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DOI: https://doi.org/10.35321/all81-03

VOLGA – THE FIRST RIVER OF EUROPE

Volga – pirmoji Europos upė

“Чтобы не было раздора
Между вольными людьми,
Волга, Волга, мать родная,
На, красавицу возьми!”

“So that peace may reign for ever
In this band so free and brave,
Volga, Volga, Mother Volga,
Make this lovely girl a grave!”

Дмитрий Николаевич Садовников¹ in 1883

ANNOTATION

The present study summarizes all designations of the Volga River and when it is possible, in wider context of primary texts, arranged in Appendix. The second task is a survey and discussion of existing etymologies. The third goal consists in offer of new solutions, if those existing are not convincing enough. Finally, some general conclusions are formulated.

KEYWORDS: River, Volga, hydronym, etymology.

¹ Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stenka_Razin> [accessed 01.11.2019].
With its 3,534 km of length (before the system of dam lakes it was 3,693 km) and basin 1,380,000 km² the Volga River is the biggest watercourse in Europe, the westernmost big river of Eurasia and the biggest endorheic river in the world. For such long rivers it is typical that they bear several names in various languages. The following seven hydronyms, arranged in alphabetic order, will be analyzed in detail in both etymological perspective and from the point of view of semantic motivation.

1. Ἀράξης

1.0. Herodotus [1.201–202] (c. 450 BCE) mentioned Ἀράξης as a river comparable with or even bigger than the Ister, i.e. the Danube. This Araxes needed to flow through 40 streams, but only one of them emptied into the Caspian Sea. In its delta there would have been islands of the size of Lesbos (1,630 km²). This description can only be applicable to the Volga (originally 3,693 km; basin 1,380,000 km²; discharge 8,060 m³/s in Astraxań; the delta of the Volga consists of c. 500 channels² on the area of 27,224 km²) and not to the river Ἀράξης, known in Modern Armenian as Araks, Turkish, Persian, Kurdish Aras, Azerbaijani Araz (1,072 km; 102,000 km²; discharge 285 m³/s by the mouth into the Kura), rising near Erzurum City in East Turkey in the same area as the source

² Available at: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/5650/volga-river-delta> [accessed 01.11.2019].
of the Euphrates\(^3\). This Araks was described as swift, but narrow\(^4\), in contrary to the description of Herodotus.

1.1. “Swift stream” can be a convincing motivation for designation of this shorter and faster river rising on slopes of mountains with an altitude over 3,000 m, traditionally explained with help of Armenian *arag, erag* “quick, swift, fast” (cf. Tomasech 1895, c. 404), which itself is of Iranian origin, cf. Parthian (Turfan) *rg* “quick, swift”, Avestan *rayu*– “leicht beweglich, flink” (Olsen 1999: 868; Bailey 1979: 359). The initial vowel represents a typical Armenian prothesis before the borrowings in *r*\(^5\). Let us add that in classical Armenian sources the river was called *Erask’*, while Old Georgian had *Rakši*\(^6\), still without the initial vowel.

1.2. If Herodotus really described the Volga as *Ἀράξης*, the ‘swift’-etymology is not applicable, since the altitude of the Volga’s source is only 228 m and with regard to the length of the stream, originally almost 3,700 km, the speed of the stream is extremely slow. In this case it would be thinkable to explain the river-name as Iranian *a-raxsa*– “harmless”, cf. Young Avestan acc.sg. (*ā*-stem?)

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\(^3\) This was known already to Pompey in 68 BCE according to the witness of Plutarch in his curriculum of Pompey [33.1]: Πομπήϊος δὲ εἰς Ἀρμενίαν ἐνέβαλε τοῦ νέου Τιγράνου καλοῦντος αὐτόν ἢδη γὰρ ἀφειστήκει τοῦ πατρός, καὶ συνήντησε τῷ Πομπηΐῳ περὶ τὸν Ἀράξην ποταμόν, ὃς ἀνίσχει μὲν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τῷ Εὐφράτῃ τόπων, ἀποτρεπόμενος δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἀνατολὰς εἰς τὸ Κάσπιον ἐμβάλει πέλαγος, “Pompey then invaded Armenia on the invitation of young Tigranes, who was now in revolt from his father, and who met Pompey near the river *Araxes*, which takes its rise in the same regions as the Euphrates, but turns towards the east and empties into the Caspian Sea” (Plutarch 1917: *Pompey* – Plutarch’s Lives, with an English Translation by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press – London: Heinemann, 1917). Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0007.tlg045.perseus-grc1:33.1> [accessed 01.11.2019]; <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0007.tlg045.perseus-eng1:33.1> [accessed 01.11.2019].

\(^4\) Cf. Virgil: *Aeneid* 8.728: *pontem indignatus Araxes* “the Araxes, angry at having been bridged”. See also the lemma *Araxes in Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 3 (1986), pp. 268–271, by W. B. Fisher (\& C. E. Bosworth). Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/araxes-river> [accessed 01.11.2019].

\(^5\) Cf. Armenian *aroyr* “brass” < Iranian *rau̯da*-, cf. Manichaean Middle Persian *ruy*, Zoroastrian Middle Persian *lud* “copper, brass”; Armenian *erang* “color” vs. Manichaean Middle Persian *rng*; Sanskrit *raṅga*– “color, dye”; Armenian *erak* “vein” vs. Zoroastrian Middle Persian *rk* id. etc. (Olsen 1999: 869, 879).

\(^6\) W. B. Fisher, C. E. Bosworth. Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/araxes-river> [accessed 01.11.2019].
*Raxša-“dark-colored” > Khotanese *rrāša “dark-colored”, Sogdian *ryš “bay horse”, Persian *rakh “mixed red and white, between black and fusc” > Wakhi *rakš “grey, brown” (Steblin-Kamenskij 1999: 292), Kurdic *rāš “black, dark” (Bailey 1979: 362; Cabolov 2010: 194). The open question is interpretation of the initial vowel. The easiest solution would be the negative *a-, i.e. *a-*raxša- = “non-dark”. But it would be rather strange that any word denoting a light color was not directly used instead. On the other hand, at least the middle stream of the Volga has been called “black” (see below).

1.3.2. Another possibility is the compound *ha-*raxša- “all dark”, cf. Avestan *ha- “together”, Khotanese *ha “all” (ESIJ 3: 345–353; Bailey 1979: 438).

1.3.3. The third possibility is the compound *āh-*raxša- “dark mouth”, cf. Avestan *āh-, Khotanese *āha “mouth” (Bartholomae 1904: 345, 351, 357; Bailey 1979: 29–30; ESIJ 1: 303–304). The hypothetical meaning “dark mouth” would perhaps reflect the fact that in the delta of Volga there are oil deposits.

1.3.4. In principle, it is also possible to admit that Herodotus combined two quasi-homonymous hydronyms, one with initial vowel, representing the ‘Armenian prothesis’ (Araks/Ars/Araz; in past Erask, but Old Georgian Rakši) and the second without it (*Raxsa- or *Raxša-; perhaps Volga). The result was a levelling leading to the form *Araxša- with the analogous initial a-.

2. *As(a)El > Ἀστῆλ/Ἀσατήλ ~ Ἀττίλ ~ Τίλ ~ Åtil

2.0.1. Byzantine sources (in chronological order; see Moravcsik 1958: 78–79): Ἀττίλ ... river by Zemarchus, c. 570 (mediated by Menander Protector) Τίλ ... river by Theophylactus Simocatta, Historiae, written c. 630 about the end of the 6th cent.

᾽Ατελ ... river by Theophanes Homologetes (†818), Chronicle (AD 284–813; about c. 680)

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7 Available at: <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etc/iran/airan/avesta/avest.htm> [accessed 01.11.2019].
8 Available at: <http://www.avesta.org/fragment/vytsbe.htm> [accessed 01.11.2019].
9 Available at: <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/5650/volga-river-delta> [accessed 01.11.2019].
Ἀστὴλ ... river and fortress in Khazaria in Byzantine geographic notices from the 8th cent.
Ἀσατήλ ... episcopate in Khazaria according to one Parisian manuscript (c. 800?)
Ἀτήλ ... river by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (first half of the 10th cent. about the 9th cent.)
Ἀτελκούζου ... place, where Pechenegs lived in the time of Constantine (ibid.)
Ἐτὲλ καὶ Κουζοῦ ... place formerly inhabited by Turks (= Hungarians), later by Pechenegs (ibid).

2.0.2. Armenian sources (Pritsak 1956: 407):
Et’il in Geography of Pseudo-Mowsēs Chorenac’i in a copy of Anania Širakac’i (c. AD 700).
At’i by Gregor of Akanc’ (†1333).
2.0.3. Sources written in the Hebrew script (Gaster 1899: 67, § 34.14):
Ḥtl {חט} in Yosippon (c. AD 900).
2.0.4. Sources written in the Arabic script (Marquart 1929: 96; Pritsak 1954: 407–408):
ʔitil by Ibn Rusta (c. 903) and al-Muqaddasī (996)
Ātl & ʔtl by Ibn Faḍlān (922)
ʔtl by al-Balḥī (†934)
ʔitil by Iṣṭahrī (mid of the 10th cent.) and Idrīsī (1157)
ʔātil by Ibn Hawqāl (977/8)
Ātil by Maḥmūd Kašgharī (c. 1070) and Marwazī (1120)
ʔatal by Abū Ḥāmid al-Andalusī al-Ḡarnāṭī (1080–1170)
Itil by Yaqūt (†1229)
Itil by Ḥuwaini (†1283)
byssil in Šaḡarat al-atrāk (c. 1457)
 Şeḍl by al-Īṣfahānī (c. 1509)
 Şeḍal or Şeḍil in Derbend-nāmeh etc.

2.0.5. Records of the European travellers from the 13th cent.: Frater Richard Ethyl; Rubruk Etilia, Ethilia, Edilia; Marco Polo Edilia; Benedictus Polonus Ethyl (Gombocz 1917: 183; Pritsak 1956: 409).

2.0.6. The hydronym is attested in the Turkic languages from the 11th cent. (Maḥmūd Kašgharī) and in the Mongolic languages from the 13th cent. (Secret history of Mongols):
Karakhanid Etil ‘river name, perhaps Volga’ [Maḥmūd Kašgharī, 11th cent.; Legend about Oghuz-Qaghan from the 13th cent.] (DTS 187), Chaghatay Ātil, Ādil ‘Volga’, Ak-Ādil ‘Kama’, lit. ‘White Ādil’, Kazakh & Nogai Edil, Teleut Ādäl, Bashkir Idsl ‘Volga’, Kazan Tatar Izol, Edsl ‘Volga’, Kara Edsl ‘Volga’ =
'Black Idəl’ vs. Ak Idəl ‘Kama’\(^{10}\) = ‘White Idəl’, Chuvash ADəl ‘Volga’, Šu̇rə̑l-ADəl ‘Kama’, lit. ‘White ADəl’ (Gombocz 1917: 183; Radlov I: 842, 857, 1509; Räsänen 1969: 52). Later occasionally in the apppellative role: Chaghatay ädil “river, stream”, dim. ädil-ća & ädil-ći “rivulet”, Kazan Tatar idəl “big river” (> Mansi ėtɛ̣l “water of sea”) vs. idəl-ćäk “rivulet” (Pritsak 1956: 415).

Middle Mongol Idil ‘Volga River’ [Secret History of Mongols, §§ 262, 270], Eǯil ‘city destroyed by the Mongols’ [Secret History of Mongols, § 274], Kalmyk Idžîl (mörn) ‘Volga (river)’ (Ramstedt 1935: 205).

The following etymologies or etymological comments have been (or could be) proposed:

2.1. Klaproth (1826) differentiated Ἀττίλας ‘Volga’ (p. 117) and Tίλ ‘Kama’ (p. 274), ascribing the meaning “black” to the latter one (p. 268). Arising from his conception of a relation between the ancient Avars and modern Avars from Dagestan, he compared the hydronym with Andi dir, but the term “black” should be b-eč̣edir in Andi, besides Karata b-eč̣etiro-b, Hunzib çə̄dilu, Bezhta codolo etc. (Klimov & Xalilov 2003: 354; according to NCED 556 Andi -dir is a derivational suffix). Concerning the attribute “black”, cf. Pritsak (1956: 411), referring to Theophylactus Simocatta’s Historiae [258.9]: (written c. 630 about the end of the 6th cent.), where

ἔνθα ὁ Tίλ διαρρεῖ ποταμός, ὃν Mέλανα Toύρκοις ἀποκαλεῖν <ἔθος> <ετος>

“wo der Til-Fluss hindurch-fliesst, den die Türken ‘den Schwarzen’ nennen<pflegen”

(see Haussig 1953: 283, 287), and further the frequent Turkic designation of the Volga as “black”, Qara Idil or Qara Itil. Pritsak (1956: 411) interpreted it as “big”, like the name Qara Mören for Huang Ho by Rašid ad-Dīn (†1318).

2.2. Haussig (1953: 426) reconstructed the form Άστήλ as *As-Til = *‘river of Ασιοι’, where the form Tίλ was recorded by Theophylactus Simocatta (already Abel-Rémusat 1820, 320 identified in Tίλ the Volga River). But Haussig was not able to offer any witness that Tίλ represented the appellative meaning ‘river’ vel sim. not only in Turkic.

2.3. Pritsak (1956: 404–419; 1982: 444) analyzed both the personal and river name Άττίλας and the river name Άστήλ as a hypothetical Old Bulgarian compound, consisting of the components *as “great, old” and *til “sea”, i.e. “oceanic = universal {ruler}” (cf. the Mongol title Dalaj-in Qa’an, with its Turkic translation Talui-nuy Xanî – see Pelliot 1923: 24–25: ‘le khan océanique’; Pritsak

\(^{10}\) Alternatively, the Kama was called Čölmên-Idol in Kazan Tatar, i.e. “the river of wasteland”, similarly Chuvash čolma and Old Bulgarian Čôlmän-Itil (Tomaschek 1889: 33) vs. Old Turkish çöl, Kazakh şöl etc. “steppe, wasteland” (Räsänen 1969: 117).
with evidence in the following Turkic forms: Chuvash as-li “gross, vonneh”\(^\text{11}\), Chaghatay äs-li “great, strong”, Old Uyghur, Middle Turkic äs-ki “old” etc. (Räsänen 1969: 50), and Old Turkic talûy “sea”, Old Uyghur taluj “sea” or “lake”, Sary-Uyghur talej, tali, tal’i “lake, sea, ocean” etc. (Räsänen 1969: 130; Clauson 1972: 502). The term could be of Chinese origin, if it represented an adaptation of the Chinese river-name 大漯 dà(i)lěi\(^\text{12}\) < Late Middle Chinese *tha(j)`lyj` < Early Middle Chinese *da’lwi’ or *daj’hwi’ (Hirth 1895: 18). But it is questionable that this Chinese borrowing could have been transformed into the component Tîł̄ already in the 6\(^{th}\) cent. More probable is another idea of Pritsak that Tîł̄ corresponded to the Chuvash hydronym Tilﾝɛ (> Russian Tel’ča), where the last syllable reflected the Turkic diminutive suffix *-ča/*-če, Pritsak (1956: 410–412) identified the same root in the rather enigmatic river-name Qara Til̄ from the basin of the Syr-Darya by Nizâm ad-Dîn (†1404), alternatively called Qara Tal̄ by ‘Anonymous author of Iskander’ from 1414. Another Qara Tal̄ emptied into Balkhash Lake according to Hudûd al-ʕālam. The real appellative use of the root *til-/*tïl- was found by Pritsak (1956: 413) only in Tungusic: Evenki tilkan “flood”, Even tilqa, Ulchi čilčan, Nanai čilqä id., besides the verb in Evenki tilka-, Even tilqъn-, Ulcha čilčan-, Nanai čilqa- “to overflow, splatter” (Cincius 1977: 180–181). In EDAL it is compared with Turkic *d(i)āĺ(ɨ)- “to overflow” > Old Uyghur, Karakhanid taš-, Turkmen dāš-, Kirghiz, Tatar taši-, Yakut tahij- etc., id., besides Oirat tašqin “flood” (Räsänen 1969: 466; Clauson 1972: 559; ESTJ 3: 169–170), and Mongolic *čilga- / *čal- gi- “to overflow” > Written Mongolian čilga-, čalgi-, Khalkha calgi-, Ordos čalgi-, Buriat salgi-, salšagana-, šal. The Chuvash hydronym Til̄- and its Central Asiatic counterparts Til̄ / Tal̄ can be connected with Turkic *d(i)āĺ(ɨ)- “to overflow”. In this case the hydronym Ἀστήλ is analyzable as the Old Bulgarian compound *as-tiaĺ “super-overflowing” or “{river bringing} big floods”.

Note: It is necessary to mention that Eugene Helinski (2000, 2004; plus Evgenij Xelimskij 2000, 2003) tried to present arguments about a Tungusic component in language(s) of the Avar Kaganat. It is natural to add the Tungusic candidate for the first component *as- of the hydronym Ἀστήλ etc. It could be

\(^{11}\) Pritsak (1956: 414) tried to identify the component *äš- in the Hunnic name Эснăу = *äš-kam “great priest”, and in the name of the Khazarian majordomus, called ṭstahrhan (Ṭabarî), i.e. ‘great tarxan’, or ṭstahrhan (Ya’qūbî), with the first Arabic component raʾš “head; top; leader”, i.e. *over-tarxan”. He added, the same etymology could be ascribed to the city-name Astraxań, although it was known only from the 14\(^{th}\) cent.

\(^{12}\) 大 dà, dài “big, great, large, wide, deep” < Late Middle Chinese *tha’, *thaj’ < Early Middle Chinese *da’, *daj & 津 lěi ‘river name’ < Late Middle Chinese *lyj’ < Early Middle Chinese *lwi’ (Pulleyblank 1991: 69, 185).
the Tungusic root *as- “very; many” > Udihe asa’h “very”, Ulča asur id., Nanai asō, asor “not very”, Manchu asi, asuru “very; many, much, frequently” (Cincius 1975: 54–55). The compound *as(V)til would mean *“{river bringing} very {big} floods”, i.e. almost the same as the Old Bulgarian interpretation.

2.4. Axmetjanov (2001: 76) derived the forms of the type Karakhanid Etil from *ertil, perhaps via *ettil, and proposed the same origin as for the hydronym Irtyş; which should be derived according to him from the verb attested in Old Uyghur, Cumanic, Shor ert-, Khakas, Chuvash irt-, Yakut irdė- “to pass” (Räsänen 1969: 46).

2.5. Taking in account the record Ἀστήλ, there is an alternative Turkic solution, based on the hypothetic compound *ast13-(h)ől14 “lower dampness”, which could be ascribed to the delta of the Volga River.

2.6. Alternatively, the form Ἀστήλ allows us to think about an early Hungarian compound, consisting of Old Hungarian (AD 1055) azaa, azah “Fluß, Bach” (UEW 3) ~ ‘fehe rea’, Modern Hungarian (dialect) azsó “Wasserriß, zeitweiliger Wasserlauf; Trockental” (EWU I: 54), “Tal, Niederung; ein Tal, in dem in Regenperioden und zur Zeit der Frühjahrschneeschmelze ein kleiner Bach fließt, das aber sonst trocken ist” (UEW 3); and Hungarian tele (first 1372), teli, dialect telle ‘voll, gefüllt’, tel- ‘voll werden, sich füllen’, teljes, arch. teles ‘ganz, vollständig, total, komplett; voll’, tőlt- ‘(Flüssigkeit) schütten, gießen, (Getränke) einschenken; füllen, anfüllen’ (EWU II: 1497–1500; UEW 518: together with Mansi TJ täwl, P tayla and Khanty Vj. O tel ‘voll’ are derivable from FU *tälk3 or *täwđe).

The hypothetic compound asz(a)tele could designate ‘valley full {of water}’ or ‘river full {of water}’.

Note 1: Constantine Porphyrogenitus had also recorded the compound Ἀτελκούζου [§ 38.30], explained as places, in which the nation of Pechenegs lived in his time. Further it appeared in the syntagm Ἐτέλ {ποταμὸς} καί15

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13 Turkmen, Crimea-Tatar, Crimea-Karaim, Karakalpak, Uyghur ast, Uzbek āst, Kirghiz, Tatar aṣ(t), Bashkir aṣ(t)/aṭ(t) “below” (Sevortjan 1974: 195–196); cf. Karakhanid (11th cent.) astīn “under, beneath”, (13th cent.) astīndakī “situated below”, Chaghatay ast(i) “beneath”, Cumanic astīnda “beneath” etc. (Clauson 1972: 242).

14 Proto-Turkic *(h)ől > Old Turkic (Manichaean), Old Uyghur (Buddhist) (both 8th cent.) ől “moist” (about land), Karakhanid ől [Māḥmūd Kašghari; Qutadğu Bilig] “moist, wet”, Middle Turkic ʾöl (Sanglax) id., (Pavel de Courteille) “marsh”, Chaghatay (15th cent.) ől “moist”, also used for darya “sea”, Turkish ől “moist, wet”, Osman ől “pool”, Turkmen öl, dial. höl “moist, wet”, Khalaj hēl, hēl, Kirghiz ől, Karakalpak hōl, Uzbek hul id., Uyghur hūl “damp, moist”, Khakassian ől “moist, wet”, Shor ől, Oyrat ʾöl, Tuva, Tofalar ʾöl, Yakut ʾūl “moist, wet”, Chuvash vilš id. (Räsänen 1969: 371; Clauson 1972: 124; Sevortjan 1974: 524–525).

15 Marquart (1903: 33, fn. 3) explained the conjunction as a mistake of a copist, who thought that Kουζoû was an alternative name for Ἐτέλ.
Kουζού [§ 40.24], which was explained more explicitly as “the place in which the Turks (= Hungarians) used formerly to be is called after the name of the river that runs through it, Etel and Kouzou, and in it the Pechenegs live now” (translated by Jenkins). Menges (1944–1945: 259) thought that this term designated either another river or it became an appellative. Following Zeuss (1837: 751), Markwart (1903: 33) speculated that the word Kουζού was an equivalent of Greek μεσοποταμία, identifying in Kουζού Hungarian köze (3 sg. possess. of köz “center, middle”), which was also used in Hungarian names of districts, e.g. Szamos-köz, Mura-köze, Rába-köze. Hungarian köz is derivable from Fennougric *küts (UEW 163; EWU II, 827) ~ *küti “middle” (Sammallahti 1988: 544).

Note 2: Müllenhoff (1906: 75) proposed that the hydronym Δάιξ [Ptolemy 6.14.2.4.5], Δαίχ [Zemarchus], Γεήχ [Constantine Porphyrogenitus 37.2], later Jajik, cf. Chuvash Jejk, Kazakh Žajyk, from 1775 called the Ural River (Vasmer IV: 551–552), might be of Uralic origin, connecting it with Uralic *joke “river” (UEW 99) ~ *jukâ (Sammallahti 1988: 537), although usually the Turkic etymology has been assumed (cf. Menges 1944–1945: 260, who compared Turkish jay-yk “expanded, open”, part. perf. pass. of jay- “to expand”, Tuva čat-, Middle Turkic [MK] jaδ-, Old Uyghur jd-, but Altai d’aijq “flood”, Tuva čaijq “deluge, downpour” are semantically closer to the river-naming and cannot be derived from Common Turkic *jād-, but only from *jāj-, continuing in Tuva čaj- “to swing, pump”, Altai d’ai- “to overflow, inundate, spread (on a river)” – see ESTJ 1989: 76–77).

3. JUL

3.0. Mari: KB Jōl, B Jul, U Jùl-ßüt Wolga (Wichmann 1953: 54, #264); East Jul (Paasonen 1948: 29).

3.1. Paasonen (1926: 38) connected the hydronym with Khanty of Konda iotpz “spring, source”, iotpó-ŋ “die Mündung eines aus einer Quelle fliessenden Baches”, Yugan iɔLpə “kleiner reissender Bach, Giessbach”. The final syllable was explained by Toivonen (1933: 382–383).

3.2. Markwart (1929: 96) speculated about adaptation of this Mari hydronym from its Chuvash equivalent ADjōl via *Ajōl. But such a development has no analogy in Chuvash loans in Mari.

3.3. Most probable seems to be the solution of Sinor (1964: 1–8), seeking origin of Mari Jul ‘Volga’ in Turkic *jūl “stream, brook, fountain” > Old Uyghur yuul “mountain brook, spring”, Karakhanid jüll, jul “brook”, Oirat, Salar jul,
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3.4. Tatar, Bashkir jul “road, way” vs. Old Turkic jol id., etc. (Räsänen 1969: 205–206; Sevortjan 4: 217–219). Specifically the Volga River was a superhighway connecting the Russian North with Pontic-Caspian steppes since prehistoric times. Concerning relation of the meanings “road” and “river” there are suggestive semantic parallels in Cushitic and Chadic, concretely North Cushitic: Beja lagì f., pl. –a “path, pathway, beaten track” (Roper); East Cushitic: Somali laag “water-channel” (Luling), Bayso lága “river-bank” (Hy); Oromo Macha lagá “river”, lágè “valley” (LVS) > Highland East Cushitic *laga “river” (Hudson 1989: 124); Konso lak-a “plain, outside”, D’irayta lak “place, vacancy, room, space” (Bl), cf. Sasse 1982: 131; South Cushitic: Qwadza lagalako “path, road” (Ehret); and Central Chadic: Wamdui lágu, Margi lagù, West Margi lakù, Kilba lakù “road” (Kraft 1981: 73, 93, 112, 122).

4. Λύκος

4.0. Herodotus [4.123] mentioned four great rivers flowing from the country of the Thyssagetae through a wasteland and further into the land of the Maeetians, and issuing into the lake called the Maeetian; their names are Lycus, Oar- rus, Tanaïs, (S)yrgis. Tomaschek (1889: 32) speculated about identification of the Lycus with the Jajik (today the Ural River) or the upper stream of the Volga, while the Oarus should belong to its lower stream.

4.1. At least indirectly Tomaschek (1889: 32–33) connected the river-name Λύκος with the Udmurt hydronym Jug, besides Lug, with its Russian counterpart Belaja, a tributary of the Kama. He explained it from Udmurt Malmyž jũ-g-ak adv. “hell, klar, rein”, Malmyž-Uržum lũ-g-ak, d’u-g-ak “auf einmal und hell”; Sarapul, Malmyž, Jelabuga jugīt, Jelabuga, Malmyž- Uržum l’ugīt, Ufa d’uğīt adj. “hell, klar” etc. (Wichmann 1987: 82), Komi jugid “light (n., adj.), lightning”, jug “lightning”, jugör “ray, light”, jugdini “to grow light, illuminate” (KESK 334). This solution is undoubtedly satisfactory for the hydronym Jug/ Lug, but difficult for Λύκος. The reason consists in historical phonetics: the Udmurt initial l- and d- are secondary variants of j- and the Permic medial -g- corresponds to Mari & Mordovian -ŋg- < FU *-ŋk- (cf. KESK 14). The Permic root *jug- regularly corresponds to Mari jongeštaš “to brighten up”, jongôdo “spacious” (KESK 334; Paasonen 1948: 27).

4.2. Perhaps more promising is to speculate about a motivation implied from the fact that Λύκος flowed through a wasteland described by Herodotus. Cf. also Kazan Tatar Çölmen-Idõl ‘Kama’, i.e. “the river of wasteland”, similarly Chuvash.
čolma and Old Bulgarian Čōlmān–Itil (Tomaschek 1889: 33) vs. Old Turkish čöl, Kazakh šöl etc. “steppe, wasteland” (Räsänen 1969: 117). If this is the case, the Baltic term *laukas “terrain without trees” seems to be a good candidate, cf. Lithuanian laũkas “terrain without trees, free space, field”, Latvian laũks “clearing, opening (in forest), free space, field”, Prussian (III) laucks, acc.sg. laukan “field” (ALEW I: 561–562), all from IE *leuk- “to light” (Pokorny 1959: 687–689).

4.3. Another solution might be based on the fact that the Volga turns its stream from an easterly direction to the south by the mouth of its biggest tributary, Kama. In the Mari language, now spoken near this bend, and in the past, around it, there is the word luk (P, B, M, U, CÜ), lÜk (CK, Ć, J), l̆ök (K) “corner, nook” and also “bend of river or lake” < Proto-Mari *lukð (Bereczki 1992: 34, No. 165; 2013: 124–125). Just this meaning perfectly corresponds with the bend of the Volga from the east to the south. Other relatives confirm priority of this meaning: Finnish loukka, loukas “den, lair”, loukku “Spalte, Höhle”, loukko “Ecke, Winkel, Versteck, Höhle”, ?lauku “Öffnung, Loch”, ?liukku “Schneehöhle”; Hungarian lyuk (dial. gyuk, juk, lik, luk) “Loch, Leck; Höhle; Hinterbacken”; Nenets O loxe? “Winkel (z. B. in einem Zimmer, in einem langgestreckten See)” (UEW 252: *loukke).

Note: It is possible to identify an analogous semantic motivation in the Old Russian hydronym Ereř (today Oreľ), denoting the left tributary of the Dnieper, which was first mentioned in Hypatian redaction of The Russian Primary Chronicle to AD 1183: Ерель, еего же Русь зовуть Уголь. Vasmer (III, 151) etymologized it with help of Osman ājri “schief, krumm”, ājrilā “sich biegen” (Radloff I: 661–662), Turkish ēğri “krumm; Kurve”, ēgilik “Krümmung”, Old Uyghur āğri “schief”, Karakhanid, Cumanish, Chaghatai āğri “krumm, gebogen”; Chuvash avőr “tiefe Stelle, Grube in einem Fluss oder See” etc. (Räsänen 1969: 37–38).

5. RAV & RAVO

5.0. Mordovian Erzya Rav, Ravo ‘Volga’, Moksha rava “river”, Rav ‘Volga’ (UEW 420). Ibn Hawqāl, AD 977/8: nahr al-Rōs ~ Mordovian determined form Rav-š (Aalto 1976[79], 37). The predecessor of the Mordovian hydronym has been reconstructed as (i) *rava (Keresztes 1986: 127), but there are at least two other alternatives, (ii) *raγa and (iii) *raŋa; cf. ad (ii) Mordovian Moksha pavaz ~ pavas “God” < *payas < Indo-Iranian *b̥agas and ad (iii) Moksha ov(ə) “Schwierigersohn” < Fenno-Volgaic *wäŋe (see Keresztes 1986: 106, 103). The comparison with Khanty DN rŏu̯, DT rāu “Unreinigkeit, Abfall, Moder (im Wasser)”, Likr. rāy/, Mj. rāyu “Moder, Schlamm (im Wasser)” (Korenchy 1972: 65), supporting the possibilities (i) & (ii), is weak in semantics.
5.1. Schlözer (1771: 306) was probably the first to connect the Mordovian hydronym with the Greek designation 'Pā of the Volga River\textsuperscript{16}, recorded by Ptolemy [6.14.1,4]. He was followed e.g. by Klaproth (1826: 82), Šafarik (1837: 402) and Kiepert (1878: 346, fn. 3). De Lagarde (1866: 263) connected Ptolemy’s ‘Pā with the name of the mythical river in Avesta Raŋhā-, but concerning the identification of these hydronyms with Volga he was reserved\textsuperscript{17}. Later (1868, 62) he added Sanskrit Rasā and in both studies Phrygian ‘Pėa, i.e. Réha?, and the Armenian hydronym Rah mentioned by Koriwn in his ‘Life of Mesrop Maš-tots’ [11.33]. Kuhn (1887: 214–215) added Avestan Raŋhā- and Vedic Rasā-, both the mythical rivers. He expressed doubts concerning their identification. He mentioned the attempt of Geiger who tried to identify Raŋhā- with Iaxartes and commented it: die Raṅha wiedererkennen will, führte jedenfalls bei seinen anwohnern einen anderen namen, aus dem das moderne Sir hervorgegangen ist und der bei den Griechen als Silis, bei den Indern als Sîdâ erscheint (Kiepert 1878, § 58). Further he said that ... Sîdâ ist selbstverständlich als die iranische, nicht etwa als die indische form des namens zu betrachten.

Let us mention that Rasā- (see Blažek 2016a: 13) was the name of a mythical stream flowing around the earth and the atmosphere [e.g. RV IX.41.6; 10.108., also Nirukta of Yaska], only in RV V.53.9. is it described as the western tributary of the Indus River. In Puranas and Mahabharata Rasā is connected with the underworld or hell (MW 870c). The form rasā- is the feminine to the masculine rāsa- “the sap or juice of plants, juice of fruit, any liquid or fluid, moisture, humidity, essence, marrow” [RV] (MW 869b, 870c: rasā- = “moisture, humidity”, but Mayrhofer in EWAI II: 441–444 expressed doubts about any appellative sense of rasā-). In Iranian the corresponding hydronym is identified in Young Avestan Raŋhā- ‘a mythical river’ [Yašt 5.63, 5.81, 10.104, 14.29, 15.27; Vidēvdāt 1.19 etc.], transcribed in Zoroastrian Pahlavi as Arang (Bartholomae 1904: 1510–1511).

Note 1: Marquart (1903: 378–379, fn. 4) interpreted the ethnonym Rogastadzans by Jordanes [Getica 23, § 116] as *Rauwa-stadjans “die Anwohner des Wolgastrandes”. The same hydronym he saw in the ethnonym Ῥόβοσκοι recorded by Ptolemy.
5.2. Schrader (1890: 633ff) and Schrader & Nehring (1917–1923: 329) saw in the hydronym an adaptation of IE *srou̯ā̞ “stream”, cf. Epic Sanskrit giri-sra-vā- “mountain stream”, Lithuanian sravā “Fließen, Blutfluß, Menstruation” etc. (Pokorny 1959: 1003).

5.3. In his review of Schrader (1890), Bartholomae (1890: 1108) tried to explain the Mordovian hydronym and Ptolemy’s Ῥᾶ on the basis of Avestan rauwan-/raon- “river, water-course” [Yt. 14.21, 18.6, V. 5.1f / Y. 10.17, V. 2.23] (Bartholomae 1904: c. 1512) < Iranian *hrau̯o̯ < *srau̯o̯ (cf. EWAI II: 784).

5.4. Paasonen (1897: 122–123) rejected Schrader’s idea and offered his own etymology based on Finnish rapa “Kot, Schlämm; etwas sprödes, brüchiges”, Estonian raba “Moor; Treber; morsch, brüchig”, Livonian raba mā “lockerer Boden”; Saami N rappe “coenum existens in loco, quem homines vei pecudes saepe calcant”. In reality the Saami term is of Finnish origin and the Balto-Finnic forms are of Scandinavian origin, cf. Old Norse draf “Bodensatz, Hefe” (de Vries 1962: 79–80; SKES 735–736).

6. *U̯ar(ī)- > Ὄαρος

6.0. The hydronym Ὄαρος was first recorded by Herodotus [4.123–124] around 450 BCE. The same component *u̯ar- may be identified in the hydronym Οὐαρδάνης, recorded by Ptolemy [5.9.5, 28], which probably designated the Kuban River (cf. Abaev 1949: 188: *u̯aru-dānu- “broad river”).

6.1. Marquart (1903: 378–379, fn. 4) thought that the hydronym Ὄαρος should be an alternative designation of the Volga river, interpreted as Iranian *u̯aru- “broad”18, cf. Avestan vouru-, e.g. in Old Avestan vouru-čašāni- “weithin

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Rogastadzans ist die gotische Übersetzung von Ῥόβοσκοι, eines von Ptol. 6.14 p. 426, 28 Wil berg an den östlichen Rhaquellen verzeichneten Volkes, bei Orosius I, 2, 2 Rhobasci, das mit den unter den Rhipaen sitzenden Boqoṣkoi Ptol. 3, 5 p. 201, 15 identisch ist. Ῥόβοσκοι, Rhobasci ist vom finnischen Namen der Wolga abgeleitet, der noch heute bei den Mordwinen Raw, Rav, in bestimmter Form Rawz lautet und wahrscheinlich dem Ῥῶς des Agathemeros zu Grunde liegt. Derselbe ist wohl dem skythisch-iranischen *Raḥa, bei Ptol. Pā (nur Gen. und Acc), aw. Raṇha, ved. Rasā entlehnt. Neben letzterem Namen kannten dieiranischen Skythen für die Wolga noch die Bezeichnung Ῥῶς (Herodotos 4, 123. 124) d. i. *waru- „der breite“ (vgl. Boq-othēνγ, hunnisch War), wovon der Volksname Boqoṣkoi abgeleitet ist. Vgl. Zeuss 1837: 80; Müllenhoff 1906: 98; Tomaschek 1889: 20. Für die Gleichung Pā = Raṇha haben sich ausgesprochen P. de Lagarde 1866: 263; Id. 1868: 62.
blickend” ~ Vedic urya-cákṣas-; Ossetic urux “weit, geräumig” (EWAI I: 227). Similarly Herrmann (1937: cc. 1680–168119).

6.2. Kretschmer (1928: 101) explained the hydronym with help of Sanskrit vâr(i) “water”, mentioning the meaning ‘rain’ of the corresponding Avestan counterpart vâr-. In reality, there are Vedic vâr- ‘water’ [RV, AV, VS], besides Sanskrit vârī-, meaning both “water” and “rain” [Mn, MBh], which corresponds to Avestan vâr- “rain”, but also Sanskrit va-ri-, pl. vâryâs “river”, corresponding to Avestan va-ri- “sea, sea bay” [Y. 42.2, 65.4, 71.10; Yt. 5.37, 8.46.8, 10.14, 19.51, 19.56, 19.59; Aog. 28; Ny. 5.5; S. 2.9] > Zoroastrian Pahlavi var “lake” (Bartholomae 1904: 1364–1365; Eilers & Mayrhofer 1960: 110–111; Nyberg 1974: 203). Kretschmer also connected this hydronym with Tocharian A wâr “water” and further with the Ligurian river-name Vârus, first recorded by Cae-sar [BG 1.86.8]. Later Krahe (1964: 38–40) included it in his ‘Old European’ hydronymy.

6.3. For Herodotus’ Ὄαρος Napolskix (p.c.) sought its origin directly in Tocharian A wâr, B war “water”, B -wâr “stream”, e.g. ñoru-wâr “downstream” (Adams 2013: 627–628), assuming in this hydronym a trace of the eastward Proto-Tocharian migration.

6.4. Schramm (1973: 115) rejected Ὄαρος as the designation of the Volga at all and preferred its connection with the Dnieper, explicitly named as Var by Jordanes 52: ut vix pars aliqua hostium remaneret, quaee in fuga versa eas partes Scythiae pateret, quas Danabri amnis fluente praetermeant, quam linguâ suâ Hunni Var appellant20, and Baq-Qox by Constantine Porphyrogenitus (De administrando imperio 38.68). This hydronym was also etymologized in several ways:

6.4.1. Seeing here a trace of the ancient Avars, Klaproth (1826: 245) tried to explain Var with help of modern Avar from Daghestan, where the word Ýor “river” appeared. Nikolayev & Starostin (NCED 537) compared it with Tindal reha “water reservoir”, Bezhta rühi “artificial brook”, Lezghin, Tabasaran hül “sea” etc., reconstructing North Caucasian protoform *hwûlV/*lûhwV.

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19 Oaros – nach Herodot [IV 123] neben dem Lykos, Tanais und Syrgis ein Zufluss der Maiotis, entspringend bei den Thyssagetai. Aus Herodot [IV, 124] ergibt sich, dass der O. ein grösserer Fluss war, an dem Dareios sein Heer lagern liess und acht Burgen baute, als er bis zur Einoede zwischen den Budinen und Thyssagetai vordrang. Danach (c. 1681) kann es sich nur um die Wolga handeln, die Herodotos irrtümlich in die Maiotis münden laesst statt in das Kaspische Meer. Kiessling u. Bd. IA s. 1f. vergleicht den Namen O. mit avest. Vouru “der breite (Fluss)”, was die Türkstämme durch Atl übersetzten;

20 “The remnant turned in flight and sought the parts of Scythia which border on the stream of the river Danaper, which the Huns call in their own tongue the Var.” See The Gothic history of Jorda-nes in English version with an introduction and a commentary by Charles Christopher Mierow. Princeton: University Press – London: Humphrey Milford – Oxford: University Press 1915: 128.
6.4.2. Tomaschek (1889: 20) compared Βαρούχ with Yakut üräχ “river” (Böhtling 1851: 49). Related may be Chuvash və̑rə̑, used in formulation šəv və̑r-ri “mouth of river”. The loss of the final velar can be compared with homonymous Chuvash və̑rə̑ “seed” vs. Old Turkish uruy id. (Egorov 1964: 49; Räsänen 1969: 516).

6.4.3. Vasmer (1923: 66), Abaev (1949: 187) and Schramm (1973: 99) explained Βαρούχ on the basis of Ossetic: Iron wæræx, Digor urux “broad” < *yuruka-/*uruka- (Abaev 1989: 90).

6.4.4. Pritsak (1954: 124–134; cf. also Schramm 1973: 99) offered the Old Bulgarian explanation of Var, applying Chuvash var “valley, flume, ravine, gorge; inside, center, middle, belly”; Anatolian Turkish poet. öz in the river-names Ėgri öz, Qılığ özü, further Kazan Tatar üzän “valley, lowland”, Baraba Tatar özön “rivulet, brook”, Kazakh özän “river; inside”, besides the designation Yozu (= özı < *özı) of the Dnieper in a late copy of Pseudo-Mowsēs Chorenac’i’s “Geography”, perhaps from Anania Širakac’i rewritten around AD 700, and Oghuz-Cumanic name Özi of the same river (–i is the possessive suffix of the 3rd person, serving for determination).

Note: It is attractive to speculate that the Old Bulgar predecessor of Chuvash var “valley, flume, ravine, gorge; inside, center, middle, belly” in the name of the Dnieper could be calqued by the term –коўчоў, Kouvčou, recorded by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the compound Ἀτελκούζου [§ 38.30], and in the syntagm Ἐτέλ {ποταμός} καὶ Kουζού [§ 40.24]. Zeuss (1837: 751) and Markwart (1903: 33) identified in –коўчоў & Kouvčou Hungarian köze (3 sg. possess. of köz “center, middle”), which was also used in Hungarian names of districts, e.g. Szamos-köz, Mura-köze, Rába-köze. Hungarian köz is derivable from Fenno-Ugric *küts (UEW: 163; EWU II: 827) ~ *küti “middle” (Sammal-lahti 1988: 544). In this case the forms –коўчоў & Kouvčou were an equivalent of Greek μεσοποταμία, and Old Bulgarian Var probably played the same role.

7. VOLGA

7.0. The hydronym Volga first appeared as Old Russian Volga in Russian Primary Chronicle written around 1100, in events dated to AD 964.

7.1. The Byzantine historian and archivarian, theologian and astronomer, Nicephorus Gregoras (1290/1–1360), formulated the hypothesis that the designation of Bulgarians Βούλγαροι is derived from the river-name Βούλγα ‘Volga’ in his Byzantina Historia 1.26.19–21 (cf. also Moravcsik 1958: 105). Another Volga is a tributary of the Dnieper. In Poland, there are two tributaries of the Vistula, which are named Wilga, one with its mouth in Kraków (25 km long), the second
with its mouth in the south neighborhood of Warszawa (67 km long). These hydronyms are transparently derivable from Common Slavic *Völga “dampness, moistness” (Vasmer I: 336–337). It is necessary to add the direct Baltic cognates, which can also etymologize the hydronym Volga, namely Latvian valgs m., valga f. “feucht”, vilgt, `gstu, `gu “feucht werden” (ME IV: 454, 587), Lithuanian vilgti, vilgstu, vilgau “anfeuchten” etc. (Pokorny 1959: 1145–1146: *u̯elg-).

There are also alternative etymological attempts:

7.2. Tomaschek (1889: 32) and Rozwadowski (1913: 49; 1948: 227–230) tried to explain the hydronym from Fenno-Volgaic *walkeða “white”\(^{21}\), but Vasmer (I: 336–337) rejected it as phonologically impossible. It is right concerning *walkeða “white” and its continuants, but there are also other forms, which are not derived by the suffix *-ða, especially Mari wöljem “ich leuchte, glänze (Feuer, Wasser, Gold, Glas)”. Its 3rd person sg. wölja “it is light” looks like a good candidate with regard to the fact, that the biggest tributary of the Volga, Kama, is called “white”, namely Chaghatay Ātil, Ādil ‘Volga’, Ak-Ādil ‘Kama’, lit. ‘White Ādil’, Kazan Tatar İzıl, İدل ‘Volga; big river’, Kara İدل ‘Volga’ = ‘Black İدل’ vs. Ak İدل ‘Kama’ = ‘White İدل’, Chuvash ADİL ‘Volga’, Şıroğ-AĐİL ‘Kama’, lit. ‘White ADİL’ (Gombocz 1917: 183; Radloff I: 842, 857, 1509; Räsänen 1969: 52). Tomaschek (1889: 32) still mentioned the Lake Volgo (61 km\(^2\)), the lowest of four natural lakes which the Volga flows through.

7.3. According to oral witness of Roman Jakobson, his former countryman Nikolaj Sergeevič Trubëckoj proposed a Baltic etymology of the hydronym Volga during his lectures in Vienna in the 1930’s. According to him the etymology of Volga was as follows: in primitive eastern Slavic, unrounded front vowels changed into rounded back vowels before a tauto-syllabic l, so that jilga must have changed to julga; the initial j was lost before rounded vowels in eastern Slavic, and the initial u acquired an obligatory prothetic v. Thus the form vulga arose, and short u changed in the 12th–13th centuries into o. So through a long series of changes jilga became Volga. Cited according to Gimbutas 1963a: 69; 1963b: 33, 205. See also Toporov 1980: 40. Among the Baltic hydronyms there are really such names which are formed from the Baltic adj. “long” continuing in Lithuanian ilgas, Latvian īgs id., besides Prussian adv. ilga “for long time”.

\(^{21}\) Fenno-Volgaic *walkeða > Finnish valkea “weiß; leuchtend, hell; Feuer, leuchtende Flamme, Licht des Feuers; Blitz”, Ludic uagzed, Estonian valge “weiß, hell, blond; Weiβes, Lich”, Livonian valda (SKES: 1619–1621); Saami N viel’gäd “white; light, pale”, Kildin vilkeð, Nöt vielkə̱ id.; Mordovian Erzya valdo, Moksha valdá “hell, licht”; Mari (J) wolvə́dá, (U B) wolvə́do “klar, hell; Helle, Klarheit”. Further cf. Mari wøyem “ich leuchte, glänze (Feuer, Wasser, Gold, Glas)”; Hungarian világ “Licht; Welt; Leute”, (arch.) “Menschheit, Leben”, indicating Fenno-Ugric *wilks “white, light; to shine” (UEW: 554–555; Bereczky 2013: 315–316). Sammalähtö (1988: 551) reconstructed Fenno-Ugric *wilkĉ “light”, besides Fenno-Permic *vékki. 

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e.g. in Lithuania rivers  İlga,  Įlgė,  Ilgės,  Ilgupys etc., and lakes  İlkai,  İlgis,  Ilgys,  Ilgažeris,  Ilgežeris etc. (Vanagas 1981: 129); Latvian rivers  Ilga upe,  Ilgupe, and lakes  Íldza-ätzers,  Íldzes-ätzers etc.; Prussian lakes  Ilgayn,  Igen See,  Ilgolwen etc. (Toporov 1980: 39). The longest ‘Long River’ is Chinese 長江  Cháng Jiāng, with length 6,379 km and basin 1,808,500 km², called ‘Long’ from the period of Six Dynasties (220–589 CE). The present name  Yángzǐ  originally was used for the lowest stream of the river.

7.4. Still less probable is the attempt of Mikkola (1929: 127–128) to identify a source in Proto-Mari *Jylɣ²³, really attested as West Mari ʃəl, East Mari ʃul ‘Volga’ (see below). For an explanation of difference in the anlaut Mikkola (1929: 127) mentioned the Old Russian transcription  Omov(ъ)ža,  Omovyža of the Estonian river-name  Emajögi. The existence of Old Russian *Volga should be demonstrated by the Udmurt folklore loan  Bulga ‘Volga’ (Mikkola 1929: 128). Vasmer (I: 337) added that the hypothetic Proto-Mari *Jylɣ would have been borrowed from such Turkic languages as Baraba Tatar, Bashkir  jylɣa “river, brook”, Kazakh, Nogai  şylɣa “rivulet, river” (Räsänen 1969: 200: borrowed from Mongol  şylɣa “bed of river, brook, slope” – see Ramstedt 1935: 109).

7.5. A quite new solution may be offered on the basis of Hungarian  völgy “valley, vale, dale” (1211); (obsolete) “Mark, Kern eines Geschwürs”, cf. the Old Hungarian place-names:  Furizuelgi (1211),  Welg (1220),  Sasweolgy (1256),  Weulgzad (1338),  Worrewlabvelgu (1342) etc. (EWU 1653). Related are Ob-Ugric  wąɣal > PKhanty  wąɣal > Khanty Trj.  wąɣal ‘ein Zufluß des Ob’, O  őχal, Kaz.  wòχal “Zufluss; Wogule”,  wòχal-jòχan ‘Boryulka (rivulet)’; PMansi  *wal’ > Mansi (LM)  vuol “Flußkrümmung”, (KU KM P LO)  vol’, (So.)  wól “Flußstrecke” (Honti 1982: 193, #677); Komi (S)  vol’,  vol-ju “ein kleiner Fluß”, (Võ)  vej ‘ein rechter Nebenfluß der oberen Vyčegda’; Nenets (Nj.)  waej in  jaχaw  waej “längere gerade Strecke des Flusses zwischen zwei Krümmungen; пнэко” < Uralic  *waðk “small river; river bend or portion of river between two bends” (UEW: 550–551).

7.6. For completeness Tocharian B  walke (indeclinable) adj. “long (of time)”, adv. “for a long time” should be added as a hypothetical source too. The semantic motivation is the same as in Lithuanian  İlga f. “long” (cf. § 7.3). The synchronous shape stands also very close to the form  Volga. The traditional projection back to *uʃɡo-, perhaps derived from the verb *uʃ- “to turn” (Adams 2013: 631–632), is also applicable to  Volga. But the etymological analysis *uŋi-dlɣo- (see Blažek 2015: 62), if correct, probably would exclude this solution.

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²² Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangtze> [accessed 01.11.2019].

²³ The loss of ɣ after the fall of the final vowel is regular, cf. Mari KB  jal “foot” vs. Mordovian Moksha  julga “on foot”, Finnish  jalka “foot” (Mikkola 1929: 127; UEW: 88–89).
### 8. SUMMARY

| Hydronym | Turkic | Hungarian | Mari | Mordovian | Tocharian | Iranian | Baltic | Slavic |
|----------|--------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------|--------|
| Volga    | (cf. Tatar Karal Volga) | *ast(i)l with big floods | lower | *ast(h)ol dampness | *ast(h)ol stream | Tatar *ul road | *araxša- harmless | *haraxša- all dark | *āhraxša- dark mouth |
| Volga    | *ast(i)l with big floods | *asz/Vnē valley full of water | | | | | | |
| Volga    | *ast(i)l with big floods | *asz/Vnē valley full of water | | | | | | |
| Hydronym | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης | Ἀράξης |
| *araxša- | *haraxša- | *āhraxša- | | | | | | |
| Harmless | Harmless | Harmless | | | | | | |
| Volga    | *haraxša- | *āhraxša- | | | | | | |
| All dark | All dark | All dark | | | | | | |
| Dark mouth | Dark mouth | Dark mouth | | | | | | |
| Valleys full of water | Valleys full of water | Valleys full of water | | | | | | |
| With big floods | With big floods | With big floods | | | | | | |
| Lower | Lower | Lower | | | | | | |
| Lower dampness | Lower dampness | Lower dampness | | | | | | |
| Stream | Stream | Stream | | | | | | |
| Road | Road | Road | | | | | | |
| Ægôjês | Ægôjês | Ægôjês | | | | | | |
| *As(ə)El | *As(ə)El | *As(ə)El | | | | | | |
| Jul | Jul | Jul | | | | | | |
| Nivoz | Nivoz | Nivoz | | | | | | |
| Rava(0) | Rava(0) | Rava(0) | | | | | | |
| hydronym | Slavic | Baltic | Iranian | Tocharian | Mordovian | Mari | Hungarian | Turkic |
|----------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|--------|
| Ὄαρος   |        | Avestan va̞ri- sea, sea bay Pahlavi var lake | B war water B -wär stream | *u̯aru- broad |         |      |           |        |
| Volga    | *volga dampness | Latvian valga f. wet Ilga long f. | B walke long | | wolya is light | völgy valley | Bashkir jylja river | |
9. CONCLUSION

9.1. The preceding table (§ 8) summarizes all more or less probable solutions, although they are often mutually exclusive. Evaluating their semantic motivations, they can be divided into two sets. The first group consists of the fully ‘hydronymical’ names motivated by meanings connected with “water”, namely “water” itself, further “river”, “(river-)valley”, “stream”, “flood”, “dampness”, “lake”, “sea”. The second group includes the terms characterizing the river stream or shores, here namely “broad”, “long”, “bent”, “treeless”, “harmless”, “white/light”, “black/dark”. It is apparent that the first semantic group is directly connected with water and should be preferred. In the case of several etymological candidates the semantic motivation, which is repeated in different designations, seems more promising than isolated explanations. So, Old Russian Volga < Common Slavic *vьlga “dampness” corresponds to Iranian, perhaps Scythian, *rahā-, whose meaning “moisture, dampness, humidity” is reconstructed according to Vedic [RV] rasā-, which is the feminine to the masculine rása– “the sap or juice of plants, juice of fruit, any liquid or fluid, moisture, humidity, essence, marrow”. The third counterpart could be identified in the hypothetical Turkic compound *ast-(h)ööl “lower dampness”. It would be possible to imagine that it described the Volga delta. It is tempting to conclude that the Slavic and maybe Turkic hydonyms represent calques on their Iranian predecessor.

9.2. Chronologically first seem to be the mythical river-names Rasā, known already from the R̥gveda composed probably between 1500–1100 BCE, and its Young Avestan counterpart Raŋhā, from the beginning of the 1st mill. BCE. Mordovian Rav or Ravo can reflect both *raŋa and *raγa. The first case preserves the specific Avestan-like development of the sequence *āhā, the latter case probably represents the form *Rahā, reconstructible for several Old and Early Middle Iranian dialects, namely Scythian, Sarmatian and Sakan with regard to their geographic distribution. Ptolemy’s Ῥᾶ and Pseudo-Agathemeros’ ῾Ρᾶς are still close to *Rahā in the 2nd and 3rd cent. CE respectively. In the mid of the 5th cent. BCE Herodotus recorded three various river-names, which may perhaps belong to the Volga: Ὄαρος, Ἀράξης, Λύκος. The Ὄαρος is etymologizable on the basis of Young Avestan vaři- “sea, sea bay” and Pahlavi var “lake”. This solution indicates a river emptying into a big water reservoir. In competition with the no less attractive Tocharian etymology (B war “water”, -wär “stream”), the Iranian origin should be preferred with regard to the Ptolemy’s hydronym Ὥωρδάνης, probably designating the Kuban River emptying into the Azov Sea/Maeotis, which is analyzable explicitly as *u̯ar(V)-dānu- “river emptying in a sea/lake”, where the second component is Iranian *dānu- “river” > Young Avestan dānu- “river, stream”, Ossetic don “river, water”, without any known
Tocharian counterpart. The river Ἀράξης was described by Herodotus as a stream divided into 40 arms before its mouth into the Caspian Sea. This description is applicable only to a really big delta. If the delta of the Volga was meant, at least three Iranian interpretations are thinkable, namely *a-raxsa- “harmless” with respect to its quiet stream or *ha-raxša- “all dark”, with variant *āh-raxša- “dark mouth” with regard to the black mud in the delta (cf. also Kazan Tatar Ka-ra Ild). The third Herodotus’ hydronym, probably belonging to the Volga, Λύκος, looks like a Greek transcription of Proto-Mari *lukā “bend”, which can designate the bend of the Volga from the east to the south by the mouth of the biggest tributary, the Kama River. This solution seems more convincing than the alternative Baltic designation *laukas “treeless terrain”, which would have designated the wasteland around the Kama River, described by Herodotus. Although such an interpretation is quite legitimate, it is not generally typical for semantic motivations of hydronyms. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE Ptolemy and Pseudo-Agathemeros recorded the Volga-names Ῥᾶ and Ῥᾶς respectively, which represent continuations of Iranian *Rahā, discussed above. From the 6th cent. CE the new name of the Volga is known, which is reconstructible as *As(a)El. There are at least three alternative etymologies. Old Bulgarian *as-tial “with big floods” can be supported by the fact that e.g. the Astraxań and Volgograd regions are more or less regularly flooded once every 5 years24. A weakness of this solution consists in the fact that there is no appellative continuant in Chuvash, only the hydronym TīlZe (see § 2.3). The hypothetical compound *ast-(h)ől “lower dampness” should probably be ascribed directly to some mainstream Turkic dialect, since none of components continue in Chuvash. The third etymological attempt presents the hydronym as a predecessor of the hypothetical Hungarian compound asz(V)-tele “river valley full {of water}”. It should not be any surprise to take into account the possibility of a Hungarian etymology as well. The trajectory of migration of ancestors of the Hungarians very probably followed the stream of the Kama and further the Volga from their confluence to the basin of the Don, which brought them to the Pontus and along its shores further to the Danube basin (cf. Blažek 2013: 181). The etymology implies the presence of ancestors of the Hungarians in the basin of the lower Volga before c. 570 CE, when Zemarchus crossed the river and recorded its name as Ἀττίλας. This interpretation may be reinforced by one of alternative etymologies for the hydronym Volga proper, namely Hungarian völgy “valley”. The Volga itself was first mentioned in the Russian Primary Chronicle dated AD 964. Its Slavic protoform *völga “dampness” seems safe; corresponding hydronyms are known from basins of the Dnieper and Vistula. But Volga may be an

24 Available at: <https://www.climatechangepost.com/russia/river-floods/> [accessed 01.11.2019].
East Slavic adaptation of the Baltic name of the type Latvian *valga* f. “wet” too. The close semantic motivation is proposed for the Vedic mythical river *Rasā*, and its Avestan counterpart *Raŋhā*, which have been connected with the Iranian / Indo-Iranian homeland and identified with the Volga. The hypothetical Turkic compound *ast-(h)öl* “lower dampness” would express the same characteristics. But there are several alternative etymologies based on languages spoken along the Volga earlier than the time the first Slavs reached the river (perhaps c. 600 CE with regard to the glottochronological dating the disintegration of Common Slavic to the 6th cent.), namely Baltic (Latvian *valga* f. “wet”; less probable is Lithuanian *ilga* f. “long” with respect to the difficult explanation of Slavic *v-*); Mari *wolγa* “is light”; Hungarian *völgy* “valley”; Tocharian *walke* “long”. Bashkir *jylɣa* “river” can be directly excluded as a late Mongolic loan. Although the Mari, Hungarian and Tocharian interpretations are not compatible, they could have been applied to the same river in various times. It is possible to imagine that an older designation was replaced by a new one on the principle of quasi-homonymy, independently of semantic difference. An illustrative example may be found e.g. in the Old Russian hydronym *Erelь*, translated in the Russian Primary Chronicle as *Уголъ* “angle”, in agreement with its Turkic etymology (Osman *äjri* “schief, krumm”, *äjrılä* “sich biegen”), but by today it has been modified to *Oreľ*, i.e. “eagle” (see § 4.3). From the last three alternatives the Tocharian one had separated as first. According to the glottochronological analyses separation of the Tocharian branch from the Indo-European mainstream (the Anatolian branch was already separated in the 5th mill. BCE) is dated to 3,810 BCE and 3,900 BCE by Sergej Starostin and Georgij Starostin respectively (see Blažek & Schwarz 2017: 203–204), while disintegration of the Fenno-Ugric protolanguage is dated only to 2,350 BCE by Blažek (2012: 34; 2016b: 89), to 2,180 BCE by S. Starostin (see Blažek 2012: 32), and to 2,160 BCE by G. Starostin (2015: 569); on average 2,230 BCE. The separation of the Mari and Permic branches is dated to 1,370 BCE by S. Starostin and to 1,200 BCE by Blažek (see Blažek 2012: 32, 34; 2016: 89) and the separation of Hungarian from Ob-Ugric is dated to 1,340 BCE by S. Starostin and to 1,480 BCE by Blažek (see Blažek 2012: 32, 34). This means that the Tocharian branch was separated c. 1,5 millennium before disintegration of the Fenno-Ugric unity and c. 2,5 millennia before separations of the Mari and Hungarian. The Tocharians were the easternmost Indo-European branch in the 1st mill. CE. They probably occupied the easternmost position in the Indo-European homeland too. If the North Pontic localization of the Indo-European homeland, at least after separation of the Anatolian branch, is accepted, the Volga could represent the eastern borderline of the Indo-European dialect continuum, first crossed just by the ancestors of the Tocharians, perhaps in the first half of the 4th mill.
BCE. In such a case, it would seem natural that the designation of such a mighty river, important for orientation, transfer and fishing, was kept for a long time, and when new populations inhabited its shores, they preferred to use quasi-homonymous names, although their meanings were reinterpreted. Besides the longest chain represented by Tocharian B walke “long” → Hungarian völgy “river valley” → Mari wolya “is white” → Latvian valga “wet” → Old Russian Volga “dampness”, there is also the series consisting of Tocharian B war “water”, -wär “stream” → Avestan vaarih “sea, sea bay”, Pahlavi var “lake” → Chuvash var “valley, flume, ravine, gorge; inside, center, middle, belly”, or Young Avestan Raŋhā or ‘Scythian’ *Rahā → Mordovian Erzya Rav, Ravo ‘Volga’, Moksha rava “river”, Rav ‘Volga’. This hypothesis implies a continuity of populations in spite of periods of massive migrations, probably in the form of relic settlements along important rivers mediating the original hydronyms. Thanks to this mechanism, names of many important rivers were preserved, although languages on their banks changed. Naturally, besides old names also new ones are introduced. In the case of the Volga the youngest example of this type is probably Mari Jul, adopted from some Turkic source of the type Old Uyghur yuul “mountain brook, spring”.

10. APPENDIX: TEXT FRAGMENTS

The Russian Primary Chronicle

Laurentian redaction

[6472 (964)] Кнѧзю Ст҃аславу възрастъшю . и възмужавшо . нача вои совкуплати . многи и храбры и легъко хода . аки пардусъ . воины многи твораше хода. возь по собъ не возъляше . ни котьла ни мясъ варѧ . но потонку изрѣ завъ . конину ли . звѣрину ли . или говѧдину . на оутле испѣкъ адаху. ни шатра имаше . но подъкладъ пославъ. и сѣдло в головахъ . такоже и прочии вои єго вси бѧ. [и] посъляше къ странамъ глѧ . хочю на въи ити . и иде на Волгу и на Вѧтичъ . и налѣзе Вѧтичымъ . и реѣ Вѧтичъ . кому дань даєте . вни же рѣша Козаромъ по щълагу . и ю раля даємъ.

Available at: <http://litopys.org.ua/lavrlet/lavr03.htm> [accessed 01.11.2019].

25 If Tocharian B walke was really derived from *ui-dl̥H₁gʰo-, it should be abandoned from candidates for protoform of the Volga. In this case the oldest member of this chain copying the stream of the Volga would be Mari. The chain should look as follows: Hungarian völgy ← Mari wolya → Latvian valga → Old Russian Volga.
**Hypatian redaction**

[6472 (964)] Кнѧзю Ст҃ославу възрастьшю . и възмужавшю . нача воӕ съво-
куплѧти . многы и храбры . бѣ бо и самъ хорошър и легокъ . хода аки парадусъ
. воины многы твораше . возь бо по себь не возлаше . ни котла ни масъ вара .
но по тонку изрѣзѧвѧъ . конину . или звѣрину . или говѧдину на оугълехъ испекь
ѧдѧше . ни шатра имѧше . но подъклѧдъ постилаше . а сѣдло въ головѧъ . тако
же и прочии вои еъ вси баыу . и посылашѧ къ странѧу . гла хочу на вы ити . и иде
на Сѣку рѣку . и на Волгу . и налѣзе Вѧтичи . и рѣчъимъ кому дань данєте . вни же
ркоша Козаруъ . по щелѧгу врала дасм

Available at: <http://litopys.org.ua/ipatlet/ipat03.htm> [accessed 01.11.2019].

**English translation of the Laurentian redaction**

6472 (964). “When Prince Svyatoslav had grown up and matured, he began
to collect a numerous and valiant army. Stepping light as a leopard, he underto-
on many campaigns. Upon his expeditions he carried with him neither wagons
nor kettles, and boiled no meat, but cut off small strips of horseflesh, game, or
beef, and ate it after roasting it on the coals. Nor did he have a tent, but he spread
out a horse-blanket under him, and set his saddle under his head; (65) and
all his retinue did likewise. He sent messengers to the other lands announcing
his intention to attack them. He went to the Oka and the Volga, and on coming
in contact with the Vyatichians, he inquired of them to whom they paid tribute.
They made answer that they paid a silver-piece per ploughshare to the Khazars.”

The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, Translated and edited by
Samuel Hazzard Cross & Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor
Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, No. 60, 1953.
Available at:<http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/dokumente/a/a011458.pdf> [accessed
01.11.2019].

**Witness of Greek authors**

Herodotus 1.201–202:

201. ός δε τοῦ Κύρῳ καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἔθνος κατέργαστο, ἐπεθύμησε Μασσαγέτας
ὑπ᾽ ἑωυτῷ ποιῆσαν. τὸ δὲ ἔθνος τοῦτο καὶ μέγα λέγεται εἶναι καὶ ἄλκιμον,
οἰκημένο δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἡλίου ἀνατολάς, πέρην τοῦ Ἀράξου ποταμοῦ, ἀντίον
dὲ Ἰσσηδόνων ἀνδρῶν. εἰσὶ δὲ οἵτινες καὶ Σκυθικὸν λέγουσι τοῦτο τὸ ἔθνος εἶναι.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.
perseus-grc1:1.201.1>
east and the sunrise, beyond the Araxes and opposite the Issedones; and some say that they are a Scythian people.”

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-eng1:1.201.1.201.1>

The Araxes is said by some to be greater and by some to be less than the Ister. It is reported that there are many islands in it as big as Lesbos, and men on them who in summer live on roots of all kinds that they dig up, and in winter on fruit that they have got from trees when it was ripe and stored for food; and they know (it is said) of trees bearing a fruit whose effect is this: gathering in groups and kindling a fire, the people sit around it and throw the fruit into the flames; then the fumes of it as it burns make them drunk as the Greeks are with wine, and more and more drunk as more fruit is thrown on the fire, until at last they rise up to dance and even sing. Such is said to be their way of life. The Araxes flows from the country of the Matieni (as does the Gyndes, which Cyrus divided into the three hundred and sixty channels) and empties itself through forty

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-grc1:1.202> [accessed 01.11.2019].
mouths, of which all except one issue into bogs and swamps, where men are said to live whose food is raw fish, and their customary dress sealskins. The one remaining stream of the Araxes flows in a clear channel into the Caspian sea.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-eng1:1.202.1> [accessed 01.11.2019].

Herodotus 1920: Histories, with an English translation by A. D. Godley.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

**Herodotus 4.123–124:**

4.123.3

ὑπὲρ δὲ τῆς ἐρήμου Θυσσαγέται οἰκέουσι, ποταμοὶ δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν τέσσερες μεγάλοι ῥέοντες διὰ Μαιητέων ἐκδιδοῦσι ἐς τὴν λίμνην τὴν καλεομένην Μαιῆτιν, τοῖσι οὖνόματα κέεται τάδε, Λύκος Ὀαρὸς Τάναις Σύργις.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-grc1:4.123.3> [accessed 01.11.2019].

Beyond this desolation live the Thyssagetae; four great rivers flow from their country through the land of the Maeetians, and issue into the lake called the Maeetian; their names are Lycus, Oarus, Tanaïs, Syrgis.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-eng1:4.123.3> [accessed 01.11.2019].

4.124.1.

ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ Δαρεῖος ἦλθε ἐς τὴν ἐρήμον, παυσάμενος τοῦ δρόμου ἵδρυσε τὴν στρατιὰν ἐπὶ ποταμῷ ᾽Οαρῷ. τοῦτο δὲ ποιήσας ὀκτὼ τείχεα ἐτείχεε μεγάλα, ἰσον ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων ἀπέχοντα, σταδίους ὡς ἐξήκοντα μάλιστα κη: τῶν ἔτι ἐς ἔμε τὰ ἐρείπια σὸα ἦν.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-grc1:4.124.1> [accessed 01.11.2019].

When Darius came into the desolate country, he halted in his pursuit and camped on the Oarus river, where he built eight great forts, the ruins of which were standing even in my lifetime, all at an equal distance of about seven miles from one another.

Available at: <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-eng1:4.124.1> [accessed 01.11.2019].

Herodotus 1920: The Histories, with an English translation by A. D. Godley.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Ptolemy, 6.14.1–4:

| Greek Text | English Translation |
|------------|---------------------|
| Ἡ ἐντὸς Ἰμάου ὄρους Σκυθία περιορίζεται ἀπὸ μὲν δύσεως Σαρματίας τῇ ἐν Ἀσίᾳ κατὰ τὴν ἐκτεθειμένην πλευράν, ἀπὸ δὲ ἄρκτων ἀγνώστῳ γῆ, ἀπὸ δὲ ἄνατολῶν τῷ πρὸς τὰς ἄρκτους ἄνιόντι Ἰμάῳ ὑπελεῖ κατὰ μεσημβρινῆν ποιμαμάς μέχρι τῆς ἀγνώστου γῆς. | Scythia within the Imaus mountains is terminated on the west by the side of Asiatic Sarmatia, as we have said; on the north by Terra Incognita (unknown land); on the east alone by the Imaus mountains running toward the north along the meridian line which, as we have stated, extends to the Terra Incognita; on the south by eastern Sogdiana and Margiana and along their indicated boundary to the mouth of the Oxus river which flows into the Hyrcanian sea, and by a part of the Hyrcanian sea as far as the Rha river, a description of the coast of which is the following: |
| Ἡ δ' ἐπιστροφὴ τοῦ Ράποταμοῦ, ἐν ἧν τῷ ὄριον τῆς ἐν Σαρματίας καὶ τῆς Σκυθίας μέχρι τῶν Ὀξου ποταμοῦ εἰς τὴν Ὀρχανίαν θάλασσαν ἐκβολαν, ἐτί δὲ τῷ ἐντεύθεν μέχρι τοῦ Ῥάποταμοῦ μέχρι τῆς Ὀρχανίας θαλάσσης κατὰ περιγραφὴν τοιαύτης. | Next to the mouth of the Rha river |
| | mouth of the Rhymnus river 91 48 15 |
| | mouth of the Daix river 94 48 15 |
| | mouth of the Jaxartes river 97 48 |
| | mouth of the Istaus river 100 47 20 |
| | mouth of the Polytimetus river 103 45 30 |
| | Aspabota town 102 44 |
| | Next to this the mouth of the Oxus river 100 43 |

English translation by Edward Luther Stevenson (1932).
Volga – the First River of Europe

[Anonymi] Geographiae expositio compendaria (usually ascribed to Agathemeros; 3rd cent. CE)
§ 29. Ἰαξάρτης μὲν καὶ Ὦξος καὶ Ῥύμμος καὶ Ῥᾶς καὶ Κῦρος καὶ Ἀράξης εἰς τὴν ἱεντί τὰ λαβάσαν
“Laxartes et Oxus et Rhymmus et Rhas et Cyrus et Araxes Caspio mari miscentur.”
Note: The editor made the conjecture Ῥᾶς for Ῥῶς
Geographi Graeci Minores, Vol. II, ed. by Karl Müller. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1861, 502.

Byzantine sources

Zemarchus, c. 570 (mediated by Menander Protector, born around the middle of the 6th cent.)
ὁ δὲ Ζήμαρχος κατὰ δὴ τὸ ψαμαθῶδες τῆς λίμνης παροδεύων ἐπὶ ἡμέρας δέκα τότε ἔνωσαν τὰ τὰ Ῥεῖτρα τοῦ Ἰχ, οὐ καὶ ἄλλα καὶ κατὰ τὸν Δαίχ, καὶ διὰ λιμνῶν ἔτερων αὐθίς εἰς τὸν Άττιλαν
“Zemarchus travelled along the sandy shore for twelve days and when he had skirted some difficult terrain came to the river Ikh, then to the Daikh and, passing some other lakes, to the Attilas {river}.”
Edited and translated by Blockley 1985: 124–125.

Further see Moravcsik (1958: 78–79):
Theophylactus Simocatta (Θεοφύλακτος Σιμοκάτ(τ)ης): Historiae (written c. 630 about the end of the 6th cent.)
258.9: οἱ Τίλ ... ποταμός, ὁν Μέλανα Τούρκοις ἀποκαλεῖν <ἔθος>

Theophanes Homologetes (†818), Chronicle (AD 284–813; about c. 680)
356.23: Ἄτελ
ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις περατικοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ Εὐξείνου πόντου, ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ Μαιώτιδι λίμνῃ, εἰς ἣν εἰσάγεται ποταμός μέγιστος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ καταφερόμενος διὰ τῆς τῶν Σαρματῶν γῆς, λεγόμενος Ἀτελ, εἰς ὃν εἰσάγεται ὁ λεγόμενος Τάναϊς ποταμός καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῶν Ἰβηρίων πυλῶν ἔξερχόμενος τῶν ἐν τοῖς τοῖς Καυκασίοις ὄρεσιν, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς μίξεως τοῦ Τάναί καὶ τοῦ Ἀτελ, ἀναφέρεται τῆς προλεξθείσης Μαιώτιδος λίμνης σχεδόμενον τοῦ Ἀτελ) ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Κούφις ποταμός, καὶ ἀποδίδει εἰς τὸ τέλος τῆς Ποντίκης θαλάσσης πλησίον τῶν Νεκροπόλεων εἰς τὸ ἄκρωμα τὸ λεγόμενον Κριοῦ Πρόσωπον.
“In northern parts of the Black Sea, by the lake called Maiotis, in which empties a big river flowing from Ocean through the country of the Sarmatians, called Atel, in which empties the river named Tanais rising from the Iberian Gates in the Caucasian Mountains; from the confluence of the Tanais and Atel (above named lake Maiotis, when the Atel is divided) a river called Kuphis flows and empties in the extremity of the Pontic Sea near Necropela by the cape, called Ram’s lip.”

Byzantine geographic notices from the 8th cent.

ὁ Ἀστήλ ἐν ᾧ λέγεται ὁ Ἀστήλ ὁ ποταμὸς τῆς Χαζάριας, ἔστιν δὲ κάστρον “{Episcopate} Astil, it means Astil – the river in Khazaria, but there is also a fortress {of the same name}” (see Moravcsik 1958: 78). Seibt (2017: 301) mentions the variant record Ἀσατήλ of this episcopate according to one Parisian manuscript.

CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS (Κωνσταντῖνος Πορφυρογέννητος; AD 905–959): De Administrando Imperio (c. 950)

37.2-4: Ἰστέον, ὅτι οἱ Πατζινακῖται τὸ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν Ἀτήλ τὴν αὐτῶν εἶχον κατοίκησιν ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν, Γεήχ, ἔχοντες τοὺς τε Χαζάριους συνοροῦντας καὶ τοὺς Οὔζους “Originally, the Pechenegs had their dwelling on the river Atil, and likewise on the river Geïkh, having common frontiers with the Chazars and so-called Uzes.”

38.30 εἰς τόπους ἐπονομαζομένους Ἀτελκούζου, ἐν οἷς τόποις τὰ νῦν τὸ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν ἔθνος κατοικεῖ “in places called Atelkouzou, in which places the nation of Pechenegs now lives”

38.66–71 Ὅτι ὁ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν τόπος, ἐν ᾧ τῷ τότε καιρῷ κατῴκησαν οἱ Τοῦρκοι, καλεῖται κατὰ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τῶν ἐκεῖσε ὄντων ποταμῶν. Οἱ δὲ ποταμοί εἰσιν οὗτοι· ποταμὸς πρῶτος ὁ καλούμενος Βαρούχ, ποταμὸς δεύτερος ὁ καλούμενος Κουβοῦ, ποταμὸς τρίτος ὁ καλούμενος Τρούλλος, ποταμὸς τέταρτος ὁ καλούμενος Βροῦτος, ποταμὸς πέμπτος ὁ καλούμενος Σέρετος. “The place of the Pechenegs, in which at that time the Turks lived, is called after the name of the local rivers. The rivers are these: the first river is that called Baroukh {Dnieper}, the second river that called Koubou {Bug}, the third river that called Troulllos {Dniester}, the fourth river that called Broutos {Prut}, the fifth river that called Seretos {Seret}.”

40.23–25 Ὅ δὲ τόπος, ἐν ᾧ πρότερον οἱ Τοῦρκοι ὑπῆρχον, ὁνομάζεται κατὰ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τοῦ ἐκεῖσε διερχομένου ποταμοῦ Ἐτέλ καὶ Κουζοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἀρτίως οἱ Πατζινακῖται κατοικοῦσιν.
“The place in which the Turks (= Hungarians) used formerly to be is called after the name of the river that runs through it, Etel and Kouzou, and in it the Pechenegs live now.”

Edited by Gy. Moravcsik; translated by R. J. H. Jenkins 1967: 166–179.

**Nicephorus Gregoras** (1290/1–1360)

1.26.19-21 Χῶρος τίς ἐστιν ἐς τὰ ἐπέκεινα τε καὶ βορειότερα τοῦ Ἴστρου κείμενος, καὶ ποταμός ρέων δι’ αὐτοῦ οὐ μικρός Βούλγαν αὐτὸν ὄνομάζουσιν οἱ ἐγχώριοι. ἀφ’ οὗ δὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὸ τῶν Βούλγαρων μετειλήφεσαν νόμομα, Σκύθαι τὸ ἔξι ἀρχῆς ὄντες.

“Trans Istrum versus Septentritionem locus est, quem fluvius non exiguus, ab incolis Bulga dictus, interfluit: unde et ipsi Bulgarorum nomen obtinuerunt, cum a prima origine Scythae essent.”

Nicephori Gregorae *Byzantina Historia*, Graece et Latine, cum annotationes Hier. Wolfii, Car. Ducangii, Io. Boivini et Cl. Capperonnerii. Bonn: Weber, 1829 (*Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, editio emendatior et copiosior, consilio B.G. Niebuhrii, Pars XIX: Nicephorus Gregoras, Vol. I), 26.

Available at: <https://ia800207.us.archive.org/31/items/byzantinahistor00bekkgoog/byzantinahistor00bekkgoog.pdf> [accessed 01.11.2019].

**Young Avestan witness**

Avestan *Raŋhā* – ‘a mythical river’ (Bartholomae 1904: 1510–1511)

*yim baraiti Karō masiō upārō yō Raŋhaiā dūraēpāraiā.*

*jafraiā hazaynro viraioi varəsō.stauuəŋhom ãpō uruuaēsom māraiieite* “die der im Wasser lebende Fisch Kara besitzt, der einen haarbreiten Wasserwirbel der fernbegrenzten tiefen, tausend Männer(grössen) tiefen Ranhā bemerkt”

[Yt. 14.29].

*təm yazata yōištō yō friiananqum paiti pōduuaēpō Raŋhaiiā.*

*satəm aspanqum aršŋum hazayŋum gauuŋm baēuuarə anumaiianqum* “Ihr opferte Yoīsta, der (aus der Familie) der Fryana’s, auf der umbrandeten Insel der Ranhā hundert männliche Pferde, tausend Rinder, zehntausen Schafe”

[Yt. 5.81].

*xšuaš.kasəm asaŋhəmcə ōiθranəmcə | vahištəm frāϑβərəsəm azəm yō ahurō mazdā | upa aodaēʃu Raŋhaiiā | yō. asārō. aii̯x̂ai̯ai̯eenti:*
“Als den sechzehntbesten der Orte und Stätten schuf Ich, der Ahura Mazdāh, (das Land) upa aoδaēṣ̌u Raŋhaiiā̊ (= an den Quellen der Ranhā), wo die wohnen, (die) keinen Oberherrn haben”  

[Vd. 1.19].

yatciṭ ahi rašnuuō aṣāum upa aoδaēṣ̌u raŋhaiiā̊  
yatciṭ ahi rašnuuō aṣāum upa sanake raŋhaiiā̊  
“Auch wenn du dich, o ašaheliger Rašnu, an der Quelle der Ranhā befindest, wir rufen an ..  
Auch wenn du dich, o ašaheliger Rašnu, an der Mündung der Ranhā befindest, wir rufen an”  

[Yt. 12.18–19].

yatciṭ sanake raŋhaiiā̊ yatciṭ vīmaiδīm aiįhā zomō  
“auch wenn (Mithra) an der Mündung der Ranhā  
auch wenn (er) im Mittelpunkt der Erde hier (wäre)”  

[Yt. 10.104].

tom yazata naire.manā kərəsāspō upa guδəm apaγžārəm Raŋhaiiā̊ mazdaδātaiiā̊.  
“Ihm opferte der heldensinnige Kərəsāspa an der Guδa, dem Arm der mazdāhgeschaffenen Ranhā”  

[Yt. 15.27].

Arəduuī sūre anāhite | moʃū mē jauua auuaŋhe | nūrom mē bara upastq̃̆m  
hazaŋrəm tē azəm zaoθraŋq̃̆m | haomauuaitinq̃̆m gaomauuaitinq̃̆m |  
yaoždātanq̃̆m pairiaŋharštanq̃̆m | barāni | aoi āpəm ygm Raŋq̃̆m |  
yezi jum frapaiiemí | aoi zqm ahuradātq̃̆m | aoi nmānəm yim xœaēpait̑̈m  
“O gewaltige makellose Arədvī! Eil mir rasch zu Hilfe, bring mir jetzt Unterstützung! Ich, will dir tausend haomahaltige, milchhaltige, in gehörigen Stand gesetzte, durchgesiehite Zaoθra’s bei dem Wasser Ranhā (dar)bringen, wenn ich lebend zu der ahurageschaffenen Erde hingelange (und) zu meinem Haus”  

[Yt. 5.63].

Available at: <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etc/iran/airan/avesta/avest.htm>  
German translation by Wolff 1910.

Vedic witness

I.112.12
yatḅh ih rasām kšodasā udnāḥ pipinvāṭḅh uḥ anaśvām yāṭḅh rāṭ̣ḅ am āvatam jiṣē  
yāṭḅh ih triśoκaḥ usriyāḥ udājata tāḅḅh u sū uthiḅḅh ih aśvina ā gatam
Ja: “Those with which you swelled the Rasā (River) with a gush of water, with which you helped the horseless chariot to victory, with which Triśoka drove up ruddy cows for himself – with those forms of help come here, o Aśvins.”

Gr: “Wherewith ye made Rasa swell full with water-floods, and urged to victory the car without a horse; Wherewith Triśoka drove forth his recovered cows,—Come hither unto us, O Aśvins, with those aids.”

Ge: “Durch die ihr die Rasa mit Wassers Flut angeschwelt habt, mit denen ihr den Wagen ohne Roß zum Sieg verhalfet, durch die Trisoka die Kühe heraustrieb, mit diesen Hilfen kommt doch ja her, ihr Asvin!”

IV.43.6.

síndʰuh ha vām rasāyā siñcat áśvān gʰ ṯnáḥ ! váyah aruṣásah pári gman
tát ū sū vām ajirām ceti yānams yēna pātī bʰ āvatʰ aḥ sūryāyāḥ

Ja: “The Sindhu River sprinkles your horses with the Rasā; your ruddy birds avoid the glowing heat. Your speedy vehicle has just appeared, with which you two become the masters [/husbands] of Sūryā.”

Gr: “Let Sindhu with his wave bedew your horses: in fiery glow have the red birds come hither. Observed of all was that your rapid going, whereby ye were the Lords of Sūrya’s Daughter.”

Ge: “Sindhu mit der Rasa benetzte eure Pferde; die rötlichen Vogelrosse entgingen den Gluten. Diese eure schnelle Fahrt machte fein Aufsehen, durch die ihr die Gatten der Surya werdet.”

V.41.15

padé-pade me jarimā́ nı̄ dʰ āyi vārūtrī vā śakrā́ yā pāyūbʰ iḥ ca
siṣaktu mātā mahī́ rasā nah smāt sūribʰ iḥ ḍjuhāstā ḍjuvāniḥ

Ja: “Step after step old age has been secured for me, either (by her) who is the able Shielding Goddess or by the protectors. Let the mother, the great Rasā, accompany us along with our patrons, she with hands outstretched, with winnings outstretched.”

Gr: “Duly to each one hath my laud been offered. Strong be Varūtrī with her powers to succour. May the great Mother Rasā here befriend us, straight-handed, with the princes, striving forward.”

Ge: “Auf Schritt und Tritt sei mir das Alter sichergestellt, sei es durch die mächtige Varutri und durch die Schutzgeister. Es sollen uns samt den Lohnherren die große Mutter Rasa zur Seite stehen, die eine redliche Hand hat, die redlichen Gewinn bringt.”
V.53.9.

Ja: “Let not the Rasā {River}, the Anitabhā, the Kubhā, the Krumu, let not the Sindhu bring you to a halt. Let not the overflowing Sarayu hem you around. On us alone let your favour be.”

Gr: “So let not Rasā, Krumu, or Anitabha, Kubha, or Sindhu hold you back. Let not the watery Sarayti obstruct your way. With us be all the bliss ye give.”

Ge: “Nicht soll euch die Rasa, Anitabha, Kubha, Krumu, nicht euch die Sindhu aufhalten, noch euch die quellenreiche Sarayu im Wege stehen. Bei uns soll eure Huld sein.”

VIII.72.13.

Ja: “Into the pressed soma pour glory {= milk}, the full glory of the two world-halves. The Rasā (River {= water} should receive the bull.”

Ge: “Gießet die Herrlichkeit in den ausgepreßten Saft, die beiden Welten überstrahlt! Den Bullen soll die Rasa annehmen!”

IX.41.6.

Ja: “O Soma, flow for us in, protecting stream all around on all sides, like {the heavenly river} Rasā, along the upper surface {of the filter}.”

Gr: “On every side, O Soma, flow round us with thy protecting stream, As Rasā flows around the world.”

Ge: “Fließe für uns in schützendem Strome, o Soma, ringsum wie die Rasa um die Erderhöhung!”

X.75.6

Ja: “To travel first joined with the Tr̥ṣṭāmā, {then} with the Susartū, the Rasā, and this Śvetyā, you, o Sindhu, {come} with the Kubhā to the Gomatī, with the Mehatnū to the Krumu, on the same chariot {with all these}, with which you go speeding.”
Gr: “First with Tr̥ṣṭāma thou art eager to flow forth, with Rasā, and Susartū, and with Śvetyā here, With Kubhā; and with these, Sindhu and Mehatnū, thou seekest in thy course Krumu and Gomatī.”

Ge: “Zuerst mit der Tristama zum Laufe vereint, mit Susartu, Rasa, mit dieser Svetya kommst du, Sindhu, mit der Kubha zur Gomati, mit der Mehatnu zur Krumu, mit denen du auf gleichem Wagen dahineilst.”

Ja: [Paṇi] “Seeking what has Saramā arrived here, for far is the road, swallowing up (the traveler) in the distance? What is your mission to us? What was the final turn (bringing you here)? How did you cross the waters of the Rasā?”

[Saramā] “Sent as the messenger of Indra I travel, seeking your great hidden treasuries, Paṇis. With a fear of leaping across – that helped us! – in that way I crossed the waters of the Rasā.”

Gr: “What wish of Saramā hath brought her hither? The path leads far away to distant places. What charge hast thou for us? Where turns thy journey? How hast thou made thy way o’er Rasā’s waters.”

“IcomeappointedmessengerofIndra,seekingyouramplestoresofwealth,OPanis. This hath preserved me from the fear of crossing: thus have I made my way o’er Rasā’s waters.”

Ge: “Mit welchem Ansuchen ist Sarama hierher gekommen? Der Weg so weit in die Ferne ist ja aufreibend. Was bedeutet die Sendung zu uns? Welches war der entscheidende Wendepunkt? Wie kamst du über die Fluten der Rasā?”

“Als Indra’s Botin komme ich abgesandt, eure großen Schätze suchend, ihr Pani’s. Aus Furcht vor dem Überspringen half sie uns dabei. So kam ich durch die Fluten der Rasā.”

Ja: “Whose are these snow-covered mountains (= the Himalayas) in their greatness; whose is the sea together with the world-stream, they say; whose are these directions, whose (their) two arms (= the zenith and nadir?) – Who is the god to whom we should do homage with our oblation?”
Gr: “His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasā his possession: His arms are these, his are these heavenly regions. What God shall we adore with our oblation?”

Ge: “Durch dessen Macht jene Schneeberge sind, durch dessen Macht, wie sie sagen, der Ozean samt der Rasa ist, durch dessen Macht diese Himmelsgegenden dessen beide Arme sie sind. - Wer ist der Gott, dem wir mit Opfer die- nen sollen?”

Available at: <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etc/ind/aind/ved/rv/m_t/
rv.htm>

Translations: Ja = Jamison & Brereton 2013; Gr = Griffith 1889[1987]; Ge = Geldner 1951.

Note: The abbreviations without special explanations, namely the parts of Avesta or dialects of the Uralic languages, follow standardly the abbreviations used in the quoted sources.

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Acknowledgement
The article was prepared under the auspice of the research Fund of Masaryk University, Nr. 2817. I am grateful to John Bengtson for his correction of English.
Volga – the First River of Europe

Volga – pirmoji Europos upė

SANTRAUKA

Šiame tyrime apibendrinami visi Volgos upės pavadinimai, kurie, kai įmanoma, yra aprašomi platesniame pirminių tekstų, pateiktų kontekste. Taip pat straipsnyje tiriamos ir aptariamos esamos etimologijos bei nurodomos naujos etimologijos, kai senosios atrodo nepakankamai įtikinamos. Volga yra ilgiausia Europos upė (ilgis – 3534 km (prieš užtvankų sistemą ji buvo 3693 km)) su didžiausiu baseinu (1 380 000 km²), vakariausia ir didžiausia Eurazijos upė bei didžiausia endorėjinė upė pasaulyje. Tokioms ilgoms upėms būdinga, kad jos įvairiomis kalbomis vadinamos keliais pavadinimais: septyni hidronimai (Ἀράξης, *As(a)El, Jul, Λύκος, Rao(o), Ὀαρός, Volga), išdėstyti abėcėlės tvarka, yra išsamiai išanalizuojami tiek etimologiniu, tiek semantinės motyvacijos požiūriu. Nors šių hidronimų etimologijos yra dažnai nesuderinamos, įvertinus jų semantinę motyvaciją, jos gali būti suskirstytos į dvi grupes. Pirmąją grupę sudaro visi Volgos pavadinimai, pagrįstai reikšmėmis, susijusiomis su „vandeniu“, t. y. „vanduo“, „vandeniu“, „vandenų slėnis“, „srovė“ (tėkmė)“, „potvynis“, „drėgmė“, „ežeras“, „jūra“. Antroji grupė apima terminus, apibūdinančius upę ar krantus, būtent: „platus“, „ilgas“, „išlenktas“, „be medžių“, „nekenkmingas“, „baltas / šviesus“, „juodas / tamsus“. Akivaizdu, kad pirmoji semantinė grupė yra tiesiogiai susijusi su vandeniu ir turėtų būti svarbesnė. Keliems etimonomams skirtinių etimologijų atrodo, kad tai apibūdina Volgos deltą. Kyla pagunda daryti išvadą, kad šios upės buvo išlaikytos ilgą laiką. Čia praėjusių ir turėtų būti svarbesnė. Keliems etimonomams skirtinių etimologijų atrodo, kad tai apibūdina Volgos deltą.
reliktinių gyvenviečių prie svarbių upių varduose, kurie yra kilę iš pirminių hidronimų. Šis mechanizmas padėjo išsaugoti daugelio svarbių upių vardus, nors jų krantuose keitėsi kalbos. Natūralu, kad šalia senų vardų atsiranda naujų. Volgos atveju jauniausias tokio tipo pavyzdys yra greičiausiai marų (fino-ugrų) Jul, paimtas iš senovės tiurkų šaltinio senovės uigūrų yuul „kalną upelis, šaltinis, versmė“.

Įteikt 2019 m. lapkričio 4 d.

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