

Manufacturing Middle Ages

Entangled History of Medievalism in
Nineteenth-Century Europe

Edited by

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THE STUDY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS OF THE
TENTH-CENTURY CARPATHIAN BASIN AS NATIONAL
ARCHAEOLOGY: EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIEWS

Péter Langó

The conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarian tribal alliance has always been an important topic of Hungarian national history. The emphasis on eastern origins and the expansion of a warrior nomadic people was a focal point of nineteenth-century Romanticism. This period forms part of the basis of national identity as well. In early research, the image of a noble, eastern warrior was very popular, and the notion that the archaeological remnants of the conquering Hungarians were to be sought in the East took shape at that time as well. Hungarian scholarship later classified the period between Late Antiquity and the kingdom of the Árpád dynasty in relation to national scholarship. In the case of the finds of the Conquest Period, they were all regarded to be of eastern origin.

The biased, national character of research on early Hungarian archaeological finds caused further problems. Foreign scholars specialising in the study of the ninth to eleventh centuries rarely touched on the issue. It was primarily scholars from neighbouring countries who studied the problem, mainly because such finds had been made in their countries as well. The conclusions drawn by researchers in Hungary and in the neighbouring countries, however, were often contradictory, usually because of political factors. Various nations created different narratives about the period, in which archaeological sources were interpreted very differently. From a distance, this dispute about the archaeological interpretation of the tenth-century Carpathian Basin must have seemed nonsensical and lacking in any scientific foundation. Thus, it is understandable that specialists of other areas rarely investigated the archaeological remains of the Carpathian Basin more thoroughly. Their interest in the findings and scholarship of the region was further hindered by the fact that the approaches to archaeology adopted in Hungary and the surrounding countries sought to answer questions that were uninteresting in the international research environment.

After a while, this one-sided oriental preference in Hungarian archaeological research has changed.¹ Interest in the contemporary remains of the wider region appeared first in connection with the supposedly eastern finds of the so-called “horizon of crushed silver.”² It later became clear that there were even closer relationships between the contemporary finds from Byzantium and the Carpathian Basin.³

At the end of the eighteenth and for much of the nineteenth century, most historians and social theorists were proponents of nationalistic concepts. As emphasized by Daniele Conversi: “By glorifying the heroism of the great figures of the national past they tried to justify historically their own political goals.”⁴

The early history and ethnogenesis of a nation has a fundamental role in the formation of its historical consciousness, and the problem of the origin is often connected to various political views. This sense of the origin often contains completely fictitious elements, which were intended to serve the political aims of a given group and strengthen its claims to legitimacy. This practice can be observed in the formation of Hungarian historical consciousness as well. The assessment of the foundation of the state, the conquest, and the preceding period have always been influenced by modern political interests, although this interaction was mutual: political views fed and influenced historical assessments, and in turn

¹ Csanád Bálint, “On ‘Orient-preference’ in archaeological research on the Avars, proto-Bulgarians and conquering Hungarians,” in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, ed. Joachim Henning (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 545–62.

² Béla Szőke, *A honfoglaló és kora Árpád-kori magyarság régészeti emlékei* [The archaeological remains of the Conquest and the Early Arpad Periods] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962), 35–52.

³ Károly Mesterházy, “Bizánci és balkáni eredetű tárgyak a 10–11. századi magyar sírleletekben I” [Byzantine and Balcanic objects in Hungarian graves of the 10th–11th centuries I], *Folia Archaeologica* 41 (1990): 87–115; *idem*, “Bizánci és balkáni eredetű tárgyak a 10–11. századi magyar sírleletekben II,” [Byzantine and Balcanic objects in Hungarian graves of the 10th–11th centuries II] *Folia Archaeologica* 42 (1991): 145–177; *idem*, “Der byzantinisch-balkanische Handel nach Ungarn im 10–11. Jahrhundert im Spiegel der Gräberfunden,” in *Byzance et ses voisins. Mélanges à la mémoire de Gyula Moravcsik*. (Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1994), 117–28. Csanád Bálint, “Mediterráneum és a Kárpát-medence kapcsolatai a kora középkori régészet szemszögéből” [Relations of the Mediterranean and the Carpathian Basin. A viewpoint of early medieval archaeology], in *Változatok a történelemre. Tanulmányok Székely György tiszteletére* [Studies in honour of Gy. Székely], ed. Gyöngyi Erdei and Balázs Nagy (Budapest: Budapesti Történeti Múzeum, 2004), 37–41.

⁴ Daniele Conversi, “Reassessing theories of nationalism. Nationalism and boundary maintenance and creation,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1 (1995): 85.

took inspiration from them. The thinking of scholars investigating early Hungarian antiquities was strongly influenced by their sense of belonging to the *natio Hungarica*. Their main goal was to reveal the early history of the 'noble Hungarian nation' and present its archaeological remains.⁵ The national ideal of the era and the ambition to collect all the historical sources of the past of the nation greatly facilitated the discovery of tenth-century Hungarian antiquities. After the unearthing of the treasures of Nagyszentmiklós (Sânnicolau Mare, Ro.) or later the grave of Benepusztá, this ambition ensured greater attention to later finds (Fig. 1).⁶ The other determining factor was the expansion, over the course of the eighteenth century, of the nobility's long-lived (lateral) concept of the nation. This attitude, and within it the ideal of the noble conquerors, saturated early historical and archaeological research.⁷

The birth of modern Hungarian archaeology could be dated to 1761, when Johann Ferdinand Miller published his study on Pannonian small finds.⁸ Scientific fieldwork was launched by István Schönvisner (1738–1818), the earlier prefect of the Theresianum in Vienna. In 1777 he became the first lecturer of the department of archaeology and numismatics at the

⁵ Éva Ring, *Államnemzet és kultúrnemzet választóján* [At the crossroads of nation state and culture state] (Budapest: Eötvös Kiadó, 2004), 143–53.

⁶ Ernő Marosi, "Survival or Revival? The Nagyszentmiklós treasure in Hungarian art history," in *The Gold of the Avars. The Nagyszentmiklós Treasure*, ed. Éva Garam (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum and Helikon Kiadó, 2002), 134–142.

⁷ The foundations of this attitude were fixed already in the *Tripartitum*, a collection of unwritten law compiled by István Werbőczy at the beginning of the sixteenth century: István Werbőczy, *Tripartitum opus juris consuetudinari regni Hungariae* (Budapest: Tudománytár, 1990), I. Part, Titulus III. 64–7. See Arnold Suppan, "Cuius regio eius natio. Nationale Abgrenzung und Ausgrenzung in Ostmitteleuropa," in *Szomszédaink között Kelet-Európában. Emlékkönyv Niederhauser Emil 70. születésnapjára*, [Studies presented to E. Niederhauser on his 70th birthday] ed. Ferenc Glatz (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézete, 1993), 361. István Fodor, "The Culture of Conquering Hungarians," in *Tender Meat under the Saddle*, (Krems: Medium Aevum Quotidianum, 1997), 30. Rudolf Chmel, "A magyarkomplexus és a szlovák–magyar megbékélés" [Hungarian complex and Slovakian–Hungarian reconciliation], *Limes* 49 (2001/5): 64–65. As shown by the debate between the law professor Mihály Bencsik and the theologist Jan Baltazar Magin from Dubnice. Bencsik wanted to exclude the Slovakian-speaking population of Trencsén County from the *natio Hungarica* with the argument that 'they are not of Hungarian origin, but the descendants of Svatopluk, who were subjugated in the battle with the Hungarians'. Ring, *Államnemzet*, 130.

⁸ Gábor Vékony, "The history of archaeological fieldwork in Hungary," in *Hungarian Archaeology at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Zsolt Visy and Mihály Nagy (Budapest: Ministry of National Cultural Heritage of Hungary and Teleki László Foundation, 2003), 15–6.

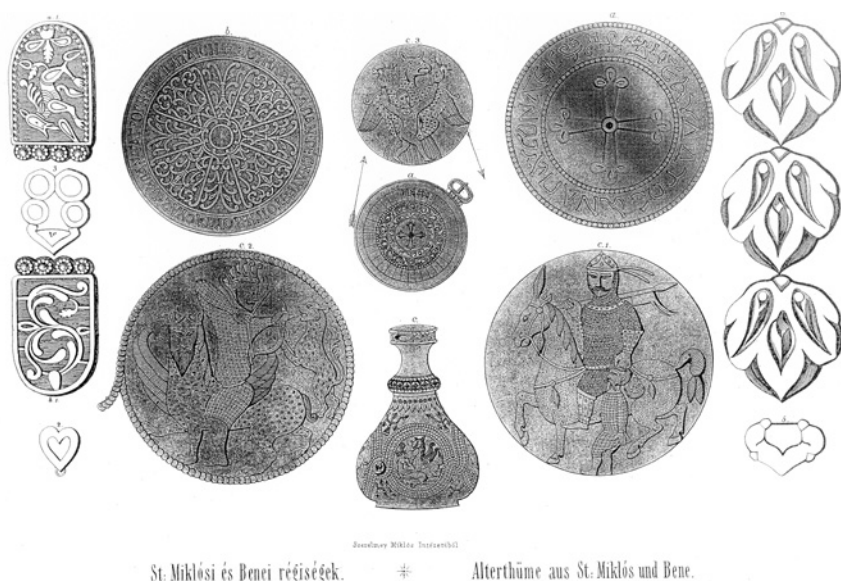


Fig. 1. Lithography of Miklós Szerelmey from the book *'Magyar hajdan és jelen'* [*Hungarian past and present.*] published in 1847 about the finds held as 'ancient Hungarian': the find from Benepusztá and the ornaments of the Nagyszentmiklós Treasure.

university. The *Ratio Educationis* issued (1777) by Maria Theresa stressed the importance of the development of university collections, which were relevant to the university, originally founded in Nagyszombat and later moved to Buda and then to Pest. Schönvisner continued his work there until 1794, when he was appointed as the director of the University Library. In his first work he described the Roman bath unearthed in Óbuda at Florián Square. His debate with István Szalágyi (Salagius) was the first of its kind in Hungarian archaeology. It concerned the Roman road system.⁹ The work of András Blaskovich and Antal Balla in this field is also worthy

⁹ Imre Szentpéteri, *A Bölcsészettudományi Kar története (1635–1935)* [The history of the Faculty of Arts (1635–1935)] (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi. Nyomda, 1935), 297; Albert Gárdonyi, *A történelmi segédtudományok története* [The history of the auxiliary sciences of history] (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1926), 12; Domokos Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon* [Culture in 18th century Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996), 577; Ernő Marosi, "Utószó. Programok a magyar művészettörténetírás számára" [Postface. Programs for Hungarian art history], in *A magyar művészettörténet-írás programjai. Válogatás két évszázad írásaiból* [Programs for Hungarian art history. A selection of the writings of two centuries] ed. Ernő Marosi (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1999), 328–9; Endre Tóth, "A további ókor" [Antiquity continued], in *Történelem-Kép*

of mention, together with that of Péter Katanics (1750–1825), who, coming to the University from Eszék (Osijek, Hr.), continued Schonvisner's work as his successor. Archaeological research at the time was closely connected to the high education, dominated by Classical and Roman archaeology. Thus research on artefacts of Hungarian origin was minimal or non-existent. The first Hungarian artefacts that awoke interest were the Holy Crown and the royal insignia. A monograph written by Péter Révay (1659), the keeper of the insignia, marked the inception of interest in Hungarian artefacts, followed in 1790 (when the crown was returned to Buda) by the work of Elek Horányi and József Peczely and five years later Istvan Weszprémy and István Katona. The end of this period was marked by the work of József Koller, published in 1800. In 1788, a debate flared up concerning Lehel's Horn (oliphant) from Jászberény (Fig. 2).¹⁰

Count Révay was the first person to pay attention to the antiquities relevant to an understanding of national history. The popularity of his work is best reflected by the fact that it was reprinted several times. The study of the material remains of the national past received a strong impetus when the reforms initiated by Joseph II reached the royal insignia and the legal claims of the aristocracy and nobility attached to them. Due to the national resistance provoked by the reforms of the emperor, there was increasing scholarly interest not only in the actual royal insignia, but also the oliphant of Jászberény, which has also been considered an early symbol of power. Already at the time it was associated with Lehel, the Hungarian commander known from written sources, whose legendary life came to an end in 955, after the defeat at Augsburg. He is reported to have been executed by Heinrich, the Bavarian duke of Regensburg.¹¹ During the eighteenth century aristocratic tradition firmly connected the

[History-Image], ed. Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2000), 265–75; Vékony, *The history*, 16–17.

¹⁰ Gárdonyi, *A történelmi segédtudományok* 15; Marosi, *Utószó*, 328. Etele Kiss, "A jászberényi Lehel kürt—kései recenzió néhány elfeledett tanulmányhoz" [Lehel's Oliphant from Jászberény—some late remarks to forgotten studies], in: *Szállástól a mezővárosig*, [The development of a dwelling place to an oppidum] ed. Péter Langó (Jászfényszaru, 2000), 67–82. *idem*, Lehel kürtje, in *Történelem-Kép* [History—Image], ed. Árpád Mikó and Katalin Sinkó (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2000), 520–6.

¹¹ István Bóna, *A magyarok és Európa a 9–10. században* [Hungarians and Europe in the 9th–10th centuries] (Budapest: História, 2000), 55. Chief Lehel and his horn appear also in the Hungarian chronicles. "Cui Leel ait: 'Afferatur michi tuba mea, cum qua primum bucinans postea hec tibi respondebo.' Allataque est tuba ei et appropians cesari, cum se ingereret ad bucinandum ipsum cesarem sic fortiter in fronte cum tuba fertur precussisse, ut illo solo ictu imperator moreretur." *Chronicon Pictum* (Budapest: Magyar Helikon Könyvkiadó, 1964), 95.

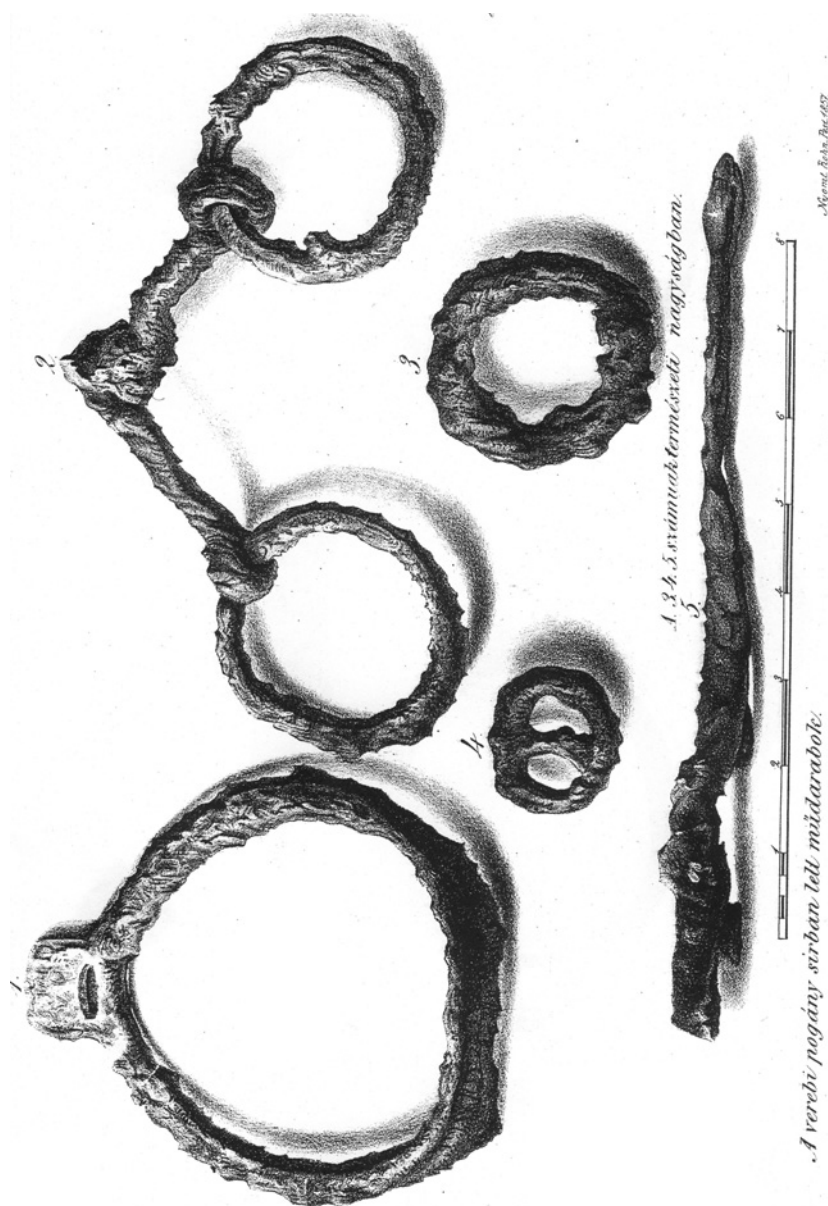


Fig. 2. The pagan burial' at Vereb. The second "coin dated" grave came to light in 1853. The grave of a male, (20–24 years old youth) buried together with his horse, and a horse harness. After: Érdy, *A verebi pogánysír*.

oliphant with the Hungarian conquest. Among the early national relics, there were some other early medieval treasures, which had been found in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, but came to be kept in the treasury in Vienna. Due to its general features, the treasure from Szilágysomlyó (Șimleu Silvaniei, Ro.) was not associated with the Hungarians.¹² As István Sándor, one of the most influential scholars at the time, has remarked, “this treasure was given by a Byzantine Emperor to one of his trustworthy officials in the province, who had distinguished himself in his position.”¹³ The fate of the treasure found at Nagyszentmiklós was quite different. Immediately after its discovery and first publication the treasure became one of the key pieces relevant to national archaeology. István Sándor interpreted the signs as runes and consequently assigned the objects to the ‘Hun-Hungarian-Cuman-Sicul group’, which he considered as part of the same ethnic entity. His opinion exerted a determinative influence on research and the interpretation of these objects for a long time. The story is quite similar in this respect to the narrative associated with the oliphant of Jászberény.¹⁴ The treasure of Nagyszentmiklós is still considered by most Hungarians as belonging exclusively to the nomadic tradition,¹⁵ and Lehel’s oliphant still belongs to the Hungarian and early Iassian national tradition.¹⁶

The founding of the Hungarian National Museum in 1802 was a turning point, since for the first time it provided a framework for a collection suitable for scientific analysis. Institutions similar to the Hungarian National Museum founded by Ferenc Széchenyi, appeared in the region at the same time. For instance, in 1804, two years after the founding of the Hungarian National Museum, S.K. Potocki opened his collection in Wilanów. A number of other Polish aristocrats followed his example. In Prussia, Frederick William III established the Berlin Museum (which later came to be known as the Altes Museum) in 1815. The Prague Museum (1818), Zagreb Museum (1821), and Ljubljana Museum (1821) were also founded in the same period.

¹² Alfred Bernhard-Walcher, “Der Schatzfund I von Szilágysomlyó,” in: *Barbarenschmuck und Römergold. Der Schatz von Szilágysomlyó*, ed. Wilfried Seipel (Wien and Milano: Skira, 1999), 22.

¹³ István Sándor: “Némelyi Jegyzetim Schönvisner Úrnak betses Munkájához,” [Some remarks on the invaluable work of Mr. Schönvisner] *Sokféle* 9 (1808): 134.

¹⁴ Júlia Papp, *Művészeti ismeretek gróf Sándor István (1750–1815) írásaiban*, [Connoisseurship in the writings of count István Sándor (1750–1815)] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), 55, 150.

¹⁵ Marosi, *Survival*, 134–135. See: Csanád Bálint: *A nagyszentmiklósi kincs* [The treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. Archaeological studies], (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2004), 246–56.

¹⁶ Kiss, *Lehel kürtje*, 524–5.

Local wealthy aristocrats with strong national enthusiasm played a crucial role in these initial stages. In Hungary the Széchenyi family helped to establish these collections, in Poland Potocki, J. Ossoliński and Lubomirski, and in Bohemia Count Sternberg. The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed significant changes in public thinking in Hungary. The strengthening of national feelings is reflected in the contemporary literature and historical studies (in the works *kihúzó!*).¹⁷ The increased interest in the early history of the Hungarians helped to develop the discipline of archaeology, still in search for its institutional framework, identify the surviving material artifacts of the conquering Hungarians. The archaeology of the Conquest Period began in 1834. The finds from the vicinity of Ladánybene were first given to sub-prefect Móríc Szentkirályi and then delivered to the Hungarian National Museum. Szentkirályi informed the famous collector Miklós Jankovich of the antiquities, and Jankovich immediately published a study identifying the assemblage as artefacts of the early Hungarians.¹⁸ This study enabled the identification of other finds from the tenth century, which were similar to the material of Benepusztá but contained no coins.¹⁹ A relatively long time (19 years) passed before a scholarly study on the next group of Hungarian antiquities, the burial from Vereb presented by Miklós Érdy, was published. These two collections and studies can be considered as the starting point of the archaeological research on the Conquest Period (Fig. 3).²⁰

As mentioned above, the archaeological remains of the conquering Hungarians had been recognized by the period of Romanticism. At the beginning of the nineteenth century ancient, early mediaeval Hungarian chronicles became popular. The increase in interest in the early history of the Hungarians is reflected by literary works with historical topics, such

¹⁷ Kosáry, *Művelődés*, 321–3.

¹⁸ Miklós Jankovich, “Egy magyar hősnek,—hihetőleg Bene vitéznek,—ki még a ‘tizedik század’ elején, Solt fejedelemmel, I. Berengár császárnak diadalmas védelmében Olaszországban jelen volt, újdónnan felfedezett tetemeiről, ’s öltözetének ékességeiről” [The newly discovered grave and the adornments of the costume of a Hungarian hero—most probably warrior Bene—who, at the very beginning of the tenth century, participated together with prince Solt in the glorious defence of Emperor Berengar I in Italy], *A Magyar Tudós Társaság Évkönyvei* 2 (1832–1834): 281–96.

¹⁹ Péter Langó, “A nemzeti múlt ‘mívbeli emlékei.’ A honfoglaló magyarság régészeti emlékéanyagának felismerése” [Vestiges of national past. The recognition of the archaeological legacy of the Hungarians of the time of the Conquest], in *A nemzeti tudományok historikuma* [The historicity of national disciplines] (Budapest: Kölcsei Intézet, 2008), 271.

²⁰ Miklós Érdy, “A verebi pogánysír,” [The pagan grave from Vereb] *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Évkönyvei* 9 (1858): 14–27.



Fig. 3. Árpád on the mountain of Pannonia. Framing the romantic historical approach on the gravure of János Blascjke and Josef Axmann in 1822.

as the epos of *Zalán futása* (The Flight of Zalán) by Mihály Vörösmarty (1825), a tale of the conquest that arguably marked the beginning of the nationalist romantic movement. It was also reflected by the widespread popularity of István Horvát, who declined membership in the Academy of Sciences and developed his own pan-Hungarian theory (Fig. 4).

As a consequence of the antiquarian approach of the time, archaeology was considered as a curiosity, thus archaeological studies, unlike works of history, did not play a significant role in the presentation of the traditional ideals of national historiography. Obviously the search for national identity in the first half of the nineteenth century was present to some extent in these works as well, since scholars interested in antiquities were indeed influenced by the romantic concept of a nation, as demonstrated by the examples of Miklós Jankovich, János Jerney and János Érdy. Érdy's patriotic attitude is nicely illustrated by the anecdote, always cited by his reviewers and which—quite probably—he also often recounted. According to the story, upon his visit to Budapest famous contemporary historian Theodor Mommsen 'recognized an original Hun-Hungarian race in Érdy and was surprised when our honourable president, the late Baron József Eötvös, told him Érdy's origin and former ancient German name.'²¹ (Fig. 5)

The turning point in the archaeological research followed political events. The revolution of 1848, the passive resistance of the Hungarian political elite following its suppression, and the Compromise with the imperial house in 1867 were followed by significant changes in academic life. Due to the economic upswing following the political consolidation and the more liberal cultural policy, the number of sites were explored and finds delivered to the museums grew rapidly. As a consequence of the subsequent projects undertaken with the intention of creating a kind of national infrastructure (which included the construction of railways and the regulation of rivers), workers disturbed numerous archaeological sites. The tremendous surge in the amount of physical material available and the scholarly work on this material was also facilitated by the national character of the research as well. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the national thinking became even stronger. Changes in attitudes towards culture also spurred the increase in material. The role of the earlier private collectors was taken over by local archaeological societies and

²¹ Iván Nagy, "Érdy János emlékezete" [In memoriam János Érdy], *Értekezések a történelmi tudományok köréből* II. 9. (1873): 19.



ÉRDI JÁNOS.

Fig. 4. János Érdy. His original name: János Luczenbacher (1796–1871) The archaeologist of Belgian origin published the second grave from the Hungarian conquest period.



Fig. 5. The ancient Hungarian artefacts' from a historical poster of the Millenium of the Hungarian conquest. After: *Marczali, A vezérek kora.*

museums. In the period dominated by Flóris Rómer and Ferenc Pulszky, one of the most prosperous periods of modern Hungarian history in many respects (at least from the perspective of economic and infrastructural developments), the foundations of professional research were laid. Archaeology was not involved in the economic development and minority issues characterizing the period.²²

Hungary's legal status was restored after the Compromise. The treaty was facilitated by a number of internal and external factors. One of the most acute interior problems was the management of the aspirations of the various national minorities living in the Habsburg Empire. In Hungary the formation of these aspirations was influenced by the xenophobia underlying the concept of a "natio Hungarica" and the Romantic theory of cultural relativity, which had gained even more ground since the end of the eighteenth century. After the achievement of linguistic unity in the Reform Era and the continuing lack of national independence, the Hungarian political elite, like elites in other European states, emphasized the importance of historiography and the 'rediscovery of the national past,' while giving priority to the unity of the state. The so-called 'Ugric-Turkic war,' which represented the most prominent research trends of the period, not only clarified the origin of the Hungarian language, but also demonstrated that, within the context of the Herderian concept of nation (based on language and culture), national myth-making had become independent from disinterested scholarship.²³

For the public, the debate seemed to revolve around the question of whether the Hungarians were relatives of the 'poor fish-scented Finno-Ugrics' or the 'Turanian high cultures.' Although the debate had no 'worthwhile stake whatsoever,' it exerted a lasting influence on research on the prehistory of the Hungarians.²⁴ As pointed out by István Fodor, contemporary Darwinist thinking also figured in the debate, since the scholars of the period 'knew about Antal Reguly's reports in the middle of the nineteenth century on the Ob-Ugric (Vogul, Ostjak) peoples, who lived under miserable and primitive circumstances and whose language

²² Péter Langó, "Archaeological research on the conquering Hungarians: A review," in *Research on the prehistory of the Hungarians: A review*, ed. Balázs Gusztáv Mende (Budapest: Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2005), 227.

²³ János Pusztay, *Az "ugor-török háború" után* [In the wake of the 'Ugric-Turkic' war]. (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1977).

²⁴ Csanád Bálint, "A honfoglaló magyarok és Európa" [The conquering Hungarians and Europe], in *Honfoglalás és Árpád-kor*, ed. János Makkay and József Korbály (Ungvár: Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség, 1997), 14.

was the closest to ours, and considered it impossible that our ancestors could have ever lived under such conditions.’²⁵

The most prominent scholars, among them Henrik Marczali and Gyula Pauler, renowned Hungarian medievalists of the nineteenth century, and influential public figures of the time (such as poets János Arany and János Vajda and novelist Mór Jókai) supported Ármin Vámbéry’s theory of the Turkic origin of the Hungarians.²⁶ The participants in the debate—with good reason—did not consider archaeology as an independent discipline yielding new conclusions that would contribute to the solution of the—primarily linguistic—problems. As a consequence of the debate, the world of both ‘the district judge in love with Attila’s ancient ancestry’ and the educated, nationalistic middle-class, rejected the Finno-Ugric theory. The public—heated by nationalism in part because of the fact that in the debates that took place in Hungary, Budapest, the Academy, or in the newspapers about Hungarians, the Hungarian language, and its origins were discussed and decided by non-Hungarian scholars (Pál Hunfalvy; József Budenz)—favored Vámbéry’s version of the myths of earlier times. Among contemporary Hungarian archaeologists, only Ferenc Pulszky’s work was followed in the academy because of his role in Hungarian politics and cultural life. The influential museum director was an enthusiastic supporter of Vámbéry’s theory—who was also a relative of his—and described the Hungarians in his studies as mounted, conquering, ‘Turanian’ nobles. The ideal of a noble nation in his works harmonized well with the national mythology of the ‘glorious conquest’ and the ‘thousand year-old Hungarian state.’²⁷ The celebration in 1896 of the one-thousandth anniversary of the conquest and the works published on or created for the occasion—including the Millennial Monument—fitted the general trend of the interpretation of the past in nineteenth century Europe.²⁸ Archaeology, as an auxiliary discipline that offered palpable illustrations of the events of the conquest in the form of objects and artifacts, also played an important role in the celebrations of the ‘Millennial year.’ The

²⁵ Fodor, *The Culture*, 29.

²⁶ Péter Domokos, *Szkitiától Lappóniáig. A nyelvrokonság és az őstörténet kérdéskörének viszszhangja irodalmunkban* [From Scythia to Lapland. Literary reactions to the problems of linguistic affinity and prehistory] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 109.

²⁷ András Gerő, *Der Heldenplatz Budapest als Spiegel ungarischer Geschichte* (Budapest: Corvina, 1990); Ernő Marosi, “A honfoglalás a művészetben” [The Hungarians’ landtaking as reflected in the arts], *Magyar Tudomány* 103 (1996): 1028–9.

²⁸ Sebastian Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie* (Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 19–22.

first detailed, comprehensive archaeological study of the period, a work by József Hampel, was published. It bore little resemblance to the often turgid and hyperbolic, nationalistic style of contemporary historians. An excerpt concerning the mission of Árpád and the conquering Hungarians from a review by Kolos Vaszary, published in 1895 on the occasion of the Millennium, offers a good example of the tendency towards exaggeration in the historical works of the time: 'What nation on our continent, however great it may be, has a thousand year-old past like ours?! Hellas, the cradle of culture, did not survive for a thousand years. Rome, the greatest state the world has ever known, was barely 800 years old when it started to perish in the wake of the death of Augustus. Its great emperors were little more than signs of the last bursts of vitality during the agony! And our nation? Over the course of this one- thousand years not only has it not aged, but on the contrary, it marches forward with new vitality at the dawn of the second millennium!'²⁹ A similar example is the description by the historian Henrik Marczali, according to whom the Hungarian conquerors could be characterized as 'jaunty, gallant, turbulent chaps, stolid, withstanding all the trials of life, full of confidence in their own strength and abilities, indefatigable when driven by their passion, insatiable when the time comes for relaxing, eating and drinking.'³⁰ (Fig. 6)

Later, influenced by factors previously mentioned, he reclassified the archaeological finds and connected the poor burials to the Slavs, the richer graves, in which the remains of horses, horse harnesses, weapons, and objects made of precious metals were also found, to the Hungarians. His work reinforced the concept—not free of the influence of evolutionary thinking—of 'triumphant and rich conquering Hungarians' often found in contemporary historical reviews, and it lent weight and corroboration to nationalist explanations. Non-scientific views popular in Europe at the time had less significant effect on the archaeology of the Conquest Period. Contemporary social-anthropological concepts and political views can be found primarily in the work of Géza Nagy. However, he expressed his political opinion overtly only in newspaper articles, and not in scholarly publications. This was less characteristic of the scholarship of other

²⁹ Kolos Vaszary, "Bevezetés", [Introduction] in *A magyar nemzet története I. Magyarország a királyság megalapításáig* [The History of the Hungarian Nation. Hungary till the foundation of the kingdom] ed. Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest: Athenaeum Könyvnyomda, 1895), 10.

³⁰ Henrik Marczali, "A vezérek kora és a királyság megalapítása" [The age of the chieftains and the foundation of the kingdom], in *A magyar nemzet története I*, ed. Szilágyi, 56.



Fig. 6. The Millennial Monument (1896).

outstanding archaeologists of the time, even in the case of Béla Pósta. His work is a good example because it demonstrates clearly the relationship between archaeology and politics in the dualist state. The politically active university professor carefully separated his political activities from his scientific research.³¹ The anti-Pan-Slavic attitude of the Hungarian political elite appeared in the works only indirectly (e.g. in the interpretation of poor burials as Slavic).³² Contemporary schools of thought and their political background, however, did leave their mark on the discipline. Examples of this influence include the emphasis on particular peoples or populations and their alleged qualities, in contrast with oppressed groups, and the assertion of different forms of legitimacy through focus on military superiority.³³

Although some of the stereotypes connected to the notions used in those studies—considered nowadays pejorative—were generally accepted

³¹ István Schneller, "Pósta Béla", *Közlemények az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiséggyűjteményéből* 1 (1919) [1941]: 22–4.

³² On contemporary anti-Pan-Slavic attitude see Kálmán Thaly, *Az ezredévi országos hét emlékoszlop története* [The history of the seven memorial columns of the Millennium] (Pozsony: Wigand F.K. Könyvnyomda, 1898), 7–13; Judit Hamberger, "A csehek a magyarokról" [The Czechs on the Hungarians], *Limes* 49 (2001/5): 32–3.

³³ Timothy Kaiser, "Archaeology and ideology in southeast Europe," in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Philip. L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 101–3.

around the end of the nineteenth century, scientific aspects always had priority.³⁴ In the research on the prehistory of the Hungarians, Turanism became popular after the turn of the century.³⁵ This hypothesis, according to which Hungarians were related to early Turkish mounted nomads and hailed from a common homeland (Turan), was a sort of reaction to Pan-Slavic movements. This theory, however, always remained in the background, and even scholars who sympathized with the idea did not promote it. Later Turanism—like other prehistorical oddities—became popular in non-scientific circles.³⁶ Just as the approach to research in Hungary was often influenced by a nationalist agenda, the evaluation of tenth century archaeological data served nationalist goals in the Slavic areas of the Monarchy as well, not to mention the neighbouring countries. The intellectual leaders of Slavic and Romanian-speaking national minorities considered the Hungarian state politic as the main obstacle to their national development. Consequently, the integrative nation-building nationalism in these areas used archaeology to further the aim of emancipation.³⁷ The intellectual leaders of the nationalists, who expressed their aspirations in cultural life tried to separate themselves from the Hungarians. They felt that Hungarian politics hampered the emancipation of their nation, binding it rather to its own assimilative politics. The desire for greater national autonomy, nourished by a number of different sources pointing in the same general direction, had an effect on the historical consciousness of these groups and their concepts of prehistory.³⁸ The reclusion from

³⁴ Derogative remarks about Slavs in Hungarian studies from the end of the 19th century can be regarded as contemporary stereotypes which were not the products of archaeology. See Judit Hamberger, "A szlovákok magyarsággépének alakulása" [The formation of the Slovaks' image of the Hungarians], *Európai tükkör* 9 (2004/3): 80.

³⁵ Paikert v. Alois, "Der touranische Gedanke", *Turan* (1917): 291–301; George G. Arnakis, "Turanism, An aspect of Turkish nationalism", *Balkan Studies* 1(1960): 19–32. Éva Kincses-Nagy, "A turáni gondolat", [The concept of Turanism] in *Őstörténet és nemzettudat 1919–1931* [Prehistory and national selfconsciousness] ed. Éva Kincses-Nagy (Szeged: Balassi Kiadó, 1991), 44–9; Ildikó Farkas, "Turanizmus", [Turanism] *Magyar Tudomány* 100 (1993): 860–868; A.V. Ratobylskaya, "Vengerskiy turanizm", *Slavjane i kočevoy mir* 10 (2001): 219–27.

³⁶ Géza Nagy, "Népvándorláskori turán öltözet", [Turanic dress in the Migration Period] *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 21 (1901) 318–323; Miklós Zsirai, "Őstörténeti csodabogarak", [Prehistorical oddities] in *A magyarság őstörténete*, ed. Lajos Ligeti (Budapest: Franklin Kiadó, 1943), 266–89.

³⁷ On the general character of the process see Conversi, *Reassessing* 85. Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, "Archaeology in the service of the state: theoretical considerations," in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3–18.

³⁸ Ferenc Glatz, "Regionális történelemszemlélet Közép-Kelet-Európában. Magyarok és szomszédai az államalapítás korában", [Regional view of history in East Central Europe.

Hungarian—noble—values and the rejection of a common history based on shared geography were defensive reactions. These groups attempted to construct a prehistory for themselves that was different from the history of the Hungarian Kingdom. The prehistory and the early history of the Slavs had an important role in the creation of an independent historical identity, and the demonstration of the allegedly aggressive nature of the formation of the Hungarian state was used as legitimization of their own political national rights.³⁹ Pan-Slavic historiography, which gained momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the strengthening of the idea of Turkic-Hungarian affinity (Turanism) were parallel and closely related phenomena.⁴⁰

Hungarian popular consciousness, the concepts of Daco-Romanian and Illyrian-Croatian continuity, emerged at the same time. The growing prominence of theories of continuity illustrates the contemporary political practice of founding arguments concerning national emancipation and corresponding territorial claims on the assertion of early origins. The most influential among the national movements of the Monarchy was first Austro-Slavism, then later Pan-Slavism. This was one of the reasons why one of the most important centers of Slavic archaeology in the second third of the nineteenth century was at the University of Vienna. The first professor of the university to specialize in Slavic archaeology was Jan Kollár, one of the creators of the Pan-Slavic idea, together with Šafárik and Palacký.⁴¹ These concepts were based primarily on the common history of Slavic peoples, and the theories of prehistory that were based on them had a considerable influence on the interpretation of the archaeological sources.⁴² Previously, the identification of Slavic finds was not evident, and

Hungarians and their neighbours in the age of state foundation] *Történelmi Szemle* 43 (2001): 99–100.

³⁹ Emil Niederhauser, “‘...megosztották az addig egységes szláv területet’. A honfoglalás a lengyel, a cseh és a szlovák történeti irodalomban”, [The conquest of Hungary by the Magyars in Polish, Czech and Slovak literature] *Magyar Tudomány* 102 (1995): 1404–15; Gábor Vékony, “‘...alapított most Swatopluk oly birodalmat’. Viták a morva fejedelemség történetéről” [Debates on the Moravian principality] *Magyar Tudomány* 102 (1995): 1454–61; Lucian Boia, *Geschichte und Mythos. Über die Gegenwart des Vergangen in der rumänischen Gesellschaft* (München: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 62–76.

⁴⁰ Langó, *Archaeological research*, 229–30.

⁴¹ Božidar Slapšak and Predrag Novaković, “Is there national archaeology without nationalism? Archaeological tradition in Slovenia,” in *Nationalism and archaeology in Europe*, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion (London: UCL Press, 1996), 274.

⁴² Sebastian Brather, *Archäologie der westlichen Slawen* (Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 11–18; On the political background of Pan-Slavic archaeological concepts see also Victor A. Shnirelman, “The faces of nationalist archaeology in Russia”, in *Nationalism and*

for a long time scholars tried to separate early Slavic material from Celtic and German finds with the help of historical and linguistic sources.

This research was defined by the fact that Šafarik—inspired by Herder—assumed that early Slavic history, the ‘dark age’, could be delineated on the basis of linguistic sources. This opinion was shared by other Slavic-speaking scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴³

The method they used was the following: in areas in which sources or place names indicated the presence of Slavic people, scholars attempted to determine the characteristic objects that could be connected to the Slavs in the given region. The German Friedrich Lisch, who played a leading role in this research, attempted to isolate the Slavic material with the help of the typological method, which was new at the time.⁴⁴ Objects at that time were often considered as ethnic markers, so once it was suggested (following the work of Lubor Niederle) that S-terminated rings and pottery with incised, wavy lines could be artifacts left behind by peoples of Slavic origins, it very rapidly became a general rule (Fig. 7).⁴⁵ The studies of the

archaeology in Europe, ed. Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion (London: UCL Press, 1996), 223–5.

⁴³ Włodzimierz Rączowski, “‘Drang nach Westen’? Polish archaeology and national identity,” in *Nationalism and archaeology*, ed. Díaz-Andreu and Champion, 198–9. Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region c. 500–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7–8.

⁴⁴ Sebastian Brather, “Slawenbilder ‘slawische Altertumskunde’ im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” *Archeologické rozhledy* 53 (2001): 725–8.

⁴⁵ Lubor Niederle, “Die Skelettgräber aus der letzten prähistorischen Zeit in Böhmen,” *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 20 (1890): 105. *idem*, *Slovanske starožitnosti. Původ a počátky Slovanů východních. A. IV.* (Praze: Bursík a Kohout, 1924). On the contemporary reception of the study see József Ernyey, “Lubor Niederle: Slovanské starožitnosti,” *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 34 (1914): 38–44, 139–45. Decoration with wavy lines was first connected to the Slavs by Ferdinand Kruse, and it became generally accepted by Czech scholars. See Lubor Niederle, “Bemerkungen zu einige Charakteristiken der altslawischen Gräber,” *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 24 (1894): 51–4. Josef Ladislav Pič, *Přehled česke archaeologie* (Praze: Komise při České Akademii císaře Fr. Josefa Pro Vědy, Slovesnost a Umění, 1908), 75–8. On the relationship of Pič and Niederle see Włodzimierz Antoniewicz, “Hołd wielkości Lubora Niederlego,” *Światowit* 20 (1948): 2–3. Hungarian research, following first Pulszky, then Hampel, also connected the pottery with wavy lines to the Slavs because they assumed that nomadic peoples did not manufacture pottery, but acquired it from the inhabitants of the conquered areas. Ferenc Pulszky, “Néhány magyarországi és ősmagyar leletről,” [On some early Hungarian and other finds from Hungary] *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Évkönyvei* 17 (1878): 224; József Hampel, *Újabb tanulmányok a honfoglalási kor emlékeiről* [New studies on the remains of the Conquest Period] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907), 51. On the history of research of the issue see also Miklós Takács, *Die árpádenzeitlichen Tonkessel im Karpatenbecken*, (Budapest: Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1986) 10–12.; Tivadar Vida, *Die awarenzeitliche Keramik I.* (Budapest: Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1999), 16–7.



Fig. 7. S-terminated rings

very talented professor in Prague reflected neo-Slavic attitudes popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. These works were translated into several languages and became the pillars of Slavic research.⁴⁶ These volumes, however, focused not only on the archaeological record. Using historical and ethnographical sources, Niederle attempted to prove that there had been a Slavic population with homogeneous material culture in the Carpathian Basin well before the Hungarian conquest. He believed that most of the archaeological record from the tenth century in the Carpathian Basin could be connected to the Slavs, and in many cases he explained the appearance of certain object types in the material culture

⁴⁶ He started to study the prehistory of the Slavs after his first Russian journey in 1893. Emil Niederhauser, *A történetírás története Kelet-Európában* [The history of historiography in Eastern Europe] (Budapest: História, 1995), 167. His views were influenced by Vykentyi V. Khvoika, Alexandr Spicin and other Russian (Ukrainian) scholars. Shnirelman, *The faces*, 222–3. Florin Curta, “Pots, Slavs and ‘imagined communities’: Slavic archaeologies and the history of the early Slavs,” *European Journal of Archaeology* 4 (2001): 368. His connection with contemporary neo-Slavic groups is shown by the fact that his comprehensive study was published first in Russia in 1909, and was published in Czech only in the following year. He intended to accomplish the aims defined by Šafarik in two six-volume monographs. Niederhauser, *A történetírás története*, 128, 167.

of the conquering Hungarians with reference to Slavic mediation. In addition to the conclusions of Müller and Lissauer, he based his theory on the ideas of Slavic Studies. For many years his works provided the guidelines for Slavic-speaking scholars in their approach to the problems of early history.⁴⁷ The publisher of the eleventh century commoners' cemetery at Bielo Brdo, Josip Brunšmid, also built on Niederle's conclusions when he identified the cemetery as Slavic (Croatian).⁴⁸ The nineteenth century scholars of the national minorities of the Monarchy represented a very different opinion on their own history than their Hungarian colleagues. Their ideas were related primarily to Pan-Slavic concepts, marking their own past as separate from the history of the Hungarian Kingdom. In connection with their aspirations for autonomy, and in opposition to the Hungarian conquest, they attempted to emphasize their own values through the principle of autochthony and to interpret the early archaeological record so as to demonstrate the illegitimacy and violent character of the Hungarian conquest and the foundation of the Hungarian state.⁴⁹ The archaeological

⁴⁷ Niederle's role in Slavic research became so important because—beside his comprehensive reviews—he could establish an archaeological school as well. As a professor of the university in Prague—he received this title in 1891—then the director of the Archaeological Institute in Prague he educated generations of scholars. Antoniewicz, *Lubora Niederlego* 2–3. His conclusions about 10th century material were carried on mainly by two of his students. Curta, *Pots, Slavs*, 368. The most outstanding of his students was Jan Eisner, who, after Niederle's death, became the most prominent person of the research on the Migration Period in Slovakia. Jan Eisner, "Slované a Maďari v archeológii," *Slavia Antiqua* 7 (1960): 189–210.

⁴⁸ Josip Brunšmid, "Hrvatske sredovječne starine," *Viestnik Hrvatskog arkeološkičkog društva* 7 (1903–1904): 38–40. Csanád Bálint, *Südungarn im 10. Jahrhundert* (Budapest: Akadémia Verlag, 1991), 160. Željko Tomićić, "Novi prilozi vrednovanju ostavštine srednjovjekovnog groblja Bijelo Brdo II," *Prilozi* 8 (1991): 95–148. *idem* "Neuere Erforschung der Bijelo Brdo-Kultur in Kroatien," *Prilozi* 9 (1992) 113–130. Following Niederle and Brunšmid, Croatian, Serbian and Slovakian research generally accepted the role of S-terminated hair-rinds as Slavic ethnic markers. Miklós Takács, "A Kárpát-medence, az Alpok délkeleti része és a Balkán-félsziget kapcsolatai a 7–9. században. A jugoszláviai kutatások újabb eredményei," [Relations between the Carpathian Basin, the southeastern Alps and the Balcan peninsula during the 7th–9th centuries. Recent results of the investigations carried out in Yugoslavia] *Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve* 1984–1985/2 [1991]: 506–7; Ágnes Ózer, "A szerb történetírás magyarságképe," [The Image of Hungarians in Serbian Historiography] in *A honfoglalás 1000 éve és a Vajdaság*, ed. Győző Bordás et al. (Újvidék: Fórum Könyvkiadó, 1997), 230–7.

⁴⁹ Emil Niederhauser, "Honfoglalás és millennium," [The Hungarians' landtaking and the Millennium] *Magyar Tudomány* 103 (1996): 1011–7. The 'conqueror' attitude frequent in Hungarian-centred historiography at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was confronted with the contemporary Slavic approach emphasizing the contrast between barbarian Hungarians and civilized Slavs. See Bernard Wailes and Amy L. Zoll, "Civilization, barbarism, and nationalism in European archaeology," in *Nationalism, Politics, and*

studies on Slavic unity and the ideas concerning the primarily Slavic autochthonous population of the tenth century Carpathian Basin sought to confirm the stereotype, inherited from Niederle, that the Hungarians were intruders who had driven a wedge between the Slavic peoples of the Carpathian Basin and made the development of a unified Slavic area impossible.⁵⁰

A considerable amount of time passed before the collections of objects and artifacts previously thought to belong to Slavic peoples were reinterpreted, a lapse that may seem a bit paradoxical in light of the changes that took place within the discipline. It was not until the 1950s, when the orthodox Soviet politics of science had a great impact on Central European scholarship, that new readings of the materials were offered. After this, Hungarian research came to consider these material remains as the legacy of the poorer social groups of the period, the so-called commoners, rather than Slavs.⁵¹ Today these poorer cemeteries are connected, independently of linguistic and ethnic boundaries, to the peoples of the Hungarian Principality and the Hungarian Kingdom ruled by the Árpád dynasty.⁵²

Thus, the differing interpretations of the history of the groups of Central Europe were determined by the intersections of the national historical traditions which were elaborated in the nineteenth century. Until this day, these opinions are tightly connected to the role of objects and groups of remains as carriers of symbolic meanings. However, the social sciences, embedded in a national framework, were not always able to free themselves of these nineteenth century traditions. Current events often demonstrate this clearly, for instance when the representative national value of such an object is emphasized (one thinks of the cases of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, the Nagymacséd cross, the horn of Lehel, or even simple objects such as the so-called hair-rings with S-terminals), and the generally accepted and established scientific opinions are relegated to the background.⁵³ In the study of archaeological finds the various national

the Practice of Archaeology, ed. Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23–4.

⁵⁰ Niederhauser, *A történetírás története*, 126, 167, 332–333, 401–404, 487; Takács, *A Kárpát-medence*, 507.

⁵¹ Béla Szőke, “A bjelobrdoi kultúráról,” [On the culture of bjelobrd], *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 86 (1959): 32–47. For a historical background see Langó, *Archaeological research*, 219–21.

⁵² Bálint, *Südungarn*, 159–93.

⁵³ Bálint, *A nagyszentmiklósi kincs*, 105–32, 246–54. Titus Kolník, “Ikonografia, datovanie a kultúrno-historický význam enkolpiónu z Veľkej Mače,” *Slovenská archeológia* 42 (1994): 125–53.

mythologies and often contradictory narratives cannot be ignored, since—pointing beyond the phases of the history of research—they shed light on the cultural background that connects and at the same time, on an interpretative level divides the peoples of the wider region.⁵⁴ In Central Europe, the interpretation of archaeological remains and their ascription to particular ethnic groups (among them the nomadic peoples of the steppe) can be regarded as a juncture that has been a significant motivating force since the beginnings of archaeological thinking, independent of whatever the symbolic meaning of these objects may have been in their original environment. Thus, these objects tell the story of the past on multiple levels: they are witnesses to their own pasts; through the historical traditions attached to them, however, they not only assume a place in the cultural canon, but also reflect historical milestones and transformations, since through the various interpretations of the past (which changed both in time and space) they are connected to the historical events of later periods as well.

⁵⁴ Kiss, *Lehel*, 525; Bálint, *On "Orient-preference"*, 546.