

Customs of Eating and Hospitality among Nomadic Peoples of the Migration Period

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When research into the customs of eating and hospitality is attempted, at least six types of sources must be taken into consideration in the case of equestrian nomadic peoples of eastern origin (Huns, Avars). As will be seen in this study, even this way, only limited results can be achieved. As a Hungarian archaeologist, I am chiefly interested in the eastern population groups that once occupied the territory of present day Hungary, the scene in the Carpathian Basin which had been set by the time the conquering Hungarians arrived. The explicit aim of these investigations is to establish analogies as well as pinpointing differences that may contribute to our better understanding of phenomena characterizing the Period of the Hungarian Conquest itself. This approach also includes a nod in the direction of those who think conquering Hungarians found more than just Slavs in the territory of their new homeland.

It is worth devoting a few introductory words to the sources. These may be direct or indirect (and sometimes very indirect!).

1) Literary sources concerning the period under discussion here, the 5th-9th AD centuries are rather meager. There are especially few references directly relevant to the topic under discussion here. They include, however, a very special, almost unique account by *rhetor* Priscus concerning his diplomatic mission to the court of the Great Sovereign Attila.¹ Other records comparable to those made by this observant, interested and, above all, apparently reliable author are available only from the 13th century, beyond

¹ Priscus, fr.8. *Excerpta de legationibus*, ed. de Boor, Berlin 1903, 121-155; C. D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila*, Ann Arbor 1966, 93-96.

the chronological boundaries of the studied period. At that time, Franciscan monks (Plano Caprini, Wilhelm Rubruquis) were on similar diplomatic missions in the great Mongol khanates.² These documents are frequently quoted when attempts are made to reconstruct life during the Migration Period (for text references see the study by Gábor Vékony in this volume). These accounts, however, have one major disadvantage: They can be reckoned only as very indirect sources within the context of the Period of the Hungarian Conquest. They discuss phenomena separated by at least three centuries and ten thousand kilometers from the topic of this paper. Both Franciscan travelers give a synthetic account of "Tartars", reviewing numerous conquering and conquered peoples within the huge empire. Thus, these works not only obliterate obvious differences between these groups, but are also biased by poetic exaggerations, and the story telling capabilities of local informants. Moreover, they also contain clearly apparent misunderstandings.

Fortunately, we also have at our disposal a direct literary source on the Mongols: "The Secret History of the Mongols".³ At the end of this study I included, as dessert, a small portion of delicious data from this work concerning eating and hospitality. It is presented in order to illustrate that although the life and customs of 13th century Mongols were in many respects similar to those of Migration Period peoples in the Carpathian Basin, there were numerous differences as well. Naturally, neither the report by Priscus, nor the accounts by the Franciscans, and not even "The Secret History of the Mongols" should be considered cookbooks. Nevertheless, they may be of use in drawing general conclusions.

2) The second group of sources would be that of contemporary depictions. However, no direct iconographic evidence is available concerning Huns or Avars. One source that should receive attention, however, are Central Asian murals.⁴ They have, in fact, been frequently cited in the literature. Although fragmented, wall-paintings in Afrasijab (that is ancient Samarkand), 6th-8th century Pendjikent, and somewhat more distantly the Uigurian Kocho and 9th century Bezeklik display ritual,

² Van der Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana* I, Quaracchi-Firenze 1929.

³ L. Ligeti, *Histoire secrète des Mongols* (Monumenta Linguae Mongolicae Collecta I), Budapest 1971; I. de Rachewitz, The Secrete History of the Mongols, in: *Papers on the Far Eastern History* 1971-1976.

⁴ A. von Le Coq, *Bilderatlas zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Mittelasiens*, Berlin 1925; T. Talbot Rice, *Ancient Arts of Central Asia*, London 1965; L. I. Al'baum, *Živopis Afrasabia*, Taškent 1975; A. M. Belenizki, *Mittelasiens – Kunst der Sogden*, Leipzig 1980.

celebratory feasts as well as nomadic ambassadors who bring presents in small cups. These are distant analogies and far from direct. Still, they shed some light on life in the Sogd oases which were contemporary with the Avar Empire in the Carpathian Basin (Fig. 1).

3) Animal bones brought to light during the course of archaeological excavations and evaluated by archaeozoologists may be considered a direct source of information.⁵

4) The same holds true for macrobotanical finds, the systematic study of which has recently begun in Hungary.

In connection with these two groups of sources it must be pointed out that animal bones from food remains in burials represent only one part of the food given to the deceased for the journey to the Other World.⁶ Evidence for foodstuffs that contained no bone is scarce. In addition, it is not sure that such grave goods generally reflect food habits, since tradition may heavily influenced mortuary rituals. Nevertheless, this body of information is one of our most important sources. Animal bones found at settlements, reasonably interpreted as food remains, are at least not biased by ritual considerations. (In that case, however, it is frequently the exact stratigraphic and chronological position of finds that poses numerous difficulties).

5) Food habits are also (very prudently) discussed in the historical branch of physical anthropology. Recently, a young anthropologist, Zsolt Bernert, presented such results. He compared skeletal remains of Avar males buried with and without high status belt sets. In his opinion, differences in the condition of teeth (and other skeletal features) may be attributed to variations in levels of nutrition. A tribute to the memory of the late Imre Lengyel must also be paid here. The biochemical analysis of the skeletons from the Avar cemetery at Bányog - Gyűrhegy, permitted him to distinguish between two groups of people. He interpreted this division as probably being the result differing food habits, i. e. differential access to nutrients. Indeed, one of these burial groups contained no bodies of privileged persons with belt sets: These all fell into the other group (which also contained people without belt sets).

⁵ L. Bartosiewicz, Az állatcsontok eloszlási rendszere avar temetkezésekben (Animal offering distribution patterns in Avar burials), *Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve 1984-1985* (Szeged 1986) 77-95.

⁶ P. Tomka, Archäologische Studien zur Ethnographie der awarenzeitlichen Völker, *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft Wien* 116 (Wien 1988), 155-188, esp. 163.

6) Last but not least, purely archaeological methods are also of help in providing information on gastronomic cultures of the past. It is not only ancient foods and drinks that are of interest, but also the dishes used. Vessels with special shapes can sometimes yield special information. Naturally, when studying pottery a similarly clear distinction must be made between artifactual evidence from cemeteries and settlements. Aside from the remains of meat found in grave assemblages, beverages and non-meat dishes are represented by pottery in burials. These were either mundane "table dishes", or storage vessels in which food could be transported during the long journey. Useless or fragmented kitchen refuse as well as the aforementioned "table dishes" may be found in settlements. Moreover, vessels used in cooking and storage also occur, not to speak of features such as storage pits, granaries and other economic buildings important in storing food (or future food in the form of grain saved for sowing). From the viewpoint of gastronomic culture it is very important to know how food was produced. Were they keeping large stock or did they live as sheep pastoralists? If land cultivation was practiced or a more complex economy developed, which branch of agriculture dominated? Was animal keeping pursued in a nomadic way, with the constant search for new pastures or did it take the form of range farming that complemented land cultivation? Had hay production and stabling emerged yet?

A few general limitations should also be mentioned. Different results can be obtained depending on which social stratum is chosen for study. Literary accounts, including that of the much valued report by Priscus, usually concentrate attention on the top levels of high society and contain only sporadically occurring notes concerning common people.

Archaeological sources represent almost the diametric opposite of the social scale: They usually consist of finds from simple, everyday life (by contrast, this makes fortunate high status finds even more spectacular). Moreover, conclusions also depend on the occasion being observed: Data may concern ritual occasions or everyday life. Historical reports, iconographic representations and cemeteries tend to represent the first category, while settlement finds are more characteristic of the second.

Following this lengthy introduction, let us turn to Huns and Avars. As is the case with most mobile pastoral societies, they predominantly consumed foods of animal origin (In the case of Avars this holds especially true for the first wave of immigrants into the Carpathian Basin). As is shown by ethnographic parallels from the recent past (which may be considered the seventh in addition to the aforementioned six sources),

Mongols distinguish between two types of food. One of these is "black food", that is meat, while the other is "white food", a term that refers to dairy products. Similarly to all steppe peoples, Mongolian meals, especially those related to ritual hospitality were occasions of special feasting that followed a formal order depending on the time and place. It is especially noteworthy that not everybody was given an equal share of food. Some meat cuts were associated with higher social status than others and were considered special delicacies. The seating order and sequence of offering food provided good opportunities to make subtle distinctions between participants at a feast. This fact has been emphasized in all literary records from Attila's court to the table of the Mongol khans (The apparent neglect of such orders could sometimes cause violent conflicts as is described in the Secret History of the Mongols).⁷ Mutton assumes a leading role in the diet of almost all pastoral peoples. Horse and camels were not eaten under ordinary circumstances but served as food at the time of ritual sacrifices. Beef probably represented a higher status value than mutton, although this latter was also served at grandiose feasts. Almost all literary accounts mention hunted animals and fish (it is typical, however, that their remains occur but very infrequently among the food remains added to the grave goods found in burials). Berries, bulbs and roots, on the other hand, are only mentioned rarely, usually within the context of describing poverty. Poor people consumed anything that was edible, even voles, in the case of Mongolia. As far as beverages are concerned, fermented mare's milk, *kumis*, assumes a leading role. This is followed by spirits distilled from milk or rice and honey beer. Naturally, the tables of high ranking people were made more attractive by serving a wealth of imported goods. Literary sources, therefore, mention wines with special affection, and one should also reckon with the use of exotic spices.

Archaeological evidence for drinking habits is available in the multitude of jugs, beakers and cups which were produced using a variety of materials and which represent a rich repertoire of forms. As has recently been pointed out by Piroska Füle,⁸ this richness is especially conspicuous in the artifactual material of the Hunnic Period (Fig. 2). Special examples were found in what is probably the largest known hoard from the Hunnic Empire. (This assemblage, found at the site of Szeged - Nagyszéksós, is probably a

⁷ See note 3 and appendix #130.

⁸ P. Füle, Die Keramik. Hunnische Traditionen und hunnischer Geschmack, in: *Reitervölker aus dem Osten, Hunnen + Awaren, Katalog der Burgenländischen Landesausstellung Halbtturn 1996*, Eisenstadt-Bad Vöslau 1996, 145-146.

burial sacrifice).⁹ Golden hoops and other pieces of decoration from wooden cups in this hoard may be reminiscent of Attila's drinking cup. They were found together with a Greek cup and Persian goblet, both made of electrum, from which, according to reliable literary sources, high ranking guests at the feasts may have consumed their drinks (Fig. 3). A special problem is posed by the functional reconstruction of the famous Hunnic Period kettles.¹⁰ These usually large bronze vessels (50-100 cm height) were molded. Their mode of manufacture and form may be traced back to the ancient homeland of Huns that was located near the Great Wall of China. Their distribution area corresponds to the vast regions conquered by Huns. Both their size (30-50-100 l!) and shape indicate the possibility that they served in storing and stirring liquids. It is impossible to tell, however, whether beverages from them were served during sacrifices, funeral feasts or other celebrations. (Naturally, it is possible that they were used simultaneously for all three purposes; Fig. 4).

Avars had no reason to complain either. The 53 liters amphora of the Kunbábony leader was obviously not used to import iron nails. Similarly, amphorae of more modest sizes (c. 10 l) found at Kiskörös and Gátér, or even the small spherical vessels with two handles recovered at Dány and Tiszavasvári must have served to store wine from southern regions¹¹ (Fig. 5). Of course, vessel types, potters' techniques and trade links changed during the almost 300 years long Avar Period in the Carpathian Basin (Fig. 6). Different forms of spouted jugs (fired gray earlier and yellow toward the end of the Avar Period; Fig. 7), however survived.¹² Find materials from the

⁹ N. Fettich, La trouvaille de tombe princière hunnique à Szeged-Nagyszéksós, *ArchHung* 32 (Budapest 1953); A. Kiss, Die goldbeschlagenen Schalen der Fürstengräber von Szeged-Nagyszéksós und Apahida I-II, *Folia Archaeologica* 33 (Budapest 1982), 163-184; B. Kürti, Totenopferunde aus Szeged-Nagyszéksós, in: *Reitervölker aus dem Osten, Hunnen + Awaren, Katalog der Burgenländischen Landesausstellung Halbtturn 1996*, Eisenstadt-Bad Vöslau 1996, 160-164.

¹⁰ I. Kovrig, Hunnische Kessel aus der Umgebung von Várpalota, *Folia Archaeologica* 23 (Budapest 1973), 95-121; I. Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich*, Budapest-Stuttgart 1991, esp. 140-146, 240-241; P. Tomka, Hun üstök (The Hun Kettles), in: I. Bóna-J. Cseh- M. Nagy-P. Tomka-Á. Toth, *Hunok, Gepidák, Langobardok* (Huns, Gepids, Lombards), Szeged 1993, 26-27.

¹¹ E. H. Toth-A. Horváth, *Kunbábony. Das Grab eines Awarenhagans*, Kecskemét 1972.

¹² É. Garam, A késő avarkori korongolt sárga kerámia – Die spätawarenzeitliche gelbe Keramik, *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 96 (1969), 207-241; D. Bialeková, Zur Frage der grauen Keramik aus Gräberfeldern der Awarenzeit im Karpatenbecken, *Slovenská Archeológia* 16 (Bratislava 1968), 205-228; Gy. Rosner, Die Frage der Schnuckkeramik der frühen Awarenzeit, *Acta antiqua et Archaeologica, Szeged* 14 (1971), 95-104; T. Vida,

6th-7th centuries are especially outstanding in terms of their variability. Metal vessels are represented by golden and silver goblets (Fig. 8), handled mugs (Fig. 9) and drinking horns¹³ (Fig. 10). A number of kinds of glassware produced following the dictates of late Antique taste have also been recovered: Small jugs, glasses, pedestalled goblets and drinking horns are represented in this category¹⁴ (Fig. 11). Pottery (rare handled cups, commonly found small pots and mugs) placed into graves must also have been used in storing liquids. Flat pottery flasks belong to a type that offers an opportunity to carry out far reaching comparative studies ranging from Kirghizia to the Rhine River region, not to speak of the debate surrounding its origins.¹⁵ These finds also show that pottery was used not only to imitate metal vessels but others types made from organic materials more prone to decay. It is certain that the group of wooden vessels was very variable. This is attested by hoop remains as well as a few fortunate, well preserved finds. Bronze hoops, iron handles and even pieces of wood from small, cup size, bucket-like wooden vessels are sometimes found. As is shown by handles made from or covered with metal, even wooden cups and jugs were made to look similar to their counterparts in pottery and metal.¹⁶ Metal rims, used in reinforcing and decorating wooden drinking cups, similar to Hunnic Period finds, have also been recovered. The use of leather containers (like the analogous ethnographic examples of bags used in *kumiss* making in the East) is attested by bone spouts (also called suckers).¹⁷ In the Budakalász

Chronologie und Verbreitung einiger awarenzeitlicher Keramiktypen, *Antaeus* 19-20 (Budapest 1990-1991), 131-134; T. Vida, La ceramica, in: *Gli avari*, Udine 1995, 103-111.

¹³ É. Garam, *Katalog der awarenzeitlichen Goldgegenstände und der Fundstücke aus den Fürstengräbern im Ungarischen Nationalmuseum*, Budapest 1993; Gy. László, Études archéologiques sur l'histoire de la société des Avars, *ArchHung* 34 (Budapest 1955).

¹⁴ É. Garam, Awarzenzeitliche Glastrinkgefäße aus Kisköre, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1973), 279-288; E. Bárdos, La necropoli di Zamárdi, in: *Gli Avari*, Udine 1995, 151-163.

¹⁵ Gy. Rosner, Megjegyzések az avar kori kulacsok időrendjéhez – Bemerkungen zum Problem der awarenzeitlichen Pilgerflaschen, *Béri Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve* (Szekszárd 1984) 81-104.

¹⁶ E. H. Toth-A. Horváth, *op. cit.* (Kunbábony), 183-191; S. B. Szatmári, Das Gräberfeld von Oroszlany und seine Stelle in der frühawarenzeitlichen Metallkunst, *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 (1980), 97-116.

¹⁷ Gy. László, Adatok az avarság néprajzához – Beiträge zur Volkskunde der Awaren I, *Archaeologia Értesítő* III/I (Budapest 1940), 91-98.

find, direct evidence exists in the form of the remains of a leather container which could be identified by Ferenc Gyulai and his colleagues.¹⁸

The hypothesis that not all vessels found in Avar graves contained beverages must also be considered. Young children or the toothless elderly at least, may have been given some sort of a mushy meal for the eternal journey.

In addition to the aforementioned vessel types, larger cooking pots, storage vessels, hand-formed pottery kettles, lids and baking bells are also known from settlements (Fig. 12), especially from the second half of the Avar Period.¹⁹ (It must be noted that some bronze kettles, wooden buckets with iron hoops and barrels are also known from this period). In spite of all signs pointing toward the far away grasslands of the East, Inner or Central Asia, as well as tempting stylistic and technological similarities, this set of vessels (as well as the variability of forms characteristic of Hunnic Period pottery) is not typical of large perpetually moving nomadic communities. In the case of the Huns a relatively plausible explanation for this phenomenon can be suggested. Pottery from their settlements, as well as the bronze vessel/clay jug/glass assemblages recovered from their graves may reflect the pottery-making traditions and eating habits of conquered peoples (Goths, Gepids, Alanians, Sarmatians, Suebi and Pannonians). Glassware of Pontic origin, bread remains²⁰ found in an oven at Devin/Dévény and the barley and honey beer (*kamon* and *medos*) provided for the Byzantine ambassadors may be considered signs of such continuity.

The situation looks different in the case of the Avars. Another point can be made here that reconfirms our conclusions drawn from a different type of data. Apparently, the conquering Avars soon gave up their nomadic way of life. People in their agricultural villages established in the Carpathian Basin became similar to their sedentary neighbors of Germanic, Slavic or Late Antique ancestry also engaged in land cultivation. Their state organization, weaponry and traditional attire, however, remained different (reflecting their steppe heritage).²¹ Especially during the early phase of the

¹⁸ F. Gyulai's paper was read in Pécs, September 28, 1996.

¹⁹ I. Bóna, VII. századi avar települések és Árpád-kori magyar falu Dunaújvárosban – Awarische Siedlungen aus dem 7. Jahrhundert und ein ungarisches Dorf aus der Awarenzeit in Dunaújváros, *FontesArchHung*, Budapest 1973; Cs. Bálint, Die awarenzeitliche Siedlung von Eperjes, *Varia ArchHung* 4 (Budapest 1991).

²⁰ K. Pieta, Die Völkerwanderungszeit in der Slowakei, in: *Germanen, Hunnen, Awaren*, Nürnberg 1987, 383-417, esp. 408.

²¹ P. Tomak, Magánbeszéd az avarokról – On the Avars - a personal view, *Életünk* 35 (Szombathely 1997), 68-75, esp. 73.

Avar Period, but sometimes in Late Avar communities as well, animal keeping also retained a major significance. I wish to emphasize that finds relevant to Avar animal husbandry display great regional and diachronic variability both at settlements and in cemeteries.²² Without trying to intrude into the realm of archaeozoology, I must mention a personal observation here. At least as may be visually appraised during the excavations at Late Avar Period cemeteries in the Small Hungarian Plain in northwestern Hungary, grave furniture tends to contain diachronically increasing proportions of bones from pig and poultry (both chicken and goose) in addition to the usual remains of sheep and cattle. Grinding stones found in Avar villages not only show that grain was turned into flour but, indirectly, also indicate that bread or other sorts of food made from dough was consumed. Cereal cultivation is also evidenced by the numerous storage pits found at settlements. Neither can the semi-subterranean earthen sheds and hay storage features identified at some settlements be considered typical nomadic constructions.²³

The assumption that nomadic traditions were preserved longest by the leaders in the top levels of society, is clearly illustrated by the Nagyszentmiklós Treasure, the most glamorous hoard find ever recovered in the Carpathian Basin. The 23 golden vessels included jugs, goblets, cups, beakers, bowls, delicacy plates and a drinking horn²⁴ (Fig. 13; this assemblage was sub-divided into two major sets by Gyula László). That these magnificent pieces were of Avar manufacture is no longer in question (The debates that remain concern their last owner and the time they were hidden). The in-depth analysis of them provided an excellent opportunity for Gyula László to summarize the information available on the dazzling feasts held by nomadic sovereigns with references ranging from Priskhos to travellers of the Mongol Period. I would give a lot to be able to join a party where the table is set with the Nagyszentmiklós Treasure ...

²² J. Gy. Szabó, A Máttra-vidéki avar kori temetők állatsontleleteinek néhány tanulsága – Einige Lehren aus den Tierknochenfunden der awarenzeitlichen Gräberfelder im Máttra-Gebiet, *Szolnok Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve* (Szolnok 1981), 65-70.

²³ P. Tomka, Avar kori település Győr, Bokányi Dezső utcában – Siedlung aus der Awarenzeit in der Bokányi Dezső Straße von Győr, *Arrabona* 24-25 (Győr 1988), 35-61.

²⁴ Gy. László-I.Rácz, *Der Goldschatz von Nagyszentmiklós*, Budapest-Wien-München 1977.

Appendix

The following small collection of sentences from "The Secret History of the Mongols" (using the English translation by I. De Rachewitz) is grouped by topics concerning food, eating and hospitality. This selection, however, is far from complete.

167 "Are choked by white milk
are suffocated by black meat", that is, at an old age. This quote refers to dairy products and meat.

Within the category of common food, sheep is mentioned most commonly:

19 "She was cooking some dried lamb, she gave to each of them an arrow-shaft ..."

279 Taxing order by Genghis Khan: "...every year from these people one two-year-old sheep out of every flock shall be given as a levy for Our soup... (i. e. for the support of the Qahan). They shall also provide one sheep out of every hundred sheep and give it to the poor..."

Meat soup (usually made from mutton) is a frequent topic:

124 Genghis Khan appoints the cooks. One of them, Degey, swears:
"In making broth of a two-year-old wether ...
I will tend pied sheep ...
And tripe will I eat."

214 "When we were engaged in battle with the enemy
you did not let me spend the night without soup."

229 "The following morning, the quiver-bearers, day-guards and stewards who have spent the night outside shall stay at the horse station (...) while We eat Our soup, then, they will report to the night-guards. When We have finished eating Our morning soup, the quiver-bearers shall return to their quivers, the day-guards to their appointed place and the stewards to their bowls and vessels."

Cattle is also mentioned:

214 A black ox with a truncated horn was slaughtered behind the yurt for the kitchen.

Game is mentioned several times:

12 "Dobun-mergen went out hunting on the Toqochaq Heights ... He met a man of the Urianqqai tribe who had killed a three-year-old deer and was roasting its ribs and entrails ..."

54 "At that time Yisügey ba'atur was hunting with falcons ..."

175 The poorly supplied army procured food by hunting: "... were moving in this way, hunting for provisions ..."

Fishing occurs in

76 "Qasar, Bekter, Belgütei ... were sitting together and were angling."

Porridge is mentioned within the context of the people's etymology in

46 "Barulatai ... he had a big body and was a voracious eater ... Qaraldai did not observe seniority when they cooked porridge."

Naturally, drinks are amply discussed as well:

85 "The thing about this was that in it, after pouring milk, kumis was churned all throughout the night until dawn. As he went, he kept listaining for this sign."

213 When Genghis Khan sits on the throne, he said to the cooks: "When you take your seats, you must sit so as to look after the food on the right and the left sides of these large kumis pitchers."

232 "When the quiver-bearers distribute drink and oof, they must not do so without permission from the supervising night-guards."

245 The seven all entered and, as Teb-tenggeri sat down on the right side of the kumis pitchers, Otchigin seized the collar of Teb-tenggeri ..."

Poor people ate anything they could get hold of:

26 (Bodonchar) "They also picked up and ate the food left over by the wolves ..."

27 "When spring came and the ducks began to arrive, he staved his hawk ... He hung the captured ducks and wild geese all over till ..."

28 However, he also "went to these people and drank kumis with them ..."

74 Höelün "gathered wild apples and berries ..."

76 "A shiny minnow was caught, which Bekter and Belgütei snatched away from Temüjin and Qasar".

84 Höelün and his deprived family "ate bulbs dug up" from the earth.

89 "Here they stayed, killing marmots and fieldmice for food."

Goat's milk is not considered an elegant drink:

#177 (The fleeing of Ong Khan is sardonically described by Genghis Khan): "You seized five goats and fed yourself by milking them, and fed yourself by bleeding your camels."

On feasts:

#130 "... decided to hold a feast in the forest by the Onan ... in the course of feasting, one jug of kumis was first poured for Chinggis-qahan ... As one jug was also poured starting with Ebegei, the concubine of Sacha-beki's father, both Qorijin-qatun and Qu'urchin-qatun said "why don't you pour beginning with me, but beginning with Ebegei?" And they thrashed the steward Shiki'ür. Being thrashed, the steward Shiki'ür said: – What sort of thing is it, your thrashing me like this, just because Yisügei-ba'adur and Nekün-taishi are dead? – So he spoke, and cried loudly".

#187 Genghis Khan is granting a privilege: "You, Badai and Kishiliq, shall carry quivers and drink the ceremonial wine ..."

213 He said further "When you, the two stewards Önggür and Boro'ul, distribute food to the right and left sides,

Do not let it fall short

For those who stand or sit

On the right side,

Do not let it fall short

For those who stand in a row

Or who do not

on the left side

If you two distribute the food this way, my throat will not choke and my mind will be at rest."

Finally, a datum that shows that things given for an earthly journey corresponded, almost in every detail, to grave goods found in Migration Period burials:

87 "He (Sorqan-shira) set him (Temüjin) on a tawny barren mare with a white mouth, cooked him a lamb fattened on the milk of two ewes and provided him with a small and a large leather bucket. He did not give him either saddle or flint and steel, but gave him a bow and two arrows. Having thus provided for him, he sent him on his way."

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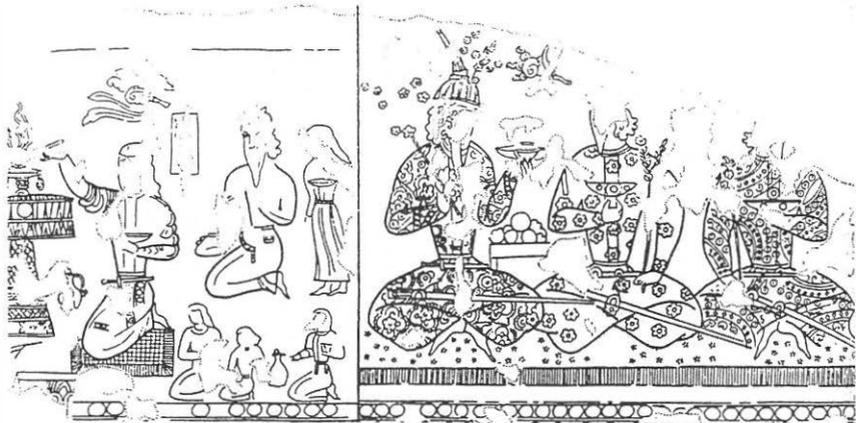


Fig. 1: Drawing of a mural from Pendjikent

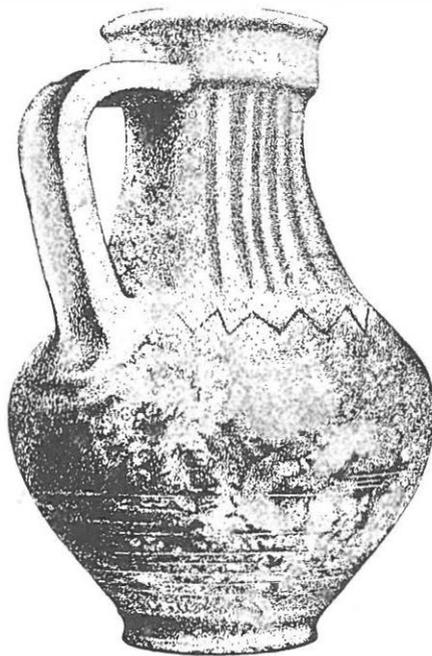


Fig. 2: Jug from Körösladány (Hun Period, 5th c.)

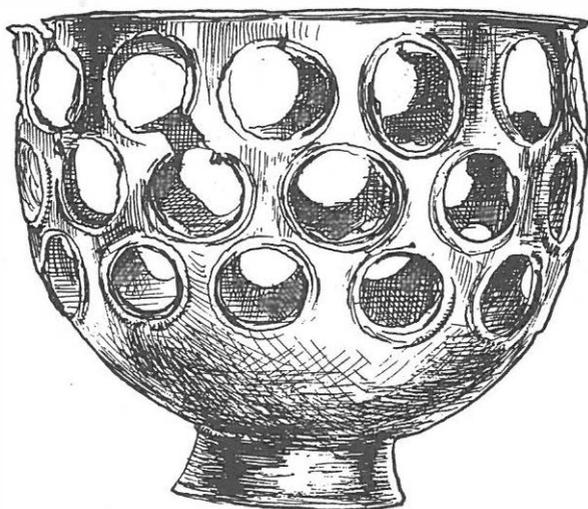


Fig. 3: Gold goblet from the Szeged-Nagyszéksós treasure
(Hun Period, 5th c.)

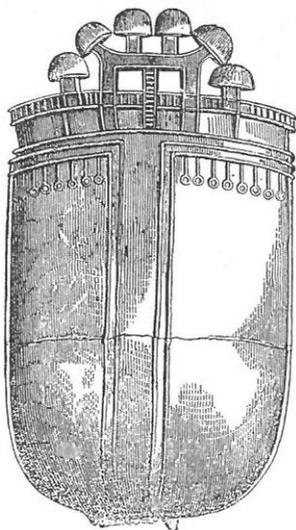


Fig. 4: Kettle from Törtel (Hun Period, 5th c.)

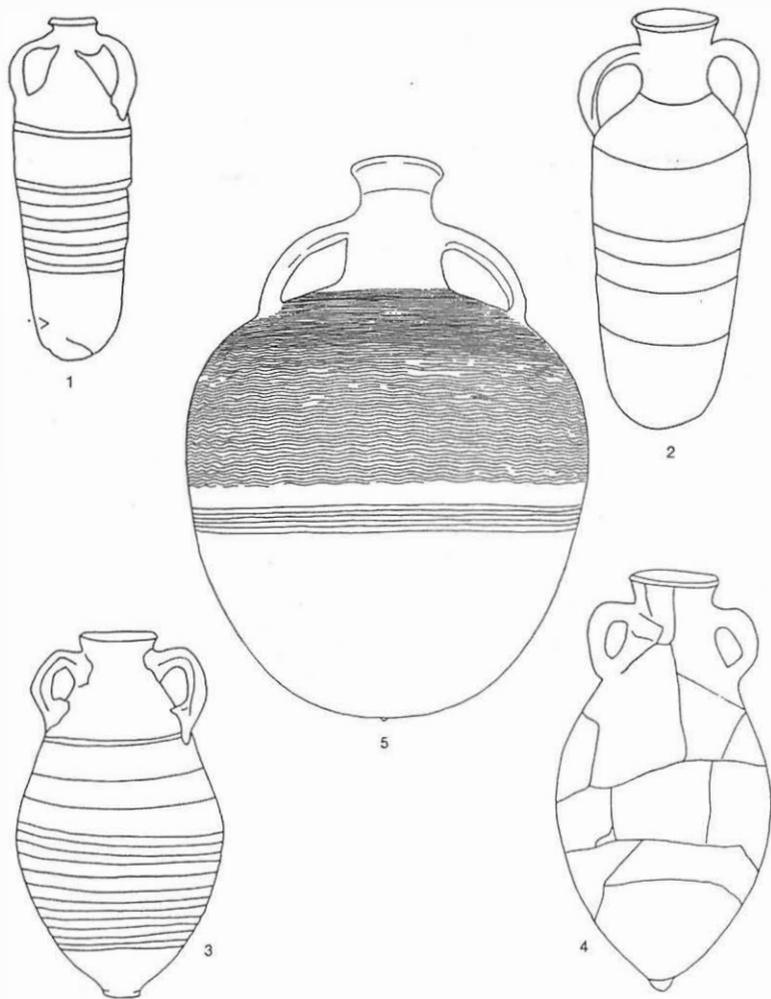


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Fig. 6: Hand-made vessel types (Avar Period, 6-8th c.)

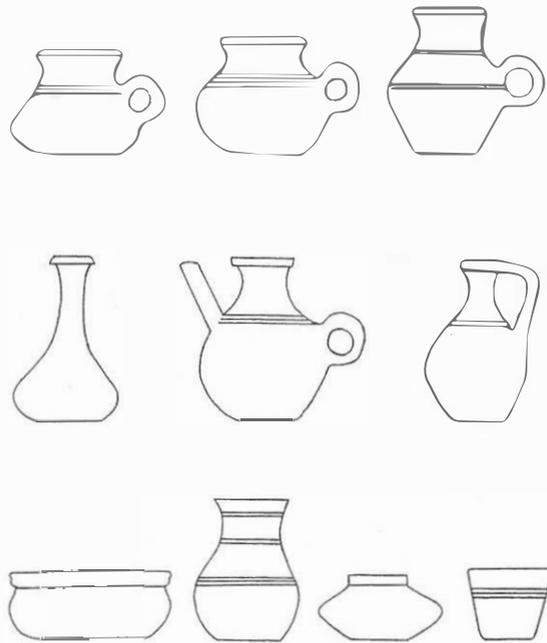


Fig. 7: Yellow potteries (Avar Period, 8th c.)

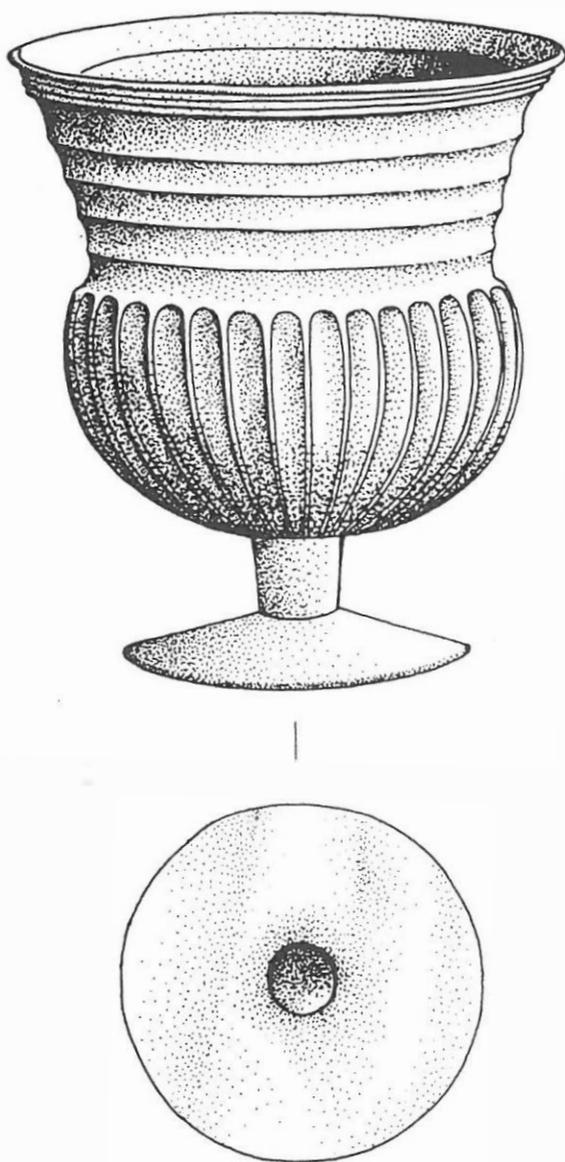


Fig. 8: Gold goblet from Bócsa (Avar Period, 7th c.)

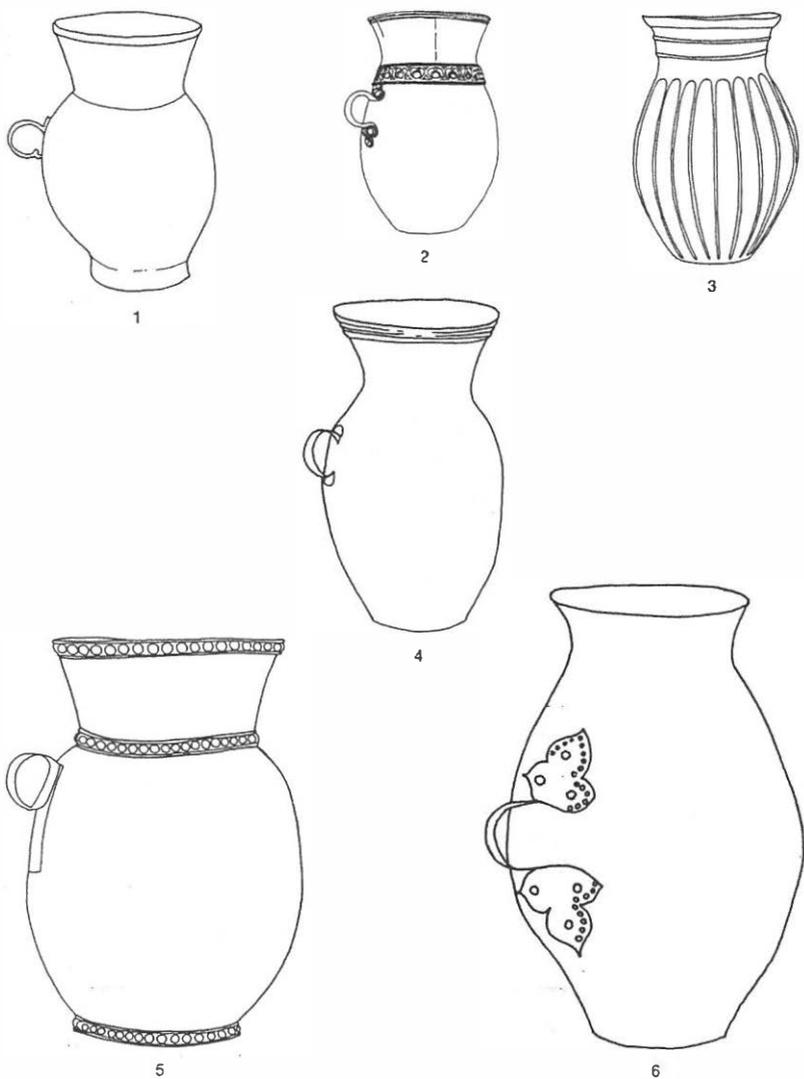


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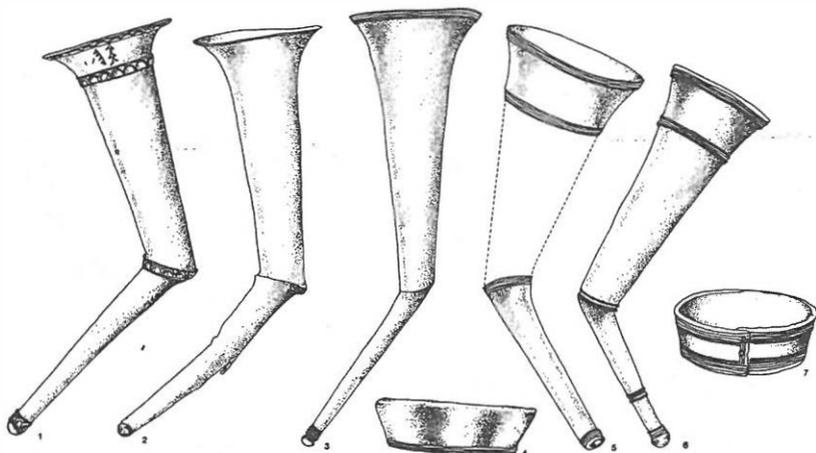


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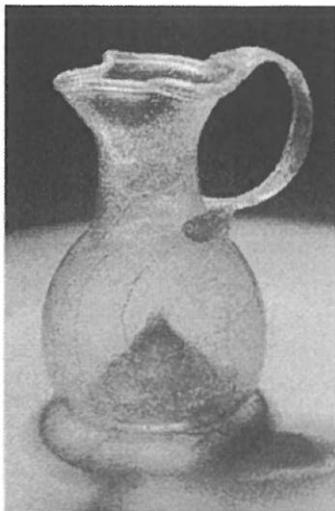


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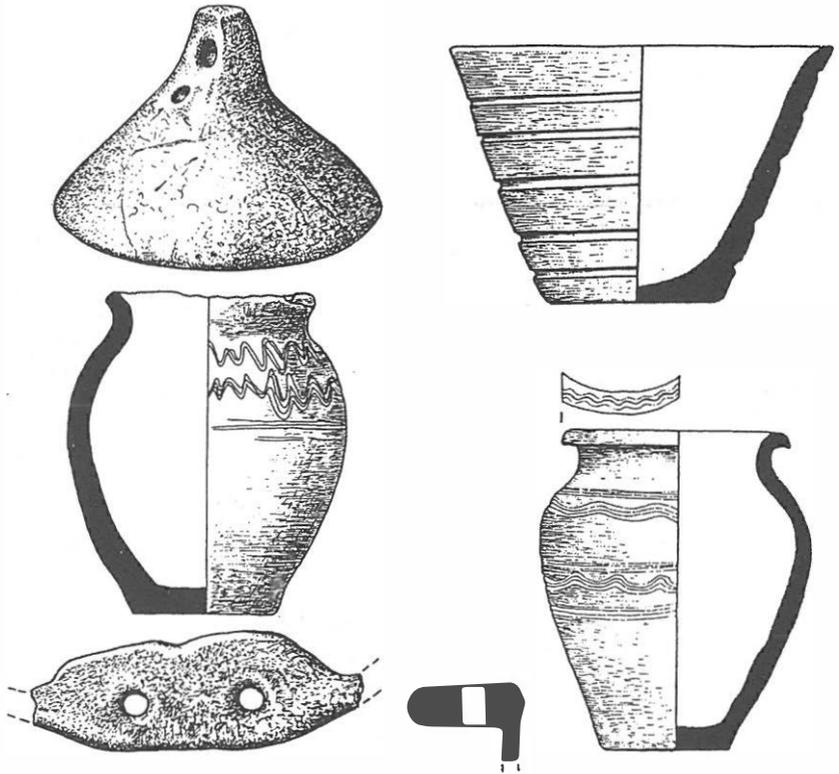


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Fig. 13: Gold vessel types from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure
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Tender Meat under the Saddle

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 9th-10th 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 Főiskola, 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 cooperation 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