

terms, ethnic designations, personal names, and the names of the authors of the main primary and secondary sources.

The book is an unusually well thought-out and well documented scholarly work that treats most of the questions, problems and debatable issues concerning the history of the early Magyars. At the same time, however, it is not an easy reading. The data contained in the individual chapters is so detailed and massive that unless one is already versed in the history of ninth-century Central and Eastern Europe, it is easy to get lost amidst the details. In consequence of this, Kristó's book is probably more useful to the historian than to the general reader. Even so, it is a book that should be available in all of the major academic and public libraries of North America, for it is the product of the scholarly effort of one of the most significant Hungarian medievalists in the twentieth-century Hungary. It would be a great service to the profession if an American publisher would find this book worthy of translation, publication and mass distribution in the English speaking world.

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János Makkay. *A magyarság kelezése* [The Dating of Hungarians]. Szolnok: Damjanich János Múzeum, 1994. 2nd, revised and enlarged edition. 231 pages.

**This book's title** could be translated into English more freely as "the chronology of Hungarian origins." In it, Makkay, an eminent archeologist, discusses Gyula László's hypothesis of the "double conquest" of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarians, a theory which postulates that the ancestors of the Magyars appeared in the Middle Danube basin for the first time not in 896 — as it is traditionally held — but centuries earlier.

Makkay observes that the current received version of the Hungarians' origins maintains that between the 4th and 9th centuries a.d. the Bulgaro-Turkic (or Onogur) ruling class of the ancient Hungarian nomadic tribes began a process of acculturation to the masses of Finno-Ugric-speaking subjects they ruled. This supposedly happened on the southern Russian steppes. Through this process the Hungarian language is supposed to have been enriched by about 300 Bulgaro-Turkic (or early Chuvash) loan-words, most of them relating to animal husbandry. In 894 a.d., threatened by other invading Turkish peoples, the Magyars fled to the West and, under the leadership of Árpád, in 895-896 settled in the Carpathian Basin. Árpád and the other tribal chiefs of the Hungarians had Turkic names and contemporary Byzantine sources refer to them as *Turkoi* or Turks. This tends to confirm the theory that the rulers of the Magyars were of Turkic

origin. The Turkish language, however, rapidly disappeared, either at the time of the "conquest" or very soon after it. In the onomastics of the Árpád dynasty, Prince Vajk (after 1001 known as King Stephen and, later, as King St. Stephen) and, as I suppose, his son Imre (the later St. Imre or St. Emeric), and his nephew Vazul (as well as his son Levente), were the last Magyar leaders to receive Turkic names, which suggests an earlier acculturation by this ruling class, for in cases of language shift the change in namegiving usually follows the disappearance of the language by one or two generations.

Against this widely accepted view, Gyula László had advanced a radically different theory. In studies which appeared in 1944 and thereafter, László argued that the peoples who spoke proto- or old-Magyar dialects might have moved into the Carpathian Basin well before 895-6, possibly as subjugated tribes of the Huns (4-5th century a.d.), or of the early Avars (6th century), or as allies of the Middle or Late Avars (or Onogurs), around 670-680. In effect, László claims that various groups of Magyar-speaking peoples were present in the Carpathian Basin well before the 896 conquest, and the Bulgaro-Turkic loan-words entered the Hungarian language here, and not during the Hungarians' sojourn through the southern Russian stepplands. Makkay argues that, if indeed László's theory is valid, the middle Iranian (Alan) loan words in Hungarian came not from the Ossetians of the north Caucasian region, but were borrowed from the Sarmatian peoples living in the Carpathian Basin from Roman times through the Hun and Avar eras. According to Makkay, the same is true of the numerous Slavic loan-words in Magyar: these entered the Magyar language not after the Hungarian conquest, i.e. in the 10th and 11th centuries, but at an earlier date from the South-Slav peoples who also lived together with the Hungarians in the Middle Danube basin under Avar rule. In this connection Makkay points out that, notwithstanding the fact that after Hungary's conversion to Christianity it received its priests from Germany and Italy, the Hungarian religious terminology is not of German or Italian origin, but Slavonic, which suggests that a certain degree linguistic-religious acculturation among Hungarians had started to take place before 896, in the Carpathian Basin.

Arguing along these lines, Makkay postulates that, with the collapse of the Avar Empire in the early part of the 9th century, the Avar ruling class disappeared from the Carpathian Basin but the subject Hungarian population remained there. This speculation gives rise to the theory that in 895 Árpád entered this land not with a large Hungarian population in tow, but with a much smaller military force of Turkic-speaking warriors (with whom there probably were some Hungarian-speaking auxiliaries). This conquering force subdued the Magyars who were living in the Carpathian Basin apparently without any military or political organization, and Árpád and his successors established a viable, strong state, in which the Magyars initially constituted the humbler strata of society. Supporting this theory is the fact that in many 11th century documents the peasants mentioned have names of Finno-Ugric origin, while among the leaders the ratio of Turkic names is high. Makkay even speculates on the

proportion of the Hungarian population that lived in the Carpathian Basin before the conquest and suggest that this was probably four or five times greater than the size of Árpád's conquering host. This pre-896 population of Hungarians in the Middle Danube region amounted to about half-a-million, according to Makkay, and included the ancestors of the Székelys of Transylvania whose alleged Turkic origin Makkay rejects.<sup>1</sup>

László's original impetus for postulating the theory of the pre-896 settlement of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin had been a sudden change (around 680 a.d.) that archeologist observed to have taken place in Avar metal ornamentation, when the so-called griffin and tendril motives appeared. The fact that after 896 the local population is known to have continued to use the same cemeteries that the people of the late-Avar period used, only strengthened László's conviction. In reinforcing László's theory, Makkay adduces indirect arguments from the fields and disciplines of toponymy, etymology, paleogeography, etc. He argues, *inter alia*, that the runic script (*rovásírás*) of the Székelys originated before 896, in the Carpathian Basin.

All-in-all, Makkay's book is the most comprehensive study of the theory of the "double conquest." A detailed summary in English (pp. 199-228) allows the non-Hungarian reader to get acquainted with this interesting historiographical controversy. Notwithstanding the publication of Makkay's work, most Hungarian historians will probably continue to doubt the validity of Gyula László's hypothesis.

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1. Regarding the origins of the settlement of Transylvania, a question of intense and bitter controversy between Hungarian and Rumanian historians, Makkay refers to the brilliant study of László Rásonyi who, following the remarkable hint of Dezső Pais, demonstrated that the mysterious *Blacus* people whom the Árpáadian conquerors encountered in 9th century Transylvania were not Wallachians, as the Romanian theory of "daco-Roman continuity" claims, but a Turkic people, the *Bulaqs*. Thus it is quite reasonable that their leader had a Turkic (and not a Wallachian) name: Gelou. On this question see another monograph by Makkay: *Hogyan lettek a blakokból románok* [How the Blacs became Rumanians] (Budapest: published by the author, 1997).

Tibor Frank. *Egy emigráns alakváltásai. Zerffi Gusztáv pályaképe, 1820-1892* [The Metamorphosis of an Emigrant. The Life-Career of Gusztáv Zerffi, 1820-1892]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985. 330