eyssenhardt, Berlin 1869, 384, 398-402, 441-442, 450, 520, 523, 546, 548-549.

Ekkehardi chronicon universale, MGH scriptorum T. VI. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 160: A. D. 766. Turci egressi a Caspiis portis, cum Avaribus bellum inierunt, multique ex utrisque perierunt. Chronica domini Sigeberti Gemblacensis monachi, MGH scriptorum T. VI. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 333: A. D. 762. Turci a Caspiis portis erumpentes, Armeniam infestant...; Annalista Saxo, MGH scriptorum T. VI. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 557. Auctarium Mellicense (Annales Mellicenses), MGH scriptorum T. IX. ed. W. Wattenbach, Hannover 1851, 536. Auctarium Garstense, MGH scriptorum, T. IX. ed. W. Wattenbach, Hannover 1851, 563.; cf. Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte im östlichen Europa. Serie A Lateinische Namen bis 900. Bd III. Hrsg. F. Kampfer, R. Stichel, K. Zernack, Red. R. Ernst, D. Wojtecki, Stuttgart 1989, 75-79.

¹⁷ Landolfus Sagax, Historia, 546, 548; Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte, Lateinische Namen bis 900. ed. J. Ferluga et al., Wiesbaden 1977, 1: 257.

¹⁸ Anastasii Bibliothecarii historia ecclesiastica. Rec. I. Bekker, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae. Bonn 1841, 233, 234; Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte, 3: 81.

¹⁹ The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor Byzantine and Near Eastern History A. D. 284-813. tr. C. Mango – R. Scott, Oxford 1997, 602 (A. D. 763/764); I. S. Čičurov, ed. Vizantijskie istoričeskie sočinenija: "Hronografija" Feofana, "Breviarij" Nikifora. Moskva 1980, 46 (text), 69 (Russian transl.). Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte, Serie B Griechische Namen bis 1025. Red. A. A. Katsanakis, G. Weiß, Stuttgart 1988, 284.

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Armenian authors also.²⁰ The phrase of Anastasius "cum Avaribus" is mistaken. The identity the Turks with the Khazars is undeniable, because Anastasius wrote in an other passage that "Turks who called Khazars".²¹

VI.

There are many western sources on the Turks from the period of the Crusades. These Turks were Saljuqs who conquered large territory of the Middle East in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the eastern part of the Caliphate as well as the eastern part of the Byzantine Empire. The Crusades began in 1096 and from this time onwards many pieces of information arrived from the Middle East. The horizon of the West expanded, the information directly accessed the western authors. The descriptions were often based on the memory of eye-witnesses. There are long and detailed reports on the battles and other events. The ethnonym *Turci* is often mentioned with the names *Sarraceni* or *Arabs*. Apart from these reports there are few information on the history of the Saljuqs. One of them is the chronicle of the bishop of Tyros, William of Tyre. The author wrote on the origin of the Saljuqs, according to him they lived in the North and were nomads in the old times. They wandered and reached Persia. This time came to power Saljuq and conquered Persia. Page 1975 of the Persia. This time came to power Saljuq and conquered Persia.

The accumulation of information on the Turks helped the formation of various theories and combinations on the historical role of the Turks. For example, in the chronicle of Sigbert of Gemblaux the Turks was inserted into the peoples of the

²⁰ E.g., K. Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in A. D. 762-764," Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 11 (1960), 75-88.

²¹ Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte, 3: 79: Turcos ..., quos Chazaros nuncupant...

²² E.g., Annales Sanctae Columbae senonensis, MGH scriptorum T. I. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1826, 106. Annales elnonenses maiores, MGH scriptorum T. V. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 13. Annales blandinienses, MGH scriptorum T. V. ed. D. L. Bethmann, Hannover 1844, 27. Ex florentii wigorniensis historia, MGH scriptorum T. V. 564. Hugonis Floriacensis, MGH scriptorum T. IX. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1851, 392. Gesta Roberti Wiscardi, MGH scriptorum T. IX. ed. 265-266, 286-287, 292. Leonis Marsicani et Petri Diaconi chronica..., MGH scriptorum T. VII. ed. W. Wattenbach, Hannover 1846, 766-767. Annalista Saxo, MGH scriptorum T. VI. ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover 1844, 727-731, 735, 741. Ekkehardi chronicon universale, MGH scriptorum T. VI., 208-209, 212, 216-217, 219-221, 224, 230. Chronica domini Sigeberti gemblacensis monachi, MGH scriptorum T. VI. 364-365, 367, Anselmi gemblacensis continuatio, MGH scriptorum T. VI. 375. Auctarium aquicinense, MGH scriptorum T. VI. 403, 411, 417, 424, 427, 434. Sigeberti continuatio praemonstratensis, MGH scriptorum T. VI. 452-455. Roberti de monte cronica, MGH scriptorum T. VI., 486, 504. Cafari annales, MGH scriptorum T. XVIII., 12, 40-44, 47. Annales colonienses maximi, MGH scriptorum T. XVII. Hannover 1861, 761, 785, 790, 793, 799-800, 802. etc.

²³ Guillelmus Tyrensis, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis*, Lib. I. c. VII. http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/williamtyre/1.html [Date of access: 4 September 2011] Meserve, *Empires of Islam...* 51–52.

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period of the later Roman Empire, with the Gepids, Alans, and Bulghars.²⁴ The historical way of the Turks was summarized in the world chronicle of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines in the thirteenth century. The important sources on the Turks were included in this story, which were known in the West from the seventh century onwards. According to Alberic in 763 the Turks came to the Caspian Gates, that is, he copied the phrase of Anastasius Bibliothecarius. At the end of this passage Alberic mentioned that from this time there is no mention on the Turks up to 1059. Indeed the history of the Turks continued in this particular year. It is the story of the origin and rise of the Saljuqs, copied from the chronicle of William of Tyre, and a phrase on the Troian origin of the Turks has been inserted into this story. It means that Alberic combined the different pieces of information in which the name *Turci* was presented. Thus the history of the Turks went back to the ancient time (Troia) and ended in the history of the Saljuqs.²⁵

There is a chapter on the origin of the (Ottoman) Turks in the works *Asia and Europa* of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini. He refused the Troian origin of the Turks and his theory is based on the information taken from Aethicus Ister. According to Piccolomini the original homeland of the Turks was in the northern part of the *oikumene*, and they moved to the Caspian region and later into Cappadocia and the southern Pontus region.²⁶

The sources on the origin of the Turks were combined with the Hungarians and the Huns. There is a passage in the Montecassino Chronicle on the identification of the Turks and Huns (or Hungarians): "...Soliman king of the people Unni who are called Turks." In the *Auctarium Neuburgense* which is based on the chronicle of Otto of Freising and was interpolated in the thirteenth century is a passage on the Turks, who, according to the author, earlier were called Huns and came from the Caspian Gates. They are the western Huns who are called Hungar-

²⁴ Chronica domini Sigeberti, MGH scriptorum T. VI. 302. C.f. Ex Orderici Vitalis historia ecclesiastica, MGH scriptorum T. XXVI. Hannover 1882, 17. The Turks are mentioned with the Gepids, Vandals, Goths, Huns and Heruls.

²⁵ Chronica Alberici monachi Trium Fontium, MGH scriptorum T. XXIII. ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, Hannover 1874, 791–792.

²⁶ Aenae Sylvii Piccolominei postea Pii II. Papae Opera Geographica et Historica. ed. J. M. Süstermann, Helmstedt 1699. 212–214, 231–233; M. Meserve: Medieval Sources for Renaissance Theories on the Origins of the Ottoman Turks. in: B. Guthmüller and W. Kühlmann (eds.): Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance. Tübingen 2000, 409–436. M. Meserve: From Samarkand to Scythia: Reinventions of Asia in Renaissance Geography and Political Thought. In: Pius II. El più expeditivo pontifice. Selected Studies on Aeneas Sylvio Piccolomini (1405–1464) ed. Z. von Mertels–A. Vanderjagt. Leiden 2003, 13–40. On Sylvius Piccolomini and other authors of the Renaissance: E.g. Cf. Enea Sylvio Piccolomini (Pius II) Orations 1. Audivi May 11, 1436 Text., transl., intr. notes M. von Cotta–Schönberg. Copenhagen 2011, 34–38. http://halsh.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/68/31/51/PD

²⁷ Chronica monasterii casiniensis, MGH scriptorum T. XXXIV. ed. H. Hoffmann, Hannover 1980, 478.

ians and Avars.²⁸ According to a sixteenth century author, Jean Lemaire de Belges, the Turks were the ancestors of the Huns and the Huns of the Hungarians.²⁹ It is the theory of the ethnic continuity of the Turks, Huns and Hungarians. These theories are typical results of the way of thinking of the medieval authors. From the end of the fourteenth century appeared the Ottoman Turks in the periphery of Europe, and the chroniclers mentioned them *Turci, Turchi*, as earlier the Saljuqs.³⁰

VII.

The ethnonym *Turci* appeared on the medieval maps also. There are a few maps: 1) the Anglo-Saxon Map from the eleventh century. In Asia were the peoples of the gryphons, Gog and Magog and the Turks.³¹ 2) The Ebstorf Map (thirteenth century). According to the text the Turks who were descendants Gog and Magog, lived in the island of Taraconta, and they are barbarians, and eat children.323) The Hereford Map (thirteenth century). Here is also mentioned the island Tarraconta and the barbarian way of life of the Turks.³³ These pieces of information, that is the origin from Gog and Magog, the island of Taraconta and the negative characteristic are very similar to the description of Aethicus Ister on the Turks. Aethicus also mentioned the name Taraconta. The localization of the island Taraconta is difficult, it was in the Northern ocean and in the text are mentioned other islands. There is a view that this is the Baltic sea and the name Taraconta is a word of a Baltic Finno-Ugrian language (Tara is a name of a God in Estonia, and the konda is a suffixum, 'The people of the Tara believers').34 In this case the name Turci in the gesta of Adam of Bremen could be clear also. The twofold mention of the Turks could be a compilation. On the basis of Aethicus, the Turks were localized in the North on one hand, and from other sources a second group of the Turks, the nomad Turks were localized on the eastern European steppe on the other.

To sum up, the ethnonym *Turci* came into the West in the seventh century and on one hand it referred to various peoples of Central Asia and Eastern Europe:

²⁸ Auctarium neuburgense, SRG T. 45.

²⁹ Cf. Eckhardt, La légende de l'origine troyenne des Turcs, 430-431.

E.g., Annales mellicenses, MGH scriptorum T. IX. Hannover 1851, 514, 519–520, 522–523, 525, 527, 529, 531–534. Continuatio monachorum Sancti Petri, MGH scriptorum T. IX., 841–842.; Chronicon elwacense, MGH scriptorum T. X. Hannover 1852, 43–44, 47–48, 50; Gesta archiepiscoporum magdeburgensium, MGH scriptores T. XIV. Hannover 1883, 451, 468, 471, 477; Annales Sancti Victoris massilienses, MGH scriptorum T. XXV. Hannover 1880, 7.

³¹ S. L. Čekin, Kartografija hristianskogo srednevekov'ja 8–13 vv. Moskva 1999, 120.

³² S. L. Čekin, Kartografija, 142.

³³ S. L. Čekin, Kartografija, 153.

³⁴ E. g. U. Sutrop, Taarapita, the Great God of the Oeselians. Folklore 26, 49–51. http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol26/sutrop.pdf

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the Turks, Khazars, Hungarians, perhaps Pechenegs, Oguzes, Cumans, the Saljuq
and later Ottoman Turks and became a collective term, the synonym of the bar-
barians of the periphery of the world and so became part of various theories on
the origin of the peoples on the other hand.