

KAZAKH-MAGYAR SEZHERES AND LEGENDS OF ORIGIN
(Details from the results of the common Kazakh-Magyar expeditions to Torghay (2002)
and Western Siberia (2006)

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In 1965, Tibor Tóth, a Hungarian anthropologist, and Sejitbek Nurkhanov, a Kazakh linguist, were the partakers of a common expedition to the Sarykopa, on the territory of Torghay-Gate. They made anthropological measures on the Argyn-Magyars living in that remote district. [Tibor Tóth, 1966]. Besides, they tried to reconstruct the past of the Argyn-Magyar tribe by questioning their elders (aksakals), who, telling about their ancestors, could go back for 10–12 generations into the past. [Tibor Tóth, 1966, 285.] But as Tibor Tóth writes: “Alas we could not find even one written variation of written family trees (sezheres) during our stay on the Sarykopa.” According to our today’s knowledge, the Argyn-Magyar family-trees were certainly lying in the drawers and large wooden boxes of the aksakals but were not shown to the members of the expedition. Keeping such an object could practically cause mortal danger in the years of the Stalinist terror. Even in 1965, under the rule of Brezhnev one could be jailed for years for it. “Nationalism” – thinking and telling about one’s ethnic origin – was counted to be separatism according to the law of the Soviet empire and that time separatism was one of the most serious crimes.

“Sezhere” is an Arabic word which means “tree”. Each Kazakh men had to – and has to – know his male ancestors back to seven generations. The written genealogical tabulations help them to remember. These tabulations had three types: family sezheres, clan sezheres and tribal sezheres. Their main significance of them lies in the fact that – together with the written or told legends accompanying them – they can help in establishing the time when the name of a certain tribe, clan, ethnic group – assimilated for our days – appears among the names of a Kazakh tribal confederation. By this, the sezheres can give enormous help for the recreation of the Kazakh history, especially in the terms of genealogy. The genealogical researches just get fashionable in the East-European countries. Those professional and amateur historians of these countries, who deal with it and try to recreate with grave difficulties their family trees forgotten long ago, would be glad to have such reference documents at their disposal.

After the declaration of the Kazakh independence in 1992 the research of the Kazakh past became free. Many sezhere-books were published. In 1993, the editor of the Torghay Newspaper, Sagyndyk Mirkalijev wanted to publish the sezheres of the tribes living in Torghay. As he wrote:

“There is a Kazakh saying: That man who does not know his seven male ancestors is counted to be illiterate.” So the Kazakhs need sezheres, genealogical tabulations in our days.

The Kazakh scientists had already described how the Kazakh people and its three hordes developed. Our readers know these data well. But it was never researched, which tribes lived in the ancient lands of Torghay. So our generation knows very little about the ancestors of the Torghay tribes. That’s why we decided to do field-work in the Torghay-district, to gather the recollections of old people and the written relics too, and to publish a Torghay sezhere-book.

As we were the first ones to write about Torghay, maybe, our collection is not complete. So, in order to supplement the possible deficiencies, we introduce the famous MAGYAR tribe to our readers first, so that they could examine our data and complete it, when considered necessary.

So the Torghay Newspaper introduced the Madiar (Magyar) tribe of Torghay in 1993. It was a great luck that it came out. The above mentioned sezhere-book was never published, because of the early death of the editor, Sagyndyk Mirkalijev. Here we can only cover some aspect of this large tribal sezhere, supplementing it with other data which the Kazakh-Magyar

expedition (its members: Babakumar Khinayat, Mihály Benkő) collected on the Sarykopa in 2002.

Once the Magyar tribe was the third largest one among those Argyn tribes who were living on the Sarykopa. The elders tell about 700 families. The written data of a census from 1847 told about 375 yurts with 1654 men. The number of the yurts diminished to 240 for 1866. The expedition of Tibor Tóth found 185 families on the scene, in 1965, and the expedition of András Bíró only 116 families in 2005. The reason of this abruptly falling number was the enormous loss of blood suffered by the Argyn Magyars of the Torghay district from the beginning of the Tsarist colonization, in the 19th–20th Centuries. They were exterminated both by Tsarist punishing expeditions, and by the Stalinist terror. The ideological leader of the Alas independence movement, Mirzhakip Dulatov was a member of the Aitkul clan of the Argyn-Magyar tribe. He even used the pseudonym “Magyar” when he signed his articles. After he had become martyr of the Stalinist times in 1935, because of him, not only “the tree of the Aitkul clan lost many of its flowers and leafs” as the large sezhere of Sagyndyk Mirkalijev tells, but the Argyn-Magyar tribe as a whole became a group of enemies of people, with the expectable consequences.

According to the Argyn-Magyar sezheres known by us Magyar derived from Tokal Argyn (“hornless” Argyn from a second wife, so, from left hand.). According to the symbolic of the Kazakh sezheres it meant that the Magyars were relatively newcomers in the Argyn tribe confederation. Their joining with the Argyns can be put to the end of the 17th Century or to the beginning of the 18th Century.

The sezhere of Sagyndyk Mirkalijev [B. Khinayat – M. Benkő, 2007, 35–62] introduces the six clan of the Argyn-Magyar tribe: Abuz, Aitkul, Akbai, Boz, Kalmambet, Seru. The material is abundantly coloured by stories, anecdotes. We can read about heroes who saved their relatives during fights; about soldiers, state officials, about famous wise men in it. However, we often find such expressions in the text: They all deceased in the course of the great fame in 1933, their name disappeared.” “After getting out of the children’s home, he disappeared, his fate is unknown.” “They have no descendants”. “Their descendants were shot, hanged, or they died from starvation” “Aitkozsa had many male descendants, they were all cruelly executed at the time of the Batpakkara uprising.” “He fall in the Great Patriotic War, he has no male descendants”. The sezhere of Sagyndyk Mirkalijev gives us a picture about the cruel past and fate of the Argyn-Magyars of the Sarykopa in the 19th–20th Centuries. Whole generations are missing from this large sezhere which even so contains about 2000 names.

We also collected “oral history”, in other words: legends on the Sarykopa in 2002. Here I introduce one of the most interesting legends we had heard. [M. Benkő, 2003, 123-125].

The Tale of Aldiar and Magyar

Zaugashti had three sons: Aldiar, Kudiar and Magyar. Kudiar had only a few descendants, his line was absorbed by the Magyar branch.

Aldiar was the eldest of the three brothers. He was a diligent and skilful animal-breeder. He was always the first who moved to the winter quarters or back to the summer quarters. His younger brother, Magyar, became vizier (judge) in his tribe. Once it happened that a poor woman named Karakölke from the Kulkhai clan had appeared in the aul of the two brothers. His first husband had died. Then, according to the nomadic customs, she had become the wife of the younger brother of the late husband. Her second husband also died. The mother-in-law of the young woman begun to hate her and chased her away from her aul. Then she moved into the aul of Aldiar and Magyar and lived there as a slave. She was strong, diligent and beautiful, so both brothers fall into love with her. They noted that when she was pissing, her urine crumbled the soil. According to the beliefs of the Kazakhs this meant that the woman had a strong womb. So, Vizier Magyar wanted to marry Karakölke as his second, or third wife.

Once it happened that Aldiar had arrived earlier to the summer quarters than his brother, Magyar. After this event the slave-woman did not come to the yurt of Magyar any longer.

Magyar vizier asked his first wife, why that woman hadn't come? His wife answered that her brother-in-law had married Karatölke ceremonially on a wedding. Then Magyar said to his brother the followings:

Now, Taz, (literally means: lousy, with sore head) you were too quick for me and succeeded in marrying this woman before me! I wish she would bear for you a strong son.

Really, a son was born at Aldiars nine months later, who was named Zhanzak. This was the name cried into the ears of the new-born child. It is also true that Zhanzak became a very strong boy.

Once it happened that Shaksak Zhenibek Khan (born in Torghay in 1693) organised a large feast for the Central horde. It happened so that none of his wrestlers could defeat the champion of the Small Horde. Then Zhenibek Khan uttered bitterly the following words:

–So, the women of the Central Horde did not bear sons?

–Then Zhakzak stood up and said:

–I defeat the giant of the Small Horde!

When the Khan asked, how he could prove his adequate strength, the boy said:

–I can press out oil of the Saksaul trees having been dried in the desert for three years!

The boy got permission to fight. To the great satisfaction of his fellow-countrymen he defeated and wounded the wrestler of the Small Horde. He got the warrior's name "Kara Balvan". There were many great champions among his descendants.

In the 1720-ies the Kalmuks were chased away from the Kazakh steppes. That time – maybe, still in the lifetime of Vizier Magyar – the influential men of the region had assembled for a consultation about the distribution of the territory. The number of the descendants of Aldiar and Magyar and also that of their breed animals were increasing continuously and steeply. Both tribes moved up to the North, into the Torghay-basin and they have been living there up to recent times.

This legend gives us a picture about the moving of the Aldiar and Magyar tribes into the Torghay Basin. It tells the time and the reasons. They were most probably moving to the North together with Kipchak tribes and separated from them in the Torgay Basin, staying there. According to Sejitbek Nurkhanov Magyar-Kipchaks can also be found in the Torghay Basin. There is one more interesting fact. The other name of the Aldiars – Taz – is an ancient Kipchak name [Zuev 2002, 71], which is also known as a village name from the Kun regions of Hungary (Tazlar). The Kara-Kipchak branch of the Kipchak tribe federation – the Sagal Kipchaks, the Kulan Kipchaks and the Madžar-Magyar Kipchaks arrived to North-Eastern Kazakhstan, into the region of the Irtysh River in 1728, in other words eight years after the arrival of the Magyar and Aldiar clans into the Torghay District.

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In 2006 I had an opportunity to take part in a Kazakh-Magyar common expedition directed to Western Siberia (Russia, Omsk Region, Russkaja Poljana district, to the village of Celinje and Kara Tal aul). The two Kazakh members of our expedition were: Aibolat Kushkumbayev, professor of history, and Babakumar Khinayat, the deputy director of the Kazakh Central State Muzeum (Almaty). We were lucky enough to find and collect three large tribal sezheres: the sezhere of the Magyar-Kipchak tribe itself, and two Kara-Kipchak sezheres, one from the 60-ies of the 20th century with Russian letters and one from the 30-ies of the 20th century still with Arabic letters. Both ones include the data of the Magyar-Kipchak tribe too. The most precious one among these find is the eighty years old Kara Kipchak sezhere written with Arabic letters, which we could borrow from the owner and could make coloured copies of it. This way we saved it for the scientific studies.

The Kara-Kipchak sezhere with Arabic letters, (further on: Omsk sezhere) is written on the pages of a copybook made for bookkeepers might well be the "last Mohican" of those Kara-Kipchak sezheres, which were so much wanted by the administration in the period of repression and were burnt on bonfires. As we were told by our host in Celinje, keeping sezheres was severely punishable activity under the Stalinist rule, when enormous amount of Kazakh

documents were destroyed – sometimes together with their keepers – by the Soviet administration. In the years of 1937–1940, members of the state security service wandered around the Western Siberian villages where Kazakhs lived, and asked everybody: Who keeps ancient Kazakh documents? If the questioned person could not name anybody, then he himself was arrested. A famous Kipchak sezhere-keeper, “the small Omar” could hide for a long time, but when he heard that if he had not been found then his family would be taken away, he came out of the swamps. Then he got arrested, and disappeared forever together with his family and with his ancient Kazakh documents.

According to our knowledge the keepers of this Omsk sezhere was Sagyndyk Nurmaganbetov, the teacher and mullah of Celinje village (+1993), and after his death Bolat Akhmetuli Nurpeisz, the mullah of Kara Tal aul. Both of them were Magyar-Kipchaks. They used the data of the Omsk sezhere for the preparation of Kara Kipchak and Magyar Kipchak sezheres. We have no ideas, who could be the previous owner and writer of the Omsk sezhere. Another riddle, how this document could survive the hard times? Such written materials, having preserved the Kazakh past, were hidden under the floors of the houses or under stones. If the owners became victims of the terror, the precious materials were lost forever. Besides, the paper is not a long lasting material in hard circumstances. The weary state of the Omsk sezhere tells about its vicissitudinous past.

It is a great luck that the time of the creation of the Omsk sezhere can be quite exactly determined. The printing time of its paper, 1930, is on all pages of the copy-book. The Kazakhs began to use the Cyrillic alphabet in place of the Arabic one in 1935. This way we can determine the fact that the Omsk sezhere had to be created in the years of 1930–1935. It could not be written much later because – as we mentioned above – the collection and annihilation of the old Kazakh documents having kept the Kazakh national tradition went on most vehemently in 1937–1940. We must mention the calligraphic beauty of the Arabic writing on the Omsk sezhere and the clearness and good arrangement of the lines showing how the Kara-Kipchak – Sagal Kipchak, Kulan Kipchak, Magyar Kipchak – generations were following each other. We can see two different handwritings on its pages. But it seems probable that the same person had written it, having used different pens and inks.

The predecessors of Madiar (Magyar) are the same in all official Kipchak sezheres published in the Kazakh Republic as in the handwritten sezheres collected by us in the Omsk District: Kipchak–Bultung–Urais–Töbet–Madiar. The brothers of Madiar: Zhanaidar, Kosaidar, Kollatai. But the descendants of Madiar are not shown in the official Kazakh sezheres. So they cannot be used for determining when the Magyar name appeared in Kipchak environment. In contrast with this we can follow the descendants of Magyar in the Omsk Kara-Kipchak and Magyar Kipchak sezheres for 12–15 generations up to the 1930–1960 years. This fact helps us in confirming our supposition that the Magyar ethnic group joined the Kara Kipchaks not later than in the last decades of the 16th Century, just those times when the eastern wing of the Nogay Horde joined the Kazakh Small Horde and Central Horde on the Kazakh steppes. Nogay and Russian documents prove that there were Madžar-Magyar tribes in the Nogay Horde in the 16th–17th Centuries [Трепавлов, 2001, 437, (text and note 7), 489, 502 (tabulation)].

The precious data of the Omsk sezheres can be supported by the written history. The Kazakh army-leader of Magyar-Kipchak origin, Sarybai Batyr was a historical person who fought against the Džungarian invaders in the 20–30-ies of the 18th Century. He lived five generations after Magyar according to the Omsk sezheres. This datum supports the supposition that the Magyar ethnic name appeared in Kipchak environment at the end of the 16th Century, 150 years earlier than Sarybai Batyr’s time of activity.

We also collected Magyar Kipchak legends (oral history) in Western Siberia. They tell about the common origin of the Magyar-Kipchaks and of the Magyars living in the Carpathian Basin. In 2006, the following legend was told us by the widow of the previous keeper of the Omsk Kara-Kipchak sezheres, Sagyndik Nurmaganbetov (she herself had heard it from her late husband who was a great collector of all kinds of relics of the Magyar-Kipchak tradition):

Once upon a time the Magyars were many. They were one nation, and were living in a large country. They had altogether 17 tribes. After a bloody war, this nation was divided into Eastern and Western parts. 7 or 8 tribes, who were living in the K k  g z valley, wandered very far from their original homeland. They were renamed "K k  g z" by our ancestors. Now they are living somewhere in the West, behind some unknown mountains. The 10 tribes, who stayed in the East, kept their original name: Magyar. The Western Magyars derived from us" [Кушкумбаев, 2007, 70].

We heard another, partly similar legend from Bejszenbaj Muhamedzsanov mullah and Nurgajdar Salkabajev in the village of Logunovka (Omsk Territory). It was told to us as follows:

Once upon a time our ancestors (the Magyars) were many, much more than nowadays. Our tribe had four branches: Kondbai, Kendebai, Sary Kul (yellow haired) and Kara Kul (black haired). Those who belonged to the Kondbaj branch departed for the West and now they are living in Венгрия (in Hungary). The other three branches stayed in the East. After the collapse of Genghis Khan's empire our ancestors took part in the Kazakh land-conquest. They wandered a lot in Central Asia in the following centuries, and at the end they found their homeland here on the Northern steppes, on the banks of the Irtish River, where they live up to now.

These legends tell that the Magyars were separated once upon a time, A part of them stayed in the East, the other part departed for the West. The same story was told about the separation of the Magyars into Eastern and Western parts by Constantinos Potrphyrogenetos Byzantian Emperor in the 9th Century A. D. It can be hardly imagined that the Magyar-Kipchaks living in the Omsk Territory had ever read the report of the Byzantian Emperor.

Finding such legends during field-work can be regarded as a significant success for any researcher. The "oral history" of the Steppen peoples could keep very important traditions for our days [Кушкумбаев, 2007, 70]. Besides, the Magyars of the Carpathian Basin practically had and even now have the punctual reflections of these legends which tell about their once-upon-a-time separation and departure from those Magyars who had stayed in the East. That's why Brother Julian had been sent to find the Eastern Magyars by the Hungarian king, B la IV in 1235, on the eve of the great Mongolian invasion against Eastern-Europe. He had found them and that time they could still speak in Hungarian with each other.

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