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# AN EXCITING EARLY HISTORY OF HUNGARY



EARLIEST TIMES FROM THE ANCIENT SOCIETY AND THE SETTLEMENT  
OF HUNGARIANS TO THE CREATION OF THE CHRISTIAN HUNGARY BY STEPHEN

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Earliest Times From the Ancient Society and the Settlement of Hungarians  
to the Creation of the Christian Hungary by Stephen



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# Preface

This book covers probably the most interesting part of the history of the Hungarian nation from the very beginnings to the era of Saint Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian state.

The style of it is deliberately easy because the author wanted to provide the readers with real pleasure while reading it. Beside the historical facts there are enclosed enjoyable legends in connection with both significant people and events of Hungarian history.

It is sure that after reading (and probably rereading) this book everybody can get closer to this nation because there is a mass of information in it about everyday life of the nomadic Magyars, their warfare, reigning principles, marriage alliances, wanderings from the far side of Siberia to the other side of the Karpathian Basin and even to the Ocean.

An interesting mixture of people live in the Karpathian Basin nowadays because the ancestors of the Magyars, the new settlers at those times came here together with some other tribes and found here some other nations not mentioning those who were captured during wanderings and taken here into the Karpathian Basin to serve the Magyars and to live with them in peace.

This diversity makes the people living in Hungary today really exciting, friendly and adventurous and their history is worth reading.

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# The Origin of the Magyars and their Original Homeland

There are no written sources about the beginning of the Hungarian nation, but according to some assumptions the language of this nation is similar in many ways to Finnish, originated from the so-called Finno-Ugric family of languages.

At the beginning the ancestors of the Magyars probably lived together with people who populated the area of the Volga, Kama, Vjatka rivers in Russia and in the Ural region.

The so-called linguistic relatives of the Magyars include the Estonians, Finns or even Mongolians and a lot of small nations living in the territory of Siberia. This community was very heterogenous. Only the common language indicated a kind of language relation among them.

This language was the so-called Ural basic language spoken by the people living in the territory of the Urals. The main activity at that time was hunting, fishing and gathering food. The following words came from this period: root, berry, honey, fishing net, arrow, bow.

The language relationship is more or less evident considering the above mentioned facts but there is big uncertainty about the location of the ancient homeland of the Magyars. Sandor Kőrösi Csoma was determined to find the cradle of the Hungarians in Middle Asia. There are assumptions even today that this territory could be the place where the Magyars originated from. But according to other researchers the ancient homeland of the Finno-Ugric is the land of Western Siberia. One thing is certain: in 1000 BC the Magyars lived together with other Finno-Ugric and probably Mongolian people in the area of the Urals, Volga Kama, Vjatka and Bjelaja rivers. Hunting, fishing and gathering food was the main occupation of these people up to the modern time. They hunted for different animals. Snakes were also hunted. In this activity probably the people of Mongolian

origin were the best. They were called Magocsa which means 'snake killer'. The components of this language were the Samoyed, Hanty and Manshy. When the ancestors of the Samoyeds left the community it was the end of the basic common Ural language and the beginning of the Finno-Ugric era. It can be dated 4000-2000 BC.

As the years went by the ancestors of the Estonians and Finnish left the community and the ancestors of Magyars, Hanty and Manshy remained.

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## The Wandering of the Magyars on the Russian Prairie

These people left the region of the Urals and went to the South where they found dry plains which were perfect for keeping animals.

A kind of animal-keeping community was formulating in that way which kept the members closer to each other. These people were separated from the large community, a part of which was the community of Finnish people. The so called Ugric era began at that time and the language spoken by the people can be called Ugric ancient language.

The ancestors of Hanty and Manshy probably went towards the region of the river Ob where they live at present. That was the time when the language of the Magyars began its own life. It probably happened between 2000-500 BC. It is necessary to mention that those people who went South to the region of the Kuban and Don rivers and tried to find good grazing ground for their animals near the Black and Azov seas were not blood relatives. The only common thing was their language even at that time. The language that got its elements from those who joined these people. Some names of the present Hungarian settlements like Madocsa, Mágocs, Nagymágocs show a possibility of Mongolian influence, while the

Hungarian equivalents of goat, ox, cheese, cottage cheese, bull, grape, apple are probably originated from the Turkish language.

Even in the most recent research there are indications that it is not excluded that the origin of the Hungarian nation can be a European-Mongolian one. It is possible that some people who joined the community speaking the language of the Magyars lost their mother tongue, the tongue which was spoken by them before they left their territory and the community living there. Of course all these make the situation more complicated because nobody knows for sure the exact number of people speaking Turkish or Mongolian who joined the community which is considered the predecessor of the Hungarian nation.

The genetic tests of part of the population living in Hungary show certain similarities with Finnish, German and Slavic people.

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## Formulation of the First Nation

In the process of wandering towards the West the Magyars arrived in territories where the forests ended and the prairies began. The matriarchal community changed into a patriarchal one step-by-step and instead of hunting, gathering and fishing the Magyars began to keep animals.

As the research of the words horse, stirrup and saddle shows the Magyars' main occupation was more and more nomadic horse keeping. At this time there can be assumed a kind of mongolian influence in the formation of this new lifestyle. The place where they lived also shows the possibility of this influence: they made accomodation for temporary use in holes dug into the earth, snow or later even built tents, which were made of animal skin (they could be similar to the Mongolian yourta tents).

The society of the Ural and Finno-Ugric people was based on blood relationship. These relations connected by blood relation formulated the first nations. There were no classes in this society. Food was provided by all members and was given to anybody. It is possible that the nation had its own leader but he was not able to create his specific power or wealth. While during the Finno-Ugric era –which lasted 4000 years- there were no big differences between everyday life and the way of providing food and keeping animals, in the Ugric period –which lasted for 1500 years- there were significant changes.

As keeping animals had a more and more dominant role in this community and it was mainly done by men, the matriarchal community changed into patriarchal one. Instead of mothers, now fathers got authority. In parallel with this change in this prehistoric society the Ugric people began farming and animal husbandry. Probably this method of animal keeping was adopted from the people living East of the Urals in 1800-800 BC. As the Ugric people lived on a vast territory it is probable that some of them were in contact even with Chinese people.

This diversity caused influence on the formation of the language as well.

Instead of stone tools which were used earlier, they began using metal ones, mainly copper and brass and later bronze. The tin which was necessary for making bronze was imported from East which developed trade among these people. Thanks to this cooperation they were able to make the first sickle of bronze.

According to the researchers of the language spoken by the Ugric at that time, they kept a lot of horses, cattle and goats. As the animal husbandry developed, hunting became less and less important and instead of continuous wandering they decided to find places where they could settle. Of course the best area for settlement was the bank of a river or a lakeshore. This radical change in the lifestyle caused a significant change

in the structure of the society. The leader of the class had the economic power as well. There were also big economic differences within the classes.

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## The Second Nomadic Period

There was a significant change in the climate in 1000 BC which influenced the disintegration of the Ugric community. At first there was a sudden warming of the climate. The predecessors of the Ugric living in the area of river Ob decided to move Northwards in the hope of finding better living conditions there. The other part of the community –the predecessors of the Magyars- lived in the Southern territory of the Urals and suffered from the bad effects of the climatic change just like those who moved Northwards.

After the short warm period there came another very cold one and as a result the people moving North found the territory no good for animal husbandry anymore. The people living in the South also suffered from the change – more and more land became desert- as a result they also had to turn to hunting, fishing and gathering again.

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## Wandering Westwards

In this so-called second nomadic phase the people made use of Mongolian

methods of nomadic animal keeping. Perhaps in this way their animal keeping method became more perfect making the community powerful enough for a decision: leave the territory and move Westwards in the hope that they could find the land which was good enough for better life. All this began in 500 B.C. and probably lasted for four centuries. This period of the Hungarian history is often called the era of 'wandering'. The route of it cannot be identified exactly but it seems to be possible that they passed through the area of the Azov sea and the moorland of Maeotis, to the North of the Black sea on the South of Russian steppes.

According to the Hungarian genesis saga this was the territory where the two strapping heroes, Hunor and Magor (Magyar) kidnapped the daughters of king Dula. The two heroes were the sons of the powerful Menrot, and his wife Eneh. As the legend goes, as the sons grew up they became very good horseriders. To pass the time they often went hunting which resulted in a lot of quarry.

One day they decided to organize a big hunt and asked their father to give them one hundred skillful warriors to make the trip more successful. They were armed with all weapons necessary for bringing down big game. During the trip they killed easily all the game that they saw, except one, a hind which behaved strangely. It appeared now and again but when the hunters got closer it disappeared mysteriously.

As the hind was extremely beautiful they chased it even when the time came to turn back and go home. A mysterious feeling overwhelmed them, the desire to catch the beauty and own it. The hunters went deep into the land of Maeotis where probably nobody had stepped before. The countryside was frightening and very different from the one they came from. The hind disappeared forever and they realized that there was no way back home anymore. So they had to settle there and found their new homeland.

Their youthful desire to find the beauty was accomplished when they met the daughters of the two kings Belar and Dul living there.

It so happened that the girls were dancing and singing in a forest together with one hundred other girls and learning fairy craft. When the two leaders caught sight of them they decided not to hunt for the hind anymore but to chase the beautiful girls. All this 'hunting' ended with marriages- everybody from the hunting troop found a wife. Hunor and his warriors begot with their wives the Hunns and Magyar's troop the Magyars.

These people met the Bulgarian people on the bank of river Volga and probably they were who called the Magyars first Hungarian or Hongorois or Ungarn. The legendary Belar and Dula reigning princes were Bulgarians so the women living in their reign can be considered to of Bulgarian origin from their mothers' side and Hunor, Magor and their warriors from their fathers' side.

According to some archeological findings the first clans of the Magyars were formulated in Baskhiria - which is called Magna Hungarya - in the 8th century. The Baskhirian clans of the Magyars separated around 830. The smaller part remained on the territory. They were found by monk Julianus in 1236. The bigger part of it decided to go South-West under the leadership of Levedi. It is possible that a part of the Bulgarian peoples living in the area of the river Volga joined them and later they were who formed the core of the Szekelys living East of today's Transylvania.

This mixed population settled in the area of the lower part of the rivers Danube and Don. The headquarters of Levedi was in the middle of this area along the Southern part of the river Bug and it was called Levedia after the leader. Here the ancestors of the Magyars met six other tribes coming from Baskhiria and Turkish territories. Levedi created an alliance of seven clans which is known today as the seven Hungarians. The leading clan of it was the Megyer or Magyar.

This can be considered the first political formation of the Magyars. At this time they might have met some Russians while they organized raids on Russian territories in the hope of catching some hostages. When the

raid was successful they made use of the hostages by selling them to the Vizantians.

Of course these swoops were very frightening for the people living on the area and as a consequence the Vizantians took necessary precautionary measures and the Kazars built the Sarkel fortress on the left bank of river Don. The attacks of the Magyars under the leadership of Levedi soon resulted in the Karaz principality being captured by the raiders and after this time the Levedi Magyars had to go to war on the side of the principality.

In 850 they were sent by the Kazars to the area of the river Volga to fight with the Beshenjós. When the troops reached them the Magyars were exhausted and not prepared for the Beshenjós' strong resistance. As they were on their own territory they were able to turn the situation to their advantage and defeated the Magyars.

It resulted another separation of the Magyars. The warriors who survived tried to escape in two different directions. It was a result of their nomadic technique: to go to war in small groups and in different directions. The smaller part of them decided to go through the Kaukaz mountains in the hope that the Bizantian people would not be able to follow and chase them there.

Of course many of them died, but those who set foot on the other side of the mountains parted with the Kazar principality forever and found their new homeland on Persian territory. They settled there and mixed with the Persian population in the following, nearly one thousand years. The researchers call them Asiatic Magyars.

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The Area of the Rivers Prut, Lower Danube and Dnjester  
as the Place of Temporary Settlement of the Magyars

The other, bigger part of the Magyars escaped by moving Westwards paying special attention to not to be caught again by the Kazars. When they thought that they had got far enough from them, they decided to settle on land which was surrounded by the rivers Prut, lower Danube and Dnjester. This choice was probably made after taking into consideration the safety of the people. The three rivers provided a kind of natural defence for them, not mentioning the Karpatian mountains which were very close to them in the West.

The main occupation of the Magyars was nomadic animal keeping. They had a lot of not totally domesticated horses which were small but very stubborn and grazed on the land which provided good crop for them. They also kept sheep with long, warm fur and pigs which were only partly domesticated.

When winter came they moved to more protected territories on the river banks together with their herds and stud. In spring they went to the hills and mountains which were a long way from them and they found good grazing ground there.

According to this way of life the Magyars had their winter and summer accommodations. Of course the winter one was well constructed which was renovated at the beginning of every winter and was used as permanent winter shelter. It was the territory where they began to cultivate the land and used the skills of the Slavic people in their farming. The main crops were millet, wheat and barley. They also knew the apple, pear and walnut. The crop was ground between two stones and bread was made from it. From milk they produced cottage cheese and cheese. The flesh of sheep was eaten frequently. But when they celebrated something they killed some horses because they considered horse flesh much tastier.

Probably these people were not strong enough after being defeated and the long escape to try to get to the other side of the high mountains. This

fact can be an explanation why they settled temporarily on this, seemingly safe land.

Of course there were not only Magyars among them. During the long-long way from the area of the Volga river, across Levedia to the area of the Prut, lower Danube, Dnjester and Seret rivers there were smaller groups of people from the Kazar principality who joined the Magyars and settled there with them.

While the Magyars lived with the Kazars peacefully, the Slavic people living on the area were oppressed by the Magyars. In this new situation the Magyars and the people from the Kazar principality lived according to the rules of alliance of the tribes, which were first formulated and worked out by Levedi. It was not too strict a relationship among the clans. Everybody was under the rule of the head of the clan they belonged to and all the clans had equal rights. The alliance of the seven Magyars was powerful enough to rule over the Slavic and Avaric people living on the territory.

The Kagan who was the leader of the Kazar principality did not want to loose his warriors and did everything to subdue the Magyars who were living on European territory. As the Kagan was more powerful than the Magyars in Etelköz (the territory surrounded by the Prut, lower Danube, Dnjester and Seret rivers) he could dictate and offered that he recognized the Magyars as a principality but in return they had to serve the Kagan as slaves. Levedi, seeing that it would be the same situation as it had been earlier when the Kazars ruled over them, did not agree. But another leader of another clan, Álmos, accepted this situation. Right after this agreement the Kazars made Álmos a reigning prince –according to their custom he was placed onto the Kagan's shield as the sign of recognizing him as prince. As we can see there was a significant moment in the history of the Hungarians when greed for power gained ground in the personality of Álmos.

Levedi, with his strong views, was pushed to the background and was

not heard in the later development of the Hungarian nation. Álmos became the first reigning Hungarian prince in about 855 and after this time the title of prince was given to his descendants. In 1301 even the king's throne was given to the descendant of Álmos. Álmos himself was the head of the Magyar principality up to 895 and reigned according to the Kagan's wish for a set period for his reign. Coming close to the end of this period Álmos succeeded in splitting with the Kazars but found their hierarchy system useful in his reigning, just like the principalities after him who considered it the only really viable method of ruling on the stjepe.

After parting with the Kazars, the Magyars conquered the Kavars in the same way as they had been by the Kazars earlier. The Kavars practically became their servants and did what the Magyars required of them. There were three clans of the Kavars under the rule of the Magyars. The Magyars united them and appointed a Kavaric person as the head like the Kazars did to the Magyars earlier when Álmos was appointed as the head of the Magyars.

There is a legend about Álmos:

## The Stud Farm of the Magyars

Fourteen times became the Hungarian plain green again, fourteen times became the trees green again in the Karpathian Basyn and fourteen times came the small larks from the fur bed of spring to sing their charming song when in Álmos's life began the fourteenth year. There were no other boys in the region who liked adventures more than him.

When he was one year old Sovard, a brave warrior put an apple, a flask of wine and a saddle in his cradle saying: Let us see which of them he touches first. What he touches with his hand will be loved by him when he grows up.

Álmos touched the saddle first and there was a pleasant smile on his face similar to the one on the red apple in the cradle.