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On the Greek Sources for the History of the Turks in the Sixth Century

By C. A. Macartney

IN the following pages an attempt will be made to resolve certain obscurities in the references made by Byzantine writers to the Turki nations of Central and Western Asia in that period—the sixth century—when the two civilizations first came into contact. It is hoped thereby to throw additional light on the situation of the various Turki tribes at that date.

The central question is that of the identification of the Avars (*Ἄβαρεις*) of the Byzantines with the Juan-Juan or Jwen-Jwen of the Chinese—an identification commonly accepted by scholars since the days of Chavannes [1] and admitted by most modern authorities, including Marquart [2] and Németh [3]; but questioned by Parker on geographical grounds, and by other authorities by reason of a small but important and quite definite chronological discrepancy.

The Juan-Juan were the most important race in Central Asia from about A.D. 300 or 315 until the middle of the sixth century. Their centre appears to have been somewhere near Karakorum.[4] After A.D. 546, according to Chinese sources, the nation known as the Turks, who had formerly been subjects of the Juan-Juan, revolted against their masters, utterly defeating their Khagan, Anakwe. His successor carried on the struggle for a few years, but had to take refuge with the Chinese, and the Turks were strong enough to insist on the massacre of the survivors of the nation in A.D. 555.[5]

The Greek references to the Avars begin with a passage from Priscus, quoted in excerpt by Suidas (s.v. *Ἄβαρις*) and by Constantine Porphyrogenetos (Exc. de Leg. Gent., ed. de Boor I. 586),[6] according to which the Saraguri, Urogi, and Onoguri were ejected from their homes between A.D. 461 and 465 by an attack from the Savirs, who were fleeing before the Avars, who had themselves been driven from their homes by nations inhabiting the shores of the Ocean, and emigrated on account of excessive mists from the Ocean, and a great plague of gryphons. The first-named nations sent embassies to the Empire, and we find them afterwards on the Volga and north of the Black Sea; the Savirs, north of the Caucasus.

Then silence falls on the Avars for 100 years; after which we come to the well-known series of events beginning in A.D. 558. For these the sources are fairly numerous.

[1] *Histoire générale des Huns*, ii, p. 334.

[2] *Eranšahr*, p. 53.

[3] *A Honfoglaló Magyarság Kialakulása*, pp. 100 ff.

[4] Parker, *A Thousand Years of the Tartars*, 2nd ed., p. 118.

[5] Ibid., p. 121. Németh, op. cit., p. 101, puts the date at A.D. 552.

[6] G. Moravcsik, *Zur Geschichte der Onoguren, Ungarische Jahrbücher*, Bd. x, Heft 1/2, pp. 55 ff., proves conclusively that the extract from Constantine is simply an abbreviation of that from Suidas.

(1) Menander tells us that a nation bearing the name of Avars arrived at the territory of the Alans about A.D. 558 and sent envoys to Constantinople. Justinian sent them to make war against the Hunnish tribes north of the Caucasus. Thereafter they attack the Slavonic Antæ also; and then send a second embassy to ask for land within the frontiers of the Empire.[1]

(2) Thereafter, according to Theophanes, "the Hermichiones, the nation living this side of the barbarians next to the Ocean" sent to Constantinople asking Justinian not to give the Avars land.[2]

(3) Theophanes Byzantinus, quoted by Photius, describes this nation as "the Turks living east of the Tanais, formerly called Massagetæ, whom the Persians in their own tongue call Kermichiones".[3] The name of their king was *Ἀσκήλτ* or *Ἀσκήλτος*.

Theophanes dates the embassy at July, A.D. 563.

(4) Corippus refers to the same embassy, calling the king Scultor.[4]

(5) Next comes another fragment from Menander, as follows: "Silzibul, the leader of the Turks, having heard of the flight of the Avars, and how they had gone off after ravaging the territory of the Turks, said in his boastful barbarian way that 'they are not birds to escape the sword of the Turks by flying through the air, nor fish to evade us by taking refuge in the depths of the sea, but they roam about the surface of the earth; and when I have finished my war with the Epthalites, I shall attack the Avars and they shall not escape my assault'. With these boastful words Silzibul is said to have started on his campaign against the Epthalites."[5]

(6) In 568 the Turks sent an embassy (their first) to Constantinople. By this time the Epthalites had been subdued. The Greeks also asked: "tell us how many of the Avars escaped from the dominion of the Turks (*τῆς τῶν Τούρκων ἀφηνίασεν ἐπικρατείας*) and if any are still with you (*παρ' ὑμῖν*). The answer was: some are still our subjects, and those who ran away somewhere number, I suppose, about 20,000.[6]

(7) The embassy proved a success, and a return embassy was sent to Central Asia in the same year. The Turks are here described as "the Turks formerly called Sakai".[7] On this occasion no reference was made to "Avars".

(8) In Tiberius' second year, however, yet another embassy was sent. This time the Roman envoy, Valentinus, came in for a bad time from his host, the Turkish Khagan Turxanthus, who accused the Greeks of allying themselves with "his slaves the Varchonites (meaning the Avars)" (*τοῖς δὲ δὴ Οὐαρχωνίταις τοῖς ἡμετέροις δούλοις — ἐδήλου δὲ τοὺς Ἀβάρους*) who were

[1] *Exc. de Leg. Gent.* fr. 1–8 (de Boor, pp. 442 ff.).
[2] Theoph. *Chron.*, ed. de Boor, p. 239.
[3] Phot. Bib. cod. 64 *κερμιχίωνες*.
[4] *In Just.*, iii, 390 ff.
[5] Menander, *Exc. de Sent.*, pp. 354–5.
[6] *Exc. de Leg. Gent.*, fr. 7, p. 452.
[7] *Exc. de Leg. Rom.*, fr. 7, p. 192 *c τῶν Τούρκων τῶν Σακῶν καλουμένων τὸ πάλαι.*

Turkish subjects, and whom he would come and destroy as soon as he wished.[1]

(9) Finally, Theophylactus Simocatta reports [2] a letter purporting to have been written to Mauricius in A.D. 598 by the Turkish Khagan " boasting of his victories ". According to this the Khagan first conquered the " Abdelites ", then allied himself with " Stembischada ", and then subdued the Avars, whose survivors fled to the Taugas (the Chinese) and the Mukrit (Mu-ko, a Tonguz race north of China ?) [3]; then he attacked the Ogor.

There follows a long digression. The Ogor, it is explained, were a powerful nation living to the east, near the River Til which the Turks call " black ". Their oldest princes, from whom some of their tribes took their names, were called " Var " and " Hunni " (*Οὐὰρ καὶ Χούννι*). In Justinian's day some of these tribes fled to Europe and took the name of Avar ; these were the European Avars, who should more properly be called pseudo-Avars. To this day some of them bear the names of Var and Hunni.

Then the Khagan subdued the Colch and afterwards proved victorious in a civil war, etc.

The above (first) description of the Avars' end tallies so well with that given by the Chinese sources of the end of the Juan-Juan that it is hard indeed to resist the conclusion that the two nations are identical. Two objections have, as we said, been raised :—

Parker declares that the frontier of the Juan-Juan did not reach far enough west to justify the identification. The empire of their first great ruler, Zaron, is said to have extended no further west than Harashar—at the most Tarbagatai or Kuldsa.[4] He is said, indeed, to have annexed the remnants of the Hiung-Nu north and north-west of his kingdom ; but even so Parker does not believe that his empire reached as far west as the Issyk-Kul, and says that " there is not the faintest trace of any Jwen-Jwen intercourse with any western people, except the Epthalites and the people north-west of Ili ".[5]

On the other hand, the Annals of Wei (*c.* C II fol. 15) say that " the kingdom of the Ta Yüe-Chi (Kušan Huns) . . . was bordered on the north by the Jwen-Jwen, and they were many times exposed to their attacks. They therefore moved westward and established themselves in the city of Po-lo ".[6] The reference is to a date about A.D. 450, and the move of the Kušan was from the Oxus valley, with the centre at Merv, to the district between the Caspian and the Aral Sea, Po-lo being probably Balxan or *Βαλαάμ*, east of the present Bay of Krasnovodsk.[7]

This passage shows the Juan-Juan well to the west of Lake Balkash in

[1] Ibid., fr. 14, p. 205.
[2] Theoph. Sim. VII ec 7–9.
[3] Chavannes, *Documents sur les Toue-Kioue Occidentaux*, p. 228.
[4] *A Thousand Years of the Tartars*, p. 117.
[5] Ibid., p. 121.
[6] Cit. Specht, *Études sur l'Asie Centrale*, pp. 11, 12.
[7] Marquart, *Eranšahr*, p. 55.

the middle of the fifth century, and it is worth noting that the migration of the Kušan before them, reported by the Chinese, almost coincides in time with the flight of the Savirs before the Avars related by Priscus. In the latter case the Avars were themselves fugitives before peoples living eastward of them again, mists and dragons ; while the Juan-Juan had shortly before been heavily defeated by the Chinese.[1]

The coincidence, if it is one, seems very remarkable. Moreover, it is not absolutely necessary to assume from Priscus' story a permanent establishment of the Avars at all far to the West ; there are instances enough of nomadic races fleeing hundreds of miles after a defeat such as the Juan-Juan had then suffered (which, it must be emphasized, was a military defeat at the hands of Chinese generals, not an attack from another nomadic race bent on seizing their feeding-grounds) and returning afterwards to their own homes. Parker's geographical scruples are thus superfluous.[2]

The chronological difficulty is that the Chinese sources place the destruction of the Juan-Juan much earlier than Theophylactus puts the fall of the " Avars ", and in any case before the destruction of the Epthalites, which probably did not take place until at least after A.D. 562.[3]

Chavannes' attempt to get round the difficulty by suggesting that the " Abdelites " are not identical with the Epthalites [4] is wholly unconvincing.

This difficulty also, however, can be resolved if we remember two things. Firstly, it is important to realize that the whole of Theophylactus' story cannot

[1] Németh, op. cit., p. 110, quotes Bičurin, *Sobraniej Svědĕni* for a great campaign waged by the Chinese against the Juan-Juan in A.D. 458.

[2] Professor Németh, indeed, argues (op. cit., pp. 107, 186 f.) that the whole operation took place much further east than has usually been supposed : that the Ogur tribes had previously been living on the Irtisch, the Savirs beyond them again, and that the result of the Avars' attack was that the Savirs moved only as far as the Irtisch, the Ogurs to the Volga. It is true that we find later traces of a Sibir kingdom on the Irtisch ; true also that the " Ocean " referred to by Priscus is certainly not the Caspian but rather the distant ocean surrounding the world, and the ultimate causes of the great movement are conceived as lying very far to the East indeed. On the other hand, the Savirs appear, not long afterwards, north-eastward of the Caucasus, and to explain this, Németh has to assume a further migration, of which we have no trace, of all or part of the nation. It seems to me much more plausible to take the traditional view, which brings the Savirs on to the Volga and the Saraguri, Onoguri, and Ogors westward of it, i.e. to the Don district. There is, however, no reason to suppose that the whole of the Savirs were driven westward ; part, perhaps the bulk of the nation, may well have remained behind on the Irtisch. Similarly, not all of the Ogur tribes will have been driven westward by the Savirs. Of the three nations mentioned by Priscus, only the Onogurs play anything of a part in later history. The Saraguri vanish from the scene almost immediately ; the " Urogi " are not heard of again at all in any original source (since the list given by the so-called Zacharias Rhetor is a mere compilation from Priscus, Procopius, Menander, etc.), and even if we assume their identity with the Ogors or Uigurs, these, too, are very unimportant as neighbours of the Empire during the next century. Clearly, therefore, these " Ogurs " were only a small fragment of the whole important and numerous nation.

[3] The accounts of this are not dated, but according to Ṭabarī, Chosroes undertook his campaign against the Epthalites after his peace with Rome (A.D. 562) and after intervening campaigns against the Khazars and the Arabs (Ṭabarī, tr. Nöldeke, pp. 166–7).

[4] *Documents*, pp. 250 f.

possibly, as some early critics assumed, be a textual reproduction of the Khagan's letter of 598. To prove this, it is only necessary to point out that the Khagan ascribes to himself the victory won over the Epthalites forty years previously, and says that he accomplished this in alliance with " Stembischada " ; but Stembischada was not his ally but his predecessor, being identical with Menander's Silzabul or Dilzabul.[1]

In fact, only the exordium and possibly the end of the letter are genuine quotations. The rest of the passage is really a long digression on the Eastern peoples, in which Theophylactus appears chiefly to be quoting from memory, his main source (direct or indirect) being, quite clearly, Menander. It is very important to realize this.

Now, Menander, although he mentions that Turxanthus describes the European Avars as " Varchonites ", invariably refers to them himself as " Avars ", and this was clearly the name under which the nation was known in Constantinople. If, therefore, it transpires to be true that these " pseudo-Avars " were not identical with the real Avars, and if the references to " Avars " which appear to occur too late can be ascribed to the false, and not the true Avars, then our difficulties vanish.

Regarding the former point there is nothing *a priori* impossible, or even improbable, in Theophylactus' story. The name itself, as Németh points out,[2] simply means " rebellious, disobedient ", and is precisely such an appellation as would easily be assumed by a fragment of a nation. The references in Menander and Theophanes need, then, present no difficulties, since all of them refer to the " pseudo-Avars ". Theophylactus' description of the flight of the " Avars " to the Taugas and Mukrit obviously, it is true, refers to the true Avars and not to the pseudo-Avars ; and he also dates this campaign after the Epthalite War. But we have shown that he is only summarizing, and roughly enough, and may easily have been misled as to date by the passage in Menander (No. 5 above) which indicates that the Turks would take on the " Avars " *after* the Epthalites. Menander was speaking here of the pseudo-Avars, but Theophylactus misread him, or remembered him inaccurately.

The true Avars, then, are really identical with the Juan-Juan, but our information concerning them is sadly reduced. It now consists of : the passage from Priscus [3] ; the story in Theophylactus of their flight to Taugas and Mukrit, and his remark that they were " held to be the most active people among the Scythians ",[4] and, presumably, that their supreme ruler was called Khagan (since their imitators took the title with the name).

The true reading in the second passage quoted above is probably *βαρβάρων*,

[1] Ibid., p. 229.

[2] Op. cit., p. 105.

[3] These are, of course, the true and not the false Avars ; the point is missed by Fehér, *Bulgarisch-Ungarische Beziehungen*, p. 26.

[4] Theoph. Sim., iii, 7, p. 284, ed. Bonn. *λέγεται γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι τοῖς Σκυθικοῖς τὸ τῶν Ἀβάρων ὑπεῖναι ἐντρεχέστατον φῦλον.*

the whole passage being most likely a reminiscence of Priscus, and through him of Herodotus.

The remainder of our references all refer to the "pseudo-Avars"; but before we can turn to them we must consider briefly the third nation playing a role in our sources: the Kermichiones.

Who were these people? They cannot have been the Turks—Toue-Kioue, since their embassy reached Constantinople while the Avars were still negotiating with Rome for settlement inside the frontier—probably, therefore, as early as A.D. 558, whereas the true Turks appeared there first in 568; further, their ruler's name was *Ἀσκήλτ* or Scultor, while the Khagan of the Turks at that time was Silzabul, Dizabul, or Istämi. Neither can they have been the Juan-Juan, as Marquart suggests; nor the Epthalites, who were well known to the Byzantines and would not have been described in this way. Moreover, the Epthalites were known as White Huns,[1] and Mr. Bailey has pointed out that the word Karmīr χyōn, meaning Red Chyon, occurs in a Pahlavi text in juxtaposition with Spēt χyōn, or White Chyon. The name Chyon, originally that of some other race, was "transferred later to the Huns owing to the similarity of sound".[2]

The nation can hardly be other than that which appears in the fourth century, under the name of Chionitæ, in the steppes on the north-west frontier of Persia. These Chionites were probably a branch of the Huns, the other branch of which afterwards appeared in Europe; the latter appear to have attacked and conquered the Alans, then living between the Ural and the Volga, about A.D. 360,[3] while the first mention of the Chionites is dated A.D. 356.[4] In the fifth century the name is replaced by that of the Kušan or of the Kidarite Huns, who are clearly identical with the Kušan. The Kušan had, as we said, moved westward from the Oxus valley about A.D. 450. Most of the Kušan, however, emigrated to India after the defeat inflicted upon them by Peroz in A.D. 468.[5] Some writers have assumed that the Epthalites, who had crossed the Oxus and settled in the old Bactria about A.D. 425, now absorbed the remnants of both Kušan and Chionites[6]; but there is no evidence to support this. The power of the Epthalites never extended, so far as we can tell, to the northern as distinct from the eastern frontiers of Persia, whereas the Kidarite Huns were so far west as to constitute a danger to the Roman Empire, as well as to Persia.[7] Meanwhile, the Huns continued to be active on the north at least up to the end of the fifth century.[8]

[1] Procopius *D.B. Persico*, p. 16: *τὸ Οὔννων τῶν Ἐφθαλιτῶν ἔθνος, οὕσπερ λευκους ὀνομάζουσι.*

[2] *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. vi, part 4, pp. 945–6.

[3] From a Chinese source quoted by Hirth, *Ueber Wolga-Hunnen und Hiung-Nu* (*S.B. der k. b. Ak. der Wiss. zu München, phil. hist. Kl.*, 1899, p. 248).

[4] Ammianus Marcellinus, xvi, 9, 2, 4. [5] Priscus, fr. 41, cf. Marquart, *Eranšahr*, p. 58.

[6] See von Wesendonk, *Kusan, Chioniten und Hepthaliten* (*Klio* 26, pp. 366 ff.).

[7] Priscus, fr. 33, 37; Ps. Josh. Stylites c. 9.

[8] Stylites, loc. cit., refers specifically to the "Huns called Kushunawe". Certainly many of the campaigns against the Huns described by him, by Zacharias Rhetor, etc., must refer to the

The statement that they were known as " Turks " is very interesting, and is not, I am convinced, confined to Theophanes. I believe Menander to be referring twice to the Kermichiones under the name of Turk, where it has usually been supposed that he is speaking of the Toue-Kioue. These passages occur in the fragment quoted above as No. 5, the words " having heard of the flight of the Avars and how they had gone off after ravaging the territory *of the Turks* ". And again in No. 6 " how many of the Avars escaped from the dominion *of the Turks* ". It is true that we thus find the name " Turk " used almost in consecutive breaths to describe different peoples ; but it must be remembered that we probably have here, not Menander's original text, but only summaries. It seems certain from the embassy of 563 that the pseudo-Avars had been the subjects, not of the Toue-Kioue but of the Kermichiones [1] ; also the wording in passage No. 5 is strange indeed if the reference were to Silzabul's own territories, while his cheerful and unconcerned attitude would contrast oddly with that of Turxanthus at the later period. It will be noted, in fact, that the Toue Kioue establish a claim over the pseudo-Avars only after their conquests in Western Asia, not before.

The ambiguity, moreover, is probably less than we suppose. It will be noted that Theophanes describes the Kermichiones as the " Turks, formerly called Massagetæ ", while Menander calls the Toue-Kioue " Turks, formerly called Sakæ ". The distinction is probably deliberate, and affords at the same time a valuable clue to the positions of the two nations. The Kermichiones lived in the homes of the old Massagetæ, viz. on the Jaxartes and the Aral ; the Toue Kioue further east, in the homes of the old Sacæ.

There is another passage in Theophylactus where the name appears to be used in the same way. A pseudo-Avar dignitary, having got one of the wives of his Khagan into trouble, decided " to flee to his ancestral tribe. These are Huns, living in the East, neighbours of the Persians, and to many more familiar under the name of Turks " (*οὓς καὶ Τούρκους ἀποκαλεῖν πολλοῖς γνωριμώτερον*).[2]

The name " Turk " appears to have been used at an earlier date still for the peoples living north-west of Persia. Ṭabarī uses it of the Kušan Huns in the fourth century, and both he and Dīnawarī tell of an inroad by " Turks " in the reign of King Bahram V (420–438).[3] In view of the Byzantine usage which we now see to have been frequent, it is difficult to dismiss these references

northern frontier, not to the Epthalites, since the Persians could not have appealed to Rome for subsidies against the latter. Some of the Huns in question must, indeed, have been neither in Epthalite nor in Kušan-Chionite territory, but north of the Caucasus ; but in view of the vagueness of our sources it is impossible to assign each reference to its proper subject.

[1] Cf. Theophanes, and in particular Corippus loc. cit.

Quos contra ingratos defendimus, arma paramus ?
Obstamus dominis, profugis damus ostia servis ?

[2] Theoph. Sim., i, 8, 5.

[3] Marquart, *Eranšahr*, pp. 50–2. Ṭabarī, tr. Nöldeke, p. 99.

as purely anachronistic; but it may be necessary to revise our estimates of the first appearance of the name.

The Kermichionites, then, are identical with the Chionites of two centuries previous, and in the middle of the sixth century clearly ruled over a considerable empire north of Persia, in the Jaxartes-Aral district. They must have played a part in the history of the time and age much larger than has generally been recognized.[1]

It is quite clear from our various accounts of the embassies—Corippus is explicit on the point—that the pseudo-Avars had been subjects of the Kermichiones. For the rest we have only one statement of the first importance on their origin: the remark of the Turkish Khagan, preserved by Menander, that their real name was "Varchonites" (*Οὐαρχωνῖται*). Unhappily, this does not get us much further. Marquart explains the name as "denizens of the Orkhon"[2]; but this is only conjecture. Németh is able to adduce a very similar Mongol tribal name,[3] but this does not show us where our race was residing in the fifth century. More important is his information that the pseudo-Avars belonged linguistically to the same branch of the Turkish family as the Huns and the Toue-Kioue, and not to the Ogur or Bulgar branch which was living at the time on the Volga and the Black Sea.[4]

Theophylactus appears to tell us more, but the appearance is deceptive. It is most important to keep firmly in mind that in the passage in question, viz. in the alleged letter from the Turkish Khagan (excluding its beginning and end), Theophylactus is not an original source, but is only directly or indirectly epitomizing Menander, and distorting him in the process. His statement that the pseudo-Avars were originally a federation of tribes known respectively as "Var" and "Chunni" is clearly a mistaken rationalization of the writer's own: an attempt to be intelligent about the name Varchonite. The "Vars" are the Avars (= pseudo-Avars), the Chunni the Bulgars, who, as we know, were almost as numerous in the Avar kingdom in Hungary as the Avars themselves, undoubtedly included Hunnish elements, and were frequently described by the Greeks as Huns. This point is confirmed by Theophylactus' statement that the Kotzageri, who "were also of the Var and Chunni", fled from the Turks to the Avars.[5]

Now, the Kotzageri were, in fact, a component of the Avar kingdom in the West, and almost as numerous as the Avars themselves, whom they considered rather as their equals than their superiors[6]; but they were never "Varchonites", but Bulgars by origin. Incidentally, the figure of 10,000 in Theophylactus'

[1] Németh, for example, in his admirable work, ignores them altogether; he also goes slightly astray in his conclusions by accepting literally (apparently) Theophylactus' inventions on the origins of the pseudo-Avars.

[2] *Eranšahr*, p. 52.

[3] Op. cit., p. 103.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Theoph. Sim., vii, c. 8.

[6] Menander, fr. 3, *exc. de Leg. Gent.*, p. 443.

account is also taken from Menander,[1] and most likely the hordes of Tarniach and Zabender could be equally well identified if we had Menander's work complete.[2]

We may, therefore, disregard the story about the Var and Chunni; and we must proceed no less cautiously with the statement that the pseudo-Avars were an Ogor tribe. It may be remarked, to begin with, that even Theophylactus does not say that the pseudo-Avars themselves lived on the "Til"; but only that they were an Ogor tribe, and that the Ogors lived there. This, again, we can almost certainly trace back to Menander, who mentions the Volga under its familiar name of *Ἀτήλ* (in the form of *Ἀττίλα*) and shows Ogors living on it.[3] He does not, it is true, use the epithet "black" in the fragments of his work remaining to us; but then we do not possess all his writings. The Volga was, of course, in the East to a Greek, so there is no need to boggle at the phrase *πρὸς τὴν ἀνατολήν* or, with Marquart, to identify the *Τίλ* with the Togla.

The fact, however, remains that Theophylactus does tell us that the pseudo-Avars were an Ogur tribe (which, linguistically and anthropologically,[4] is not correct). Further, both he and Menander omit all mention of the Kermichiones, whose tributaries the "Avars" had certainly been. It is, moreover, remarkable that we find in our sources no mention of an Ogor state before the arrival of the Turks, while we do find Kermichiones; on the other hand, the destruction of the Kermichiones is nowhere mentioned, whereas Theophylactus mentions the destruction of the Ogors as the next great achievement of the Turks after the Epthalite war; Menander shows the Khagan boasting of the destruction of the powerful Onogurs, and mentions Ogurs as Turkish subjects on the Volga. It would really appear as though the empire known to the Persians as Kermichiones must have been identical with that known to the Turks as Ogor—a supposition which does not, of course, imply that it was racially homogeneous. It is perfectly possible that Ogur = Bulgar tribes had gained the upper hand after their westward move in the fifth century, but the Persians had retained the old name.

Of this empire the pseudo-Avars must have been one of the eastern components. It is interesting to note that according to Corippus, who is very specific on the point, they had come to the Caucasus through Persia.[5] Menander

[1] Ibid., p. 458: *καὶ δὴ παρεκελεύσατο δέκα χιλιάδας τῶν κοτριγούρων λεγομένων Οὔννων διαβῆναι τὸν Σάον ποταμόν.*

[2] I should not be surprised if *Ζαβενδέρ* turned out to be identical with the *Ζαβεργάν*, the Cutigur leader mentioned by Agathias (Hist. V–10, etc.) and Menander, and *ταρνιάχ* to have some connection with Menander's *ταργίτιος* or *τάργιος*.

[3] *Exc. de Leg. Gent.*, fr. 8, p. 453.

[4] The Avar skulls examined in Hungary show a high proportion of purely Mongol types.

[5] Loc. cit. 11.277 ff.

Quem Persae timuere ferae, genibusque minantis
Admovere manus, pacem et meruere precando
Ni facerent, frustra celsis Babylonia muris
Cincta foret, dominos Avares nune ferre parata.
Rupimus Euphratem, gelidos superavimus amnes. . . .

also says that they only reached the Caucasus "after long wanderings" (πολλὰ παρανοστήσαντες). That they took the southern route, being bought off, very likely, by the Persians, is rendered the more probable by the fact that they attacked the various Hunnish tribes after and not before reaching the territory of the Alans (so Menander, whom Theophylactus only summarizes inaccurately).

Our sources cannot tell us anything more of the "pseudo-Avars" in their early homes, except only the statement that the fugitives numbered some 20,000, while others of the nation remained behind and became subject to the Toue-Kioue, the latter statement being confirmed by the later story of the fugitive Avar dignitary.