

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE AND TURKIC NATIONS

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Abstract. *This article explores the deep historical, linguistic, and genetic connections between the Hungarian (Magyar) people and various Turkic nations. It highlights their interactions from the 6th to 9th centuries with Turkic confederations such as the Khazars, Bulgars, and Pechenegs, focusing on cultural exchange, shared nomadic traditions, and mutual influence in language and governance. The study also examines Turkic linguistic traces in Hungarian and recent genetic evidence confirming ancient Central Asian ancestry. The article concludes that the Hungarians' identity was shaped by centuries of cultural fusion, making them a bridge between East and West.*

Keywords: *Hungarians, Magyars, Turkic nations, Khazars, linguistic influence, genetic heritage, steppe culture, cultural interaction.*

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada mojar xalqi va turkiy xalqlar o'rtasidagi chuqur tarixiy, tilshunoslik hamda genetik aloqalar yoritilgan. Unda VI–IX asrlarda mojarlarning xazarlar, bolgarlar va pecheneglar kabi turkiy ittifoqlar bilan o'zaro munosabatlari, madaniy almashinuv, ko'chmanchi an'analar va boshqaruv tizimidagi o'xshashliklar tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, vengr tilidagi turkiy so'zlarning kirib kelishi va genetik tadqiqotlar natijasida aniqlangan qadimiy Markaziy Osiyo ildizlari ham ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqola yakunida vengr xalqining shakllanishi Sharq va G'arb madaniyatlarining sintezi sifatida baholanadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Vengrlar, mojarlar, turkiy xalqlar, xazarlar, lingvistik ta'sir, genetik meros, dasht madaniyati, madaniy aloqalar.*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматриваются глубокие исторические, лингвистические и генетические связи между венгерским (мадьярским) народом и тюркскими народами. Особое внимание уделяется контактам мадьяр с Хазарами, Булгарами и Печенегами в VI–IX веках, культурному обмену, общим кочевым традициям и взаимному влиянию в языке и управлении. Также анализируются тюркские заимствования в венгерском языке и результаты современных генетических исследований, подтверждающих центральноазиатские корни мадьяр. В заключение подчеркивается, что венгры стали мостом между Востоком и Западом благодаря культурному синтезу.*

Ключевые слова: *венгры, мадьяры, тюркские народы, хазары, языковое влияние, генетическое наследие, степная культура, культурное взаимодействие.*

Introduction. The history of the Hungarian people, known as the Magyars, is deeply rooted in the vast and diverse landscape of the Eurasian steppe, a region that for millennia served as a crossroads of civilizations, languages, and nomadic cultures. From the Ural Mountains to the Carpathian Basin, waves of migrations and cultural exchanges shaped the destiny of numerous peoples—including the Magyars—whose path toward nationhood was marked by centuries of contact and coexistence with various ethnic groups. Although the Hungarian language is part of the Uralic language family, distinct from the Indo-European and Turkic linguistic groups surrounding it, the cultural and historical development of the Magyars cannot be understood without recognizing their deep interactions with Turkic tribes. These interactions, which occurred during the Magyars' long migration westward between the 6th and 9th centuries, left an enduring

legacy visible in many aspects of Hungarian civilization. The Magyars borrowed not only words but also customs, political structures, and elements of material culture from the Turkic peoples they encountered across the steppe.

Literature analysis. The Turkic influence reached far beyond simple cultural borrowing—it shaped the Magyars' worldview, social organization, and even their sense of identity as a steppe nation. The dual leadership system, certain military traditions, and aspects of dress and craftsmanship all show traces of this shared heritage. When the Magyars finally settled in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century, they carried with them a rich mosaic of influences that reflected both their Uralic roots and their long-standing connection with Turkic-speaking neighbors. Today, this ancient relationship between Hungarians and Turkic nations continues to attract the attention of historians, linguists, and cultural scholars. It offers valuable insights into how migration, contact, and adaptation can shape a people's identity across centuries. In the modern world, this shared past also serves as a foundation for renewed diplomatic and cultural cooperation between Hungary and the Turkic states of Central Asia and Anatolia [4]. This article explores the multifaceted relationship between the Hungarian and Turkic peoples—from ancient migrations and linguistic exchanges to modern expressions of kinship and friendship that continue to link these nations across time and geography.

Research methodology. This study uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical, linguistic, archaeological, and genetic methods. Historical sources and scholarly literature are analyzed to trace Magyar-Turkic interactions. A comparative linguistic method identifies Turkic loanwords in Hungarian. Archaeological evidence is used to examine similarities in material culture, while genetic studies provide data on ancestral connections. Overall, a comparative and integrative framework is applied to understand these relationships.

Results and discussion. The early history of the **Magyars**, or ancient Hungarians, begins in the region surrounding the **Ural Mountains**, an area often described as the meeting point between **Europe and Siberia**. Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that the Magyars were originally part of the **Uralic peoples**, whose early homeland lay near the forest-steppe zones of the **Volga-Kama region**. From there, the ancestors of the Hungarians gradually began to move westward, driven by climatic changes, population pressures, and the search for better pastures and trade opportunities.

Linguistically, the **Hungarian language** (Magyar) belongs to the **Finno-Ugric branch** of the **Uralic language family**, making it a distant relative of **Finnish** and **Estonian**. This linguistic affiliation highlights the Magyars' early connection with northern Eurasian peoples, who were primarily hunters, fishers, and semi-nomadic herders. However, as the Magyars moved south and west across the vast **Eurasian steppe**, they encountered and interacted with numerous **Turkic tribes** whose influence profoundly transformed their language, economy, and social structure. Over several centuries—

roughly between the **6th and 9th centuries CE**—the Magyars lived in close proximity to Turkic groups such as the **Khazars, Bulgars, Pechenegs, and Kipchaks**. [6] This prolonged coexistence in the steppe environment led to extensive **cultural exchange and intermarriage**, blending Uralic and Turkic traditions into a unique synthesis. The Magyars adopted **new political institutions** modeled after Turkic systems, incorporated **Turkic vocabulary** into their language, and refined their skills in **horse breeding, archery, and pastoralism**, all of which became defining features of early Hungarian culture.

By the time the Magyars reached the **Carpathian Basin** around **895 CE**, they had already evolved from a northern Uralic tribe into a **powerful steppe confederation**, well adapted to nomadic warfare and diplomacy. Their society reflected the dual legacy of their **Uralic origins** and their **Turkic interactions**, combining elements of both worlds into a distinct national identity. This complex cultural heritage would continue to shape Hungary's historical development and its enduring ties to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Between the 6th and 9th centuries, the Magyars maintained close and continuous contact with a number of Turkic confederations, including the Bulgars, Khazars, and Pechenegs.[1] These centuries of coexistence on the Eurasian steppe were crucial in shaping the political, linguistic, and cultural character of the early Hungarian people. The interactions were not limited to trade or warfare; they also involved deep social and institutional exchanges that would leave a lasting imprint on Magyar society.

Among all Turkic groups, the Khazars had perhaps the most significant influence on the Magyars. The Khazar Khaganate, a vast and powerful Turkic empire centered north of the Caspian and Black Seas, ruled over numerous steppe tribes during the 7th–9th centuries. Historical records and archaeological evidence suggest that the Magyars were once vassals or allies of the Khazars, living under their political and military dominance for a considerable period. During this time, the Magyars adopted several aspects of Khazar governance and social organization, including the dual leadership system. This structure consisted of two principal rulers: the kende (a sacred or symbolic ruler) and the gyula (a military commander), both terms of Turkic linguistic origin. Such a system reflected the balance between spiritual authority and military power typical of steppe confederations and highlights the extent to which the Magyars had assimilated Turkic political traditions. Moreover, the Khazar period exposed the Magyars to broader networks of trade, religion, and diplomacy, connecting them to the Byzantine Empire, the Arab Caliphate, and other Eurasian powers.

Another important episode in Magyar-Turkic relations was the alliance with the Kabars, a Turkic group that had rebelled against Khazar authority. After their revolt, the Kabars sought refuge among the Magyars and were incorporated into the Magyar tribal federation. This alliance strengthened the Magyars both militarily and demographically, as the Kabars brought with them valuable experience in steppe warfare, governance, and

trade. The integration of the Kabars into Magyar society also reinforced Turkic cultural influences. Some scholars suggest that the Kabars played a key role in the Magyars' later westward migration toward the Carpathian Basin, providing leadership and strategic expertise during this crucial phase of expansion. Traces of Turkic clan names and traditions within the early Hungarian tribal structure further indicate the depth of this integration. Beyond formal alliances and political ties, the Magyars and Turkic peoples shared a common steppe culture, characterized by nomadism, horsemanship, archery, and animal husbandry. Both peoples relied heavily on the horse for transportation, warfare, and status, and their economies centered around the management of large herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. These shared ways of life created a profound cultural symbiosis that can still be observed in later Hungarian traditions, from equestrian practices to decorative art and folklore motifs. The Magyars' time among Turkic tribes also helped shape their military tactics, particularly the use of mounted archery and mobile warfare, which became decisive factors during their successful conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Thus, the centuries-long relationship between the Magyars and the Turkic nations was not merely one of coexistence—it was a dynamic process of cultural fusion and mutual adaptation, through which the early Hungarians forged a new and enduring identity on the threshold of Europe.

Linguistic and Cultural Influence. Although the Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic language family and is therefore linguistically unrelated to Turkic languages, it nevertheless bears a strong and lasting imprint of Turkic contact. This influence is primarily visible in its lexicon, but extends beyond words into the spheres of material culture, social customs, art, music, and folklore. The centuries of coexistence between the Magyars and various Turkic-speaking peoples across the Eurasian steppe produced a deep layer of cultural integration that profoundly shaped early Hungarian civilization.

According to linguistic research, approximately 300–400 Turkic loanwords entered the Hungarian language during the period of close contact between the 6th and 9th centuries CE. These borrowings are not superficial but cover essential areas of life, revealing how deeply intertwined the two peoples became. The loanwords reflect the Magyars' adoption of nomadic, pastoral, and military terms from their Turkic neighbors—vocabulary related to animal husbandry, tools, weapons, trade, governance, and family life [4].

Some of the most prominent examples include:

- tenger (sea) from Turkic tengiz,
- árpa (barley) from Turkic arpa,
- bors (pepper) from Turkic bors,
- szablya (sabre) possibly from Turkic selebe,
- úr (lord) from Turkic ogur or ur, meaning “man of rank,”

- asszony (lady or woman) from Turkic aszon,
- bika (bull) from Turkic buka.

The fact that such fundamental words entered Hungarian suggests that Turkic languages served as a lingua franca of the steppe, influencing not only the Magyars' vocabulary but also their conceptual understanding of social hierarchy, warfare, and trade. Moreover, the phonological and morphological features of some borrowed words demonstrate a long period of bilingualism and mutual adaptation, rather than brief or incidental contact. Beyond linguistic influence, the Magyars adopted many elements of Turkic steppe culture, which became integral to their identity. This included forms of dress, patterns of ornamentation, food preparation techniques, and weapon designs. Archaeological findings in Hungary—such as horse harnesses, sabres, and belt ornaments—closely resemble those found in Turkic sites from the same era, confirming the exchange of both material and symbolic culture. The Magyars also shared the nomadic worldview of the Turkic peoples: reverence for nature, the sky, and ancestral spirits, as well as a belief in destiny and heroic valor. Although the Magyars later converted to Christianity in the 11th century, some echoes of ancient steppe spiritual traditions—such as totemic symbols, shamanistic motifs, and respect for horse and eagle imagery—persisted in their folklore and art [7].

Cultural parallels can also be observed in music, poetry, and oral storytelling. Both Hungarian and Turkic peoples preserved their history and moral values through epic songs and heroic tales, often performed with simple string instruments. The rhythm, structure, and themes of these oral traditions—centered around bravery, freedom, and kinship—show striking similarities. The horse culture, central to both societies, also inspired songs, legends, and visual motifs that celebrate speed, strength, and loyalty. In the realm of art and craftsmanship, Turkic influences were especially visible in decorative metalwork, embroidery, and leather artistry. The Magyars' intricate belt decorations and horse gear, as found in archaeological sites from the conquest period, exhibit motifs such as geometric patterns, animal figures, and stylized floral designs—common features in Turkic art. These artistic exchanges underscore the mutual aesthetic appreciation and symbolic vocabulary shared by the steppe peoples [3].

By the time the Magyars entered the Carpathian Basin, their culture represented a unique synthesis of Uralic and Turkic elements. Their language retained its Uralic grammar, but its vocabulary and cultural expressions were enriched by centuries of Turkic contact. The result was a hybrid civilization, firmly rooted in the traditions of the Eurasian steppe yet distinct in its identity. This blending of influences not only helped the Magyars adapt to new environments and political realities but also gave them the cultural flexibility necessary to establish a lasting state in Central Europe. The Turkic legacy within Hungarian culture remains a vital reminder of the Magyars' long journey across the steppe—a journey of adaptation, exchange, and creative transformation.

Modern genetic and anthropological research has provided valuable insight into the complex origins of the Hungarian people and their deep-rooted connections to the Turkic and Central Asian world. While contemporary Hungarians are genetically closer to other European populations—owing to over a millennium of settlement and intermarriage within Central Europe—scientific studies of ancient Magyar remains have revealed traces of Central Asian, Uralic, and Turkic ancestry, confirming the historical narratives of cultural and biological blending during their migration across the Eurasian steppe.

Genomic analyses conducted on remains from 10th-century Magyar burial sites—particularly those excavated in the Carpathian Basin—indicate that the early conquering Magyars possessed a genetically mixed heritage. Their DNA contains a combination of European, Siberian, and Central Asian components, corresponding closely to populations historically associated with the Uralic and Turkic linguistic spheres. Researchers have identified genetic markers shared with modern Turkic-speaking peoples, such as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Kazakhs, as well as with Uralic groups like the Mansi and Khanty of Western Siberia. This suggests that before their westward migration, the Magyars lived for centuries in regions where Uralic and Turkic tribes coexisted and intermingled, forming a population of mixed ancestry. These findings support the view that the Magyars were not ethnically homogeneous, but rather a confederation of tribes representing a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. As they moved westward, they absorbed not only Turkic allies such as the Kabars but also other steppe groups, blending genetic lineages and cultural traits. Consequently, by the time they reached the Carpathian Basin around 895 CE, the Magyars had already developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual polity with strong steppe characteristics. Anthropological examinations of Magyar skeletal remains provide further confirmation of this mixed heritage. Craniological studies have shown that early Magyar populations displayed a range of morphological types, from Europoid to Mongoloid features, reflecting both Western Eurasian and Eastern steppe ancestry. Burial customs also reveal influences from Turkic nomadic traditions: horse burials, weapon offerings, and belt ornaments typical of Turkic steppe aristocracy have been found in Magyar cemeteries across the Carpathian Basin.

Such archaeological parallels demonstrate that the Magyars shared not only genetic traits but also cultural and social practices with their Turkic contemporaries. The prevalence of steppe-style weaponry, horse equipment, and ornamental motifs points to a shared elite culture that transcended linguistic and ethnic boundaries in the early medieval steppe world. Over the centuries following their settlement in the Carpathian Basin, the genetic profile of the Hungarian population gradually shifted toward a European composition, as the Magyars intermarried with local Slavic, Germanic, and Romance-speaking peoples. Nonetheless, genetic and cultural “echoes” of their Turkic and Central Asian heritage remain detectable. Certain physical anthropological traits, place names, and traditional practices preserve the memory of their eastern origins. More importantly, this

mixed ancestry symbolizes the adaptive and integrative nature of the Magyar people. Their ability to synthesize diverse genetic and cultural elements—Uralic, Turkic, and European—enabled them to establish a strong and enduring nation at the crossroads of East and West. Thus, the study of Magyar genetics not only illuminates their biological origins but also highlights the broader historical process of cultural fusion and transformation that defines the Hungarian identity [5].

Conclusion. The history of the Hungarian people is a story of movement, adaptation, and synthesis. From their Uralic roots to their encounters with Turkic tribes, the Magyars absorbed and reinterpreted diverse cultural and linguistic elements to form a civilization uniquely situated between East and West. Their interactions with Turkic peoples—whether through alliance, coexistence, or shared nomadic traditions—played a decisive role in shaping the political and cultural foundations of early Hungary.

Modern genetics, archaeology, and historical linguistics continue to confirm what ancient chronicles and oral traditions long suggested: that the Hungarian identity is deeply interwoven with that of the Turkic world. Today, this connection transcends the boundaries of scholarship and has evolved into a renewed sense of kinship and cooperation among nations that share the vast historical legacy of the steppe. The Magyars, once wanderers between the Urals and the Carpathians, remain bridge-builders between Europe and Asia—a living testament to the enduring power of cultural fusion and human connectivity across continents and centuries.

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