

ONE HYPOTHESIS THE DECIPHERMENT OF
THE INSCRIPTIONS FROM MURFATLAR (BASARABI)

The Dobrudja—millennial cradle of countless generations of people that have been ever following one after another—has always been one of the most attractive provinces, as concerns the researches in the historical, ethnographical, sociological, political and cultural past of our country. This fact is fully justified by the rôle played by the Dobrudja, as this region has really enjoyed a great prestige (unlike a lot of other regions), namely, that of being a knot ensuring the relations between Orient and Occident, between the Mediterranean peoples and the Baltic and the Siberian ones.

The ancient and mediaeval history of the Dobrudja has since revealed some of its mysteries; however, from many a point of view, there are still a lot of them waiting for a disclosure.

Among the numerous localities and toponymical points where the Romanian archaeologists' diggings have ferreted out of late several time-honoured settlements, one is to mention also the village of Murfatlar (Basarabi), where during the years 1957-1962 an important monastic complex was discovered, near a big chalk quarry¹.

We shall not give here a description of the monuments in it, as these have been already presented as such in several studies. We shall deal only with some of the still undeciphered inscriptions engraved in the rocks² as well as with some zoomorphic and anthropomorphous carvings, whose secrets we try to ferret out. Of course, our attempt at this is but a hypothesis, that can be confirmed or refuted later on, not a final conclusion on the matter.

The inscriptions from Murfatlar, except those in Greek and in Palaeosla-

1. I. Barnea and Virg. Bilciurescu, "Şantierul arheologic Basarabi" (The Archaeological Diggings in Basarabi), in *Materiale de arheologie*, 6, 1959, p. 548; I. Barnea, "Les monuments rupestres de Basarabi en Dobrudja», Extrait des *Cahiers Archéologiques*, t. XIII, Paris, 1962, pp. 185 ff. See there the rest of the bibliography, too.

2. I. Barnea and Şt. Ştefănescu, *Din istoria Dobrogei* (Facts from the History of the Dobrudja), III, Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1971, pp. 230 ff.

vonice—written in Cyrillic or in Glagolitic—that have been already deciphered³ have aroused a great and due interest in them, not only from the experts in the fields, but also from people interested in such things, so that they have got by now several interpretations, more or less veracious. Thus, M. Isbășescu considered them as Gothic, i.e. coming from the successors of the ancient Goths, still living in the Dobrudja in the 9th century, and contemporaneous with the Latin writer Walfrid Strabo Fuldensis⁴. An analogous opinion was shared by P. Diaconu and P. Ș. Năsturel⁵. Bogdan P. Damian thought they were Turkish runes, out of which some were, according to him, Proto-Bulgarian, whereas the other ones were Proto-Glagolitic and Proto-Cyrillic⁶.

Of course, the decipherment of these inscriptions could offer new data concerning the research in and the dating of the respective monuments. From the very first one is to mention that the Murfatlar runes are of two kinds: 1) similar or identical to the runes discovered in other places from our country or from abroad (see table I)⁷; 2) specific to the Murfatlar writing (see table II).

Our decipherment of the texts has made us draw the conclusion that they represent several writing stages, these stages being different from one another as concerns both the language used in them and the period when the respective inscriptions have been engraved. Thus, we have got texts in *Gothic*, two variants marking the transition *Gothic-Old German*, texts in *Old German proper*, and in *Proto-Bulgarian*.

However, there are fairly close connections among these stages, that can be easily seen from even a perfunctory comparison of the letters in them (see table III). Only in a few instances the letter acquires a new phonetical value, from a stage to another; in most instances this phenomenon does not occur.













3. *Ibidem*, pp. 203 and ff.; G. Mihăilă, "Inscriptii slave vechi de la Basarabi (reg. Dobrogea)" (Ancient Slavonic Inscriptions from Basarabi-Dobrudja), in *Studii si cercetări lingvistice*, 15, 1964, No. 1, p. 40.

4. I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 231. See also P. Diaconu and P. Ș. Năsturel, "Citeva observații în legătură cu complexul arheologic de la Murfatlar (Basarabi)" (A Few Comments on the Archaeological Complex in Murfatlar-Basarabi), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 20, 1968, No. 11-12, pp. 942 ff.

5. P. Diaconu and P. Ș. Năsturel, *op. cit.*, pp. 937-946.

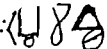
6. Damian P. Bogdan, "Grafitele de la Basarabi" (The Grafittores in Bassarabi), in *Analele Universității din București, Seria Șt. Soc. Ist.*, t. XVI, 9, 1961, pp. 40-41.

7. See also *Ibidem*, pp. 36-40.

The grammatical-phonetical inflexions are marked by means of certain signs, these being usually a straight, broken or curved line or even a point "annotating" the letters. Thus, one can come across the letter > or < also under these forms: , , , , whereas X can be met also as , , , , , , , . A more minute research in this device could thus reveal most interesting facts ensuring a deeper knowledge of the respective language and might undoubtedly modify some of our translations.

In order to solve in a satisfactory way the decipherment or the runic texts in Murfatlar we have made comparisons between them and a lot of other alphabets. In this respect we can mention: Norse runes, two variants of the Marcomans' alphabet, Scythian letters, Huns' letters, including also Attila's alphabet, Wurfila's alphabet, the ancient Hungarian writing, that of the peoples having inhabited the Orkhon-Yenisei region, the Pahlavi-Arsacide one and so on⁸. In order to decipher the letters specific to the Murfatlar writing we have resorted to various hypotheses, i.e. we have assigned various phonetical values to the symbols. We have felt ourselves entitled to consider as a true one, the phonetics value of a symbol when: a) we have been able to check it in several words, coming either from the same text or from texts belonging to different stages; b) alongside of symbols whose value had already been established by us, they have formed, together with these, words that can be found in dictionaries exactly under the same aspect as in the respective text⁹, a fact enabling us to avoid arbitrary "solutions".

Here are our decipherments proper:

I. Texts in Gothic: 1 a) The inscription¹⁰:  b) Transcription: k(niu) pud c) Translation: St. Pud.

The orthodox calendar has got, under April 15, "St. Ap. Aristarch, Pud

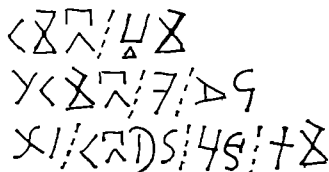
8. Our bibliography on this point is made up of the following works: E. Doblhofer, *Les déchiffrements des écritures*, Paris, Arthaud, 1961; Fischer-Károly Antal, *Hun-Magyar írás és annak Fennmaradt Emléki*, Budapest, 1889; L. Musset, *Introduction à la Runologie*, Paris, 1965; Zvonimir Kuludzić, *Historija Pisama* (The History of Writing), Zagreb, 1957, Vladimir Colin, *Povestea scrisului* (The Tale of Writing), Bucharest, Editura Tineretului, 1965.

9. For the translation of these texts I have used chiefly Dr. Alois Walde, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Ed. I, Carl Winter's Universitäts-Buchhandlung, Heidelberg, 1906.

10. The inscriptions are rendered according to I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-120.

and Trophymos”¹¹, whereas the Holy Writ¹² mentions Pud among the people who had turned their own house into a church for the Christian community. A tradition mentions that “later on his house was turned into a church called “pastoral”, as according to the tradition, St. Ap. Peter used to celebrate the Liturgy in it”¹³.

The inscription is incised on the western wall of the nave of the little church B 4, above the figure of a saint, whose clothes are very similar to those of a Byzantine patriarch¹⁴; however, this fact does not entitle us to consider the figure and the inscription as coming from the 10th century, as we shall see from the following.

2.a) The inscription: 

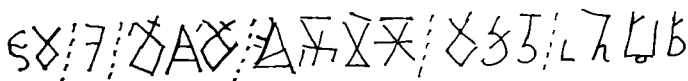
b) Transcription: *kuñ(i) Tu huñ(i) k aũ... bi kñiũ o z(io) n... u...*

c) Translation: “Thou, God, (do help us) whenever (we pray) here unto (Thee), kneeling down, ‘oh, God, N... U...”

All the words in this text are Gothic, except the term *Z(io)*, which could be rather an Old German word, according to the mention from A. Walde’s dictionary. This inscription is incised on the left lintel of the entrance of the little church B 4. Although we have attempted at achieving a “fluent” rendering, it is most likely that the inscription is not a complete one. Thus, we could not translate the last word from the second line, as well as the two last symbols—these seem to be the initials of two proper names, well-known already to the then “readers”, i.e. to the then “parishioners”:

II. Transition texts, in a mixed language, i.e. Gothic-Old German.

1.a) The inscription:



11. See Godefrido Henschenio and Daniele Papebrochio, *Acta Sanctorum*, Paris-Rome, 1866, Vol. XVI, p. XXIV, The Western Churches celebrate St. Pud on May 19; see *Ibidem*, vol. XVII, pp. 295-300.

12. II Tim. IV, 21.

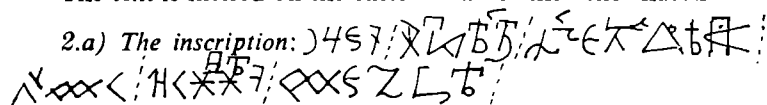
13. Dimitrije of Rostov, *Viețile Sfinților* (The Saints’ Lives), Chișinău, 1909, pp. 199-200; G. Henschenio and D. Papebrochio, *op. cit.*, vol. XVII, pp. 295-300.

14. I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 228.





b) *Transcription*: ob ñ bab atuo bai (m)ik pel; c) *Translation*: "It is a sad /thing/ for us not to be careful about both our lives /from/ here /until/ the end".

Out of the seven words in the sentence, four are in Gothic (ob, ñ, bai, -ik), one is met both in Gothic and in Old German (bab, bad), whereas the other two are in Old German proper.

The text is incised on the eastern wall of the little church B 4.

2.a) *The inscription*: 

b) *Transcription*: ouhhoni ond ini ghotara stuk r(i)h(k)ooni wokai; c) *Translation*: "The benevolent Heavens have protected us, so that they have not dared to kindle /= to defile/ our altar with desecration".


The text is incised on a fragment coming from a pillar of the little church B 4. Among the words in the sentence, three are in Gothic and three are in Old Norse-Icelandic, a branch of the ancient Germanic languages, used most probably by the vikings, too. Here they are: , ,  (in Gothic) and  (in Old Norse-Icelandic)

III. Old German proper texts:

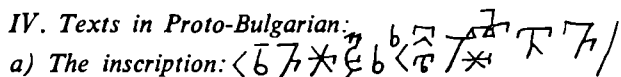
a) *The inscription*



b) *Transcription*: io loub rihh(i) al(h)s

c) *Translation*: "The Book of All-Eternity is forbidden (by) the king (emperor)," or, by extension, "The Holy Writ is prohibited by the emperor". The inscription is incised on one of the walls of the nave of the little church B 4. The words are in Old German, save for  that one is to rank among the Gothic terms, although it is possible that the text left should be but a fragment still extant from a wider one that has not reached us in full.

IV. Texts in Proto-Bulgarian:

a) *The inscription*: 

b) *Transcription*: kōñgō slakñ(o) l(a)mja g(a)nyt(i)

c) *Translation*: We think that this text allows for four variants-renderings:

1. "The powerful emperor is protecting the dead"
2. (by extension) "God redeems the lost (people)".
3. "Khan Krum is protecting the souls of the dead".
4. (by extension) "Khan Krum does not allow the violation of the sepulchres".

This inscription is incised on one of the walls of the nave of the little church B 4 too.

The decipherment of these inscriptions asks for a series of inferences that are to be drawn from it.

Thus, we are entitled, from the very first, to asseverate that the monastic complex in Murfatlar had been founded, not in the second half of the 10th century as the former opinion ran, but even far earlier¹⁵, i.e. about the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th one.

It is an ascertained fact that this "passage way of all invasions"¹⁶, as the Dobruđja has been rightly styled, was the place of big battles since the first centuries A.D. between the Eastern Roman Empire and the so-called "barbarians", this term being used also for the Goths, irrespective of the branch they belonged to.

These appeared in the regions bordering on the northern shores of the Black Sea, since about 200 A.D., and blended themselves with the Carpians. According to some sources, even Emperor Caracalla had had to fight them¹⁷. After the disappearance of the Severus dynasty, "the barbarian world of the Goths was set in full motion and brought or goaded the surrounding populations, such as the Yazygues, and the Roxolans (the Sarmatians), the Carpians and the free Dacians, and afterwards also the Gepidae, against the Roman districts situated down the Danube.

At the end of the 3rd century A.D. the Goths appeared themselves at the Lower Danube, and made themselves conspicuous through their many raids in the regions southwards of the Danube, from where they lead away many captives who thus increased and strengthened the Roman elements living

15. Since 1972, Deacon P. David has asseverated that "*The runic writing has been created on the territory of the Dobruđja... this being a proof that it has led to the apparition of a specific, independent writing there*", in his work *Primii martini creștini cunoscuți pe teritoriul patriei noastre* (The First Christian Martyrs Known on the Territory of Our Country), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 24, 1972, No. 3-4, p. 280. In another work of his, the same author has set forth his opinion that the monastic city in Murfatlar had been founded a long time before the 10th century; moreover, he has asseverated that St. Dimitrie the New from Basarabi, (whose relics are buried in the Patriarchal Cathedral) "had served his "apprenticeship" within the Murfatlar-Basarabi Community". See in this respect, for a wider research, his "Coinidențe și relații generale (indirecte) între Anglia și Dacoromania (sec. III-XIII)" (Coincidences and General-Indirect Intercourse between England and Daco-Romania, During the 3rd-13th centuries), in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 17, 1975, No. 5-6, pp. 746-781 and in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 20, 1968, No. 9-10.

16. Gordon East, *Géographie Historique d'Europe*, Paris, Gallimard, Ed. V, 1939, p. 67.

17. C. Daicoviciu, *Problema continuității în Dacia* (The Problem of the Continuity in Dacia), Reprint from the *Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice*, Cluj, vol. III, 1936-1940, pp. 48-49.

northwards of the Danube, although these had already been most weighty since previously in that zone"¹⁸.

The Goths blended themselves with the autochthonous people and this resulted in a mutual influence between them. As expected, the autochthonous people could be met throughout the whole of Dacia, including Scythia Minor too. They were forming most of the population living in these regions ruled by "the armed nation"¹⁹, of the invaders. Although the Goths formed a kind of "military camps" in the midst of the autochthonous people, whom they asked to pay them a tribute only, they were nevertheless compelled to have a frequent intercourse with these native people.

If one now thinks that the inscriptions from Murfatlar come from the 4th-5th centuries A.D., one ought nevertheless to remember that no correspondence is ever extant between the letters used here and those known from Pietroasa or from Radu-Negru. An explanation of this could be offered by the fact that by this time the Goths were already divided into classes, these being their aristocracy and the broad masses of their people²⁰. This aristocracy maintained a cultivated form of its Gothic idiom, whereas the language and the writing of the common people had reached another stage of the evolution of this same language, that some experts think as having been inferior to the former, as concerned its vocabulary and its grammar²¹.

After the invasion of the Huns, the Gothic tribal aristocracy went away together with the army, but the autochthonous Daco-Roman people, as well as the remainder of the Goths went on living on the territory of our country, "and continued its own civilization and searching for safer less dangerous zones on this same territory"²².

It is precisely to this same population, made up from the coinhabiting Daco-Roman elements and the Gothic ones that we are in debt for the beginning of the existence of the monuments from Murfatlar.

18. Maria Comşa, "Sur la romanisation des territoires nord-danubiens aux IIIe-IVe siècles de notre ère", in *Nouvelles études d'histoire*, vol. III, Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1965, pp. 28-29.

19. C. Daicoviciu, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

20. *Istoria României. Compendiu* (The History of Romania. A. Compendium), Bucharest, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1970, p. 93.

21. P. Diaconu and N. Anghelescu, "Despre necropola din sec. IV e.n. de la Radu Negru (Some Comments on the 4th Century Necropolis from the Village of Radu Negru), in *Studii şi Cercetări de Istorie Veche*, t. XIV, No. 1, 1963, p. 167-174.

22. C. Daicoviciu, Em. Petrovici, G. Ştefan, "La formation du peuple roumain et de sa langue", in *Bibliothèque Historique Roumaine*, I, 1963, p. 16.

It seems that the people living within this monastic complex were not acquainted with Wulfila's alphabet, owing either to the fact that his Bible was not spread among them, in their rather "remote" zone, or to some ulterior invasions, not to mention the fact that their Gothic writing in its turn could have become widely spread among their "parishioners".

We think that these monks were belonging to Arius's heretic sect. This opinion of ours is backed up both by the well-known fact that the Goths were indeed followers of Arius's and by an element of rupestral painting still unnoticed as it ought to deserve indeed to be. We have in view the stylized figure of a stag, incised on the eastern wall of the massif. At first sight, it would seem that the point where two of his horns meet each other is either erased or deteriorated²³. However, according to other sources that reproduce it too, this point of junction between the left horn and its branch appears most clearly on the picture²⁴.

When studying the stag's figure, one might think that it looks as if the stag's head were provided with three horns, although in fact this "third horn" is but a branch of the left one as we have already said. Thus, only two horns, the "extreme" ones are really springing up from the animal's forehead i.e. are springing up from one and the same origin. The "third horn", i.e. the branch springs up from the left horn at very short a distance from its "root", and equals it in size. As this is a rupestral picture from a church, we are quite sure that initially it had been afforded a sacred significance, so as each element from it has possessed of the worth of a symbol, that every "person in the know" ought to have really known. Now, one is aware that one of the basic dogmas of Arius's heresy was that the Son had been born in time from the Father, i.e. the Son was but a being created in time by the Father. This heretic conception was reproved by the First Oecumenical Synode in Nicaea at 325 A.D.²⁵.

One fact that the anonymous painter has chosen precisely the stag, an animal less frequent in Christian iconography, is pointing out also to some other affinities of the inhabitants of this monastic centre. To put it better, one can easily become aware that they were fairly well acquainted with the Dacian-Getic traditions, folklore and mythology where the stag was afforded a prominent rôle.

23. I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 270, fig. 56.

24. D. P. Bogdan, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

25. I. Mihălcescu, *Istoria Bisericii Universale* (The History of the World Church), vol. I, Bucharest, pp. 150-175.

We think that a lot of the figures incised on the walls of the churches in Murfatlar belong to some local carvers, well-acquainted with the time-honoured Dacian-Getic culture, and converted to the Christian faith. This our opinion is backed up also by the fact that one might indeed consider the 32 letters-runes specific to the Murfatlar-Basarabi writing (see table II), that stand also against the only 20 ones known also in other zones of Eurasia, as a reminiscence of the Getic-Dacian writing, so little known until now. The fact that the runes specific to these inscriptions can be met during a rather long period, as they can be found even in the Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions, is showing that the monastic complex in Murfatlar-Basarabi could have indeed sheltered a continuously extant community until about the end of the 9th century, and, more than that, even a true "school" where the cultural elements were handed down from a generation to another.

Although the language mostly met with in the inscription is the Gothic one, whereas most of the letters used belong to an autochthonous Getic-Dacian writing, a fact showing that the official language used in the divine service was Gothic by then, Gothic was only the language of the respective Germanic population, but not the "cultivated" "art" language of the then aristocracy. It is most likely that most of the people inhabiting the Murfatlar complex were of Dacian-Getic origin, as they had succeeded indeed in determining the adoption and adaptation of a lot of their ancient letters in the rendering of a foreign language. One knows that later on, in the Romanian Principalities, although the population was made chiefly of Romanians, who were speaking a most pure Romanian language, the divine service was celebrated for a rather long while, in Palaeoslavonic. The same thing occurred in the Roman-Catholic countries, where the divine service was celebrated into Latin.

As C. Daicoviciu has put it up, "an object can belong to a Gothic or to a Germanic type-pattern, but this is not always a proof that its owner a Goth or a German himself. The Germanic art and forms could have pervaded the respective culture by means of borrowings, either of the objects themselves or of the style used"²⁶.

During the last decades of the 4th century, the Huns made their appearance at the Danube's mouths; they were to bring with them a lot of changes within the structure of the populations then living on what was to become

26. Radu Vulpe and I. Barnea, *Din Istoria Dobrogei* (Facts from the History of the Dobrudja), II, Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1968, p. 404.

later on the territory of our country²⁷. "The Goths were falling back westward; some of them took refuge southwards of the Danube, ...and a part of these could have remained to live there in Moesia as *Gothi Minores*, acomodating themselves to the circumstances"²⁸.

The sojourn of the Huns on our territoires was but a short one, as the Daco-Romans and the Goths went on living on their ancient site. During this short sojourn, "the Huns belonging to the upper families used to speak Gothic, or, respectively the Gepidae's language, a fact proved by their use of Germanic names even beyond the kindred of the chiefs; this was thus a prolongation of the influence exerted upon them by the Ostrogoths when they had formerly lived eastwards of the Carpathian Mountains²⁹.

We think that the texts coming from the transition period can be dated as having been incised either during the Huns' invasions or a little after them. If the Gothic text No. 2 is but a pious prayer, this time the writer seems to have been a far more anxious man. It is most likely that this text was incised after a period of cruel persecutions or marked by deep political and social agitations.

Taking into account the resemblances extant between the letters ancised found out at Murfatlar and the ancient alphabet of the Huns and of the Hungarians, we feel inclined to think that they come from a period when the intercourse between the Daco-Romans-Goths and the Huns had already led to a certain "cementation" between them. A most interesting fact is the presence of terms belonging to the Old Germanic language known as Old Icelandic or Old Norse. It is possible that these terms had made their appearance owing to the influence exerted by the great commercial line connecting the Northern Europe and the capital of the Byzantine Empire³⁰.

The Murfatlar monastery could have been also been a hiding place, a shelter, as its site was not very far from the great center called Tomis (being only at some 20 kilometres far from it). Further diggings and excavations could bring forth new data in this respect.

27. C. Daicoviciu, *op. cit.* p., 59.

28. *Ibidem*, p. 60.

29. I. Andrișescu, *De la preistorie la Evul Mediu* (From Prehistory to the Middle Ages), Bucharest, Cultura Națională, 1924, p. 75. See also *Istoria României* (The History of Romania), Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1960, vol. I, pp. 594-597, 610-612 and 694-697.

30. I. Barnea "Elemente de cultură materială veche rusească și orientală în așezarea feudală din sec. X-XII de la Dinogetia" (Elements of Ancient Material Russian and Oriental Culture within the Feudal Bettlement of Dinogetia During the 10th-12th Centuries), in *Studii și Referate privind Istoria României*, I, Bucharest, 1964, pp. 204-206.

As concerns a series of zoomorphic pictures-representations, among which one can find also images of serpents, we cannot agree to a former opinion that they ought to be considered as belonging to a Northern population³¹. One is to keep into account that "the serpent incised on vessels is an ancient element of Getic-Dacian scenery, that has passed from the Iron Age through the Roman Age to the Age of Migrations...The serpent on the vessels coming from Roman Dacia is a national Dacian element"³², and we are dealing here even with a serpent whose head is that of another animal, most likely a wolf's one, a most eloquent proof in this respect.

It would be an interesting thing to ferret out the people to whom could belong the eight-wheel cart, incised on one of the walls of the quarry in Murfatlar.

The Proto-Bulgarian texts are making up the third group of inscriptions. We are told that at first "the Bulgarians lived between the Caucasus and the Lower Don, but were later on driven out westwards by the Khazars and then by the Hungarians. Some of them forded the Dnieper, the Dniester and the Danube and passed through the Dobrudja, attacking finally the city of Salonica in 675-677, whereas other Bulgarians occupied the plateau situated in the zone of the Lower Danube"³³. However, it is an ascertained fact that a lot of Proto-Bulgarian tribes had already appeared at the Lower Danube frontier of the Byzantine Empire, even as early as about 480. At the end of the 5th century they had already been admitted as "*foederati*" in the diocese of Thrace³⁴.

We think that the Proto-Bulgarian texts in Murfatlar come nevertheless from a later age, viz. from the first half of the 9th century, i.e. from the reign of Khan Krum (813-814), who, among other things, had shifted several Macedonian populations northwards of the Danube in order to strengthen the frontiers of his kingdom³⁵. One is aware also of the fact that the Bulgarians had adopted the Christian faith in the second half of the 9th century under the reign of Boris-Mikhail (852-889), whereas Krum, on the contrary, had exerted bloody persecutions against the Christians. We are aware also of the fact that Khan Krum was the first ruler-lawgiver of the Proto-Bulgarian state,

31. I. Barnea and Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

32. C. Daicoviciu, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

33. Gordon East, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

34. Radu Vulpe and I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 409; *Istoria lumii în date* (A Chronological Survey of the World History), Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 1972, p. 55.

35. Radu Vulpe and I. Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

and consolidated this way the internal organization of his country³⁶.

Taking now into account the two last texts variants of our translation, we could provide the following explanations for them: during Krum's persecutions, it was highly probable that his warriors violated and sacked also the graves, besides their sacking of the houses and of the edifices belonging in fact to the autochthonous people. In order to protect their graves in the burial places of the monastery from being thus violated, the monks who were literate people, wrote, on one of the entrance walls of the church, in the plunderers' language, some menacing and warning words taken over from the very articles of the law given by their own ruler. It would be indeed an interesting thing to ferret out among Krum's laws one comprising an interdiction concerning the violation of graves³⁷.

Of course, all our decipherments and comments dealing with the texts or with some zoomorphic and anthropomorphous figures incised on the walls of the little churches from Murfatlar-Basarabi are making up but a hypothesis, a modest attempt at elucidating some problems still racking the brains not only of experts, but also of all the people highly interested in a true knowledge of our past.

As for our decipherments proper, these are not "definitive" ones. They will be checked again, partly or wholly, if necessary, and chiefly when the other few texts that until now have not yielded their meaning will be deciphered too.

36. *Mic dicționar enciclopedic* (A Short Encyclopedic Dictionary), Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1972, p. 1348.

37. Concerning Khan Krum's policy, see M. Sâmpetru, "La région du Bas-Danube au X-e siècle de notre ère", in *Dacia, Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne*, Bucharest, t. XVIII, 1974, p. 249.

TABLE I

Correspondences between the runes of Murfatlar and those ferreted out in various sites of Eurasia

No.	RUNES	Phonetical value	SPRAEDING
1	ᚠ, ᚢ, ᚦ, ᚨ, ᚫ	a, o, r, z	Orhono-Yenisei
2	ᚷ	b	Celei, Ghensenken, Pliska, Preslav
3	ᚹ, ᚻ, ᚾ, ᚿ	o, g	Pliska, Slon
4	/	i	Mayatskoye, Mongolia, Nagy-Szent-Miklos, Novoherkassk, Orkhono-Yenisei, Simnicolaou
5	D	i	Mayatskoye, Mongolia, Novotcherkassk, Pliska, Simnicolaou
6	Z	k	Kirgizia
7	ᚨ	l	Pliska
8	ᚠ	n	Garvân, Pliska, Simnicolaou-Mare, Slon, Vinita
9	4	o	Mongolia, Orkhono-Yenisei
10	ᚷ	o	Mayatskoye, Mongolia, Orkhono-Yenisei, Pliska, Simnicolaou, Slon
11	H	r	Vinita
12	/	t	Pliska, Slon
13	ᚹ	u	Garvân, Kirgizia, Pliska, Simnicolaou-Mare
14	L		Pliska, Slon
15	O		Mayatskoye, Novotcherkassk, Preslav
16	P		Mongolia, Sarkel-Belaia, Vedja
17	T		Pliska, Preslav
18	ᚹ		Mongolia, Orkhono-Yenisei, Slon

TABLE II

Runic letters specific to the inscriptions in Murfatlar

























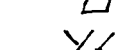
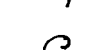



No.	LETTERS	Value	No.	LETTERS	Value
1		a	16		k
2		a	17		n
3		a	18		n
4		a	19		n
5		a	20		o
6		a	21		s
7		b	22		t
8		d	23		t
9		d	24		t
10		h	25		u
11		h	26		u
12		h	27		u
13		i, y, ä	28		w
14		j	29		gh
15		k	—	—	—

TABLE III

Comparison among the various runes used in Murfatlar

No.	Phonetical value	Gothic	Transition-Gothic		Old- German	Proto- Bulgarian
			I	II		
1	a	𐌰	𐌰, 𐌱, 𐌲, 𐌳, 𐌴, 𐌵, 𐌶	𐌰	𐌰	—
2	b	𐌶	—	𐌶, 𐌷	—	—
3	c	—	—	—	—	—
4	d	𐌸	𐌸	—	—	—
5	e	—	—	—	—	—
6	f	—	—	—	—	—
7	g	—	—	—	—	*, *
8	h	𐌹	𐌹	—	𐌹	—
9	i(ä)	𐌺	𐌺	5	𐌺	𐌺, 𐌻, 𐌼
10	j	—	—	—	—	𐌽
11	k	𐌻, 7	𐌻, 𐌼	𐌼	—	𐌽
12	l	—	—	𐌾	𐌾	𐌾
13	m	—	—	—	—	𐌿
14	n	𐌿, +	7, 𐌿, 𐌾	7	—	7
15	o	4	𐌿, 𐌾, *, *	𐌿, 𐌾	𐌿	—
16	p	𐌺, 𐌻	—	—	—	—
17	r	—	𐌿	—	𐌿	—
18	s	—	𐌿	—	𐌿	𐌿
19	t	—	𐌿, 𐌼	𐌿	𐌿	𐌿
20	u	𐌿, 𐌾, 𐌿	𐌿	𐌿	𐌿	—
21	v	—	—	—	—	—
22	w	—	𐌿	—	—	—
23	x	—	—	—	—	—
24	z	𐌿	—	—	—	—
25	y	—	—	—	—	𐌿
26	gh	—	𐌿	—	—	—