

SZÉKELYS AND TURKS

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Introduction

The topic of my study is closely related to the question of Székely origins. Its details and history have been extensively addressed in the scholarly literature, which enables the interested reader to engage with the topic in greater depth.¹ The main question of my topic can be formulated in a somewhat simplified form as follows: are the Székelys of Turkic origin or not? The framework of this study does not allow me to give a detailed answer to this question. There is no need for this, since the historiographical background is contained in the above-mentioned works, so in the following we will only address aspects closely related to the explanation of what we have to say.

For easier navigation, I have divided the theories discussing the origin of the Székelys into four groups: 1) Hungarian origin (theories that consider the Székelys to be an artificially created group recruited from among the Hungarians for military tasks). 2) Military auxiliary origin. The theories that can be classified here consider the Székelys to be a different (mostly some kind of Turkic) ethnic group from the Magyar people, which joined the Hungarian tribes before the conquest. 3) Double conquest. This theory can also be considered a special version of the Hungarian origin, and mainly emphasizes the migration to the Carpathian Basin and its timing. 4) Hun origin theory. This can be considered the oldest view, as its roots go back to the Middle Ages. We will return to this in more detail later. I would like to point out that the latter two theories are currently experiencing a renaissance, and some researchers are turning to them with increased interest. It would be beyond the scope of my study to examine this phenomenon, so I will not discuss this aspect.

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¹ Kordé, 1991; 2006; 2016, 91–117; Aydemir, 2021, 99–324.

Occupational name and Hungarian origin

As I mentioned, most theories claiming Hungarian origin started from the assumption that the folk name *Székely* developed from an old Hungarian word meaning some kind of occupation (military, border guard). The modern founder of these theories was Pál Hunfalvy in the second half of the 19th century. At first, he started from the word combination *szék/elv*, following the example of *Erdély = Erdő/elv*.² then, influenced by criticism, he slightly modified his idea and divided the name into *szék/el* components. He endowed the element *szék* with the metaphorical meaning of ‘inner, gut, the heart of something’, and he wanted to shed light on the essence of the name as follows: “*Compared to the interior of many things, the comparative el means the exterior, the extreme; therefore szék-el is the exterior of the interior*”.³ The understanding of the complicated explanation is greatly aided by his statement regarding the essence, according to which Székely does not mean a separate population, but a border guard, who could be of any origin. It is no coincidence that it was not the specific result of Hunfalvy’s attempts to decipher the name that proved to be permanent, but rather its basic idea, namely the view that the name *Székely* comes from an occupational name, which has the meaning of ‘guard, border guard’.

This trend, which therefore wanted to derive the origin of the Székelys from a supposed occupational name, played a decisive role among the theories acknowledging Hungarian origin until recently. Those scholars who held this view mostly relied on linguistic and archaeological arguments, such as the linguist Loránd Benkő or the archaeologist István Bóna. According to Benkő, the Székelys were not originally a separate ethnic group, but a military group of border guards organized by the central government; the ethnonym *Székely* did not originally denote an ethnicity, but an occupation. This refers to a population performing border guard duties that was resettled in Transylvania from the western part of the country.⁴ In contrast, Bóna argued that the term *Székely* denotes an occupation, corresponding to the designations ‘archer, shooter’ and ‘guard’, and that it only became the name of a population group in the 12th century, following the completion of the reset-

² Hunfalvy, 1876, 301.

³ Hunfalvy, 1881, 105.

⁴ Benkő, 1990, 120–121.

tlement of the border-guard organization. In essence, the name *Székely* comes from an old Hungarian word meaning ‘/border/guard’ (*speculator, custos*) or ‘archer, shooter’ (*sagittarius*), meaning that the Székelys is a people group organized for border guarding and military tasks.⁵

Linguistic problems are only one of the weak points of this view. As Bóna also stated, there is no occupational name from which Székely could be derived in an appropriate way. Therefore, the theory cannot be supported by linguistic and etymological means. The problems with the theory become even clearer if we review the narrative and documentary sources of the Árpád-period.⁶ First of all, it turns out that the border guards were named with the words *ewr*, *eur* from the beginning and were never, on a single occasion, given the name *Székely*. The situation is similar with the word *sagittarius* meaning ‘shooter, archer’. We do not find any source where archers are called *Székely*, but there are several where the Székely and other ethnic groups are referred to with this term. Of these, we will only mention the best known, the description of the battles at Olšava in 1116 and at Lajta River in 1146, which survived in the chronicle composition of the 14th century and in foreign sources.⁷ If we compare the social and legal status of the border guards (*speculatores*) and the Székelys based on the sources, we encounter insurmountable differences. The low legal status and social position of the guards, mostly similar to that of the castle people, unfolds before us: the king could grant their lands, they had to pay taxes to the lord, the *ispán* and the king. Their inheritance system (which we learn about in the most detailed way from the charter issued by Stephen V in 1270 to the guards of Magyarország)⁸ was again much less favorable than in the case of the Székelys: the lord would definitely receive the property of a guard who died without a male heir; for example, if the deceased had only a widow as heir, the lord could claim two-thirds of the estate. For the *speculatores*, the coveted but rarely reached peak of social advancement was becoming a royal servient (*servientes regales*) or, as they are mentioned several times in contemporary charters: a noble servient (*servientes nobiles*), which in all cases was due to royal favor. However, this was only possible for a few, and the majority of them

⁵ Bóna, 1991, 1536.

⁶ Kordé, 1995.

⁷ SRH I: 436, 456.

⁸ HO 8: 127–130.

led the way to dependence on the landlord, i.e. becoming serfs. The majority of the Székelys, however (at least those settled in Transylvania), acquired numerous privileges during the 14th century,⁹ and last but not least, they retained their group consciousness and a certain degree of unity within the Hungarians. We should also briefly mention those views (now held by only a few) that do not so much emphasize the origin of the Székely people but rather aim to prove that the original and almost exclusive task of the Székely people was border guarding, which also played a decisive role in their settlement in Transylvania.¹⁰ The acceptance of this view – not to mention many other factors – is mainly hindered by the sources: they clearly show that in the case of the Székelys, it was precisely military service that played the main role in ensuring that, unlike the guards mentioned above, they did not lose their social status, but rather strengthened it and gained privileges.¹¹ We can therefore conclude the derivation of the name Székely from an assumed but never proven occupational name contradicts both linguistics and contemporary sources, so Hungarian origin theories based on such foundations do not hold up. This is of course also true for any attempt that seeks to derive the name *Székel* and the origin of this ethnic group from an unprovable old Hungarian common word.

Bolgar-Turkic origin

I agree with the opinions that seek the ancestors of the Székelys among the military auxiliary peoples who joined the Hungarians before the conquest. Since their appearance in written sources, the Székelys have been portrayed as a population with an independent ethnic (or tribal) name and their own traditions, primarily engaged in military (typically as auxiliary troops or protectors) activities. In addition, they acquired and consolidated ethnic privileges in the Middle Ages, and had a territorial organization (*szék/sedes*-system) independent of the county system. Moreover, they are often distinguished from the Hungarians in both domestic and foreign sources. The steppe environment of the Hungarians before the conquest, the auxiliary way of life

⁹ Benkő–Oborni, 2016, I.

¹⁰ E.g. Kolumbán–Antal, 2009.

¹¹ Kordé, 2012; Sófalvi, 2017.

of the Székelys, their separate status within the Hungarians, and the peculiarities of the runic script have long raised the possibility that the ancestors of the Székelys should be sought among the Turkic peoples.¹² However, there are indirect data, analogies, etc., which, when combined, can confirm this idea. Among these, I refer to the already mentioned Turkic-like runic script, which survived only among the Székelys until the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era. Simon Kézai also reports on its existence in his chronicle written around 1283.¹³

Other parallels and indirect evidence can clarify the circle of Turkic peoples (tribes) among whom we can suspect the ancestors we are looking for. The explanation of names plays an important role in attempts at identification. On purely onomastic grounds, several possibilities can be considered. I myself consider the theories that identify the ancestors of the Székelys with the *'sk.l ~ 's.k.l* tribe belonging to the Bulgaro-Turks to be the most probable. According to my explanation of the name, the Bulgaro-Turkic language, from which the name *Eskel* was transferred to Hungarian, was strongly final-stressed. Hungarian, on the other hand, places the stress on the first syllable. The name pronounced ^(e)*skel* sounded like **skel* to the Hungarian ear, which in turn caused a consonant cluster at the beginning of the word. This was resolved by the epenthetic vowel (*i*), and thus a form **sikël* was created. From this, through the labialization of the second vowel, it became **siköl*. From this, the present-day *Székely* variant was formed.

As for the Bulgarian-Turkic population joining the Hungarians, I argue that although the written sources do not contain conclusive evidence that the Székelys were among the Kabars, the references in the Hungarian tradition, and especially the similar role of the two populations, and the spatial proximity of the Hungarians, Eskels and Kabars in the 9th century, make this connection highly probable.¹⁴ Although it is not complete proof, it cannot be completely ignored that there are no arguments that would rule out the existence of this connection. Therefore, as far as is possible, it can be said, at least at the level of acceptability, that the ancestors of the Székelys joined the Hungarians within the Kabar alliance around 850. Within the Kabar

¹² Kordé, 1997.

¹³ SRH I; Sándor, 2014.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the Kabars and the claims raised in connection with them, including an extensive review of the relevant scholarship, see: Tóth, 2015, 298–341.

“tribal alliance”, the Eskel-Bulgarians could have played the role of the “leading tribe”. At least this is what we can conclude from the fact that the *Székely* name (and the national unity itself) remained for many centuries, while the names of the other two tribes (fragments) disappeared almost without a trace. A similar process may have taken place as in the *Hétmagyar* (‘Seven Hungarians’) tribal alliance: the alliance takes on the name of the leading tribe (in a compound word), and then, after the breakup of the tribal system, the entire population is given this name. As we know, Kabar, regardless of its meaning, is an artificial name (“*they were called some sort of Kabars*” – says our source, Constantinos Porphyrogennetos,¹⁵ which, unlike other tribal names, hardly occurs in place name form. Instead of this “official” name, in everyday life the Kabars used the names of their own tribes, and over time, they increasingly used the *Székely* name of the “leading tribe”, which then became the collective name of the entire population.¹⁶ As for the prince (*archon*) of the three Kabar tribes mentioned by Constantinos Porphyrogennetos, I myself agree with the opinions that attribute this position to the Aba clan. The fact that this long-standing clan had ties to the Székelys (and thus the Kabars) was also expressed in Hungarian tradition.¹⁷

In recent years and decades, numerous works have been published on the Székely question. Among these, Hakan Aydemir’s book stands out, primarily because it explores the Eastern (Chinese, Arabic, Persian and other) sources with extreme thoroughness, through which he drew a new and unprecedentedly detailed picture of the Székely “primordial history”.¹⁸ A description of this extremely data-rich work would exceed the available framework, but we cannot avoid a brief summary of just a few sentences. As the author writes, “...*the Székelys are actually a people of Turkic origin and migrated from Inner Asia, from the areas between the Tola River in northern Mongolia and Lake Baikal, to their present-day place of residence, Transylvania. The first actual data on the Székelys and Székely history are provided by the Eskel (= Sekel) coins from the late 4th century, which were issued by the ancestors of the Székelys.*”¹⁹ As a result of the change of rule around 350, the ancestors

¹⁵ Moravcsik, 1984, 11

¹⁶ The Hungarians also had an internal name, as well as a name derived from *Onogur* and used by foreigners.

¹⁷ Kordé, 1997, 14–23; Tóth, 2015, 298–341.

¹⁸ Aydemir, 2021, 99–324; 2023.

¹⁹ Aydemir, 2023, 26.

of the Székelys and the Huns fled in two directions, west and southwest. Based on many *Sekel* and *Eskel* ethnotoponyms, some of the fleeing Székelys drifted to the Southwest Caucasus in the 5th century – perhaps together with the Ogurs – while others joined the ancestors of the Volga Bulgarians in the 7th century. Thus, the ancestors of today's Székelys arrived in the Carpathian Basin by joining the Huns who were fleeing westward. This is where their Hun and Attila tradition originates. They survived the Gepid and Avar periods, finally joined the Hungarians, and due to the prestige of the Hungarian language and culture, they gradually shifted to Hungarian (*Székely-Turkic* → *Hungarian*). The Hun and Attila tradition is therefore not an invention of the medieval Hungarian chroniclers; rather, they merely described an existing tradition.²⁰ Aydemir rejects the Volga Bulgarian *Eskel* origin, and he also considers the issue of Kabar-Székely identity to be unlikely.²¹

This short study is certainly not intended to evaluate Hakan Aydemir's extensive work or to debate his theory, especially in the absence of in-depth knowledge of Turkology, Sinology, and Orientalism. Hakan Aydemir's book will certainly provide ample material for competent scholarly debates in the years to come. However, one thing can be said for sure: whichever explanation of the name proves to be more likely, whether they are Kabars or not, there seems to be one thing in common among the theories: the ancestors of the Székely people belonged to the Turkic peoples.

In this paper, I undertake to discuss only one, but all the more important, question: a brief examination of the topic of Székely tradition.

Attila or Csaba tradition?

The analysis of Székely tradition material has always played an important role in attempts to solve the question of origin. The debate usually revolves around what can be considered a genuine, ancient tradition (even if it has survived in a changed form) from the fragments or even short stories known from the records of medieval chroniclers, and what can be considered a scholarly combination (but not a conscious forgery!). A full explanation of these problems would exceed the scope of my thesis by many times. Therefore, I

²⁰ Aydemir, 2023, 26.

²¹ Aydemir, 2021, 285–289; 2023, 24.

can only undertake to concentrate on the most important questions and refer only to the literature that can provide additional information to the interested reader.²²

Of the medieval Székely tradition material, the tradition related to Ladislaus I is the youngest. This is reported by the Anonymous Minorita in connection with the narration of the battles between the Székelys and the Moldavian Tatars in the 14th century.²³ Since the legends related to King Ladislaus I (1077–1095) no longer belong to the question of Székely origins, we will not discuss them further. The earliest statements about the origin of the Székelys are made by two Hungarian chroniclers, Anonymus, who wrote around 1210, and Simon Kézai, who wrote around 1283. Anonymus settles this question with a single half-sentence: the Székelys “were initially the people of King Attila” (*Siculi, qui primo erant populi Atthyle regis*).²⁴ Kézai, on the other hand, weaves a somewhat roundabout story about the Székelys, not without contradictions:

“...the Székelys ... are the remnants of the Huns, who, having learned that the Hungarians had again marched into Pannonia, went to meet the returning ones at the borders of Russia, and ... together they conquered Pannonia.”

The leader of the Székelys was Csaba, who went to Greece after Attila's death:

“These Székelys thought that Csaba had died in Greece [...] This Csaba was therefore the legitimate son of Attila – fathered by the daughter of Honorius, the emperor of the Greeks [...] From this Csaba the Aba clan originates”.²⁵

Based on the cited sources, we can draw several conclusions. The first and perhaps most important is that the Székelys did not have the tradition of Attila, but of Csaba, and that they had a kind of tradition connected to the Aba, and that some of their groups had at some point come into closer contact with a member of the clan named Csaba. This Csaba – contrary to Kézai's

²² Kordé, 2016, 107–117.

²³ Anonymus Minorita, 151–152.

²⁴ SRH I: 101.

²⁵ SRH I: 162–163.

claim – was not the son of Attila, unknown from other sources, or the alleged son-in-law of the earlier Emperor Honorius, but a figure in Hungarian history of the 10th–11th centuries, who had close ties with the Székelys. According to a widespread view, he was a 10th-century adventurer leader who, returning home from the lost battle of Augsburg, moved to the Balkan Peninsula with a part of his people (the Székelys). In my opinion, however, in this Csaba, we can see an unknown 11th–12th century member of the Aba clan,²⁶ who played an important role in the life of some Székely groups, later (thanks to Simon Kézai) became part of the traditional consciousness of the entire population. Whoever this Csaba was, we can say that he was not a Hun (or Avar) but a figure in Hungarian history. The story preserved in the chronicle of Kézai about him can only serve as evidence that the Székelys had a different tradition from the Hungarians, but it does not allow us to assume the existence of an ancient Attila or Hun consciousness.

In my opinion, the line of research that sees in this half-sentence evidence of a Székely Attila tradition is giving too much weight to Anonymous's claim that the Székelys "*were originally the people of King Attila*". It is suspicious in itself that the Anonymous notary is unaware of the Csaba tradition embedded in the small story of Kézai. In his work, Csaba's name is only in a meaningless expression (*Sobamogera*, i.e. 'Csaba Magyarja'), which he no longer understands, and (based on the Greek language) he gives Csaba's name the meaning of "stupid". This also shows that there is no trace of any "complex" Hunnic tradition in Anonymous's *Gesta*, no matter how many elements of Hunnic history we look for in him. In addition to not knowing about the alleged son of the Hunnic king, Csaba, he is not aware of his brother, Aladár, or the fratricidal war that took place between them. What he knows or describes about the Székelys again differs from Kézai's version. Chapter 50 of the *gesta* talks about the campaign against the Bihar chieftain Ménmarót (one of the people he invented), led by Ösbő and Velek. The army and the generals crossed the Tisza and

"...camped along the Kórógy River. When the Székelys, who were initially the people of King Attila, heard about the famous Ösbő, they peacefully marched to meet him and handed their sons over to him as hostages with various gifts, and in the battle against Ménmarót they

²⁶ Kristó, 1994, 143; Kordé, 1996.

secured the first line of battle in front of Ösbő's army. The leaders immediately sent the sons of the Székelys to Prince Árpád, and they themselves marched against Ménmarót behind the advancing Székelys."²⁷

Anonymus, as is well known, often projected the conditions of his own time back to the time of the conquest, thus making up for the scarcity of his sources and the shortcomings of his knowledge. He acted similarly in the case of the Székelys, who, according to him, marched peacefully (*obviam pacifici venerunt*) to Ösbő, who was camping by the waters of the Kórógy. It is clear from the narrative that the scribe placed the Székelys of the time of the conquest in the territory of Bihar. The author was probably prompted to do this by the fact that at that time (around the turn of the 12th–13th centuries) Bihar was still a significant Székely centre.

It is striking, however, that Anonymus has no knowledge of the Székelys of Transylvania, although at the time of the creation of the gesta a significant part of this population had already settled beyond the Királyhágó Pass. Their absence is all the more striking since the anonymous scribe presents the Romanians – whose settlement in Transylvania began a few decades before the creation of the gesta – as opponents of the conquering Hungarians. It is worth noting that, according to Kézai, after Attila's death, the Székelys withdrew to the Chigle field (*in campo Chigle*) (i.e. not in Transylvania). The "returning" Hungarians (whom Kézai considers to be Huns) were joined *in confinibus Ruthenie*. They conquered Pannonia together, but not in plano Pannoniae, but with Blackis *in montibus confinii sortem habuerunt*.²⁸ This suggests that Anonymous did not have precise knowledge of Székely relations. It is clear from his report that he considered this population to be a military element that had joined the Hungarians, but he was no longer aware of the exact time and place of their joining. There is nothing to suggest that Anonymous had any concrete knowledge about the Székelys beyond the approximate, rather imprecise information. His comment cannot be considered evidence of an assumed – real or fictitious – Székely Attila tradition. His statement reflects his view that the Scythians – to which the Székelys and the

²⁷ SRH I: 101–103.

²⁸ SRH I: 162.

Hungarians belong – constitute one people, and that they were once all under Attila’s rule, although they later broke away from each other.

Summary

The analysis of the tradition and the listing of arguments (pro and con) could be continued for a long time. All in all, I personally believe that the Székelys did not have an original Attila tradition, but a much later Csaba tradition, not related to the Huns. However, I am sure that the ongoing debate on this is not over yet and it is not the task of this short paper to put an end to it. In conclusion, I will only say that the Székelys were most likely originally Turks, but then became Magyarized, to such an extent that they are often referred to as the “most Hungarian” population.

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Sekeller ve Türkler

Geniřletilmiř zet

alıřmamın temel sorusu řu řekilde formle edilebilir: Sekeller Trk kkenli midir, deęil midir? Mevcut alıřmanın kapsamı, bu soruya tm ayrıntıları kapsayan kapsamlı bir yanıt vermeye elveriřli deęildir. Bununla birlikte, byle bir ayrıntılı incelemeye de gerek yoktur; zira konuya iliřkin tarih yazımı tezde anılan eserlerde zaten ele alınmıřtır. Bu nedenle ařaęıda yalnızca tartıřmamız aısından doęrudan ilgili olan hususlara odaklanılacaktır.

Daha iyi bir kavramsal ereve saęlamak amacıyla, Sekellerin kkenine iliřkin teorileri drt ana gruba ayırdım: (1) Macar kken kuramı: Bu gruba giren yaklařımlar, Sekelleri Macar topluluęu iinden asker grevler iin devřirilmiř ve yapay olarak oluřturulmuř bir grup olarak deęerlendirmektedir. (2) Asker yardımcı halk kkeni: Bu kategoriye dhil edilen kuramlar, Sekelleri Macarlardan farklı, oęunlukla Trk kkenli bir etnik grup olarak grr; bu grup, Macar boylarına Macarların Karpat Havzası'nı fethinden nce katılmıřtır. (3) ifte fetih kuramı: Bu yaklařım, Macar kken kuramının farklı bir tr olarak da deęerlendirilebilir ve esasen Karpat Havzası'na yerleřim sreci ile bunun kronolojisine odaklanır. (4) Hun kken kuramı: En eski yaklařım olarak kabul edilebilir; zira kkleri Orta aę'a kadar uzanmaktadır.

1. Meslek adı ve Macar kken kuramı: Sekellerin Macar kkenli olduęunu savunan kuramların byk oęunluęu, Sekel boy adının eski Macarcada belirli bir mesleęi (zellikle asker ya da sınır muhafızlıęına iliřkin bir grevi) ifade eden bir kelimeden tredięi varsayımına dayanır. Bu yaklařımın modern anlamdaki kurucu ismi, 19. yzyılın ikinci yarısında Pl Hunfalvy olmuřtur. Hunfalvy, *Sekel* adının bir meslek isminden tredięi ve 'beki, sınır muhafızı' anlamı tařıdıęı sonucuna varmıřtır.

Bu grř, farklı biimleriyle Lornd Benk ve Istvn Bna gibi nde gelen arařtırmacılar tarafından da benimsenmiřtir. Bu yaklařıma gre *Sekel* boy adı, eski Macarcada '(sınır) muhafızı' (*speculator, custos*) ya da 'oku, niřancı' (*sagittarius*) anlamına gelen bir kelimeden tremiřtir; dolayısıyla Sekeller, sınır koruma ve asker grevler iin rgtlenmiř bir topluluk olarak deęerlendirilmiřtir.

Bununla birlikte, bu kuramlar eřitli aılardan sorunludur. ncelikle, *Sekel* adının tretilebileceęi kesin bir meslek adı tespit edilememiřtir. İkinci olarak, tarihsel incelemeler, sz konusu dnemde sınır muhafızları (*speculatores*), okular (*sagittarii*) ile Sekeller arasında nemli toplumsal, hukuki ve stat farklılıklarının bulunduęunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu veriler iřığında, *Sekel* boy adının bir meslek adından tredięi ynndeki aıklama doęrulanabilir grnmemektedir.

2. Askerî yardımcı halk kökeni (Bulgar-Türk kökeni) kuramı: Ben, Sekellerin kökenini, Macarların yurt tutuş öncesinde bünyelerine kattıkları askerî yardımcı topluluklar arasında arayan görüşlerle hemfikirim. Bu yaklaşımlar çoğunlukla *Sekel* boy adını Bulgar-Türk kökenli *Eskel* adıyla özdeşleştirmeye çalışmıştır.

Ben de benzer bir ad eşleştirmesi denemesinde bulundum ve Sekellerin Macarlara katılımını, 9. yüzyılın ortaları civarında, kabar topluluğu çerçevesinde düşünmekteyim. Bununla birlikte, Hakan Aydemir yakın zamanda yayımlanan kapsamlı çalışmasında *Eskel-Székely* eşleştirmesini reddetmiş ve *Sekel* adını yine Türkçe kökenli *Sekel* boy adından açıklamıştır.

Aydemir'e göre *Sekeller* Hunlara katılmış ve onlarla birlikte Karpat Havzası'na yerleşmiştir. Attila'nın ölümünden sonra ise, 895/896 yıllarındaki Macar yurt tutuşuna kadar bu bölgede varlıklarını sürdürmüşler ve bu dönemde Macarlara katılmışlardır. Hun geleneklerini ise yüzyıllar boyunca muhafaza etmişlerdir.

3. Hun köken kuramı: Attila geleneği mi yoksa Csaba (Çaba) geleneği mi? Ben, Sekel gelenek malzemesinin değerlendirilmesi meselesini farklı bir şekilde ele almaktayım. Sekellerin kökenine ilişkin en erken bilgiler, iki Macar kronik yazarı tarafından aktarılmıştır; yaklaşık 1210 civarında yazan Anonymus ve yaklaşık 1283 civarında eser veren Simon Kézai.

Anonymus bu sorunu tek bir yarım cümleyle geçirir: Sekeller başlangıçta kral Attila'nın halkıydı ("*Siculi, qui primo erant populi Atthyle regis*"). Buna karşılık Kézai, çelişkilerden tamamen arınmış olmasa da Sekeller hakkında daha kapsamlı bir anlatı sunar. Buna göre Sekeller, Hunların kalıntılarıdır ve liderleri, Attila'nın oğlu Csaba'dır (Attila'nın bu isimde bir oğlu başka kaynaklardan bilinmemektedir). Attila'nın ölümünden sonra Sekeller Karpat Havzası'nda kalırken, Csaba önce kayınpederi İmparator Honorius'un yanına, Yunanistan'a gitmiş, ardından ise İskit topraklarına geri dönmüştür.

Efsaneye göre Csaba, Aba soyunun atasıdır ve Hun döneminin değil, daha ziyade Macar tarihinin bir figürü olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Bu anlatının önemli bir sonucu, Sekellerin aslı geleneğinin Attila'ya değil, Csaba'ya bağlandığını göstermesidir.

Anonymus'un ifadesi, özgün bir Attila ya da Hun geleneğinin varlığını kanıtlamaz. Zira söz konusu kronikçi, Sekellerle ilgili koşullar hakkında sınırlı ve kesinlikten uzak bilgilere sahipti. Onun anlatımından, Sekelleri Macarlara katılmış askerî bir unsur olarak değerlendirdiği anlaşılmaktadır; ancak bu katılımın zamanı ve yeri konusunda bilgi sahibi değildir. Bu yaklaşım, Anonymus'un, Sekelleri ve Macarları da kapsayan "İskit" topluluklarının başlangıçta tek bir halk oluşturduğu ve bir dönem Attila'nın hâkimiyeti altında bulunduğu, daha sonra ise birbirlerinden ayrıldıkları yönündeki genel görüşünü yansıtır.

Anonymus'un anlatısında, Kézai'de görülen “Hun hikâyesi” unsurlarının bulunmaması (hatta Çaba adının yalnızca anlamını yitirmiş bir kelime parçası şeklinde ortaya çıkması), bu anlatının esas kurgulayıcısının Kézai Simon olduğunu düşündürmektedir. Kézai, Attila ile doğrudan bağlantılı olmayan gelenek parçalarını, Batılı kroniklerde Hunlar hakkında okuduklarıyla birleştirerek, çok sayıda efsanevi unsur içeren kendi anlatısını oluşturmuştur.

Bununla birlikte, bu anlatı Sekeller ile Aba soyu arasındaki ilişkiye de işaret etmektedir. Aba soyunun kökeni ise Hazar Kağanlığı yönüne işaret eder; bu durum, Sekellerin doğu kökenine ilişkin kuramları daha da güçlendirmektedir.

