

HUNNIC COMPONENTS IN THE HUNGARIAN ETHNOGENESIS

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Introduction

The Hungarians (according to their vernacular ethnonym: Magyars) are the only surviving historical community whose first state-organisation and ethnogenesis took place concurrently in the steppe cultural environment. With this Eastern heritage, the ancient Hungarians integrated into the medieval intellectual and political Western European environment, and within it expressing the legacy of its culture in the Carpathian Basin. Of course, the chronicling of these events was preceded by the existence of a rich oral tradition, of which we know only those that survived in our old historical records and chronicles. As a result of the social change beginning around the turn of the first millennium, foreign linguistic (Latin) and religious (Christian) official scribes began recording the memory of the ancient past, and this we can count on a foreign cultural filter which decided what and how much of the pagan oral heritage were worthy of recording. However, there must have been such strong traditional elements because some were able to penetrate this filter, thus ensuring their survival in written form. Since folk memory of historical events can often extend over several centuries,¹ the source value of the Hungarian gestas and chronicles is greater than is sometimes believed to be by the overly cautious philological critics.

We don't know the exact dates of writing of the individual legends, thus the period of the Árpád Dynasty (1000–1301) still presents numerous enigmas. It has long been disputed as to the actual time the first Hungarian

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¹ Hoppál, 2014, 103–122.

gesta was put in writing, yet the oldest chronicles from the 13th–14th centuries preserve traces of earlier written works.

The first – but lost – Hungarian historical record, the so-called *Ancient Gesta* can be dated to the time of King Andrew I (1046–1060).² In the 11th–13th centuries a number of clerics continued recording history. The oldest surviving work from this creative process is *Gesta Hungarorum* written and composed by Simon Kézai (ca. 1285). However, since Kézai's work survived only in excerpts, for complete data we must turn to the 14th-century chronicle compositions, the most famous of them the so-called *Illuminated Chronicle*.³

However, the work which stands out from this main line of the Hungarian medieval historiography is the earliest independently surviving Hungarian historical record, the *Gesta Hungarorum* (early 13th century) authored by King Béla's nameless scribe (for this reason called *Anonymous*), known only as Master P. Yet his work presents but an elitist, hero-focused work about the “origins of the kings and nobles of Hungary” and their deeds in the 9th–10th centuries.⁴ Hungarian history-writing became scientific historiography during the 17th–18th centuries. During this period, data from foreign sources were also incorporated into Hungarian historical knowledge, and our scholars were already practicing source criticism on the historical reconstruction. The Hun-Hungarian tradition, one of the subfields of Hungarian pre-history, fits into this process of historical reconstruction.⁵

The problem of the relationship between the Huns and the Hungarians has long been the subject of heated debate. The present study intends to join this debate by enumerating through what course of events could the Huns have been included in the process of Hungarian ethnogenesis.

Hunnish components in the Hungarian chronicles – Attila's „usefulness”

First of all, the origin myth of the Hungarians, the *Legend of the Miraculous Deer*, should be mentioned. The earliest account of this myth is known from

² ifj. Horváth, 1954, 305–315; Szabados, 2020.

³ Hóman, 1925; Kristó, 2002, 28–88.

⁴ Hóman, 1938; Szabados, 2006.

⁵ Hóman, 1925a.

Simon Kézai, which – considering the above-mentioned characteristics of Árpád-period historiography – means that it was recorded no later than 1285. Yet, it may not be an exaggeration to attribute the first recording of it to the author of the *Ancient Gesta*, which could be dated to the 11th century. In any case, in Kézai we read: the giant Menrot living in the area of Persia, had two sons by his wife Eneth called Hunor and Magor, who became the ancestors of the Huns and Magyars:

“Now it happened one day when they had gone out hunting in the Meotis marshes that they encountered a hind in the wilderness. As they went in pursuit of it, it fled before them. Then it disappeared from their sight altogether, and they could not find it no matter how long they searched. But as they were wandering through these marshes, they saw that the land was well suited for grazing cattle. They then returned to their father, and after obtaining his permission they took all their possessions and went to live in the Meotis marshes. The Meotis region borders on their Persian homeland, and except from one very small ford it is cut off on all sides by the sea; it has no rivers but abounds in grass, trees, birds, fish, and animals; access and exit to this land is difficult. So, they entered the Meotis marshes and remained there for five years without leaving. Then in the sixth year they went out, and when by chance they discovered that the wives and children of the sons of Belar were camped in tents in a lonely place without their menfolk, they carried them off with all their belongings as fast as they could into the Meotis marshes. Two daughters of Dula, prince of the Alans, happened to be among the children who were seized. Hunor took one of them in marriage and Mogor the other, and to these women all the Huns owe their origin. And as they stayed on in the marshes, they gradually grew into a very powerful people, and the land was not large enough to contain them or to feed them.”⁶

It has been suggested that this myth is merely a literary topos, variant of the ancient Greek myth, Io. Not only the Hungarians have the *Legend of the Miraculous Deer*, but the Huns also had such a myth, and so the classification of it as a topos is untenable. János Berze Nagy convincingly refuted

⁶ Kézai, 15–17; cf. SRH I: 144–145.

the notion that only the memory of the abduction of women had lived among the Hungarians, and that Jordanes should be credited with having introduced the *Legend of the Miraculous Deer* into his Hun chronicle of Kézai.⁷ Motif similarities do arise in such current linguistic environments as those found among the oral tradition of certain Turkic peoples, yet the Hungarian *Legend of the Miraculous Deer*, written in Latin, cannot possibly have had direct textual connection. New research confirms the conclusions of János Berze Nagy.⁸ Recently Gergely Agócs, an ethnomusicologist, published the Bjnöger saga, which he collected among Balkars living in the Caucasus. The text of the saga shows motifs which have close similarities with the *Legend of the Miraculous Deer*.⁹ Since Kézai did not travel to Central Asia or the Caucasus to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, nor did the “informants” from there travel to Hungary to research Latin codices, then the similarities of the motif must presume their derivation from an ancient common cultural community.

A continuous debate among historians has been the question of the authenticity of the Hungarian Hun tradition.

Before 1945 the perception regarding this tradition was dominated by the opinion of Bálint Hóman. Hóman believed that the core of the Hungarian-Hun tradition could be identified in the influence and dominance of the Árpád Dynasty, meaning that this tradition initially applied only to the ruling dynasty, and then in time it applied to the origin of all the Hungarian people.¹⁰ Bálint Hóman’s reasoning proved to be the prototype of a highly influential theory regarding the spread of tradition. Reinhard Wenskus used the same terms “Traditionskern” (‘core of tradition’) or “traditionstragender Kern” (‘core carrying tradition’), when discussing the early historic records of the Germanic peoples. The essence of the term is that a dominant group, when forming a higher-level political unit, legitimized group membership with an origin myth, and the dominant group’s group genesis was eventually shared by the entire community.¹¹

This view, however, changed in the second half of the 20th century, and thence a negative attitude became dominant. E.g. György Györffy put

⁷ Berze Nagy, 1927, 162–164.

⁸ Mátéffy, 2012.

⁹ Agócs, 2016.

¹⁰ Hóman, 1925a, 88.

¹¹ Wenskus, 1961, 54–87.

forth the idea that the Hun-Hungarian ethnic identity and the Hun story in the chronicles is not the product of oral tradition, but developed in 10th-century Europe as scholarly literary invention. This view eventually resulted in self-contradiction because earlier he stated that the Hun-Hungarian tradition developed through Onogur-Bulgarian mediation.¹² So: is this tradition Eastern or Western? Unfortunately, he never resolved this contradiction. Notwithstanding, his views have had a powerful influence on medieval Hungarian scholarship. We only need to refer to the work of Gyula Kristó, another influential scholar who rejected the antiquity of Hunnic tradition until the end of his life.¹³

Nevertheless, recently, a number of scholarly studies have emerged that suggest this tradition, or at least some of its elements, to be credible.¹⁴ The work of Gabriella M. Lezsák, followed by Izabella Horváth's extensive study of the myth of Attila's burial deserve attention. The result of Horváth's analyses, substantiated by thorough interdisciplinary examples, is that the burial ritual of the great Hun king has such far-reaching, ethnographically, archaeologically and historically verifiable Central and Inner Asian parallels, that it is impossible to consider this legend to be a modern fabrication or a borrowing from medieval Western European chronicles.¹⁵ The two authors also vindicate Arnold Ipolyi, author of *Hungarian Mythology*, concerning the often-questioned authenticity of his entries on the Attila-tradition.¹⁶ Similarly, the data published in the relevant volume of the *Catalogue of Hungarian Historical Legends* testify to the strong presence of Attila and the Huns in current oral tradition.¹⁷ The summary comment of Zoltán Magyar, the author of the extensive database of the *Catalog*, is fully justified: "*The Catalog of Hungarian Historical Legends contains a multitude of local legends that bear witness to an extremely virulent and extensive folklore tradition, perpetuating, among other things, the special funeral of the legendary ruler and his secret burial place.*"¹⁸

¹² Györffy, 1948, 126.

¹³ Kristó, 1983; 2004, 40.

¹⁴ Dümmerth, 1971, 421–425; Hoppál, 2014, 103–122.

¹⁵ Lezsák, 2016; Horváth, 2022.

¹⁶ Ipolyi, 1854, 201.

¹⁷ Magyar, 2018, 13–45.

¹⁸ Magyar, 2018a, 198.

For the purposes of this study, I will highlight only a few aspects which validate the credibility of the Hungarian people's awareness of their Hun origins and the Attila tradition of the Árpád Dynasty. Two factors need to be considered: first, whether this ancestral awareness has a source basis, and second, what advantage could the Árpáds have had by claiming Attila as an ancestor. In other words: can it be true that the Árpád Dynasty purposefully chose Attila for political reasons, thereby increasing its own glory and thus strengthening its right to rule the Carpathian Basin? Could this need to legitimize the Árpád Dynasty have served as an ulterior motive for the court clerics when recording history?

A brief answer can be given regarding the source base of this claim. Two written records exist of the *Legend of Turul*, prophesying the birth of Árpád's father, Álmos's destiny as a great ruler.

The earlier version is the well-known account by the Anonymous notary of King Béla III (1172–1196), but the later chronicled version is closer to the lost original.¹⁹

*“In Scythia, Előd, the son of Ügek, begot a son by the daughter Eunod-bilia, who was called Álmos because, when his mother was pregnant, a bird, like a falcon, came to her in a dream, and revealed to her that a stream would come from her womb but not multiply in her land. And this was because from her loins came glorious kings. And because sompnium is dream in our language, and his origin was foretold by a dream, therefore he was named Álmos...”*²⁰

Scholars often contrast this legend claiming Álmos as descendent of Attila, with the tradition of the Árpád Dynasty's actual knowledge of Attila as ancestor. To justify this seeming contradiction some scholars point out that in the *Legend of Turul* it is the falcon-like raptor, the turul, who impregnates the mother of Álmos, therefore his descendants – the Árpáds – cannot claim Attila as ancestor, and it was the Christian clerics who tamed the animal-conception into a dream event.²¹ Beside the legendary birth of Er-Togrul (13th century) and his son Osman, there are notable ancient parallels of

¹⁹ That of Anonymous is fraught with misunderstandings, and he even invented the name of Álmos' mother Emese by mistake (Szentmártoni Szabó, 2002; Szabados, 2010).

²⁰ SRH I: 284–285.

²¹ Horváth, 1931, 38–39; Györffy, 1948, 40–41.

dream conception, namely that of the Persian king Cyrus (6th century BC), and even that of Gautama Siddhartha (Buddha – 5th century BC). Perhaps I don't need to state the obvious, namely, that those who recorded the *Legend of Turul*, the life of Cyrus and of Buddha did not use each other as sources, and that the ancient writers of the two latter stories cannot be accused of Christian modesty for neither chronological nor cultural reasons. Therefore it is methodologically untenable to insist on an explanation claiming only the dream as a conception possibility, while ignoring the fact that the same text also mentions the mortal father and the pregnant mother!²² Actually, according to the text, the awareness of the Árpád Dynasty's descent from Attila on one hand, and the *Legend of Turul* on the other, were not mutually exclusive origin stories, but rather can be considered as two elements of the same family tradition.

The problem of the “usefulness of Attila” needs to be discussed at greater length.

We cannot ignore the fact that among the historians of the Árpád-period there is indeed one who – in retrospect and of course figuratively speaking – wants to turn the descent of the first Hungarian ruling house from Attila into a medieval political issue. Anonymous introduces the *Legend of the Blood Contract* with these lines:

“The Hungarian people, most valiant and most powerful in the tasks of war thus originated, as we said above, from the Scythian people that are called in their own language Dentumoger. And their land was so full on account of the host of people born there that it was insufficient to sustain or keep them, as we said above. On account of this, the seven leading persons, who right up to the present day are called the Hetumoger, not tolerating the pressures of space, having taken counsel among themselves to quit the soil of their birth, did not cease seeking by arms and war to occupy lands that they might live in. Then they chose to seek for themselves the land of Pannonia that they heard from rumor had been the land of King Attila, from whose line Prince Álmos, father of Árpád, descended. Then these seven leading persons realized from their common and true counsel that they could not complete the journey begun unless they had a leader and the master above

²² Szabados, 2012; 2017.

them. Thus, by the free will and common consent of the seven leading persons, they chose as their leader and master, and of the sons of their sons to the last generation, Álmos, son of Ügek ... Then they said with equal will to Prince Álmos: 'From today we choose you as leader and master (ducem ac preceptorem) and where your fortune takes you, there will we follow you.' Then on behalf of Prince Álmos the afore-said men swore an oath, confirmed in pagan manner with their own blood spilled in a single vessel."²³

However, the rest of his *Gesta* reveals that Mester P. himself did not consider the descent from Attila to be a strong enough basis for the conquest by the Árpáds, since his description of the armed struggle for the new homeland (Pannonia) is much more vivid than it had actually been. The chroniclers who actually worked on the portrayal of the historical Attila also cannot really be accused of being lenient with the description of the great Hun king. Simon Kézai describes both the negative and positive characteristics of Attila: he was brave and cunning, well-groomed and lustful, generous to strangers, and terrifyingly strict to his Huns.²⁴ And indeed, Kézai does not forget to mention even the darkest aspect of his character, that of the allegation of fratricide. He concludes his presentation of this event with a peculiar moral judgment, which he attributes to the Huns.

"After the court Attila left Eise-nach and went to Sicambria, where he murdered his brother Buda with his own hands and had his body thrown in the Danube. Attila's reason was that while he was away fighting in the West his brother had overstepped the boundaries of authority he had established between the two of them and had had Sicambria renamed after himself. Although Attila issued an order to his Huns and his other followers that the city was to be referred to as the City of Attila, and the Germans out of fear respected the order and called the city Etzelburg, the Huns paid scant heed to it and continued to call it Óbuda, as they still do to this day."²⁵

Finally, he notes that Attila's death occurred after a vigorous act of lovemaking, when lying on his back, the king was choked to death by a nose-

²³ Anonymus and Master Roger, 16–17; cf. SRH I: 39–40.

²⁴ SRH I: 150–151.

²⁵ Kézai, 51–53; cf. SRH I: 156.

bleed. However Kézai's severe deheroization is not yet over. He emphasizes: Attila's empire went to the grave with him, due to the ensuing struggle for succession among his sons. Many people died in these bloody battles. Csaba, one of Attila's sons, returned to Scythia with the remnants of his army (the Huns who remained in place hence have called themselves Székelys to this day)²⁶ Kézai's narrative is consistent with the historical fact that after Attila's death (453), the Huns gave up their steppe statehood in the Carpathian Basin.²⁷ Kézai therefore acts correctly when he makes it clear that there is no continuity between the presence and rule of the Huns and the Hungarians in Central Europe.

Let's return to the next question: did the Árpáds choose Attila as their glorious ancestor in order to enhance their own prestige and thereby their right to rule in the Carpathian Basin? Were the Árpáds politically dependent on Attila as ancestor?

Given the cultural historical context of the 11th–13th centuries, this accusation of usufruct proves untenable. Again, it should be emphasized that one of the unique phenomena of Hungarian history is reflected in the social change toward Christianity which took place at the beginning of the first millennium: the Hungarians are unique in that they expressed the tradition of their ethnic and ancient steppe-style statehood within the framework of the Western Christian cultural sphere, shown through the records written in Latin by Christian clerics. By the time the earliest surviving *gestas* were completed, Anonymous Notary's *Gesta Hungarorum* from the early 13th century and Simon Kézai's *Gesta Hungarorum* before 1285, the first Hungarian ruling house could already boast a political legitimacy that fit into the Christian world and gave it an extraordinary status: after the canonization of Stephen I and his son, Emeric (1083), and consequently the canonization of their canonizer, Ladislaus I (1192), the Christian descendants of the Great Prince Álmos condensed their political legitimacy into the term "lineage of holy kings".²⁸ It is also an important factor that – as we have seen – Kézai does not conceal the dark features of Attila's character. If we add to this the negative image of Attila that is common in Western European historiography, then the political "uselessness" of the great Hun ruler from a Hungarian per-

²⁶ SRH I: 160–162.

²⁷ On the term of "steppe-state" or "steppe-empire" see Pohl, 2003, 572–573.

²⁸ Deér, 1938, 117–119; Teiszler, 2023.

spective, becomes even more apparent. Therefore, it is more logical to consider that the Árpád Dynasty “accepted an ancestor” rather than “chose an ancestor”, because in the latter case a much more “useful” ancestor could have been chosen.

If an ideal ancestor were needed, a truly ideal one of choice might have been in the person of Khagan Bayan, who successfully led the Avar conquest of the Carpathian Basin (568) and set up the Avar Khaganate (568–822), a steppe-empire that existed in Central Europe for a quarter of a millennium. Moreover, no sin of fratricide casts a shadow on his memory.

Hunnic components in the foreign (and domestic) sources

Yet, strangely enough, our historians of yore did not include the Avar khagans into the tradition of the Attila→Álmos lineage. This seems correct, but if we look beyond the dynastic line toward ethnogenesis, we feel a sense of loss because the memory of the Avars (7th–9th centuries) was left out of our medieval chronicles from the time period between the Huns and the Hungarians. To explain this, and invoking Wenskus’s “tradition core” theory, in 2014 I came to the conclusion that the Avars are not listed as “Avars” in our chronicles, because there was no dominant “Avar” tradition core left that could have made its way into the written records of the Árpád dynastic period.²⁹ The descendants of the Avar Khaganate appear under a different name in Hungarian medieval historiography. In 1944 Gyula László already noted:

*“...the Avars’s history as it is recounted in the Hungarian chronicles under the name ‘Hun’ is the strongest evidence that we could only have obtained the (historical) data from the Huns (Avars) who remained here and assimilated...[i.e. into the Hungarian population].”*³⁰

To address this issue, it is now necessary to briefly digress and touch on the theoretical issues surrounding group appellations, so that we can reach more cautious conclusions. I see a double problem arising here: on the one hand, the definability of forms of identity, and on the other, the functions of individual personal names.³¹

²⁹ Szabados, 2014, 294.

³⁰ László, 1944, 98; cf. Bendefy, 1945, 107.

³¹ I discussed these topics in my two papers Szabados, 2014; 2022.

Under the term forms of identity, I mean to point out that it is not immaterial what group marker the chroniclers apply to identify a state (political unit?) or an ethnic group. Although these cannot always be distinguished, and it would be frivolous to expect medieval historians to follow 21st century conceptual categories, yet there are instances when the examination of identity forms is almost mandatory.

For clarification first of all, the remark of the 6th-century Byzantine historian Menander Protector is relevant here. He notes that Emperor Justinian I (527–565) encouraged the Utigurs to wage war against the Kutrigurs. The Utigurs were reluctant to do so and said, *“it is not fair and unseemly to destroy our relatives [the Kutrigurs], who not only speak the same language as we, are our neighbours, have the same customs and habits as we, but are also our blood relatives, even if they are subjects of other princes.”*³² The Utigurs therefore recognized the Kutrigurs as belonging to the same ethnic group though they lived under a different political authority. Menandros provides a clear example of the “one ethnos – two states” formula – provided we accept the organization of the Utigurs and Kutrigurs to be on state-level. In this case, the group markers “Utrigur” and “Kutrigur” refer to two separate political formations, not two ethnic groups. Menandros did not mention a common ethnonym. Next, there is also a report by a 6th-century Byzantine author, Agathias, who describes the process by which the Utigurs and Kutrigurs were eventually subsumed under other major powers:

*“Then they carried out minor raids and robberies, and then they [the Kutrigurs and Utigurs] engaged in open warfare, until their forces on both sides dissolved and they themselves became completely stateless, so that they even lost their ancient name. Such was the misfortune of these Hunnic peoples that even if a part of them remained, they were scattered and forced to serve others and had to change their name to that of their overlord.”*³³

That is to say, from that time on they used the name of the new overlords and they ceased to exist under the former state appellation of Utigurs and Kutrigurs. It is of significance that Agathias applies the group name “Hun” to both as ethnic identifier or marker.

³² FHG IV: 202–203; cf. Doblhofer, 1955, 88–89.

³³ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1998, 27 (Translated by Izabella Horváth).

The question of the function of certain proper names leads us to one of the aforementioned “Hun” groups, which is also of particular relevance to Hungarian history. Hungarians in their own language call themselves “Magyar”, who in the first half of the 9th century separated from their earlier environment, yet the name “Magyar” had appeared in writing centuries earlier, but not as an ethnonym or a denominating noun for a social or political group. Three authors, not independent of each other (Johannes Malalas (†after 570), Saint Theophanes the Confessor (†817), and Georgios Kedrenos (mid-11th century) report that internal strife erupted in the Black Sea Region among the Huns at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Justinian I.³⁴

*“In the same year [527/528 AD], the king of the Huns near Bosphoros, called Gordas, joined the emperor, became Christian, and was baptized. The emperor received him, provided him with many gifts, and sent him back to his own country to guard Roman territory and the city of Bosphoros... After the king of the Huns, who had become a Christian, returned to his own country, he found his brother and told him of the emperor’s love and liberality and that he had become a Christian. He then took the statues that the Huns worshipped and melted them down, for they were made of silver and electrum. Enraged, the Huns united with his brother, went away and killed Gordas and made his brother Mouageris king in his place. Then, in the fear that the Romans might seek him out, they fell suddenly on the city of Bosphoros and killed the tribune Dalmatius and his soldiers. At this news the emperor sent out the ex-consul John the grandson of John the Scythian and son of the patrician Rufinus, with a large Scythian force, and at the same time directed against the Huns Godilas... and the general Badourios. On hearing this, the Huns fled and disappeared.”*³⁵

The texts apply the ethnonym *Οὐννοι* to the Huns, and the name of the victorious Hun king occurs in the following variants: *Μοῦγγελ* (Johannes Malalas), *Μουαγγέρην* (Theophanes) and *Μοαγγέρα* (Georgios Kedrenos).³⁶ Gyula Moravcsik convincingly demonstrated the connection between the Hungarian ethnonym and the personal name of a Kutrigur-Hun king, called *Muage-*

³⁴ Moravcsik, 1927, 261–265.

³⁵ Theophanes, 267.

³⁶ Moravcsik, 1983, II: 192–193.

ris, who ruled in the Black Sea Region around 528.³⁷ In this study, he also made a thought-provoking, though shown to be erroneous, statement about the origin of the name “Hunor”:

*“I consider it probable that the author of the 11th century Gesta, when reading the history of the Huns in foreign chronicles, read the words Hunor rex = Hunorum rex in the usual abbreviated form after the name of one of the Hun kings, perhaps in the margin of the manuscript, and, thinking it to be ‘Hunor king’, he made it the ancestor of the Huns.”*³⁸

Having examined the functions of the name “Magyar” (and its variants) one by one, I noticed that this Kutrigur-Hun data can fit into the ancient Hungarian proper name system which has survived in the chronicles however much fragmentarily.

In the various chronicles, the appellations can be divided into four related groups: 1.) Personal name: *Muageris* (Kutrigur-Hun king), *Magor* (Hunor’s brother, in the *Illuminated Chronicle* he also appears once as the father of Hunor and Magor). 2.) Clan name: *Megyer* (ruling clan). 3.) ethnic name: *Hetumoger* (‘Seven Hungarians’). 4.) Geographical name: *Dentumoger*, *Magor* (the whole of the ancient homeland of Scythia), *Mogoria/Magoria* (part of the ancient homeland of Scythia). Furthermore, it should be remembered that it is not at all uncommon in the Eurasian steppe cultures for communities (nation, people, empire) to receive the name of a ruler: the Seljuk, Ottoman, Nogai, and Chagatai – to name a few – all received the personal names of their rulers.³⁹

The supportive value of the *person* → *group* method of name-giving analogies requires appreciation, because these examples all originate from the same cultural sphere. Based on the afore-mentioned medieval written sources considering the functions of the proper noun “Magyar”, I propose a possible reconstruction of the process: a Kutrigur-Hun king named *Magyar* (*Muageris/Magor*) had become the eponymous ancestor of a leading elite (the *Megyer*) clan; centuries later, in the same Eastern European sphere, the then head of this clan, Álmos, organized a steppe state, and thus the “magyar”

³⁷ Moravcsik, 1927.

³⁸ Moravcsik, 1927, 265; cf. Berze Nagy, 1927, 162–164; Mátéffy, 2012, 944–945.

³⁹ Golden, 1992, 6.

tradition he inherited was applied to the entire “magyar” people of the Great Principality of Hungary.⁴⁰

This Hunnic thread running through the process of Hungarian ethno-genesis is composed of domestic and foreign historical sources. However, this is not a linear process, but, as Miklós Takács aptly puts it: “*it would be more correct to speak of the possibility of a multi-branched, multi-channel course of Hungarian ethnogenesis.*”⁴¹

To follow further clues, we need to return to the “Avar” thread. Who are those Avars? Among the ethnonyms applied to them in the chronicles, the name *Hun* emerges repeatedly.

According to the chronicle of Johannes Malalas, “*at the same time [ca. January 558] strange foreign Huns who were called Avars, entered Constantinople.*”⁴² Discussing the background of the Avar conquest of 568, Theophylaktos Simokattes strives to exactly use group names to systematize the ethnic relations of the steppe.

“Then the Chagan embarked on yet another enterprise, and subdued all the Ogur, which is one of the strongest tribes on account of its large population and its armed training for war. These make their habitations in the east, by the course of the river Til, which Turks are accustomed to call Melas. The earliest leaders of this nation were named Var and Chunni; from them some parts of those nations were also accorded their nomenclature, being called Var and Chunni. Then, while the emperor Justinian was in possession of the royal power, a small section of these Var and Chunni fled from that ancestral tribe and settled in Europe. These named themselves Avars and glorified their leader with the appellation of Chagan. Let us declare, without departing in the least from the truth, how the means of changing their name came to them. When the Barselt, Onogurs, Sabir, and other Hun nations in addition to these, saw that a section of those who were still Var and Chunni had fled to their regions, they plunged into extreme panic, since they suspected that the settlers were Avars. For this reason they honoured the fugitives with splendid gifts and supposed that they re-

⁴⁰ Szabados, 2022; cf. Szabados, 2017a.

⁴¹ Takács, 2006, 80.

⁴² Malalas, 296.

ceived from them security in exchange. Then, after the Var and Chunni saw the well-omened beginning to their flight, they appropriated the ambassadors' error, and named themselves Avars: for among the Scythian nations that of the Avars is said to be the most adept tribe. In point of fact even up to our present times the pseudo-Avars (for it is more correct to refer to them thus) are divided in their ancestry, some bearing the time-honoured name of Var while others are called Chunni."⁴³

Theophylactos Simokattes, writing before the year 630, reports the first population growth in the established Avar Kaganate in the Carpathian Basin which occurred through immigration, too:

"At that time the Tamiach and Kotzager, who are also from the Var and Chunni, fled from the Turks and, on reaching Europe, united with the followers of the Avar Chagan. It is said that the Zabender also originated from the race of the Var and Chunni. The additional force that came to the Avars was accurately estimated at ten thousand."⁴⁴

The event can be dated to ca. 595. If we take this statement literally and count only the ten thousand immigrant warriors, it is logical to assume that they settled and established families in their new homeland, but it is even more plausible that their wives and children migrated with them. Even legitimate criticism of the rounded figure of ten thousand does not diminish the significance of the Avar steppe empire in Central Europe having been augmented by a community of several thousand people sharing a related cultural tradition.

The next immigration wave can be dated to the last third of the 7th century. This time, the fourth son of the Onogur-Bulgarian Khagan Kuvrat arrived with his army in Pannonia, where he came under Avar rule. Since the Onogur-Bulgarians were also the successor population of the Hun empire, it is possible to trace the fate of one of their fragments in the Carpathian Basin. This is how Nicephorus Patriarch writing in the beginning of the 9th century narrated it.

⁴³ Theophylaktos, 189–190.

⁴⁴ Theophylaktos, 191.

“It is now time to speak of the dominion of the Huns (as they are called) and the Bulgarians and their affairs. In the area of the Maeotic lake, by the river Kophis, lies Great Bulgaria (as it was called in olden times) and (here lived) the so-called Kotragoi, who are also of the same stock (as the Bulgarians). In the days of Constantine who died in the West, a certain man by the name of Kobratos became master of these tribes. On his death he left five sons, upon whom he enjoined not to part company under any circumstances, so that their dominion might be preserved thanks to their mutual friendship. But they took little account of the paternal injunction and a short time thereafter they divided, each one of them taking his own share of their people. The eldest son, called Baianos, in accordance with his father’s command, has remained until this day in his ancestral land. The second, called Kotragos, crossed the river Tanais and dwelt opposite the first; the fourth went over the river Istros and settled in Pannonia, which is now under the Avars, becoming an ally of the local nation. The fifth established himself in the Pentapolis of Ravenna and became tributary to the Romans. The remaining third brother, called Asparuch, crossed the rivers Danapris and Danastris and settled near the Istros, where he found a suitable place for habitation (called Onglos in their language), which happened to be difficult (of access) and impregnable by the foe: for it is secure in front because it is impassable and marshy, while at the back it is fenced by inaccessible cliffs. When this nation had thus divided and scattered, the tribe of the Khazars, (issuing) from the interior of the country called Bersilia, where they had lived next to the Sarmatians, invaded with complete impunity all the places that are beyond the Euxine Sea. Among others, they subjected Baianos to paying tribute to them.”⁴⁵

This fourth son of Kuvrat has been identified by researchers as Kuber.⁴⁶ He later left the Avar Khaganate with his “warriors” and settled in the Byzantine Empire, around Thessaloniki. It is a point of scholarly dispute as to whom Kuber had led when he left the khaganate: whether the Onogurs

⁴⁵ Nikephoros, 87–89; cf. Moravcsik, 1930, 89–97.

⁴⁶ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1968, 84–87.

who moved in with him followed him, or whether they remained in the Carpathian Basin.⁴⁷ In this case with whom did Kuber leave Pannonia?

A hagiographic work compiled in the 680s, the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* reports that Kuber left the territory of the Avar Kaganate with descendants of Byzantine prisoners of war.⁴⁸ According to the historical reconstruction of Samu Szádeczky-Kardoss and Teréz Olajos, the khagan first separated Kubert from his people and placed him in the southern territory as governor of non-Avar inhabitants (primarily Byzantine prisoners of war and their descendants); after this, a rift between the Avar ruler and the Bulgarian prince occurred, which led to the exodus.⁴⁹ This, however, implies that Kuber did not leave at the head of those with whom he arrived. This necessitates taking into account another “Hun” thread, namely, Kuber’s 7th century Onogur-Bulgarian immigrating community, a population growth factor at the latter period of the Avar Khaganate. The presence of this population is likely, since the charter issued in 860 by the East Frankish king Louis the German (843–876) uses the term “Border of the Wangars” (*Uuangariorum marchia*).⁵⁰ Citing this source, Olajos, specialist of the Avar period, presented convincing arguments that the term Wangars in the charter refers to the Onogur immigrants. Etymologically, the name “Wangar” is best derived from Onogur and not Avar; moreover, from a geographical point of view, the Onogurs’ migration to Pannonia – that is, to the western part of the Carpathian Basin – coincides with the fact that barely two centuries later, the “Wangar border” was the name of a mountain in western Pannonia.⁵¹

Previously, the Huns also appeared in the toponyms of the Carolingian era. Richárd Szántó pointed out that “...at the end of the 8th and in the 9th century, another name for the Avars, ‘chuni’, appeared as place names; here, the geographic objects were not named after Attila’s Huns, but rather the name of the ‘chuni’ branch of the Avar population entered the geographical nomenclature.”)⁵² Unfortunately, it is not known whether this geographical name referred to a local living community in 860, or just to their memory.

⁴⁷ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1983, 169; Bálint, 2004, 46.

⁴⁸ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1998, 219–220.

⁴⁹ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1998, 218–220; Olajos, 2013, 530–531.

⁵⁰ MGH DRG I: 146, No. 101.

⁵¹ Olajos, 1969; 2013, 524–532; Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1971, 13; cf. Király, 1987.

⁵² Szántó, 2022, 95.

However, despite the proverbially meager source base, it can now be stated that the steppe-derived survivors of the Avar Khaganate did not die out after 822, but resurfaced under different names in the 9th–10th centuries. A brief survey illustrates this: for 863 we read in the Swabian Annals, “*The Hun people are approaching the community of Christians...*,” and in similar context an Einsiedeln annalist also places the conversion of the “Huns” in the year 863.⁵³ The same event was recorded in the Annals of Altaich to the year 865, “*The people of the Huns were baptized.*”⁵⁴ There are hardly any other Christian “Hun” groups to be reckoned with in the 9th century Pannonia, so the next mention, just a few years later, is probably also about them: The church document on the conversion of the Bavarians and Carantani (870/871) recounts:

“...how the Huns expelled the Romans, Goths and Gepids from Lower Pannonia and took possession of the territory, until the Franks and Bavarians, together with the Carantani, harassed them in constant wars and defeated them. And those who embraced their faith and accepted baptism, they made taxpayers of the kings, and the land on which they remained and lived, they possess to this day in return for taxes paid to the king.”⁵⁵

The chronicle of Abbot Regino of Prüm, completed in 908, mentions magyars wandering in the “Pannonian and Avar grasslands” (*Pannoniorum et Avarum solitudines*). This was recorded for the year 889.⁵⁶ Based on the thorough philological arguments of Szádeczky-Kardoss, the “Avar steppes” should not be considered uninhabited wastelands, but rather grassland inhabited by Avars.⁵⁷

A didactic work compiled in the mid-10th century by Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII (913–959) and later titled *De Administrando Imperio*, describes the consequences of an Avar-Croatian war and speaks with mid-10th-century validity about Avars living among Croats, whose “Avar nature

⁵³ MGH SS I: 50, 66, 76; MGH SS III: 140; cf. CFHH I: 91; Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1986, 138; Olajos, 2012, 176; Szabados, 2015.

⁵⁴ *Annales Altahenses Maiores* 60.

⁵⁵ CBC 40 (Translated by Izabella Horváth).

⁵⁶ Regino, 132.

⁵⁷ Szádeczky-Kardoss, 1983a; 1993.

is recognizable.”⁵⁸ Therefore it seems the local inhabitants were able to survive the collapse of the Avar khaganate and the subsequent establishment of the magyar grand duchy yet preserving their original steppe identity. If we encounter a “Hun” ethnonym among their groups, it is meaningless to consider the term as an antiqueization; after all, Byzantine historians and Frankish annalists were not likely to have been in direct contact with each other in order to conspire.

Instead, it is worth paying attention to Richárd Szántó’s excellent insight. As it can be seen, the two groups of texts of the 14th-century Hungarian chronicle compilations differ in the dating of the Hungarian conquest: the so-called *Buda Chronicle* dates it to 888, while in the *Illuminated Chronicle* we find the year 677.⁵⁹ However, there is one clause that is the same in both, and this concerns the name of the incoming people: “*vulgariter Magori sive Huns, Latine vero Vngari.*” Szántó argues convincingly that the correct translation of this passage is, “*the Hungarians or Huns in the vernacular – who are called Ungarus in Latin...*” „vulgariter” means ‘in the language of the people,’ and the second word means ‘in Latin...’.⁶⁰ So the meaning of the pair of terms is not ‘in a vulgar manner’ and ‘in Latin,’ but ‘in the language of the people’ and ‘in Latin.’” We also agree with his conclusion: “*The description of the vernacular name of the Hungarians (Magori sive Huni) indicates that the writer knew Hungarian, knew the name of the people and the tradition from which he adopted the folk names. The 11th or 12th century scribe would hear that certain people had called themselves Magyars and perhaps even Huns in the vernacular. But it is more likely that the name Hun was no longer heard in everyday life, yet they still remembered that the Hun self-appellation had previously existed among part of the people, and thus the writers of the early sources recorded it.*”⁶¹

I have yet to mention another population that survived and joined the Hungarians, which the tradition considers not to be survivors of the Avar, but of the 5th century Hunnic Empire. These are the Székelys, people who became visible to the historian again when a larger political unit broke up.

⁵⁸ DAI 142–143.

⁵⁹ SRH I: 284–286.

⁶⁰ SRH I: 286.

⁶¹ Szántó, 2022, 84–85, 88 (Translated by Izabella Horváth).

This is how Simon Kézai describes them:

*“Another group of the Huns survived, three thousand men who saved their lives by fleeing from the battle of Krimhild. Out of fear of the Western nations they remained on the field of Csigla until Árpád’s time, referring to themselves not as Huns but as Székely. These Székely are in fact remnants of the Huns, and when they found out that the Hungarians were returning to Pannonia, they came to meet them on the borders of Ruthenia, and then joined with them in the conquest of Pannonia and acquired part of the country.”*⁶²

Bálint Hóman expressed partial criticism of this tradition as follows: *“Historiography does not confirm the ancient tradition of the Székelys moving to Transylvania after the death of Attila and the collapse of his empire, living there in seclusion among the mountains for five hundred and fifty years, until the arrival of the Hun-Hungarians. However, scholarship confirms and elevates the Hunnic tradition of the Székelys to a historical fact, their origin from one of the Hunnic-Turkic tribes that once belonged to Attila’s empire and then to the vast Avar empire, their independent and continuous possession of Transylvania for over eleven centuries, independent of the Hungarian conquest, the close ethnic kinship of the Hungarian people with the Hunnic-Turkic (Bulgarian) elements, and the cultural kinship with the entire Hungarian people, and in consequence their rapid and complete ‘Magyarization’.”*⁶³ It is worth bringing Hóman’s thought back into the scientific discussion, as it is becoming increasingly clear to contemporary research that the Magyars did not arrive in a vacuum when they took possession of the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century. Fortunately, Hakan Aydemir recently addressed the issue of the Székelys from a linguistic perspective and, in opposition to Hóman’s view, took a bolder stance, arguing for the validity of the tradition preserved by Kézai using the tools of modern science. *“The group of Székely fleeing west – the ancestors of today’s Székely people – broke away from the ancestors of the later Szekel (sījié 斯結) tribe and around 370 joining the westward fleeing Huns arrived in the Carpathian Basin. This is where their Hun and Attila traditions originate. They survived*

⁶² Kézai, 71; cf. SRH I: 162.

⁶³ Hóman, 1921, 107 (Translated by Izabella Horváth).

the Gepid and Avar periods, eventually joining the Hungarians, and due to the prestige of the Hungarian language and culture, they eventually shifted from Székely-Turkic to Hungarian (Székely-Turkic → Hungarian)."⁶⁴ Indeed, we cannot rule out the possibility that a smaller community remained invisible to chroniclers for several centuries. Aydemir's arguments are strong enough so that "traditionalist" scholars' interpretation can also be included in the scientific debate on the question of Székely origins.

Summary

If I refer back to the analogy chosen in the title, I must admit that the Hunnic – and of course non-Hunnic – strands in the Hungarian ethnogenesis present a highly fragmented frame. There is nothing surprising in this for those who approach the scarce sources with abundant uncertainties. In addition to the written sources, there are other additional data, relics of intellectual and material culture, and the evidence of human remains, but the overall picture still remains incomplete and debatable. At the current level of our knowledge, no researcher can say whether the late owner of the skeleton of a steppe warrior, for example, identified himself as a Kutrigur or an Utigur, and in what language he expressed this, and in what version may he have heard the *Legend of the Miraculous Deer* from his ancestors. But in light of the paucity of data, it is particularly surprising to see that in many places, after the end of the Hunnic Empire, the "Hun" factor is apparent for centuries. Of course, if we pay attention to when, where, and in what sense someone can be called a "Hun", we can think more flexibly, accepting that early medieval ethnogenesis was a network of actions running on several channels, and the ancient past of the Hungarians is no exception.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Aydemir, 2023, 26.

⁶⁵ It is worth remembering that the ideological antecedents of the multi-stranded Hungarian ethnogenesis date back to the 18th century, to the Jesuit historian György Pray. Although this was not formulated so openly in his work, he already followed the lives of the Huns, Avars and Hungarians separately, as far as the records at his disposal allowed. The folk histories that fit together were replaced by a system of actions taking place in multiple locations with temporal overlap. Pray traces the history of the Huns from 210 BC, from their Asian ruler who appeared under the name "Tevmanvs", to 469 AD, until the death of Dengizik; he notices the appearance of the Avars on the scene in 310, and loses track of their history in 827; finally, he starts his annals of Hungarian prehistory, which he kept until 997, from 551 (Pray, 1761). The separation of the Huns, Avars and Magyars does not mean isolation. Pray did not deny

According to all the aforementioned aspects the “Hun” traces in the Hungarian ethnogenesis are the following. The king of the Kutrigur-Huns called “Muagyerisz” (~ Magyar) appeared in 528 beside the Black Sea. The Avar Khaganate based on “Var and Chunni” people integrated the Carpathian Basin (568–822). Other “Var and Chunni” groups (e.g. Sabirs, Kutrigurs) joined them (ca. 595). After the fall of the Avar Khaganate the Hungarians conquered the Carpathian Basin (862–895) led by Álmos and his son Árpád, descendants of Attila. They integrated the “Avar” survivors (e.g. Christian “Huns” mentioned in 871). Consequently, Hungarian ethnogenesis was not a linear process but involved multiple strands and stages, a phenomenon that we today call multilineal ethnogenesis. Thus, it can be described as an early medieval Turkic–Hungarian network.

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the connection between the three peoples, but he protected his book from a rambling presentation with an ingenious structural innovation. Each chapter was headed by an introductory dissertation, “*Dissertatio Praevia*”, which was intended to discuss the issues of origin and kinship. After this, the actual political history proceeds according to the strict order of chronology (see Szabados, 2006, 186–187). György Pray’s later thought is related to this, which incorporates the new results of northern language comparison into his thinking in such a way that the long-known testimony of written sources is not ignored. “*If we consider the birthplace of each community, I think the Finns, the Huns, the Avars and the Magyars originate from the same nation, from the same people; but later, as usually happens, they are separated by branching off, with different names, and thus also by linguistic changes.*” (Pray, 1774, 1).

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Macar etnik oluşumunda Hun unsurları Genişletilmiş özet

Macarlar, günümüzde varlığını sürdüren tarihsel topluluklar arasında hem ilk devlet örgütlenmesi hem de etnogenezi süreci bozkır kültür çevresinde gerçekleşmiş olan nadir örneklerden biridir. Bu doğu kökenli mirasla Orta Çağ Batı Avrupa’sının zihinsel ve siyasal dünyasına entegre olmuşlar ve kültürel birikimlerini bu çerçevede içinde, onun ölçütlerine uygun biçimde ifade etmişlerdir. Yazılı kültüre aktarım sürecini elbette sözlü gelenekte yaşayan anlatıların oluşumu incelemiştir; ancak bunlardan yalnızca eski gestalarımıza ve kroniklerimize kaydedilenleri bilebilmekteyiz. Bilindiği üzere, Macarların ilk binyıl dönümünden itibaren gerçekleşen kültür değişimi sonucunda, eski geçmişin hatıraları yabancı dilde (Latince) ve yabancı bir dinî (Hristiyan) yazın çevresinde kayda geçirilmiştir. Bu durum, pagan döneme ait hangi anlatıların yazıya geçirilmesinin uygun görüldüğünü belirleyen bir tür kültürel süzgecin varlığına işaret eder. Bununla birlikte, bazı güçlü gelenek unsurlarının bu süzgeci aşarak yazılı kültürde varlığını sürdürebildiği de açıktır.

Hunlar ile Macarlar arasındaki ilişki meselesi, nihai bir çözüme kavuşturulamamış tartışmalar alanını oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu probleme yalnızca şu açıdan katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır: Hun unsurlarının Macarların etnik oluşumuna hangi yollarla nüfuz etmiş olabileceğini incelemek.

Bu bağlamda ilk olarak Macarların etnik köken söylencesi olan *Mucizevi geyik* (Csodaszarvas) anlatısı ele alınmalıdır. Bu anlatı en erken Simon Kézai tarafından kaydedilmiştir; bu da Árpád Hanedanlığı dönemi (1000–1301) tarih yazıcılığının özellikleri dikkate alındığında, 1285 yılı itibarıyla yazıya geçirilmiş olduğu

anlamına gelir. Anlatının özüne göre Hunor ve Magor adlı iki kardeş bir geyiği kovalar; onu yakalayamazlar, ancak yeni bir yurt bulurlar ve daha sonra eş olarak bazı kadınları kaçırmalar. Böylece Hunlar ve Macarlar onların soyundan türemiştir. Söylencenin kesin bir tarihlendirmesi mümkün değildir, ancak söylencenin geçtiği coğrafya belirgindir: Karadeniz'in kuzey bozkırları. Türk halkları arasında tespit edilen motif paralellikleri, bu etnik köken söylencesinin tarihsel-kültürel meşruiyetini desteklemektedir.

Árpád Hanedanlığı'nın Hun köken bilinci ve Attila geleneği incelenirken iki temel husus göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır: Birincisi, bu köken bilincinin tarihsel bir temele dayanıp dayanmadığı; ikincisi ise Attila figürünün ne tür bir "işlev" gördüğüdür. Árpád Hanedanlığı'nın Attila'yı, kendi ihtişamını artırmak ve Karpat Havzası üzerindeki egemenlik hakkını meşrulaştırmak amacıyla mı seçtiği sorusu bu bağlamda önem taşır. Bu yaklaşımın, hanedanlığın saray çevresindeki din adamları tarafından ne ölçüde yönlendirildiği de tartışmalıdır. Ancak mevcut veriler, Árpádlar söz konusu olduğunda faydacı bir "ata seçimi"nden ziyade, çıkar gözetmeyen bir "ata üstlenimi"nin gerçekleştiğini göstermektedir. Zira artık Hristiyan olan hanedanlık, Hristiyan tarih yazıcılığı içinde son derece olumsuz değerlendirilen bir figürü – Attila'yı – atası olarak benimsemiş ve onun olumsuz özelliklerini de kroniklerinde gizlememiştir. Ayrıca Attila'nın hatırası, Macar gestalarının ve kroniklerinin kaleme alındığı dönemde artık siyasal meşruiyet sağlamak için elverişli bir araç olmaktan uzaktı; zira Büyük Dük Álmos'un soyundan gelen Hristiyan hükümdarlar, meşruiyetlerini "kutsal kralların soyu" kavramı üzerinden tanımlamaktaydılar.

Hanedanlık bağlarının ötesinde, halkın erken tarihsel gelişiminde de Hun bileşenlerinin varlığı gözlemlenebilir. Bununla birlikte, Hun ve Hun olmayan unsurların bir arada bulunduğu bu yapı, Macar etnik oluşumunu parçalı ve kesintili bir yapı olarak ortaya koymaktadır. Sınırlı kaynaklar ve yüksek derecede belirsizlikler içinde ilerleyen araştırmalar açısından bu durum şaşırtıcı değildir.

Yazılı kaynakların yanı sıra zihinsel ve maddi kültür kalıntıları ile insan iskeletlerinin sunduğu veriler de bu tabloya katkıda bulunsalar da genel görünüm hâlâ eksik ve tartışmalıdır. Mevcut bilgi düzeyimizde hiçbir araştırmacı, bir bozkır savaşçısının kendisini Kutrigur mu yoksa Utigur mu olarak tanımladığını ya da bunu hangi dilde ifade ettiğini kesin olarak söyleyemez; aynı şekilde, atalarından *Mucizevi geyik* anlatısını hangi varyantta işittiğini de bilemeyiz. Bununla birlikte, veri eksikliğine rağmen dikkat çekici olan husus, Hun devletinin yıkılışından sonra da "Hun" unsurunun çeşitli bölgelerde yüzyıllar boyunca varlığını sürdürmüş olmasıdır. "Hun" kimliğinin hangi bağlamda, ne zaman ve nerede kullanılabileceğini dikkate aldığımızda, erken Orta Çağ etnik oluşumunun çok katmanlı ve çok yönlü bir süreç olduğu daha açık hale gelir.

Erken Macar tarihine Hun unsurlarının bu şekilde eklenmiş olması mümkündür. Hun İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşünden (453) sonra nüfus doğuya çekilmiş, ar-

dından değişken siyasi ve etnik formasyonlar içinde varlığını sürdürmüştür. Yaklaşık 528 yılında Karadeniz çevresinde *Muageris* adlı bir Kutrigur Hun hükümdarı ortaya çıkmıştır. 568 yılında ise *Var* ve *Hunni* olarak anılan topluluklar arasından çıkan Avarlar, Karpat Havzası'nı egemenlikleri altına almıştır. Onların arasına önce (yaklaşık 595 civarında) yine *Var* ve *Hunni* olarak tanımlanan Tarniahlar, Sabirler ve Kutrigurlar, ardından Hun kökenli Onogurlar (yaklaşık 670 civarında) katılmıştır. Avar Kağanlığı'nın sona ermesi (yaklaşık 822) halkın ortadan kalkması anlamına gelmemiştir; zira 871 civarında Frank egemenliği altında yaşayan Hristiyan “Hunlar” kendi topraklarını ellerinde tutmaya devam etmişlerdir. Bu sırada, *Mucizevi geyik* anlatısının geçtiği bölgede ve bir zamanlar *Muageris*'in hüküm sürdüğü sahada Álmos (yaklaşık 820) doğmuş ve Etelköz'deki Macarları bir bozkır devleti altında örgütlemiştir. Karpat Havzası'nı bütünleştiren (862–895) Macar Büyük Prensiği'nin burada karşılaştığı yerli topluluklar, oluşmakta olan Macar devletinin halk tabakasını oluşturmuştur.

Bu karmaşık süreç, ayrı bir kol olan Sekellerle (Székelyek) daha da çeşitlenmektedir. Fetih dönemindeki Macarların köken anlatısını *Mucizevi geyik* söylencesi temsil ederken – yani bu anlatı baskın etnik köken geleneğini oluştururken – Sekellerin ayrı köken anlatısı, Macar kronik geleneğine ikincil bir unsur olarak dahil olmuş ve bu bağlamda Avar (hatta Hun) mirasının olası tek historiografik “devamı” olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bu iki – Macar ve Sekel – topluluk oluşturuçu unsurun Árpád dönemi yazılı kültüründe korunmuş olması, erken tarihçilerimizin, etnik oluşum sürecinin doğrusal olmayan, çok katmanlı doğasının farkında olduklarını göstermektedir. Günümüzde çok yönlü etnik oluşum olarak adlandırılan bu süreç, Macarların oluşumunda da belirleyici olmuştur. Nitekim Macarlar tarih sahnesine kültürel ve tarihsel açıdan belirgin biçimde Türk özellikleri taşıyan bir topluluk olarak çıkmışlardır; bu nedenle onların etnik oluşum süreci, bir Türk–Macar etkileşim ağı çerçevesinde tanımlanabilir.