

A Review Article:

**Two Books by two Sandors about the
Origins of Hungarians**

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Frank Sandor. *Magyar Origins. A 21st Century Look at the Origins of Ancient Hungarians*. Self Published. Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada, 2012. ISBN 978-0-9880065-0-8. 400 pages; available from Amazon.com (USD 24.26 + shipping as paperback).

Klára Sándor. *Nyelvrokonság és hunhagyomány. Rénszarvas vagy csodaszarvas? Nyelvtörténet és Művelődéstörténet* [Linguistic kinship and Hun tradition. Reindeer or miraculous stag? Linguistic and cultural history]. Typotex Elektronikus Kiadó Kft., Hungary, 2011. Published with the support of the György Lukács Foundation. ISBN 978-963-279-873-7. 472 pages; available from: http://www.tydotex.hu/konyv/sandor_klara_nyelvrokonsag_es_hunhagyomany (HUF 1652 as pdf download) or as paperback from <http://www.libri.hu> (HUF 4655 + shipping).

At first glance, the two books under review share only three features: the family name of the authors (who are probably unrelated), the topic, and the authors' enthusiasm. Just about everything else in these books is sharply different. According to the posting on Amazon.com, Mr. Frank Sandor was born to Hungarian Canadian parents who fled Hungary in 1956. He has an Associate Degree in Criminology from Douglas College, and attended both the British Columbia Institute of Technology and Simon Fraser University. It is unclear what he studied at these institutions, and Mr. Sandor did not mention any degree earned beyond his Associate Degree. In short, Mr. Sandor is an amateur historian and linguist with no formal education on the subject. In contrast, Dr. Klára Sándor is highly credentialed in the field (see her home page on the web: <http://www.sandorklara.hu/>, or the Hungarian edition of Wikipedia). Dr. Sándor belongs to a school, an intellectual lineage that includes such inter-

nationally recognized, prominent scholars as András Róna-Tas and the late Lajos Ligeti. She earned her doctorate in *turkology* at the University of Szeged in 1991, an advanced degree (*kandidátus*) in linguistics from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, MTA) in 1996, and she is the recipient of numerous awards. She was also a representative in the Hungarian Parliament delegated by the SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats), a now defunct liberal party.

The difference in the two authors' academic background is painfully evident from their writing style as well as the content of their books. Both authors wrote the book in the respective languages in which they were educated. Mr. Sandor's writing is loaded with spelling and grammatical errors, and his use of English generally undermines the reader's trust in the content. Mr. Sandor uses embarrassingly flawed spelling (e.g. he spelled "resurrection" as "reserection" [p. 137]), frequently misuses the Saxon genitive (e.g., "the pagan dharma wheels six realms of existence [p. 222]), does not know the difference between "*i.e.*" and "*e.g.*" (for example on pp. 66 and 298), and uses expressions like "this is not over exaggeration on my part" (p. 159) — as if there were such phrases as "over exaggeration," and its counterpart, "under exaggeration." Mr. Sandor confuses adjectives with adverbs: "This gives us a *probably* adoption time of this word to be between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D." (I added the italics.) His writing style is mostly colloquial. His book lacks an index that would be badly needed, particularly because of the repetitious structure of the book. Dr. Klára Sándor, on the other hand, writes well: her style, spelling, and grammar are excellent. Although she used a somewhat formulaic approach to introduce the material of each chapter, and some of this felt cumbersome and contrived, there were no errors comparable to Mr. Sandor's. Dr. Sándor also inserted colloquial language on occasion (e.g., "Dzsingisz egyéb ügyekben nem sokat *lacafacázó* mongoljai" – p. 257; "*rissz-rossz* latinsággal megírt Csíki székely krónika" – p. 376), evidently in an effort to make her book an easier read. After all, her monograph is not meant as a scholarly treatise, but a popular science book. As expected from someone of her expertise, the book is well structured, has endnotes, references, and an index — although only for the names appearing in the text. The pdf version is fully searchable.

Both authors defined their reasons to write their books at the outset. Mr. Sandor, at least initially, set out on a personal quest to trace his Magyar origins through time. As a first generation Canadian, this is also a journey for defining his Magyar identity, with hopes to pass it on as a father. Dr. Sándor also mentioned personal reasons stemming from her

love for the deer of Hungarian mythology. The deer that is threatened by the attitudes of Hungarians — those who turn it into a rigid idol and those who ridicule it. These attitudes are usually aligned with one's political persuasion and represent the political right (conservative, patriotic/ nationalistic [the designation differs on one's affiliation]) and political left (liberal, cosmopolitan/anti-patriotic [the designation differs on one's affiliation]), respectively. Dr. Sándor describes the schism between "the reality of linguistic history" and "the truth of legends" as perceived by many, and states that the two aspects can be reconciled. Both authors' stated goals are worthy, although I feel that neither will succeed to their satisfaction. Mr. Sandor's semi-novel theory of Hungarian origins is seriously flawed (in spite of some accurate and even insightful observations), whereas Dr. Sándor's book is unlikely to convince the opponents of Finno-Ugrism. I must add that some of the opponents even deny the fundamentally Finno-Ugric nature of the Magyar language, whereas others accept it, but deny that the Magyars branched off from northern Ob-Ugric peoples, migrating to the south and finally to Central Europe. The first group is hopeless to convince. The second group has an important point: the origin of the "Uralic" speakers remains unresolved.

Dr. Sándor mostly presented material based on peer-reviewed scholarly publications, representing the state of the field, including its prevailing views, practices, and biases. Questioning Dr. Sándor's statements would be equal to disagreeing with most linguists and historians. Mr. Sandor, on the other hand, presented primarily his own research, which is admittedly in conflict with the "official history" accepted and promulgated by western and Hungarian academicians alike. Mr. Sandor believes that the West has had hostile attitude against Hungarians, and that the current take of the MTA on Hungarian origins is rooted in the politically motivated (therefore tainted) "science" of Finno-Ugrism that was invented by Budenz and Hunfalvy as agents of the Habsburgs. Mr. Sandor is hardly the first one to come up with that accusation. A vast volume of literature has been created by amateur researchers in the past 150 years to counter the "Finno-Ugric conspiracy." Mr. Sandor is clearly in this group, and he put forth an alternative explanation for Magyar origins. In his concluding chapter (p. 294), he quoted Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: "Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth," and added that his book was about the same idea. *I.e.*, the impossible notion is that the Hungarian language came from the "fabled Proto-Uralic language east of the Ural Mountains," and after he eliminated this impossible proposition, the "truth remains" (even if it sounds

unlikely): Hungarians came from around the Hindu Kush Mountains, and the Hungarian language and other Uralic languages descended from Sanskrit. Of course, one would need to eliminate *all* impossible scenarios to follow Doyle's proposition properly.

Mr. Sandor correctly described that the relationship between Magyar and Sanskrit had been observed by "another Sandor" (whose baptismal name was Sándor): Sándor Csoma de Kőrös (1784-1842). Dr. Sándor wrote about Csoma in her book, and mentioned that he had studied Sanskrit, but failed to mention Csoma's assertion that Sanskrit and Magyar were related both in their grammar and vocabulary. Neither Dr. Sándor, nor Mr. Sandor cited the small bilingual book by Gyula Wojtilla (*Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Szanszkrit-Magyar Szójegyzéke*), which was published by the MTA in 1984 and incorporated Csoma's work on the subject. Whereas this omission is understandable from the amateur Mr. Sandor, given her outstanding credentials, Dr. Sándor's oversight is puzzling.

Neither author mentioned the Indo-Uralic hypothesis, the works by the English Henry Sweet (1845-1915), the Hungarian László Szabédi of Kolozsvár (1907-1959), or the contemporary Dutch, Spinoza Prize-winning linguist Frederik Kortlandt (1946-), just to name a few relevant scholars. Surprisingly, Mr. Sandor reached an insightful (presumably independent) conclusion, which (although incorrect as stated) is close to the Indo-Uralic hypothesis: "This would make all Uralic languages a branch on the Indo-European group of languages" (p. 263). From a superbly credentialed linguist like Dr. Sándor, whose field and training are related to the origins of the Magyar language, the total exclusion of the Indo-Uralic hypothesis (*i.e.*, not even mentioning it with criticism) is inexcusable from a purely scholarly perspective — it is neglecting a field that is in conflict with the favoured model. However, Dr. Sándor is hardly alone with this omission. In fact, most books and conferences about the origin of Magyar language neglect to mention the Indo-Uralic hypothesis, or even its widely accepted counterpoint, which denies common origin, but accepts "early contacts" between speakers of Uralic and Proto-Indo-European (PIE). An example for neglecting the topic is the conference held at the MTA in April of 2013 (<http://www.arpad.btk.mta.hu/>). Given that an estimated one third of Hungarian vocabulary is deemed Indo-European (IE) in origin (or at least overlaps with it), this is not a trivial issue. Such omissions certainly provide ammunition to Mr. Sandor, when he (like many others) criticizes the "establishment-approved scholars," accusing them of ulterior motives.

To be sure, the accusations are mutual, even though not personal. The authors apparently don't know of each other's work. Dr. Sándor dedicated a whole chapter ("Fatum Morganum") to the amateur "researchers" of Hungarian origins, who had been labeled already in the 19th century (perhaps with some cynicism, a possible sly reference to the principle of Tengriism) as "*délibábos*," which is probably best translated as "mirage-chaser." The word *délibáb* (*mirage*) literally means "noontime puppet [apparition]." Since the words *noon* and *south* are the same in Hungarian (*dél*), the mirage-chaser amateur linguists and historians have come up with a similarly unflattering name for the Finno-Ugrist scholars: "*északi bábos*" ("northern puppet" mirage-chasers). The cardinal directions South and North indeed reflect where the two camps usually envision the Magyar *Urheimat*. Dr. Sándor correctly points out that the *délibábos* camp is not uniform in its degree of preparedness, motivations, intents, truthfulness, commitment, or fraudulence. She gives selected examples to illustrate her points. Unfortunately, her selection of authors, the selection of these authors' statements, and sometimes her assessment of these authors betray bias.

An example for the bias is Dr. Sándor's portrayal of the late Dr. László Götz and his "four-volume monograph" that was published under the joint title of *Keleten Kél a Nap* (*The Sun Rises in the East*). Dr. Sándor admits that Dr. Götz occupies a special place among the proponents of Sumerian-Hungarian relatedness — a notion both Mr. Sandor and Dr. Sándor dismiss. She states that unlike many others, Dr. Götz "did not use non-existent literature," "he did not confuse Sumerian and Akkadian readings" [of cuneiform signs], and "he tried to use counter-arguments to disprove/refute the arguments supporting Finno-Ugric kinship [*rokon-ság*] instead of mere 'Communist name-calling'." In the end, she adds, the views of Dr. Götz "cannot be sustained" and his arguments "have been refuted" (p. 47). It is telling that Dr. Sándor did not add any reference to prove the point that Dr. Götz's work had been refuted. The original publication indeed consisted of four volumes — prefaced by the late Professor Gyula László (whose "double conquest" theory "should be forgotten" as stated by Prof. Róna-Tas at the above mentioned MTA conference). However, if Dr. Sándor wants to live up to scholarly rigor, she should have noted that Dr. Götz wrote a 5th book, and the currently circulated two-volume version contains all five books. Curiously, there is not even a single example that Dr. Sándor found worthy of quoting from this huge (over 1,100 pages long) and dense *opus*, which is supported with scientifically valid, published references. The umbrella statement that

Götz's work had been refuted is hardly acceptable. Was he wrong about everything? And if he was wrong, what does it mean about the scientific literature on which he based his books? Dr. Sándor quoted ridiculous and obviously wrong statements by Badiny, Aczél, and others, but not from Götz. Even more curious is that Dr. Sándor did not single out Götz's treatise of the Turkic languages, particularly the relationship between the *lir-* and *saz-*Turkic languages vs. Sumerian and Magyar. In addition, Götz described that *lir-*Turkic nature of Chuvash language was a late development (which Götz did not invent, but cited a published reference). It is befuddling why Dr. Sándor, a professional turkologist would not comment on these topics in a concrete manner. Did she read Götz's book, or merely related what she had heard about it in academic circles?

In general, a main problem with Dr. Sándor's book is in the biased omissions, and accepting the prevailing dogma without applying scrutiny. Neglecting Csoma's work on Magyar-Sanskrit linguistic kinship while mentioning Csoma's Sanskrit studies, neglecting to mention the Indo-Uralic hypothesis, or neglecting to mention even the existence of the linguist Gábor Bálint de Szentkatolna (1844-1913) are but a few examples. She accuses the "mirage chasers" of bias (scientific, nationalistic, political, *etc.*), in which she has a point, yet she is guilty of the same. As mentioned, in spite of being a turkologist, she did not critique Götz's assessment of Turkic languages. But there is more. Dr. Sándor mentioned (and praised) the turkologist and Vice President of the MTA, Lajos Ligeti on several occasions throughout the book. She also mentioned the medieval chronicles about the origins of the Hungarians (Anonymus [*Gesta Hungarorum*], Simon of Kéza [*Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum*], Márk of Kált [*Chronicon Pictum*]). Finally, Dr. Sándor also mentioned the great turkologist (and long-time opponent of Budenz), Ármin Vámbéry. Yet, she omitted to mention a '*gesta*' that should be prominently important particularly for a turkologist because it was procured in Turkey and donated to the Academy in 1860 by Vámbéry: the *Tarih-i Üngürüşz* ("The Story of the Hungarians"). This book was well hidden in the stacks of the MTA's Library for well over a hundred years until the early 1970's. The book was originally written in Latin, and translated into Ottoman Turkish by Mahmud Tercüman (1510-1575) who rescued it from burning during the Turkish occupation of Hungary. The medieval Turkish was translated into Hungarian by József Blaskovics (1910-1990), an ethnic Magyar living in Czechoslovakia, working at Charles University in Prague as a professor of turkology. According to the witness account of Gyula Geönczeöl, Lajos Ligeti tried to prevent the translation and the publication of this book, and

threatened those who were involved with the project. In spite of his objections, partly because of support from Gyula Illyés, a Hungarian company (*Magvető*) published it in 1982 in limited numbers and minimum censorship of the text. Since then, in spite of the collapse of the communist system in 1989/1990, the book has been printed only outside Hungary. The *Tarih-i Üngürüş* contains statements that are in conflict with the official model of Magyar origins — beyond what the other chronicles contain. That was Ligeti's reason to object to its publication and (once the cat was out of the bag) that is why the professional scholars either neglect it, or (if they refer to it at all) dismiss it as unreliable as a source material. Dr. Sándor chose the path to neglect it altogether. So did Mr. Sandor whose saving grace is that he is neither a turkologist, nor a professional.

To return to Mr. Sandor's opus, I must reemphasize that his lack of scientific background made the reading painful and frustrating. Here, I would like to give some concrete examples to avoid accusations of non-specific "umbrella statements."

Regarding the Magyar language as a direct derivative of Sanskrit, Mr. Sandor came up with "Linguistic Laws" that he less than modestly named after himself as "Sandor's Laws" (following in the footsteps of "Grimm's Laws"). Rule 1: Reduce (shorten the word to a maximum of two syllables); Rule 2: Reuse (recycle Magyar words to translate foreign concepts, creating "hybrid words"); Rule 3: Soften (certain phonetic changes). To be clear, Mr. Sandor does not appear to understand that if a Linguistic Law exists, its application should consistently lead to predictable outcome. (As an aside: professional linguists are less than consistent about their application of sound "rules," and designate certain words inappropriately as onomatopoeitic, idophone, "vándorszó," etc. to avoid exposing the limitations of the model they intend to "fit.") "Sandor's Laws" are vague and can make almost anything fit without being able to predict. So, how do these Rules of "Sandor's Law" work? According to Mr. Sandor, applying Rule 1 to the Sanskrit word "*viropaNa*" meaning "grow/woman," we get the Magyar word: "*nő*". The "reduction" meant the disposal of "*viropa*", and we kept only "*Na*," which went through Rule 3, and softened to "*nő*." Never mind that the "*Na*" is a suffix, and is appended to many words in Sanskrit, e.g., "*varga*" to create "*vargaNa*." Mr. Sandor is also mistaken beyond the "rule:" the word "*viropaNa*" does not mean "woman" in Sanskrit. The root of the verb is {viruh} ("to cause to grow, to thrust out, to expel, to remove").

Mr. Sandor's Rule 2 example is even less insightful — it betrays that he is not only unfamiliar with Sanskrit, but his competency in Hun-

garian is compromised. Thus, the Rule of “Reuse” is exemplified with the Magyar word “*vasaló*” (“iron” — the tool for ironing *e.g.*, shirts), which he believes to be a hybrid between the Magyar word “*vásár*” (market, trade/trading) and the Sanskrit word “*loha*” (iron, the metal). But perhaps all of this was topped by his etymology for the Magyar word “*lovás*” (horseman), which he derived from the Sanskrit “*loha*” as well because the word “*lovás*” contains “*vas*” — and “*loha*” refers to iron and something “copper colored.” Mr. Sandor does not seem to realize that the Magyar word “*lovás*” follows the typical suffixation of words such as *cső – csöves*, *kő – köves*, and that the word “*lovás*” has as much to do with “*vas*” (iron) as the word “*lovak*” has to do with “*vak*” (blind).

After this, one would not be surprised to see Mr. Sandor’s etymology for the Magyar word “*püspök*” (bishop). He believes it came “from the Sanskrit name Puspaka which means “King of serpents” [sic]. If you check Mr. Sandor’s otherwise trustworthy (and valuable) source, spokensanskrit.de, you will find that the Latinized transliteration is *puSpaka*, and it means “kind of” (not “king of”) serpent (and not “serpant”).

The Appendices include a table of 200 Sanskrit words that are, in Mr. Sandor’s logic, the precursors of cognate Magyar words. Most of these were completely unrelated words (and some were listed twice). However, there were some that, almost as a total surprise, proved to be at least somewhat correct. For example, gold is “*arany*” in Magyar, and one of the dozens of Sanskrit word for gold is “*hiranya*” (should be correctly transliterated “*hiraNya*”; Mr. Sandor missed the similar “*aruNa*”). Other good catches include Magyar “*méz*” = Sanskrit “*mada*” (*honey*); Magyar “*nem*” = Sanskrit “*nahi*” (*no*; Mr. Sándor should have noticed the Sanskrit “*na*” as well); and Magyar “*hó*” = Sanskrit “*hima*” (*snow*). The Sanskrit “*kaSaya*” (dirt, filth) was equated with “*kō*” (*stone*), not realizing that “*katha*” is the cognate word for the Magyar “*kő*” in Sanskrit.

Appendix D (p. 345-351) deals with the etymology of “*tulipán*” (tulip), which was addressed also in the body of the text (pp. 137, 159-166). Mr. Sandor is hardly the first one to recognize that something is wrong with the history of the tulip motif in Hungarian art, but to his credit, he provided evidence that the etymology of the internationally used word “tulip” was also wrong. According to the “MTA-approved” version, the “tulip motif” entered Hungarian folk art only in the 18th century, and the flower reached Hungary from the West, *i.e.*, after the flower became a fad in the Netherlands. And, together with the flower, its name “tulip” arrived to Hungary from the West. This line of history was refuted in a book by

one of the so-called “mirage-chaser” amateur historians, Dr. Miklós Érdy (*A Magyarország Keleti Eredete és Hun Kapcsolata* [The Hungarians’ Eastern Origins and Hun Ties]). However, even mainstream academicians have come up with findings that undermine the traditional view about the Hungarian tulip motif’s origin in Western Europe. Marianne Rozsondai described tulip motifs on the leather covers of *Corvina* codexes made for Kings Mátyás (Mathias) and Ulászló II (Vladislaus II; <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00021/00379/Ksz2008-3-02.htm>). Both kings predated the famed journey of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, the envoy of Ferdinand I to the court of Suleiman the Magnificent. Busbecq is credited with obtaining tulip bulbs, which he gave to his friend Charles de l’Écluse. Charles de l’Écluse established cultivation of tulip in the Netherlands. Mr. Sandor is observant when he points out that the official etymology of “tulip” is wrong. The prevailing opinion is that the word is related to “*turban*” because of the appearance of the flower. However, Busbecq wrote in his *Turkish Letters* that he saw fields with blossoming flowers on his way from Adrianapolis to Constantinople, and among the flowers were those that “the Turks called *tulipan*.” *I.e.*, verbatim the Magyar word. The problem is that the Turkish never called tulips *tulipan*, but “*lâle*.” Thus, when Busbecq gave the bulbs to de l’Écluse, he also transmitted the name, which he heard from people he met, and assumed to be Turkish. Yet the word the “Turks” mentioned to him was not Turkish. As Dr. Érdy, Mr. Sandor also pointed out that the highest genetic diversity of tulips is in areas where the Magyars came from. The conclusions by the two authors were somewhat different: Dr. Érdy placed the Magyars to the Tien Shan area, whereas Mr. Sandor to the Hindu Kush range. Nonetheless, both concluded that the tulip motif came with the ancient Hungarians to Europe. Mr. Sandor, unfortunately, ruined the finding by adding his typical etymology. He tries to derive the word from the Sanskrit “*tUlika*” (“painter’s brush”) because of their similar appearance. He failed to notice the relationship to the Finnish “*tulipalo*” (“fire”) and “*tuli*” (“flame”), even though when discussing the words for fire (p. 178), he recognized these Finnish and the cognate Estonian words. (As an aside, the Mongolian word for “flame” is “*döli*,” very similar to the Finnish.) In Table 6 (p. 178), Mr. Sandor gave the Sanskrit word for fire as “*tulika*,” which is a simple mistake. However, if it were correct, it would be related to Finnish, and more likely explanation of the word “*tulipan*” than the “painter’s brush” meaning.

Mr. Sandor’s approach is multidisciplinary, and is not limited to linguistics. As such, he ventures into the realms of archeology, numis-

matics, folklore, religion, and genetics. Unfortunately, he is not better at these than he is at linguistics.

Like Dr. Sándor, Mr. Sandor also addresses some of the medieval chronicles. It is a hit and miss approach at best — Mr. Sandor probably never studied Latin. The following telling comment is just an example: “Kezai writes Meotidis which is believed to be Meotis” (p. 78). Clearly, Mr. Sandor is unfamiliar with the 3rd declension of Latin nouns and adjectives, and can’t recognize a genitive case. And yet, he observed an interesting element (p. 144) in “*Emese’s Dream*” as described by Anonymus in the *Gesta Hungarorum*. According to the translated text, a divine vision appeared to *Emese* “in the form of a falcon that, as if coming to her, impregnated her [with her son, *Álmos*].” Mr. Sandor noted that the original Latin text was “*in forma asturis*,” which literally means “in the form of a craft,” and not “in the form of a falcon.” The issue is not simple, and Mr. Sandor was ill prepared to explain it. He concluded: “the tradition is fairly consistent in presenting the craft as either a hawk, falcon, osprey, *etc.*” He didn’t notice that “*in forma asturi*” means “in the form of hawks.” An “s” makes a difference, and *that* “s” may have a host of explanations. One of them is similar to the one offered by Mr. Sandor: an association between the words “craft” and “bird of prey.” Since the craft may refer to a wheel, and falcon-shaped Gothic fibulae displayed a wheel – the solar cross – on the falcons’ chest, the original translation is right on target even without contemplating the differences between classical *vs.* medieval Latin, or errors in copying.

Mr. Sandor interprets Simon de Kéza’s *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum*’s famous passage about the *rovás* letters in a unique way. The passage about the “letters of the *Blacks*” has been a matter of controversy. Some equated the Blacks with Vlachs (“oláh” – a word related to “olasz”), but László Rásonyi identified them with the *Blaks* (or *Bulaqs*), a Turkic tribe. Mr. Sandor envisions that the event of acquiring the letters was not around the time of the Conquest, nor was it in the Carpathians, but much earlier in Bactria (which would be turned into *Blak* from the “Sanskrit name *Balak*”), and the mountains were the Hindu Kush (pp. 58-60). In reality, the Sanskrit name of Bactria is *Bahilka*, and not *Balak*.

Mr. Sandor asserts that the Magyars’ religion at the time of their arrival in the Carpathian Basin was Vedic Hinduism. To arrive at this conclusion, he dismisses other religions, including Tengriism (pp. 178-179), a religion discussed more in-depth by Dr. Sándor (pp. 133-135, 160-161, 257-258) who also describes the link between Tengriism and

Manicheistic Christianity (pp. 162-163). Tengriism, correctly pointed out by Dr. Sándor, is not just a syncretic religion, but it is a form of monotheism. In contrast to Mr. Sandor, Dr. Sándor asserts the majority of the 9th century Magyar settlers followed Tengriism, *i.e.*, the typical steppe religion of the “other nomads.” The insight shown by the two authors about Tengriism is very contrasting. Mr. Sandor states that the belief that Tengriism was the Magyars’ religion is based on a single word: “*tenger*” (sea). Mr. Sandor accepts that the Magyar word for “sea” “probably comes” from the word meaning “sky” and “sky god,” but concludes that “the evidence ends” at this conjunction. He is missing a major point, which was at least partially covered by Dr. Sándor, correctly citing a major discovery by Gyula László: the grave goods were placed next to bodies in Magyar graves in an arrangement that was symmetrical to that in life. Similarly, the cemetery was the mirror image of the village — all this was based on the belief that in the netherworld everything mirrored the one above. Dr. Sándor overlooked pointing out that this is the reason why the Magyar word for “sea” is the same as the Mongolian word for “sky,” and that in several languages one can find identical (or closely related) words for sky and sea, or sky and land/earth. Thus, the “as above, so is below” principle is, in and of itself, not a proof of Tengriism — we encounter it in Hermetic philosophy, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, *etc.* — but its manifestation as part of the burial customs is narrowing the possibilities.

Dr. Sándor and Mr. Sandor have contrasting takes on the genetic evidence of the Magyars’ origins. Dr. Sándor focuses on the general aspects of genetics and its limitation in identifying any people’s ancestors. She correctly points out that nations do not originate from an isolated population. She missed the opportunity to define ethnogenesis *vs.* the history of the ethnos, and how genetics may play a role in tracking down both. When staying away from the specifics, she also avoids discussing data that are difficult to interpret within the confines of the “MTA-sanctioned” Finno-Ugric theory. Mr. Sandor, on the other hand, tries to make the Magyars’ *paternal* genetic origin monophyletic, and ties it to a single Y chromosomal haplogroup subclade designated as R1a1a (identified with the M198 marker, *i.e.*, an SNP [single nucleotide polymorphism]). He cites data indicating that about 60% of Magyar men belong to this subclade. He also asserts that the Uralic speakers (other than Magyars) carry a different marker (known as M178), which is absent from the Magyar population. Thus, he concludes, “Hungarians do not share a common genetic origin with Estonian or any other Uralic language speaking people” (p. 25). Moreover, “if the marker is at least 4,000 years old,

Magyars sure as heck were not living near Uralic speakers east of the Ural Mountains as recently as 1,500 years ago” (p. 27). Mr. Sandor admits: “Magyars and other Uralic speakers do share a common language that cannot be ignored” (p. 27). Mr. Sandor identifies Magyars’ ancestors in the people whose remains are known as the Tarim Basin mummies (pp. 13, 33, 63).

What is wrong with Mr. Sandor’s assertions regarding the Magyars’ genetic background? In short, what he considers as “proof” is a “perhaps” at best. DNA-based genealogy is a rapidly developing field, and it can be confusing due to the changing terminology. Thus, Mr. Sandor never realized that the “Finno-Ugric M178 marker” that he described as absent from the (contemporary) Magyar population (p. 27) is identical with the “genetic subgroup” [Y haplogroup subclade] N1c identified in two individuals’ bones in “Conquest Era graves” that he mentioned later in the text (p. 107). Mr. Sandor attributed these N1c-positive individuals to “assimilated groups” that “may have been Alans.” It is noteworthy that the Alans’ typical Y haplogroup is definitely not N1c, but G2a — another piece of information Mr. Sandor is apparently unfamiliar with. Mr. Sandor cited an early study, which used a small sample, leading to an over-estimation of R1a1a (M198) in the population of present-day Magyars. The real proportion is lower than 60% and, in reality, Magyars have somewhat lower percentage of R1a1a in the population than some of the Slavic populations (*e.g.*, Ukrainians).

What Mr. Sandor also fails to recognize is that the M198 marker now designates a subclade known as R1a1a*, which has several further subclades. Unfortunately, the DNA of the mummies of the Tarim Basin have not been analyzed for these subclades, thus we can’t claim whether they are our ancestors or our ancestors’ cousins. They could have been just as much the ancestors of Slavic peoples (presumably with an M458 marker), or Turkic peoples (presumably with a Z93 marker), or Baltic (Finnic) and Central European (Magyar and Slavic) people (presumably with a Z280 marker). Whereas I must point out that Mr. Sandor has no proof for the Magyar identity of the Tarim mummies (which the “mainstream” science claims as Indo-European with just as much evidence as Mr. Sandor’s), there are some noteworthy genetic observations connecting the Tarim mummies to the Andronovo culture. Genetically, a dominant (not exclusive) Y haplogroup in the Andronovo culture was R1a, and several of the maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA haplogroups (*e.g.*, T, U5a) are also prevalent among present-day Magyars. An association between the Y chromosomal R1a haplogroup and the relatively novel gene

mutation (the rs12913832*G allele of the *HERC2* gene) resulting in blue/green eye color has been reported. Both the Andronovo and Tarim populations were prevalently blue/green eyed based on the DNA test. The Andronovo culture itself is a matter of controversy. Its designation as a culture of Indo-European speakers is shaky, yet it is the “consensus.” Designating it as Uralic is a minority opinion, which is based on the Seima-Turbino phenomenon, *i.e.*, the migration of Uralic speakers that started in the Andronovo territory. Mr. Sandor is wrong to represent the Tarim mummies as definitely Magyar. To his credit, he at least recognized the link; after all, kinship of some sort is likely with present-day Magyars as well as other Uralic speakers via the Andronovo horizon. Dr. Sándor, on the other hand, even though mentioned the Tarim basin related to various populations (such as the Uyghurs) and Sir Aurel Stein’s discovery of ancient documents written in various languages (such as Tocharian), she never mentioned the existence of these mummies (discovered by Stein in 1907).

The potential implications of these genetic observations, combined with linguistic data, are far reaching, and may support the Indo-Uralic hypothesis, challenging the current consensus model.

The last part of the final chapter in Dr. Sándor’s book (starting with p. 429) is an intriguing interpretation of the Magyar *csodaszarvas* (miraculous deer) legend, and I only wish Dr. Sándor had elaborated on the comparative mythology more than she did. In these pages, she turns our attention to the stories written on the night sky as constellations, and invokes our [developmentally] primary, image-based reasoning. The heavens served as gigantic storybook for our forefathers when telling legends to their children; the sky was a map, as well as a calendar. To prove the compatibility of the Finno-Ugric nature of the Magyar language and the Hun-Magyar legend of the miraculous deer, Dr. Sándor presented a similar legend of the Saami (Lappish) people, as recorded by the Saami writer, Johan Turi (p. 431). The legend is “written” in the constellations of the night sky: two brothers (constellation Gemini) are chasing the deer (whose antlers are the constellation Cassiopeia and body is composed of the constellations Perseus and Auriga), but another hunter is also after the deer (constellation Orion), and the water that is “being crossed” by the deer is the celestial river, the Milky Way (illustrated on p. 432). Dr. Sándor correctly identifies the parallel between the Saami legend and the Hun-Magyar version: *Hunor* and *Magor* are the twins (Gemini), Orion is Nimrod. The deer, at the same time is the same as the ancestral mother *Enéh*. Importantly, Dr. Sándor reminds the reader of the nearby constel-

lation *Cygnus* (Swan) and the felt swan found in a 5th century B.C. Scythian kurgan in Pazyryk. This swan is interpreted as the “escort of the dead” into the netherworld. Dr. Sándor could have expanded on this, and mention *The Swan of Tuonela*.

The constellation-based mythological story predates the Pazyryk kurgan, and predates the time when Finnic and Magyar peoples parted. Greek mythology inherited some of the same elements, such as Castor and Pollux (the “twin half-brothers”) whose mother, Leda, was seduced by Zeus in the form of a swan. Swan was also a sacred bird and related to the cult of Apollo that reached the Etruscans and the Greeks from Anatolia. The story of sacred twins is considered a part of proto-Indo-European mythology. Yet, we find it in Saami, Finnish, Magyar, and other Uralic speaking people’s mythology, along with the swan. Under the pen name Acharya S, D.M. Murdock offered a similar constellation-based explanation about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in her book *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (and offended many believers in the process). Interestingly, the “mirage-chaser” Badiny also described a constellation-based legend about Nimrod as Orion and his twin sons — but what he described was (supposedly) a Sumerian legend. To be sure, the deer was a revered, sacred animal depicted in Sumerian and Bronze Age Hatti art (e.g., the standards found in the royal graves at Alaca Höyük).

Mr. Sandor believes that Conquest era Magyars followed a Vedic religion. Although this claim cannot be supported, I must admit that there are echoes in Vedic mythology and several other religions, making the mistaken identification understandable. One of these echoes is the swan (*hamsa* in Sanskrit). In Vedic mythology, the *Hamsa* is associated with Surya (the Sun), and represents balance, perfect union, and life. I would also like to call attention to the etymology of the Magyar word for swan “*hattyú*” that was missed by both authors. The ancient swan symbolism around the River Kaidu on the southern side of the Tien Shan Mountains (which has the Khan Tengri peak), and the words meaning “swan” in various languages historically related to the region would also be revealing.

I admire Mr. Sandor for having the desire, commitment, and dedication to unveil the origins of Magyars. At the same time, due to the misguided notions that prevail throughout his book, I cannot in good conscience recommend it. On the other hand, I would recommend Dr. Sándor’s book, noting that the picture she portrays is not immune from biases and major omissions. Nonetheless, her book contains rich and relevant information, and is an enjoyable read.