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THE ANTHROPNOM HЗОТЪ (IZOT): HISTORICAL AND LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

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Abstract: *The article discusses the historical and linguistic aspects of the anthroponym ‘Izot’, which appears in the 12th century Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle. The discussion explores the existing opinions about the historical prototypes of ‘Izot’ and leads to a hypothesis of its probable historicity based on historical and comparative linguistic analysis. A conclusion has been reached that despite the influence exerted by apocryphal prophetic literature on the Chronicle and the presence of certain traces of the epic tradition, the passage concerning ‘Izot’ is most likely a later adaptation of a lost Old Bulgarian text with historical content. The other two anthroponyms included in the story of Izot are also analyzed. Ozia is identified with the Muslim caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan (717–720). Two different hypotheses about the identity of Goliath are presented. According to the first one, it reflects the mediaeval Bulgarian notions of Franks. According to the second, the anthroponym is Biblical rethinking of the name of the Great Moravian ruler Rostislav (846–870).*

Keywords: *Izot, Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle, Dulo clan.*

According to mediaevalists, the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle*¹ was created in the second half of the 11th or the first half of 12th century in Western Bulgarian territories. Its historical accuracy still raises important questions. Contrary to the view of researchers from the first half of the 20th century, who rejected its historical value and tended to regard it as a heretical (Bogomil) work [Йорданов, И. 1970, с. 274], its content has been reconsidered in the context of the traditions of mediaeval prophetic literature [Таркова-Займова, В., Милтенова, А. 2011, pp. 276–277]. Indeed, the chronicle could represent a compilation of mediaeval myths of identity integrated into the apocryphal interpretations of the Old Testament and the history of the early church. However, in my opinion, a certain part of the evidence in the chronicle originated from previously lost records of real historical events. Perhaps, the evidence contained there underwent folklorization and sacralization in a monastic milieu largely influenced by the apocryphal traditions of popular Christianity.

The Problem and Its Interpretations in Historiography

In the present article I shall explain in both historical and linguistic contexts one of the most “mythological” passages of the chronicle—those concerning the “epoch” of the “Bulgarian tsar” Izot.

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¹ The other name of the *Chronicle* is *A Tale of the Prophet Isaiah*, but to avoid any confusion with the Biblical book of Isaiah, I will use the name introduced by Yordan Ivanov in his book *Bogomil Books and Legends*.

No other available source mentions anything about Изотъ (Izot) and his name is completely unknown in other mediaeval records, chronicles, or epigraphic materials.

Below I offer a brief summary of the evidence in the apocryphal chronicle about Izot:

- He was a son of Испор (Ispor), unanimously identified by all researchers with Asparuh, the founder of Danube Bulgaria in 680–681.
- He killed Ozia (Ozia), “the tsar from the East” and Goliath “the Frank from the Coastland.”
- He was the father of Boris and Simeon: real Bulgarian rulers from the 9th and the 10th centuries.
- During his rule there were big cities in the Bulgarian territories.
- He ruled for 100 years and 3 months and died in Pliska, the first known capital city of the first Bulgarian empire.²

The researchers of the chronicle share different opinions about the real historical identity of Izot. Ivan Duychev characterizes Izot as a “mythical person” but hesitantly suggests that he could have been the Bulgarian ruler Krum (802–814), or Ozia, the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I [Дуйчев, И. 1943, с. 238; Дуйчев, И. 1972, с. 126].

Ivan Venedikov accepts and develops this hypothesis. His arguments are based on the phonetic closeness between the anthroponym ‘Izot’ and the Greek word *ἰσοτέως*—‘justice, equality’ (according to Venedikov) and on the evidence of the legislative activity of Krum. On this basis, Venedikov identifies “the tsar of the East,” Ozia with the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus I [Венедиков, И. 1995, с. 116–117]. Researchers disagree on the historicity of the above-mentioned legislative activity of the Bulgarian ruler. For instance, the uprooting of vineyards was disproved by other sources [Narratio anonyma e Codice Vaticano, 1961, p. 12]. Besides, according to the *Greek Lexicon of Roman and Byzantine periods from B. C. 146 to A.D. 1110*, the meaning of the word *ἰσοτέως* is ‘equally with God’ [Sophocles, E. 1900, p. 604]. In my opinion, this challenges the linguistic connection between the anthroponym Izot and the Greek adverb. Besides, the name Nicephorus evidently differs largely from the anthroponym Ozia.

Veselin Beshevliev introduces another hypothesis. He seeks a connection between Izot and the Bulgarian ruler Omurtag (814–831) who crushed the revolt of Thomas the Slav. Beshevliev identified the latter with Ozia; Thomas the Slav was proclaimed emperor in Antioch and, therefore, could be regarded as a ‘tsar from the East’. The Frank from the Coastland is identified with the emperor Ludovicus Pius (813–840) because of the border problems and conflict between the Frankish Empire and Bulgaria in the period of 824–829 AD. According to Beshevliev, the mention of “the big cities” and the relationship of Izot with Boris I (852–889) and Simeon (893–927) also indicates that the mysterious tsar Izot is Omurtag—during his reign he initiated a lot of construction works and was the forefather of the rulers Boris I and Simeon [Бешевлиев, В. 1982, с. 43–44]. In my view, this hypothesis seems to be much more plausible than Venedikov’s hypothesis, however, it does not explain the use of the names Izot and Ozia.

According to Hristo Matanov, Izot was the Bulgarian ruler Tervel (700–721) who intervened in the Second Arab siege of Constantinople (717–718) and defeated the Arab army in 718 [Матанов, Х. 1980, с. 147]. In her earlier works Miliana Kaymakamova regarded Izot as a personification of the foreign policy of the Early Mediaeval Bulgarian State [Каймакамова, М. 1990, с. 128], but recently she has subscribed to the possibility of identifying Izot with Tervel [Каймакамова, М. 2011, с. 204]. From a linguistic perspective, the anthroponym ‘Izot’ could not have originated from the Proto-Bulgarian name ‘Tervel’.

Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova and Anisava Miltenova claim that “Izot was probably a fictional character, Azotus, who occurs in the Scripture; the name signifies both a ruler and the Philistine capital city” [Tapkova-Zaimova, V., Miltenova, A. 2011, pp. 296–297]. Actually, ‘Azotus’ is the Greek phonetic adaptation of the Hebrew ‘Ašdod’, one of the important Philistine towns. The town is

² The English translation of the text of the chronicle is included in *Historical-Apocalyptic Literature in Byzantium and mediaeval Bulgaria* [Tapkova-Zaimova, V., Miltenova, A. 2011, pp. 291–295].

mentioned several times in the text of the Old and New Testament [**Нов библейски речник** 2007, с. 24]. One of these mentions refers to the military activity of Uzziah / Azariah, King of Judea (791–739 BC).

According to other researchers, the latter appears to be the prototype of Ozii from the Chronicle (see below). However, the passage in the Anonymous Chronicle resembles none of the Biblical texts. For instance, according to 2 Chronicles 26: 6 Ašdod (Azotus) did not destroy Uzziah, but Uzziah destroyed Ašdod (Azotus): “He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod.” Even if we accept the hypothesis that the compiler/author of the Anonymous Bulgarian Chronicle mechanically changed the places of Ašdod (Azotus) and Uzziah, this cannot explain the other evidence concerning Izot: his connection with Ispor and Pliska and the military clashes with the Franks. Besides, it remains unclear why the compiler/author chose Ašdod (Azotus), but ignored Gath and Jabneh.

Ivan Bilyarski considers this part of the Chronicle as borrowed from the Caucasian literature tradition. He identifies Ozia—“the tsar of the East”—entirely with Uzziah / Azariah, the leprous king of Judea punished by God, whose story is known from 4 Kings 15:31–7 and 2 Chronicles 26:1–23. According to him, the possible ideological prototype of Izot is Ashot from the Caucasian Bagrationes, and the narrative about Izot follows the ideological model of “David’s kingdom” and “the good king” against God’s antagonists. According to him, these images most likely appeared in the literature of Caucasian peoples [**Билярски, И.** 2010, с. 147–148; **Билярски, И.** 2011, с. 132–135]. However, Bilyarski does not specify any text from the Caucasian literatures that could be the prototype of the passage referring to Izot.³

Linguistic and Historical Analysis of the Passage

I will try to present arguments in favor of the hypothesis that in spite of the obvious folklore motifs influenced by the Old Testament and its apocryphal Christian interpretations, this fragment of the chronicle reflects real historical records concerning the military clashes of the Early Mediaeval Bulgarian States with the Arabs and the Franks.

- The name Ispor—all researchers accept that it appears to be a phonetic variant of the name of the founder of Danube Bulgaria, Ἀσπαρούχ, in the Byzantine chronicles and Есперих (Esperih) in the Old Slavonic (Bulgarian) translation of the *Nominalia of the Bulgarian Rulers*. I also share this view but with an important note—the variant ‘Ispor’ from the epigraphic material in the Ravna Monastery dating back to the end of the 9th and the first decades of the 10th century [**Попконстантинов, К.** 1996, с. 105]. Therefore, the compiler/author of the chronicle could not have invented this variant in the 12th century, and it obviously follows an anthroponomical tradition coming from an earlier period.

- The mention of Pliska—it was the political centre of the First Bulgarian Empire before Preslav and the information in the chronicle about it is also correct.

- The anthroponym Ozia—according to the chronicle, he was a “tsar of the East”. In another passage of the chronicle, where the author/compiler speaks about the discovery of the Holy Cross [**Иванов, Й.** 1970, с. 284], Golgotha is localized in the East; therefore, “the East” from the chronicle coincides with the region of the Near East. At first glance, that confirms the identification of Ozia with Uzziah. Moreover, the Greek adaptation of the Hebrew name in Septuagint is ‘Οζίας’ which strongly resembles Ozia. However, as I mentioned above, all key events during the reign of Uzziah are completely absent in the Anonymous Chronicle. On the other hand, the title “tsar of the East”, obviously the Near East, indicates the Arabian siege of Constantinople from 717–718. Then the Arab army was led by Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik, but from a linguistic perspective, his name had nothing to do with Ozia. In this period, the caliphate was ruled by representatives of the Umayyad dynasty, who resided

³Anisava Miletnova and Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova draw attention to the Byzantine adaptation of the Armenian anthroponym Ashot – “Azot” [**Tapkova-Zaimova, V., Miltenova, A.** 2011, p. 297]. The latter suggests Greek mediation – i.e. Greek translation of the supposed Caucasian text but the existence of similar texts is entirely hypothetical.

in Damascus and controlled the Near East, Iran, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the bigger part of the Iberian Peninsula. Therefore, in Early Mediaeval Bulgaria, the caliphs from Umayyad dynasty could be accepted as “tsars of the East”, they ruled over the whole of the Near East, including Jerusalem and Golgotha, and the centre of their political power (Damascus) was found in the same region. The siege of Constantinople was undertaken during the rule of Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān [Blankinship, Kh. 1994, p. 31], who died in September 717. His name also cannot serve as a basis of the anthroponym ‘Ozia’, but his successor, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan ordered the withdrawal of the Arab army in 718 (As-Sallabi, A. 2011, pp. 531–532). In mediaeval Muslim documents and sources, his name appeared with different variants: Umar, Umar Amīr al-Mu’minīn (Umar the Master of believers) but the most common variant was Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (Umar, the son of Abd al-Aziz - literally ‘slave of the mighty one’) [As-Sallabi, A. 2011, pp. 698–728]. In my opinion, Ozia appears to be a later reinterpretation under the influence of the Biblical name Uziah/‘Οζίας⁴ of an initial Old Bulgarian adaptation of the Arabic anthroponym Aziz - *OЗНЗЪ. Therefore, in my view, the anthroponym ‘Ozia’ is the most significant proof that the author/compiler of the chronicle used currently lost early mediaeval sources of Bulgarian origin, that described the military history of the early mediaeval Bulgarian state. Some of the other names of the caliph could have been included in the initial Old Bulgarian document, but the later copies preserved only the variant which could be phonetically associated with the Biblical anthroponym.

• “Goliath, the Frank from the Coastland”—I will try to present two possible hypotheses concerning the identity of the “Bulgarian Goliath”. Usually, the name of the Biblical character is used as a symbol of a tall man, a giant. There is explicit evidence in some sources that the height of northern peoples had made an impression on Bulgarians. For example, Robert de Clari wrote that the Bulgarian tsar Kaloyan (1197–1207), during his military campaign against the Latin Empire, invited into his camp the French knight and aristocrat Pierre de Bracheux who was known for his military feats and high stature [Robert de Clari 1956, pp. 101–102]. Besides, the author/compiler of the Anonymous Chronicle explicitly calls the Russian branch of Vikings *исполни*, i.e. ‘giants’ [Иванов, Й. 1970, с. 284]. This notion of northern peoples obviously originated from popular Bulgarian culture, and cannot be attributed to any influence exerted by a foreign (Byzantine or Caucasian) literary tradition. The exact time of its appearance remains unknown, but the active relationships of the Bulgarian mediaeval state with the Franks date back to 820s. A mention by the Bulgarian archbishop Teophylactus Achridensis (the second half of the 11th century) of the Frankish invasion of Bulgaria during the first years of the reign of Boris I (855–889) [Teophylactus Achridensis 1994, p. 68] hints of the probable existence of unknown Bulgarian records referring to those relationships with the Franks.

However, the geographical term, “the Coastland” supports another hypothesis. The exact word used in the chronicle is *поморского* (*potorskogo*) [Иванов, Й. 1970, с. 282] – literally ‘next to the sea, from the sea’. At first glance, it could be ascribed to the Philistine origin of the Biblical Goliath. During the Bronze and Iron ages, the Philistines occupied the sea coast of Canaan. In the Old Testament the Mediterranean Sea was once called “the sea of the Philistines” [Exodus 23: 31, Нов библейски речник 2007, с. 838]. However, there is no reference to the sea in the Biblical narrative about Goliath. The Byzantine and Old Bulgarian apocrypha concerning the story of king David and Goliath also does not mention sea [Петканова, Д. 1981, с. 100–101]. The fact points to Beshevliev’s hypothesis—“the Coastland” could be the result of a misinterpretation of the name Морава (Morava) [Старобългарски речник, 1999, с. 866], or perhaps the adjectives *моравьскъ / *поморавского (Moravian), which from a phonetic perspective are very close to the Old Bulgarian noun *море* (*more*) – ‘sea’ and to the adjective *морьскъ* [Старобългарски речник, 1999, с. 867] / *поморского* – ‘from the sea’ [see also Бешевлиев, В. 1982, с. 44]. In this case, the appearance of the name Goliath could have been a result of another Biblical interpretation of a name of a real historical figure. That is the anthroponym Rastislav / Rastitsa⁵—a prince of Great Moravia who played a significant role in the relationships between Franks, Bulgarians, Byzantines, and Moravians in the

⁴ It appears many times in the Bible (the Old Testament) as a name of different men.

⁵ In all mediaeval sources the first vowel in the different variants of the name of the Moravian ruler is ‘a’ or ‘e’, not ‘o’ [Stanislav, J. 1949, p. 272].

middle and second half of the 9th century. Probably the author/compiler of the Anonymous Chronicle interpreted the name as a composite of the Slavic words *расть* (*rast*)—‘height’ and *слава* (*slava*)—‘glory’, or as derivative of *расть* (*rast*)—‘height’ (in case of *Rastitsa*). It is most likely that in the case of *Ozia* he has reinterpreted the anthroponym in accordance with the Biblical pattern and replaced the original Slavic anthroponym with the Biblical name *Goliath*. It is well known that in the second half of the 9th century Great Moravia played a significant role in Bulgarian-Frankish relationships, but in the 12th century the memory of Great Moravia in the Bulgarian popular milieu must have become vague or completely lost.

The Historicity of *Izot*—Historical and Linguistic Aspects

In this context, the most important question is about the identity of *Izot*. A fragment from the historical work of the 16th century Ottoman author Şemseddin Ahmed (*Kemālpaşazāde*)—*Tevāriḥ-i āl-i ‘Osmān (Histories of the House of Osman)*⁶ can shed light on the historicity of the passage of the *Chronicle* in question. Delyan Rusev was the first Bulgarian historian who discovered and published the fragment in question. According to Rusev, *Kemālpaşazāde*’s evidence about mediaeval Bulgarian history is based on an unknown variant of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle [Rusev, D. 2018 p. 436]. Below, I will present the exact English translation of the passage identified by Rusev as corresponding to the story of *Izot*. Here, this name is absent but other significant details are included:

After he (the previous ruler – *Por*) had reigned for thirty-three years, he died and a most noble man called *Sān* became sultan in his place. Turkish couplet from the author: *Himmetiyle etdi ‘alīşānini / eyledi meşhūr ād-u-sānini*. Those who translate the history of the mentioned beys from the Greek language in the above ways say that the aforesaid ruler, who had appeared from the Eastern lands, is *Çasār* by origin. [He] seized the Bulgarian country by force, slew two renowned beys and stayed inside [their lands?] for some time as commander, and for this reason [his name] is connected with these [lands]. After this ruler ascended to the Bulgarian throne, he built a magnificent fortress in the plain around *Şūmlu*, named it *Pelāsta*, and made it his capital. He reigned for seven years and nine months. In the end, the bridle of lifetime slipped from his hands, and the esteemed horseman dismounted the hard-bitted horse of earthly life. When he died, *Semyon* became ruler in his place [Rusev, D. 2018, pp. 443–444].

Rusev’s comment on this passage is also important. He notes that the strange name *Sān* which appeared on the place of *Izot* “provides no clue for identification whatsoever and, moreover, the whole passage is extremely ambiguous, which makes the translation proposed above rather tentative” [Rusev, D. 2018, p. 464]. Rusev identifies the term *Çasār* with the Byzantine title “Caesar” received by the second ruler of Danube Bulgaria, *Tervel*, from the Byzantine Emperor *Justinian II* in 705 [Rusev, D. 2018, p. 464]. Finally, he tends to identify the two beys slain by *Sān* with *Ozia* and *Goliath* from the story about *Izot*. However, “the designation of *Ōzia* as ‘the king of the East’ has been transferred to *Izot/Sān* himself in the Ottoman text, where he is said to have appeared ‘from the Eastern lands’” [Rusev, D. 2018, p. 465].

⁶ *Tevāriḥ-i āl-i ‘Osmān* was composed during the reign of the Ottoman sultan *Bayazid II* (1481–1512). According to the Turkish historian *Şerafettin Turan*, *Kemālpaşazāde* wrote his work by the order of the sultan himself [Turan, Ş. 1957, p. XIX]. It regards the history of the Ottoman dynasty. The origin of the fragment concerning the medieval Bulgarian history is unclear and under discussion. Delyan Rusev cites *Şerafettin Turan*’s opinion according to which the passage repeats some Greek text referring to Bulgarian history. This opinion is confirmed by the information of the above-cited fragment about *Sān* where *Kemālpaşazād* explicitly mentions that the stories of the Bulgarian rulers were translated from Greek. However, Rusev refutes this hypothesis. He draws attention to the language peculiarities of toponyms which indicate Bulgarian origin of the initial text on which this part of *Kemālpaşazāde*’s work is based [Rusev, D. 2018, pp. 452–455]. There is another argument in favor of Rusev’s view: the phonetic structure of the word *çasar* (*chasar*)—*Caesar*, appears to be a Turkish phonetic adoption of the Old Bulgarian *цѣсарь* (*tsæsar*) not of the Greek *καῖσαρ*. A detailed language analysis of the Ottoman Turkish used in this fragment (for example syntactic constructions) can shed additional light on the origin of the initial text but that is not a subject of the present article.

In my opinion, the identity of *Sān* can be disclosed on the basis of the previous passage in *Kemālpaşazāde's* work, where the second Bulgarian ruler is called *Por*⁷. Rusev correctly identifies his name as *Ispor* [Rusev, D. 218, pp. 461–463]. Therefore, it could be suggested that *Sān* is also part of some real name. There is only one ruler from the pagan period whose name included the syllable *san* – he was Persian (836–852). The following arguments support this identification:

- As a son of *Zvinita* (the brother of *Malamir*) he was the noblest man among the Bulgarians after *Malamir's* death in 836 (*Kemālpaşazāde's* history).
- He was the real father of *Boris I* (the *Apocryphal Chronicle*).
- In 845, he sent ambassadors to *Louis the German*, the king of East Frankia [*Annales Fuldenses*, 1960, c. 43], and granted asylum to *Pribina*—a Slavic nobleman who was hostile to *Moymir I*, the first known ruler of Great Moravia [*Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, 1960, c. 133]. Obviously, during *Persian's* reign, Bulgarians continued to interfere in the political affairs of the Slavic tribes which inhabited Central Europe—a policy that began in the 820s. Moreover, *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus* asserted that *Persian* was the first Bulgarian ruler who tried to conquer the Serbians [*Constantinus Porphyrogenitus*, 1964, c. 209] and most likely this attempt was part of a common policy led towards the Slavic tribes from the North Western Balkans and Pannonia. Probably, the *Chronicle* reflects some elements of the Frankish, Pannonian and Moravian policy of *Persian* and *Boris I*.

Therefore, in the story about *Izot / Sān* there are pieces of evidence randomly assembled referring to two different Bulgarian rulers. The first one is *Tervel* (701–718), based on the relationship with *Ispor*, the victory over *Ozia* (the *Apocryphal Chronicle*) and the title *Caesar* (*Kemālpaşazāde's* history). The other has to be *Persian* (836–852). The information about the building of *Pliska* (*Kemālpaşazāde's* history) and the death of *Izot* in *Pliska* (the *Apocryphal Chronicle*) can refer to both rulers.

Nevertheless, the names of both rulers cannot explain the appearance of *Izot* in the *Apocryphal Chronicle*. Below, I will try to suggest several hypotheses about the historicity and personality of *Izot*:

- *Izot* is a common eponym designating the pagan period of the First Bulgarian Tsardom after the death of *Ispor*. Here an etymological connection with the Philistine town *Azotus / Ašdod* can be assumed. Several times in the Bible (the Old Testament), the town is mentioned as a centre of the pagan cult of the Philistine deity *Dagon* [1 Kings, 5:1; 1 Maccabees, 5:68, 10:84]. However, the books of the Old Testament contain the names of many pagan towns and centres and the reasons that caused the choice of *Azotus / Ašdod* as well as the transformation of oikonym into anthroponym remain obscure. Different ethnonyms and pseudo-ethnonyms are used in the *Chronicle*: *Giants*, *Romans*, *Greeks*, *Bulgarians*, *Kumans*, and even *Ethiopians*, but *Philistines* are completely missing. In my opinion, unlike the cases of *Uzia* and *Goliath*, the Biblical texts and anthroponyms/toponyms cannot give any satisfactory explanation of the name and personality of *Izot*.

- *Izot* was a hero of an unknown epic tradition who replaced in the *Chronicle* the real rulers from the pagan period. The influence of mediaeval folklore and the oral interpretations of history on the text of the *Chronicle* is significant; for instance, the story of *tsar Slav* and the hundred hills. The period of *Izot's* reign, 100 years and three months, also indicates folk influences. The fact that *Izot* is excluded from the conflicts with “*Greek stardom*” and “*Ishmaelites*” and his role is restricted to the clashes with “*Ozia*” and “*Goliath*” may question to some degrees the folk hypothesis but does not disprove it.

- The name of *Izot* was present in some of the initial prototexts used by the author/compiler of the *Chronicle*. This hypothesis also seems plausible, but any comment on the hypothetical prototexts at this stage is mere speculation.

⁷ That is the information about *Por*: “After he died, a malefactor called *Por*, also [stemming] from the Bulgarian tribe, replaced him as ruler. The narrator says: “Contrary to custom, this sinner had lied in his mother’s womb for three years before he appeared [into the world]”. Eventually, he spread oppression and utterly tortured the subjects in his lands. He burned down their homes and drowned many of them in the waters of the Danube for no reason. After he had reigned for thirty-three years, he died and a most noble man called *Sān* became sultan in his place” [Rusev, D. 2018, p. 443].

The etymology of the name is another problem that can suggest new hypotheses about the historicity of Izot. Obviously, the name did not originate from the Slavic, Greek and Turkic anthroponymic systems and they must be excluded from possible sources. The Armenian name Ašot is a possible source of the name [Билярски, И. 2011, с.133] but the transition š > z indicates Greek mediation. Indeed, people of Armenian origin, including one who really bore this name, are known from the history of the First Bulgarian Tsardom, but they cannot explain the appearance of Izot in the Chronicle, and especially his role in the wars with Arabs and Franks.

There is another possible etymology, different from Bilyarski's hypothesis. It refers to the Middle Persian word *āzād* – ‘noble’, ‘free’ [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 15]. The Middle Persian word originated from the Old Persian *azata* – ‘nobleman’, ‘free’ and was widely spread in the neighbouring languages, such as Armenian, Georgian, Caucasian Albanian, and Turkic languages, and was even attested in the works of Ancient Greek authors [de Blois, F. 1985, p. 5]. As a loanword from Persian, it was registered with the meaning ‘free’ in an Aramaic inscription from Egypt, where it was recorded as ʾzt [Hoftijzer, J., Jongeling, K. 1995, p. 28]. In Armenian and Caucasian Albanian, the word appeared as *azat*, *azatk* and had the meaning of ‘freeman, nobility’ [Farrokh, K., Sanchez-Gracia, J. Maksymuik, K. 2019, p. 25]. The possible phonetic transition Azat > Izot is identical with the phonetic pattern of Aspar > Ispor. The most important point is that according to the Chronicle, Izot was a son of Ispor, i.e. he was a member of the Dulo clan where the names of Middle Persian and even Semitic and Armenian origin prevail. I will summarize the anthroponyms in question below:

The Anthroponym ИРНИКЪ (Irnik) from the Nominalia of the Bulgarian Rulers

It almost coincides with the name of the second son of Atila — Ἡρνάχ / Hernac. The attempts at Turkic etymologization of both anthroponyms have been summarized by Omeljan Pritsak, who proposes a sophisticated etymology which in my opinion is doubtful: “It has been suggested that the name should be connected with the Turkic *ernäk* ~ *ernäk* ‘finger, thumb’. Sometime ago, I expressed another opinion: the etymon here is *erän*, the “irregular” plural of *ēr* ‘man’, with the meaning ‘real man, a man squared, hero.’ The ending *áč/ac/ik* is explained as a diminutive suffix: *ernäk* ~ *ernäk* is a diminutive of *erän* (er+än): *erän* + diminutive suffix /G Ak/ or /AK/: er+än+gäk > *ernäk*: ar+än+äk > *ernäk*” [Pritsak, O. 1982, p. 447]. With respect to the diminutive suffix /AK/, Pritsak used the work of von Gabain on the grammar of the Old (Proto) Turkic language. However, all examples given by von Gabain are in the singular, including the derivative of *är* (man) > *ärkäk*, *irkäk* [von Gabain, A. 1950, p. 62]. Actually, the form er+än+gäk which Pritsak considers as the initial basis of Irnik/Irnah/Hernac is an attempt of von Gabain to explain the etymology of the Turkic word(s) *erkek*, *ergek*, *irgek*, *erneк* – all of them meaning ‘thumb’, but according to von Gabain, having originated from the supposed Turkic diminutive form **erengeк* ‘little man’. Other authors insist on etymological connection between the Turkic word (s) for ‘thumb’ with similar words in Mongolian and Tungusic languages [Севротян, Э. 1974, с. 299–300].

Otto Maenchen-Helfen emphasises a possible connection between Ἡρνάχ/Hernac and the Armenian name Arnak which was used at the time of Hernac. He also gives as an example the name Ἀρνάκης attested in an inscription from Tanais dating back to the second century AD [Maenchen-Helfen, O. 1973, p. 415]. Referring to the evidence of the Armenian chronicler Egishe, Alexander Gadlo mentions the anthroponym *Heran*, which signifies ‘leader of the Huns’ (most probably the Caucasian Huns), who attacked the region beyond the Caucasus in the mid-5th century [Гадло, А. 1979, с. 116].

The Anthroponym Ὀργανῶ (Organa) [Nicephorus Patriarchus, 1960, p. 294].

The name strongly resembles the Anatolian Turkish name Orhan. However, according to the Turkish Etymological Dictionary of Personal Names, the etymology and origin of Orhan is unclear [Nişanyan, S. 2021, pass.]. The chronological distance between both anthroponyms is significant; the first one relates to the 6th–7th centuries, the second to the 13th–14th centuries. In my opinion, an etymological connection between the Proto-Bulgarian anthroponym and the high-ranking Sassanian title “Vuzurgan” (the plural of Vuzurg) could be suggested. The title belonged to the high nobility in the Sassanid Empire [Tafazzoli, A. 1990, p. 427].

The Anthroponym Коуртъ (Kurt)

The etymological connection with the Turkic word *kurt* ‘wolf’, is fictitious because the initial meaning of *kurt* is ‘worm’. The word first appears with its original meaning in written Turkic sources around the 9th century, while its secondary meaning was recorded two centuries later, in the 11th century [Древнотюркский словарь 1969, с. 468–469]. Most researchers explain this semantic change in some of the Turkic languages with the tabooing of the original word for ‘wolf’ [Левитская, Л., Дыбо, А., Рассадин В. 2000, с. 168]. The name Kurt (Куртъ) is known not only from the *Nominalia of the Bulgarian Rulers*, but also from the 9th- and 10th-century epigraphic materials from the Ravna Monastery [Попконстантинов, К. 1996, с. 105]. At first, it could be considered as a hypocoristic form of the name Κοῦβρατος attested in the Byzantine chronicles and in some archaeological materials from Malaya Pereshchepina. However, in my view, the evidence of the expanded version of the mediaeval Armenian geographical book *Աշխարհացոյց* supports the existence of a separate name ‘Kurt’. There, the name of this member of the Dulo clan and ruler of the Proto-Bulgarians was given as ‘Hudbadr’ [Златарски, В. 1970, с. 153]. Obviously, the Armenian record does not follow the Byzantine variant Κοῦβρατος—eventually ‘Kubrat’. The first syllable ‘Hud’ could be identified with the anthroponym ‘Kurt’, while the second ‘badr’ with the title ‘bad’/ ‘pad’⁸. Alexander Gadlo presents two possible etymologies of ‘Kurt’—the Middle Ossetian (Alanian) *kurd* ‘blacksmith’, and the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) *gurd* ‘hero’ [Гадло, А. 1979, с.118].

The Anthroponym Безмеръ (Bezmer)

Bulgarian linguists and historians claim that the name relates to the Middle Persian ‘Bōz-Mihr’ [Бешевлиев, В. 1967, pass.]. Indeed, a similar name was recorded in the sources from the Sassanid period in the variants ‘Buzmihr’ and ‘Buzmir’ [Rapp, S. 2014, p. 46, 226]. The Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions give an additional anthroponomic example based on the theonym ‘Mihr’ (Mithra): that is the name ‘Πουμυρ’ (Pumir) [Бешевлиев, В. 1992, с. 252]. Its first syllable most likely renders the Middle Persian word – *pus* (son) [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 69].

The anthroponym Ἀσπαρούχ (Asparuh)/Есперих (Esperih)/Испор (Ispor)

The variant ‘Ispor’ indicates that the basis of the anthroponym was ‘Aspar’⁹, not ‘aspa’. The same variant of the name was encountered in the first centuries AD in different regions; in the inscriptions of Hatra, Upper Mesopotamia [Marcato, E. 2018, p. 29] and among the Alans [Bachrach, V. 1973, p. 98]. The name must be a development of the Old Persian *asa-bāra* ‘horseman, rider’ [Nyberg, H. 197, p. 33] or an adaptation of the Avestian *asbāri* with the same meaning [Kanga, K. 1909, p. 260].

The Anthroponym ‘Коѿбер’/Kuber [Acta S. Demetrii, 1960, pp. 158–165].

It is preserved in the modern Bulgarian anthroponym in its female variant ‘Kubra’. The only possible basis of this name is the Arabic adjective *kubār* ‘great’. The name enjoyed big popularity in

⁸ Twenty years ago, the Bulgarian Turkologist Ivan Dobrev expressed the opinion that the first component ‘Bat’ in *Batbayan* and probably in *Bat Organa* is an adaptation of the Middle Persian title ‘pat’ [Добрев, И. 2004, с.74]. According to the Pahlavi dictionary of David MacKenzie, the basic form of the title is *bad/bed* ‘lord, master’ [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 16, 18]. Usually, it appears as an enclitic after the main word — *spahbad/spahbed* (*spah* – army) ‘lord of the army’ [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 23], *dahibed* — ‘ruler, lord of the land’ [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 23] or *goped* — ‘lord of the cattle’ [Niberg, H. 1974, p. 83]. This finding can explain the form ‘Hudbadr’. However, titles where it is the first element are also known: *pātihšāi* ‘ruler, commander, sovereign’ from ‘pati + hšāi’ [Niberg, H. 1974, p. 157] and probably *badgospān*. Some names of Bulgarian military commanders from 11th and 14th centuries like ‘Botko’ or ‘Бѣтоула (Botul)’ [Попруженко, М. 1928, с. 94] may have come from ‘bat’ which underwent the change of -a towards -o typical of Old Bulgarian.

Besides, this hypothesis can explain the appearance of the name ‘Bathaiia’ instead Asparuh is some West European sources [Siegbertus, 1965, с. 42].

⁹ Here I will disregard some attempts at Turkic etymologization. Most of them introduced completely artificial initial forms. Moreover, all of them like ‘Ešberüh’ or ‘İšbara’ contain -š in their phonetic structure but in this case the Old Bulgarian -s adaptations like ‘Esperih’ and ‘Ispor’ seem inexplicable. Similar attempts in practice suggest a Greek mediation that can explain the transition -š > -s but from a historical and linguistic perspective this is highly doubtful.

the ethnically mixed regions of Sassanid Iran. For instance, it was attested many times as a personal name in the inscriptions from Hatra (Upper Mesopotamia) dating back to the first centuries AD [Marcato, E. 2018, p. 72]. It is interesting that according to some Late Antique sources, the real name of Mani was 'Kubrik'. This is interpreted as a combination of the name 'Kubar' and the Armenian diminutive suffix '-ik'. The appearance of this suffix is explained with the Armenian origin of his mother [Смагина, Е. 2011, с. 36, 418]. In this case, an Armenian mediation in the spread of name can be suggested.

The Anthroponym 'Cormesius' [Sigebertus. 1965, с. 43]

In the Madara inscriptions the name appeared in the variant 'Κρουμέζ' [Бешевлиев, В. 1992, с. 101]. Considering the closest identical name Кормисошъ (Kormisoš), the original name can be reconstructed as *Kormes. In my opinion, the etymological connection with the theophoric names 'Ohrmazd/Hormuzd', the Middle Persian variants of the name of the supreme Zoroastrian deity Ahura Mazda [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p. 61], is undoubted. Beshevliev attributed the name to the personal Sassanid name 'Hormizd' — a derivative of the same theophoric name [Бешевлиев, В. 1967, pass.].

The Anthroponym Севаръ (Sevar)

Judging from the name 'Asparuh', a connection with the Middle Persian *aswār*, *suwār* — 'rider, horseman' [MacKenzie, D. 1986, p.13] and the New Persian *sawar* — 'rider, horseman'¹⁰, can be suggested. Both names, as well as the Madara bas-relief, indicate that the figure of the horseman has played a certain role in the political ideology and legitimation of the Dulo clan.

To sum up, the hypothesis of an Armenian or Middle Persian origin of the name Izot does not contradict the anthroponymic practices in the Dulo clan. Therefore, it can be supposed that he was an unknown member of this clan. Moreover, the meaning of the word *azat(k)* in Middle Persian, Armenian and Caucasian Albanian suggests another hypothesis: 'Izot' was a title wrongly interpreted by the author/compiler of the Chronicle as a personal name. This hypothesis can explain the fact that the information about Izot in Chronicle contains events from different epochs (8th–9th centuries) referring to the reign of different rulers (Tervel and Persian/Boris I). Unfortunately, the language analysis appears to be an indirect proof that cannot replace the lack of other written sources and cannot solve the main question—this of historicity or non-historicity of Izot. However, it shows that the variant 'Izot' could not have been invented by 12th century Bulgarian scribes, nor borrowed from another literary tradition—in this case, we would expect the appearance of the original variant(s) 'Ashot', 'Azot', or 'Azat'.

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¹⁰ The period of New Persian started in the 7th century after the collapse of the Sassanid Empire.

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