The Culture of Conquering Hungarians

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Academically based, sound views concerning the character of Hungarian culture during the Period of the Hungarian Conquest have been put forward in historical research since the end of the last century. The millenary celebrations (1896) in Hungary also stimulated research that yielded an impressive body of scientific information. Written sources from the conquest period were collected, translated and published, a collection of 10th century archaeological finds was published, and other disciplines also contributed long lasting results on that occasion.[1] For the first time, the opportunity arose for scholars representing various aspects of research to compare and discuss their opinions on the character of the culture developed by the ancient Hungarians.

Nevertheless, forming a coherent opinion was not easy even then. By that time it had become clear that Hungarian is not an isolated orphan in the linguistic universe and originates neither from the language of Attila's people as had been thought previously but belongs to the large family of Finno-Ugric languages spoken by relatively few people. In coeval Byzantine, Arabic, Persian and Western sources our ancestors at the time of the Hungarian Conquest are described as one group of many pastoral nomadic peoples from the steppes. They are often referred to by the names of these peoples as Scythians, Turks or Onogours. These two indisputable facts presented a formidable puzzle for researchers in the last century. The image of our linguistic relatives, who at the time populated the northern regions of the Russian Empire, seemed rather incompatible with that of the brave mounted warriors who had conquered the heart of Europe. This way of thinking is a prime example of historical Darwinism. They knew of the accounts of Antal Reguly on the Ob Ugrians (Voguls and Ostyaks), who in the middle of the 19th century lived in immense poverty, under conditions

[1] Pauler - Szilágyi (eds.) 1900.

that were considered in any case primitive. Although their language was closest to ours, these scholars found it unimaginable that ancient Hungarians had ever pursued such a miserable way of life. This attitude, however, is rooted in the assumption that the 19th century state of Ob Ugrians may have reflected ancient Hungarian lifeways. Today, it is practically incomprehensible how those excellent scholars could subscribe to such a naive idea more fit for medieval genealogists. In a more-or-less explicit way they presumed that the historical development of any nation could only be progressive. This meant that ancient Hungarians must have lived on the same or even on an "inferior level of culture" as 19th century Ob Ugrians when they separated from their relatives. Readers of these scholarly studies today may wonder why none of them hypothesized that cultural deterioration of our linguistic relatives might possibly have taken place following separation from the ancient Hungarians.

In order to understand their way of thinking, however, one must also take into consideration the atmosphere of the millenary celebrations as well as the prevalent view of history at that time. Self-confident citizens of a dynamically developing country had every reason to presume that the nation evolved along a progressive course and that it would overcome the historical handicap relative to more developed regions of Europe in the foreseeable future. (Economic indices massively supported this general feeling.) In spite of apparent difficulties, the future of the nation was perceived in a very optimistic manner. Increasingly self-confident Hungarian public opinion had an understandably hard time accepting the newly discovered relations with impoverished Finno-Ugric peoples with no independent state and who were at the time looked down upon. The historical perspective of Hungarian aristocracy rooted in the Middle Ages was significantly more popular. Naturally, it was not Kézai's 13th century description of Hungarian nobility that they relied upon, but the Holy Scripture of the Hungarian aristocracy, István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum*, a collection of laws drafted following a 16th century peasant uprising. This work very clearly defined the privileges of the Hungarian nobility. The glorious descendants of Huns who won back Attila's ancient homeland gave rise to the Hungarian aristocracy. Others, who behaved in a cowardly manner in this heroic fight or belonged to the subservient peoples found here formed the lower strata of serfs. By the end of the 19th century, however, the theory of Hunnic ancestry began to spread without its social content. It may even have been perpetuated by János Arany, the greatest romantic, who during the Reform Age in the first half of the 19th century

strengthened the nation's self-confidence by references to a glorious Hunnic ancestry. With the emergence of a public education system in Hungary, this medieval myth became an indelible part of both historical knowledge and the national conscience of every Hungarian citizen within the country's historical borders. It is thus not an accident that the popularity of comparative linguists who advocated the Finno-Ugric relationship, was dwarfed by a dilettante, Ármin Vámbéry, who as a self-made linguist advocated the Turkic connection. The scholars usually figured only in newspaper cartoons.

Contradictions between the linguistic and cultural origins of Hungarians were apparently further fueled by views prevalent in archaeological research. The first equestrian burial from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest was found accidentally by herdsmen at Benepuszta near the city of Kecskemét in 1834. Fortunately, the finds have not been lost. Most of them were taken to the Hungarian National Museum. On the basis of Italian coins found in the grave, Miklós Jankovich, collector and outstanding antiquarian, identified both the date of the burial as well as the ethnic affiliation of the deceased. The next burial from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest was discovered at Vereb in Fejér county in 1853 and was published by János Érdy. River regulations, road and railway construction as well as industrial development have brought to light an increasing number of archaeological finds, including those from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. A series of archaeological societies were established in the countryside, and increasing numbers of artifacts were preserved, remained in the country and underwent scholarly analysis. Beginning with the end of the 1860's, a quantum leap may be observed both in the number of artifacts and of the more or less professionally excavated burials representing the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. Newly discovered finds, however, were identified and evaluated following the stereotypes of the first known, rich burials of conquering equestrian warriors found at Benepuszta, Vereb, Galgóc and Szolyva. Researchers at the time thought that it was only these cemeteries, including the burials of a war-like elite, represented conquering Hungarians. Hungarians, therefore, were all well armed warriors dressed in richly decorated attire, while poorer 10th century cemeteries of the common people, excavated at the same time, were associated with the slaves of the Hungarians, the local Slavic population. This was nothing but an echo of the previously described historical paradigm.

Already by the time of the millennium, attempts were made to reconcile the two sides and solve the apparent contradiction between the origins of Hungarian language and culture. In the first of the ten volumes devoted to summarizing Hungarian history, Henrik Marczali wrote as follows: "Since the Voguls, whose language is closest to Hungarian among the Finno-Ugric dialects, lived on the southern and central ranges of the Ural Mountains, some would like to see them as kin to the Hungarians. In any case, this opinion is erroneous. Julian described equestrian steppe nomads,[2] not forest-dwelling mountain people. Even aside from this, the language of those people could not be either Vogul or Ogur. Thirteenth century Hungarian is a known language: the "Funeral Speech"[3] somewhat predates Julian's journey. It is not very different from the language spoken at present. This comparison shows how relatively little language has changed over many centuries. Therefore, if Hungarian was indeed spoken and understood in the Ural region (at the time of Julian), it was Hungarians who lived there, not just any kind of Finno-Ugric tribe".[4]

Furthermore he explains that "... Hungarians included an eastern branch of Turks..." and that their migration started somewhere in the region of the Altai Mountains and lead westward along the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus mountains. "Should Hungarians have indeed immigrated from the direction of the Ural River and southern Russia, they must have been in contact with Ugric peoples for an extensive period of time. Contacts were not limited to trade and warfare as was the case with the Slavs or Iranians. Contacts must have been as constant as can only be made possible by cohabitation. It is natural that rudimentary populations whose political organization had fallen apart and lost even their homeland always joined mighty nomadic peoples. It is the power of these latter that guaranteed allies and even subordinates. The historical fact that Turkic Hungarians merged with some sort of Ugric tribe, more populous than their own, must have taken place during the time when they spent a considerable length of time in the proximity of Khazars. Numeric dominance must be hypothesized in order to explain why the language of the politically disorganized party became dominant in this alliance, similarly to Slavic languages swamping

[2] I. e. the eastern Hungarians this friar encountered during his trip to *Magna Hungaria* in 1236 – author's note.

[3] The earliest known text written in Hungarian.

[4] Marczali 1895, 34.

Bulgarian, English the Saxon, French the Norman, Norman the Frankish and Lombard the Gothic".[5]

Ármin Vámbéry stubbornly defended the Turkic character of the Hungarian language. He considered Hungarian a mixed language, similarly to the entire population. He once wrote: "... namely, Hungarians are a mixed group of people par excellence, a mixture whose match would be difficult to find in the field of ethnography; it is this way for the simple reason that the historical development of this people took place on the border between Asia and Europe in a region where all sorts of population elements had begun to stir at the time of the Great Migration before they became calm and settled down.[6] He added: "...the basic Ugric element was oppressed by the intellectually superior Turks, which lead to their Turkization... The leaders were Turkic in their religious, political and military life, and their language linked not only Turks and Ugrians but other fragments of population as well ...".[7]

As far as the essence of the problem is concerned, both Marczali and Vámbéry found it incomprehensible that any of the Finno-Ugric peoples could have developed their own equestrian nomadic culture. Although the idea that Hungarian was a language of fundamentally Turkic origin or that it was an admixture of idioms never had followers on an academic level, these ideas are still cultivated by amateurs today. On the other hand, the possibility of language exchange has been seriously considered by some scholars. In 1939, Count István Zichy presumed that living in the Ural region, ancient Hungarians speaking a Bulgar-Turkic language adopted an Ugric language. This outdated theory was resuscitated by Tibor Halasi-Kun in 1990. Although Halasi-Kun has not accepted Zichy's idea that some "developed" Turkic peoples adopted the "backward" Finno-Ugric language (which would actually be historical nonsense), he suggested that nomadic Hungarans, who were originally Turkic speakers, acquired the new language from their Finno-Ugric speaking female folk. His basic premises, however, were also culture-historical: "As has been stated by 19th century linguists, Hungarian is undoubtedly a Finno-Ugric language. In spite of this, from the viewpoint of their characteristic features, social structure, culture and tradition, conquering Hungarians display features of a Turkic people in every respect".[8]

[5] Marczali 1895, 36-37.
[6] Vámbéry 1914, 7.
[7] Vámbéry 1914, 61.
[8] Halasi-Kun 1990, 8.

Even though the theory of linguistic exchange has never been accepted by scientific linguistics, contrasting the stereotypes of "fishing-hunting, forest-dwelling Finno-Ugric" with "war-like, equestrian nomad Turkic" cultures has haunted our academic literature up until the present day. The petrification of this view probably has also been greatly enhanced by some outstanding representatives of the internationally respected Budapest school of Turcology. Following World War I and the Trianon Peace Treaty that upset the territorial integrity of historical Hungary the superb Turcologist Zoltán Gombocz revised his previous views and developed a new theory concerning the circumstances surrounding the adoption of Bulgar-Turkic loan-words into pre-conquest Hungarian. Previously, he had suggested that influential Bulgar-Turkic-Hungarian contacts took place in the region of the Volga and Kama Rivers between AD 600 and 800. By the 1920's, however, he had shifted this scene towards the south in the Caucasus region and dated it to the 5th to 7th centuries AD. Thus, according to the new concept, Hungarians must have had connections with the Huns in these southern areas. Gombocz thereby shared the opinion advocated by Bálint Hóman and could proclaim: "I too believe, that conquering Hungarians must have taken with them some elements of the later Hunnic myth. In other words, they brought along the belief that Huns and Hungarians had been related, the tradition that their Grand Duke Árpád was the descendant of Attila, the great king of Huns and that the conquest of the Carpathian Basin was *secundus introitus*, the reconquest of a land that belongs to the Hungarians due to their relation to Huns".[9] It must be noted that although Gombocz's new theory had scholarly foundations, the lines written by him concerning Hunnic-Hungarian connections were conceived to a great extent under the pressures of his time. This outstanding scholar devoted himself to rehabilitating the historical and national self-confidence of Hungarians who had been politically humiliated in those years (Today we know there is no reason why this should have been done by strengthening the completely unfounded idea of Hunnic origins).

Another outstanding Hungarian turcologist, Gyula Németh published his work entitled "The formation of Conquering Hungarians" in 1930.[10] This book has remained influential until today although it is nothing but an introduction to Turkic philology, the history of ancient Turkic peoples combined with an etymological study of the names of Hungarian tribes, nobility and personalities from the aspect of Turcology. It is a very useful

[9] Gombocz 1921, 20.
[10] Németh 1930.

scholarly study, but its content has nothing to do with the title, since it concentrates on the pre-conquest Turkic connections of Hungarians and these elements in their population which were possibly of Turkic origin. According to Németh's final conclusion: "... among Hungarians, it is impossible to simply speak of a 'ruling Turkic layer' and a lower class 'Finno-Ugric layer'.

It seems certain that following their separation from the Finno-Ugric peoples and before the integration into the Christian cultural sphere in Central Europe, (with exception of Alanian contacts) the Hungarians were almost exclusively exposed to Turkic influence, i. e. maintained the closest links with Turkic peoples. It is also evident that Hungarians integrated numerous Turkic population elements, that Turks played a role in social organization and even some of the rulers were of Turkic origins. These ruling and non-ruling Turkic elements, however, were assimilated in a special way by Hungarians of Finno-Ugric ancestry".[11]

Unfortunately, the majority of researchers into Hungarian cultural history have subsequently disregarded Németh's finely toned description. In fact, they hypothesized the existence of a Turkic speaking ruling layer among Hungarians and their "Turkic-like" culture while referring to his work!

The theory of the so-called "double conquest", so popular even among today's amateur historians, was also conceived at the time of the millennium. It was created by Géza Nagy, who was not only a fiery patriot but an excellent archaeologist and historian as well. In the previously cited ten volume history of Hungarians he came to the following conclusions. Onogur Bulgars had inhabited the Kubany region after AD 463 until the 7th century, when their empire was destroyed by the Khazars around 670 AD. Thereafter they fled westward, some of them to the Lower Danube Region, while another group reached the Avar homeland that, at the time, occupied the Carpathian Basin. These latter may have included Hungarian speaking groups as well. "Árpád (Grand Duke of Hungarians) found not only foreigners and related peoples but also Hungarians in the homeland. The Hungarian species (*sic*!) predates the Hungarian conquest here. It is possible that they had already arrived with the Avars, However, if it was not earlier, the immigration of Hungarians must also have begun by the last quarter of the 7th century AD. Our legends point to the Seklers as descendants of this

[11] Németh 1930, 298.

first group, and in such matters the folk memories of peoples tend to be admirably resilient".[12]

The reasoning behind this argument, somewhat surprisingly from this great scholar, is to say the least anemic. Géza Nagy only stated that military campaigns by Charlemagne could not have entirely exterminated Avars, and that the name Onogur ("ten ogurs") used for Bulgarians had also been applied to Hungarians in coeval sources and was adopted in foreign languages (c. f. Ungarn, vengr, Hongrois, Hungarian). However, it was already known by the end of the last century that ancient Hungarians were described under different names in written sources (Byzantine documents, for example, refer to "Turks"). The term Onogur used for Hungarians may originate from the fact that the habitation area occupied by Hungarians in Levedia was at one time the ancient homeland of Onogur Bulgars. (Moreover, this term has never been accepted as a form of self-definition, describing ethnic identity by the Hungarians alone. It has exclusively been used by other peoples).

Although the century old hypothesis of Géza Nagy is frequently cited today, no one has ever considered why this author of good academic standing should have felt compelled to put this theory forward. Nevertheless, the reason is quite clear and lies in research history although Géza Nagy never elaborated on the circumstances. As has been briefly touched on before, Hungarian archaeologists of the late 19th century had only considered the burials of mounted warriors to be part of the Hungarian heritage. Cemeteries of the common people with numerous graves but only modest grave goods were thought to have been those of the conquered local Slavic population. The aristocratic historical paradigm, rooted in the Middle Ages, had two outstanding advocates at the time. One of them was Ferenc Pulszky, the other Géza Nagy himself. They soon came to realize that their views were coming up against increasingly stubborn evidence. Namely, the numbers of poor 10th century graves soon rose incomparably higher than those of rich burials. At that time, several authors theorized about the miraculous survival of the Hungarian language in the Carpathian Basin amongst a "sea of Slavs".

I think that with his theory of double conquest, Géza Nagy tried to reconcile the two sides of this nagging contradiction. That is, if one assumes that part or even the majority of the local population was Hungarian at the time of Árpád's arrival, the survival of the Hungarian language becomes understandable. It is not an accident, however, that this excellent

[12] Nagy 1895, CCCLII.

archaeologist never bothered presenting linguistic evidence in support of his theory. Such evidence did not exist at the time and neither has it since become available.

Scholars' understanding of the culture of pre-conquest and conquering Hungarians was almost exclusively based on linquistic research around the turn of the century. Points emphasized by believers of the "Turkic" character of our culture were apparently supported by Bulgar/Turkic loan-words that had entered the language prior to the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. These terms typically refer to concepts of intensive farming, spiritual life and emergence of social organization. In light of these arguments, it is not surprising that linguistic data contradicting this pattern were treated with considerable scepticism. In 1929, however, Gedeon Mészöly, using rigorous linguistic reasoning, demonstrated that, for example, ancient Hungarians were familiar with horse keeping prior to Turkic contact. Terms such as *ló* (horse), *nyereg* (saddle), *fék* (bridle), *ostor* (whip), *másodfü ló* (yearling) and *harmadfü ló* (2 year old) originate from the Ugric linguistic period of the language.[13] However, the majority of contemporary researchers were not able to accept his discovery, so deeply rooted was the idea that it was the Turks who "organized" the Hungarians into an equestrian people. This attitude is clearly illustrated by the opinion published by Béla Gunda in 1943: "... horse and its cultural significance may be excluded from the ancient Ugric economic life.

Hungarian Ugrians, on the other hand, encountered by western Turks cannot be considered foragers who relied on fishing and hunting alone. Turks, as pointed out by Gyula Németh in another context, would have had little use for such a people. From an economic point of view, foraging Hungarian-Ugrians would have had a hard time fitting into the framework of Turkic peoples, not to speak of the fact that nomadic Turkic peoples would have completely fragmented such Hungarian Ugrians in a cultural, linguistic and political sense alike ... In my opinion, Hungarian Ugrians (as well as Voguls and Ostyaks associated with them) must have been a people highly specialized in hunting, which had already developed some affinity for animal husbandry ...".[14]

Several researchers were of the opinion that linguistic evidence put forward by Mészöly showed only that the Ugrians were mounted forest hunters, rather than horse breeders or animal keepers of any sort.

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[13] Mészöly 1929, 210.
[14] Gunda 1943, 212-212.

At the end of the last century, relevant literature hardly ever reckoned with the evidence from archaeological artifacts. Starting with the end of the 19th century, however, Russian researchers published masses of archaeological finds from the section of Eurasia where the ancient Hungarian people may have formed and lived during the centuries when it was in migration. A very significant school of archaeological thought emerged in Finland (at that time, part of the Russian Empire) with representatives such as J. A. Aspelin and A. M. Tallgren. This school had set rather peculiar "national aims" in terms of research: the study of the archaeological heritage of ancient Finno-Ugrians. This is how "Finno-Ugric archaeology" was born. Nevertheless, the broad scope of their investigations included almost all of Eurasia. It is perhaps not an accident that Hungarian archaeologists have never been involved with this research. Investigations of ancient Hungarian history were almost identical to linguistic studies at that time. The first Hungarian archaeologist to carry out extensive data gathering in Russian museums was Béla Pósta, who traveled to Russia as a member of Count Jenö Zichy´s third oriental expedition in 1897-1898. He published the summary of his results in 1905 both in Hungarian and German.[15] Even today, his book remains up to date and presents numerous excellent eastern parallels with finds in Hungary from the Migration Period and the Period of the Hungarian Conquest . In fact a significant portion of the collection gathered by him still awaits publication. Pósta, however, nurtured very ambitious plans. He considered his first trip to the east and the resulting book only a preliminary study, and perhaps it is for this reason that he never wrote up a historical summary of his experiences (Unfortunately, the consequences of World War I prevented the realization of his plans).

In Hungary, culture historical conclusions drawn from archaeological research in Russia were applied for the first time by Count István Zichy, the well-regarded archaeologist and art historian, who was a long time director-in-chief of the Hungarian National Museum. Although he never had the opportunity to study these finds in the original eastern collections, he knew the relevant Finnish archaeological literature very well and used that information to draft an outline of an early history of Finno-Ugric culture. He correctly concluded that the cultural and economic development of our linguistic relatives had halted at a certain stage of their history: "Finno-Ugric peoples may be considered to have stagnated in their original state, be retarded in their development. Their material culture and foraging methods were already primeval at the time they enter history. Their backwardness

[15] Pósta 1905.

becomes even more obvious in comparison with Indo-Germanic peoples. Neither of tbem could have developed a complex social organization on their own, attaining a higher level of cultural development only under continuous external influences. The reason for this stagnation, however, should not be sought in the intellectual disposition of Finn-Ugric peoples; the explanation lay in their original geographical position ... Obi-Ugrians, the majority of whom live under similar circumstances even today, have preserved most characteristics of this stagnant culture.[16]

In recent decades, new information concerning the character and development of ancient Hungarian culture has been primarily enriched by results from archaeological research. With the help offered by ever increasing numbers of archaeological finds it became possible to reconstruct the economic and cultural status of extensive areas in Eurasia. Although not all regions have been equally investigated and indeed some are still little known, the general picture that has emerged is already significantly richer than it was half a century ago. It is of primary importance in this regard to identify the archaeological cultures that are associated with the distribution area of ancient Hungarians in various theories. For our research purposes, the standards are set by cultural characteristics in broader regions in which our distant ancestors may also have inhabited or evidently inhabited. It must be admitted, however, that for the time being we are poking in the dark in this regard. Aside from airy-fairy ideas of amateur "experts" on ancient Hungarian history, researchers in various disciplines are close to a consensus as regards the habitation areas of ancient Finno-Ugric peoples and Hungarians respectively.

The Finno-Ugric, more specifically Uralian, origins of the Hungarian language make it undisputable that our distant ancestors cohabited with or partially shared the distribution area of the ancestors of our present day linguistic relatives. This area must have been the broader region of the Ural Mountains where ancient history may be traced back to the 6^{th}-5^{th} millennia BC in the archaeological record. It is the remains of material culture that bear witness that the groups from this community who occupied more southerly regions changed from foraging based on fishing and hunting to an economy that relied on land cultivation and animal keeping during the Bronze Age (2^{nd} millennium BC). This change in lifeways which attained historical dimensions was inspired by populations to the south who spoke Indo-European (more exactly ancient Iranian) languages. In all probability, the community of Ugric peoples, which included ancient Hungarians (in

[16] Zichy 1923, 39-40.

addition to Obi-Ugrians - Voguls and Ostyaks), occupied the southernmost section of the forested zone in western Siberia, adjacent to the forest/steppe belt east of the Ural Mountains. Animal bones and macrobotanical remains recovered from archaeological sites in this region leave no doubt that they pursued animal keeping and land cultivation by that time and that they had developed sophisticated bronze metallurgy as well.

Thus the debate during the 1930's concerning horse husbandry by our ancestors in the Ugric Period became irrelevant. They undoubtedly kept horses, moreover they reared cattle and sheep as well. It is also remarkable that a more or less similar economic development was observed among the Finno-Ugric population groups who inhabited areas west of the Ural Mountains at this time. Therefore, the aforementioned opinion that Finno-Ugric populations entered historical times as a homogeneous, primarily foraging community of fishers and hunters should be considered anachronistic as well. Although it remains true that they predominantly inhabited the forest belt of eastern Europe and western Siberia, they did not exclusively exploit that area. Groups who lived in the southern zone of this forested region fell within the distribution range of emerging agricultural economies during the 2nd millennium BC. The influence of this change reached the northernmost areas latest but left only a few groups unaffected.

Around the 8th century BC another significant economic transformation took place on the Eurasian steppe. It was at that time that nomadism emerged, a form of animal keeping in which, depending on local geographical conditions, herds were grazed in different winter and summer pastures following a cyclical pattern. This newly invented form of animal husbandry made a more efficient exploitation of grazing capacities possible, thereby increasing animal stocks many times over. Nomadism was based on many centuries of experience in herding among pastoral peoples of the steppe and became widespread in steppe and forest-steppe areas, regardless of the ethnic or linguistic affiliations of the peoples who occupied these regions.

The relative homogeneity of nomadic economy lead to the development of similarities between both the material and spiritual cultures of the pastoral communities who inhabited this vast, open area. In addition, in comparison with previous periods, perpetual motion greatly intensified contacts between various groups. It is also very important that, as a result of their relatively monocultural economy, constant trade connections with sedentary agriculturalists became an essential need for nomadic pastoral peoples.

Neither did the wide distribution of nomadic lifeways leave Finno-Ugric speaking peoples unaffected. Those who lived in the Eurasian forest-steppe belt were particularly predisposed. To our present day knowledge, these peoples included the southern groups of the Ugric community, especially the proto-Hungarians. On the basis of linguistic and historical evidence it seems quite likely that approximately in the middle of the 1st millennium BC (during the Early Iron Age in archaeological terms), a distinct ancient Hungarian population may have formed who called themselves "Magyar" as a sign of distinct ethnic and ancestral identity. (This latter may have been related to an ancient variant of the so-called legend of the magic deer). Although the exact circumstances under which such an ethnic group may have emerged are not known, it must be hypothesized that events like this took place under the influences of the aforementioned economic changes hallmarked by the onset of nomad pastoralism. In all probability, southern Ugric population groups also adopted nomadic economies at that time, while their northern linguistic relatives maintained their previous forms of subsistence.

Ancient Hungarians may thus already have become part of the broader community of nomadic Eurasian peoples at the time of their ethnogenesis. Therefore, both their ways of life and culture were influenced by the basic principles characterizing that huge community. Early nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppe living west of the Altai Mountains, usually spoke some variant of ancient Iranian languages. The nomadic empire of the Scythians, whose life was documented by Herodotos, lay in the plains north of the Black Sea. East of this area, linguistically related Sarmatians inhabited the regions of the Volga and Ural Rivers, while the herds of Saka, a group similarly of Iranian origin, occupied pastures in Central Asia. The Tuva and Altai Mountains fell within the distribution area of the so-called Asiatic Scythians. Within this vast region, a material culture developed that was homogeneous in many respects, and whose artifacts are well known to archaeologists. The so-called Scythian animal style became widely spread in the decorative art of that period, and it probably reflected comparable spiritual culture and religious beliefs wherever it appeared. Meanwhile, smaller territorial units must also have developed their own characteristics. Behind these local variations, it is possible that there were also ethnic and linguistic differences. It is unlikely therefore, that this enormous area was inhabited by people speaking exclusively Iranian languages. Other linguistic groups must also have been present there with material and spiritual cultures

as well as belief systems which may have been somewhat different from that of the aforementioned Iranian peoples.

Ancient Hungarians must have been one of these peoples distinguished by "another" language. They probably lived in the northern zone of the steppe belt and in the forest-steppe area of western Siberia in the region of the Irtis and Isim Rivers . Pastoralism in the forest-steppe area, however, must have differed from nomadism in the open steppe in several details. Distances between the summer and winter occupation areas were shorter, while sedentism and land cultivation were proportionally more important. Another relevant factor was that this zone did not fall within the southern area through which passed the routes of the largest nomadic migrations. Life, therefore, was somewhat more relaxed here.

The ethnic composition of the steppe changed considerably during the first centuries AD. Large scale migrations triggered by the Huns swept dozens of Asiatic peoples into Eastern Europe. Although the languages of certain population groups regularly mentioned in written sources remain unknown, it may be hypothesized that languages of the linguistic Altai family, especially varieties of Turkic, were mostly spoken. During the 6th century, when the Turkic Empire emerged in Inner Asia, another wave of migrations started in the steppe. Therefore, new Turkic-speaking peoples appeared on the border between Asia and Europe. By this time, the overwhelming majority of the steppe region must have become Turkic-speaking as well.

Being part of the nomadic cultural community, the culture of ancient Hungarians mustered all the colors of the "pastoral universe" of the steppe. This particular culture, however, retained a number of special features as well. First, the language was radically different from the Iranian and subsequently Turkic languages that dominated in the steppe. As far as we know today, of the ancestors of all contemporary Finno-Ugric peoples, only the ancient Hungarians turned to nomadism during the studied period. They were the only group to represent the family of Finno-Ugric languages in the nomadic world. Meanwhile, their ties with their linguistic relatives were severed. Hungarians had no serious contact with Finno-Ugric peoples until the 19th century when the Finno-Ugric origins of the Hungarian language became evident. (The essence of this statement is not changed by the recent discovery of data suggesting that, aside from Hungarians, other Finno-Ugric groups may also have turned to nomadism around the middle of the 1st millennium BC. Some of these peoples moved into the Kama River valley on the western side of the Ural Mountains during the 4th century and even

further north to the regions of the Vichegda and Pechora Rivers. Biogeographical features here, however, did not permit the continuation of that kind of subsistence economy. The presence of Ugric/Ob-Ugric inhabitants in this area could be detected until the 18th century in historical sources and topographic names. Other Ob-Ugric ancestral groups remained in the Western Siberian territory on the Baraba steppe and in the Irtis River region and subsequently underwent Turkization. In all probability, they may be considered the forerunners of Baraba Turks and Irtis Tartars. It is likely that these groups maintained cultural and linguistic links with the ancient Hungarians until the 6th century AD. However, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis, exactly because of the aforementioned historical fate of these population groups).

The culture of ancient Hungarians, therefore assumed a steppe nomad character prior to the Period of the Hungarian Conquest and was not simply "Turkic" as had long been believed. As mentioned before, for almost a millennium the steppe was populated by non-Turkic speaking nomads. Naturally, the nomadic culture of ancient Hungarians did not remain unaltered over the one-and-a-half millennium that preceded the conquest of the Carpathian Basin. At present, enough information exists to sub-divide it into two major periods.

The first period spanned a time from the middle of the 1st millennium BC to the 6th century AD, when our ancestors inhabited the forest steppe area of Western Siberia. During the first, longer interval in this period their southern neighbors were Iranian speaking peoples, the Sarmatians and Sakas related to Scythians. Around the time of Christ's birth, ancient Hungarians may have established contacts with the Huns, who perhaps spoke a Turkic language. The character of this connection, however, is very difficult to appraise on the basis of material culture remains. It seems likely, however, that contacts were predominantly cultural and commercial, and one should not reckon with significant degree of mixing between the two populations. The hypothesis of intensified contacts is contradicted by the observation that, in spite of the apparently significant cultural influences, relatively few early Iranian loan-words have been preserved in our language.

The second period began with the aforementioned great migration of the 6th century AD. At this time, it was not only the peoples of the open steppe that began to move with ever increasing momentum as had been the case during the 3rd-4th centuries AD Hunnic migrations: Some of the nomads living in the forest steppe zone were also forced to leave their former

habitation areas. Thus, ancient Hungarians also left their homeland in Western Siberia and moved onto the western side of the Ural Mountains to the area between the Ural and Volga Rivers. In this territory, 6th-8th centuries cemeteries have been discovered which display clear relationships with 10th century burials of the conquering Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. From this region, the majority of the population moved to the Azov Sea sections of the Volga and Don Rivers that corresponded to the former territory of the Khazar Khanate or at least was in its immediate proximity. A minority, however, had remained in their former habitation area, and this must have been the group of people encountered by Julian, a Dominican monk in 1236. Therefore he called that land *Magna Hungaria*, that is Great/Old Hungary.

This second phase could also be referred to as the "Turkic Period" of the ancient Hungarians. It was during this time that ancient Hungarians developed close ties with the Onogurs (Bulgarians) and Khazars. During this period, ancient Hungarians entered the regions of the steppe world which were most developed at the time. The Khazar Khanate had a semi-nomadic state formation and a more strongly developed economic structure than those of the peoples in the Ural region. The Khazar army also guaranteed relative peace in the European steppe for most of the AD 8th-9th centuries which favored economic prosperity. An improved form of plow cultivation spread here during this period and an increasing number of nomadic families in the khanate (especially the poorer kinship groups) turned to sedentism and more intensive forms of farming. Their winter habitations were transformed into permanent villages of land cultivators. This transformation process undoubtedly affected ancient Hungarians as well. Hungarian assimilated some 200-250 Bulgarian-Turkic loan-words from the language of neighboring Bulgars and Khazars which are mostly related to this more advanced type of farming. (Words related to pig and poultry keeping such as *disznó* [pig], *serte* [bristle], *ártány* [castrated pig] and *tyúk* [hen] are especially telling examples since true nomads keep neither poultry nor pigs).

Hungarian society also underwent essential changes during this period. Under Khazar influence and following the Khazar example, a semi-nomadic Hungarian state organization was created which was understandably similar to that of the Khazars. This was characterized with the institution of the so-called dual kingdom led by the "chief king" of divine origins called the *kende* and a bailiff who was the chief commander of the army known as the *gyula*. The majority of Hungarian linguists agree

that the names of Hungarian tribes were also of Turkic origin. Should this be really true, one may hypothesize that the tribal organization of ancient Hungarians was also transformed under the influence of neighboring Turkic-speaking peoples. During this period, several Turkic population fragments also joined the Hungarian tribal alliance. It is probable that the Eskil Bulgarians had joined the ancient Hungarians even earlier, and they may well be considered the predecessors of the subsequently formed Sekler population group. Sometime around 850 AD, Khabars who had rebelled against the Khazar khan, also united forces with the Hungarians: Following their unsuccessful uprising they sought refuge with Hungarian sovereigns. Around 950 AD, the Byzantine emperor, Constantin Porphyrogenite, recorded that they still spoke their ancient Turkic language, although they had learned Hungarian by that time as well. This means that they lived in a bilingual state that preceded ethnic assimilation. The wise emperor also documented the grave casualties inflicted on Hungarians when warfare with the Pechenegs had lead to the separation of part of their population which subsequently moved south of the Caucasus Mountains into the Persian frontier area. During the mid-10th century, these so-called Savard Hungarians still maintained contacts with Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin through mediation by their ambassadors. Later, however, they were absorbed by neighboring peoples.

In all probability, the first occurrence of Hungarian written sources may be dated to the time when Hungarians lived in the region of the Don River (Levedia). This is not only shown by the Bulgar-Turkic origins of the words *ír* (write) and *betű* (letter *sensu* character) but also by Runic script on the bone cover of a quiver found in a grave from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest near the city of Kalocsa (Fig. 1). The characters of this text do not belong to the long-decoded Turkic system known from Inner Asia. They bear some resemblance to Runic inscriptions from Eastern Europe. The same type of script was also used in the Khazar Khanate.

The relationship between Hungarians and the Khazar Khanate must have deteriorated because the Hungarians had accepted rebelling Kabars. It is probably for this reason that around 850 AD ancient Hungarians moved westward to the so-called Etelköz area in the Dnieper River region, thereby ensuring their independence from the Khazar Khanate. Somewhat later, in 862 and 881 AD, Hungarian warriors already intervened in the fight between eastern Franks and Moravians in the area of modern day Austria.

It was during the stay in Levedia and Etelköz areas that the material culture whose remains are known from burials and settlements of the Period

of the Hungarian Conquest developed. Early forms of the metal mounts used in decorating leather sabratache (Fig. 2) and female hair braid disks are known from archaeological sites in the Don River region, in the northern range of the Caucasus Mountains and the Kiev area. Parallels to 10th century Hungarian silversmithery may be recognized among the decorative elements of the so-called oriental silver hoards.

This means that Turkic influence on Hungarian material culture in Eastern Europe may be considered significant and must have lasted at least until the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. (Linguistic influence must have lasted even longer, until the end of the 10th century when the linguistic assimilation of newly accepted Kabars was accomplished). When Bulgar-Turkic loan-words showing this Turkic cultural influence are studied, it must be kept in mind that some of these terms are "unnecessary", i. e. their adoption did not mean significant cultural adjustments. On the other hand, it is always very important to understand the real culture historical meaning of such words. For example, the adoption of the word *sátor* (tent) should in no case be taken as an indication that felt tents were unknown to ancient Hungarians prior to contacts with neighboring Turkic peoples. As pastoralists they must have used such tents since at least the Bronze Age. This loan-word probably indicates the introduction and use of a new type of tent around the 8th century, characterized by a round ground plan and a wooden grid frame. This type is widely known under the name of *yurt*. Similarly, the newly adopted word *eke* (plow), did not mark the first encounter with this tillage equipment. It probably indicates the adoption of plows equipped with a share, widely used in Eastern Europe at that time. (Meanwhile, the original Hungarian word for plow probably disappeared from usage). The new word *sarló* (sickle) must have entered Hungarian, as the new, serrated, crescent-shaped type of this implement gradually spread. Similarly, the appearance of the word *búza* (wheat) should not be taken as a proof that this plant was unknown to ancient Hungarians and that they began cultivating it only at this time, since Bronze Age wheat grain is known from sites from the southern Ural region. It is plausible that the share of wheat cultivation increased among the plants grown in the Levedia habitation area. Meanwhile, an increasing number of pastoralists must have turned cultivators. (It is a well-known fact that nomadic peoples usually grow millet in the vicinity of their winter habitations). It is very significant, on the other hand, that there were no noteworthy additions to the Hungarian vocabulary related to horse keeping during this period. This shows that nomadic pastoralism was not exposed to Turkic influences. (As indicated

above, however, such an influence may be detected in terms relevant to sedentary forms of animal husbandry). This fact clearly shows that Hungarian nomadic economy, including horse keeping, did not emerge under Turkic influence.

The conquest of the Carpathian Basin opened a new chapter in Hungarian cultural history. The new environment did not simply mean new neighbors speaking unfamiliar languages. Biogeographical conditions were also new. Although the Great and Small Hungarian Plains in the Carpathian Basin represent the westernmost section of the East European forest steppe belt, these areas are not fit for the large scale nomadism practiced at that time. Due to higher precipitation in this region, seasonal herding along the rivers surrounded by broad floodplains became nearly impossible and lost its significance. Within only a few decades, winter occupations developed into permanent villages, the rate of sedentism (that had already started in the eastern regions) significantly accelerated here. (It is certainly not an accident that earlier nomadic invaders of eastern origins such as the Sarmatians and Avars also settled on the Great Hungarian Plain).

The 895 AD conquest did not simply mean that a new people, that is Hungarians, appeared in the Carpathian Basin. They also represented a new culture which was radically different from its predecessors in this area. In addition, this culture not only occurred sporadically here and there but also spread to plains and hills, wherever Hungarians settled. This new culture cannot be regarded a straight continuation of Avar culture either in its entirety or in detail. Aside from a number of other arguments, this difference alone excludes the probability of a "double conquest" theory. (Especially the hypothesis that masses of Avars survived until the Hungarian conquest and that subsequently they would have decided the main developmental trend). In the case of conquering Hungarians, hardly any of the Central and Inner Asian features can be identified, which otherwise are so characteristic of the Avars. Their artistic tastes and battle gear were completely different, and their spiritual culture must have been markedly different as well.

There can hardly be any doubt that the conquering Hungarians also brought with then a significant number of agriculturalists from the East. Aside from the aforementioned arguments, unambiguous evidence for this is offered by great similarities between the settlement structure, building types and even tilling equipment of the earliest Hungarians and those found in the Don River region. Sometimes these features were actually identical. In spite of this, however, the whole of Hungarian culture in the 10th century may be considered nomadic in character, since its roots reached back to the world of

the Eastern steppe, where their millennia-old traditions and mentality originated.

The character of this culture is clearly illustrated by the colorful goldsmithing work of the conquering Hungarians which is well known from burial finds. The sabretache plate from Tiszabezdéd made from gilded copper sheeting may actually have been made in the Etelköz habitation area (Fig. 3). The surface of the main motif is vertically divided by a leafy branch with a rhombus-shaped field in the middle. A Greek cross engraved above a leaf may be seen within this field. The ancient master ornamented the upper two halves of the rhombus-shaped field, where the branches again meet, with the image of two peacock-like dragons. The leafy branch starting from the bottom of this ornament symbolizes the "Tree of Life" (also known as "Tree of the World" or "Tree Reaching the Sky" in our folk tales), a central element in the pagan mythology of the ancient Hungarians. The cross is a motif evidently borrowed from Christianity. The peacock-like dragons (*senmvurs*) are symbols used in Iranian Zoroastrism. Several researchers interpret this combination of elements as a form of religious syncretism, although my own opinion is that it was inspired simply by ancient Hungarian shamanism. Shamanism, however, is not a formalized religion, but a multitude of ancient beliefs that have been accumulated in innumerable strata throughout the millennia combining ancient as well as more recent elements. In their habitation areas in Levedia and Etelköz, Byzantine missionaries familiarized Hungarians with some elements of Christianity The hope was that Christian symbols would help them get along and bring them good luck in the same way as representations of the pagan "Tree of Life" and of the peacock-like dragons of Iranian origin. There is no reason to hypothesize therefore that the Hungarian conqueror who wore the Tiszabezdéd purse was Christian. That the opposite of this idea should be true is corroborated by the fact that, following an ancient pagan burial rite, he was buried in the company of his horse.

The formation of Hungarian artistic styles were elucidated by a number of valuable observations by Nándor Fettich during the 1930's. In his opinion, however, the most beautiful pieces of goldsmithing work were manufactured prior to the Period of the Hungarian Conquest in Eastern Europe, predominantly in the Kiev region. "The art of making purse plates reached its climax during the last decades the completely developed Hungarians spent in Levedia".[17] Until his death he did not give up this idea and reiterated it again, for example, in his 1973 evaluation of the famous

[17] Fettich 1935, 25.

chieftain's grave from Zemplén. With the increasing number of relevant finds from both Hungary and abroad, however, the proposition put forward by Gyula László and István Dienes gained increasing support. They suggested that the overwhelming majority of this excellent goldsmithing work had not been produced in the East, but in the newly conquered homeland. Today, there is hardly any doubt that they were right. In the East, only certain elements of this art and forerunners of these objects can be found. The style itself really started flourishing in the Carpathian Basin. The prosperity of this art was given great impetus by the significant amounts of precious metals that were imported into Hungary as booty after their vicious military incursions and provided the basis for the rapidly growing wealth of chieftains and their military entourages.

Although there are no two pieces of art from the Period of the Hungarian Conquest that are identical, the character of this art is surprisingly uniform. This observation seems to contradict reports in written sources that claim that conquering Hungarians did not form an ethnically homogeneous group and that there were various foreign population groups among them (Kabars, Seklers and Khalizes). Reviewing the uniformity of this art, it must be hypothesized, however, that the populations that joined the Hungarians soon culturally and then linguistically assimilated with them. The culture of the conquering Hungarians largely reflects what Zoltán Kodály discovered in folk music: "Even if researchers can prove that Hungarians as a people were composed of ten splinters, the soul of Hungarians is the same from Somogy to Szatmár and Csík to Nitra".[18] Moreover, it may be added that the frequently advocated opinion concerning the mixed nature of the conquering Hungarians is erroneous. These people should not be regarded as an incongruent ethnic conglomerate, since there is no evidence to support this view. One may thus hypothesize that the conquering Hungarians were no more "mixed" than population groups in that period in general.

Gyula László was the first to unambiguously demonstrate that the apparently monotonous floral pattern, the so-called palmetta motif, which was widespread in the Hungarian art of the conquest period, is not a simple ornament designed only to fill in blank spaces. This is backed up by the entire Hungarian culture and belief system of the time. It is for this reason that precious metal objects of foreign origin stolen during their raids never occur in their graves. One may thus conclude that such objects were not used during their lives either, but melted down. It seems obvious that artistic

[18] Kodály 1975, 33.

representations of western taste would have been alien to them, while the decorative motifs used in the artistic creations of their own master goldsmiths became telling symbols. Naturally, this content relevant to the belief system was not directly reflected in the objects themselves: It was revealed only by research into the Hungarian language as well as in comparative ethnography. Thousands of elements in the belief system of ancient Hungarians have been preserved until the present day. The "Tree Reaching the Sky" in our folk tales is nothing but the "Tree of Life" also known as the "Tree of the World" that links the various strata of secular life (central, upper and lower worlds). This tree is symbolized by the palmetta bunches woven into an endless net on the surface of sabretache plate (Fig. 4). Sometimes, this floral pattern depicts the magic tree so unambiguously (for example on the discs from Sárospatak; Fig. 5) that one can have no doubt concerning its symbolic meaning. In another example, the tree was depicted upside down, pointing toward the Lower World (Fig. 6). The meandering design running below the rim of a silver bowl from Kétpó is also very instructive. The late master placed a tiny tree in the middle of this design, indicating the actual meaning of the floral design (Fig. 7). Among the braid disks designed for female hair, a bird's head with a hooked bill can sometimes be seen on the tip of the tree branches (Fig. 8 and 9). This is nothing but the miraculous eagle who carried privileged newborn babies (shamans and sovereigns) down from the tree who is enthroned at its top. A horse-like animal with talons and decorated with floral patterns is another motif that commonly occurs on disks. A leafy branch grows out of its back. This may be looked upon as the container of the shaman's soul which, mounting the "Tree of Life", reaches the seven-layered heaven, the empire of gods and ghosts. (In one of our folk tales, the youngest son, a shaman, climbs to the peak of the "Tree of Life" riding horses with silver, golden and diamond coats).

The radial pattern shown on disks with ancient decorations corresponds to the sun as it turns around the sky. This ornament is also frequently interwoven with floral elements (Fig. 10). (The Biharkeresztes specimen is decorated with a swastika that ends in palmetta leaves.) The sun that gives and maintains life, is also shown on disks from the Don region, which may be considered the forerunners of Hungarian disks. One should also remember that the sun was probably the symbol of both the Khazar as well as the supreme Hungarian chief, who were considered to be of heavenly origin. The name of the supreme Hungarian sovereign (distinguished by the terms *Kende* of *kündü*) also originates from the Turkic

term for sun: *'kün'*. The eagle, considered the "Bird of the Sun" (called *turul* in Hungarian on the basis of its Turkic name) is also present in the art of the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. In addition to the well known Rakamaz disk, it is neatly depicted on a belt mount from Karos (Fig. 11) and on the disks found in the Zemplén area (Fig. 12). It is known from Hungarian chronicles that according to the genesis myth of the Árpád Dynasty, the first Hungarian Sovereign Álmos was born to Emese who had been impregnated by a *turul* bird.

Among the depiction of animated creatures one also finds the stag, the magic animal of Hungarian genealogy, depicted on a strap-end from Törtel (Fig. 13). The eagle and the stag are extremely ancient elements in the art of nomadic peoples and may be easily identified in Scythian art as well. It is most likely that these animals, endowed as they are with special powers, have been present in Hungarian mythology at least since the time of the ethnogenesis of the Hungarians.

In addition to masterpieces of goldsmithing, the graves of conquering Hungarians also contain objects which are reflections of ancient mythology and spiritual culture. Ancient types of shrouds as well as symbolic skull trepanations bear witness to the dualistic soul perception of ancient Hungarians ("body-soul" and "shadow-" or "free-soul"). Mortuary behavior, including the burial of the skull and foot bones of the riding horse following a feast, are all indicative of a belief in the "Other World". Some fortunate finds have lead us to the remains from graves devoted to shamans. Bone stick handles carved in the shape of owls' heads were found at Hajdúdorog (Fig. 14) and Szeghalom. It is the Szeghalom find that shows that such artifacts must have decorated a shaman's stick at the time of their use. In Hungarian folk tradition, owls are considered shamanistic, magic birds who indicate approaching death and take the souls of the dead away.

Archaeological remains and artistic representations have the potential to reveal thousands of details concerning spiritual culture. Decoding their ancient meanings, however, must be attempted by using comparative analyses. One may also justifiably wonder whether this artistic style was available only to the privileged and whether the common people understood little of this symbolism. This idea is contradicted by the fact that the same motifs appear on carved bone while woodcarvings which must have rotted over time were probably similar as well. Indirect data from artistic objects show that their poorly preserved organic components must have been decorated with a similar wealth of patterns. Fringe-designs visible in the upper section of the Szolyva sabratache-plate make it evident that the

goldsmith in this case was imitating leatherwork (Fig. 4). Fine lines along the leaf-edges on another sabretache plate from Túrkeve are reminiscent of ancient appliqué patterns in textile (Fig. 15). This is why the culture of conquering Hungarians should be considered largely uniform among both high ranking and common people. The roots of that culture lead us quite clearly to the East.

The 10th century is one of the most dynamically changing periods in Hungarian history. This holds equally true for economy, society and culture. By the middle of that century, when the devastating military incursions into neighboring countries had to be halted and a complete network of sedentary agriculturalist settlements had come into existence, the elite of nomadic society had lost both its social prestige and economic significance. Géza the Great Sovereign channeled the future development of his people in a European direction. The spread of Christianity and the developing new society changed the character of Hungarian culture as well. The colorful eastern artistic style disappeared, ancient beliefs were suppressed and, even if gradually, Hungarian culture assumed a European face. This was the price of survival and continuing development, although some elements of that ancient culture have remained stubbornly imprinted in the popular memory for over a millennium.

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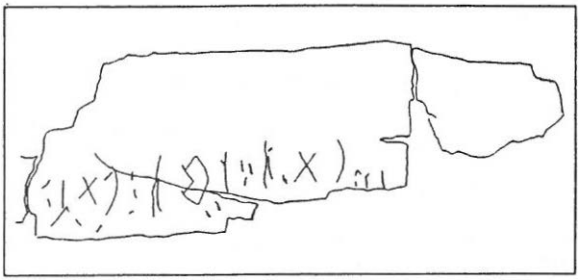

Fig. 1: The runic inscription of Kalocsa

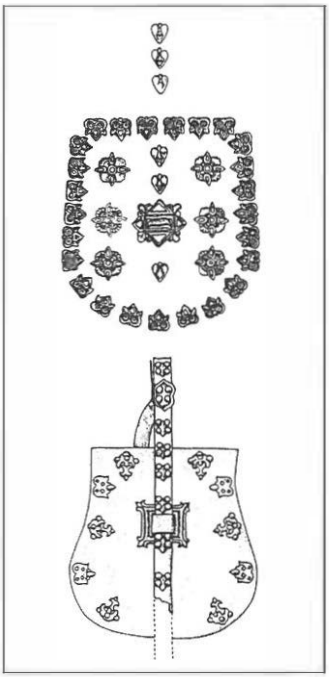

Fig. 2: Decorated sabrataches of similar types from the Conquest Period cemetery at Karos and from the Alan cemetery at Martan-Chu (North Caucasus)

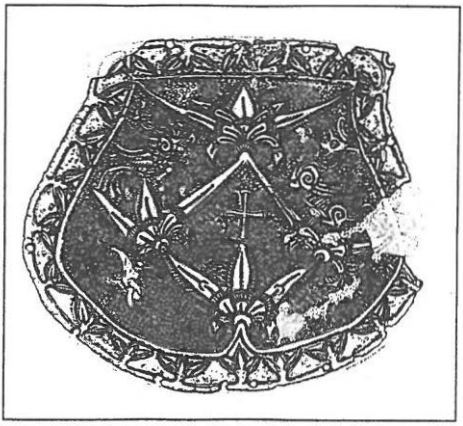

Fig. 3: The sabratache plate of Bezded

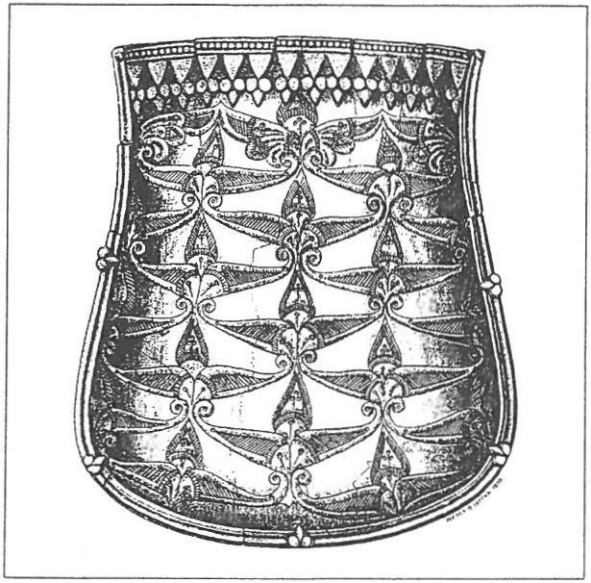

Fig. 4: The sabratache plate of Szolyva

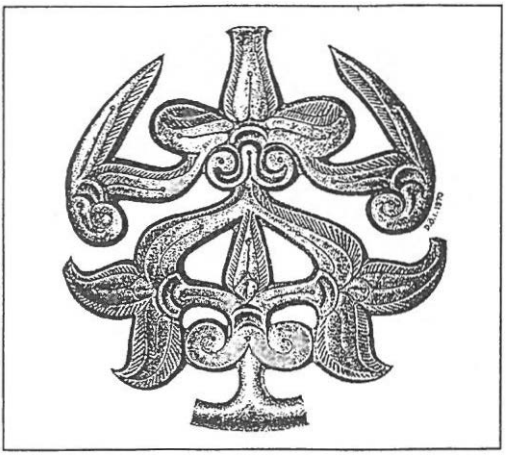

Fig. 5: Life-tree on the disks of Sárospatak

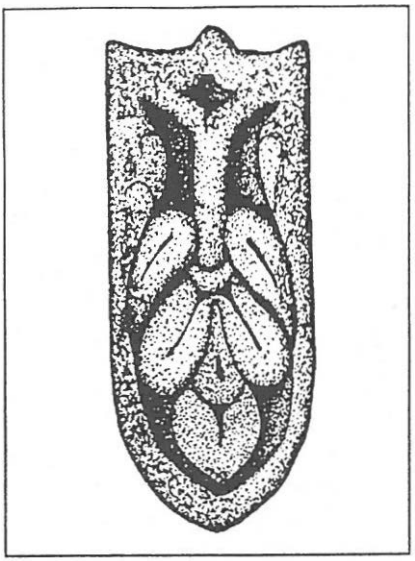

Fig. 6: Life-tree on the strap-end of Bashalom

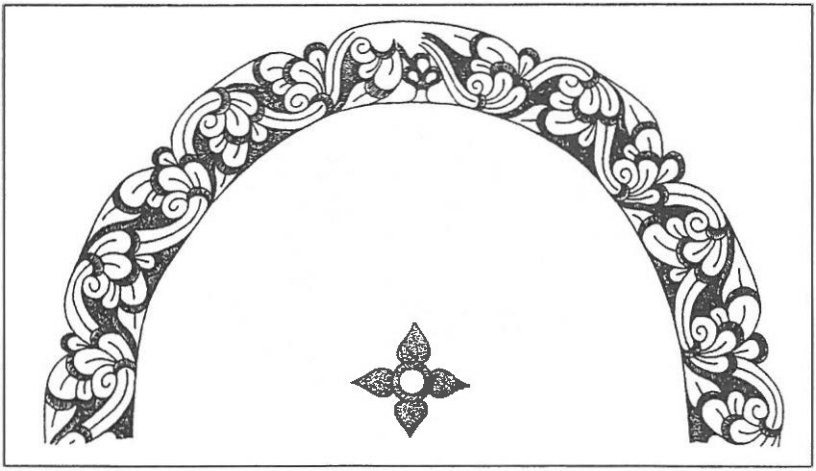

Fig. 7: The decoration on the cup of Kétpó

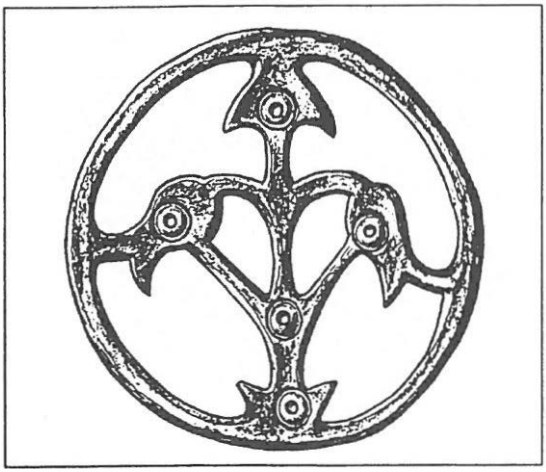

Fig. 8: Life-trees and birds on a hairbraid disk

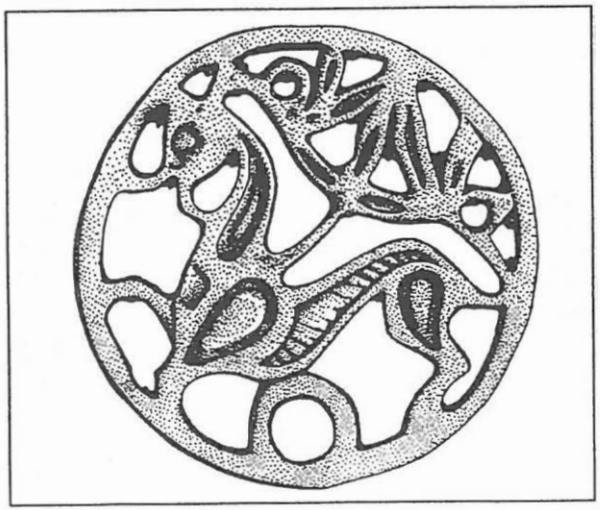

Fig. 9: Life-tree and horse on the hairbraid disk of Eger

Fig. 10: The symbol of the solar disc on the disk of Törökkanizsa

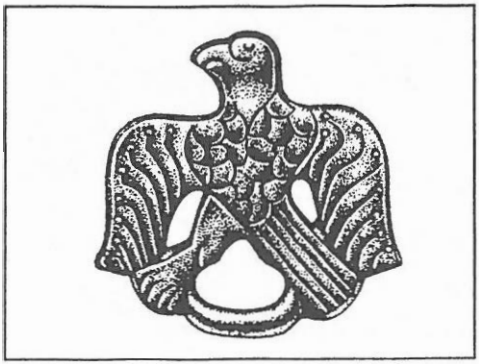

Fig. 11: Eagle-shaped belt mount of Karos

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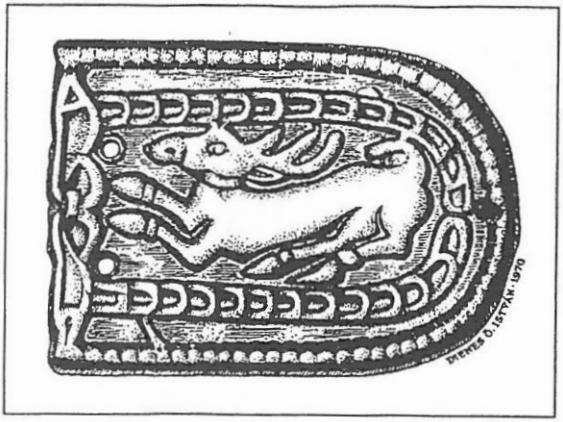

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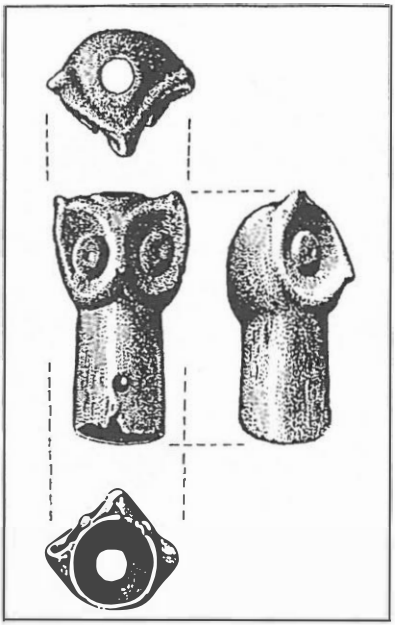

Fig. 14: Owl's head decorating the shaman's stick from Hajdúdorog

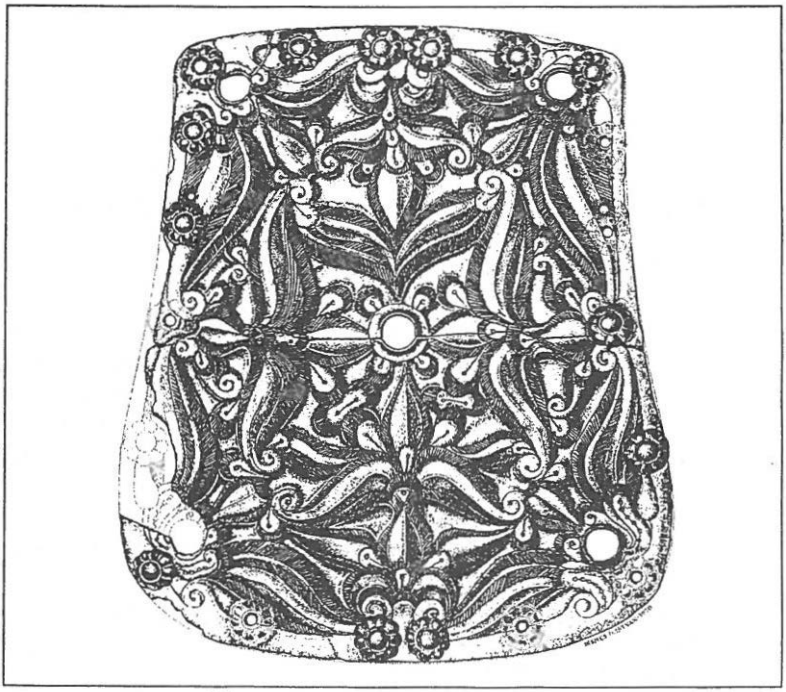

Fig. 15: The sabratache plate of Túrkeve.

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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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