# Mobile Pastoralism and Meat Consumption: an Archaeozoological Perspective

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It should be considered ironic that, while the majority of animal remains brought to light during the course of excavations represent food refuse, many archaeozoologists have traditionally tried to reconstruct everything from the environment around the site to the form of animal keeping that is the direct evidence of meat consumption. It is a welcome development, therefore, that more recently the primary interpretation of such finds as food remains has become increasingly explicit.

Because "the masculine element is sufficiently emphasized by the importance of hunting"[1] an androcentric bias has often been characteristic, especially of the ethnoarchaeological evaluation of faunal remains from hunter-gatherer sites.[2] Archaeological research has been dominated by the overrepresentation of traditional male roles while food preparation was relatively less intensively studied. In the spirit of this centuries long tradition, archaeozoology has also focused more on hunting and herding (preferably by "horsepersons"), although the signs of butchering, food processing and cooking can be observed quite accurately on excavated animal remains. More recently, faunal analysts have, at least indirectly, addressed gastronomic questions.[3]

The theme of this volume, as well as the attempts to reconstruct food characteristics of the Period of the Hungarian Conquest (see appendix),

[1] Clark 1954: 10.
[2] Gifford-Gonzalez 1993: 187.
[3] E. g. Coy 1972; Bartosiewicz 1985: 116, 1995; Vörös 1986; Schibler and Furger 1988; Van Wijngaarden-Bakker 1990; Takács 1990-1991.

mark a welcome crossroads in research. They equally represent an upswing in the study of archaeological food remains and the interest focused on ancient Hungarians and their culture at the time of the 1996 millecentennary celebrations in Hungary. It is especially fortunate, that such investigations are not only limited to conquering, 9th century Hungarians, but also are also concerned with pastoral nomads from related material cultures. Thus, certain general characteristics of meat consumption by nomads can be discussed on a broader basis, using archaeological evidence from several time periods.

The archaeological evaluation of this question is also important because written sources relevant to this topic invariably discuss eating habits in high society, at the feasts of sovereigns or chieftains, usually from the perspective of western ambassadors or missionaries who visited various "nomadic" empires in Asia. Household refuse from archaeological excavations, on the other hand, provides evidence for mundane meat consumption, often at small, rural settlements that has never been previously documented. This information helps to distance us from the romantic research attitude especially rampant in emotionally loaded historical topics such as the Hungarian Conquest.

## Theoretical framework

Archaeozoology is a discipline devoted to the identification, analysis and scientific as well as economic/cultural interpretation of animal remains from archaeological sites. In a paradox way, ancient human activity that by definition hinders the proper zoological analysis of archaeofaunal assemblages is one of the most important topics in archaeozoology. This type of "noise" in the zoological record can be culturally idiosyncratic and is therefore of utmost interest to the archaeologist. Food preparation itself is a typical human influence shaping archaeozoological assemblages which can be reconstructed from the animal remains brought to light at excavations.

Taphonomy, that is the study of all *post-mortem* modifications in animal bones, is a concept that entered archaeozoology from paleontology. Its special significance to archaeology is, that while *post mortem* effects are natural in paleontological deposits, archaeological assemblages went through taphonomic modifications under strong human influence. During the long process between the killing of an animal and the archaeological recovery of its remains, one should reckon with a number of natural and

anthropogenic effects. These may best be characterized by the following questions:

1. What is the source of our animal finds? (hunting, animal keeping, scavenging, etc.)
2. What kinds of animals were eaten/exploited? (domestic/wild, young/ old, etc.)
3. Which parts of the animals were brought to the site? (large animals especially, are often only partially represented among the finds)
4. What types of bones were destroyed/damaged/lost during food processing?
5 Where were food remains and refuse bone deposited? (scattered, buried, etc.)

In addition to these anthropogenic/cultural influences, classical taphonomic factors such as soil acidity, water transport, kryoturbation, etc. may cause further modifications to the animal bone assemblage prior to excavation. Archaeologists themselves may also be regarded as taphonomic factors at the very end of the line, since selective excavation, partial recovery or even incomplete publication further erode the original information content of animal remains as well as other artifact classes from archaeological sites.

## 1. The sources of animal remains – relations between hunting and animal keeping

The archaeological evidence provided by animal bones suggests that conquering Hungarians (similarly to other Eurasian pastoral peoples who reached the Carpathian basin during the first millennium), did not practice hunting for the purposes of meat procurement, although there is no reason to doubt that warriors and noblemen occasionally went hunting as a pastime or a form of military exercise as is often mentioned in written sources. The very sporadic occurrence of wild animal bones among the food remains, however, shows that pastoral people *produced* most of the meat they consumed. Roughly speaking, when less than one quarter of bones originate from hunted animals among the food refuse, one should not reckon with subsistence hunting.[4] Evidence of game animals is very rare even among the

[4] Bartosiewicz 1990, 288.

food remains enterred as grave goods with sometimes high-ranking personalities. Hare and wild fowl (including gathered eggs) must have been easily available even for common people. Evidence for fishing is negligible from archaeological sites of the Migration Period, although this may also be due to the lack of appropriate techniques of recovery: small animal bones can only be found when water sieving is systematically used.[5] Another animal product rarely considered is honey, that could also be acquired by gathering in most environments.

Although ethnographic analogies always have to be treated prudently, the question inevitably arises, how much meat pastoral people may have eaten at the time of the Hungarian Conquest? On the one hand, although a number of animals must have been kept, their great individual value must have made slaughtering relatively rare. Even the culling of smaller, more proliferant domestic animals (sheep, goat and pig), also known as the "small change" of pastoral communities,[6] must have been subject to serious consideration. Ethnographic analogies from the recent past in Anatolia show that some pastoral communities consume meat only 3-4 times annually. In addition, the evidence from excavated materials shows that many pastoral groups in the Migration Period of the Carpathian Basin also practiced some form of plant, especially cereal, cultivation, although, according to Ferenc Gyulai their characteristic cultigen was millet, a plant with a very short growing cycle, quite typical of mobile communities.

In addition to cultigens, dairy products must have played a very important role in the nutrition of early pastoral groups in the Carpathian Basin as well, although archaeological evidence for this type of product is significantly more limited than for meat. Most nomadic peoples regularly milk dams in their herds. This not only provides a continuous supply of animal protein on a daily basis, but due to the different (and thus complementary) lactation cycles of various animal species, guaranteed milk provision for the greater part of the year. Therefore it must be hypothesized that perishable dairy products, not really very detectable in the archaeological record, were essential in the diet of conquering Hungarians.

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[5] Bartosiewicz 1983.

[6] Dahl and Hjort 1976. In the Near East, even today, sheep and goat are not kept so much for meat but rather for secondary products and to be used as a trading currency. Akkermans 1990.

## 2. The relative roles of various animals in meat provisioning

The overwhelming majority of animal remains from Migration Period and early medieval sites in Hungary originates from cattle and sheep or goat, although the contribution of pig bones to food refuse tends to increase through time. Meanwhile, the frequency of horse bones which display evidence of meat consumption declines. It is for this reason that the proportion of horse and pig bones among the food refuse is a characteristic feature of archaeozoological assemblages from the broader time period under discussion here. The proportion of these animal remains from 22 sedentary and 34 pastoral settlements are summarized by cultures in Figure 1. Pastoral "nomadic" animal keeping in this graph is represented by Saltovo Majack and Balkan Danubian (east of the Prut River) cultures and bone assemblages from the Period of the Árpád Dynasty that followed the Hungarian conquest in the Carpathian Basin. These three cultures fall into the upper right corner of the graph. Their similarity stems from a high relative contribution of horse and sheep within the number of identifiable bone specimens (NISP). Avar materials represent a special, transitional case with a high ratio of sheep NISP, but few bones indicative of horse flesh consumption. This neatly illustrates the observation by Péter Tomka that heterogeneous populations of the Carpathian Basin during the three centuries of Avar occupation turned increasingly to sedentism.[7] Sedentary cultures in this graph were selected from coeval eastern Europe.[8]

The possibility of pig keeping by ancient Hungarians has been fiercely debated since the beginning of this century. According to Béla Tormay, it was incomprehensible that pigs could have been herded into the Carpathian Basin at the time of the conquest. Meanwhile, Ottó Herman saw no contradiction between the nomadic lifeways pursued by Hungarians and the possibility of pig keeping. Undoubtedly, pigs are not as easily herded over long distances as sheep, goat or large stock. In addition, pig is a species that prefers humid environments. Considering, however, that unimproved breeds of pig are quite agile, one should not rule out the possibility that ancient Hungarians migrated with their pig stocks. At the turn of this century, pigs stolen beyond the Drava river were sometimes herded as far as 130 km to the southern coast of Lake Balaton. In Mexico, pigs are driven to the market over similar distances in hilly terrain.[9] It should also be noted that pig is the

[7] Tomka, in this volume.
[8] For details on these cultures see Bartosiewicz 1993: 125-126.
[9] Diener and Robkin 1978.

most proliferate of all domestic animals, that is, it may have spread very rapidly among newly arrived Hungarians who settled in the Carpathian Basin, even if the rapid pace of their "migration" during the conquest did not favor long distance pig herding.

The underlaying assumption behind this century old debate may have been ideological, since in a schematic, uniformitarian interpretation pigs represent a sedentary way of life, culturally "superior" to nomadism. In fact, keeping sheep and goat can be a key to a different form of development in a centralized management system. In addition to meat, these animals also provide a surplus of secondary products (milk, wool) and they are easily controlled (with very little labor investment) in flocks much larger than those of pig.[10] In fact, the rise of mighty mobile pastoral empires has attested to the fact that sophisticated social and cultural systems could emerge on the economic basis of caprine keeping. It remains a mystery, however, whether pigs carefully depicted in the Thuróczy chronicle in 1486[11], in fact belong to the heroic invaders of the newly acquired homeland or to captured local sedentary agriculturalists who are being herded away on the left side of the picture (Figure 2).

In spite of the presence of pigs in archaeozoological assemblages from the relevant period in the Carpathian Basin, the most important meat purpose animal in local pastoral communities must have been sheep (and goat, whose bones are not easily distinguished from those of sheep). Although slaughtering an ox or horse must have yielded ten times as much meat as killing a sheep[12], these valuable, large animals were probably mostly killed on special occasions. The ratio between the body mass of small and large ungulates is sometimes reflected in the frequency by which these animals are killed: Slaughtering a horse is often preceded by the killing of ten sheep.

The horse, an animal which declined in importance in the diet of pastoral peoples in the Carpathian Basin, has always been a deeply appreciated animal with highly valued meat in nomadic communities. In the middle of the 8th century, Pope Gregory III banned the consumption of horse flesh in the Christian world, possibly in order to protect horse stocks for the military that was supposed to keep Islamic expansion at bay. As is usual

[10] Akkermans 1990: 245-249.

[11] Published half a millennium after the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Beware of the iconographic bias and the fact that Huns and Hungarians have been consistently mistaken for each other in many historical sources.

[12] Matolcsi 1982.

with meat taboos, however, the ideology of this ruling was rooted in a decree by the missionary Winfried Bonifatius from 715 which denounced the consumption of horse flesh on hygienic grounds.[13] The taboo against eating horse flesh was observed to varying degrees in various European countries.[14] A gap in horse meat consumption is clearly illustrated by the absence of a specific term for it in English. As Normanization reached the mundane British kitchen, the loan-words beef, pork, mutton, venison (13th century) and poultry (14th century) were adopted. "Cheval" or any of its derivations, however, failed to enter the English gastronomic dictionary.

Especially in the young Hungarian Kingdom, banning horse flesh meant direct confrontation with pagan, pastoral tradition. According to the Vienna Illustrated Chronicle, as part of Vata's uprising against the king in 1046, as a quasi-political gesture, the defiant rebels "devoted themselves to the devil, ate horse flesh and committed all sorts of terrible crime".[15] This ancient custom, apparently, survived for centuries in Hungary in spite of the strong drive against non-Christian rituals. Eastern pastoral groups such as the Cumans and Iasians continuously infiltrated into the Carpathian Basin between the 11th and 13th centuries. The evidence of horse remains from 15th century features at the rural settlement of Szentkirály suggests that the meat of these animals was possibly eaten by Cumanians even at that late time.[16]

It is noteworthy that horse as a supplier of meat regained some, at least regional importance following the French Revolution. Today consumers in Belgium will pay for prime cuts of horse 90-98% of the price charged for the same parts of beef (Figure 3). The similarity in these values reflects the comparably high relative production costs of meat from large bodied, slow growing, unipara animals. The slight difference may be related to the still wider cultural acceptance of (higher market demand for) beef in modern society.

In terms of quantity, beef must always have been an important source of animal protein. Cattle remains, however, regularly occur at settlements from all periods in Hungary, not only from the Migration Period and Early Middle Ages. Their presence, therefore, is not as diagnostic as those of sheep, pig and especially horse. Goat remains are relatively rare. The consumption of dog meat, widely practiced in modern day Asia, was

[13] Becker 1994: 31.
[14] Langdon 1986: 261.
[15] Matolcsi 1982: 252. Note that in this quote, horse eating is mentioned before all the other sinful things.
[16] Takács 1988-1989: 103.

unknown. There must have been a taboo against eating these animals, although they seem sometimes to have been sacrificed for ritual purposes.[17]

## 3. Partial carcass representation and the spatial distribution of bones

This topic, to some extent, is again related to the question of hunting. On the basis of ethnographic analogies, it may be presumed that part of the meat procured by hunting was shared or even consumed on the spot of primary butchering. If, similarly to several modern day nomads,[18] this practice was followed by ancient Hungarians, it is understandable why wild animal bones, attributable to opportunistic hunting, made it to the refuse pits of settlements so infrequently. Some useless carcass parts, including several of the bones themselves, may have been left behind to reduce transportation efforts. Sometimes pieces of the skull or bones from the distal extremity segment (toe bones), may have been taken home with the hide of large game animals skinned off-site (Figure 4).

At the early medieval site of Örménykút 54, masses of cattle bone were concentrated in an area that barely measured two square meters.[19] This butchering site, located on the settlement's periphery was discovered almost by accident. It shows that primary butchering (and probably slaughtering) of domestic animals took place in a special area, and only a part of the bones were carried around with pieces of meat to other quarters within the settlement. Notably, the skeletal parts found in the aforementioned pile of bones represented carcass segments which are very poor in edible parts (Figure 5). This spatial distribution is a small-scale parallel to the phenomenon described in connection with hunted animals. A different pattern was observed at the early medieval rural settlement of Ménfőcsanak – Szeles dated to the Period of the Árpád Dynasty, where articulated extremity bones of horses were scattered between the dwellings.

Horse heads and feet (meta- and autopodia) are frequently placed in the graves of various pastoral peoples in the steppe (Figure 6), and this tradition survived in the Carpathian Basin as well (Sarmatian, Early Avar and Hungarian burials[20]). Identical skeletal elements from sheep (skulls and

[17] Vörös 1991.
[18] See Vékony in this volume.
[19] Bartosiewicz 1988.
[20] e. g. Bartosiewicz 1996a.

metapodia) are also frequently found in similar positions.[21] Although these bones are widely interpreted as the remains of the sacrificial animals whose meat was eaten during the burial feast along with their skin (with appendicular bones cf. Figure 4) buried with the deceased, another modern parallel to this tradition is worth hypothesizing. At several marketplaces in Anatolia I saw cooked heads[22] and feet[23] of sheep sold as a special delicacy (like "corn on the cob") in front of butcher's shops. Although they were offered for sale not by individual animal but kept in separated stacks, these heads and feet had nothing to do with the animals' skin anymore. This distant but thought-provoking analogy is a warning that anatomically similar bone finds from different animals at archaeological sites cannot be interpreted following a rigid scheme: Sometimes similar sheep remains in Avar graves may be primary food offerings rather than bones left in the hides.

## 4. Carcass partitioning and cooking

Once an animal is slaughtered, its body may be cut up following more than one method. Evidently, specialized butchers developed more or less optimal ways of carcass partitioning (with regard to the anatomy of each species) by the Middle Ages. The actual methods of butchering, however, always depended on the tools available for this work and the ways people intended to use resulting cuts. These differences can also be observed on animal bones from archaeological sites.

As far as the best cuts of horse are concerned, another look at a contemporary parallel is worth considering. As opposed to cattle, low quality parts and intestines of horse are not sold in contemporary Belgian supermarkets. The parts (analyzed in Figure 3) largely coincide with *učа* which in northern Kirghiz pastoral communities is considered the most precious cut of horse.[24] It corresponds to the hip region between the horse's eighth vertebra and tail. Although the cross-cultural appreciation of various carcass parts tends to show significant variability even in modern Central and Western Europe,[25] this anatomical region objectively represents high

[21] Bartosiewicz 1996b.
[22] Including the tongue and the first and sometimes second cervical vertebrae.
[23] Complete distal extremity segment.
[24] c. f. the study by Gábor Vékony in this volume.
[25] Bartosiewicz 1997.

culinary value (i. e. pure, tender meat) that is not easily masked by geographical, temporal or cultural distances.

It is easy to understand that barbecuing a complete ox or sheep would result in more intact bones than the preparation of stew in a kettle with a diameter of 20-30 cm. Even today, bones are often cracked up to release marrow into the stew's juice. It is more likely, on the other hand, that in the first case exposure to open fire would cause more charring on the surfaces of bones that are not covered by meat.

In comparison to bones from later periods, butchering refuse left behind by pastoral peoples in the Carpathian Basin seems to be less consistently cut up. It may be hypothesized that this work was not always carried out by specialized personnel, and even the metal tools used were not as sharp and powerful as the axes and knives of Roman or late medieval butchers.

The kitchen refuse of pastoral peoples comparable to conquering Hungarians is characterized by a high degree of butchering that may be often interpreted as pot-sizing. Sometimes more robust cattle and horse bones show signs of vigorous hacking, although these marks are never as systematic as in the case of the aforementioned Roman and medieval finds. They may also indicate major pieces of meat which may have been consumed on special occasions.

Assuming that meat was not preserved means that any beast that was slaughtered would have had to be eaten in a relatively short time. Especially in the case of large domesticates such as cattle or horse, a certain number of people would have been required to participate in sharing the fresh meat. This is why killing animals for major feasts such as weddings or funerals seems to have been more reasonable than for everyday purposes. Horse skulls and foot bones are most characteristically found in graves from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest.[26] They are widely presumed to have come from the animals' hide, but they may also represent remains of individuals whose meat was eaten by the perhaps numerous people who gathered for the funeral. Unfortunately, no such food remains have yet been found to allow the direct testing of this otherwise realistic hypothesis.

Preserving meat, however, must have been a priority in many cases. I regard the much debated quote by Amianus Marcellinus from the 4th century as indirect evidence for this: "the Huns... eat meat from all sorts of animals, which they place on their horse's back under their thighs thereby making

[26] e.g. Matolcsi 1982: 234-235, Figs. 75-76.

them tender and warm."[27] Confusing Huns and Hungarians with each other is a common mistake even today. Regardless of this inaccuracy, it seems quite possible that horsemen took some sort of meat (perhaps dried and salted) with them on long rides. Such supplies could have been kept somewhere near or under the saddle.[28]

Fourteenth century records from Hungary reveal how beef was first cooked in large kettles, then filleted, salted and dried in ovens. Once the meat had thus been prepared, it was pulverized for the purposes of storage.[29] Obviously, this medieval plebeian recipe did not require particularly high quality meat or special attention paid to carcass partitioning. Nevertheless, its roots may reach back many centuries.

## 5. Eating and garbage disposal

Everyday meals from the period of Hungarian Conquest are not only illustrated by animal bones but also by potsherds and, most recently, plant remains. The hypothesis that most fresh meat was consumed by common people probably on special occasions may explain the relatively small number of bones recovered from Migration Period and early medieval sites. Only a proportionally small part of animal remains originates from well-preserved burials, especially those from the Avar Period. Since, however, such grave goods also represent special occasions, i. e. food sacrifices, one should not presume that they precisely reflect everyday dietary patterns.

Animal bones found at the settlements of pastoral peoples were not always deposited in clearly defined, tidy refuse pits. One result of nomadic life was that, in contrast to, for example, prehistoric features that are filled by bones accumulated over long periods of time, the peoples under discussion here (including conquering Hungarians) probably spent shorter periods of time at smaller sites which did not favor the spectacular buildup of well-preserved animal remains commonly observed, e. g., in the cess-pools at medieval urban sites. Animal bones thus left lying all over a settlement's surface, were exposed to more trampling, re-deposition and destructive gnawing by dogs. This multi-faceted taphonomic loss may

[27] Szántó 1986: 6.

[28] According to an alternative interpretation, pieces of raw meat were placed on the saddle to cure the horses' sore back on long rides.This assumption, however, is even more difficult to prove.

[29] Miskulin 1905: 72.

further reduce the number of bones found at habitation sites of early pastoralists.

## Epilogue

Food habits form an integral part of our culture and follow its dynamic changes. Even today, our meals carry an inseparable symbolic content, which is not simply determined by our economic position. Beyond the variability related to individual taste, general trends may be observed such as the modern day spread of vegetarianism or the well known low level of fish consumption in modern day Hungary. An excellent example of this complex phenomenon was the dinner, whose celebratory timing, scientifically selected raw materials, creative forms and preparation not only said something about our past and present but, perhaps more importantly, about the relation between the two.

## Appendix

Menu composed and prepared on the occasion of the symposium by Dénes Sándor (College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism), Csaba Nyers (Society of the Friends of Ancient Hungarian Culture) and Péter Mózes (Fortuna Restaurant). Animal products in bold face print, notes by the author:

Foods:

**Eggs**[30] filled with dill-flavored **sheep cheese** and lentil salad
Barley soup seasoned with lovage
Tarragon **lamb** in a thick sauce
**Brown hare** in saffron dip
**Fowl**[31] barbecue with ginger[32] flavoring
**Venison** baked in wheat bread with forest mushrooms
Larded roast **horse**
Cereal dumplings

[30] In addition to domestic hen, all sorts of wild fowl must also have played a role in nutrition.
[31] See footnote 28.
[32] This substance may have been acquired through long-distance trade.

Chick pea kasha with buckwheat
Baked apples filled with nuts and **honey**
Millet pancakes with ashberries
**Curd** flavored with fruits and **honey**
Dried and fresh fruits
Wheatbran biscuits

Beverages:
Pear spirit (unknown in the 9th-10th century)
**Kumiss**
Somló "Sheep's tail" wine[33]
Beer
Fruit juices
Spring water
Tea[34]

The special feature of this list is that particular attention was paid to the authenticity of ingredients (better known from direct archaeological evidence), while the modes of preparation were admittedly suited to modern equipment and contemporary tastes. This soundly explicit approach should be particularly welcome, since dilettante reconstructions of ancient lifeways often obliterate the delicate line between fact and fiction, thereby damaging their own research credibility.

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[33] This is the possibly oldest (dry white) wine available in modern day Hungary. However, it post-dates the Period of the Hungarian Conquest by several centuries.
[34] See footnote 32.

composition and the *per capita* energy consumption of the human population in developing countries). *Állattenyésztés és Takarmányozás* 33/3: 193-203.

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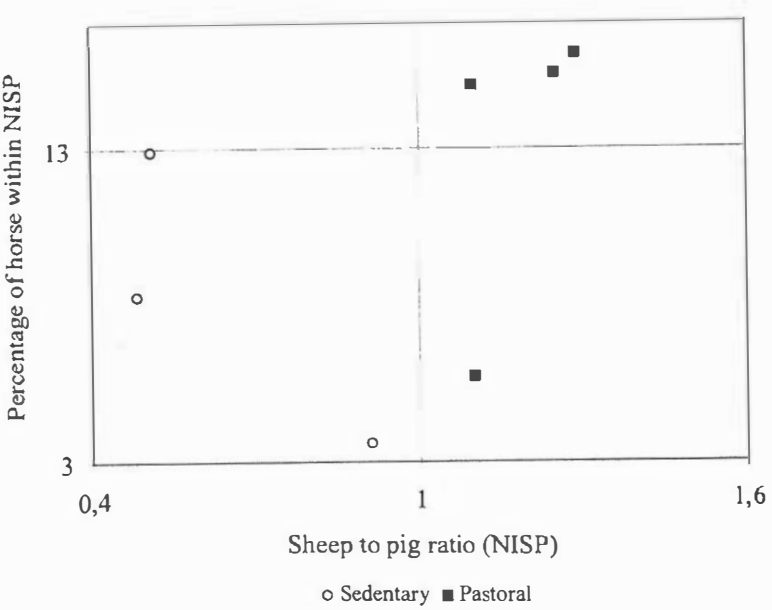


| | | Sedentary | Pastoral |
|---|---|---|---|
| Saltovo | 1,29 | | 16 |
| BD north | 0,91 | 3,6 | |
| BD east | 1,1 | | 15 |
| Romni | 0,51 | 12,9 | |
| Avar | 1,1 | | 5,7 |
| Slavic | 0,482 | 8,3 | |
| Árpád | 1,25 | | 15,4 |

Fig. 1: Animal remains from different cultures in Eastern Europe (56 settlements)

Fig. 2: The 1486 depiction of the Hungarian conquest
in the Brno (Brünn) edition of the Thuróczy Chronicle

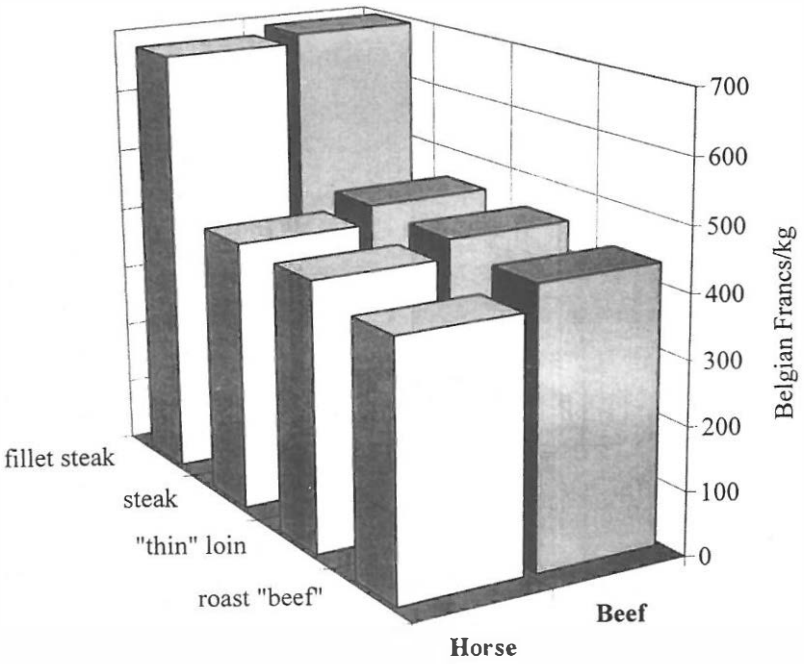


Fig. 3: Modern prices of horse meat and beef


Fig. 4: Albrecht Dürer's picture of a skinned stag
with characteristic "terminal" bones (after Kurth 1963: 284-285)

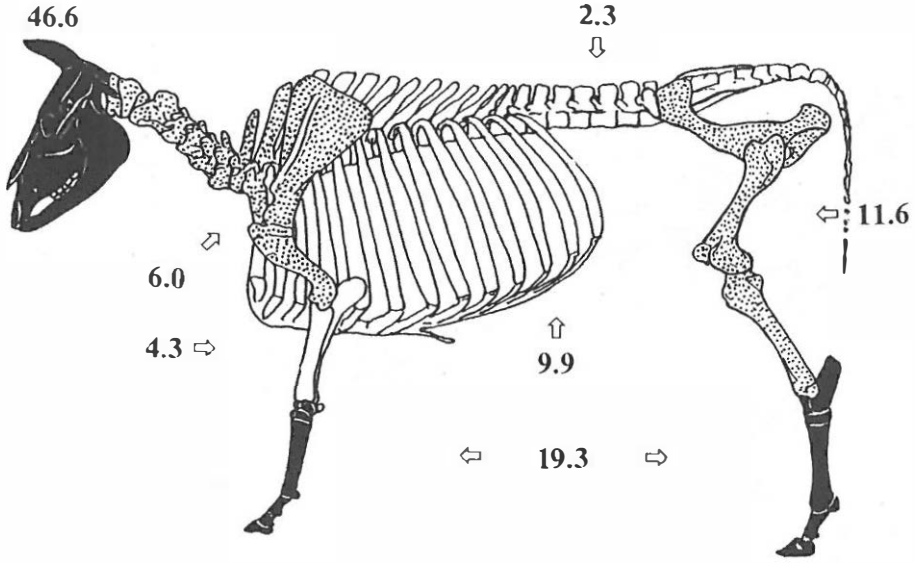


Fig. 5: The percentual contribution of various skeletal regions (by weight) of 7 (MNI) cattle at the Örménykút butchering site

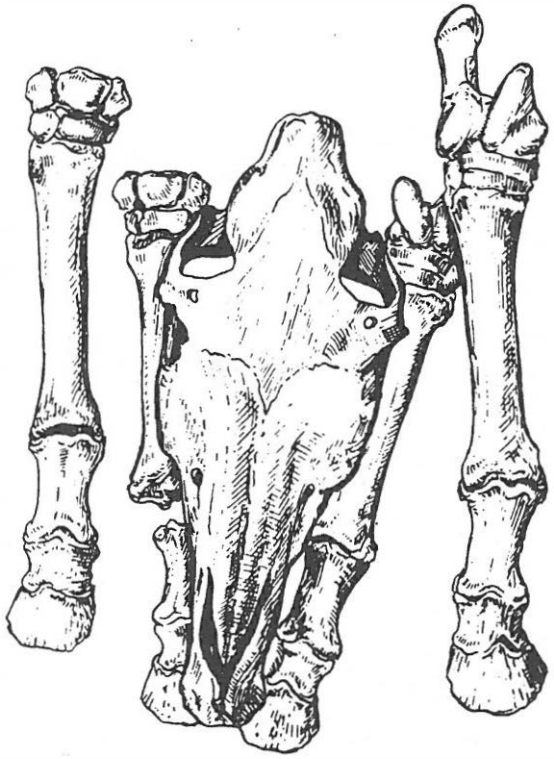

Fig. 6: Typical arrangement of horse bones in a Bulgarian burial (after Matolcsi 1982)

# Tender Meat under the Saddle

## Customs of Eating, Drinking and Hospitality among Conquering Hungarians and Nomadic Peoples

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON GERHARD JARITZ

SONDERBAND VII

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# STAMRA

(Studia archaeologica
mediae recentisque aevorum
Universitatis Scientiarum
de Rolando Eötvös nominatae)

EDITED BY JÓZSEF LASZLOVSZKY

VOLUME II

# Tender Meat under the Saddle

## Customs of Eating, Drinking and Hospitality among Conquering Hungarians and Nomadic Peoples

In Memory of
Gyula László
(1910 – 1998)

Edited by József Laszlovszky

Krems 1998

The articles have been part of a conference organized by the College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism, the Society of Old-Hungarian Culture, and the Department of Medieval and Postmedieval Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (October 10-11, 1996).

Translated from Hungarian
by Alice M. Choyke and László Bartosiewicz

Cover illustration: The seven chiefs of the Hungarians (detail),
J. Thuróczi, *Chronica Hungarorum*, Brünn 1486.


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# Table of Contents

# Preface

1996 was the year of millecentennial celebrations of the Hungarian conquest. Many scholarly conferences and popular programmes were organised for this occasion. The theme of this volume was the topic of a programme organised by the College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism, The Society for Old-Hungarian Culture and by the Department of Medieval and Postmedieval Archaeology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. The first part of the programme was the conference on the archaeological, historical and natural scientific researches on the customs of food consumption of the Hungarian conquest period. These papers are representing a new approach as well an upswing in the study of every day life and material culture. Thus, the study of archaeological food remains and the research on the culture of conquest period Hungarians were relevant contributions for the organisers to the 1996 millecentenary celebrations in Hungary. The conference was not only limited to the $9^{th}$-$10^{th}$ century conquering Hungarians, but also was concerned with the pastoral nomads from the Migration period and the Middle Ages.[1]

The scholarly programme of the conference was followed by an exhibition on the archaeological food remains and finds, on the objects of nomadic peoples from early modern period and on modern art objects inspired by these ancient cultures.

The most exotic part of the programme was the dinner organised by the college. This was an attempt to help this institution to create standards for historical tourism and experimental programmes. The special feature of this dinner was the cooperation between scholars of historical studies and specialists of catering and tourism. Particular attention was paid to the authenticity of ingredients (known from historical sources and

[1] The first version of some of the papers presented at this conference was published in Hungarian. *"Nyereg alatt puhítjuk". Vendéglátási és étkezési szokások a honfoglaló magyaroknál és a rokon kultúrájú lovasnépeknél.* Szerk. Laszlovszky, J. Ómagyar Kultúra 10 (1997) különszám. = Tudományos Közlemények II. Kereskedelmi, Vendéglátóipari és Idegenforgalmi Föiskola, Budapest 1997.

archaeological evidence), while the modes of preparation and serving were obviously suited to modern equipment, conditions and contemporary tastes. We regarded this experiment as an important step in the cooparation between scholars and specialists of historical tourism, since dilettant reconstructions of conquest period every day life were also present in the programmes of 1996.

The title of this volume refers to that strange ancient, but often present day, understanding of the customs of „barbars" or nomadic peoples which has also influenced scholarly studies for a long time. Ammianus Marcellinus from the 4th century wrote: „the Huns ... eat meat from all sorts of animals, which they place on their horse's back under their thighs thereby making it tender and warm." A part of this observation is interesting for the ancient history of food consumption or animal husbandry, either reflecting the practice that horsemen took some sort of dried meat with them on long rides, or recording another practice to cure the horses' back with pieces of raw meat. The other part of this sentence is just an example for the topoi of „civilised people" as they misinterpreted some customs of the „barbars".

We dedicate this volume to the memory of Gyula László, professor of archaeology, who was the most important figure in Hungarian archaeology to introduce a new approach: to see the people and their life in the archaeological finds and objects. His pioneer work *The Life of the Conquering Hungarian People* is regarded by the authors of this volume as a standard for those who want to reconstruct the past.

József Laszlovszky