Hungarian Prehistory Series

The Hungarians moved to their later homeland, the Carpathian basin at the end of the ninth century. Prior to this period they lived in the western part of the southern Russian steppe as vassals of the Khazar Kaganate. The ethnic environment of the Kaganate had a great impact on the ethnogenesis of the Hungarians as testified by the numerous Turkic and Iranian loan words as well as the art, the military and the political structure of the Hungarians in the period of the conquest. Therefore, from the point of view of Hungarian prehistory, it is crucial to be familiar with the history of the nomadic peoples, that is, with the "oriental background." The Hungarian Prehistory Series, launched in 1990, aimed to publish source editions, collected papers and monographs in connection with the history of the Eurasian steppe. It includes historical, linguistical and archaeological studies. The Department of Medieval World History (University of Szeged) has played an active role in the publication of the series since 1994.

The published volumes of the series until 2000 are the following:


Professor Samu Szádeczky-Kardoss, an outstanding Hungarian classical scholar published his work entitled Az avar történelem forrásai in the series. Its predecessor was a publication, published in German, that collected extracts from the sources on the European Avars. Subsequently, Professor Szádeczky-Kardoss began to publish the Hungarian translation of the sources, with abundant commentaries, in chronological order. The first nine chapters of this work were published in the Archaeologiai Értesítő between 1978 and 1986. Due to the great interest in this work, it was reprinted in the Hungarian Prehistory Series in 1992 as the first volume of a major undertaking, completed with two chapters. However, with the completion of the second volume, the publisher faced a problem since, by this time, the first volume was out of print. Therefore, instead of a reprint edition of the first volume, the two parts were published jointly. The entire work covers the history of the Avars from 557 to 806. All the sources, from this period, on the Avars can be found in Hungarian translation. The commentaries on the excerpts meet all scholarly standards. The accuracy of the editor is exemplified by


3 S. Szádeczky-Kardoss, Az avar történelem forrásai 557-től 806-ig. [Sources of Avar History from 557 to 806.] Co-author: Cs. Farkas, co-workers: M. Borsos, et al., Budapest 1998.

4 The translations of Greek sources on the Avars after 806, prepared by Teréz Olajos, are to appear in the Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár [Szeged Medieval Library.] series.
the corrigenda attached to the volume after its publication. The corrigenda draws
the attention of the reader to 11 (!) misprints in the 300-page book. The use of the
book is facilitated by an index divided into two parts.

The interest in the Muslim sources for Hungarian prehistory and that of the
conquest grew at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time a mostly bilin-
gual book was published with the title A magyar honfoglalás kútfüi5 (MHK), com-
prising Muslim texts translated and commented on by Géza Kuun. In the 1950s,
Károly Czeglédy re-translated some of these sources6 and planned to compile
a six-volume chrestomathy of Hungarian prehistory. In this undertaking he took
upon himself the task of editing Muslim authors. The series, however, has never
been completed. It was well-known that Mihály Kmoskó (1876–1931) had compiled
a prehistorical chrestomathy of Muslim sources on the Hungarians in the
period of the conquest that remained in manuscript form.7 Due to his ideological
position, its publication was not possible in the political situation after 1945. Its
recent publication was carried out by István Zimonyi, the editor-in-chief of the
Hungarian Prehistory Series, who evaluated the translations from a scholarly
point of view and edited the volume that had disgracefully been left unpub-
lished.8 Mihály Kmoskó considered it to be important to keep the excerpts on the
Hungarians in their broader context. Thus he translated sources concerning the
different peoples who had been in touch with the Hungarians (Khazars, Volga
Bulghars, Alans, Burtas, Moravians, Russians, etc.) Finally, he extended his re-
search to every ethnic groups of the Eurasian steppe zone. The selection from the
works of almost forty authors comprises a chrestomathy over a thousand pages
long. There are almost 6,000 notes added to the texts. The only imperfection of
the book is that – due to non-scholarly reasons – it could not have been published
earlier as, in the case of certain sources, some of its results needed to be corrected.
Since the death of Mihály Kmoskó, several significant manuscripts have been
published that are important for Hungarian prehistorical studies (Hudúd al-
ʿAlam, al-Marvazi, Ibn Hayyán, etc.). The new results are always highlighted in
the notes by István Zimonyi. The work begins with an introduction to the au-
thors. It is followed by the excerpts. In the first volume the relevant passages of
the accounts of Ibn Hurdádhbih, Muslim ibn Abi Muslim al Jarmi, Qudáma, Ibn

5 A magyar honfoglalás kútfüi. [Sources of the Hungarian Conquest.] Ed. Gy. Pauler and
S. Szilágyi, Budapest 1900.
6 A magyarok elődeiről és a honfoglalásről. [On the Ancestors of the Magyars and the Con-
7 K. Czeglédy, “Monographs on Syriac and Muhammadan Sources in the Literary Re-
 mains of M. Kmoskó,” Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 4 (1954) 19–91; For Mihály Kmoskó’s scholarly activity, see István Zimonyi, “Kmoskó Mihály és a ma-
gyar őstörténet,” [Mihály Kmoskó and the Hungarian Prehistory], in Őstörténet és
8 M. Kmoskó, Mohamedán írők a steppe népeiről. Földrajzi irodalom. [Muslim Writers on the
1997–2000. The publication of the forthcoming four volumes is in progress.
Rusta\textsuperscript{9} and Hárún ibn Yahyā can be found. The second volume comprises the texts of al-Istakhri, Ibn Hauqal, al-Muqaddasi, al-Maʿsūdī and al-Bakrī. The work published half a century after the death of Mihály Kmokó, proved to be abiding and unique in terms of national scholarship.

Klára Sándor produced a critical edition of the longest extant document of the Székely runic script, known as the Runic inscription of Bologna, discovered by Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli.\textsuperscript{10} The count, a member of the Habsburg imperial army, discovered a stick with Runic inscription in Gyergyószentmiklós (Now: Gheorgheni, Romania), in 1690. He copied the inscriptions and accompanied it with the alphabet of the Székely Runic script as well as with the Latin translation of the texts. The book begins with a philological analysis of the Runic inscription. In the first chapter the author introduces the source, reconstructs its history and determines the date of its origin. On the basis of a textual analysis, Klára Sándor identified several chronological layers. Most probably, the first step was a Hungarian Runic calendar based on the Latin alphabet. It might have been transformed into a Hungarian Runic script around the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. This inscription might have been copied several times and once – in the second half of the fifteenth century – Franciscan friars incorporated the feast of a new saint into the saints' calendar. The next chapter comprises the description of the content of the text and the detailed phonetic analysis of the identification of the Runic script. The second part of the book lists all the Runic words of the inscription, arranged into entries. The photocopies of the Runic texts can be found in the appendix.\textsuperscript{11} Various studies have been published on the enumeration of the Székely Runic script and its historical background in recent decades.\textsuperscript{12} This is the first study, however, carrying out a critical edition of the Székely Runic script that claims to meet modern scholarly standards. The study and the critical edition

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{See also H. Göckenjan und I. Zimonyi, *Orientalische Berichte über die Völker Osteuropas und Zentralasiens im Mittelalter. Die Ġayhäni-Tradition.* Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica, Band 54, Wiesbaden 2001.}
\footnote{K. Sándor *A Bolognai Rovásemlék.* [The Runic Inscription of Bologna.] Szeged 1991.}
\footnote{Formerly it was published by Gyula Sebestyén (*A magyar rovásírás hiteles emlékei.* [The Authentic Remnants of the Hungarian Runic Scripts] Budapest 1915). His work, however, can only be obtained at book auctions, moreover, the photos in the reviewed work are of much better quality.}
\end{footnotes}
of the entirety of the authentic texts should yield a corpus that can be a basis for further academic research. The Székely Runic script would be the key to the hitherto underciphered Eastern European (Avar, Khazar, etc.) Runic scripts.

The Department of Altaistics, together with the Hungarian Prehistory Research Group of the József Attila University\(^\text{13}\) organized a workshop on the Runic scripts of the Carpathian Basin on 26\(^{\text{th}}\) March 1992. The proceedings of the workshop were published in the same year in the Hungarian Prehistory Series.\(^\text{14}\) The first article of the volume by András Róna-Tas treats the Turkic origin of the Hungarian ír 'write' and betű 'letter' words. The author reckons both expressions to be Turkic loan words dating from prior to the Hungarian conquest. Irén Juhász reported a Runic script found on a large strap end that was discovered in a late Avar grave in Szarvas (County Békés, Hungary). While János Harmatta published the transcription of Avar Runic inscriptions. István Dienes reported an inscription discovered in a grave from the period of the Hungarian conquest near Kalocsa (County Bács-Kiskun, Hungary), and the transcription of the script was provided by Gábor Vékony. He identified the language of the inscription as common Turkic. Géza Ferenczi reviewed the Székely Runic inscription. Ferenc Kósa dealt with the methodic quest of the Runic inscriptions, while Klára Sándor treated the issues raised concerning the origins of the Székely Runic script.

Several outstanding Hungarian orientalists have published volumes containing their collected studies.\(^\text{15}\) The series continued this tradition by publishing a selection of the articles of András Róna-Tas.\(^\text{16}\) Here we mention only a few of the fifty papers. The preface of the book, written by the author himself, surveys the post-World War II historiography of Hungarian prehistorical studies.\(^\text{17}\) Among the articles of the book the evaluation report on István Fodor's PhD thesis can be found. In this report András Róna-Tas not only presents his own ideas concerning Hungarian prehistory, but also makes critical remarks on Fodor's theses upon the migration of the Hungarians from the Eastern European forest-land to the

\(^\text{13}\) Since 1 January 2000 the name of the institution has been "University of Szeged."


steppe zone. Some papers of the volume study the Khazar ethnonym and others investigate their language. The author’s conclusion from the point of view of Hungarian prehistory is that the idea of common Turkic etymology of the Khazar ethnonym was not valid. Thus he invalidated one of the major pieces of evidence of purporting to prove the common Turkic origin of the Khazar language. There are many Turkic loan words in Hungarian from the pre-conquest period that conform to Chuvash criteria. Scholars, however, deemed the language of the Khazars to be of common Turkic type. Therefore, they tried to place the Khazar–Hungarian coexistence in a very short time framework since a long-lasting impact would not be appropriate for explaining the huge proportion of Chuvash-type loan words to be found in the Hungarian language as against the common Turkic ones. The studies of András Róna-Tas showed that there is not an adequate basis for identifying the language of the Khazars as common Turkic. Thus, one can assume a longer connection between Khazars and Hungarians. This can basically alter ideas about the migration of the Hungarians before the conquest. In his work entitled A magyar népnév egy 1311-es volgai bolgár sírfeliraton, the author showed that the self-designation of the Hungarians – i.e. Magyars – could be related to a Hungarian group settled in the Volga region. The history of this separate group of Hungarians is particularly interesting not only from the point of view of the ethnogenesis of those Hungarians who settled in the Carpathian basin but also in the light of ethnic changes in the Volga region during the Mongol period. The volume ends with the bibliography of András Róna-Tas up to 1994, compiled by Éva Kincses Nagy. The book comprises substantial studies of the author that should not to be overlooked by those studying Hungarian prehistory, particularly, in many cases it is difficult to have access to them.

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20 The ‘Magyar’ Ethnonym on a Volga Bulghar Grave Inscription from 1311.
In his work, entitled *Kelet, a korai avarok és Bizánc kapcsolatai*, Csanád Bálint published the enlarged and corrected version of two of his former papers in German. These articles are closely connected with each other. The first paper treats the strap mountings connected to the steppe culture and their parallels through the analysis of a grave in Üc Tepe (Azerbaijan). He points out that the political–cultural influence of the Byzantine Empire was not coterminous with its borders. Certain objects deriving from Byzantine culture reached Europe, Africa, the Southern Russian Steppe, and Iran. This requires a reconsideration of the ethnospecific nature of several objects. While the first article discusses a particular object type, the other provides a new approach towards the evaluation of the findings. The author is right in his warning that from a methodological point of view it is hazardous to draw conclusions on the basis of a group of archaeological hoards (or even on a single finding). Such “conclusions” infiltrate into historical studies as “results of archaeology” and in many cases produce erroneous hypotheses strengthening one another. According to Csanád Bálint, the main objective of archaeology is to provide a solid source basis for further research through systematic study of the finds. The article of János Harmatta on the inscription of a Sassanian seal-ring found in a grave in Üc Tepe is in the appendix. The practical use of the volume is facilitated by more than sixty photos, drawings and maps.

In the Spring of 1988 a conference was organized in Szeged and its eleven contributors tried to analyze the impact of losing World War I and the negative effects of the peace treaties on the scholars dealing with Hungarian prehistory. Through the peace treaties, Hungary lost two thirds of its original territory. One third of the population became citizen of surrounding foreign countries. The reaction of the scholars of the period differed. István Fried studied the opinions on Hungarian–Slav relations. After the war the Slav ethnic groups, formerly belonging to Hungary, established their autonomous nation-states. Both among the Slavs and the Hungarians there arose a need to reappraise their history in accordance with their changed situation. The article of Árpád Berta on the development of the first prehistorical theory of Gyula Németh can also be found in the volume. The author, who edited the enlarged and revised work of Gyula Né-

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meth (A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása), provides an excellent summary of the ideas on the prehistory of the Hungarians of the young turcologist. He points out that these ideas need to be interpreted together with the prehistorical ideas of noted contemporary orientalists (Ármin Váméry, Zoltán Gombocz, Bernát Munkácsi, István Zichy and others). Finally, Zoltán Kordé provides a summary of several studies on the ethnogenesis of the Székelys.

The work of Károly Rédei, a leading professor of the Finno-Ugric Department at the University of Vienna, dealing with the history of the Hungarian language was published in the Prehistory Series. The democratization process of the 1990s in Hungary made possible the publication of the works of numerous emigrant Hungarian historians. In addition to the high standard scholarly studies, many amateur “historians” published their so-called “works.” Their fantastic and unscholarly ideas (about the Hun–Hungarian, the Sumer–Hungarian or the Turkic–Hungarian relationship) unfortunately found their way to an enthusiastic general readership. Books were also published prior to this period trying to criticize these false theories. The increasing number of amateur works led Károly Rédei to provide a new summary in his work. He presents a detailed historiography of these “genial discoveries” and through striking examples shows the unscholarly nature of the methods applied by these “historians.”

Jenő Szűcs prepared a monograph on the Hungarian ethnogenesis in the 1970s. However, until his death in 1988 this work was not published. His historical approach, nonetheless, became well-known and popular. His book on the economic and social regions of Europe became a bestseller, and this success surprised even its publishing house. His work, entitled A magyar nemzeti tudat kialakulása, proved to be a turning point in research on Hungarian prehistory. Szűcs adapted the theory of the historian Reinhard Wenskus to the Hungarian case. The


majority of the German ethnic groups that had settled in the western part of the Roman Empire merged into the local population of the occupied territories. During this process their ethnonym gradually became a territorial category. From a qualitative point of view, this process resulted in a new phenomenon: the modern nation. Szűcs pointed out that the transitions between the stages are not evident. The Hungarians in the period of the conquest did not lose their national consciousness, it rather spread among the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Hungary. After accepting Christianity, only fragments of the ancient ethnic ideas of the Hungarians found their way into written sources. Szűcs managed to provide a homogenous picture out of the small pieces that had not been achieved by other Hungarian scholars until then. At the end of the book a summary can be found of the scholarly activity of the author written by István Zimonyi. It is followed by a bibliography of Jenő Szűcs' work, compiled by Erzsébet Szűcs.

The medievalists of the communist countries launched a new project that aimed at compiling a Marxist encyclopaedia of the medieval history of Eastern Europe with the title Encyklopädie der Frühgeschichte der europäischen Völker. In the course of the distribution of entries, however, the editors – in a very unscholarly way – took the modern borders of the countries as a basis. Thus the Hungarian scholars were to be excluded from the preparation of entries discussing the history of two thirds of Hungary that had once belonged to the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Therefore, they begin to launch a new project with a working title A magyar föld és nép korai történetének enciklopédiája. The editorial work was taken by Sándor Bökönyi and Gyula Kristó and the secretary of the editorial board was Csanád Bálint. The entry-words would have included the Hungarian prehistory and medieval history up to 1387, as well as the history of the Carpathian basin between the Hun and the Hungarian conquests. In addition to the Hungarian edition, they also planned an edition in German. A pilot booklet – containing 26 entries – of the future encyclopaedia was published. The publication of the first volume was planned for 1992. Due to the political changes, the financial basis of the undertaking became uncertain. Thus, on the basis of the already prepared entries a team, led by Gyula Kristó, began to compile a new book. It was eventually published in 1994 under the title Korai magyar történeti lexikon (9-14. század). With the shortening of the period under investigation, the entries – imperfectly – prepared on the pre-conquest history of the Carpathian basin were left out. Thus only 2,000 entries of the originally scheduled 3,000 were published.

Out of the remaining entries those, concerning the Huns, the Gepids and the Lombards were prepared in a way that they were published together in one vol-

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ume. Before the publication of the encyclopaedia, István Bóna, who had co-ordinated the preparation of the entries dealing with the period under study, published a volume containing these entries in a book entitled *Hunok – Gepidák – Langobardok*. This volume of 180 entries comprises the writings of István Bóna, János Cseh, Péter Tomka and Ágnes Tóth. There are separate entries, besides the substantial, summarizing ones (the Huns, the clothing of the Gepids, or the archaeology of the Lombards), on all the notable individuals (e.g. Arikan / Erekan, Dengitzik / Dintzik, Onegesios, Orestes, Uldin, Audomharjis / Omharius, Alböin / Albun / Albwin, Bajan, Hildigis). The entries on the Hun golden bows, the Gepid survival and the one on the religious life of the Lombards were especially interesting.

The exhibition arranged for the eleven hundredth anniversary of the Magyar conquest of Hungary was first shown to the public in Miskolc, in 1995. The exhibition was opened to a wider public in the National Museum of Hungary in the following year. The catalogue of this exhibition, after the introductory studies, presents the archaeological findings on the Hungarians in the period of the conquest arranged into lexicon-like entries, well illustrated with color plates. The three publications together, except the entries concerning the Avar period, provide a useful summary of the history of the Carpathian basin between the fourth and the fourteenth centuries that meets all scholarly expectations.

István Vásáry redeemed a long-lasting debt on the part of Hungarian orientalists by publishing his work entitled *A régi Belső-Ázsia története*, since up to this time no monograph had been published in Hungarian on the more than a thousand-year history of the steppe. The work of Lajos Ligeti, *Az ismeretlen Belső-Ázsia* – according to the expectations of the publishing house – aimed at a wider readership. The work of Károly Czeglédy only treated the events between the second century B.C. and the sixth century A.D. Also, he only studied the eastern part of the steppe region. Moreover, his work was not widely diffused, due to his extraordinarily condensed style. The book of Vásáry combines a readable style with the abundant notes required by scholarly literature. The first chapter of the book comprises a general introduction, in which the author clarifies the subject matter discussed, explains his sources and outlines the geographical environment of the events. The term 'Inner-Asia', used in the title, refers to a cultural unity


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bordered by populations settled from the south and the ethnic groups of the taiga and tundra from the north. This territory extended as far west as the Carpathian basin and as far east as Manchuria. Besides dealing with the Inner Asian nomadic populations (Hsiung-nu, Yüeh-chih, Hsien pi, Juan-juan, Türk, Uyghur, Kirghiz, etc.), the book also provides a detailed discussion of the nomadic peoples (Scythian, Hun, Onoghor, Volga Bulghar, Avar, Khazar, Hungarian, Pecheneg, Uz, Cuman) who were in contact with Europe at any stage in their history. István Vásáry not only examined the history of the peoples of the steppe but also these of the nations, countries (Kitans, Jurchens, Tibetans, Tanguts, Karakhanid Empire, Khvarezm) that ever were in contact with them at certain stages of their history. The volume also comprises a twenty-page annotated bibliography, a detailed chronology and indices. Together with his book entitled Az Arany Horda (The Golden Horde) it provides a summary of the history of the Eurasian steppe from the Scythians to the Mongols.41

The thirteen volumes of the Prehistory Series published during the last decade prove that there is a well-skilled scholarly team in Szeged, and also that there is a palpable academic need for such publications. Finally, it should be pointed out that, in addition to the series reviewed here, orientalist and historical studies in Szeged are also represented by the foreign language publication Studia uralo-altaica series as well as by the Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár.

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