

## TRACES OF THE LATE HUNS OF EUROPE: HISTORICAL SOURCES AND LEGENDS

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**Abstract:** The history of the Huns has always been of great interest to European researchers. Regarding their history, many questions are yet to be answered, e.g. what happened to the Huns in various parts of Europe after Attila's death.

In some parts of the East and the West European continent many local legends on the Huns still exist today, which indicates that this unique horsemen people of the eastern steppes left a deep mark.<sup>1</sup> We find a particularly vivid tradition among the Seklers living in the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin.<sup>2</sup> Scientific research is still skeptical about the survival and influence of the Huns however, recent years' scientific publications have somewhat colored the previous picture of the Huns.<sup>3</sup> The publication on the Huns is so extensive that it is impossible to present it in one study. Since the 19th century, numerous studies have dealt with the possible language of the Huns. Russian researchers began to excavate Asian Hun tombs at the very beginning of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, dozens of Hun cities and cemeteries were discovered in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Sergey Botalov wrote a summary monograph on them. In this work, he analyzed the archaeological findings of the European and Asian Huns. Gmirya and Gadjiyev have written significant publications on the history and archaeological findings of the Caucasian Huns. One of the most thorough summaries of the history of the European Huns is Maenchen-Helfen's work published in 1973. In recent decades, the studies of Heather and the Korean Kim have significantly reassessed the view on the Huns. In 2008, a study: *The Heritage of the Huns* was published in which foreign and Hungarian researchers presented their findings on the European and Asian Huns. In this study, in addition to archaeology and history, linguistics and culture were also presented. An international Hun conference was organized in 2005 in Sukhbaatar, Mongolia, in 2007 in Speyer, and in 2011 in Ulaanbaatar, and since then similar scientific forums have taken place in many countries.

In my present study, my intention is to track down where Hun communities led by Attila's relatives or sons remained and how they played a significant role in late ancient history. Studying the ancient written records, I attempt to reveal the probable historical process. I compare some ancient Greek and Roman records with European Hun folklore

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<sup>1</sup> There are dozens of legends related to the Huns and Attila in Western Europe: Germany, France and Switzerland. Michel Bakocs and Szilvia Sztruhar collected them. Their book is being published in 2025.

<sup>2</sup> The Sekler-Hungarian folklore texts mentioned the descendants of the Huns in Europe. The Seklers regard Attila's youngest son Chaba their king.

<sup>3</sup> Niles, Ferrari, Heather, Kim, etc.

tradition. Unfortunately, most of the publications were pro-Goths or Romans, and they did not pay enough attention to the remnants of the Huns. Recently, many new publications have appeared, which emphasize the significant historical role of the Huns in the second half of the 5th century as well. I have studied these new approaches and the new results of archaeology. Archaeological findings of typical Hun objects can be found throughout Europe.

*Keywords: Huns, Attila, Battle of the Nedao, Attila's descents, Archaeogenetic studies*

### Introduction

Let me summarize briefly the history of the European Huns. It is known from the historical chronology that the Huns started their European campaign in 375. They were able to occupy the majority of the Eastern European plain and reached the Lower-Danube a year after. Then they conquered the Carpathian basin as well. The Goths were fleeing the invading Huns in 375. They found refuge in the Balkans, and then came into conflict with the Romans. Finally, the Goths defeated the Roman troops at the Battle of Adrianople in 378. Due to the invasions and expansion of the Eastern peoples, the Roman Empire split into an eastern and a western part in 395. During the first half of the 5th century, the Huns occupied more and more territories from the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. The heyday of the Hun Empire was during the reign of Attila (434-453). The great king died suddenly in 453, which brought disorder and instability to the region. There was no one who was able to keep the Hun Empire united so it disintegrated into small principalities. Soon after, the Western Roman Empire also ceased to exist. It was shattered by Attila's campaign in Italy in 452, looted by the Vandals in 455 followed by fierce internal political struggles for power. Simultaneously with the decline of statehood, the number of surviving historical chronicles also decreased drastically. We have only fragmentary sources from this period. In the 470s, Odoacer attacked Italy, dethroned the last Roman emperor, and established an independent kingdom. After the collapse of the great Hun Empire in Europe, the Eastern Roman Empire remained the only strong political power in the region. Mostly Goths and Gepids have been employed as border guards to protect the former parts of the old Roman Empire from the Huns and other steppe horsemen. They were strong enough to gain independence but their kingdom did not last long. Attila's sons made several attempts to restore the Hun empire, which failed. They were only able to rule certain parts of the territory of the former empire.

### Battle of Nedao and the disintegration of the Hun Empire

After the European campaign of the Huns, the Western Roman Empire began to decline. It lost its sovereignty, because Hun troops were stationed on its territory and the Romans have become taxpayers to the Huns. [Obrusanszky (2016): 92] More and more

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<sup>1</sup> Findings of Hun cauldrons and artificially distorted skulls throughout Europe show the migration route of the Huns from Inner Asia to Europe. These show us that they lived in small and large communities.

foreign peoples, mostly Goths, settled in the territory of the former empire, who over time established an independent government and wanted to separate from the Romans. From time to time, the Romans were able to defeat separatist efforts with the help of the Huns.<sup>1</sup> The Western Roman Empire slowly fell to pieces, and at the same time, writing culture also declined, so only a few memories were left from the late history of the Huns. That is why this era is called the dark ages. Only a very few historical documents have survived in late transcripts, especially in the Eastern part of the Empire which is called Byzantium where the ancient records were preserved, and parts of these were used in later chronicles.

One of the most important historical sources of this historical period is Jordanes's *Getica*, i.e. the history of the Goths, who used much information from the lost works of Priscus of Panium and Cassiodorus. Unfortunately, the historical sources provide fragmentary information only about the events of the second half of the 5th century, and it was focused only to the Goths. There are also some late historical records from the Merovingian period (6-8<sup>th</sup> century) that mentioned tribes and people in the territory of the easternmost part of the former Roman Empire, e.g. Transdanubia (it is today's Hungary). Peter Kiraly discovered that the sources recorded Huns there.<sup>2</sup> In the first half of the 6th century, Procopius,<sup>3</sup> historian of Emperor Justinianus, also mentioned the Huns in the Caucasus and the Balkan region. The Byzantine author was well acquainted with the political environment of Europe, and he frequently mentioned the Huns as the Emperor's main allied force. Some additional Byzantine sources such as Agathias, Theophylact Simocatta, etc, have also mentioned European Huns. The medieval chronicles, written in the Hungarian royal court are especially valuable in this respect. A chapter in these chronicles: "The History of the Huns" preserved lots of valuable information on Attila's Huns. However, historians did not use the data of these chronicles in their works. It is confirmed, that some stories came from an ancient heroic epic, which were sung even in the 14th century by the special singers, the *regős*.<sup>4</sup> From the description of Priscus of Panium, we know that such singers existed in Attila's court and sang epics or songs about the great deeds of the Huns.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Roman general Aetius was always successful in his campaigns if Huns troops helped him.

<sup>2</sup> Király 2006. 146-147. *Auctuarium Neuburgense*. 477. Western Huns, who call them as Hungarians (Hungarus).

<sup>3</sup> His main books: Persian wars, Gothic wars. The book of Secret History also mentioned some valuable information on the Huns.

<sup>4</sup> These events were recorded in the Hungarian royal court from the second half of the 11th century. Authors added new information from time to time, but the old, so-called Hun history was left untouched. That is why the Hungarian chronicle details are extremely important in the research of the late Huns, which were written in the Middle Ages, but the stories were previously passed down from father to son through the mouths of *regős* (singer/bards). Such singers already lived in Attila's court. Rhetor Priscus of Panium, who was a guest at the Hun court, mentioned them. Anonymus also mentions singers in his chronicle (*Gesta Hungarorum*).

<sup>5</sup> "As evening came, pine torches were lit up, and two barbarians, advancing in front of Attila, sang songs which they had composed, chanting his victories and his virtues in war. Those at the feast listened to the singers. Some took delight in some of the verses, some of which reminded them of wars, some excited their souls, while others, who were weakened and whose spirits were compelled to rest, gave way to tears." Fragment of Priscus of Panium. Bóna 1993. 70. There is a lot of information about the *Regös* in medieval official documents, which serves as proof that during the Árpád era they sang songs about the ancient

Both Jordanes and the Hungarian chronicles wrote that Attila died suddenly after the Italian campaign. The Hungarian royal chronicles and the *Tarikhi Üngürüs*<sup>1</sup> recorded that King Attila died in Sicambria, which was his own winter residence. The sources noticed that he was buried next to some great Hun leaders, such as Bela, Kadocha, Keve and others. [*Chronicum Pictum* (1986): 17]. The *Chronicum Pictum* informs us that even the enemies of the Huns did not know whether to cry or rejoice at the news of his death. They hesitated, they were afraid of his countless sons, who came up with a whole nation. They believed that after the death of the father, one of his sons would rule. But Detre of Verona<sup>2</sup> and the other Gothic princes were cunning, since during his reign King Attila sat on their necks, they divided the unified Hun community into parties. All sources say that a competition began amongst the sons of Attila as who would inherit the throne of the great king. Jordanes reported that right after Attila's funeral, dispute arose among the heirs over who should succeed the throne. The young men were fueled by the desire to rule Attila's Empire, and everyone believed in his own ability and power, therefore they divided and destroyed the great empire. The kingdom declined without a powerful successor.<sup>3</sup> Presumably, Attila did not leave a will, where he would have named his heir. The rightful heir was probably Attila's youngest son, Hernac. When Priscus of Panium visited the court of King Attila around 449, he recorded what he heard there. According to it, the whip of God loved Hernac (Hungarian: Prince Chaba) the most among his sons, because it was prophesied that he would revive his lost state. So, it is possible that the great king wanted him to be his heir. However, Jordanes gravitated towards the Goths, claiming that Attila loved Ellák the most.<sup>4</sup> However, Ellac did not sit close to Attila in the banquet that Priscus participated, just two sons, Dengizikhh and Hernac were close to him. Ellac was not able to unite the tribes of the Hun Empire. He had no chance for ruling the post-Hun Empire, because he died in the battle at Nedao. [*Jordanes: Getica* 262] The other son of the great Hun king was Aladar, whose name was only recorded in Hungarian sources. The Hungarian chronicle confused him with Ellac, and he was said to be the son of Krimhilda. [*Chronicum Pictum* (1986): 17]. The *Tarikhi Üngürüs* was informed that he was the appointed leader of Transylvania. His name appears in Transylvanian folklore and even in court documents, which I present below. So, it is not clear whether Ellac can be identified with Aladar, or that they were two separate persons. Ancient sources also mentioned Dengizikh, who took over the administration of the eastern wing after the

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historical deeds. Anonymus called them inoculators. Later, even in the middle of the 14th century, we hear that when the regös, who served in the court, retired, they were settled in Regtelek (today: one district of Budapest.) Szabó, 1881.

<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian chronicles from the royal court, the *Chronicum Pictum* or Kezai's *Gesta Hungarorum*, also recorded that. *Tarikhi Üngürüs* is a 16th-century Ottoman Turkish chronicle preserving the history of the Hungarians. Its author Mahmud Tercüman translated it from a Latin chronicle found after the siege of Székesfehérvár (Hungary) in 1543.

<sup>2</sup> The *Chronicum Pictum* preserved his name as the leader of the Goths.

<sup>3</sup> "After they had fulfilled these rites, a contest for his realm arose among Attila's successors -given that minds of young men are fuelled by an ambition for power-, and while everyone mindlessly strove to rule, together they all destroyed his empire." *Jordanes: Getica* 259.

<sup>4</sup> *Jordanes: Getica* 262. "In this battle Ellac, the eldest son of Attila fell, whom his father is said to have loved so much more than all the rest. He preferred him to all his other children in his kingdom. But fortune did not consent to his father's wish."

death of Bleda, Attila's brother. He launched several campaigns to reclaim his father's inheritance.

According to Jordanes the main problem was that Attila's sons wanted to divide the tribes among themselves.<sup>1</sup> However, the Gepid Alarik (elsewhere: Ardarik) was outraged by this. He rebelled against Attila's sons and encouraged other Gothic tribes to oppose Attila's sons. On the other hand, the Hungarian chronicles wrote that the unity of the empire was broken by the Gothic princes, because they wanted to raise their own candidate to the throne against Prince Chaba (Hernac in Latin sources). The Hungarian source does not say anything about the division of people by the Huns.<sup>2</sup>

It is believed that other tribes could have rebelled against their former masters and acquired certain territories. Jordanes, just like the ancient Hungarian chronicles, identified the division of the Huns as the biggest problem, which led to the disintegration of the Hun empire. He explained the situation as follows: "Division is such a dangerous thing, that they crumbled when divided, who were formidable when united."<sup>3</sup> The literature about this period also drew attention to the fact that at that time there could have been a disagreement not only between the Huns and the Goths/Gepids, but also between the Gepids and the Goths. Jordanes mentioned that Alarik (Ardarik), the lord of the Gepids, revolted the peoples living under the Huns. It is more likely that the dominant Goths rebelled against Attila's sons, rather than the small, insignificant Gepids, whose role was insignificant. All historical sources, including the Hungarian chronicles, reported on a long, bloody conflict that caused enormous losses on both sides. The conflict was because of the Huns and Goths could not arrange the arguments peacefully, and they were not able to elect a joint ruler to inherit Attila's empire. They tried to decide who the next leader of the empire would be on the battlefield. Jordanes called it the battle of Nedao, but the Hungarian chronicles named it the Battle of Krimhilda. The historical sources do not match where the battle took place: according to the Hungarian tradition, it was near the Hun capital, Sicambria on the bank of Danube. It is conceivable that Krimhilda's battle at Sicambria, described by the Hungarian chronicles, could have been one of these clashes. [Chronicum Pictum (1986): 17]. It is possible that a battle took place near the capital of the Hun Empire, but the decisive battle could have taken place in the south. We can understand that the fate of the Huns of the Carpathian Basin was not sealed in a single battle, but rather in a few clashes, which means that several battles and

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<sup>1</sup> The sons of Attila, due to the libertinism of his lust, practically amounted to a nation, demanded that the tribes be divided among themselves equally, and that the people be apportioned to them like household slaves. Jordanes: *Getica* 259

<sup>2</sup> But Detre of Verona and the German princes were cunning, since during his reign King Attila sat on their necks, they split the united Hun community into parties. Some wanted to make Chaba king after Attila. Chaba was King Attila's son by the daughter of the Greek emperor Honorius. Others wanted Aladar to be the heir, who was fathered by the German princess Krimhilda. The more intelligent part of the Huns was attracted to Csaba, while other Huns, to Aladar. Both began to rule. When each wanted to get the better of the other, the cunning Detre, who at that time was in Sicambria with Aladar, set up such a hard and strong contest between the two kings that the Danube continuously flowed with German blood for fifteen days. In those days the Huns carried out such a massacre that if the Germans did not hide it because of their hatred, they would have to admit that from Sicambria to Potentiana neither men nor foolish beasts could drink clean water from the Danube.

<sup>3</sup> L. 15 notes.

even a civil war broke out after Attila's death. Several researchers considered the possibility that the fate of the Hun Empire was not decided in a single battle at Nedao, but that there had been battles between the Huns and the Goths before that. Jordanes mentioned the location of the battle near the river Nedao but did not name the exact place. Maybe they had their Gothic names at the time, which were then forgotten.

He summarized the result of the battle as: "mutually destroyed each other" somewhere in Pannonia. Recent research has placed the great battle between the Goths and the Huns in Southern Pannonia, near the banks of the Sava River. According to Wolfram, the battle took place either in 454 or 455. The Austrian researcher placed the battle in the vicinity of the Sava. Bugarski-Ivanisevic also believes that the battle took place in the south. They identified its place on the banks of the Nadela River, between today's Belgrade and Szendrő, in the territory of today's Serbia. The Gracian, Croatian historian also located the battle of Nedao in Southern-Pannonia or Pannonia Secunda. Due to these new results, it is likely that after 453, the Goths could not occupy today's Transdanubia in Hungary totally, but they held the region between the Sava and Drava rivers and placed their residence there. At that time, it was considered the most valuable area, because it connected the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, and the main trade and military routes passed through here. The Hun-Gothic battles after 453 could be in Pannonia Secunda, and we can see that the Ostrogoths also fought for the acquisition of the Balkans in the second half of the 5th century. We find out from Jordanes' description, that the Goths' and Gepids' goal was not the possession of the whole Hun empire, but only the acquisition of certain territories that had long been the property of the Romans, and they wanted to receive an annual income from the Eastern Roman Empire for protecting these territories (provinces of Pannonia Secunda and Savia).

The historical sources and the scholars agreed that the Huns lost the battle, and the Hun Empire disintegrated. The territories in Western Europe, and certain areas of the Carpathian Basin were lost and they came under foreign rule. Jordanes recorded that Attila's sons retreated to the stable eastern wing of the Huns, around the Black Sea. Based on contemporary descriptions, it is probable that small principalities and kingdoms were formed instead of the great Hun Empire. Since the regional role of the Huns decreased and they did not launch attacks toward the Roman Empire, we have no information on them during the second half of the 5th century. If we carefully study the historical sources, it turns out that although the Goths won the great battle of Nedao, they were unable to create a strong, central power and did not manage to get the desired territory, the whole Pannonia Secunda and beyond. They ruled some Pannonian areas between 454-473, and in the meantime, they tried to occupy the southern provinces in the Balkans. According to Wolfram, the unified Ostrogothic kingdom in Pannonia existed in 456/457-473. [Wolfram (1988): 261]

John Niles described this period as the following: "During the "warring states" period that followed that unanticipated event, numerous warlords and statesmen strove with one another for power, with the result that a new tier of leaders eventually gained authority in much of Europe and Central Asia." [Niles (2022): 392]. Wolfram also had the same idea, as he wrote "The Pannonian history of Ostrogoths deals with princes and wars." [Wolfram (1988): 266]. After the collapse of the Hun Empire, the Lower-Danube region became diverse. At the same time small politically fragmented principalities were

created, but they did not achieve stability and maturity at all. The territory they ruled was a fraction of the former Hun state. The victory of the Goths did not bring peace to the Lower-Danube area. They could not pacify the region. Even after the Hunnic-Gothic war, the steppe peoples, such as the Huns and the Sarmatians, continued to disturb the Ostrogoth borders. Not only the Huns, but also the Goths changed their place of residence, which means the movement or migration of people affected not only one people, but almost all the peoples of the former Hun Empire. Because of permanent attacks toward the Goths, probably they were looking for a new place or residence and moved southward in 473. After a decade, some of them finally moved to Italy, and some moved to the Eastern Empire and settled down there. The *Chronicum Pictum* wrote about that situation, mentioning that there was no ruler or king in Pannonia for ten years after Attila's death. Another reason for the migration of the Goths was that the income of the armed elite that came from the Eastern Roman Empire was uncertain. Emperor Marcianus was revoked by Leo I in 457. After long battles they received only 300 pounds a year, a fraction of what the Huns were being paid from the 440s onwards (2,100 pound a year).<sup>1</sup>

The Goths could not form and operate such an advanced political organization as the Huns did. We can notice that after the fall of the Hun Empire, a very diverse and at the same time politically fragmented picture unfolds in the Danube region. The newly created political groups were not stable and mature at all. The incomes of the armed elite from the former Empire - which existed during the Attila's era - have significantly decreased or even dried up. There was no longer a political organization that could manage these ethnically diverse groups with a unified will for a common goal (against the Eastern Roman Empire). Due to the decrease in income, the gun-toting leading stratum turned against each other, and in many cases the kings or war leaders could no longer maintain their former prestige. Both the Eastern and the Western Roman Empire were able to absorb the military communities left without power into their forces and use them for their own campaigns. It is very difficult to identify the location of the Goths in Pannonia from the fragmentary information and contradictory historical sources. We cannot speak of a pure ethnic block, but an ethnically mixed population living in the territory of the former Hun Empire and also in the Eastern Roman Empire. Jordanes mentions only a few place names that the Goths owned, among them Palso (Balaton) is clear. The identification of the others is problematic.<sup>2</sup> So, it seems that the Goths and Gepids mainly sought to acquire the southern territories of the former Hun Empire and established their headquarters there after the Battle of Nedao. Then an additional question arises as to who lived in the other former territories, for example in the territory of today's Hungary, Transdanubia, or near the old Hun centers (summer and winter

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfram 1988. 262. He mentioned the Gothic yearly payment from the Eastern Roman Empire (only 300 pounds a year). Compared to this they received a huge annuity from Attila. From 443 the first peace of Anatolius, 2,100 pounds a year was received plus 12 solidus for each prisoners. Bóna 1993. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Jordanes: *Getica* 268. "Let us now return to the tribe with which we started, namely the Ostrogoths, who were dwelling in Pannonia under their king Valamir and his brothers Theudemir and Widimer. Although their territories were separate, yet their plans were one. For Valamir dwelt between the rivers Scarniunga (modern Jarčina, Serbia) and Aqua Nigra (modern Karašica, Croatia), Theudemir near Lake Pelso (Lake Balaton in western Hungary) and Widimer between them both."

accommodation). On the other hand, the Huns haven't disappeared from the Carpathian Basin in two decades. Scientific research did not provide an answer to what might have happened to the Huns during the two decades of Gothic rule, or who might have lived in the above areas afterwards. They probably did not write about the possible remaining of the Huns because, based on Jordanes, they believed that all the Huns could have left the territory of the former empire. This question can be answered based on a thorough inspection of the archaeological findings and archaeogenetic studies.

Recently, some investigations took place. The archaeogenetic study of the Balkans in the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages revealed that the region was quite ethnically mixed. The remains of the Bronze Age population, peoples from Anatolia and North Africa who settled in the Roman period, peoples from the Eastern Mediterranean region, North and East European inhabitants (Goths, Sarmatians) and steppe peoples from the Pontus-Caspian region lived there. One of the important findings of the genetic study examining the population of the Balkan Peninsula is that there was a mixed population in the region, and no ethnically unified Goth or Gepid community can be identified. [Olalde et al. (2023), *Cell* 186, 548]

As Jordanes recorded, Attila's sons left the Carpathian basin with their fellows, and retreated to the eastern provinces ruled by the Huns. However, one of Attila's son was killed in battle: "Attila's eldest son, Ellac by name, is killed in this battle...after he was killed, his other brothers went to the Pontus Sea, where, as we have described, the Goths used to live." [Jordanes: *Getica* 263]. Jordanes also notes: "Attila's son, Hernac also chose a place for himself and his people on the edge of Lesser Scythia.<sup>1</sup> His relatives Emnetzur and Ultzindur occupied Utus, Hiscus and Almus in coastal Dacia,<sup>2</sup> and many of the Huns emerged everywhere. Many of them migrated to the Roman Empire, from whom the Sacromontis and Fossatis [Jordanes: *Getica* 266] are still named." [Jordanes: *Getica* 266] The *Chronicum Pictum*, compiled in the Hungarian royal court, has preserved similar data for us: "So the defeated Chaba (Hungarian name for Hernac) and his sixty brothers (the sons of Attila) who opposed him along with – according to tradition- fifteen thousand Huns fled to his grandfather, Honorius. The Greek Emperor Honorius wanted to settle Chaba in Greece, but he did not stay, but returned to Scythia, because the residence of their ancestors was there. Chaba stayed in Greece (Eastern-Roman Empire) for thirteen years, and due to the dangerous and difficult journeys, it took another year for him to return to the land of Scythia." [Chronicon Pictum (1986): 20]. However, the two historical sources did not write that the Huns left their old homeland en masse, we only have data on the migration of the royal lines and their own escorts. Lacking contemporary historical sources, nobody knows how many Huns stayed in the Carpathian basin and on the territory of the former Hun Empire. Procopius wrote in connection with the siege of Rome 535, that Hun soldiers also served there, mentioning some of them did not come from the Ister River, but far from the coast. Unfortunately, he does not provide any additional information about this group, but at least we learn that Huns continued to

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<sup>1</sup> In the ancient Greek-Roman period two Lesser Scythia existed. One is situated on the western shore of the Caspian-sea (now: Dagestan, Russia), the other is situated on the western bank of the Black Sea (now: Dobrudja, Romania-Bulgaria).

<sup>2</sup> Now: Northern-Bulgaria.



rule Lesser Scythia, living in organized form in other areas as well. They could even live in the Carpathian Basin or in Moldavia, which was not occupied by foreign powers. These lands were ruled by steppe people from ancient times to the Middle Ages. Greek Latin works however did not write much about them, because the region was out of their interest.

Elsewhere, we can read that Hun communities, who lived in Illyricum, were settled down near the town of *Castra Martis*. They were probably given nobility for military merits. The names of three people were specifically mentioned: "...Bliwila, Duke of Pentapolis and his brother Froila and also Bessa patrician to this day." [Jordanes: *Getica* 265]. From the short list, we can realize, that many Huns went to the neighboring provinces from the former Hun Empire. Some became independent, such as Lesser Scythia and Illyricum, others found their place in the Byzantine Empire and gained high military rank. In the next chapters below, I have collected the traces of Attila's sons in Eastern and Southern Europe, and the stories based on Eastern Roman sources, and local folklore texts.

### Land of Dengizikh

Based on Jordanes' description, Attila's descendants did not give up getting back their own former territories and tried to regain their father's empire. As I mentioned above, Jordanes did not write that all of the Huns left the ancient imperial center en masse but we only know that the sons of Attila and their escorts left for a safe place, in Lesser Scythia, which can be identified with today's South-Dagestan, and Northern-Azerbaijan. The coastal parts of this area later are referred to as the "Land of the Huns" by Caucasian sources,<sup>1</sup> and existed until the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. We can find in the local historical sources, that Derbent named as Gate of the Huns.

The other Lesser Scythia was the region of the Danube Delta, the western coast of the Black Sea, which was controlled by the Scythian peoples for centuries. Perhaps the later was the residence of Dengizikh, who was Attila's son, who inherited Bleda (Hungarian Buda) territory from River Tisa to River Don. According to Jordanes, he led a campaign into Southern Pannonia, where the Ostrogoth rulers lived. The first attack was directed against Valamir. He probably lived in the easternmost region, so he was attacked by the Huns first. Jordanes said about this: "Now it happened that the sons of Attila, regarding the Goths as deserters from their rule, came against them as though recuperating their fugitive slaves and attacked Valamir alone, when his brothers didn't know about it. He sustained their attack, though he had but few supporters. After exhausting them in a long fight, he utterly overwhelmed them that hardly any enemy remained. The remnant fled to the parts of Scythia bordered by the waters of the river Danaber (Dnieper), which the Huns call in their own tongue the "War." [Jordanes: *Getica* 269]

According to researchers, the first campaign took place around 456-457, around two years after the Battle of Nedao. From the Lower Danube, it was not so difficult to reach Pannonia Secunda, or seat of Valamir. Because this Hun campaign was not successful,

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples: Khorenatsi, Agathangelos, Elishe. (Gmyrya 1995.)

Dengizikh attacked the Goths again in order to get his father's land back. The second campaign was directed against one of the Southern Pannonian cities, Bassianae.<sup>1</sup> It happened around 467/468. Jordanes mentioned: "When Dengizikh, king of the Huns, a son of Attila, learned this, he gathered to him the few who still seemed to have remained under his sway, namely, the Ultinzures, and Angisciri, the Bittugures and the Bardores. Coming to Bassianae, a city of Pannonia, he beleaguered it and began to plunder its territory. Then the Goths right away abandoned the expedition they had planned against the Sadagares, turned upon the Huns and drove them so ingloriously from their own land that those who remained have been in dread of the arms of the Goths from that time even down to the present day." [Jordanes: *Getica*, 273] The name of the city can be an important aspect regarding the location of the Ostrogoths and the main location of the conflict. It was situated in the eastern part of former Pannonia Secunda, near to Sirmium, which was the center of the province. Despite of the lost battles, the Huns did not disappear suddenly from the territory of the former Hun Empire. It seems that even after the defeats, Dengizikh did not give up recovering the former Hun territories. As Priscus noted he and his brother Hernac sent emissaries to Constantinople to sign a peace treaty and gain a marketplace for themselves on the Lower-Danube.

They wanted to make peace in around 465-466, provided that a marketplace be established at the Danube where "according to the ancient custom" Romans and Huns could exchange "what they needed."<sup>2</sup>

The request was rejected by the Romans. It seems that blackmailing with trade rights was one of the tools used not only by the Chinese Han Dynasty, but also by the Romans against the steppe peoples. They wanted to tie certain peoples to themselves with the right to open markets or by granting commercial advantages, for example for some friendly Huns and Goths who had settled in the region and had good relations with the Byzantines. The newcomer steppe tribes and even Dengizikh did not receive this support. Refusal of trade rights and benefits was a sensitive topic for the Huns, because the craftsmen and the herders of the former Hun empire produced similar products and there was competition between them to get them to the Roman market. [Obrusanszky (2021): 38-39]

Dengizikh attacked Thrace, plundered the cities and villages. When the Eastern Romans wanted to negotiate with him, he refused to meet the Roman commander of Thrace. He sent his envoy directly to the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo I. However, the Emperor replied to Dengizikh that if he personally came to him and accepted obedience, he would rethink the commercial rights. The Huns wanted to get revenge of the Eastern Romans. In the winter 466/467, the Huns crossed the frozen Danube and looted the province of Dacia on the Lower-Danube, then captured Serdica (today: Sofia) with an unexpected maneuver. Hormidac [Wolfram (1988): 266] and his Huns occupied the city. The Roman general Anthemius, who stationed in the area, besieged the city, and wished to starve the Huns. The Huns finally decided to leave the city and face the Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> Jordanes: *Getica* 272. It was an important ancient Roman town in Pannonia Secunda. It is located near present-day Donji Petrovci, a village in the Ruma municipality (Vojvodina, Serbia). Bassianae was the second largest town in Syrmia, after Sirmium.

<sup>2</sup> Helfen 1973. 166. According to Priscos of Panium's fragment.

Romans in an open battle. Hun horsemen were fighting on both sides. The Romans i.e. Anthemius won the battle. Hormidac eventually sued for peace. Walter Pohl assumed that the Hun troops attacked the Goths at the Danube Limes. Dengizikh's Huns probably occupied more and more territories in the Danube Delta, in the years of 468–69. Vaczy thinks, that Dengizikh wanted to settle down there.<sup>1</sup>

Undetermined Hun-Gothic divisions also threatened Thracia and the Roman territories in the Balkans. In the summer of 468 the imperial government issued new decrees against the use of “buccellarii, Isaurians, and armed slaves.” This would mean that there had been a considerable rise in the number of barbarians – and among them especially Goths and Huns-who sought their fortune in the Roman Empire.” [Wolfram (1988): 266]. One year later, in 469 a new battle took place between the Romans and Huns. Dengizikh, who personally led the troop was captured and beheaded. Marcellinus Comes briefly recorded: “The head of Dinzic, son of Attila, king of the Huns, was brought to Constantinople.” [Helfen (1973): 168]. After that, there was peace in the border areas for a short time. Many historians associate the final disappearance of the European Huns from this date. [Jordanes: *Getica*, 301]. It is true that Attila's son died in 469, but Dengizikh's territories haven't been occupied by either the Byzantines or the Goths. It is likely that it remained under Hun control, and it was ruled by one of Dengizikh's sons or relatives from Attila's clan. The Huns did not disappear from the historical sources at all. They just retreated from the borderland for a short period and did not attack the Eastern Roman Empire. We have information on them from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when the Huns attacked Thracia and Constantinople again. They could arrive from Lesser Scythia or the former kingdom of Dengizikh.

### District of Mundo

According to Jordanes, some groups of Huns also lived in the Balkans, the valley of the Morava River. They were united by one of Attila's sons, Mundo. Jordanes and later Byzantine sources mentioned him. Mundo's figure and origin have already generated many discussions among researchers dealing with the period, since we only have very sparse data about his life. Due to the diversity of his career, some scholars thought of the possibility that there were two Mundos: a robber leader who appeared near Sirmium around 505, who was descended from Attila, and a general who was *magister militum* of Illyrcum during Justinian's time. [Kiss P. (2014): 102]. Szádeczky-Kardoss made Mundo's family tree. According to that he could have been Attila's grandson. His grandmother's name is unknown. His father was Giesmos, his mother was Thraphstila. Mundo's son is Mauricius and his grandson is Thiudimund. [Szádeczky-Kardoss (1975): 166]. We have scarce documents about his deeds. Firstly, Jordanes recorded that: “...Now he sent the count of Pitza, chosen from among the chief men of his kingdom, to hold the city of Sirmium. He obtained it by driving out its king, Thrasaric, son of Thraustila, and holding his mother captive. From thence he came with two thousand infantry and five hundred horse to assist Mundo against Sabinian, the military

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<sup>1</sup>He crosses the frozen Danube in a chariot, meaning the entire people, women and children, follow his army. Accordingly, he does not come to raid, but to conquer, to gain a new homeland.

commander of Illyricum, who was then preparing to fight Mundo near a city called Margoplanum, which lies between the Danube and the Margus rivers, and thus defeated the army of Illyricum. For this Mundo, who came from Attila's clan, fled to the tribe of the Gepids, and wandered beyond the Danube in desolate places where no one tilled the soil. He gathered around him many outlaws, villains, and robbers from all sides, and occupied the tower called Herta, which stood on the bank of the Danube. He empowered himself to rob his neighbors and made himself king over vagabonds. Pitzia caught up with him when he was desperate to surrender. He rescued him from the hands of Sabinian, and made him a grateful subject of his king, Theodoric." [Jordanes: *Getica*, 301]. The story tells that Mundo stayed somewhere between the Danube and Morava (Margus) rivers. According to Theophanes' chronicle, his father's name was Giesmos. It is emphasized that the father held the dignity of "rex", i.e. he was considered a prince, or high-ranked leader among his people. According to the historical sources, after the death of his father, he went to live with his maternal uncle, Regas, who was the king of Sirmium. Based on historical sources, it seems that he may have been an important local ruler, because when Theoderich, King of Rome, heard of him, he sent an ambassador to persuade him to join his alliance. [Wolfram (1988): 322]

Both Jordanes and Theophanes recorded, that Mundo and his people joined the Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great (471-526), who gained great power in the Balkans and turned against his former allies, the Gepids. At that time, the Ostrogoths were already in a hostile relationship with the Gepids, due to territorial claims as both wanted to expand toward the Balkans. When the Ostrogoths gradually marched into Italy from the mid470s, the Gepids occupied the vacant parts of the Balkans, and resided in Sirmium. After that Theodoric unsuccessfully reclaimed his old possessions. He sent an army to the Sava to expel the Gepids out of there. Mundo probably recognized an opportunity and turned it to his own advantage: he offered his help to Theodoric and swore fealty to the Ostrogoth ruler. Such theory arose that Theodoric owed his success in Italy to Mundo's activity and campaign.<sup>1</sup> In 504, Theodoric the Great's general, Pitzia (Pitzamus), expelled the Gepid king Trasarik from Sirmium, who had inherited the power from his father, Trapstila. The following year, in 505, Pitzia of Sirmium sent two thousand infantry corps. Mundo sent to him five hundred horsemen. [Jordanes: *Getica*, 31]. According to the historical sources, he stayed in the fortress of Herta on the Danube and raided the neighboring lands as the leader of the so-called Scamaras. [Jordanes: *Getica*, 300]. Regarding Mundo's historical role, the Hungarian scholar Attila Kiss summarized the following: "It is conceivable that Theoderic's key to success was Mundo, a leader of half-Gepid-half-Hun origin. It is claimed by several scholars referring to the information of Malalas and Theophanes, because both sources mention that Mundo went to Italy to tempt Theoderich in 487." [Attila Kiss (2014)]. Based on the remaining descriptions, it seems likely that the lands acquired by Mundo at the beginning of the 6th century can be in the region of the confluence of the Danube and Morava, which legally belonged to Byzantium. The identification of Mundo's center, Herta's tower ("turris Herta"), is problematic, because there is no mention of a fortress elsewhere in the late antique sources. Diculescu explained the name Herta as a place name of Germanic origin, found

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<sup>1</sup> Pohl 19180. 291.

in Old Saxon "hërta" and in Old Norse in the form "hjarta", meaning: "centre", "palace". [Diculescu (1922): 114–115]

There is no information in the literature as to where Mundo's headquarters could have been, nor is the position of Herta's tower known. Maybe Herta is a special place name used by Goths only, but it is possible, that it had a Roman settlement before. [Prostko-Prostynski (1994): 230–231]. I agree with this theory, because of the location of the tower. The city was one of the important fortresses of antiquity, where the Huns and the Romans concluded the famous peace of Margum in 435. It is situated at the confluence of the Danube and Morava rivers. This place was an important crossing point on the Danube, in the Roman period. Around 449 a delegation led by Priscus of Panium also crossed the river there. According to the description, the Herta tower could be north of the Danube-Morava mouth, perhaps near the ancient city of Margum/Viminacium. Nearby at Kevevára (Kovin) was also a fortress called Castra Constantia, which was later referred to as Contra Margum, suggesting that it is located opposite the Roman city. The mouth of the Danube and the Morava offered an excellent opportunity for Mundo's attempt to become independent. The area was practically located at the junction of the borders of three powers - Byzantium, the Gepids and the Ostrogoths. Sarmatians and remnant of Huns might have been living nearby. The acquisition of the Danube-Morava area was made easier by the fact that no major Byzantine forces had been stationed in the otherwise neglected border region since the Huns.

Returning to Mundo's historical role, in the first half of the 6th century, he got a new ally: the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinianus I. With the help of Heruls, Mundo went to Constantinople with an escort to negotiate with the ruler. Mundo had been staying in Constantinople just at that time when the uprising of the circus parties broke out in 532, which went down in history as the "Nika revolt". The rebels, with weapons stolen from the armories, became masters of the city and already elected their own emperor. Then General Belisarius undertook to put down the rebellion. He needed determined people to put down the rebellion, so he took Mundo and his son, whom he nominated as the head of the cavalry. So, Attila's successor then changed his Asian name to a Latin one: Mundus, and his son took the name Mauricius. When war broke out between the Byzantines and the Goths in 533, Belisarius chose him as one of his lieutenants. The recklessness of the Hun general knew no bounds, he defeated the Ostrogoths and occupied Dalmatia. However, the Goths wanted to regain Salona,<sup>1</sup> which was a strategic point in the region. When news of the approach of the Goths spread, Mundo sent his son Mauricius with troops to keep an eye on them. However, the young man disobeyed the order and attacked the enemy, cutting through their ranks. The Goths surrounded him and slaughtered everyone, including Mauricius. When Mundo learned of this, he and his soldiers attacked the Goths and defeated them. However, one of the Goths recognized Mundo on the battlefield and stabbed him with his sword.<sup>2</sup> The event may have taken place in 536.

### Odoacer, German or Hun?

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<sup>1</sup> Near modern Split (Croatia).

<sup>2</sup> Procopius The Gothic War Book I. 5. He called Mundo as Mundus.

It was a title of a study has been published by Robert L. Reynolds; Robert S. Lopez in 1946. Unfortunately, nobody paid an attention to this for a long time.

In most publications, Odoaker's father, Edicon, was mentioned as king of the Sciri, suggesting that he was of Germanic origin. (We note that the exact ethnic affiliation of the Sciri is not known.) However, Priscus of Panium, who knew Attila's confidant well, wrote that he was of Hun origin: "Orestes is just servant and scribe of Attila, but Edicon as an excellent warrior in wars and a Hun, so he stands far above Orestes." [Priskos (2014): 11]

The authors stated that Odoacer was Hun by birth, and he belonged to the royal line of the Huns. In recent years, researchers have also dealt with the origin of Edikon and Odoaker. Patrick Amory explains that "Odoacer is called a Scirian, a Rugian, a Goth or a Thuringian in sources; his father is called a Hun, his mother a Scirian. Odoacer's father Edeco was associated first with the Huns under Attila, and then with a group called Sciri, an ethnographic name that appears intermittently in fifth-century sources. [Amory (1997): 282]. Erik Jensen thought that Odoacer was born to a Gothic mother and that his father Edeco was a Hun. [Jensen (2018): 16]

In order to discover the possible origin of Odoacer, let's start the investigation with the most authentic Roman source, the report of Priscus of Panium, who himself visited the capital of the Hun Empire and met Attila. We must emphasize that, he learned quite a lot about Hun internal politics and relations, by negotiating with local authorities. Odoacer's title is mentioned in the sources as follows: "Odoacer, genere Rogus, Thorcilingorum, Scirorum, Herolum turbas munitus." [Jordanes Getica 242; Jordanes Rom. 44; L. Reynolds-Lopez (1946): 44] or "Odowacar, Torcilingorum rex, habens secum Sciros, Herulos." Reynold-Lopez stated that Torcilingi was a clan name, which meant Toghrul or Toghril or falcon, which is a very popular name in the steppe region (Seljuk Turks had a ruler, whose name was Toghrul, the Mongolian Kereit ruler's name was Tooril, etc.). Not only the above-mentioned authors, but Cesare Balbo was the first, who thought that the name Torcilingi was from the Turks (or steppe tribes). The author, Reynold-Lopez mentioned another important information about Odoacer's origin and family relationship i.e. that he might belong to the royal clan of the Huns. "Genere Rogus" has a meaning: Rogus clan. It may refer to Rugas/Rua, king of Huns, before Attila. If we put this two information together, it could mean that the name of the Hunnic royal clan was Toghrul. Exactly the same information can be found in the Hungarian historical chronicles, they called the royal clan of the Hungarians (Árpád) as de genere Turul, who also derived themselves from Attila.<sup>1</sup> According to the rhetorician Priscus, Edicon, who was of Hun origin, was the king of the Sciris. That's why later in the literature he began to refer to him as Germanic by origin, although it was very common for conquered people to be ruled by a different nationality. Attila was also the king of the Germans, even though he was not a German. Let us return to the story of Odoacer and his family. So, his father is Edicon, Attila's confidant and statesman, who participated in the 451 Battle of Catalaunum. After Attila's death, he stayed in Pannonia for a while. Niles mentioned that he became king of the Danubian Scirians in the aftermath of Attila's

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<sup>1</sup> Kézai: Gesta Hungarorum. Appendix 1. Chapter 1. 1.

death. He participated in the great battle against the Ostrogoths in 468, at the Boilo-river, where he lost his life. Edica's sons then fled that region. Odoacer's older brother was named 'Hunulf,' (shortened form of 'Hun-wulf') first became commander-in-chief of Illyria, then joined Odoacer in Ravenna and became his right-hand man. [Niles (2022): 394]. Odoacer eventually moved to Italy around 470, and gained control over much of it. After the overthrow of the Western emperor Julius Nepos by the Roman general Orestes (475), he elected his son as the Emperor of the Western Roman Empire and named Romulus Augustulus. Odoacer led revolt against Orestes in 476, he proclaimed himself king by his troops, and five days later Orestes was captured and executed in Placentia (now Piacenza), Italy. Odoacer then deposed and exiled Orestes' young son, the emperor Romulus Augustulus. Odoacer's aim was to keep the administration of Italy in his own hands while recognizing the overlordship of the Eastern emperor. Zeno granted him the rank of patrician, but Odoacer styled himself "King." His rule in Italy was threatened by the Eastern Romans and the Ostrogoths. The Eastern Roman Emperor Zeno did not want to lose the valuable province, that's why he appointed Theodoric as a king of Italy and sent him there to protect his interest from the "barbarian tribes". Theodoric invaded Italy in 489 and by August 490 he had captured almost the entire peninsula, forcing Odoacer to take refuge in Ravenna. The city surrendered on March 5, 493. After that Theodoric invited Odoacer to a banquet and there he killed him. Theodoric exiled Odoacer's son Thela to Gaul, but when he attempted to return to Italy Theodoric had him killed. With the death of Odoaker, we hear no more about the Torcilingi family in the historical chronicles, their name is preserved in a few family names in the Balkans.

### **The Sekler Tradition About the Huns**

It is clear from Jordanes' description that significant Hun groups of people could survive and remained in the vast area north of the Lower-Danube, especially in Wallachia (today: Romania) and north of it. Unfortunately, there are only few contemporary descriptions about the areas north of the Danube, such as Wallachia or Transylvania regions because it was out of interest for Eastern Roman Empire. As Jordanes wrote, Huns appeared everywhere after the collapse of the great empire, some of them sought a new homeland in the Eastern Roman territory. The text only mentioned the migration towards the south and the former Roman territories, the early medieval sources did not mention how many Huns left for the north. However, we can find an extremely interesting tradition in Transylvania (former Hungarian Kingdom, today: Romania). Hernac's relatives Emnetzur and Ultzindur -mentioned by Jordanes - occupied Utus, Hiscus and Almus in coastal Dacia.<sup>1</sup> A Hungarian traveler and scholar Balázs Orbán wrote about them the followings: "Vargyas is one of our most beautiful villages. In the lower half, there is the beautiful courtyard originally occupied by the Dániel family. The upright and enthusiastic patriot Dániel Gábor lives there, chief royal officer of Udvarhelyszék. The Dániel family is one of the famous primordial families from which many famous people originates. Columbán Ferenc Apaffi's<sup>2</sup> adviser, his family lineage

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<sup>1</sup> Now: Northern-Bulgaria. Jordanes: *Getica* 266.

<sup>2</sup> He was Prince of Transylvania.

goes all the way back to the era of the collapse of the Hun Empire, when 3,000 Seklers from the final battlefield settled in the eastern part of Transylvania under the leadership of Elmedzar and Uzindur. The mentioned leaders bore the title of Bayan or ban (whence the rabonban). Their direct successor was Póka (hence Pókafalva and Póka family in Póka, Galambfalva), followed in 565 by the enormously powerful Colon, whose name combined with his official title became Colonban, who was the forerunner of the Columbans of Olasztelek. This was done by Orbó (seat of Orba) in 631, and again by Ugron (ancestor of the Ugron family). This is followed by Ders (the village of that name), Kebe (the village of Kebeled), Bebők and finally Uzon (the village of Uzon), who led the Hungarians that came with Tuhutum to Des in 743." [Orbán 1982. I. *XLVII. Vargyas*]. Not only the Sekler scholar from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but a 6th century Byzantine chronicler, Agathias also mentioned the Ultizur Huns. He wrote that the Ultizur and Burgundian Huns were still well known at the time of Emperor Leo, but today we don't know them anymore, they probably either perished or migrated to the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> So, perhaps Sekler tradition can confirm Agathias' assumption that some Hun tribes migrated elsewhere, to a place that was outside the Byzantine sphere of interest. After the Romans withdrew their troops from Transylvania (the old province of Dacia) in around 270, the area was no longer of interest to the Romans, which means that they did not report on the peoples who lived there and the events that happened there. So, they did not harass the former Roman territories with their incursions, and the sources did not write more about them.

There is other information about some Huns, which has been preserved by ancient Hungarian chronicles.<sup>2</sup> It is said that 3000 people escaped from the Battle of Krimhilda, who then migrated into Transylvania as their new homeland. From that time, they were called as Seklers instead of Huns. [Chronicum Pictum (1986): 19]. The Sekler Chronicle of Csiki also states the same, in which it is said that Alpine Dacia was occupied by the most valiant people, the Seklers, after the disintegration of Attila's Empire. Both sources claimed that Attila's son Aladar had retreated to Transylvania and brought the Huns under his control. Aladar is known not only by the above works, but also by Sekler people near the village of Dobó in Seklerland, Transylvania. They had an interesting case. In the beginning of the 19th century, the Vargyas family wanted to acquire the territories of the free Seklers, but the villagers did not give it to them, and went to court. On 14 January 1807, the Dobó villagers testified under oath in front of the court that they received their territories from Aladar, the son of Attila, who arrived in the area with his remaining armies in 445. [Benkő (2018): 84; Fehér (2014): 531]. It was recorded in a protocol. Based on Sekler legal custom, the Dobó people were the original occupants of the area, so the Vargyas family had no right to take it. So, there are several independent sources

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<sup>1</sup> "But their stay was destined to be a brief one, and at the end of it they vanished without leaving any trace of themselves. This fact is illustrated by the case of the Ultizurs and the Burugundi who were well-known right up to the time of the Emperor Leo and were considered a force to be reckoned with, but whom we in our day and age neither know nor, I imagine, are likely to, since they have either perished or migrated to the ends of the earth." Agathias Book 5. 11.4.

<sup>2</sup> All Hungarian chronicles from the 13-15th centuries recorded the same stories. (Chronicum Pictum, Kezai's Gesta Hungarorum, Thuroczi's chronicle, etc.)



confirming that a part of the Huns retreated to Transylvania and lived there during the Avar period.

Archbishop Antal Verancsics of Esztergom wrote the following in the 16th century: "No one doubts that the Seklers are of Hun origin. The story of their origin is as follows: we find in the Hungarian chronicles that King Attila, as he lived more than 125 years,<sup>1</sup> left behind more than 60 children, of whom two stood out, Chaba and Aladar; both of them were considered mature for their age, similar to their father in spiritual virtues and strictness, and superior to the others, and they rightly decided that one of them would succeed his father in the kingdom... Their morals are not completely unpolished, but the Scythian crudeness can still be seen in them and in almost all their habits. They differed from the Hungarians in their laws and way of life, except for religion. Even their language is not quite the same, for they speak like the ancients. Instead of letters, they carve square marks on sticks and the line is led from right to left, like the Jews, Egyptians, and Turks. One or two of these signs, with the addition of a few points, mean more than the number of types would suggest. It is common knowledge among the residents there that the Huns used these signs." [Verancsics (1944) Liber III. 138-142]

The easternmost Hungarians, or Seklers had their own chronicles, e.g. Sekler Chronicle of Chiki. It is said that the Huns continued to live in Seklerland and their name of the leader was Rabonban, who lived in the castle of Attila's brother, Buda: "The residence of Rabonban was Budvár, which old Rabonban Buda Nabu Fileim had built before Attila's empire fell... " [Csiki Sekler Chronicle, 25]. The ruins of this fortress still stands in Szekelyudvarhely (today: Odorheiu Secuiesc), moreover interesting stories are still told about Attila and Buda by locals, as well as they keep Budvar fortress as their own sacred center. According to some chronicles report, Seklers waited for Árpád's arrival, received them in Ruthenia, made an alliance with them. Not only the Sekler tradition, but almost all Hungarian historical sources from the Middle Ages mentioned that the Seklers went to receive the incoming army of Árpád on the eastern border of the Carpathians and made an alliance with them.<sup>2</sup>

In the chronicle of *Gesta Hungarorum*, Seklers fought not only in the western ends, but also in other areas of Transylvania for establishing the new Hungarian kingdom! The *Chronicum Pictum* also provided an important data. It says that since the Seklers fought on the side of Prince Árpád to conquer Pannonia, for this then they received land in the Pannonia.<sup>3</sup>

The consciousness of their Hun origin is still very strong among the Sekler people. Nowadays dozens of legends mention Huns, Attila's youngest son, King Chaba, or Attila's wife, Queen Réka. Those legends had been collecting since the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recently ethnographer Zoltán Magyar collected many historical tales from living Transylvanian people and from old publications in Hungarian journals. [Magyar (2011)]. It says that the Hunyad castle was built by the Huns (today: Bánffyhunyad) and local

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<sup>1</sup> He confused names of Ethie and Etele (Attila), two kings of Huns, that's why he calculated 125 years. Ethie was Attila's great-grandfather.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronicum Pictum* 27. Kézai: *Gesta Hungarorum* Book I. Chapter III. 6. etc.

<sup>3</sup> The reason the Sekler got land is an ancient custom of nomadic people: the blood contract. Anonymus compiled the points of the mid-meal agreement, it includes the provision of joint distribution of the common prey.

folklore mentioned that the Huns crossed the Királyhágó (King's pass), which is situated in between Nagyvárad and Kolozsvár (today: Oradea and Cluj)<sup>1</sup> and they established the castle there. There are also several legends about the Huns in Erdővidék. In the border of the village Vargyas, we can find the symbolic grave of Queen Réka, who was the main wife of King Attila. According to a local legend, she had died there in a terrible accident. [L. Obrusanszky (2016): 112-113]. They could have also settled in the nearby settlements like Bibarcfalva, Erdőfüle and Nagybacon. But the Seklers who lived in Bereck near the Ojtozi Gorge also said that they were descendants of the Huns. After Frigyes Pesty's<sup>2</sup> description of the Hungarian cities and settlement of the Carpathian basin, Balázs Orbán traveled through Seklerland and summarized the data collected about the region in six volumes, including local legends about the Huns. The great Sekler scholar mentioned, among other things, the names of Attila's road and Attila's well at Bodzaforduló, [Orbán 168. IV] where the Huns are said to have moved into the Carpathians. In addition, he immortalized many sayings related to the Huns.

### Conclusion

From the list above, we can see that there are so many memories of the Huns left in the local people's memory, which cannot be classified as fiction. Nobody had a doubt about the tradition of the Hungarians and the Seklers until the second half of the 19th century, when the Habsburgs began to attack the ancient history of Hungarians to divide them from the oriental world, mainly from the neighboring Ottomans, who assisted the Hungarians. The 19th-century German historian Robert Roesler also questioned the authenticity of the Hungarian Hunnic tradition, and instead came up with a completely new theory in which he emphasized the historical role of the Goths and tried to minimize the role of the Huns. Roesler's followers, such as Pál Hunfalvy, declared that after Attila's death the Huns had all but disappeared from the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe, with not a trace of them remaining. In his work "Ethnography of Hungary", published in 1876, Hunfalvy explained the Hunnic tradition that it had been written by German missionaries for Hungarians. However, there is no evidence for that, because the stories in the Hungarian chronicles are not found in any German historical chronicles or legends. Regarding the origin of the Seklers, Hunfalvy claimed that they were late immigrants, who worked as border guards in Transylvania. [Hunfalvy (1876)]. Even his contemporaries objected to Hunfalvy's views, especially the Sekler origin Jakab Elek and Orbán Balázs, who presented some evidence for the real tradition of the Hungarians. József Thúry, renowned Historian-Turkologist argued for the authenticity of the Hungarian national tradition and refuted Hunfalvy's theses in detail. Significant Hungarian orientalists of the second half of the 19th century expressed their opposition to Hunfalvy's position. The studies of Gábor Bálint, Géza Nagy, and Bernát Munkácsi attempted to give Hun research a new direction and prove Hun-Hungarian relations with historical and linguistic data. In the journal edited by Munkácsi, Keleti Szemle, excellent foreign studies were published that provided new data on the Huns, such as Fridrich

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<sup>1</sup> It was the main road of the former Hungarian Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Pesty

Hirth's study entitled *Attila's Family Tree*, or the Japanese linguist Shiratori Kuragichi's treatise on the Hunnic language and dignified names. From the beginning of the 20th century, the research of such distinguished researchers as Thomsen, Marquart, Bury, etc. put the culture and history of the peoples of Eastern and Central Europe and the Caucasus in a completely new light, in which the Huns were also mentioned.

In recent decades, excavations have been carried out in the territory of present-day Romania, and archaeologists have also excavated findings related to the Huns in present-day Seklerland. It is clear, that Hun artifacts and even traces of settlements have been found around present-day Seklerland, which prove that Huns lived in the area. [Harhoiu (1997)]. Since the area is extremely isolated due to the high mountains, it is possible that Hun communities could have lived there for hundreds of years. There is countless evidence of the Szekler connection with the East, the Huns. Such is the ethnographic evidence, such as the symbolic rebirth, the use of the scarf, the tradition of looking at the sun, the cult of the Sun and the Moon, We must mention the folklore tradition, where we can find outstanding parallels with Inner Asia (divination from 41 stones, lead casting, etc.), [Obrusanszky (2023), Obrusanszky (2024)] but research into legal customs also proves that the Seklers are connected to the Huns and their descendants in many ways.

In 2024, several studies suggested the Hun origin of the Seklers. Hakan Aydemir, based on Chinese sources, proved that the earliest settlement area of the ancestors of the Seklers was in the northern part of today's Mongolia. [Aydemir (2023)]. Archaeogenetics began to be interested in the origin of Seklers. A study from 2023 presented 115 whole mitogenomes and 92 Y-chromosomal Short Tandem Repeat (STR) and Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) profiles from a Hungarian ethnic group, the Seklers (in Romanian: Secuii, in German: Sekler), living in southeast Transylvania (Romania). Phylogenetic analyses confirmed the presumed eastern origin of certain maternal (A, C, D) and paternal (Q, R1a) lineages, and, in some cases, they could also be linked to ancient DNA data from the Migration Period (5th–9th centuries AD) and Hungarian Conquest Period (10th century AD) populations. [Borbely (2023)]

Karl O. Högström's publication as Huns in Scandinavia revealed the migration of the Huns northward via Poland.

Attila's Huns left an indelible mark on Europe. In addition to the above-mentioned documents, he is one of the main characters in northern Germanic epics. The Huns enriched Europe with many new elements. In my short summary above, I presented only a few important documents that proved the survival of the Huns in the central regions of Europe. Although the great Hun empire was divided into parts, their regional political role remained, and they were still considered an important factor in the European region. Their memory has survived to this day among the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin, who consider themselves descendants of the Huns. I believe that new research results will soon prove that Attila's people made a real historical impact on the continent and on the people's way of life.

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