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West Old Turkic and the formation of the Hungarian tribal confederation

István Zimonyi

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The new monograph, *West Old Turkic*, by Árpád Berta and András Róna-Tas discussing the Old Turkic loanwords in Hungarian is of crucial importance for early Hungarian history, as the migration of the Hungarian tribal confederacy from the Ural to the Carpathian Basin has been reconstructed on the basis of the results of these language contacts. The authors prefer the concept that the early Hungarians remained on the steppe for a relatively long period. They moved to the territory between the Kuban and Don at the end of the 6th century, and then migrated west of the Dnieper shortly after the 670s.

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0. Introduction

The magnum opus, West Old Turkic. *Turkic Loanwords in Hungarian*, by my professor András Róna-Tas and my late friend and colleague Árpád Berta, is the crown jewel of a long scientific career.¹ As a birthday greeting to my eighty-year-old professor, I will comment on the monograph from a historical point of view.

The formation and early history of the Hungarians can be investigated by integrating the results of linguistic, archaeological and historical inquiry. The first sources about the Hungarians can be dated to the second half of the 9th century. The historical and geographical framework of the formation of the Hungarian tribal confederation can be reconstructed on the basis of the history of Eastern Europe in the 5th–8th centuries and the consequences of the study of Old Turkic loanwords in Hungarian.²

1 A. Róna-Tas & Á. Berta 2011. *West Old Turkic. Turkic Loanwords in Hungarian*. [Turcologica 84.] Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden.

2 Recent literature on early Hungarian history: I. Fodor 1982. *In Search of a New Homeland*. Budapest; Gy. Kristó 1996. *Hungarian History in the Ninth Century*. Szeged; A. Róna-Tas 1999. *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*. CEU Press, Budapest; I. Zimonyi 2007–2008. Vom Ural ins Karpaten-Becken. Die Grundzüge der ungarischen Frühgeschichte, *Chronica* 7–8, 261–270.

The study of Turkic loanwords in Hungarian began in the second half of the 19th century, and its founder was Ármin Vámbéry. The first synthesis of the field was the monograph by Zoltán Gombocz.³ The next phase was represented by Gyula Németh, whose study focused on the Turkic tribal and proper names and titles.⁴ The historical-etymological dictionary of the Hungarian language was published between 1967 and 1984 in four volumes in Hungarian, and the Turkic loanwords were compiled by Zsuzsanna Kakuk under the supervision of Lajos Ligeti.⁵ Its revised edition, in German, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen*, appeared in three volumes between 1992 and 1995.⁶ The consultant for the pre-Ottoman Turkic loanwords was András Róna-Tas. Directly preceding this work was the book by Lajos Ligeti entitled *Turkic Connections of the Hungarian Language Prior to the Conquest*, published in Hungarian in 1986 in the age of the Árpád dynasty. Ligeti's book is not an etymological dictionary; it concentrates on linguistic problems of the Hungarian-Turkic contacts and their cultural and historical implications.⁷

The monograph by András Róna-Tas, Árpád Berta and the team at the Department of Altaistics contains 419 Turkic loanwords in Hungarian. In addition 70 etymologies are classified as improbable, and there are more than 70 items of Middle Iranian copies. The latter two sections are in the addenda. Gombocz accepted 223 Turkic etymologies. The historical-etymological dictionary included 233 early Turkic copies. Ligeti mentioned altogether 286 Turkic loanwords.

The pre-Ottoman Turkic copies in Hungarian were divided into two layers: a pre-conquest layer, before 895, and a middle layer, entitled Pecheneg-Cuman or sometimes Cuman loanwords. The two layers can be separated basically from a chronological point of view, but at the same time the source language of the earlier layer has been regarded as Bulghar Turkic or Chuvash-type Turkic, and the later layer was copied from common Turkic. The Turkic loanwords of the middle layer number 35 words, so 384 items belong to the early layer.

Ligeti revised the Chuvash criteria of Gombocz, and he defined the following characteristic features as Chuvash peculiarities:

Rhotacism (*borjú* 'calf', *iker* 'twin', *ökör* 'ox', *sár* 'mud, marsh', *gyűrű* 'ring', *szűr-* 'to strain, to filter', *térd* 'knee');

3 Z. Gombocz 1912. *Die bulgarisch-türkischen Lehnwörter in der ungarischen Sprache*. Helsingfors.

4 Gy. Németh 1930. *A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása*. Budapest 1930; second revised edition by Á. Berta 1991.

5 L. Benkő (ed.) 1967, 1970, 1976, 1984. *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára*. I–IV. Budapest.

6 L. Benkő (ed.) 1993, 1995, 1997. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen* I–III. Budapest.

7 L. Ligeti 1986. *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai a honfoglalás előtt és az Árpád-korban*. Budapest.

Lambdacism (*kölyök* ‘young of an animal, kid, puppy, lad’, *dél* ‘noon, south’, *dől* ‘to lean, topple over, stream down’);

Initial *š-* (*si* > *ši*) (*söpör* ‘to sweep, to broom’, *serke* ‘a nit’, *serte* ‘bristle’, *sőreg* ‘sterlet, sturgeon’, *sár* ‘mud, marsh’, *sárga* ‘yellow’, *sárkány* ‘dragon’, *kéneső* ‘mercury’);

OT *y-* ~ Hungarian *gy-*, *s-*, *sz-*, *i-*, *ny-*, (*gyúr* ‘to knead, pug’, *gyümölcs* ‘fruit’, *gyalom* ‘drag-net, a kind of fishing net’, *gyárt-* ‘to produce, build, fabricate’, *gyertya* ‘candle’, *gyom* ‘weed’, *gyűrű* ‘ring’, *disznó* ‘pig’, *gyékény* ‘bulrush, matting made of bulrushes’, *gyopár* ‘cudweed’, *dió* ‘nut; walnut’, *gyapjú* ‘wool’, *gyarló* ‘poor, frail, feeble’, *gyász* ‘mourning, bereavement’, *gyeplő* ‘rein’, *gyomor* ‘stomach’, *gyöngy* ‘pearl’, *gyűlik-* ‘to assemble, gather’, *gyűszű* ‘thimble’, *sarló* ‘sickle’, *süveg* ‘cap’; *szőlő* ‘grape, wine grape’, *szél* ‘wind’, *szücs* ‘furrier’, *ír-* ‘to write’, *író* ‘buttermilk’);

OT *q-* ~ Hungarian *h-* (*homok* ‘sand’, *harang* ‘bell’, *hajó* ‘boat, ship’);

OT *-d-* ~ Hungarian *-d-*, *-z-* (*idő* ‘time, weather’, *ködmön* ‘frock, sheepskin waistcoat’, *egy* ‘holy’, *szőlő* ‘grape, wine grape’, *kender* ‘hemp’, *köldök* ‘the navel’, *ildom* ‘proper behaviour’, *érdem* ‘merit’, *búza* ‘wheat’, *túzok* ‘bustard’);

OT *-Cg(g)-* and *Ck(q)-* ~ Hung. *-CØ-* (*Bular*, *gyapot* ‘cotton’, *ártány* ‘barrow’, *bér* ‘wage, rent’, *egy* ‘holy’, *tiló* ‘hemp breaker, swingle, scutch’);

OT *-ŋ* and *-n* ~ Hungarian *-m* (*gyom* ‘weed’, *szám* ‘number’);

OT long vowels in first syllable (*sár* ‘yellow’, *sárkány* ‘dragon’, *kéneső* ‘mercury’); Prosthetic *v-* and *y-* (*vályú* ‘trough, tray’, *vék* ‘a hole in the ice (for fishing)’, *Jenő*, *Jelek*);

OT first syllable *a* ~ Hungarian *ī* (*dió* ‘nut; walnut’, *ír-* ‘to write’, *író* ‘buttermilk’, *tiló* ‘hemp breaker, swingle, scutch’, *tinó* ‘steer, young bullock, ox’, *tyúk* ‘hen’, *tanú* ‘witness’, *dara* ‘grist, groats, soft hail’);

Chuvash lexical peculiarity (*sarló* ‘sickle’, *kölcsön* ‘loan’, *disznó* ‘pig’, *gyertya* ‘candle’, *kicsiny* ‘small, little’, *gyermek* ‘child’, *süllő* ‘pike perch, zander’, *eke* ‘plough’, *üröm* ‘wormwood; bitterness’).⁸

Ligeti performed some statistical calculations. Géza Bárczi’s Hungarian etymological dictionary included 35 words with Chuvash criteria and 167 words from Turkic languages prior to the Hungarian conquest (895).⁹ The historical-etymological dictionary of the Hungarian language (TESz) contains 42 copies from a Chuvash-type Turkic and 191 from Old Turkic. I have made similar calculations concerning Ligeti’s monograph and ‘West Old Turkic’ using Ligeti’s criteria. Ligeti has 87 words of Chuvash character and 199 Old Turkic ones.¹⁰ The monograph by Róna-Tas and Berta identifies 116 Chuvash-type and 268 Old Turkic copies. In all these cases, the term Old Turkic means Turkic in general without any criteria. If a Turkic loanword in Hungarian has a Common Turkic criterion, it belongs to the

8 L. Ligeti op.cit., 12–48.

9 G. Bárczi 1958. *A magyar szókincs eredete*. Budapest.

10 L. Ligeti op.cit., 35–36

middle layer, i.e. Pecheneg, Cuman loanwords. Gyula Németh enumerates 34 copies from the middle layers,¹¹ and Róna-Tas and Berta mentioned 35 Cuman loanwords in Hungarian.

| | Old Chuvash | Old Turkic | All |
|------------------|-------------|------------|-----|
| Bárczi | 35 | 167 | 202 |
| TESz | 42 | 191 | 233 |
| Ligeti | 87 | 199 | 286 |
| Róna-Tas - Berta | 116 | 268 | 384 |

Gombocz, Németh and Bárczi represented the view that the words with Common Turkic criteria belong to the middle layer, Pecheneg-Cuman copies. Ligeti and Róna-Tas share that opinion: the words with Common Turkic characteristics began to be copied prior to the conquest of the Carpathian Basin (895), but most of them reached the Hungarian language in the 11th and 13th-14th centuries when Pecheneg and Cuman groups settled down in the territory of the Hungarian kingdom.

As for the Turkic proper names in Hungarian, Gombocz collected 48 names in the age of the Árpád dynasty, and he emphasized that these names were copied from Common Turkic languages, mainly Pecheneg and Cuman.¹² Gyula Németh revised the proper names, and he identified 6 names from Chuvash-type languages (*Gyula, Géza, Karoldu, Saroldu, Bő, Ölbő*).¹³ Ligeti reviewed 22 names and found 15 were copied from Chuvash-type languages (*Gyula, Géza, Gyarmat, Sarolta, Karoldu, Bő, Ölbő, Jenő, Jelech, Üllő, Kündü, Karcha*; 3 Black Hungarian = Kabar ~ Khazar: *Tárkány, Ajtony, Küküllő*) seven from Common Turkic languages (*Álmos, Inak, Ináncs, Tas, Jutocsa, Ákos, Tarján*).¹⁴ It can be concluded that nearly half of the proper names mentioned by Gombocz are really from Pecheneg and Cuman proper names attested in the sources or connected with geographical considerations. But we have names from the 9th-10th centuries that reflect Chuvash-type languages and Common Turkic, too. So the concept which determined the research—i.e. if one third of the corpus of the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian prior to the conquest reflects Chuvash-type languages and two thirds has no criteria, but there is no trace of a Common Turkic character, then the earliest layer of Turkic copies were copied from Chuvash-type Turkic—is hardly acceptable. The outdated concept prescribed

11 Gy. Németh 1921. Török jövevényszavaink középső rétege: *Magyar Nyelv* 17, 22–26.

12 Z. Gombocz 1915. *Árpádkori török személyneveink*. Budapest.

13 L. Ligeti 1979. *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai és ami körülöttük van*. Vol. II. Budapest. 425.

14 L. Ligeti 1979. *A magyar nyelv török kapcsolatai és ami körülöttük van*. Vol. II. Budapest. 407–469.

that the words with Common Turkic criteria belong to the middle layer, Pecheneg-Cuman, as it is supposed that they spoke a Common Turkic language.

The case of rhotacism is atypical in this respect. Róna-Tas and Berta mentioned the following Hungarian copies where Chuvash *r* reflects in the places of Common Turkic *z*: *borjú* ‘calf’, *görény* ‘polecat’, *gyűrű* ‘ring’, *iker* ‘twin’, *karó* ‘stake, pale, stick’, *koporsó* ‘coffin’, *ökör* ‘ox’, *sár* ‘mud, marsh’, *sért* ‘to injure, to hurt’, *sőreg* ‘sterlet, sturgeon’, *szár* ‘light-coloured, yellowish, pale, (partly) bald’, *szűr* ‘to strain, to filter’, *tar* ‘bald’, *tarka* ‘piebald, pied’, *tenger* ‘sea’, *térd* ‘knee’, *tűr* ‘to endure, suffer, bear, stand’ (17). But they add: “Turkic words with /z/ are *boza*, *buzogány*, *kalauz*, *káliz*, *koboz*, *kuvasz* (< *kuwaz*), *özön*, *szűz* and *tőzeg*,¹⁵ almost all with clear Cum criteria. *Káliz* is earlier, first attested in 1111, most probably fr the period after the Conquest, and is of ultimately non-T origin (< *Kvaliz* ← *Kvarizm*). It copied its T lws after the /r/ appeared in some WOT lgs in front of EOT /z/.”¹⁶ In reality there are two words that reflect later Kipchak criteria: *buzogány* ‘club, mace, reed-mace’ and *koboz* ‘lute, cittern’. So we have 7 words with *z* which cannot be exclusively connected with later Kipchak or Oghuz languages.

András Róna-Tas performed another statistical calculation. There are 384 West Old Turkic words in Hungarian: 246 words exist both in Hungarian and in Chuvash, 115 words are absent in Chuvash, and 23 words are copied from Tatar or Bashkir in Chuvash, but from West Old Turkic in Hungarian. This means that more than one third of the West Old Turkic copies (138) in Hungarian have no parallel in Chuvash. It corroborates the existence of more languages including other Chuvash-type Turkic and Common Turkic ones.

| WOT | 384 | Chuv. 116 | Old Turkic 268 | Cuman 35 | 419 |
|------------------------------|-----|-----------|----------------|----------|-----|
| Hungarian Tat/Bask → Chuvash | 23 | 7 | 16 | | |
| Hungarian | 115 | 26 | 89 | 35 | |
| Hungarian Chuvash | 246 | 83 | 163 | | |

The well-known fact must be taken into consideration that there were no homogeneous empires or tribal confederations. In 1996 Gerhard Doerfer gave a lecture at the PIAC at Szeged where he called attention to the natural bilingualism (Mongol and Turkic) of the Naiman and Merkid tribes in the 13th century.¹⁷ Thus it can be sup-

15 *Boza* ‘a kind of beer, alcoholic beverage’, *buzogány* ‘club, mace, reed-mace’, *kalauz* ‘guide, pilot; conductor, ticket inspector’, *káliz*, *koboz* ‘lute, cittern’, *kuvasz* (< *kuwaz*) ‘a kind of dog, a Hungarian breed of sheepdog’, *özön* ‘flood, deluge, stream’, *szűz* ‘virgin, pure’ and *tőzeg* ‘peat, turf, dried dung’.

16 Berta & Róna-Tas op.cit., 1114.

17 G. Doerfer 1997. Čilger’s Self-Criticism and the Problem of Ethnic Cleansing. In: Á. Berta (ed.) *Historical and linguistic interaction between Inner-Asia and Europe*.

posed that Chuvash-type Turkic languages could have been dominant in the territory of the Eastern European steppe, but Common Turkic Oguz and Kipchak languages must have been spoken in the region. As for the bilingualism, Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentioned about the Hungarians: “And so to these Turks (Hungarians) they taught also the tongue of the Chazars, and to this day they have this same language, but they have also the other tongue of the Turks.”¹⁸

Even the terminology of the copied language(s) also has its own history. Ashmarin used the term Bulghar Turkic first, and Gombocz adopted it. The Chuvash language is the descendent of Volga Bulgharic. As Volga Bulgharic is regarded as the dominant language of the Volga Bulgars and they migrated to the Volga region from Magna Bulgaria, north of the Black Sea similarly to the Danube Bulgars who moved to the Balkans, Gombocz worked out a historical fiction: all people under the denomination Bulghar spoke Bulghar Turkic. As for the Danube Bulgars, there is not a single text, but 20 words from inscriptions and loanwords, and names and words from the late list of Bulghar princes. Ligeti expressed his doubts about the reconstruction of the Danube Bulghar language. Volga Bulgharic is reconstructed from the inscriptions of the Volga region from the 13th to 14th centuries. There is no contemporary text from the time of the Volga Bulghar empire, which flourished from the 10th century until the Mongol invasion in 1236. The language of the Bulgars in Eastern Europe between the 5th and 7th centuries is not known. The crucial point of the Bulghar Turkic theory is a misleading concept: an ethnonym cannot determine the language of the people it designates.¹⁹

Gyula Németh extended this construction to those Turkic peoples whose names contained the term Ogur, such as Ogur, Saragur, Onogur, Kutrigur and Utigur, since its Common Turkic counterpart is Oguz.²⁰ Based on the *r* ~ *z* opposition, Peter Golden used the term Oguric to replace Bulghar Turkic. It poses the same difficulty; the languages of these tribes and tribal confederation are unknown.

Ligeti preferred the linguistic arguments and renewed the term Chuvash-type Turkic, which is correct and based on linguistic argumentation.

Róna-Tas and Berta introduced the term West Old Turkic for the languages spoken in the Eastern European steppe between the 5th and 12th centuries. Old Turkic is a term used practically for East Old Turkic with its inscriptions and texts in differ-

Proceedings of the 39th Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) Szeged, Hungary: June 16-21, 1996. Szeged. 81–88.

- 18 Constantine Porphyrogenitus 1967. *De Administrando Imperio*. Vol. I. Greek text by Gy. Moravcsik, English translation by R. J. H. Jenkins. Washington. 175.
- 19 Gy. Németh 1930. *A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása*. Budapest. 39–40; L. Ligeti op.cit., 9–12; P. B. Golden 1992. *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*. Wiesbaden. 95–97; A. Róna-Tas op.cit., 112–114.
- 20 Gy. Németh 1922. On ogur, hét magyar, Dentümogyer. *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* I. (1921), 148–155.

ent scripts. West Old Turkic has no deciphered inscriptions or texts; it must be reconstructed from glosses of non-Turkic sources and loanwords in neighbouring languages among which the Hungarian plays a leading role. If West Old Turkic means Turkic languages and dialects, supposedly dominated by Chuvash-type languages and dialects in the 5th to 10th centuries, but not excluding the presence of non-Chuvash-type dialects and languages, it is a perfect term. The situation must have changed when new Turkic-speaking tribes reached Eastern Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries.²¹

As for early Hungarian history, the crucial problem has been the definition of the language of the Khazars. Gombocz identified the Khazar language on the basis of the *Khazar* ethnonym and the city name *Sarigšīn* as Common Turkic. Németh accepted it and brought new arguments. Gombocz developed his first concept of Hungarian prehistory accordingly: the Bulghar-Turkic loanwords in Hungarian were copied from the Volga Bulgars between 600 and 800. The first date corresponded to the arrival of the Volga Bulgars in the Volga-Kama region, whereas the second is the time of the southern migration of the Hungarians. Later Gombocz changed his view due to Zichy's biogeographical method, and he put the place of contact on the territory of the Kuban River between 463 and 600. The Hungarians moved from the Volga region to the Kuban region with the Onogurs, Ogurs and Saragurs in 463, and the northern wandering of the Volga Bulgars around 600 was the end of the contacts. Németh accepted Gombocz's second opinion first, but returned to Gombocz's previous theory later.²²

In 1980 Peter Golden collected the glosses of the Khazar language and concluded that Khazar was Common Turkic.²³ Marcel Erdal also inclined to define the language of the Khazars as Common Turkic.²⁴ András Róna-Tas proved that the ethnonym Khazar cannot be derived from the non-existent ghost word Common Turkic **qaz*- 'to wander', but its original Turkic form is *Qasar*.²⁵ Ligeti reexamined the Khazar glosses and the Hungarian titles copied from Khazar plus the testimony of a runic script authentication, and he concluded that the Khazar language was

21 Róna-Tas & Berta op. cit., vii, 20.

22 K. Czeglédy 1985. *Magyar őstörténeti tanulmányok*. Budapest. 156–163.

23 P. B. Golden 1980. *Khazar Studies. An Historico-philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars*. I-II. Budapest.

24 M. Erdal 2007. *The Khazar Language: The World of the Khazars*. New Perspectives Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium hosted by the Ben Zvi Institute. Ed. by Peter B. Golden, Haggai Ben-Shammai and András Róna-Tas. Leiden-Boston. 75–108.

25 A. Róna-Tas 1995. *A magyarság korai története*. Tanulmányok MÖK 9. Szeged. 47–78. *kaz*- 'to dig' ~ *az*- 'to go astray', parallel *karbuz* ~ *arbuz*. Kazar, Kazak: Róna-Tas & Berta, op.cit., 6.

Chuvash-type Turkic. András Róna-Tas corroborated this position with new arguments.

The relevance of the debate is clear: if the Khazars spoke Common Turkic, the Hungarians ought to avoid the territory of the Khazars, i.e. the region circumscribing the Caucasus, Volga and Don, and Bulghar Turkic was able to enter into contact with Hungarian in the Volga-Kama region and in the vicinity of the Black Sea. Németh's second theory, i.e. the Hungarians moved to the Black Sea region from the Volga-Kama territory in the first half of the 9th century, has been widely accepted among historians and archaeologists.



Makk Ferenc 2009. A magyarság korai története. In: Királynők messzi földről. Magyarország és Katalónia a középkorban. Szerk.: Miquel, Marina - Sarobe, Ramon - Makk Ferenc - Tóth Csaba. MNM: Budapest. 50.

In reality the concept of a linguistic-historical framework for Hungarian migration lost its validity. Therefore, the geographical settings of the formation of the Hungarians between the 5th and 8th centuries need new argumentation. It can be concluded that the formation of the Hungarians took place in the steppe and forest steppe region of Eastern Europe.

From a historical point of view, the chronology and time of contacts and the biogeographical relevance of tree names and grape cultivation are taken into consideration.

Gombocz supposed two dialects of the copied Turkic language. Ligeti reconstructed an Old Chuvash and a Middle Chuvash layer, while aware of some dialectal variants within the layers. Ligeti put the intensive period of the contacts between the middle of the 7th century and the 830s. András Róna-Tas separated three layers: the

first layer contains the Hungarian words with initial *gy*, *s*, absence of final gutturals (*-k/-g*) and words with rhotacism and *-lcs-* (72 words); the second layer includes also words with rhotacism and *-lcs-* plus the initial Hungarian *sz-* (13 words), and the third layer contains the final gutturals, prosthetic *v-*, initial Hungarian *d-* and *g-* and the words with lambdacism (41). According to András Róna-Tas, the third layer can include copies from Oguz and Kipchak languages.

Ligeti located the contact of Hungarian and Turkic in the territory north of the Caucasus on the basis of the spread of the following plants: *kőrís* ‘ash tree’, *som* ‘cornel’, *körte* ‘pear’ and the words of grape cultivation.²⁶

Róna-Tas defined three regions: 1. The Kuban–Don region; 2. the southeast part of the Crimean peninsula and 3. the region west of the Dniester where the trees *kőrís* ‘ash tree’, *tölgy* ‘oak’, *bükk*, ‘beech’ were found together. As the above-mentioned plant names and others existed in the Hungarian, Alan and Turkic languages, Róna-Tas put the place of intensive contact to the Kuban–Don region.²⁷



The migrations of the Hungarians (Róna-Tas, Berta op. cit., 1486).

In contrast with the historians and archaeologists who supposed that the Hungarians moved to the Black Sea relatively late (around 750 or 830) and who emphasize the

²⁶ L. Ligeti op.cit., 291–294.

²⁷ A. Róna-Tas 2005. Turkic–Alanian–Hungarian Contacts. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 58, 205–213.

importance of the integration of Kabar tribes into the Hungarian tribal confederation and the possibility of copying in the Carpathian Basin from the remnants of the Avars or Danube Bulgars, Ligeti and Róna-Tas, studying the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian, concluded that the intensive contacts took place north of the Caucasus, in the Kuban-region. Ligeti supposed that the Hungarians moved to the forefront of the Caucasus in the mid-7th century, from the Volga-Kama region, and that they crossed the Don around 830 and appeared west of the Dnieper around 870.

According to Róna-Tas, the Hungarians moved from the Ural region to territory between the Kuban and Don in place of the Bulgars at the end of the 6th century and became part of the Khazar Khaganate; then the Hungarians migrated west of the Dnieper after the Khazars destroyed the empire of Kuvrat shortly before 670.

In conclusion, Ligeti and, with minor modifications, Róna-Tas returned to the concept of the southern, so-called Caucasus *Urheimat*, which was the predominant idea of Gombocz and then Németh from 1920 until the 1960s.²⁸

28 A. Róna-Tas op.cit., 322.