

## Notes on Balkan Toponymy of Turk Origin (Wallachia)

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The idea of this article is not to question the well-known name given to the Romance people in the Early Middle Ages by their German neighbours, namely: Germ. \**wahlos* from Lat. *Volcae* - Celtic tribal name mentioned in Cesar "De belle gall." (6, 24, 1 etc.). The name *wahlos* was first registered in the ninth century as *uualha* in Bavarian "Glossas Cassellanae" (Tagliavini 1972: 163), comp. Germ. *Wahl* "French", "Italian", etc. (see below). This German word is considered as the basis of Slavonic name of the former Danubian principality *Wallachia* (Muntenia and Oltenia, the historical provinces of the present-day Rumania, = Rum. Țara Românească).

The transaction of the Old-Germ. \**wahlos* "Romance"(?) > Slav. (obsolete) *valáh* (*vlah*), *volóh* "Rumanian", "Moldavian", resp. *Waláhia* "Rumania" (= Țara Românească)" (> Germ. (obsolete) *Walachei*), being quite plausible, has not been proved yet (Sukhachev 1990: 143-144). As for Balkan areas, we consider this etymology to be deficient.

The following is an improved version of a more detailed article published in Russian in the "Notes on Turk Origin Balkan Toponymy" (Girfanova, Sukhachev 1993, 1994, 1996).

Our main goal is to reveal some traces of Old-Turkish (those of the medieval Bulgarian, Petcheneg, Kuman, etc.) of the Balkan traditions later influenced by the language of the Ottoman Turk period.

The penetration of the German word *wahlos* believed to be Celtic and its spread can be described as follows: Old-Germ. *Wahl*, *Walak* (pl. *Walahâ*) "Romance (and the inhabitants of Romance provinces)", *Walholand* "Italy", comp. Frank. *Walagoti* "Ostrogoths of Italy" (6th

cent.), Middle-High-Germ. *Walch* up to 16th cent. (gen. *Wahles*, pl. *Wahle*), from 1516 also *Wälscher* (Bavar. *Walich*, Low-Germ. *Wallen*) “French”, “Italian”, rarely “Spanish” (Grimm 1922: 544-548). Comp. Old-Iceland. *Válr* “British Celts”, *Válland* “northern Gaul”, Old-Engl. *Wealas*, *Wealhas* “Gauls” and “Celts” (comp. Engl. *Welsh(man)*, *Wales*, *Cornwall* and *Walloon* “Belgian” - from French). Saxon. *Woelisc*, Old-Engl. *wealth*, *wahl*, *wielisc* “alien, foreign” resulted perhaps directly from the Celtic and English contacts, comp. Welsh. *folk* (Wekly 1967, vol. 2, s.: *welsh*; Holthausen 1963: 386, 393; Oniens 1966: 999; Vries 1961: 641). Besides Germ. *Wállah* (since 1522), *Wallak* (since 1562), *Wallách* (since 17th cent.) “gelding” (Grimm 1922: 631-633) is regarded as derivative of the Russian name of Wallachia common among the Rumanian herdsmen though *Wallach* is not the word (name) they used to call themselves. It is more likely to assume the borrowing of Russian *valjuk* “gelding” derived from the verb *valjati* “to throw down, to tighten” (Trubachev 1960: 44). However the contamination of *Wallach*, *Wallak* “gelding” and *Wahl*, *Walak* “*Wallach* (= Rumanian)”, *Wallachei* remains a fairly plausible explanation, comp. the stress shift *Wállach* - *Wallách*.

Russ. *volóh* “old name of Romance Peoples”, Ukr. *vóloh* “Rumanian”, Bulg. *vlah* (pl. *vlási*), Serbo-Croatian *vlàh*, Sloven *Làh*, Czech. and Slovak. *vlach*, Pol. *włoch* and Russ. *valáh* “gelding” and “Rumanian, inhabitant of Wallachia” are regarded by M. Vasmer as related to the New-High-Germ. *Wallachei* (from Old-Slav. *volohě* in its turn) and *Wallach* “gelding” (are said to be from the language of Rumanian herdsmen). Turk. *āflak* “Wallachia” and *kara āflak* “Moldavia” are explicated from Russian *Valahia* (Vasmer 1964, vol. 1: 269, 345).

In Bulgarian Etymological Dictionary we find Bulg. *vlah* (popular) “Rumanian” and “Macedo-Rumanian”, Old-Bulg. *vlahě* only “Rumanian”; Alb. *vlahinikë* “Rumania, Wallachia” can be found there as well (BER 1971, vol. 1: 163-164). For Czech. we have *valach* “herdsman” (in Moravia and Beskidias), Old-Czech. *vlach* “Italian” and “gelding” (from German) (Holub, Kopečný 1952: 407). A. Brückner compares Pol. *walach* “Wallach (= Rumanian)” and *walachyć* “to castrate” with corresponding German words, but Pol. *włoch* “Italian” he explains by means of German via Russian *voloh*. This etymological tradition goes back to P.J. Šafařík who has interpreted the very fact of the Slavonic borrowing of the German word as an evidence of its ancient origin. The Serbo-Croatian *vlàh*

“Romance (Latinus)”, “Rumanian”, “Italian”, “Tracian Wallach” (in Macedonia), “herdsman”, “Serbian” etc. derive according to P. Skok from hypothetical Gothic \**Wals*, that was borrowed by the Balkan Slaves (Skok 1974, vol. 3: 606-609).

Hung. *oláh* “Rumanian” is derived from Slav. *voloh* (sing.) and *olasz* “Italian” from Slav. *volosi* (pl.), comp. *Olaszország* “Italy”. In anonymous “Gesta Ungarorum” (circa 1196-1203) the Latin form *Blahii* meaning the inhabitants of Transylvania can be found. We come across *volohě* in the first Russian chronicle (circa 1113), even in those “Balkan Wallachs” as well as the mentioning of Wallachs in the Byzantine chronicles were to start long disputes in historiography. For example, Anna Komnin (12th cent.) wrote in “Alexiad” about “Bulgarians and nomads (they are named in common speech *Blahoi*)”. In similar cases all historians and linguists take into account only Romance origin of Wallachs or “nomad” Wallach-shepherds in full conformity with the meaning of the German words. Anna Komnin’s point of view is really valid.

In the old times the Balkan Peninsula is known to be the last refuge for the people living in the steppes - mainly Turks. Therefore it is reasonable to look for the ancestors of Wallach nomads among the Turkish peoples.

In fact we find not only homophonic names of the Kumans in Hungary (12-13th cent.), comp. Germ. *falones*, *phalagi*, *valvi*, *vallen*, *Val(e)we(n)*, Lat. *Valvi*, *Fallones* (Baškakov 1980: 200; Dobrodomov 1978: 108), but also such ethnonyms as *bala* (Bashkir, tribe Kataj), *balake* (Kirgiz., tr. Adigine), *balhur* (Uzb., tr. Üz), *balaš* (Kirgiz., tr. Kitaj) etc. (Lezina, Superanskaja 1994, part 1: 104-105), either *bolak-kazajakly*, *bulak-kazajakly* (Uzb., tr. Üz), *bolat* (Kazah., tr. Karaul-džasik), *bolatči* (Kazah., tr., Kajman), *bolhi* (Kirgiz., tr. Saraj) (ibid.: 125-126), or *volke* (Turkm., tr. Olam), *volkuli* (Turkm., tr. Ärsari) (ibid.: 138). Comp. also *bula čopon* (Petcheneg), *bulgak* (Karakalpak, tr. Šömišli) (ibid.: 132) and *bolgali* (Uzb., tr. Kangli, Keneges kipčak) (ibid.: 125).

The stem *bol-/vol-* may be explained by means of the Turk *böl-* “to divide” which gave together with resultative aff. *-(i)k/-(i)ğ* Turkish (Ott.) *bölük* “part, section” that can be traced in Serbo-Croatian *bulik* (1675), *buluk* (1683 *bolo*), *buljak*, Bulg. *boljuka*, *bujuk*, Maced. *buluk*, Rum. *buluc*, Alb. *bylyk*, **Hung.** *bölök* (1576), Modern-Greek *mpouluki* “group, regiment” (Kakuk 1973: 85-86). The same meaning is relevant for Turk *bölük/bölüg* “part, section”, “detachment”, or *bylyg* “group, subdivision”,

comp. Kalmuk. *böl(ö)ğ* “part”. A. Caferoğlu showed also a meaning “the part of people, population”, and a meaning “region, area” that can be observed in the Turkish (Ottoman) dialects (Sevortjan 1978: 214-217). As for a deeper etymology we may assume Ramstedt’s opinion to be reasonable. He found the name of *bulak* applied to various Hun’s tribes in Chinese chronicles and explained that as a result of Chin. *lâk* “tax, duty” and *b’uo* “class, category”, where the generalised meaning can be described as “subjects that pay tribute, duty” (Ramstedt 1953-1954: 15).

In the 7-8th century Turkish tribes forced the Slavs back to the Northern areas of the Danubian plains (in the first Russian chronicle these tribes were called the *valahě*). Therefore we consider an Old-Turkish origin of the ethnical name *voloh* (*valah*) highly possible.

Balkan toponymy reflects a number of items that can not be satisfactory explained given only the German (resp. Slavonic) hypothesis of the Wallachs name origin.

For example, in Rumania we found such hydronyms as *Bolohani*, *Bolohanul*, *Pîrîul Bolohanului*, *Bolohanosul*, *Bitca Bolohonoasă*, *Bolohani* with the stem *boloh* that was regarded by I. Jordan as dialect form (the Moldavian) of *bolovan* “ball, lump; block” from Slav (Russ.) *bolvan* “block”, “idol” (Jordan 1963: 338). However, we have not only Russ. *bulyga* “lump, block” (obvious from Turk, also as *bolvan*, though M. Vasmer gives for *bulyga* Germ. *Beule* “cone” (Vasmer 1964, vol. 1: 239), but also Rum. (dial.) *bulgur* “crushed millet” from Turk. *bulğur*, *burğul* “groats”, comp. Russ. (dial.) *bulgur* (id.) and Rum. *bulughină* “potato” (without etymology). Several names such as *Bělhovotovo* etc. can be found in Bulgaria (Kovachev 1969: 103), *Bolcovtsi* (Zaimov 1977: 75), *Bolovjan*, *Bulcani* (Zaimov 1967: 108), etc. All these names may be explained from Turk. *böl-* + *-(i)k/(i)ğ* “part (of something)”.

If we now take the ethnonym *bulgar*, even if we put aside the confusion between Bulgarian (resp. Bulgaria) and Wallach (resp. Wallachia) in historical sources (see: Naumov 1979: 201 sq.), we can notice the resemblance between stems *bul-g-ar* and *vol-(o)h*. Similar correspondence is valid for ethnicons *bul-g-ar* and *baš-k-ir*, that are etymologically identical (Baskakov 1988: 122). So to assume the historical kinship between the words *voloh* (*valah*) and *bulgar* (*bolgar*) is not so absurd as it seems when we do not stick to German origin of the Slav. *voloh* and its variants.

However, “the multiple etymology” attitude (Rumanian linguists’ terminology) of the ethnic name for Wallachs rather than a single source etymology either German or Slavonic or Turkish appears more correct.

Here it seems relevant to remember the semantics of the word connected with the activity of the Wallachs, shepherds. We have a number of Indo-European forms descending hypothetically from I.-E. \*uel- “pasture” (Ivanov, Toporov 1979: 76), comp. Russ. *voloha* “skin”, “hide”, Irl. *folc*, *folí* “long hair”, “horsehair”, *ulcaic* “bearded”, “hairy”, etc.

As we mentioned above, *voloh* was not the name the Rumanians called themselves. However, in Rumania there are many settling names like for example *Vlaha*, *Vlahii*, *Vlahei* (also *Vlah-Chioi*), *Vlahița*, *Vlașca Mare*, *Vlașca Mică*, *Vlașca*, *Cotul Vlașca*, *Hanul Vlasciu*, *Vlașceni*, *Voloșcani* etc., that were explained by I. Iordan as “different forms of our Slavonic name” (Iordan 1963: 304). Such geographical nomenclature is only reasonable if the inhabitants are strangers for the rest of the population (as, for example, in the case of historically proved inclusions of Wallach’s settlements in Bulgaria, Serbia, etc.).

Dealing with the historical issues, more systematic consideration of the Old Turkish tribes from the Balkan Peninsula and Danubian plains seems necessary.

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