

FROM THE ANCIENT HOMELANDS TO THE CARPATHIANS – FROM THE FINDS TO THE APPAREL

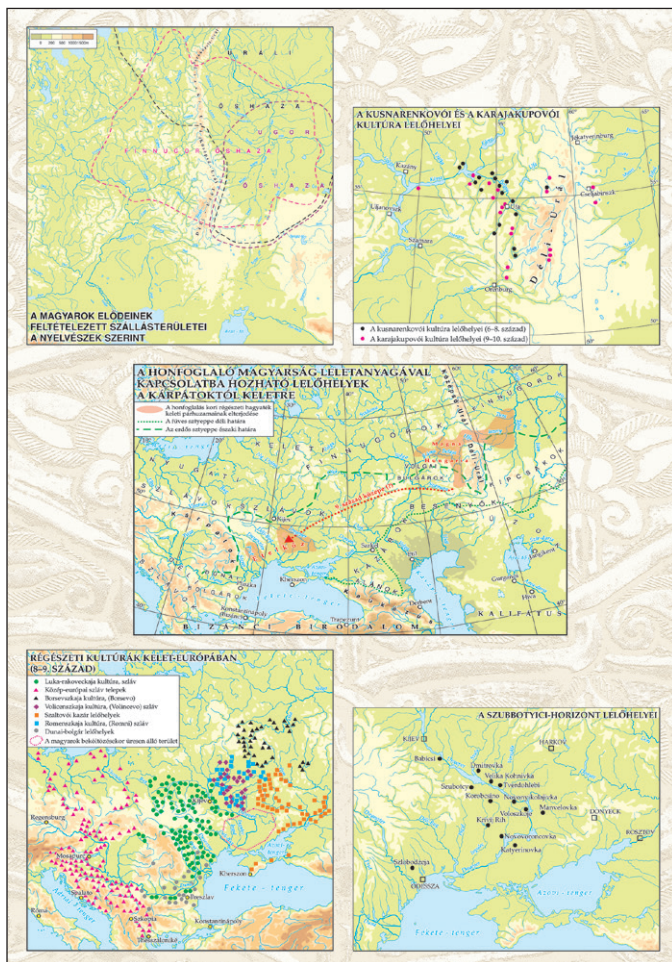
Travelling Exhibition of Posters on the Most Recent Results from Archaeological Research on Ancient Hungarian History and the Conquest Period

(The research and the article have been created within the framework of the MÖT 28.317/2012 program)

ZOLTÁN BOLDOG – ZSOLT PETKES – BALÁZS SUDÁR – ATTILA TÜRK

The first half of the paper introduces the archaeological sites in Eastern Europe where finds can be connected with our ancestors, and which – at the same time – mark the area where certain events of our early history may have taken place. This area stretched from Uelgi to the east of the Urals as far as Slobodzia along the Dniester River. In the second part the most probable ‘method of use’ of the archaeological finds is introduced, and we try to survey what our ancestors might have worn and looked like when they arrived at their new homeland.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE AND THEIR MIGRATION



The history of the Hungarian people, just like that of any other people, can be traced back to the distant past. Several branches of science can help to familiarize us with this early period, but their results are often ambiguous. The archaeological evidence points to the areas east of the Urals. The first relics from archaeological cultures that are most probably connected with our ancestors – the Kusunrenkovo and Karajakupovo cultures (6th–10th centuries AD) – were found in the regions of the Central and Southern Urals.

A portion of the Hungarians probably moved to the west in the middle of the 9th century, however, the attacks of the Pechenegs mentioned in historical sources have not been proved by archaeological research.

Some sources write about several settlement locations of Hungarians in Eastern Europe, but there is only archaeological evidence for the Etelköz region. This is the area that includes the sites of the Subbotyic horizon near the lower reaches of the Dnieper River that appeared in the middle of the 9th century, when the Hungarians are mentioned in historical sources.

According to the latest research, the legacy of our ancestors already sporadically appears in the Carpathian Basin from 860–870 AD. The Hungarian conquest itself must have been a long process at the end of the 800s, with the Battle of Pozsony (present-day Bratislava) in 907 making the settlement permanent.



TO THE EAST OF THE URALS: SINEGLAZOVO (RUSSIA)

An early mediaeval archaeological site in the area of the Southern Urals that is very important from the Hungarian point of view – belonging to the late Kusnarenkovo-Karajakupovo horizon – has been found in the southern part of present-day Chelyabinsk, on the banks of Lake Sineglazovo. The first finds were dug up in 1908, but unfortunately were not documented and were only announced after the Second World War. In 1959, further graves were found when a silicate factory was being built and were excavated by V. S. Stokolos. The most significant finds were a silver bowl ornamented with palmette motifs and green silk cloth with medallions, which unfortunately have been lost. It was not until 2009 that another two graves of particular interest to us were also found during excavations. The gilded harness mounts with palmette motifs discovered show considerable similarities with the style of the finds in the Carpathian Basin from the time of the Hungarian conquest, while the form of the S-shaped double bridle (curb and snaffle bit), the loop-handled stirrup, the bone buckle and the iron girth buckle imply a link with the 8th–10th-century finds at the Minusinski Basin and the Altaic region.

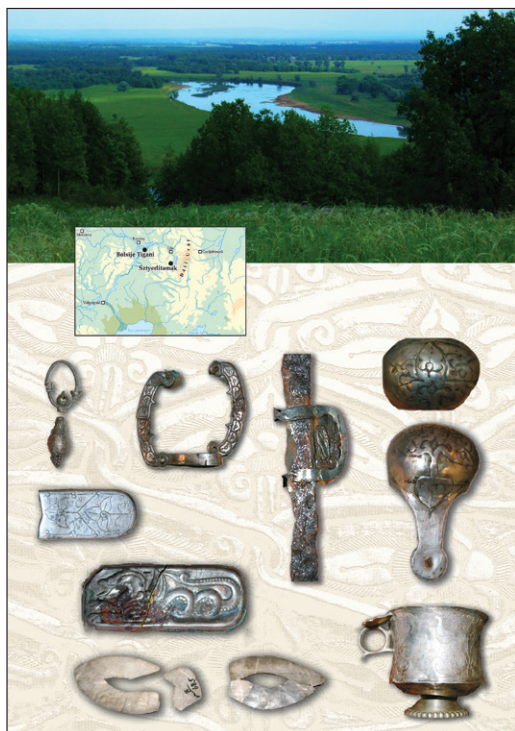


TO THE EAST OF THE URALS: UELGI (RUSSIA)

Since 2010 Sergej G. Botalov has been regularly excavating near Lake Uelgi in the Chelyabinsk region on the basis of finds made using a metal detector. Recognising the importance of the site, Hungarian experts have also joined in the work since 2012. In this Russian-Hungarian Ural Archaeological Expedition, Hungary is represented by the Department of Archaeology of Pázmány Péter Catholic University and the Palaeontological Research Group of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. So far several kurgans (burial mounds) and 30 graves have been excavated in an area of 3,000 m².

A settlement may have existed here in the 8th–13th centuries. The deceased were buried under kurgans or in simple shaft graves in the areas between the kurgans. Cremation graves as well as sacrificial pits with horse bones and charcoal have also been found. The finds in Uelgi show relationships with several distant areas. For example, there are buckles with bear figures, pseudo granulation earrings and bi-metal fire-striking tools that are characteristic of the Kama valley. There are belt and harness mounts related

to those in the Altai Mountains and pottery related to the finds in the southern taiga forests as well as distinctive pottery finds that can be linked to the so called ‘moustached’ kurgans in the Kazakh steppes. From the Hungarian point of view, the rosette-shaped harness mounts and silver objects ornamented with palmette and floral designs arranged in reticulated patterns are of special interest.



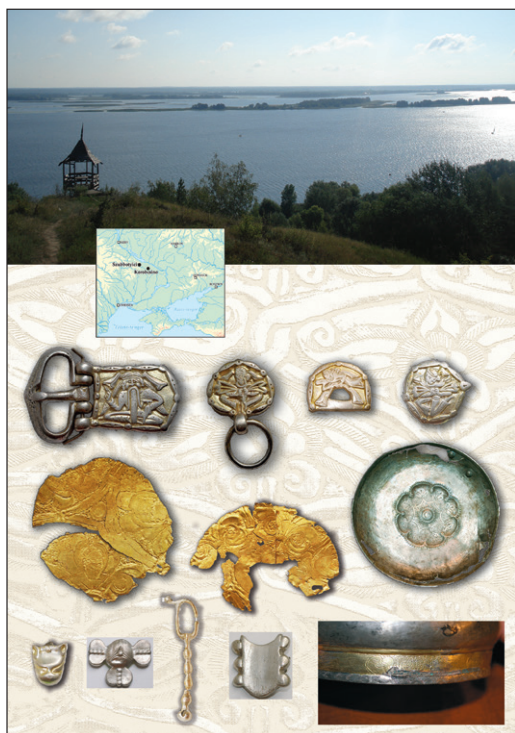
THE ANCESTORS OF THE HUNGARIANS TO THE WEST OF THE URALS

On the basis of the archaeological finds, researchers have presumed since the 1970s that the populations of Kusunarenkovo (6th–8th centuries AD) and Karajakupovo (8th–10th centuries AD) cultures on the west side of the Urals were the ancestors of the Hungarians.

The best known site in Bashkiria from this period is the cemetery in Styerlitamak, which lies on the right bank of the Bjelaja River. The first graves came to light during the building of a factory in 1947–1949, but the rescue excavation only took place in 1950–1951. Originally these must have been burials under a kurgan with mainly east-west oriented graves. The most significant finds are silver ornaments, jewels and a silver cup with a decorated brim. The dirhams issued by the members of the Arab Abbasida dynasty played an important role in the dating of the site.

One of the best-known and most emblematic archaeological research sites for early Hungarian history was found in Tatarstan, Russia, on the outskirts of Bolsije Tigani in 1973. Burials with parts of horses, gilded silver fittings and characteristic Ural pottery were found in the cemetery. This cemetery is the westernmost site

of the Kusunarenkovo find area, which is characterized by a large amount of Bulgarian-type finds, as well as its geographical separation. Based on the later, 10th century section of the site excavated in the 1980s, it is now clear that this was the graveyard of one of the communities of the Hungarians that stayed in the East.



ETELKÖZ: SUBOTCY AND KOROBCHINO (UKRAINE)

In the 1980s finds were discovered along the middle section of the *Dnieper River*, on the outskirts of the present-day village of Subotcy, which can be linked to the ancestors of the conquering Hungarians. Since then several similar sites have become known which have been given the comprehensive label of the Subbotyc horizon based on the earlier Russian designation that is widespread in the literature. As the archaeological and historical sources coincide, this area can be considered to be the Etelköz settlement area of the Hungarians. It is of great importance that the finds are related to those found near the Volga and in the Southern Urals as well as those in the Carpathian Basin from the 9th–10th centuries.

The belt ornamented with a total 23 gilded cast silver studs is a prominent find. The buckle, which depicts a cross-legged old man with a long beard, is the highlight of the high quality metalwork.

The other outstanding archaeological site of the Subbotyc horizon is on the outskirts of the settlement of Korobchino. Here only one grave of a man was found, but it had rich grave goods. Of

the metal finds, two gilded silver bowls are the best quality, and are decorated with chasing in the background of their floral patterns. A large gold sheet was also found in the grave, which was possibly a death mask. Among the weapons and harness gear found, the gilded sabre sheath end ornamented with palmette and floral designs arranged in reticulated patterns deserves particular mention. A pitcher from the Volga region also came to light.



ON THE BANKS OF THE DNIESTER: SLOBODZIA (REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, DNIESTER VALLEY)

According to the latest information, the Subbotytic horizon, which can be related to the settlement of Etelköz, can be dated to the second half of the 9th-century. Although the western border of Etelköz is traditionally drawn at the Lower Danube, this has not yet been confirmed by archaeological finds. Moreover, the 9th century settlement finds related to the first Bulgarian Empire appear much further north, up to the central area of present-day Moldova. The westernmost known site definitely belonging to the Etelköz group is in the valley of the Dniester at Slobodzia.

In 1994, east-west oriented mediaeval graves dug into an earlier Bronze Age kurgan were found near the settlement. In addition to the characteristic finds of the Subbotytic horizon, there were grave goods of Volga, Slav and Byzantine origin in the 26 excavated graves. From the Hungarian point of view, the burials with parts of horses placed at the feet, iron stirrups with curved bottoms and the gilded silver fittings are of particular interest.



HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN ABOUT THE ATTIRE OF OUR ANCESTORS?

The scholarly demand for the depiction of the attire of our ancestors arose at the end of the 19th century, when the life of the Central Asian nomads became better known and the archaeological finds in Hungary provided a tangible basis. Since then we have continued on this path, with ethnographic materials and archaeological finds being thoroughly researched and compared. In Hungary, Ferenc Móra was the first to have illustrations drawn. However, the real breakthrough was achieved by the activities of Gyula László, who not only passionately studied the daily life and material remains of the conquest period Hungarians but was an artist as well. His depictions that were published in every possible way – in books, articles, transparencies, etc. – are still definitive.

Not much has remained of the splendid garments due to the climatic conditions of the Carpathian Basin, primarily only metal clothing ornaments and some pieces of silk and leather. However, these are important as they contain a lot

of information: the placement of the fittings in a grave may imply the cut of a garment, the way the belt was worn or the length of the boots; and the material remains show the quality of craftsmanship or commercial relations. Contemporaneous clothes and works of art, which have survived under different, more favourable circumstances, also provide relatively good information about the attire of our ancestors.

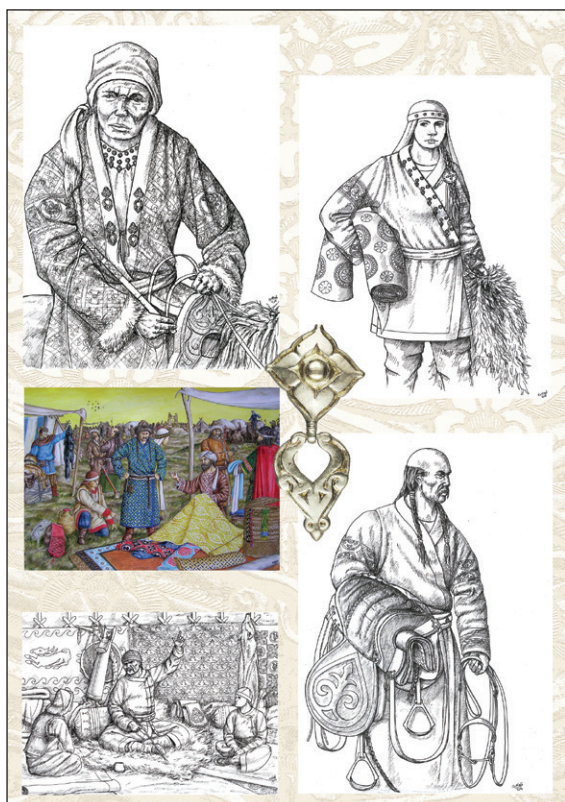


UNDERGARMENTS: SHIRTS AND UNDERPANTS

We have knowledge primarily about shirts worn by Hungarian women. It is known that their underclothing was made of finely woven flax or hemp linen. The shirts were made with several types of neck-lines, some opened in the front, but there are also types which were done up on the shoulders. The neck-line of women's shirts – often even in the case of commoners – was adorned with a row of fittings, which were fastened on a leather or textile ribbon and then sewn on the shirt so that this decorated strip was visible over the garment. Some grave goods suggest that there were shirts with upturned collars, and these were also adorned with fittings. A shirt embroidered with beads (three strings of beads) has also been found in the grave of a Hungarian woman. The shirts were probably adorned with *appliqué* and trimming made of materials different from the shirt.

There have been no finds that could have been trousers, but the attire of our ancestors was probably not different from that of the people of the steppes. As was usual in the case of nomads, both women and men must have worn trousers. Among the clothing finds from the Caucasus region, there

are, for example short, knee-length linen (under)pants, which were tied with a string or strap threaded in the waistband. The trousers worn over them were always long.



OVERGARMENTS: KAFTANS

Men, women and children alike in equestrian societies wore kaftans (today called a 'cloak') as an overgarment. There were versions of these of varying thicknesses and more than one may have been worn at a time.

This garment was made for practical purposes, made necessary for horse riding. The best ones were made of silk, not because of the beauty of the material but because it is light and a good insulator. Very small, only palm-sized pieces of this material have remained from the clothes of our conquering ancestors, but there are several descriptions of them. Although kaftans were used in the same manner everywhere, their appearance varied. In the case of our ancestors this is shown by where and how the buttons and – on women's kaftans – gilded silver fittings were sewn on the material. There were kaftans that were fastened in the middle, with the trimming on the two sides adorned with studs. In other cases, the two sides were folded diagonally over each other, so the trimming was diagonal as well. The sides of a third type of kaftan were cut vertically, but the right side completely overlapped the left shoulder, so two layers covered the chest of the wearer.

Finally, there was a type that was seemingly rarely used in Hungary: the kaftan was done up with a row of buttons in the middle, similar to the Hungarian hussar's jackets used much later.



BELTS AND THEIR ACCESSORIES

A very important element of the clothing of nomads was the belt, which in addition to its practical role indicated the status of the wearer with its adornment and accessories. It was the most decorated piece of men's apparel at the time of the Hungarian conquest, although women's belts were much less ornamented.

It is possible that our ancestors wore more than one belt or item functioning as a belt. One was to fix the kaftan and the other to tie personal belongings onto, the latter of which was probably more decorated.

A typical set of Hungarian belt fittings – sometimes including several dozen pieces – consisted of four elements: a buckle, horizontal and vertical fittings and a belt tip. These were accompanied by smaller fittings on the tips of additional straps in some cases. The belt was fastened with a secondary, inner strap; the main strap adorned with fittings was threaded in front of it and its tip was slipped through the belt on the left-hand side, where it hung down.

It was possible to hang several personal belongings from the belt, for example a bag containing a tinder set – firesteel, flint and tinder – an iron knife, weapons and perhaps a bowl or cup.

FOOTWEAR

Although the footwear of our conquering ancestors disintegrated long ago because of the climate of the Carpathian Basin, there are quite a few facts known about it, since wealthier individuals adorned even their shoes with metal fittings. These fittings not only show the tastes of our ancestors but also the styles of the boots, for example, whose toecaps were probably round and did not curl up. They were most likely knee high, and the Hungarian round-bottomed stirrups suggest that the soles of the footwear of our ancestors must have been relatively soft. Both men and women used this kind of footwear, which was necessary for riding. Ethnographic and historical examples make it possible to suppose that felt insoles or stockings were also used in the boots. In addition, felt boots were worn on top of the leather ones in winter – Ibn Fadlán, a 10th century traveller, even wrote about this. This style had a special name, “botos”, in the traditional parlance of the Great Hungarian Plain.

Common people – craftsmen, fishermen or farmers – did not need boots. Most likely they wore shoes or moccasin-like footwear, similarly to people in other regions.





CONQUERING HUNGARIAN MOUNTED ARCHER, 9TH-10TH CENTURIES

The most typical weapon of mediaeval mounted nomads – including the conquering Hungarians – was the composite bow. Thus, both contemporaries and succeeding generations have thought of the eastern warrior as a mounted archer whose tactics were strange and frightening. The nomadic warriors achieved the masterful use of the bow as well as the perfect harmony between horse and horseman through constant practice throughout their life, supplemented by their people's experience gained over generations.

In this picture a warrior can be seen, whose horse is wearing a breast collar with silver coins, silver plates are sewn on its bridle and its saddle is adorned with woodcarvings. The warrior is wearing a kaftan made of Byzantine silk, a sabre is hanging on his belt and his archery equipment is complete.

The metal and bone objects depicted in the drawing are archaeological finds from Hungary. The clothes were made based on pictures from a Byzantine manuscript and remains of eastern clothing from the early mediaeval age.

LANCE BATTLE BETWEEN MOUNTED NOMADS, 8TH CENTURY

Along with several other kinds of weapons, eastern mounted warriors also used short spears in battle, which they used to fight in a kind of mounted 'lance duel'. In addition to the finds, this drawing was made based on frescos from Central Asia, pictographs of Altaic nomads, Turkish grave sculptures and the depiction of warriors on Iranian silver platters.



HUNGARIAN ARMoured MOUNTED WARRIOR AND MOUNTED ARCHER, 12TH CENTURY

After the foundation of the Hungarian state, western heavy cavalry equipped as knights appeared in the Hungarian army as well. In 12th century Europe, only knights were considered professional soldiers, and the armoured heavy cavalry was regarded as the strongest division. A knight was trained starting from childhood and had to practice regularly. Knights fighting with a heavy lance and double-edged sword were almost unstoppable in close combat; it was very difficult to defeat them due to their strong (though rather expensive) armour and large shields.

However, the major part of army in the Árpád period consisted of mounted soldiers with lighter weapons, who still continued to use the bow as their main weapon for a long time. Expense was also an important issue: according to the laws of King Coloman I, the cost of the equipment for two armoured soldiers was equal to that of five unarmoured ones. This drawing is based on pictures from 12th century manuscripts and frescos.

BYZANTINE INFANTRYMAN, 11TH-12TH CENTURIES

In this period in southeastern Europe the army of the Byzantine Empire had the best infantry. Their heavy infantry led by well-equipped and well-trained officers turned back many attacks, and in battles they were the central, most reliable part of the army. The equipment seen in this picture was drawn based on 11th-12th century frescos and reliefs depicting Byzantine warrior saints.