Part I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUNGARIAN HISTORICAL TRADITION

I

ALTHOUGH it now seems probable that the Magyars were acquainted with the art of writing before they entered Hungary, and even possessed an alphabet of their own,[1] yet they did not, so far as we know (or have any reason to believe) commit to writing any account of their origins and doings until a much later date. This does not, however, mean that they were uninterested in such subjects. It is unlikely that a nation later so devoted to family history should have been indifferent to the subject then. Personal reminiscences, told round the hearth, must have been frequent. More notable episodes of personal or national history crystallized into the form of folk songs or ballads, some of which evidently enjoyed wide popularity among the people. There was even a special class of minstrels or bards, some, we may infer, attached to courts or individual families, others wandering 'free-lances', who made their living by composing and reciting these ballads. These

[1] See on this, G. Németh, *A magyar rovásirás* (Budapest, 1934). The only surviving specimens of this script are in the Székely country, whence the alphabet is known as the 'Székely runes.' The writings in this script are cut in wood, stone or metal, but it appears that ink was also used. Most of the letters correspond to letters in the kok-Turkish alphabets known from the Orkhon inscriptions, their nearest relatives being those used in the Talasz valley inscriptions; but besides fourteen letters of Turki origin, the Magyar inscriptions contain four letters (a, f, h and l) derived from the Greek alphabet, and two (e and o) which bear a strong resemblance to the Glagolitic. Németh argues that the Magyars must have acquired this alphabet on the Pontic shores, for otherwise they would have borrowed Latin, not Greek and Slavonic characters. His arguments are not, however, wholly convincing. The surviving specimens are written from right to left.

minstrels were certainly familiar figures, at least up to the beginning of the thirteenth century.[1]

A salient trait of this type of 'literature' was its personal character. It dealt almost exclusively with the origin and the exploits of individual champions. To this fact—which we could in any case have deduced from the character of the material which has come down to us—we have the explicit witness of more than one chronicler. Anonymus, in what is almost certainly a quotation from some old epic, writes of certain of his heroes that, after a victory, 'they rejoiced greatly, and held a banquet, and each one extolled himself for his victory'.[2] Another writer explains the belief that Hungary was conquered by seven captains alone by saying that the seven chief leaders had songs made up in their own praise, in order to monopolize the credit.[3]

This personal colouring is apparent even in those traditions about which memory was vaguest—those relating to the origin and the earliest history of the Magyars. The nation in its earliest days is personified by its mythical ancestor, Magor—a figure who, with the later spread of pseudo-learning, becomes confused with Magog and, alternatively, is fitted into a Biblical family tree as a descendant of Japhet.[4] But Magor and his equally mythical brother, Hunor, remain only names; with one doubtful exception, no legend has accumulated round them.[5]

[1] I give this date as being that at which Anon, who has references to minstrels and folk-singers which show them to have been familiar figures in his day (Anon, Prologue, and c. 42) certainly wrote (see below, pp. 61–3). The minstrels were first and foremost panegyrists, but, as their name *joculatores* shows, performed other roles also. St Gerard in his 'Meditations' rebukes the priests and nobles who spend their time listening to them; see E. Moór, *Die deutschen Spielleute in Ungarn* (*UJ.*, vol. 1, pp. 281 ff.). Moór seems inclined to derive the whole institution from the German Minnesänger, and hence from the Roman mimes, although he admits the existence of Slavonic minstrels, called *igrici*; but the strongly national character of the Hungarian ballads, which is evident even in the short, third-hand fragments of their work which have come down to us, show conclusively that the Magyars must have had a native class of minstrels. For that matter, such minstrels were universal in SE. European countries up to almost the present day, while on the other side, Priscus (*Frag.* ed. de Boor) tells us of a similar performer at the Court of Attila.

[2] Anon. c. 27.

[3] B 36.

[4] This stage has already been reached in all our main texts, Anon, the *H.C.*, etc. See on it, L. Foti, *Gog und Magog*.

[5] Conceivably a group of names in the *H.C.* c. 5, may be genuine antiques, but even this is doubtful; *Studies III*, p. 122, and *Studies VII*, pp. 168–70

The Magyar national tradition really starts with the circumstances which caused them to migrate from what was generally regarded as their ancestral and original home, 'Etelköz' or the Don Valley.[1]

From this time on we have a fairly coherent story, which is reproduced, with variants which are wide indeed, but involve no obvious contradictions, in a considerable number of texts which derive directly or indirectly from Magyar sources. In practically all of these again we find the personal note, although this may take one of two alternative forms: some versions lay the chief stress on the seven leaders, known as the *Hetumoger* or 'Seven Magyars',[2] who act by common council, and as representing the will of the people, although one of them assumes the leading role, as being 'most valiant in battle and wisest in council'. Others emphasize the person of the single supreme leader, and his dynasty. It has been argued by some[3] that these two variants represent different historical outlooks, the monarchic, that of the ordered eleventh century state, the oligarchic, that of the turbulent thirteenth century. As a matter of fact, the surviving accounts which stress the role of the Seven Captains are, if anything, older than those of more dynastic outlook;[4] but it is probable that the two variants always co-existed, although the monarchic probably grew in popularity as the Hungarian monarchy established itself. The differences are in any case more of emphasis than of fact; for all versions alike agree on the fact that the Magyars were originally organized under chieftains who, under the stress of emergency, elected a single leader.[5]

These early stories preserve no details of the Magyars' life in their original homes. As the reason for their momentous decision to move, they usually give pressure of population,[6] although in

[1] Actually, the Magyars probably entered 'Etelköz' only about 830 A.D. and left it in 889. The memory of the still earlier move from the left bank of the Don is preserved chiefly in the story in c. 38 of the *D.A.I.* the Magyar origin of which is now generally recognized; see Bury, *The Treatise D.A.I.* (*Byz. Z.* vol. xv, p. 586) and Macartney, *Magyars*. For an interpretation of this very vexed passage, see Macartney, *op. cit.* pp. 86–112.

[2] Hét in Magyar = 7.

[3] Hóman, *Gesta*, pp. 104–5; Domanovszky, *Folytatása*, p. 1.

[4] See below, p. 18.

[5] By far the most historical account is probably that of the *D.A.I.* c. 38.

[6] This is the account in T (see below, p. 35), whence Anon cc. 1, 5, and K, B 5; also Regino *ad ann.* 889 and *Incerti Ep.*, Gombos, *Fontes II*, 1234), both of whom derive this

one or two very early accounts, which are rather statements of fact than national epics, and have been preserved only by foreign historians, mention leaks out of the defeat by the Petchenegs which was the real cause.[1] Later, when the subject had become confused by the introduction of the Hun legend, which made the Conquest the second and not the first invasion of Hungary, every sort of combination was introduced. The route was only vaguely recorded, although the oldest and most authentic tradition said that the Magyars in their migration passed by Kiev.[2] For the rest, we have in most accounts only a vague description of 'deserts', on which the nation supported itself by hunting and fishing, its young men acquiring great mastery in the arts.[3] Finally, there was a memory of an arduous journey over difficult mountains.[4]

The climax of the story was naturally the conquest of the new home. There was certainly one general, very popular account, which reappears in a great many versions, telling how the Magyars saw the new land, delighted in its fertility and determined to settle there, the more so—as this old legend says frankly enough—because it was practically uninhabited.[5] To this, however, was soon added a further cycle of stories dealing with the process whereby the Magyars consolidated their possession of their new homes. The very earliest accounts simply say that after settling (in the central Alföld) apparently without meeting opposition, they ravaged the territories of the surrounding rulers, and occupied them; the details being given variously.[6] Another story, which has unfortunately become distorted beyond recognition, went

statement from Magyar sources (*Studies III*, pp. 175–9). In the *Incerti Ep.* there is further confusion through other combinations by the author. Later the famine *motif* was expanded in connection with the pun on the name Hungari = Hungries.

[1] Only in Regino and *D.A.I.*

[2] In T, hence Anon and the *H.C.*, and also in the Russian *Poviesti* (trans. Cross, pp. 138, 147). This is derived ultimately from a Magyar source; see my *Pascua Romanorum*.

[3] Anon c. 1 seems to quote a sort of popular refrain on this subject.

[4] In particular, in B 26.

[5] The version in T, whence Anon and the narrative Chronicles, is based on old material, but unfortunately overlaid with borrowings from Regino. There are other traces of the story in Regino, *Incerti Ep.*, *P.H.* (two versions), and the Southern Slav sources, Presbyter Diocleas, Thomas of Spalato.

[6] So Regino, and, following him, Anon, c. 50, K 34–7, B 54–7.

into more detail on the settlement on the Tisza and the fighting which attended it.[1] This story does not appear to have given the name of the adversary, or if it did, the name cannot be recovered today. A persistent and early tradition, however, maintained that the Magyars had to acquire their territory from Sviatopluk, King of 'Great Moravia'. This story gradually expanded into an elaborate legend, according to which the Magyars first purchased their land from Sviatopluk, but afterwards cheated him over the price, and slew him.[2] An alternative version gives the name (not yet sufficiently explained) of Marot.[3] A third may have given yet another name, also unexplained, that of 'Salanus'.[4]

Besides this central narrative, there were undoubtedly numerous others of a more personal character, composed either by individual warriors themselves[5] or by their *joculatores*, to whom the new and more settled conditions gave better opportunity to exercise their talents. One or two of these, which were concerned with exploits lying a little apart from the conquest of Hungary proper, have survived in a form which is still recognizable today.[6] Particularly popular was the story (composed perhaps at a somewhat later

[1] This is the story given in the *H.C.* 8 ff., where it is applied to Attila, and heavily overlaid with other material; but traces of it are discernible (see *Studies III*, pp. 166 ff., *VII*, 149, 179).

[2] Regino simply mentions the Moravians among the peoples whom the Magyars conquered after their settlement in Hungary. In the *D.A.I.* Sviatopluk is definitely the central figure, and his 'Great, unbaptized Moravia' the main area afterwards settled by the Magyars. C. 41 preserves another piece of folk-lore about Sviatopluk which Fehér, *Ungarns Gebietsgrenzen in der Mitte des X Jahrhundertes* (*UJ.* April 1922, p. 54), believes to be of Southern Slav origin; but it occurs in the middle of chapters where Constantine is certainly drawing on a Magyar or Kavar source, and contrasts with the Czech national legend of Sviatopluk's end, given by Cosmas of Prague (*MGH. SS.* IX, p. 44). This fable also is therefore probably Magyar, so that Sviatopluk had already come to occupy the central place in the Magyar tradition by the middle of the tenth century. The Sviatopluk legend is given most fully and picturesquely in B 28 and by the Pole Matthias Miechovius, *Tractatus de Duabus Sarmatiis*, I, 14; more briefly in K B 23, Aventinus, *Annales Boiorum*, p. 635 (ed. Riezler), and Thomas of Spalato.

[3] K 23, 26, V 23, Anon 11, 20–1, 28, 51. As I point out in *Studies I*, pp. 30 ff., Anon knew no details about his 'Menu-Morout', and simply decked out his meagre bones with the attributes of other figures. For further conjectures on him, see *Studies VII*, p. 178.

[4] Salanus is the central figure in Anon. See on him below, pp. 77–8.

[5] See notes 2–4 above, and especially B 36 (*isti capitanei VII de se ipsis cantilenas componentes*) and Anon c. 22 (*unusquisque laudabat se ipsum de sua victoria*).

[6] So the stories of Gyula's, or Tuhutum's conquest of Transylvania (Anon cc. 24–7, B 30–65), and Huba's of North-Western Hungary (Anon. 33–7). On these, see below, pp. 74 ff.

date) of the exploit whereby the hero in question acquired the estate at whose hearth, no doubt, the ancestral valour was regularly and dutifully celebrated. The Seven Captains being popular figures, a favourite national song was to enumerate them, mentioning in the case of each where he received his estate, and what was the feat which earned it for him;[1] and it is only natural that the names of the august Seven should not be quite the same in every case, while similar songs doubtless celebrated numerous more obscure founders of families. As the prestige of the House of Árpád grew, the form into which this material was cast was sometimes varied, and Árpád was represented as circumambulating the country and bestowing estates on his warriors, out of the plenitude of his power.[2]

The celebration of heroic deeds did not, however, stop with the Conquest itself. The raids and campaigns which the Magyars carried out during the next half century in almost every country of Europe afforded ample material for further compositions of the same type. The chief element in these, again, was undoubtedly constituted by personal narratives of the exploits of individual heroes, three of whom—Lel, Bulchu and Botond—seem to have been particularly popular characters. But while each episode may have been in its origin individual, they were, if popular, taken up and woven into larger compositions on a more national scale, in which not the individual but the national community (*communitas Hungarorum*)[3] occupies the centre of the field. These more comprehensive compositions soon threw national history into a fine confusion, particularly as, by a peculiar national convention, the number 7 possessed a special mystical virtue. Seven Principal Persons had agreed to move from 'Scythia' or 'Dentumoger' into Hungary; seven Captains had conquered 'Pannonia' and from their bases there, spread terror through Europe. The heroes of the different epochs soon became gloriously confused; and although

[1] This is the form represented by the lists in K 27–33, B 28–34.

[2] This is the form taken by Anon's main source (*Studies III*, pp. 136 ff.); cf. also *P.H.* c. 3.

[3] The phrase occurs in K and B 7, 10; K 40, 42; B 36, 62, etc., and is even to be detected in Anon c. 54, although Anon deliberately adapts it wherever he notices it to the monarchical formula that Árpád, Zoltan, etc. give the orders. Ra's source sometimes appears to use instead 'tota Hungaria'.

the original election of Almus (or Árpád) must in reality have taken place at least fifteen years before the Conquest,[1] the seven electors (the Hetumoger) were represented as identical with the seven leading figures in the Conquest, and one list of the latter included figures, such as those of Lel and Bulchu,[2] who *floruerunt* some two generations later. Probably no list preserving the real names of the original seven heroes of the Conquest has survived;[3] certainly no authentic list of the seven Principal Persons who took the decision to move from Etelköz.

Nevertheless, we owe to these pieces of personal glorification a knowledge of at least the names, seats, and, in one or two cases, the chief exploits of a number of Magyar heroes of olden time, even though we cannot always be certain whether the persons in question lived exactly at the date afterwards attributed to them.[4] We also owe to them knowledge of the interesting fact that the Magyars, on entering Hungary, were accompanied not only by the Kavars—a Turki tribe mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenetos[5] but also by many other Turki tribes, known generally as 'Cuns'.[6]

All this material must have contributed a great reservoir of tradition, on which later scribes drew when knowledge of writing spread, and when the nation began to take a belated interest in its own origins. By that time certain particularly popular episodes

[1] Macartney, *Magyars*, p. 110.

[2] This is the list found in K and B.

[3] As I show (*Studies III*, pp. 136 ff.), the oldest surviving list is one to be extracted from a curious recurrent formula in Anon.; but even this was composed a considerable time after the Conquest, since it regularly refers to the sons, or in some cases to the remoter descendants, of the heroes celebrated. It is, however, particularly interesting as distinguishing between Magyars and 'Cuns'.

[4] There are some who believe, like Marczali (*U.G.* pp. 86 ff.) that the Botond of Anon is the German knight Boto or Poth, a famous hero who played a considerable part in the fighting against Hungary in the eleventh century. As witness is cited Ekkehard, who writes of him *ad ann.* 1104: '*Pannonia vero talem illum ac tantum se fatetur aliquando exitisse, ut is vere de gigantibus antiquis unus apud illos credatur fuisse*. These words do not seem to justify so far-reaching a conclusion, particularly since Botond is regularly mentioned in close conjunction with Lel and Bulchu, who were certainly Magyars, and figures of the mid-tenth century. Moreover, Pais (*Scr. R.H.* vol. I, p. 85, n. 4) finds a probable Turkish derivation for the name of Botond and certainly such a derivation for the name of his father Culpun. But even so, both Botond and his colleagues Lel and Bulchu were, as we said, by no means contemporary with the Conquest.

[5] *D.A.I.*, cc. 39, 40.

[6] *Studies I*, p. 29, *III*, p. 140, n. 88.

had clearly come to take a place, almost automatically, in any narrative: certain versions of the central episodes had achieved a sort of priority over others. It is also natural to suppose that by that time it had occurred to at least one minstrel to join together some of the loose tags of material into a complete narrative, from the first beginnings down to the end of the pagan period. But if this was done at all, it was probably done many times, with many variants: we need not suppose that the same legend of the Conquest was always used, nor the same list of Seven Captains. The opportunities for variation, and for combination in different manners, were obviously very considerable.

It must, unfortunately, be added that as a consequence, the historical value of these early ballads is as a rule very small. Thus the later versions of the move from Maeotid marshes entirely omit, as we have seen, any mention of the real cause: the Petcheneg invasion. The lists of the Captains do not even approximate to reality, and the attempts made by certain historians[1] to deduce from them the positions occupied by the various tribes in Hungary are a sad waste of misplaced ingenuity.[2]

The value which these early fragments contain is mostly incidental, and accidental, although none the less considerable. Thus the tale in B 60 of Lel's death is totally unhistorical, as Kézai, who rejects it on that ground, remarks; but it affords an interesting and authentic glimpse of the religious beliefs of the pagan Magyars. The use of the formula *communitas Hungarorum*, which is certainly very old, shows the oligarchic, almost republican spirit of the time,[3] and there are one or two other incidental

[1] In particular, Hóman, *A hónfoglaló törzsek megtelepedése* (Turul, Budapest, 1912). The conclusions reached in this essay are repeated, with certain modifications, by Hóman himself in his later Magyar Történet, and by most Hungarian historians today; but they are largely unfounded.

[2] See on this my *Studies III*, pp. 139 ff.

[3] Cf. n. 3. p. 6, above, and *Studies III*, pp. 183 ff. It may be noted that the references to the *communitas Hungarorum* cover precisely the period when we know from other sources that the central power was weakest. Deér (*Pogány magyarság, keresztény magyarság*, p. 63) suggests that there was a regency of three during the minority of Árpád's son, Zoltan; but K B 10, with the remarkable words *usque tempora ducis Geichea, dum se regerent per communitatem* suggests that this 'republican' phase lasted until the formal establishment of the monarchy (taking *usque* in the inclusive sense).

records of great value for the internal organization of the nation.[1] Extreme caution is, however, necessary before using any of this material as a historical source.

II

A later age dated the beginnings of Christianity from the reign of Géza, father of St Stephen, and thus drew a line at the end of the reign of his predecessor, Toxun. Up to that date lasted the heroic, pagan period of Magyar history, and the children of a sedater world told of their forefathers' exploits with the formula 'in the days of Toxun' or 'up to Duke Géza's days' as we might say 'once upon a time'.[2] The date was, indeed, a good one at which to mark a break in the tradition; for during Géza's reign the Magyars were in fact kept on the subdued defensive, so that it furnished no material for the tales of adventure and rapine which had been the almost exclusive subject-matter of the early minstrels. Poor Géza, indeed, comes off badly in the records, his fame being entirely overshadowed by that of his son; and except for a few incidental remarks, we hear little of him from most Hungarian sources, except in his capacity of father.[3]

With Stephen, and with the national conversion to Christianity, was consummated the great change in the life of the Hungarian people—a change amounting to a political, social and

[1] This applies particularly to K B 7 which, although it appears in the texts as part of the Hun Chronicle, certainly reproduces ancient Magyar tradition. Nothing could be more misplaced than the remark of its editor in the *Scr. R.H.* vol. I, pp. 148, 257, that *totum caput notam fert saeculi XIII*. Hungarian historians are also arguing in a circle, besides flying in the face of all probability, when they deny the existence of the 'genus' before the thirteenth century.

[2] The phrase appears, in slight variations, in K B 7, B 36, K 42, B 62, Anon c. 56. Another phrase to the same effect was *sub ritu paganismo*. B's words in c. 5 *hec fuit prima preda post diluvium* is probably an adaptation of the above formula.

[3] In the Legenda Maior-Hartvic series, Géza does little more than provide the foil to his more famous son. In the alternative legend (see below, p. 28) he comes off much better; but precisely the parts which do him credit are not taken over by the narrative chronicles. Foreign sources, also, have little to say on him, the fullest details being those given by Ortilo de Lilienfeld in his *notulae anecdotae priores*. The authenticity of this work has been questioned, but although parts of it may well be legendary, other parts, including its Hungarian information, seem to be founded on old and reliable sources which deserve much more attention than they have received from Hungarian historians.

pyschological revolution. Remarkably speedy as the transformation was, it could not, however, come about in a day or a year: not only did it begin before Stephen's rule opened, but there were also, in the period following his death, two considerable pagan counter-revolutions.[1] So too, in literature, the old was not immediately ousted by the new. St Stephen himself provided material for contemporary or almost contemporary celebration which was at first entirely in the old manner. There are certain texts[2] which tell of the exploits of Stephen the warrior—not Stephen the Saint—in quite the old style, with all the old, unhallowed gusto in war and booty. Those which have survived are probably only parts of a much more extensive cycle of these stories, of most of which we catch only fragmentary glimpses. The stories preserved in the lay Chronicles were almost certainly collected with the pious aim of showing Stephen's saintly life, although the biography containing them no longer exists as such; but much of the material which appears in the extant *Legends of St Stephen*,[3] although adapted to sedater purposes by the monkish writer, probably originated in the same way. Nor was this heroic literature exclusively confined to the exploits of the king himself. Another and similar composition, fragments of which have been preserved in two of our surviving texts[4] related to Stephen's uncle and enemy, the *Gyula*, or holder of the third dignity in the land, who fell from his high estate in consequence of his obstinate opposition to Christianity. Yet another composition of the same kind has survived in the form of a brief reference on the one hand[5] and an adaptation by a later writer, of very different spiritual outlook,[6] on the other. This is the story of a certain Ajtony,[7]

[1] In 1046 and 1061 respectively. The revolts were partly national, and directed against the foreign soldiers, clerks, etc. of the new regime—superbly described by the Chronicles (K 46, B 71) as 'Teutons roaring with beastly fury and Latins twittering garrulously like swallows'; but they were also partly religious. Their leaders shaved their heads, pagan fashion, consulted witches and feasted ceremonially on horseflesh—obviously a ritual act (B82).

[2] These are parts of B 30 (for its connection with B 65 see *Studies III*, p. 47) and B 64, 65, 66. B 67 is a later addition.

[3] In particular, *Leg. Min.* cc. 5–7. The *Leg. Mai.* takes these stories from the *Leg. Min.*, but dilutes them considerably (see below, p. 163).

[4] B 30, 64; Anon cc. 25, 27. [5] Anon c. 11. [6] *Leg. Mai. S. Gerardi*, c. 8.

[7] This, it appears, is the correct form of the name, a Turkish word meaning 'gold' or 'copper' (Pais, *Scr. R.H.*, vol. I, p. 50, n. 2). In Anon the name appears as Ohtum; in the *Vita*, as Achtum.