

## *Sacred Kingship among the Peoples of the Steppes*<sup>1</sup>

by  
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The study of the institution of sacred kingship was greatly advanced by the Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (Rome, 1955), which was dedicated to this theme.<sup>3</sup> The many contributions enriched our knowledge of sacred kingship in every way, but in my opinion, the most important aspect of these contributions is that they allow us to pursue a new, comparative study of this phenomenon.

Several terminological difficulties, however, stand in the way of such a comparative approach. The comprehensive, phenomenological material of the Congress was extremely heterogeneous, and it quickly became clear that further progress would first require a clarification of terms. Such a move towards clarity was made by the Dutch scholar Th. P. van Baaren, who argued convincingly that in order to clarify the notion of "sacred kingship" we should return to the original Frazerian terminology.<sup>4</sup> This would mean that the only sacred kingships are those in which 1) after his ascension to the throne the king is treated as a divinity on earth; 2) the king rules his people with divine power; 3) the king is accountable for order in the cosmos; and 4) the life and death of the king have cosmic significance. The death of the king has a representative character, and just as in the case of the demi-gods of pre-history, the dying of the king becomes a fountain of life for his entire people.

It is obvious that there are only a few cases in which all of these criteria are met. In van Baaren's opinion, only the African examples remain valid "sacred kingships."<sup>5</sup>

In my opinion, the most important remarks made since the Congress on the sociological relations of sacred kingship were those of F. Sierksma, another Dutch historian of religion. In his essay on "Religie en primitieve culturen,"<sup>6</sup> he pointed out that in every known case of sacred kingship among primitive peoples, sacred kingship was only able to develop in places where a societal layering had taken

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by W.L. North of K. Czeglédy, "Das Sakrale Königtum bei den Steppenvölkern," *Numen* 13 (1966): 14-26.

<sup>2</sup> This article was first presented as a lecture to the History of Religion Conference at Strassburg, 19 September 1964.

<sup>3</sup> *La regalità sacra — Contributi al tema dell' VIII Congresso Internazionale di Storia delle Religioni* (Roma, aprile 1955) = *The Sacral Kingship. Studies in the History of Religions* (= Supplement to *Numen* 4 (1959).

<sup>4</sup> *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 10 (1955-56): 204-95.

<sup>5</sup> The African examples of sacral kingship were discussed in two recent monographs: Tor Irstam, "The King of Ganda," *The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden* new series, 8 (1944); P. Hadfield, *Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa*, (London, 1949). Hadfield's results correspond in many respects with those of Irstam. In both of these works, the more recent and relevant investigations of African researchers (in particular C.G. Seligman, C.K. Meek, P.A. Talbot, E.E. Evans-Pritchard) are thoroughly discussed. Texts of the rituals of a sacral kingship are available in translation in M. D'Hertefelt and A. Coupez, "La royauté sacrée de l'ancien Rwanda," in *Annalen of the Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika*, 52 (1964).

<sup>6</sup> *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 10 (1955-56):209-236.

place, hence in places where a people had imposed its rule on another people by means of conquest and force.

In contrast to the view which argues that we only encounter sacred kingship in Africa, it seems that there is another example of sacred kingship, which not only belongs to this group, but presents a classic case of this institution, namely the sacred kingship among the Steppe peoples. An investigation of this manifestation of sacred kingship allows a new evaluation of the phenomenon and clears the way for further study along several lines, especially that of the sociological elements of this institution.

The vast belt of the Steppes, located between the Hungarian plains and the Great Wall of China, runs along the southern edge of the Eurasian arboreal zone. Starting in the 1st millennium B.C. this region has been inhabited by Iranian, Hunnish, Turkish and Mongol mounted nomads who, at various times, unified a large portion of the Steppes into a single empire. One of the examples of sacred kingship which I mentioned comes from those Turks who assembled a huge kingdom in Mongolia, south of the Baikal Sea, between the 6th and 9th centuries. Another is found in a branch of the Turks who moved far to the west and founded their own kingdom between the 6th and 10th century in the territory of the Khazars, the center of which lay on the lower Volga, north of the Caspian Sea. The third example is the ancient sacred kingship of the Magyars.<sup>7</sup>

Frazier, to whom the information about the death of the Khazar king was still not known at the time of the first edition of the Golden Bough, found the Muslim information brought to light by Róheim sufficiently important to publish them - insofar as it was available to him in translation - in an article (Folklore 28 (1917): 382-417); in his "Aftermath" he later talks more about this theme. The ancient Magyars belonged to the Finno-Ugrian peoples and, together with the Voguls and the Ostjaks (the survivors of whom now live in western Iberia), constituted the Ugrian branch of the Finno-Ugric language group. In the Finno-Ugrian period, these peoples settled in the forested zone north of the Volga, not far from one arm of the Ural mountains. Around the 6th century A.D. a great change occurred in the Magyar's way of life. They moved southwards into the meadows between the forests and the open Steppe and began breeding horses. They soon appear as a true, mounted Steppe people who, as time passed, could only be distinguished from the Khazars by their language.

The sources which talk about Turkish sacred kingship are, first, the dynastic histories of the Chinese Cou dynasty,<sup>8</sup> and second, the Arabic geographical sources.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese talk about the

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<sup>7</sup> Khazar and Magyar sacred kingship has been thoroughly treated by Géza Róheim in Man 15:2 (1915); and Ethnographia (Budapest) 28 (1917): 50-98, in Hungarian. Cf. Psychoanalysis and Culture. Essays in Honor of Géza Róheim, edited by G.B. Wilbur and W. Muensterberger, (New York, 1951).

As a follower of Freud, Róheim uses Freudian methods of interpretation (Oedipus-complex, dream analysis, sexual psychology of infants, and the psychological law of ambivalence, etc.) extensively; cf. also P. Radin, The World of Primitive Man, (New York, 1953), pp.308-10.

<sup>8</sup> Cou-su, C.50; cf. Liu Mau-Tsai, Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-küe) (= Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen 10), (Wiesbaden, 1958), p.8, 459, 496 n.46; cf. P. Boodberg, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 4 (1939); K.A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-Sheng, History of Chinese Society. Leao, (New York, 1949), p.274 n.189.

barbarian people of the central-asiatic Turks because they inflicted so much damage on the Middle Kingdom through their raids. The Arabs speak about the empire of the Khazars and about the Magyars on the basis of the eye-witness reports of Muslim merchants, who sought out the Steppe peoples of the Caucasus or those located beyond Sogdiana and the Aral Sea with their great caravans. Several references to Magyar sacred kingship appear in Byzantine sources or in the Latin chronicles of Hungary.

The following picture clearly emerges from these sources: all three peoples, the eastern Turks in Central Asia, the western Turks in the land of the Khazars on the Volga, and finally the Magyars, who until 889 C.E. lived between the Don and the Danube, recognized the institution of sacred kingship. The sacred kings of the Khazars and the Magyars were surrounded with taboo-prohibitions in such a way that in these two kingdoms an explicit double kingship developed. There was the sacred king and there was the second king, whom the Arabs denote with the word *malik* (king) and who essentially functioned as the executive king. The latter king was the supreme military leader, he decided between war and peace, and he represented the highest authority in all affairs of the people.<sup>10</sup> The taboo-prohibitions which completely isolated the other, sacred, king from the people, were very numerous and almost identical with those surrounding African sacred kings, as we know from the catalogs of Tor Istam and P. Hadfield.<sup>11</sup> The Khazar king was considered by his people as accountable for rainfall, drought, and other cosmic events in the entire region.<sup>12</sup> We encounter this same type of treatment in Africa, where the aging, graying and impotence of the king signifies the corruption of the whole land. This brings to mind the words of the Latin poet Claudian, who cries out in his first invective against the eunuch Eutropius (in the closing of the poem): "How shall we wage war under the auspices of an effeminate man? Can married couples have blessed children and the field bring forth rich harvests, can the earth be fruitful and wealth increase under an unfruitful consul?" In the event of famine or misfortune in war, i.e. of a failure of the Khazar king, he - and this is particularly important - is killed.<sup>13</sup> He is also killed after he has ruled a

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<sup>9</sup> The Arabic reports about Khazar and Hungarian sacred double kingship: Ibn Rusta, edited by de Goeje, pp.139-40 (Khazars); ibid. pp.142-43 (Magyars); Ibn Fadlan, edited by Z.V. Togan, p.43 (Arabic text); Istahri, edited by de Goeje, 224-5; Persian translation of Istahri, edited by Iraj Afshar (Tehran, 1961), pp.180-1; Ibn Hauqal, edited by de Goeje, pp.283-285; Ibn Hauqal, edited by J.H. Kramers, II, pp.395-96; Mas'udi, Murug al-dahab, edited Paris, II, pp.12-14; translations of the Arabic texts in J.M. Dunlop, The History of the Jewish Khazars, (Princeton, 1954). A Hebraic Geniza Fragment (Cambridge, T-S Loan 38) contains interesting, but clearly unreliable statements about the dynastic changes among the Khazars (edited by P.Kokovcov, Evrejsko-Khazarskaja perepiska v X veke, (Leningrad, 1932), pp.33-36 Text, pp.112-123, Russian translation with critical notes).

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Rusta, Ibn Fadlan, Istahri — Ibn Hauqal, Mas'udi, works cited above.

<sup>11</sup> The Khazar king always remained in his palace or harem (Mas'udi), since he was not supposed to be seen (Ishtahri). He left his palace only once every four months and rode out one mile ahead of his troops; nevertheless, if anyone encountered him, he had to prostrate himself on the ground before the king (Ibn Fadlan); cf. the similar African prohibitions in Tor Istam, work cited, pp.23-25, 78-88; Hadfield, work cited, pp.33-40.

<sup>12</sup> Mas'udi, cited above.

<sup>13</sup> Mas'udi, cited above.

certain number of years.<sup>14</sup> According to Ibn Fadlan, the longest reign of a Khazar king is 40 years. Especially interesting, however, is another report which states that the length of a king's reign is already determined at the time of his initiation. According to the Chinese yearbooks in the case of the sacred king of the central-asiatic Turks,<sup>15</sup> and the Arabic sources in that of the Khazars,<sup>16</sup> a silken cord or skin is placed around the king's neck during his initiation and then pulled so tightly that the initiate is almost strangled. On his last breath the initiate king let's out a word, in fact a number, which will then be the number of years he will reign.

A striking parallel to this practice appears in a description of the religion of the African Bambara by Ch. Monteuil.<sup>17</sup> According to his description, the next king of the Bambara is almost strangled to death during the initiation. In front of him is placed a vessel filled with stones and the leaves of the Baobab tree. In his last gasp, he takes some of the stones from the container, the number of which equals the number of years he will rule. Hocarth would surely have used this correspondence as evidence for the fact that the sacred kingship of Mongolia and that of North Africa have a common origin. I believe, however, that here we are simply seeing a religious-historical convergence, albeit a very amazing one.<sup>18</sup>

We must also guard against attributing, with Frazier, an overwhelming significance to the cosmic power of sacred kings, e.g. over rain, and claiming that the most ancient religion was the same as believing in the divinity of kings. On this question, I am in complete agreement with the opinion of Professor Widengrens who asserts that the king is not the king because of his power over the rain, but rather his power over the rain arises from the fact that he is king.<sup>19</sup>

I would like to turn now to a element of Khazar sacred kingship which is important from a phenomenological perspective. According to one of the Arabic sources, the Khazar sacred king took part in the military expeditions of his people. During the march a *samsa*, i.e. an image of the sun, was carried before the king, and it was this sun's light which the king watched while the march was in progress.<sup>20</sup> In

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn Fadlan, cited above.

<sup>15</sup> Cou-su, cited above.

<sup>16</sup> Ishtahri — Ibn Hauqal, cited above.

<sup>17</sup> Les Bambara de Ségou et du Kaarta, (Paris, 1924), p.305; D. Westerman, Die Geschichte Afrikas, (Cologne, 1952), p.37.

<sup>18</sup> Certainly it is now fully conceivable, given a remark made by Professor Kerényis after his lecture, that very early on there existed the possibility of exchange between Africa and Central Asia by way of Iran and Mesopotamia.

<sup>19</sup> G. Widengren, Hochgottglaube im alten Iran. (Uppsala, 1938), pp.352-54.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Rusta, cited above; — V. Minorsky [Oriens 11 (1958), p.129] refers to a passage in Ta'rih-i Bayhaq (p.173), in which a Daylamit compares the moon to a gilded shield, which was carried before the king during the march. — Concerning this *samsa*, the question arises whether we are justified in assuming a historical connection between the Khazar and the Iranian solar symbolism. The shield-raising as an act of election amongst the Khazars and the Magyars (Constantine Porphyrogenitos, De administrando imperio, ch.38) is generally associated with similar Byzantine rites. In this case, one could also cite Iranian (cf. H.P. L'Orange, Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World, (Oslo, 1953), pp.88-89, 103-109) and

this context I would like to refer to a passage from the Armenian historian Levond, who gives an account of a battle between the Khazars and the Arabs in the Caucasus in which the Khazars suffered so serious a defeat that even their "copper figure" fell into the hands of the Arabs.<sup>21</sup> The Armenian accounts of this likeness, however, unfortunately remain very general. The figure is referred to here both as *patker* and *nsan*, and both of these Parthian loan-words signify in Armenian "sign" and "image" respectively. The connection of sun-worship with sacred kingship in this case is important because in Africa sacred kingship seems, in the opinion of several scholars, to be connected with moon-worship.<sup>22</sup>

The origin of ancient Hungarian sacred kingship presents a difficult problem. The most ancient source which discussed the Hungarians before their western migration to central Europe in 889 C.E. was the lost work of the Samanid minister Gaihani, who wrote ca. 920 C.E. We know the text of Gaihani's lost report, however, from such a large number of earlier and later Persian extracts that it would not pose any really insurmountable problem to reconstruct the original composition of the report and to edit it in accordance with the text-critical principles valid in classical philology. Consequently, there is no doubt that the two kings of the ancient Magyars named in the work of Gaihani, bear the titles *Künde* and *Gila* respectively. It is likewise clear that these names relate to the names *Kende* (< *Künde*) and *Gyula* (< *Gila*) which are well-known from Hungarian antiquity. In the earlier Hungarian sources these names are still the designations of princely office-holders. Later, however, they appear as the names of families of the upper-nobility and eventually, in the modern period, they are increasingly known as family names and *Gyula* as a first name, though now completely without its original force.<sup>23</sup>

The question still remains as to whence the Hungarians acquired these titles. For they clearly do not belong to the old Finno-Ugritic vocabulary of the Magyars. Right from the outset it is very clear that we are justified in looking for the origin of both names among the Khazars, since around the middle of the 10th century the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus claimed in his De administrando imperio, intended as a school book for his son, that the Magyars were closely connected with the Khazars in their (i.e. the Hungarians') old homeland between the Don and the Danube.<sup>24</sup> He even says that the Magyars, after they had suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Petchenegs, a Turkic people, wanted to rebuild their nation anew on the basis of a proposal of the Khazar king. From the emperor's account it appears that the Magyars inhabited Khazar territory for a long time, and that the two peoples frequently

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Caucasian-Albanian parallels. We must not forget, however, that the same rite was common to many places, and that a similar act of raising during the royal election is also attested among the Turks.

<sup>21</sup> Edited by Ezeanc<sup>c</sup>, p.101.

<sup>22</sup> van Baaren, Nederlandsch Theologische Tijdschrift 10 (1955-56), p.293.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. D. Pais, Magyar Nyelv 50(1957), p.507.

<sup>24</sup> Edited by Moravcsik, ch.38, pp.170-74; ch.40, pp.175-78.

waged war together as allies. Furthermore, if we consider that the Arabic descriptions of the Khazar and old Magyar sacred kingships are essentially the same in this regard, then we must admit that this speaks strongly for a Khazar origin of Magyar sacred kingship. In my opinion, however, this can be shown as irrefutable only if we can also demonstrate the Khazar origin of the Magyar language of kingship.

In itself, this idea is not new, but the attempt to derive the old Hungarian royal title *Künde* from the Khazar, i.e. from Turkish, always posed a linguistic problem. Although this is not the place to investigate these linguistic questions in an exhaustive manner, I would nevertheless like to summarize my results. The title *Künde* is attested in three different forms in the Arabic, Persian, Hungaro-Latin sources. First, the basic form is *Kündä*, which appears as the name of the Magyar king in Gaihani and the Arabic geographer Ibn Rusta, respectively. From this stage it developed regularly with aggressive assimilation into the Old Hungarian *Kende*. Second, from the original form *Kündä*, *Kündü*, a variant attested in both Arabic and Hungaro-Latin sources, arose in a regular manner with progressive assimilation into Hungarian as well as Turkish (Khazar). In the Hungaro-Latin sources, it takes the form *Cundu* (\**Kündü*).<sup>25</sup> In the Arabic sources the form of the same variant appears \**Kundu*, which is attested most probably in the travel account of Ibn Fadlan, who lived as a Muslim Faquih in 921/2 C.E. among the Volga Bulgars. Ibn Fadlan names the bearer of the third rank among the Khazars as *Kundu Haqan*.<sup>26</sup> The third ruler among the Khazars, therefore, also possessed the Turkish royal title *Haqan*. According to Ibn Fadlan, this third king was directly below the second (administrative) king. The third variant, *Kündäcik*, is identical with the base form *Kündä*, but the name has been provided with a Turkish diminutive suffix -*cik*. We know this from an Arabic historical source which recounts the history of the later 9th century. In this historical work, there is an extensive discussion about a Turkish vezier, who has risen in the Caliphate to the position of Governor of Mosul, achieved the highest military ranks, and played a prominent role in the lively events of his time. His name reads *Ishaq ibn Kundagiq al Hazari*. To judge from his own Muslim name (Ishaq) and the name of his father (aiyub), he was an Islamicized Khazar and belonged to the earliest layer of the Turkish Mamluks, who were later able to seize the power in the Caliphate for themselves. Since J. Marquart's "explorations"<sup>27</sup> and even earlier, one tried to connect the name of this *Ishaq ibn Kundagiq* with the Old Hungarian *Kündä*. Particularly important was the work of

<sup>25</sup> *Anonymi Gesta Hungarorum* I, edited by Szentpétery, (Budapest, 1937), p.41: *Cundu pater Curzan*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Fadlan calls the three Khazar kings *K.n.d.r.* With reference to the Hungarian variants *Kündü*, however, one must read *k.n.d.w.* (*Kündü*) instead of *k.n.d.r.* This emendation signifies scarcely any change from the Arabic letter. Firdausi also knew this variant, since in his royal book he talks about *Kundu* (*K.n.d.r.*) in the same way as about a *saqlabischen* (slavic) assistant of the Turkish prince. As usual, he does not cite his source, but the kind and way in which he uses the word *Saqlab* shows clearly that he borrowed the name from Ibn Fadlan's travel account, and furthermore, that he had before his eyes the same textual variant as Yaqut presents to the lexicographers.

<sup>27</sup> p.168; cf. V. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband*, (Cambridge, 1958), p.156; H. Vámbéry, *Ursprung der Magyaren*, (Leipzig, 1898), p.84.

A. Zajackowski, who noted that the last part of the name, the suffix *-gik* was clearly identical with the Turkish suffix *-cik*.<sup>28</sup> From their very beginning, however, these attempts were contested by the Hungarian Turcologists on linguistic grounds. They asserted, in opposition to the above explanations, that the Turkish *Kündācik* would have implicitly been written in Arabic letters with Kef rather than a Qaf. These criticisms are not valid, in my opinion. First of all, it is very natural, but nevertheless incorrect, to judge the name forms of the Arabic text solely on the basis of historical Osmanic orthography. At issue here is the Arabic notation of a Turkish name that was common amongst the Arabic population of the entire Caliphate. The notation must, therefore, be regarded as the Arabic representation of a foreign name, as it was spoken amongst the Arabic population; the graph must therefore be understood on the basis of the Arabic language's phonetic history. From this perspective, the rendering of the initial syllable *kū-* with *ku* as well as the rendering of the last syllable *-cik* with *-giq* are completely regular.<sup>29</sup> Hence, in the mouths of the Arabic population the name sounded like *Kundagiq*. As has already been mentioned, the last syllable of the name *Kündācik* is identical to the Turkish diminutive suffix *-cik*. I would simply like to note that the same name is attested in combination with another diminutive suffix. Instead of *Kundagiq*, some prose authors write *Kundag*, and this latter form is not an incorrect spelling. The famous flatterer, the poet Buhturi, a contemporary of Ishaq ibn Kundagiq and glorifier of the great Turks in his poetry, referred to him in a poem not as *Kundagiq* but as *Kundag*.<sup>30</sup> The latter form, assured by the next thirty rhymes on *-ag*, is now established. The linguistic explanation of the form *Kundag* poses no problem, since it can easily be explained as the familiar form combined with the Turkish diminutive suffix. The bearer of the name "little *Kündā*" was perhaps the crown prince, given the fact that Ishaq's father had earlier belonged to the highest rank of Khazar dignitaries, or perhaps even that he was himself a Khazar crown prince, as Buhturi's verses reveal. Finally, I would like to remark that the name form *Kündāc* is attested in the historical work of Ya'qubi also as *Kundas*.<sup>31</sup> This form is also not surprising since the foreign *c* is regularly replaced either by *g* or by *s* in Old Arabic.

As far as the origin of the title of the second Hungarian king, scholars have long been agreed that this name, too, did not belong to the original Hungarian vocabulary. Rather it goes back, etymologically,

<sup>28</sup> A. Zajackowski, *Ze Studiów nad zagadnieniem Khazarskim*, Polnische Akademie der Wissenschaften, (Krakow, 1947), p.34.

<sup>29</sup> The Turkish first syllable *ū-* was taken over as well into Arabic, in which there was no vowel *ū*, in the form *ku-* (ancient examples of this are the Arabic forms of *Kül tegin* and *Kül cor*). The rendering of the Turkish and Iranian *e*-sound in Arabic by *a* is also well known and was made possible by the fact that the *a* (and also the *ā*) show already in old Arabic, as well as in many modern dialects, an inclination to shift to *ā* (open *e*). This is the familiar phenomenon, which the Arabic national grammarians have called *imāla* (inclination). The manner of writing the final *-k* with *q* is likewise not unexpected in Arabic, since the Arabic *k* was, as we have known since the time of Hoffman and Hübschmann, an aspirated sound. Furthermore, the Arabs regularly rendered a Greek or Armenian *k* by their *q* instead of with their *k*. These observations were fully confirmed by the more recent phonological investigations of J. Cantineaus (*Études de linguistique arabe*. (Paris, 1960), pp.64-71).

<sup>30</sup> Diwan, (ed. Beirut, 1962), pp.425-27; 437-39.

<sup>31</sup> (ed. Beirut, 1960), II, p.492.

to the Turkish title *Jila' Gila*, which is attested as a title in the account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus concerning the Turkish Petchenegs. Hence we can regard the Khazar, i.e. Turkish, origin of the Old Hungarian sacred kingship as proven not only historically but also linguistically.

From the standpoint of the history of religions, this is very informative. The investigation of Old Hungarian paganism as well as the religion of the two small peoples who today are the Ostjaks and the Woguls on the Ob in west Siberia, has in fact shown that sacred double-kingship does not belong to the ancient religious institutions of the Ugrian peoples. The Magyars first took it over when they left the forested zone for the Steppes and came under the rule of the Khazars. At that time, after the 6th century, the Khazars extended their rule to dozens of smaller or larger tribal unions of Caucasian, Bulgarian, Finno-Ugrian, and Slavic peoples. The result of this was that the Khazar chief, at the pinnacle of an imperial administration constructed hierarchically on the basis of the social layers, became a sacred king, in exactly the same way as had the Turkish over-king in the original homeland of the Baikal Sea. This same development happened again later, in the 9th century. This time it was the Magyars who organized a tribal union independent of the Khazar overlords. The union soon became a great power between the Don and the Danube, as we know from the Arabic geographical sources. The way in which the Magyars repressed the Slavs, according to the account of Gaihani, is characteristic. The Hungarians actively drove the Slavic merchants into the city-havens on the Black Sea and extended their raids to a large portion of central Europe, including the Vienna basin. This originally insignificant forest people now adopted the institution of sacred kingship from the Khazars, and its two kings called themselves by the Turkish titles of their original Khazar overlords.<sup>32</sup>

The destruction of Hungarian hegemony in southern Russia and the surrounding area still did not signify the end of the ancient Hungarian sacred kingship directly. Although the Hungarian tribal union, defeated by the Turkish Petchenegs, lost its old territory in southern Russia, they were clearly able to re-organize their shattered tribal union. The Khazar Khagan, disturbed by the closeness of the dangerous Petchenegs, was also involved. He proposed that the Magyars subject themselves to him and elect a vassal king, who would marry his daughter. This naturally would have meant the giving up of Magyar sacred kingship. The Khazar plan was not put into effect, however, since the Magyars were forced to leave southern Russia permanently after their second defeat at the hands of the Petchenegs in 896 C.E. At the same time, the Byzantine emperor, who was waging war against the Bulgars at the time, sent an embassy to the Hungarians. The ambassadors reported that the Hungarians lived under two kings.<sup>33</sup> For

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<sup>32</sup> The nomadic double-kingship was linked to the common two-fold division of the tribal union by A. Alföldi (*Károlyi Arpád Emlékkönyv*, (Budapest, 1933), pp.28-39). This view has recently received wide acceptance, although we should not forget that the nomadic two-class system is not connected either genetically or historically with sacred double kingship. On the two class system, cf. H. Petri, *Jahrbuch des Linden Museums* (1951), pp.188-201.

<sup>33</sup> Georgius Continuatus A, edited by Bekker, (Bonn, 18??), p.854.



us, this means that sacred kingship survived even after the defeats of 889 and 896 by the Petchenegs.<sup>34</sup> In their new homeland on the Danube and the Theiss plain, they continued their plundering expeditions for several more decades. A century later, in 1030, they were converted to Christianity under Stephen the Holy. From this point on, the Hungarians were no longer subject to sacred kings, but rather to Christian kings "by the grace of God."

Thus, the investigation of Turkish, Khazar, and old Hungarian kingship offers important results for a comparative study of the institution of sacred kingship. The meaning of the above examples is, on the one hand, that they allow a historical study of this institution in relation to the relevant African contributions, while, on the other hand, illuminating its sociological prerequisites. Sierksmas' thesis, which asserts that sacred kingship always develops as a result of the layering of societies, is valid in this case as well. The Turkish and old Magyar sacred king is not only the chief of his own tribal union, but his power extends over a multiplicity of tribes and peoples. These other groups are not just his tributaries, but are even treated as servants by him. The distance between the king and his subjects is infinitely large: the king's stature towers at the level of the super-human. Societal layering cannot, of course, be regarded as the only cause in the development of sacred kingship, but a sociological treatment of the problem must be included for a correct understanding of this important religious historical phenomenon.

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<sup>34</sup> According to Georgius, both Hungarian princes are called *Arpad (es)* and *Kusan(es)*. Regarding *Kusan*, we know from the Hungarian chronicles that he was the son of *Kündüs*. From this fact, some scholars have wanted to claim that the Kusan (Curzan) was the sacred and the Arpád the administrative king of the Hungarians, in other words, that the dynasty of the family Curzan was replaced by that of the Arpáds. The most recent of these, G. Györffy, (*Budapest régiségei* 16 (1955):9-17) has linked the origin of sacred double kingship with the increasing wealth of the king. The entire Byzantine and Hungarian historical tradition argues against these views. Arpad is even mentioned in the first position in Georgius' work. Thus, it appears that one is scarcely able to argue that any son of a *Kündü* was always a *Kündü*. In reality, the sons of the ruler of the nomads held the most important offices of the empire.