

A LINK BETWEEN HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC TIMES: THE SYMBOLIC WRITING SYSTEM

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As early as 1850, H.C. Rawlinson stated that the earliest cuneiform writings in Mesopotamia are in the Scythian language. Subsequent studies by scientists from various part of the world have demonstrated the relationship between the Sumerian and Ural-Altai languages from the structural point of view. The problem of the Hungarian-Sumerian linguistic relationships is a difficult one because there is a considerable time lapse between the latest Sumerian writings and the earliest Hungarian text and there is not a continuous sequence of linguistic documents on which to base the phonetic and grammatical history.

In hopes of overcoming these difficulties, certain statistical methods were recently developed; in particular, the one known as the «glottochronological method» developed by Hymes (1960), who published and discussed, (among other things), a 100-word list for basing upon it evaluations of lexical relationships. My research in this field continues along the same lines as these previous efforts. The procedure was as follows: first, the more distant languages of agglutinative character had been excluded, then, the similar diagnostic items of the basic vocabulary in the Uralic and Altaic languages were sought, paying special attention to rules regarding sound changes. Hymes 100-item-test list was used. In order to eliminate conformities due to chance, only those morphemes with the same meanings as basic vocabulary items were considered; when there are parallels both in morpheme and in meaning, between the Uralic and the Altaic languages, the probability that it is due to chance is slight. The tables constructed by this complex (polygonal) method, show a direct line from around 5,000 years ago to the present.

After the publication of my paper on Sumerian-Ural-Altai affinities in *Current Anthropology*, (1971), some scholars wanted to see the word list I used: I published it in *Magyar Mult* (1972a), and recently (1976a), a revised and completed version of my paper came out in Hungarian. In the last of the papers mentioned above, I presented the results of the glottochronological examination: there are 63 Sumerian and 12 Akkadian words in the Hungarian language of today.

After these necessary references to previous publications, I wish to present some further considerations.

Prof. I.M. Diakonoff of Leningrad University, explored both the lexical and the grammatical structure of the *Hurri* and *Urartu* languages which contain a good deal of Sumerian elements. In the historical-geographical section of his book (1971) he outlined a horse riding people from the southern part of the Caucasus, the *Subir* (Su-bar-to). In the IVth millennium B.C. they practiced writing, mine working, metallurgy, smithery, draining, husbandry, glass making and town building techniques.

On the basis of these considerations, Csöke (1973) provided evidence that the *Hurri* and *Urartu* languages can be considered as the bases of the Uralic and Altaic languages and that Sumerian is their archaic form.

Another Soviet scholar, A.B. Dolgopolski (1973), found similar links between the Hamitic-Kushic, Ural-Altaiic, Dravidian, Sumerian, Semitic, Indo-European, Elamian and some Caucasian languages that existed more than 10,000 years ago. Mrs. Hary (1975) reviewed similar statements of Hungarian scholars who were not sufficiently appreciated in their days.

«New lines for a correct Sumerian phonetics to conform with the cuneiform scripts» a paper read at the XXIX International Congress of Orientalists in Paris, by Francisco Jos Badiny (1974, p. 74), rose much attention. The author put the questions: «Is it at all possible to use the Sumerian vocabulary left in their transcriptions by Assyro-Babylonian writers, as a spoken language; could the Sumerians use the so-registered homophonic lexical material?». And further: «Is the grammer that we believe to decipher from the scripts, really of the living Sumerian of that time?». Following the opinion of René Labat, Raymond Jestin (1951) declared: «The problems of the Sumerian language can be solved neither with the aid of Semitic nor with that of Indo-European language».

In a personal letter (1953), prof. A. Deimel wrote: «I haven't the slightest difficulty in accepting the fact that Hungarian and Sumerian are related languages». According to Badiny: «60% of the monosyllabic Sumerian words are in present day Hungarian, with similar sound and meaning; the present-day Hungarian has the same agglutinative structure as the Sumerian; the same linguistic idiosyncrasies can be found in Sumerian and in Hungarian alike».

Therefore, I would strongly advise that the Hungarian language be used to restore the Sumerian language and also, to help clarify problems otherwise posed in the Sumerian (the same can be done with Akkadian and Hebrew).

So far, the Sumerian language has been studied in the context of Assyriology. Emphasis has been mostly put on the Akkadian language. The study of Sumerian is of importance because: 1) the Akkadian script is copied from Sumerian «cuneiform»; 2) the Akkadian texts contain a great deal of Sumerian expressions («sumerogramms»), the majority of which are missing in Akkadian, indicating the use of Sumerian sound and meaning-value by the Akkadians.

Lehmann (1892) must have come to the same conclusions when he said that «Semitic Babylon uses a great many Sumerian words, the same is true for the Sumerians using Semitic words». Perhaps Kramer made the same considerations when he said: «Sumerian has many similarities with such agglutinative languages as Turkish, Hungarian and some Caucasian languages» (1963, p. 306).

Sumerian is unique amongst the languages of the Ancient Middle East in being agglutinative (Hawkes & Woolley, 1964). Nevertheless only the non agglutinative Hebrew is used by scholars of comparative analysis as a basis for their studies of the Sumerian language. This system might concern Akkadian — it is also a Semitic language but not agglutinative — but it can not be applied to Sumerian. Considering historical and archeological evidences, Badiny decides that the starting point of the Sumerian culture and ethnic movements to the north must have been *SUBIR-KI* — the territory spreading over *URI-KI* or *AGADE*.

That is, the «Royal Title» of the kings of «Sumer and Akkad» — «Kings of the Four Quarters», already owned by Lugalannemundu, king of Adab (2,600 B.C.). It surges from the correspondence between Aradmu and Shulgi, the latter having sent an expedition to the north, the name of the people and territory in mention was *SUBAR* or *SUBIR* (Kramer, 1963, pp. 231-32).

According to the Armenian historians (Byzant. Faust, M. Chorene, Indsidian, Mechitar) «A *SABAR*, *SUBAR* or *SABIR* people existed in Urartu, living close to the Hurrians». «Hurrian has genetic and linguistic affinities only with Urartian, the language of ancient Armenia». «The Hurrians flourished from the middle of the third to the end of second millenium B.C. Their greatest political accomplishment was the Mitani Empire... Mitani dominated Assyria and *NUZI*... prior to the mass Hurrian settlement, the place was occupied by different Subarean ethnic groups (The Interpreters)».

The identity of the Subarean people with the Hurrians is advocated by Oppenheim and Ungnad, but Semitic linguists (Speiser and Gelb) say otherwise. From ancient times it is possible to identify Armenia (in the «Northern Quarter of the Sumerian Royal Title») as the Subarean (Subir - Sabir people), which must have played an important role in Mesopotamian political life, as they may have settled in *NUZI*.

We already know that Assyrian cruelty and the continual growth of Semitic power in Mesopotamia forced them to move northward. They founded «Sabiria» in the neighbourhood of Armenia and finally crossed the Caucasus (Padanyi 1963). We may deduce, from the cronicles of the Assyrian Kings and the bronze reliefs of the Gates of Balavat, how the Assyrians destroyed the northern Subirki-peoples and occupied Urartu.

Patkanow (1900) expressed the opinion that the Subar-Sabir people are Hungarian tribes. Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos called the Hungarians «Sabartoi asphaltoi» (Moravcsik, 1970). Macartney (1930) comes nearest to the truth in ascertaining that «Sabartoi» is identical with the North-Mesopotamia *Subartu* (Subir-ki) and *Asphaltoi* is «only the usual Greek epitheton ornans» (Badiny, 1974, pp. 68-69; pp. 72-73).

C. Gostony (1975, pp. 58-111) sees in the ward «*asphaltoi*» the Sumerian *usbar*, a composition of *us* (blood) and *bar* (body, skin), meaning: relative, descendant on matrilineal line.

The Subarians expanding to the north, reached Siberia which received its name from the Sabir people (Diakonoff, 1971) like the city in western Hungary: Szombathely, received the latin name Sabaria in the frame of the Roman Empire on account of the Sabar (Savir, Savard) population settled in that area. Later a Hun-Sabir ethnic group founded Kazaria (Artamonov, 1962; Avgijev, 1960), near the territory where Soviet archaeologists excavated the ruins of Szuvar, on the shores of the Volga.

Considering these ethnic movements we may conclude that the Subarian language must have left its traces in archaeological finds too: for instance the rock inscriptions at Behistun. Behistun is a giant, towering rock, slightly to the east of the midpoint between Lake Van and the Persian Gulf. The cuneiform inscriptions there are positioned below and by the side of a large relief depicting the victory of Darius the 1st over ten of his enemies. Today it is known that they were written in Old-Persian (Neo-Elamite), Median and Assyro-Babylonian, the three major languages spoken by the population of the Persian Empire. The second language of the trilingual inscription was also spoken in and around Susa and is therefore named Neo-Elamite. Its decipherers (Westergaard, 1844; Hincks, 1857; Rawlinson, 1847; Norris, 1852) established that it was also agglutinative as Hungarian and Turkish, they were of the opinion that it was spoken by the Medians and that is related to the languages spoken by Scythian or Turanian

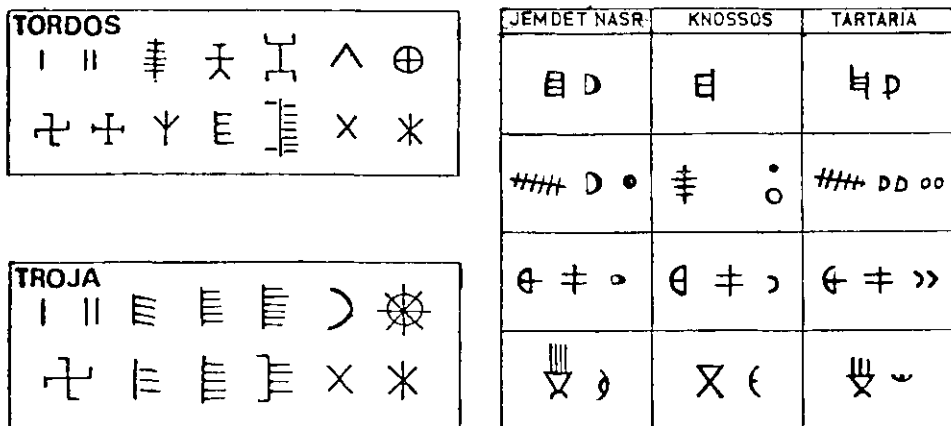


Fig. 4
Charts comparing standard pictograms from Tordos, Troja Jemdet Nasr, Knossos and Tartaria.

peoples (Érdy 1974, p. 50). According to Oppert — says Érdy — «the contemporary people whose language was placed in the distinguished second position had to be the Turanian Medes, who had played a very important role in vanquishing Assyria. He confirmed this by the argument that the Medes called themselves Mada which is an ancient Turanian word meaning land and country in Sumerian. The same word was the source of the geographic name of Media and of the ethnic name of its inhabitants» (Érdy 1974, p. 51).

Oldjas Suleimanov provides new evidence of the linguistic affinities between the Sumerian and the Turkish. He presents, not only parallels in the lexical material, but similarities in the religious beliefs, customs, rituals, burial traditions, ethnic arts and practices. He regrets that Western scholars in their enthusiasm for Indo-European history, show no concern for the languages and cultural history of Asia (cf. Avgijev, 1960).

G.J. Pelih proves the affinity of the Sumerian and Selcoup languages mainly in the religious beliefs, burial customs, particularly in the Narimi archaic area.

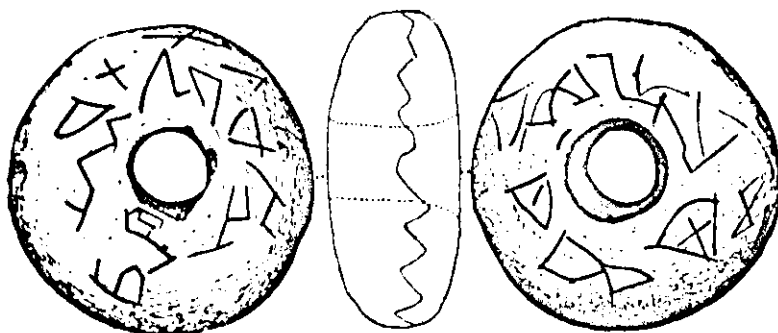


Fig. 5
Fish-net weight with pictograms from Tordos.

The Reguly Vogul collection, gathered in the last century, gives proof of the high cultural level in which they lived earlier (Orban, 1975). In these poems, hymns and prayers — in stylistical forms very similar to the Sumerian ones — the people and their leaders present themselves as having known the writing, «the book, the metallurgy, smithery, husbandry, town and house-building» (Bobula, 1960). It is known, that this cultural wave coming from the south met the dolichocephalic European «race» in the area of Ananino (Baráth, 1974). In Finland not only the name of their own country, Suomi, but also the linguistic vestiges, point to the south (Helmi, 1973).

C. Gostony presents his arguments and other proofs in his demonstration table (1975, pp. 194-202).

In Tartaria (Tatárlak), Transylvania, in 1963 Nicolae Vlassa excavated a Neolithic settlement where he found three tablets from the 5th millennium B.C. On these tablets there are pictographic writings similar to those discovered at Lepenski Vir in Yougoslavia by D. Srejovic (Badiny, 1974, pp. 33-38).

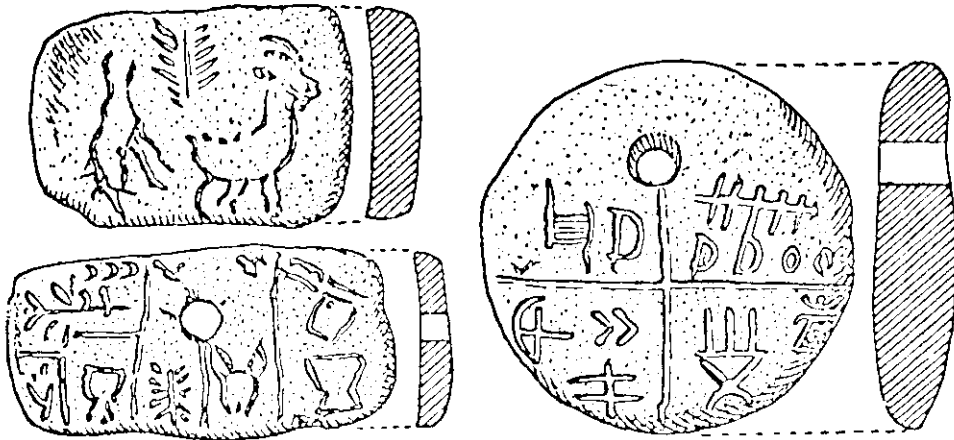


Fig. 6
Three Sumerian-type, pictographic clay tablets excavated by N. Vlassa in 1961 at Tatarlak (Tartaria, Transylvania), 18 km. from Zsofia Torma's site at Tordos. Ca. 2/3 of original size (after Vlassa, 1963).

Near to Tartaria, in Tordos, the Hungarian archaeologist Zs. Torma, in the second half of the past century, found ca. 10,000 Neolithic pieces of Körös-culture (Kalicz, 1970) much of them with pictographic-symbolic writing. Sumerologists making an examination of these Tartaria inscriptions stated that the writing is a thousand years older than similar finds unearthed in Mesopotamia at Djemdet Nasr. Boris Perlov (1975) commented on the statement at the Soviet Academy of Sciences and concluded: the presumerian pictographic-symbolic writing, as it seems, moved from the Karpathian basin toward the south. The Sumerian language however presented itself about the 3rd millenium B.C. in an unfolded although transitional writing stage. A. Kifisin, a Soviet sumerologist, ascertains, that the earlier common Eurasian symbolic system with its ca 70 symbol-families dissolved in the 7th millennium B.C. on account of the polifeminsation. Thus the development of the writing guides us back to the 8th millennium, when the Scythic world began to move towards the est and south

with the Turanian peoples (A. Endrey, 1975). As far as the rest goes the Tartaria writing is very similar to the symbols of the ancient Hungarian writing system (Zakar, 1976, cf. Telegdi, 1558).

As for the name «Scythian», C. Gostony (1975) deduces it from the Sumerian *sag + ud — da* = bright head = Sumerian, the name through which the Sumerians denoted themselves. The latin name of the arms of the Scythians (*sagitta*), seems to come from the name of the people (*Sagudda*) who were the first to use the arrow as the main weapon of the whole nation. Considering the spreading out of the Scythians, it is not difficult to understand that their basic language reached Lappland, China (Sajnovics, 1972), the Indus valley, the Indonesian and Pacific Islands (Hevesy, 1932; Uxbond, 1928; Vámos, 1976). There are some scholars who state therefore, that the Hungarian (*Magyar*) is one of the archaic languages of the world (Kemény, 1975).

Idrite looking for the vestiges of the Magyars (cf.: Mada and Kiengir - Hengar - Hungar) in Tibet Körösi Csoma (Terjék, 1971), stated: «the study of the Sanscrit language, together with Hungarian, is more fruitful for scholars than any other language». The affinities of the two languages is not only evident in the lexical material but also in the structure of nouns and verbs; these two languages do not use praepositions (but postpositions), nor auxiliary verbs (Tudományos Gyűjtemény, 1836, p. 129, Körösi, 1834).

That the great language-families have common roots was already known a long time ago. Even now we see, how harmful it was to obstruct the investigation of the affinities of languages on a large scale. Especially in Hungary this was quite tragic. Unfortunately linguistic and historical studies are often conditioned by political motivations.

After the defeat of the Kossuth's war of independence by the Austrian-Russian army in 1849, the Austrian government attempted to oppress not only the military but also the spiritual resistance of the Magyars. The previous reform-generation led by Count Széchenyi would have saved and foster the precious Hungarian traditions in historiography and literature. Contrary to this, Bach, the Austrian minister of the Interior, forced an Indoeuropean line into the scientific life. «The population was still terrorized by endless executions and political oppression. The political and cultural centers became empty. The flourishing academic life of the country came to a halt. What little was still going on was to be forced to function as a pendant of the political power... Absolutism attacked the Hungarian Academy too. The police chief of Budapest called upon Count József Teleki, President of the Academy, on October 13, 1853 instructing him that the learned society founded by Széchenyi must change its constitution and then request his approval...». After a lengthy hassle, the new constitution was approved in February 1858, but with changes that threatened the national character of the Academy.

In 1876 Ágoston Trefort, minister of Education, convoked the Hungarian linguists and declared: «We don't *need* Asian but European relatives, therefore in future scholarship, college posts, journeys abroad for purposes of study, will be accorded only to those who are working along the lines of the Finno-Hungarian affinity». Administrative measures of this kind contributed to the foundation of an exclusive Finno-Ugric linguistic relationship (Hary 1975, p. 94).

This anti-Turanian trend in the Indoeuropean linguistic circles is still dominating today, although the last slaughter on a large scale was instituted by Indogermans

and not by Turanians. Sayce (1908) pointed out: «European scholars had long been nursing the comfortable belief that the white race primarily and the natives of Europe secondarily, were *ipso-facto* superior to the rest of mankind and to them belonged of right the origin and development of civilization. The discovery of the common parentage of the Indo-European languages had come to strengthen the belief that in Sanscrit we had found, if not the primeval language, at least a language that was very near to it and idyllic pictures were painted of the primitive Aryan community living in its Asiatic home and already possessed of the elements of its later culture. Outside and beyond it were the Barbarian «races», yellow and brown and black, with oblique eyes and narrow foreheads, whose intelligence was not much above that of the brute beasts. Such culture as some of them may have had, was derived from the white race and perhaps spoilt in the borrowing. The idea of the rise of a civilization outside the limits of the white race was regarded as a paradox».

It was exactly this paradox to which the first decipherers of Assyrian cuneiform found themselves forced. Another paradox was added to it: not only did the civilization of the Euphrates and Tigris originate among the race that spoke an agglutinative language and therefore was neither Aryan nor Semitic but, further, the civilization of the Semitic Babylonians and Assyrians was borrowed from this older civilization along with the cuneiform system of writing (Érdy, 1974, pp. 375-376). It seemed impossible that so revolutionary a doctrine could be true and Semitic philologists naturally denounced it. For centuries, Hebrew had been supposed to have been the language of Paradise and the old belief which made the Semitic Adam the first civilized man continued to unconsciously affect the Semitic scholars of the nineteenth century. It was hard to part with the prejudices of early education especially when they were called upon to do so by a small group of men whose method of decipherment was an enigma to the ordinary grammarian, and who were introducing new and dangerous principles into the study of the extinct Semitic tongues».

Riassunto: Il sistema simbolico (pittografico) della scrittura è stato sviluppato nove millenni fa in Eurasia. Questa comunione spirituale però cominciò presto a disfarsi in seguito al polifonismo dei simboli. Secondo recenti scoperte, la prima scrittura fonetica si è sviluppata da simboli pittografici pre-sumerici (Djemdet Nasr), i quali esistevano già in Transilvania un millennio prima, come provato da scienziati sovietici. Altri studiosi dimostrano l'esistenza di una parentela fra i simboli Scito-Ungarici e Sumerici in ca. il 60% dell'alfabeto, nelle lettere iniziali delle parole-base. Oggi è già definitivamente provata l'affinità del linguaggio ungherese (turco, finno-ugrico, uralico) col sumerico non soltanto riguardo al lessico e alla struttura ma anche nella scrittura e nella pronuncia.

Résumé: Le système de l'écriture symbolique c'est développé dans le 7ème millénaire a. J.-C. in Eurasie. Cette uniformité dans la communication spirituelle a cependant commencé à se décomposer bientôt en conséquence de la successive poliphonisation des symboles. Selon les plus récentes découvertes, le premier système d'écriture phonétique c'est développé a partir de la pictographie pré-Sumérienne (Djemdet Nasr) et existait déjà en Transylvanie un millénaire avant, comme quelques archéologues soviétiques l'affirment. D'autres savants prouvent que le système de l'écriture Scythique-Hongroise est apparenté avec la pictographie sumérienne selon une correspondance dans ca. 60% de l'alphabet, respectivement dans la première lettre des mots de base. Le Hongrois (Turque, Finno-Ougrien, Uralique) et le Sumérien ont été prouvés similaires non seulement en matière de lexique et de structure mais aussi en écriture et prononciation.

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