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History and culture of Volga Bulgaria - specificity of source basis

(Summary)

The research presents and comments upon the broad range of sources for the Volga Bulgaria's history and culture. From the point of view of the more and more enduring 'broad' understanding of the historical texts' building materials, what is meant under 'a source' in the text is a broad circle of evidences for the past, far exceeding the narrow framework of the traditional narrations. The history of Volga Bulgaria is divided in four stages and each of them is filled in with the available source basis – written evidences of Arab, Persian, Russian and West European origin, archeological finds, architectural monuments, numismatic samples, etc. Special attention is devoted to the legends, being a manifestation of the mental predisposition at the level of mass culture, as well as the utilization means of that special type of sources. The already existing in the mediaeval studies, as well as the alternative research and hermeneutics' algorithm for the 'interpretation', the 'understanding' of the cultural codes and messages respectively, implicitly laid down in the said evidences, is proposed and commented. Asynchrony is established between the political and the cultural history of the Volga state. Attention is drawn to several topical and frequently discussed themes, encountered in the sources for Volga Bulgaria, such as the participation of the Slavs in its state formation, the Turkic element in the Volga Bulgaria's culture, the pagan remnants, etc. Without claiming heuristic achievements, the hereby-proposed research aims to prove that the historical and cultural life of Volga Bulgaria may be reconstructed – a necessary and probably impending task facing the Bulgarian mediaeval studies.