

The Ethnonym *Apar* in the Turkish Inscriptions of the VIII. Century and Armenian Manuscripts

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Late rulers of the second Turkish Qaghanate (682-745) left behind some inscriptions in Turkish in the mid of what is today Mongolia, known as commonly Turkish or Orkhon Inscriptions. The ethnonym *Türk* was firstly used by this state, and the word “*Türk*” first time occurs in Turkish in those inscriptions. During the short life of this qaghanate, its boundaries extended to vast areas from the Khingan Mountains in the east to the Sogdiana in the west, and Bilgä Qaghan (716-734), who erected those stones, ruled over a lot of Turkish and non-Turkish peoples in Central and Inner Asia. The inscriptions give very important information about the founding of the Qaghanate in 552, its following splendor, some specialties of early Turkish states, the period of the second Turkish Qaghanate, the neighboring kingdoms, and in short, human geography of Central Asia and the Near East in those ages.

In this article, I will tell on a place-name or ethnonym, (*A*)*Par* or *Par*, which still keeps its mystery, according to the Turkish inscriptions and some early Medieval Armenian sources.

We have not any formal documents written in Turkish about the first Turkish Qaghanate which was founded by Bumïn (552-553?) and Istemi (552-574?) in 552, and our data are based on only Chinese annals. However, the two inscriptions dated to the second qaghanate period fortunately give us very important and formal information through Bilgä Qaghan’s words.

1. *Apar* in the Turkish Inscriptions of the VIII. Century

In the aforesaid inscriptions, known as Bilgä Qaghan and Köl Tigin in respect to their owners, a word “(*A*)*Par* 𐰽𐰺” is mentioned (**BQ-East 5, KT-East 4**), by counting representatives of the countries and peoples, who participated in the mourning rites (“*yogh*”) in Turkish headquarters then in Mongolia, for Bumïn (Tumen according to Chinese sources) Qaghan’s passing in 552. A similar narration is repeated for Köl Tigin, who died in 731, in his inscription erected by Bilgä Qaghan, his elder brother, in 732, and for Bilgä Qaghan, who died in 734, similarly in his inscription erected by Tängri Qaghan, his son and successor, in 735:

KT-E 4 / BQ-E 5: “(*Özi anča*) *kergek bolmiš. Yiyçi siyütçi öngre kün toysıkda Bökli Čöllüg il, Tabyač, Tüpüt, (A)Par, (A)Purum, Kırkız, Üč Kurikan, Otuz Tatar, Kitany, Tatabi... bunča bodun kelipen siytamiš, yoylamiš. Antag külüg kayan ermiš*”.¹ [They thus passed away (lit.: ‘became lacking’). As mourners and lamenters there came from the east, from where sun rises, the representatives of the people of the Bökli plain, the Chinese, the Tibetan, the Avar, the Byzantium, the Kirghiz, the Üch Quriqan, the Otuz-Tatar, the Qıtan and the Tatabi... This many peoples came and mourned and lamented. So famous kagans were they.]²

It can be easily deduced from the order of the ethnonyms or place-names that they are told according to clock direction, that is, from east through south to west, and then to north. The studies on the *Bökli Čöllig il* showed that it, or at least its first component refers to “*the state of Mo*” (Gaojuli Kingdom) to the east of the Turkish land and in the north of China.³ And *Tabgač* is frankly once the very famous dynasty in Northern China, known as Toba / Wei. However, during the first days of the First Turkish Qaghanate, the dynasty ruling over the North China was not yet *Tabgač*, but the Sui (581-618), of Chinese origin. During the Second Turkish Qaghanate the

¹ See Aalto 1971, p. 33; Tekin 1995, p. 38, 62.

² The translation of the text was cited from Tekin 1968, p. 264. Also see Enoki 1970a, p. 25.

³ See for this question, Enoki 1970a, p. 25, fn. 3; Osman Fikri Sertkaya, “*Probleme der köktürkischen Geschichte: Muss es “Çölgi Az eri” oder “Çöl(l)üg iz eri” heissen?*”, *Journal of Turkish Studies* (Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları), 3, 1979, pp. 291-294; Idem, “*Göktürk Tarihinin Meseleleri: Tonyukuk Abidesi Üzerine Üç Not.II. “Çölgi Az eri mi?-Çöllüg iz eri” mi?*”, *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, XIX (1980), pp. 170-174; Mori 1984, pp. 139-144; Sertkaya 1995, pp. 29-32 and 45-49.

power was at the hand of the Tang Dynasty (618-906). It seems that, for the second phase of the qaghanate, either it was not known by the Turks the throne had passed from the Tabgač to the Chinese (Tang), which is not very likely, or during the later times name of this old dynasty of “Turkic” origin, *Tabgač* came to denominate China as a whole in all times, as shown in some Turkish texts of the later periods (for example, those of the Uighur period).⁴ The third name *Tüüpüt* is already an equivalent of today’s Tibet.⁵

Some earlier and late studies on the word or phrase (*A*)*Purum* / *Ap(a-U)rum* in the same line of the text [and even, (*A*)*Par Purum*, in the joint form with the previous word which I will try to explain below] pointed out that the Turks had mentioned the Roman Empire, or at least its eastern part, the Byzantium, in that way. A certain *Apurim* occurs in the form of *prwmyñ* in the Inscription of Shapur I of Sasanian (242-272).⁶ S. Kljashtorny conjectured that this word was a memory of the Byzantine ambassador Valentinus’ visit to Istemi Qaghan in 576.⁷ Since it is already known that the *Kirgiz* and other peoples mentioned in the text dwelled in the north and north-east of the Central Asia and the second Turkish Qaghanate, there remains a sole problem for the text: Where did the (*A*)*Par* seat, and, more importantly, who were they?

Now, the problematic and mysterious word (*A*)*Par* 𐰽𐰺𐰍 (Tibet) and (*A*)*Purum* 𐰽𐰺𐰍 (Byzantium). Once some scholars tried to read it as *Par*, and recently Sertkaya repeated the reading *Par*⁸, referring to Doerfer’s famous rule of the Turkic philology.⁹ However, as in the Orkhon Turkic texts the vocals *a* / *ä* at the beginning of the words were not written, and according to P. Aalto’s the famous rule for ancient Turkic and Mongolian, it should be a word of foreign origin,¹⁰ and must be read as *Apar*: “Neither the Turkic nor the Mongolian languages possess an initial *p*- in old original words.”¹¹ Some researchers explained it either as the Avars (Ruan Ruan or the European Avars?),¹² or the whole Iran country,¹³ and even the “White Huns” (Ak-Huns)¹⁴ in northeastern Iran, from the point of views of some historical and linguistic opinions.¹⁵ However, none of them took account of information out of some Armenian sources from the Vth and VIth centuries.

In this paper, I will try to make a comparative study of the data in the Turkish inscriptions and the Armenian sources.

According to the order in the text, we should look for (*A*)*Par* in the area what is today Afghanistan and Iran. The text narrates some activities during the times of Bumīn (d. 553?) or Istemi (d. 574 or 576?) qaghans, and then burial rites after the former or latter qaghan’s death. Given the following developments between 553-563 in Central Asia, the dead ruler here should

⁴ See Clauson 1972, p.438 (“*tavğaç*”); DTS 1969, p. 542 (“*tavğaç*”); Golden 2002, 58.

⁵ DTS 1969, p. 598.

⁶ This problem was disputed for a long time. W. Radloff read it wrongly as *Parpurim* and later *Parpurum* together with the previous word (Radloff 1895, p. 45; Radloff 1897, p. 131), and W. Thomsen corrected it as *Apar* and *Apourim* (Thomsen 1896, p. 98). H. N. Orkun followed Thomsen and read it *apar apurim* (See Orkun 1936, p. 30-31; 1941, p. 151-152). Eventually B. Ögel wrote a long article on this problem and accepted the form “*Apurim*”. Indeed, this word was an ancient Turkic form of *Frōm* ~ *Frūm* (=Byzantine Empire) as J. R. Hamilton explained (see Hamilton 1974, p. 111-117, cited after Sertkaya 1999, p. 25). About this matter, see, Ögel 1945, pp. 70-85; Kljashtornii 1964, p. 73 (“*Purum*”); Gumilev 1967, p. 34, fn. 42; Aalto 1971, p. 34; Sertkaya 1995, s. 135, especially 142; 145-147, 150-152 (“*apa urum*” = ‘the Great Rom’, owing to its spelling in Turkish :Rom > Rum > Urum).

⁷ Kljashtornii 1964, p. 73.

⁸ Sertkaya 1999a, p. 25; Sertkaya 1999b, p. 42.

⁹ Doerfer 1983, p. 91: “**p*- in the main Turkic was kept as *-p*- in Uigur Turkish, but **-b*- (after a vocal) in the main Turkic becomes *-w*- in Uigur”.

¹⁰ M. Ölmez also suggests that it is a word of foreign origin, see Ölmez 1997, p. 175.

¹¹ Aalto 1955, p. 9.

¹² For example, see Malov 1951 (*Avari*), p. 36; Haussig 1983, p. 6, 140 (*Juan-juan*). According to Haussig, the word *Aba* in the Chinese sources stands for *Apar* in the Turkish Inscriptions.

¹³ See Sertkaya 1999a, p. 25 (“the name of the whole Iranian country”).

¹⁴ Gömeç 1999, p. 32, supposed that the Akhuns and the Hephthalites were the same, whereas they were completely different dynasties, and the latter succeeded the former.

¹⁵ For the various theories on *Apar* and some arguments about them see Enoki 1970a, pp. 25-27.

be Bumīn, and the following burial and embassy activities belonged probably to that period,¹⁶ but not the events after 574 or 576, by the same political reasons. Supposing Bumīn died in 553 and taking into account the following dates, there were at that time the Sasanian Empire in Iran; the Hephthalite Empire on the territories north and north-east of Iran, including the eastern part of today's Khorasan.¹⁷ As before stated, in some recent works, (*A*)*par* was considered as the name for either the whole Iran, in broader sense, or the Hephthalites (or, wrongly, the previous Akhun dynasty).

Another important issue to pay attention here is that the names mentioned in Chinese and Turkish sources point out really either to a tribe and nation, or a place, thus we are not sure at the first glance whether the name “*Apar*” is a geographical or political one. In the Chinese sources, relating to the areas in the east of Iran, the mentioned names are not geographical, rather refers generally to political structures (for example, Kangju, Sute, Daxia, Kibin, Wuishanli). In the Turkish inscriptions, it seems that the equivalents of some of the above-mentioned names are also political ones (Kängäräs, Bärčäkär, Buqaraq ulus, Altı Čub Soydaq etc.).

Unfortunately, Chinese sources are not much useful to help enlighten the problem. In the Chinese sources, contemporary of the Sasanians, Iran or Persians are mentioned as *Bossu* [puâ-sie].¹⁸ As for the Hephthalites, their country was *Ida* or *Yeda*, but the polity *Hua*.¹⁹ On *Bossu* (Pers, Iran) of the Chinese sources, Hamilton pointed out that in the name *Apar* one could not see a reference to the word *Pârs*, but to *Awar*. While this word (*Pars*) does not stand for the whole Iranian domain, relating to the *Pars / Pers / Fars*, we can see a name *Bärčäk-är*, usually explained as *Fars*, in the Turkish Inscription (KT-N 12).²⁰ For this reason, *Apar* can not be Iran or the Sasanian country. However, according to Sertkaya, a Sanskrit word *Pahra / Pahla* is more suitable for *Par* but not (*a*)*par*.²¹ There are other opinions, more reasonable both historically / ethnically and geographically: the name *Apar*, according to both Turkic and Armenian texts in context stands for the region of Khorasan of Hephthalite empire, which I will take in hands again in the Conclusion.

2. The Armenian Sources in the Vth - VIIIth Centuries and *Apar*

In this connection, we have some important and pertinent Armenian source from the Vth and VIIth centuries, in which a certain word “*Apar* Ապար” is mentioned, related to the events that happened in the west and east of Iran in those times: Eghishe Vardapet, Ghazar Parpets‘i and Sebēos.²²

Our first source, Eghishe Vardapet was one of the prominent authors of the Vth century and so-called “eye-witness” of some wars between the Sasanian Empire and some Armenian formations, especially those at the end of the first half of the Vth century: Though it was claimed by Ter-Mkrtichian that he had participated in the well-known “*Avarayr Battle*” in 451 between the Armenian nobles under the leadership of Vardan Mamikonian and the Sasanians, and that he was a contemporary of the events during the rule of Yazdagird II, the Sasanian king (439-457) because this fact could be deduced from some clues given by him,²³ Prof. R.W. Thomson rightly showed that this first phase of Eghishe’s life is very doubtful and rather late. Thus, he writes,

¹⁶ See Gumilev 1967, p. 34.

¹⁷ Akbulut 2002, pp. 279-281.

¹⁸ For example, see Harmatta 1971, pp. 135-137, 140-141; Ecsedy 1977, p. 228, 233, 235; Cannata 1982, p. 72, 78, 84; Daffinà 1983, p. 121; Malyavkin 1989, p. 235, fn. 479.

¹⁹ Malyavkin 1989, p. 112, n. 25; 234, n. 474.

²⁰ See Tekin 1968, p. 312; Tekin 1988, p. 126 and Tekin 1995, p. 99 : (“*an ethnic name: Fars*”).

²¹ With a changing of the sound *r ~ l* : skt. *Pahla / Pahra* > at. *Pahr* > *Par*. See Sertkaya 1999a, p. 25. However, K. Enoki criticizes this idea: “*Persia (Pârs, Pârša) has never been called “Par”, though it could have been called either Pas or Pâsa*”, see Enoki 1970a, p. 26, and fn. 6.

²² I am very grateful to Prof. M. Bais, who gave me important knowledge and some corrections on the Armenian sources.

²³ See Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 26.

“the thirteenth-century Kirakos [of Gandzakets‘i] mentions the tent and altar of Trdat, used in the Armenian camp at the time of the holy Vardanank‘. This seems to be a unique reference to that tradition, but Kirakos does not connect it with Elishe. As a historian Elishe is placed between Moses Khorenats‘i and Lazar by Kirakos, as by Stephen of Taron, whereas in the next century the chronicler Mkhitar of Ayrivank‘ places Elishe after Lazar, which strictly speaking would render invalid Elishe’s claim to have been an eyewitness.”²⁴ Anyway, Eghishe has been giving information on the wars of the Sasanians against *Kushank* [i.e. the Hephthalites; the settled nations such as Chinese, Iranians, Greeks and Armenians used to call all successive nomadic peoples and polities with the name or title of an earlier well-known nomadic formation] in the years 442-448. Even, it is claimed that he had been in the country of “*Apar*” in military service during those wars. He later became “*vardapet*” and then, produced a history book titled “*History of Vardan and the Armenian War*”, which was written probably a few years after the finish of the Armeno-Sasanian wars in the second half of the V. century, and which covers Armenian history from the collapse of the Armenian dynasty Arshakids in 428 to the years 464 / 465.²⁵ In relation to the wars of the Sasanians with the Hephthalites, he mentions a country in the Northeastern Iran as “*the upper lands*”²⁶ or “*the land of Apar Ապար*”²⁷ That region is possibly an equivalent for today’s Khorasan, with Nishapur its main city.²⁸ He also mentions “*the land of the Kushans*” in connection with serial campaigns of the Sasanians against them in the years 442-449, 450-451 and 453-454.²⁹

Ghazar Parpets‘i, another Armenian author of the Vth century, wrote his “*History of Armenia*” by the order of Vahan Mamikonian. He undertook to write a history of Armenians, as a kind of a continuation of the “*History*” by Phaustos Byzantios [whose work, according to M. Abegian and N. Garsoïan, was written in the second half of the Vth century;³⁰ but C. Trever dates it to the end of the IVth and the beginning of the Vth centuries³¹] and completed this work around 500.³² Ghazar’s story begins from where Phaustos concludes, that is, the division of Armenia between the Romans and Sasanians by an agreement in 387,³³ and comes to the year 428, when the Armenian Arshakid House collapsed.³⁴ For the events after that date, it is proposed that he used the work by Egishe, as well as some other authors of the previous era. He died at the end of the Vth century or, the beginning of the VIth century. Ghazar names a land in the East of Iran as “*Kushank country*”³⁵ or “*Apar country*”³⁶, just as Egishe did.

As a very important Armenian source of the VIIth century, Sebēos was an episcope and had participated in the council held at Dvin in 645. He wrote a *History of Emperor Heraclius* which includes a whole history of Armenia from the very beginning up to 661, the time of Islamic conquest, which he witnessed. Some Armenian specialists divide his work “*History*” into

²⁴ Thomson 1982, p. 48

²⁵ See Trever 1954, p. 136; Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p.26.

²⁶ And, according to R. N. Frye *Aparshahr* “*can be well derived from ‘the upper lands’*” (Frye 1983, p. 206, fn.5).

²⁷ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 26, 50, 53-54; <http://www.vehi.net/istoriya/armenia/egishe/EGISHE.html>.

²⁸ Trever 1954, p. 135 (he accepts the whole Apar region as Nishapur one); Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 26, fn.44; Thomson 1982, p. 64, and fn.1; <http://www.vehi.net/istoriya/armenia/egishe/EGISHE.html>; http://www.vehi.net/istoriya/armenia/egishe/EGISHE.html#_ftn17.

²⁹ http://www.vehi.net/istoriya/armenia/egishe/EGISHE.html#_ftn14.

³⁰ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 18; Garsoïan 1989, p. 11, who says: “*a date in 470s seems most likely*”.

³¹ Trever 1954, p. 133, 145.

³² See Thomson 1982, p. 251. However, Trever accepts the date 490-495, and shows it within a time for 10-12 years after Egishe, see Trever 1954, p. 137.

³³ Thomson 1991, p. 10.

³⁴ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 32.

³⁵ Trever rightly points out that the term “*Kushan country*” had lost its political mean, and became a geographical name at that time, and the term was used for the regions of the Hephthalite ruler, according to the context (Trever 1954, p. 143).

³⁶ For example, see Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, pp. 52-53; Thomson 1991, p. 133, 135, 143; <http://rbedrosian.com/gp6.htm> : “*Arriving in the land of Apar, he [king Yazdagird] came to the shahastan called Niwshapuh.*”.

two main parts: the first part generally called as “*Primary History*” and the second one. According to general accept among the specialists, the attribution of the whole text come to us to Sebēos is at least doubtful. Probably only the second part of this “History” is Sebēos’ work, while the first part, dealing with more ancient events is not attributed to Sebēos.³⁷

He also speaks about the “*country of the Kushans*” and their rulers,³⁸ and narrates the “*contemporary*” events between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires during the rules of the emperors Mauricius (582-602) and Khosrow II (A)Parviz (590-628) respectively.³⁹ He names Khosrow II as “*Aparve:z*”.⁴⁰ In connection with both the Armenian uprising in 451 and the place where the Armenian nobles were martyred, and the events taking place at the beginning of the VIIIth century Sebēos calls a country in Northeastern Iran, near the city Nishapur, as “*Ap(a)r-Shah(r)*” which evidently is the same as Eghishe’s *Apar*, whereas the earlier writers used to the term Armenian *Apar ashkharh*.⁴¹

As for the last source, the *Ašxarhac’oyc’* by Ananias of Širak who lived between ca. 610-685,⁴² its original and long version accepted to be written between 591 and 636⁴³ mentions the countries of Persia and Aria and their bounding parts, and names a part of Aria as “*Ap(a)r-Shahr*”, together with Koshm and Wrkan.⁴⁴

3. About *Aparshahr* and the *Aparni*

It seems, according to the explanations in the Armenian sources and some scholars’ opinions, that the land of Apar was arrived soon after going through Hyrcania; thus it should be nowhere but the region of Nishapur (however, not the city Nishapur, the main center of Khorasan).⁴⁵ During the campaigns of both Yazdagird II in the 450s against to the Hephthalites [Haytals according to the Islamic sources] and of Khosrow II Aparviz at the beginning of the VIIIth century, Nishapur was used as a military base.⁴⁶ Since the Sasanians first started to call the region as Khorasan, soon after the events that the sources deal with, one can directly associate Khorasan with the expression *the region of Nishapur*. Th. Nöldeke, H. Hübschmann, R. N. Frye, A. Christensen and K. Enoki always identify the Aparshahr / Abarshahr / Abharshahr or Abrashahr with “*Khurasan*” or “*Nishapur*”.⁴⁷ According to H. W. Haussig *Aβaršahr* means

³⁷ For information in detail about this matter see Thomson 1999, Part I, “Introduction” (I am very indebted to Prof. M. Bais for the present information and the source critics); G. Bournoutian, “Sebeos: A Historical Controversy”, *Armenian Review*, (Summer 1975), pp. 138-146; http://www.vehi.net/istoriya/armenia/sebeos/index.html#_ftnref1 ; <http://rbedrosian.com/seb1.htm>; <http://rbedrosian.com/phaint.htm>

³⁸ See Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, pp. 40-41, 47, 57-62.

³⁹ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁰ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, pp. 58-59. According to Balazuri, the local ruler in Sistan was also called as *Aparviz* (See Christensen 1993, p. 327, fn. 9). About the relating words and titles with *Aparve:z* in Iranian sources see Justi F. 1895, 19: “*Aparwēz*” (I am very indebted to my colleague, C. Lo Muzio who sent me this reference).

⁴¹ See Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 60; Thomson 1982, p. 30 [“... *How the holy martyrs of Christ were seized by the heathens and were martyred in Apr Shahr near the city of Niwshapuh in the place called T’eark’uni...*”]; Thomson 1999, Part. I, p. 50 and n. 314; Part II, p. 101, 187-188. The place name T’eark’uni here was not known by Eghishe or Ghazar. About it and Thomson’s opinion see Thomson 1999, Part I, p. 2 and n. 10.

⁴² After S. T. Eremyan and R. H. Hewsens, see Hewsens 1992, p. 12, 15.

⁴³ See Hewsens 1992, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁴ Ter-Mkrtichian 1979, p. 63; Hewsens 1992, p. 74-74A: “*The thirty-third country of Asia is Ariana which is east of Media and extends as far as India, by Hyrcania and part of Scythia.... The Holy Scriptures call all of Ariana “Parthia”,... This region is called Xorasan by the Persians, i.e., “Eastern” [K’usti Xorasan]. Here are said to be the following provinces: Košma [or, Komš], Vrkan [Gurgan, ancient Hyrcania], Apršahr, Amr, Mrot, Hrew, Gadšan, Gozkan... and Gozbon...*”

⁴⁵ Trever mentions *Apar-shahr* as Tos [Tûs] region (Trever 1954, p. 142), but the region Nishapur seems more suitable for it. P. Christensen says that Nishapur was also called as *Abrashahr* (Christensen 1993, p. 193)

⁴⁶ Christensen 1993, s. 194.

⁴⁷ Nöldeke 1879, p. 17, fn.2 (“*Abrašahr ist der ältere name für die Stadt oder eigentlich wohl den District des späteren Nēwšâpûr, (jetzt Nišâpûr, arab. Nišâbûr)*”); Hübschmann 1962, pp. 20-21 (“*Persische Landschaft mit der Hauptstadt Niwshapowh, Niv-shapuh (in Parthien)*”). I am very grateful to Prof. M. Bais who kindly gave me this knowledge, together with a lot relating data in the Armenian sources); Frye 1962, p. 180 (“*or the Nishapur region*”);

“*Reich der Abar*” and should be sought in south-western territory of the Western Turkish Empire.⁴⁸

There is also another opinion which suggests that *Apar* might be concerning with a very old name *Aparni* / *Aparna* in the classical sources, which was one of the three tribes of the confederation of the Dahae on the Ochos (today’s Tejend) river; and the *Aparshahr* or *Abarshahr* was a district of the Aparnis.⁴⁹ J. Markwart suggests that *Apar-shahr* became in the forms of *Apar ašxart* (and *Apar ašxarh* in older form) in Armenian, and *Abarshahr* in Arabic, and it meant “*the country of Aparnak*”,⁵⁰ i.e. the Aparnoi, but not “*the upper countries, upper lands, Oberland, Hochland*”, which Frye also supposes.⁵¹

However, there are some problems with reading and understanding this “*Aparshahr*”. Although many scholars accepted the form in the original text of *Res Gestae Divi Shaporis* [dated from 262 A.D.⁵²] of Shapur I as “*Aparshahr*” / “*Abarshahr*” or “*Abharshahr*”, it appears only in the Parthian version, but not in the other versions given by A. Maricq, whereas the other place-names are mentioned.⁵³ Thus, one can think even that there was not an original name *Aparshahr* in the IIIrd century A.D., and it is mentioned in the later sources written after the coming of the tribes of certain Huns (or Akhuns), or the Hephthalites (from the second half of the IVth century, or the beginning of the Vth century A.D. up to Islamic period, cf. especially Tabari).

Nevertheless, it must be sought only in the north-eastern parts of Iran, and between Gurgan, Marw and Balkh, according to the order of the place-names in the sources.⁵⁴ Thus, *Apar* is to be connected with the so-called *Aparshahr*, later Khorasan, and was not the whole Iran.

The Aparni or Parni were “*probably the leading tribe*” migrating “*from the area of Khwarazm into Parthia in the first part of the third century B.C.*” According to this opinion and also Strabo’s record, the (A)parni were “*a part of the larger Dahi [Dahae] confederation*”⁵⁵ and “*the Dahae had occupied the region in Achaemenian times from their plain of Dihistan. ... From the late 4th century A.D., Chol and Kidarite Huns pressed upon the province [Hyrcania / Gurgān] from Dihistan... From the reign of Yazdgard II periodic campaigns were necessary to contain their penetration within the province.*”⁵⁶ In this connection, some scholars also identified the Aparni with later Avars. However, it is not acceptable “*either historically or linguistically*”, just as Frye said.⁵⁷

Frye 1984, p. 206, fn. 5 (“*later the Nishapur area*”), 294 (“*present Khurasan*”), 300; Christensen 1936, p. 84 (“*le Khorassan dans le sens moderne du nom*”), 133 (“*Nēv-Shāhpuhr=Abharshahr*”); Enoki 1970a, p. 21, 26 (“*Aparshahr means nothing but Nishapūr*”).

⁴⁸ Haussig 1953, pp. 328-330; Enoki 1970a, p. 26.

⁴⁹ See Christensen 1936, p. 215; Lecoq, **EnIr**, “*Aparna*”, p. 151.

⁵⁰ Marquart 1901, p. 74; Markwart 1931, p. 52. Because the Aparnak had given their name to Apar-shahr. See Honigmann-Bosworth, “*Nīshāpūr*”: “*Armen. Apar aškhārḥ*, the “*district of the Ἀπάροι*”; Frye 1962, p. 180; see also Brunner 1983, p. 767 (“*...province Abarshahr, “realm of the Aparni*”). Also Haussig accepts the opinion Aparni, but not the European Avars. See Haussig 1954, p. 329. R. Giraud is inclined towards the opinion of European Avars (Giraud 1960, p. 189). However, V.G. Lukonin reads this word as *Aprenak* and interprets as “*upper country*”. See Lukonin 1969a, p. 38-39; Lukonin 1969b, p. 25-26; Lukonin 1987, 211, 213.

⁵¹ See Frye 1962, p. 180; Frye 1984, p. 206, fn. 5; Maricq 1965, p. 64, fn.7.

⁵² Lukonin 1969b, p. 21.

⁵³ See Honigmann-Maricq 1953, pp. 11-18, 39-40, 99-107; Maricq 1958, pp. 305-331, 336; Maricq 1965, p. 46-73; Göbl 1993, p. 49-50.

⁵⁴ In Parthian version of *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, the possessions of Shapur I are followings: “*Merv, Herat and all Abarshahr, Kerman, Seistan, Turan, Makran, Paradan, Hind and Kushanshahr as far as Peshawar and up to the borders of Kash, Sughd, and Chach...*” See Lukonin 1969b, p. 32; Chegini-Nikitin 1996, p. 38. Especially, in the order of the place-names in Tabari mentioning the conquers by Ardashir I (224-241): “*The King left Istakhr and advanced to Sijistān, Gurgān, Abarshahr, Marw and Balkh, and Khwārizm.*” (Enoki 1970a, p. 20; Lukonin 1969a, p. 51; Lukonin 1987, p. 213; Litvinsky et al. 1994, p. 477).

⁵⁵ Frye 1962, p. 180.

⁵⁶ Brunner 1983, pp. 767-768. About coming of the Aparni / Parni / Parnoi, as a tribe of Dahae, out of Dihistan to Seleucid lands and an identification Aparnak = Nīshāpūr see Herzfeld 1932, p. 36 and fn. 1; Daffinà 1967, pp. 35-40; Daffinà 1982, pp. 36-38.

⁵⁷ Frye 1984, p. 206, fn. 5.

4. Conclusion

In my opinion, the name “*Apar*” in Turkish Inscriptions of the VIIIth century (Bilgā Qaghan and Köl-Tigin) is not a geographical, but political, just as some other names occurring in both Chinese and Turkish sources (Kibin, Kangju, Wuishanli, Anxi etc., and Tabgač, (A)Purum / Byzance, Kyrkyz, Uch-Kurykan, Otuz Tatar etc.). But the name “*Apar*” and its component in Armenian sources seem to show a geographical area (Khorasan), which might also intimate a political formation once there. This formerly possession might be of the Hephthalites, but not the Akhuns [“*White Huns*”] because the two dynasties were completely different from another, and the first replaced the second.

The purpose of this paper is not to discuss here the Awar / Avar and Ruan Ruan problem and to descend the Hephthalites directly from the Ruan Ruan in Mongolia. But, one of the main reasons of the studying the problem *Apar* together with the Hephthalites and Ruan Ruan is that the tribes *War* and *Hun* (Varchonitae) took place both in the Hephthalites and Ruan Ruan.⁵⁸ As known well, according to a Chinese record, the Hephthalites descended from a Ruan Ruan tribe called *Hua* in the Qeshi region (Turfan area).⁵⁹ This tribe came to Tokharistan and soon settled also in eastern regions of Khorasan at the beginning of the Vth century. About the same days, the Avars / Awars appear in the sources.⁶⁰ Having submitted earlier to the Huns or “*White Huns*” there, the Hephthalites took over the whole Tokharistan in the course of time, and began to struggle with the Sasanians for Khorasan, earlier *Aparshahr*, where in the earlier times the Kidarite Huns were in possession. After the Kidarite Huns or from the coming of the Hephthalites, the country was named after them (“*Apar-shar*”, that is, *the country of the Apar*). The names *Apar* or *Aparshahr* appear in neither Iranian nor Armenian texts, and nor the Sasanian coins have it,⁶¹ at least before the first half of the IVth century A.D., because Aparshahr (Nishapur) was founded in ca. 350-360,⁶² that is, when the Chionitae (Huns) in the east were submitted to the Sasanians.⁶³ Again, in his well-known **Atlas of China**, A. Herrmann shows the eastern regions of Khorasan, Tokharistan etc. as a dominions of Afu / Hua / Awars / Hephthalites at the times between ca. 440 and 500 A.D.,⁶⁴ relying on the identification Hua = Uar = Awar.

⁵⁸ About the Uar and Xun / Xunni / Chunni (Varchonitae, Warhuniten) and this opinion see Grignaschi 1980, pp.221-233; Haussig 1983, p. 6; Schreiner 1985, p. 188.

⁵⁹ About the theories of the origin in Qeshi and Gaoqi, and their relations with China see Enoki 1959, pp. 12-13; Herrmann 1925, pp. 564, 568-569, 578-580. However, there is also another theory that Hua may be connected with Ghûr on the river Harî-Rûd in Afghanistan. About it see Enoki 1970b, pp. 38; Czeglédý 1980, pp. 215.

⁶⁰ The first mention of the Hephthalites in the region is about 442 by Egishe, but that of the Avars is about 463 by Priscos. See Szadeczky-Kardoss 1990, p. 206; Litvinsky 1996, p. 135. About this first phase of the Hephthalites see Wesendonk 1933, p. 342-345; Enoki 1970b, pp. 38-44; Enoki 1984, pp. 118-122.

⁶¹ In Sasanian coins the name Apar or Aparshahr is mentioned in the form ‘PR or ‘PRŠ as a sign of the mint-place of the coin. See Aalto 1971, p. 33; Chegini-Nikitin 1996, p. 52.

⁶² Though there are some various opinions about the time of its foundation under Shapur I or Shapur II, it seems more reasonable to accept the time of Shapur II. For example, According to Lukonin its foundation time is relating to shahanshah Shapur I’s first expedition of the conquests on the boundaries of the eastern lands in 245-248. See Trever-Lukonin 1987, p. 13 (“*In result, in the region of Aparshahr was built a new “tsarskii” city, Nishapur...*”). About this matter see Honigmann-Bosworth, “*Nīshāpūr*” (under Shapur I); <http://65.1911encyclopedia.org/N/NI/NISHAPUR.htm> (under Shapur II).

⁶³ See Chegini-Nikitin 1996, p. 38: “*The victorious return of Shapur [II, 309-379] must have taken place some time before 360; it was apparently at this time that the city of Abarshahr [the city of Nishapur] was founded and used as his headquarters.*”

⁶⁴ Herrmann 1935, p. 30-31, 32. Lukonin accepts as its time: the end of 356 – the beginning of 358 A.D. See Lukonin 1969b, p. 42.

According to Islamic sources, the Sasanians renamed the region as *Khorasan* after they reconquered the area, and one ruler [Khosrow II] assumed himself the title “*Aparve:z*”⁶⁵ claiming that he had taken possession of the earlier “*Apar*” land. In spite of his acceptance of some losses in the west to Byzantium, he insisted until the end of his life on not giving territory in the east to both local Hephthalite princes and Turkish rulers. Especially under the leadership of Bahram Chubin, the governor of earlier Hephthalite territories, this Sasanian policy went on.⁶⁶ In this connection, I should note that when the Sasanians once conquered and subdued the lands of the Kushans in the time of Shapur I, they renamed it as “*Kushanshahr*” and gave its administrators the title “*kushanshah*”.⁶⁷ For this reason, it should not be surprising for us to see the conquered / subdued lands of the Huns / Khionitae or Hephthalites in Khorasan renamed by the Sasanians as “*Aparshahr*” and their Sasanian rulers titled after it as “*Aparshah*”.

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⁶⁵ The etymology of *Aparve:z* has a little problem. Being compared with *Parviz* in New Persian it is said that *Aparve:z* also means “victorious”. H.S. Nyberg (**A Manual of Pahlavi**, Part II, Glossary, Wiesbaden 1974 II, 22 s.v. “*Apar*”) compares it with the Armenian Loan-word “*ve:ch*”, a component from OIr. in the meaning “Streit, Zwist” in German. In this case, it seems as a compound-word. And the first word “*Apar*” means OIr. *upari- “above”. (I would like to thank to my colleague, Dr. P. Lurje to whom I am indebted this knowledge).

⁶⁶ About his struggles for Khorasan against the local Hephthalites and the Turks see Akbulut 1984, pp. 124-131.

⁶⁷ Lukonin 1969b, p. 36-37.

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