

Perspectives on Hungarian and Uralic prehistory

KLIMA, LÁSZLÓ & TÜRK, ATTILA (eds.). 2021. *Párhuzamos történetek: Interdiszciplináris őstörténeti konferencia a PPKE Régészettudományi Intézetének szervezésében. Budapest, 2020. november 11–13. / Parallel stories: Interdisciplinary conference on Hungarian prehistory, organized by the Institute for Archaeology, PPCU, Budapest, 11–13 November 2020.* Studia ad Archaeologiam Pazmaniensia 23 & Magyar Őstörténeti Kutatócsoport Kiadványok 2. Budapest. 245 pp.

1. General overview

The collection *Párhuzamos történetek: Interdiszciplináris őstörténeti konferencia a PPKE Régészettudományi Intézetének szervezésében. Budapest, 2020. november 11–13.* is an interesting new addition to the long tradition of works dealing with the early history of the Hungarians and the Hungarian language. The book represents the proceedings of a conference organized by the Institute of Archaeology at the Pázmány Péter Catholic

University (Budapest, Hungary) in 2020 and it is edited by two well-known experts in archaeology and the early history of the Hungarians: László Klima (the former chair of the Finno-Ugric Department at the ELTE University, Budapest, currently a researcher in the Department of Hungarian prehistoric archaeology at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest) and Attila Türk (active in both the Prehistory of the Hungarian People Research Group of RCH, Budapest, and the Institute of Archaeology at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest). The book is published in the series Studia ad Archaeologiam Pazmaniensia and also as the second part of the series Magyar Őstörténeti Kutatócsoport Kiadványok devoted to the prehistory of the Hungarians.

The volume consists of eleven articles. The first half of the articles have been written by linguists, and they deal with both methodological issues and more specific questions of Hungarian and Uralic historical linguistics; some articles deal with the history of Mordvin, Mari and Permic, so the scope

of the book is larger than simply Hungarian prehistory, contrary to what is implied by the English title. The other half of the book has been contributed mostly by archaeologists and concentrates on various issues of both Hungarian and Uralic archaeology. The last article stands out with its topic and methodology, investigating the background of a Hungarian myth and its impacts on prehistory.

The topics are connected to relevant questions and debates of historical linguistics and archaeology, and most articles have an interdisciplinary approach. The book is thus an interesting read for scholars of Uralic historical linguistics and for scholars of historical linguistics in general.

In general, *Párhuzamos történetek* is well edited and clear to read. The articles are accompanied by many maps and tables. All of the articles are written in Hungarian, but they include abstracts and lists of keywords in English (most articles) or Russian or German (one article each), and also the maps include English explanations, making the articles and their results somewhat accessible to international audiences, too. Here one should note that the English abstracts and explanations would have required a more careful proofreading, as there are various mistakes in spelling.

In the following, I will give a short overview of each article of the book and comment on some specific issues in more detail. I will focus mainly on the articles dealing with linguistics, but since the articles on archaeology have an interdisciplinary approach and are relevant to linguistics as well, I will also briefly comment on some problematic issues discussed in them.

2. Presentation and commentary of the articles

The first article of the volume is the methodological essay by Zsuzsa Salánki, Beatrix Oszkó and Mária Sipos titled “A kétnyelvűség helye és szerepe az alapnyelvi korban (The place and role of bilingualism in the era of proto-languages)”. The paper discusses interesting issues of prehistoric multilingualism, especially possible multilingualism during Proto-Uralic times, a topic that is important but challenging. This is one of the most intriguing articles in the book.

The article offers a good and clear methodological overview: both the methods and basic sources of research on bilingualism as well as those of research on protolanguages and the comparative method are presented. Overall, the use of recent references of historical linguistics and sociolinguistics in the

article is impressive: even though in the beginning of the article the authors state that they will mostly refer to research written in Hungarian, many recent international works on Uralic prehistory are referred to (such as various publications by Aikio, Kallio, Laakso and Parpola).

Even though the article is very thorough and well-written, some minor shortcomings can be noted. It would have been good to refer to the article by Kallio (2006) that discusses fundamental issues related to the dating of Proto-Uralic: the authors mention that the Uralic protolanguage would have dispersed in the 4th millennium BCE at the latest, but later datings have been supported in recent research, especially in Finland (for example, Parpola's 2012 article that the authors refer to, supports Kallio's shallow dating of Proto-Uralic), and it would have been good to mention the possibly more recent date of Proto-Uralic, even if this issue can be debated. Also, Sammallahti (1988) could have been mentioned alongside the UEW as a source of Uralic etymology, especially as Sammallahti's reconstructions have played a big role in loanword research.

As a general note it would have been interesting to read more on the contacts of the speakers of

Proto-Uralic, as this topic is important when the possible bilingualism of the speakers of Proto-Uralic is discussed. Even though the article describes different contact situations and gives a thorough look at the methodology of the research on bilingualism, the article does not offer ready answers to whether speakers of Proto-Uralic or later protolanguages were indeed bilingual, and what kind of role bilingualism played in the various contact situations (such as Baltic loanwords in Finnic).

The article is followed by Sándor Csúcs's treatise on Hungarian–Permian contacts “A másodlagos permi–magyar nyelvi érintkezések kérdése (Über die sekundäre Kontakte zwischen den permischen Sprachen und dem Ungarischen)”. This is a topic that has a long research history and has been also discussed by Csúcs in several earlier publications. The present article is, in fact, largely a repetition of his earlier remarks published in 2007. An addition to the 2007 material is, however, the inclusion of the Ob-Ugric languages into the comparison of possible common innovations in phonology, morphology and syntax. Csúcs states that he added Ob-Ugric–Hungarian parallels in order to have a point of comparison to the possible Hungarian–Permian parallels.

The scrutiny by Csúcs includes some good remarks and observations, but unfortunately the material is not entirely up-to-date. There are problems especially with the lexical material. In his treatment of possible Permic loanwords in Hungarian, Csúcs does not distinguish the cognate sets that could formally go back to Proto-Uralic from etymologies that clearly cannot be regular cognates. The etymological analysis remains on a surface level and many phonological details (substitution patterns) are not treated comprehensively. The lexical material is taken from the UEW, and references are missing to recent works (such as WOT) that deal with the same etymologies and sometimes offer competing explanations.

I will here focus on some of the etymologies discussed by Csúcs and only briefly comment on some of the other issues:

Csúcs presents three probable loanwords from Permic into Hungarian, along with a longer list of potential loans. The three probable loanwords are, according to Csúcs, Hungarian *ezüst* ‘silver’ ← Early Proto-Permic (“korai proto-permi”, in Csúcs’s terminology) **äz-vešk3* id., Hungarian *kenyér* ‘bread’ ← Early Proto-Permic **keņer* or **keņjr* ‘pearl barley, groat’ and *küszöb* ‘threshold’ ← Early

Proto-Permic **kəsiþ* id. Regarding the potential loanwords, the criteria for borrowing are not very clear, and it would have been better if the author had listed more arguments to support the idea that these words are indeed loanwords from Permic into Hungarian. For example, the word family involving Hungarian *lebég*, *libég* ‘float’, *levegő* ‘air’, reconstructed as **lemp3* ‘schweben, fliegen’ in the UEW, is a possible loan from Permic according to Csúcs. However, there are irregularities within Permic (Udmurt *lobj-*, Komi *leb-*), meaning that the Proto-Permic reconstruction is not clear, and it is also unclear what the original vowel in Hungarian is. In this case it is very difficult to prove a loan from Permic into Hungarian, as we do not know enough of the history of the Hungarian and Permic words. Metsäranta (2020) assumes that the Permic words reflect Proto-Uralic **limpä-* ‘fly’, but the Hungarian vocalism (the open *e* in the standard language and *i* in some dialects) does not fit this reconstruction regularly (from Proto-Uralic **i* one would expect *ë* in Hungarian regularly, cf. **pintV-* > *föd* ‘cover’). It can be stated that before a Permic origin for Hungarian *libég*, *lebég*, etc. can be assumed, several issues need to be settled.

Another problematic example is the comparison of Hungarian *nagy*

‘big’ with Komi *naž* ‘geizig’, *nać* ‘ganz, ganz und gar’. Csúcs gives a reconstruction with **l-* (Proto-Finno-Ugric **lθńćz*), but this is erroneous (a typo?), as there is no trace of **l* anywhere in the daughter languages. UEW reconstructs **nθńćz* ‘stark, hart’. The irregularities within the Komi dialects (*ć* vs. *ž*) make it unclear how old the word is, and it is dubious whether this has anything to do with Hungarian *nagy* ‘big’. It should be noted that the word *nagy* has also an alternative etymology presented by Widmer (2007: 302–304) which should have been addressed somehow in this context (even if Widmer’s idea of deriving *nagy* from a Uralic stem **nu-* ‘upper part’ is not very convincing).

For Hungarian *imád* ‘pray’, a borrowing from Proto-Permic *vomiž* is possible according to Csúcs, but also competing loan etymologies have been suggested: the possible Turkic etymology (? West-Old Turkic **vim-*, reconstructed on the basis of East Old Turkic *um-* ‘ask for, covet’) is discussed as a possible but uncertain etymology in WOT (455–457), and Harmatta (1997: 74) has assumed an Iranian origin (hypothetical Iranian **wi-mand-*, unattested but assumed by Harmatta on the basis of the alleged Indo-Iranian root *mand-* ‘recite a liturgical text’; this is listed among

the implausible Iranian etymologies by WOT: 1339, and in fact it is not quite clear what is the evidence for this Indo-Iranian root, as one does not find a Sanskrit or Avestan root reflecting **mand-* in EWAia or AiWb). Even if these etymologies have their problems, these should be addressed before a loan from Permic could be suggested.

It can be stated that many of the examples listed by Csúcs involve problems and it is dubious whether they can be loans from Permic into Hungarian or vice versa. However, this does not mean that it would be futile to assume such contacts and that there would be no promising examples at all. But it is in any case clear that the grounds are much shakier than Csúcs lets us assume, and the issue of early Permic–Hungarian contacts is far from settled. Also the three loanwords that Csúcs considers convincing might require a closer critical scrutiny.

Csúcs also discusses some other possible common phonological, morphological or syntactical innovations shared by Hungarian and Permic, for example the infinitive suffix *-ni*, voicing of word-initial stops, loss of the Uralic genitive case and development of new genitive markers, loss of Proto-Uralic past tense marker **ś* and the tendency to change the inherited SOV word order towards SVO. Here it is

important to note that Fejes (2020) has shown that many of the parallels suggested by Csúcs (2007) most likely do not result from contact: some are parallel developments, and some typological similarities are inherited from Proto-Uralic. Fejes accepts only the voicing of stops and the infinitive suffix *-ni* as possible evidence of contacts; see the table in Fejes (2020: 91).

To comment on some issues, the emergence of voiced stops in Hungarian and Permic, for example, is probably not a shared phenomenon: Csúcs is right in doubting common innovation here, and it seems overtly optimistic (see also Fejes 2020: 80) to assume that even the beginning of these phenomena had something in common. In the inherited Uralic vocabulary in Hungarian the voiced stops are rare, and the processes leading to the emergence of the stops seem to be very different from those in Permic, where voiced stops frequently appear in inherited words. In Hungarian, voiced stops are found mostly in loans and words of unclear origin, and very few plausible examples are found in inherited vocabulary. Regarding loans, WOT is uncertain as to whether the reconstructed West Old Turkic had word-initial voiced **d* and **g* or not, meaning that the emergence of Hungarian voiced stops in the

Turkic loans is not sufficiently well understood at present – see the discussion in WOT: 1077–1080.

In addition to cases where Hungarian and Permic show developments that are similar even if they are not necessarily connected (such as the voicing of initial stops), Csúcs also discusses some cases where the arguments for Permic influence remain quite unclear. The origin of the voiced *d* in the Hungarian 2SG verbal ending and possessive suffix is one such case. The origin of the voiced *d* is unclear, but it seems to be a long shot to assume Permic influence on voicing here. It is known that clusters of a nasal and **t* were present in various forms of the 2SG possessive suffixes in Proto-Uralic (see Janhunen 1982: 32; Salminen 1996: 25), and it would not be implausible at all to assume that the ACC.2SG **-mtə*, GEN.2SG **-ntə* that would regularly give *d* in Hungarian would have been generalized into the nominative as well (if the reflex of **t* was lost in the nominative, *d* < **-mtV* in the accusative could have been generalized). According to Kulonen (2001: 160–161), the *-n-* element would have denoted plurality in possessive suffixes and Hungarian 2SG *d*- < **nt-* would be generalized from plural forms.

Regarding the origin of the Hungarian accusative *-t*, different solutions have been suggested.

Honti (2022) does not mention this case suffix among the reflexes of the Uralic **-tV* ablative. The *-t* accusative has occasionally been reconstructed even for Proto-Uralic (Honti 1996: 68; Sipőcz 2006: 29), but this has been disputed by Salminen (1996: 26).

The article by Csúcs is followed by several articles discussing contacts between Turkic and Uralic languages from various points of view. Gábor Zaicz writes on the Mordvin–Turkic contacts in “A mordvin nyelv kapcsolatai a volgai area török nyelveivel (The relations of the Mordvin language with the Turkic languages of the Volga area)”, stating that he is basing his study mostly on earlier publications. The author dealt with this topic already in his unpublished dissertation in 1970, and he has published a study with a similar name in three parts in *Folia Uralica Debreceniensia* in the years 2017–2019 (the latter opus is noted to serve as the predecessor and also as the source of the present work). The article indeed gives an impression of a summary or overview of earlier works, with few references and little argumentation, and although it does give a good overall picture of the topic, it would have made it easier for the reader if the author had presented more actual arguments to back up his claims.

Some particularly problematic issues include the lack of argumentation and donor forms when Iranian loanwords are discussed. A more thorough discussion of Iranian loanwords would have been especially interesting, as the Iranian influences in Mordvin have not received much attention in recent research, compared to many other branches of the Uralic family.

The discussion of Turkic loanwords is also not very thorough. For example, the main criteria in differentiating between the loans from Chuvash and the earlier varieties of Bulgar Turkic remain uncertain. There is no detailed discussion of sound substitution and the example etymologies are not analyzed in detail. Some references relevant to Turkic–Mordvin contacts are also missing that clearly should have been mentioned, such as Rogačev et al. (2013). Nor does Zaicz refer to Róna-Tas’s (1988: 765–768) discussion of Turkic influences in Mordvin.

Klára Agyagási tackles the complicated topic of Mari–Turkic relations in her article “A mari nyelv kapcsolatai a volgai area török nyelveivel (Контакты марийского языка с тюркскими языками Поволжского ареала)”. A well-known researcher on the topic, Agyagási has written extensively on this issue, most recently

in her 2019 monograph *Chuvash historical phonetics*. It is known that Mari historical phonology has made some important steps in the last few years (Aikio 2014; Metsäranta 2020), and some of the ideas presented earlier by Gábor Bereczki (1992; 1994) regarding Proto-Mari reconstruction have been disputed in these recent works. Agyagási largely follows Bereczki's views, and as she bases her chronology of Mari–Turkic lexical contacts on developments in Mari (and Turkic) historical phonology, it is natural that the acceptance of her ideas depends on the correctness of the reconstructed phoneme systems and their phonological developments. A critical review of Agyagási's (2019) ideas of Mari vocalism and the stratigraphy of Mari–Chuvash contacts has been recently presented by Holopainen and Metsäranta (2020), and I will not repeat those observations here, but I simply want to point out that not all of Agyagási's ideas are based on solid evidence. This means that even though Agyagási has some good ideas, her ideas regarding the stratigraphy of Turkic loans in Mari cannot be accepted as such. Nevertheless, I want to stress that even if one does not accept Agyagási's results as such, her present article is still an interesting contribution and worth reading

for all scholars of Mari and Chuvash – hopefully there will be more interaction between the different views on Mari vocalism in the future.

Agyagási is followed by Klára Sándor, who deals with methodological questions and problems with the donor languages of the early Turkic loans in Hungarian in “A török–magyar nyelvi kapcsolatok újraértelmezésének lehetőségei (The possibilities of reinterpreting [sic] the Turkic–Hungarian language contacts”. A specialist of both sociolinguistics and early Turkic languages, Sándor challenges many prevalent views (presented in major works like WOT) and offers a thought-provoking read that is among the most interesting ones in this book. Even if one does not agree with her, she shows clearly how problematic it is to determine the stratigraphy of prehistoric loanword layers, and what kind of a role sociolinguistic variation can play.

Sándor provides interesting and plausible arguments to doubt the stratigraphy of West Old Turkic loans, she even criticizes the very term. Sándor assumes that instead of several different chronological layers, the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian might reflect synchronic dialectal diversity in Turkic at the time of borrowing.

This is an interesting suggestion, and in principle possible, but unfortunately Sándor provides few concrete examples to back up the claims. To prove this, one should deal in more detail with all the cases where WOT (and earlier scholars) assume possible chronological differences, such as the substitution of the Turkic affricate *č (see WOT: 1088–1094 for a discussion of the different reflexes of this sound in the loanwords into Hungarian). One should also keep in mind that many details in Hungarian historical phonology still remain poorly understood, which makes it difficult to distinguish possible chronological differences in loanwords.

Hopefully the arguments presented by Sándor will provoke further discussion on the problematic and insufficiently understood aspects of early Hungarian–Turkic contacts. It is true that despite the conclusions of WOT being largely accepted by many researchers (such as Agyagási 2019; Bakró-Nagy 2021), the reconstruction of West Old Turkic has also received criticism (Erdal 2018). However, it should be noted that the other evidence for West Old Turkic – possible loans in Alanic/Ossetic and Slavic – should be taken into account, even if the material is scanty compared to the number of loans in Hungarian.

The editor László Klima in “A finnugor nyelvhasználat hazai története és egynémely őstörténeti csodabogarak. Zsirai Miklós (és mások) tévedései (A history of research on the linguistic relatedness of Hungarian and Finno-Ugric languages, with some odd ducks from the sea of linguists. Misconceptions by Miklós Zsirai and others)”, one of his three (!) papers in the volume, deals with curiosities in the history of Uralic linguistics. Klima’s account shows interesting examples of erroneous views that have circulated within Uralic linguistics for decades, when people do not pay attention to the original sources.

The last paper in the linguistics section is by the turkologist Balázs Sudár, who continues the interesting methodological discussion in his essay “A magyar nyelv honfoglalása (The Hungarian language conquest)”. This methodological discussion is, alongside the contributions by Salánki et al. and Sándor, one of the articles in this book that can be most warmly recommended. The main problem presented by Sudár is how we can know when the Hungarian language really entered the Carpathian Basin, as the written sources do not really say anything about this, and the traditional explanations involve various problems: there is no

clear evidence of mass migration of Hungarians, and we know little of the demographics of the Carpathian Basin around the time of the alleged *Landnahme* of the Hungarians in the late 9th century (there is some evidence of a pre-conquest population remaining in parts of the Pannonian plain). Sudár compares different strategies of language replacement, and he notes that the Hungarian conquest does not really fit any of these. Future works on Hungarian ethnohistory and on the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin will have to address the questions raised by Sudár.

Sudár mentions that typological evidence for different kind of migrations would be useful, but this is complicated by the need to analyze every situation individually. It can be mentioned in this context that Janhunen's (2008) paper on the Turkic conquest and language replacement in Anatolia could probably be used as part of such an investigation, and the detailed treatise on the spread of Slavic by Lindstedt and Salmela (2020) would also be useful in such discussions.

The second part of the book consists of archaeology, history and folkloristics, and it consists of five articles, with an obituary to István Fodor ending the book. The first article "A finnugor

alapnyelvi korszak a régészet tükrében (The Proto-Finno-Ugric (PFU) period in the Light of the Archaeological Research)" is by József Vigh. He presents findings of archaeology in careful detail, and his paper can be lauded for tackling some recent issues raised by Saarikivi and Lavento (2012). Nevertheless, it has to be said that it remains unclear to me how it is determined that the particular archaeological phenomena discussed by Vigh can be connected with Proto-Finno-Ugric in particular (not to speak of the difficulties in assuming this protolanguage at all). It should certainly have been stated that the Finno-Ugric node is not very widely accepted among linguists, especially outside of Hungary (see Aikio 2022: 3–4; Salminen 2002).

Another point of criticism is that references to some important sources on Uralic prehistory and homeland studies are lacking. There are no references to works of Parpola, who has discussed Finno-Ugric prehistory from the viewpoint of archaeology and linguistics in several works (such as Parpola 2012). Also Kallio's (2006) influential paper on dating and locating Proto-Uralic would have warranted a reference in such a work.

Vigh is followed by László Klima, who discusses archaeological traits of early Hungarians in

the Volga region in “Magyar nyomok a Volga-vidék régészetében (Hungarian traces in the archeology of the Volga Region)”. Klima assumes that the similar archaeological items in the Volga region and Hungary are due to secondary contacts that took place already after the conquest; the Volga Bulgars were possible mediators.

The third article on archaeology, “A korai magyar történelem régészeti kutatásainak aktuális eredményei és azok lehetséges nyelvészeti vonatkozásai (Recent advances in archaeological research on early Hungarian history and their potential linguistic relevance)”, is by the editor Attila Türk who presents new views on the Hungarians’ migration route, challenging earlier views in sources like WOT. Regarding linguistic arguments, Türk moves in similar lines as Sándor, assuming that the early Turkic–Hungarian contact period was significantly shorter than has been traditionally assumed. Türk states clearly that this shorter period of contact would fit the recent results of archaeology better. However, as mentioned above in my comments on Sándor’s article, many phonological details of the loanwords need to be settled before this kind of scenario can be accepted. On the other hand, Türk mentions a possibility that the earliest Turkic

loanwords could have been borrowed in Siberia already, and this is an interesting suggestion that could be pursued further.

László Klima’s final piece in the book is titled “A magyar őstörténet hajnalán, Nyugat-Szibériában (At the dawn of Hungarian prehistory in Western Siberia)” and it deals with an earlier period than the paper by Türk. As is often the case with research on very early linguistic history, the author has claims that cannot be accepted as such. The article discusses interesting points of Ugric and Hungarian prehistory (also referring to possible sources from Antiquity that might depict the Ugric peoples), but much of the linguistic argumentation remains speculative. Klima makes use of the shared vocabulary of the Ugric languages, but it is disputable how secure this evidence is, as the Ugric vocabulary listed in sources like UEW involves numerous irregularities.

For example Klima mentions the shared Ugric horse vocabulary as evidence that the Proto-Ugric speakers were pastoralists, but much of the horse vocabulary is irregular: even the word for ‘horse’ (Hungarian *ló* : *lovat*, North Mansi *lo*, North Khanty *loy*) displays irregular vocalism, and many other words related to horses, such as the word for

‘saddle’ (Hungarian *nyerég*, East Mansi *nayər*, East Khanty *nöyər*) involve similar problems. In general, there are so many uncertainties regarding the history of Ugric that archaeologists should be extremely cautious.

Klima also discusses the problems of the dating of the split of Proto-Ugric; here a reference to Helimski (1982: 59–61) could be added. Iranian loanwords in the Ugric languages are not mentioned by Klima, although they can be potentially helpful in the chronology of Ugric linguistic history (see Korenchy 1972; Holopainen 2019: 339–343), but Klima does not comment on the loanwords in this context.

On the other hand, Klima assumes that the Ugrians learned horse-hunting from the Iranians in the Andronovo archaeological culture. Due to the problems with the reconstruction of the Ugric horse vocabulary mentioned above, this claim is problematic. In this context, it is interesting that Klima does not mention Harmatta’s (1997) Iranian etymologies for the Ugric horse vocabulary. Iranian lexical influence would fit Klima’s idea of the Iranian origin of Ugric horse hunting, but Harmatta’s etymologies are not very convincing: for example, the assumed Iranian etymology for

Ugric ‘horse’ (Hungarian *ló* etc.) relies on Harmatta’s “East Iranian” reconstruction **loyə* (< Proto-Iranian **bāraka-*) ‘horse’ (Harmatta 1997: 72), which is not based on attested East Iranian evidence but is completely speculative. Klima does mention Napol’skikh’s (2001: 371) Tocharian etymology for the Ugric ‘horse’: Napol’skikh assumes that this word is a loan from “Para-Tocharian” **lāwa-* ‘Vieh’ (< Proto-Tocharian **lūwā*), but the assumption of “Para-Tocharian” is problematic as such, and the meaning of the attested Tocharian words (Tocharian A *lu*, B *luwo*) is ‘animal/bird’ according to Adams (2013: 606), making the semantic side of the etymology implausible.

I cannot judge Klima’s conclusions on archaeology, but his article is in any case an interesting account of possible archaeological evidence on early Hungarian, and despite my critical remarks on some linguistic issues above, some of Klima’s conclusions on the early spread of Ugric can be correct.

In the last article of the book, Somfai discusses a widespread motif among the “Altaic” and Uralic peoples in “A Fehérlófia mese mitológiai háttere (Mythological background of the Hungarian tale ‘Whitemare’s Son’)”, the only paper on folkloristics in the volume. Somfai assumes that the spread of

the similar motif was due to contact, but it remains unclear what the exact route of this motif to the Hungarians was.

The obituary to István Fodor is written by the two editors, both students of that renowned archaeologist who passed away in 2021. The obituary lists the scholar's important achievements but also goes quite deeply into personal issues, describing the problems in Professor Fodor's relationship with his two students.

3. Concluding remarks

As I hope to have shown above, the articles are of varying quality and depth. The most important studies are the ones by Salánki et al., Sándor and Sudár, as they tackle important methodological questions and provide new perspectives on older problems. It is difficult to comment on the book as a whole, as the articles included are quite different in both content and approach. As a general remark it can be stated that the book tackles some important problems of both Hungarian and Uralic prehistory, and though it does not present a synthesis of either, it presents discussions of individual topics. In this way the book can be recommended for scholars interested in Hungarian and Uralic historical linguistics, but it cannot

be recommended as an up-to-date general guide to Uralic prehistory.

As Hungary has a lively tradition of prehistoric research, it is understandable to publish a volume of studies on the history of Hungarian written by Hungarian scholars. However, as this book includes studies on the history of other Uralic languages, too, it might have been a better option to invite also scholars from outside Hungary to contribute, especially as views on many central issues on Uralic prehistory differ across countries today. Perhaps a larger international symposium and publication on these topics would be a good next step. While we wait for this, scholars of Uralic studies outside of Hungary will certainly find thought-provoking material in many of the articles of this present book.

Sampsa Holopainen

*Fellowship holder of the Austrian
Academy of Sciences (APART-GSK)
at the Department of European and
Comparative Literature and Language
Studies of the University of Vienna*

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