

Dreisziger, Nándor. Péter Király. *A honalapítás vitás eseményei: A kalandozások és a honfoglalás éve* [The Disputed Events of the Establishment of a Homeland: The Marauding Expeditions and the Year of the Conquest]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2006. Pp. 259. Maps and illustrations. András Zoltán, ed. *Király Péter „A honalapítás vitás eseményei” fogadtatása: Állásfoglalások, vélemények és további többirányú kutatások* [The Reception of Péter Király’s “The Disputed events of the Establishment of a Homeland:” Reactions, Opinions and Further Multidirectional Research]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2010. Pp. 120. Illustrations. AHEA: E-journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association, Volume 5 (2012): <http://ahea.net/e-journal/volume-5-2012>

Péter Király. *A honalapítás vitás eseményei: A kalandozások és a honfoglalás éve* [The Disputed Events of the Establishment of a Homeland: The Marauding Expeditions and the Year of the Conquest]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2006. Pp. 259. Maps and illustrations.
 András Zoltán, ed. *Király Péter „A honalapítás vitás eseményei” fogadtatása: Állásfoglalások, vélemények és további többirányú kutatások* [The Reception of Péter Király’s “The Disputed events of the Establishment of a Homeland:” Reactions, Opinions and Further Multidirectional Research]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2010. Pp. 120. Illustrations.

Reviewed by Nándor Dreisziger, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

History textbooks in Hungary date the arrival of the ancestors of the Hungarians to their present homeland to the end of the 9th century A.D., while the fact that there are other theories about the timing of the settlement of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin is often not even mentioned. Yet in the past half-century alone at least a half-dozen prominent Hungarian academics have advanced theories that place the arrival of the Hungarians much earlier, sometimes several centuries prior to the time given in the textbooks. Péter Király is one of these historians and his book under review here is just the most recent of these works questioning the accepted dogma of Hungarian historiography about the settlement of the Magyars in East Central Europe.

Although there have been historians in the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th who had questioned the view that the ancestors of the Magyars arrived in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century, they tended to be ignored. But the trend continued and doubts about the majority view on this matter persisted into the last decades of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st. The most prominent among the scholars who had such doubts was Gyula László, usually considered founder of the “Dual Conquest” school of historiography. László kept publishing on this subject throughout much of the last third of the 20th century, at first claiming that some or possibly most of the ancestors of the Magyars arrived in the Carpathian Basin as early as the 670s and the rest at the end of the 9th century. In the 1990s when he was approaching old age László changed his emphasis and argued that the predominant majority of Hungarians had settled in the present homeland at least 220 years before the “conquest,” by which time another archaeologist-historian, János Makkay, as well as the physical anthropologist Pál Lipták had come to similar conclusions. In his book *Avars and Ancient Hungarians* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1983) Lipták suggested that Hungarians had settled in their present homeland in instalments, starting with the 5th century and ending in the 9th, but especially in the times of Avar rule (6th, 7th and 8th centuries). Still another contemporary Hungarian scholar, Dezső Simonyi, came to believe that much of that settlement had taken place already in the 5th century. Then in 2002 a younger historian, Gábor Vékony, published what he had meant to be his doctoral dissertation, but his untimely death in 2004, did not allow him to finish his work, in which he claimed not only that the ancestors of Hungarians had arrived in the Carpathian Basin hundreds of years before the 9th century but that the nomadic tribes that came in 895 were probably not even Hungarian. Like his predecessors, László, Makkay, Lipták, Simonyi and others, Vékony’s ideas were ignored or dismissed by other members of Hungary’s academic establishment.

It was against this background that, only four years after the publication of Vékony’s book, Péter Király’s monograph appeared. The main part of the book deals with the date of the arrival of the ancestors of the Hungarians. Based upon his many decades of research in medieval chronicles and document collections, Király is confident in saying/ claiming that a people called variously as Ungri, Ungari, Ungar or Unger, Ungarus or Ungerus, Onger, Wanger, Hunger or Hungaer or Hungeri, or Hungarius (I might add Ugorskij), had lived in the Carpathian Basin at least since the 7th century. Király in fact found the first references to these people in connection with events of the second half of the 6th century. Lest some people think that these names were appellations European scribes used for one or another of the peoples of the Carpathian Basin of the times, Király found at least one document in which several of the peoples of that

Dreisziger, Nándor. Péter Király. *A honalapítás vitás eseményei: A kalandozások és a honfoglalás éve* [The Disputed Events of the Establishment of a Homeland: The Marauding Expeditions and the Year of the Conquest]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2006. Pp. 259. Maps and illustrations. András Zoltán, ed. *Király Péter „A honalapítás vitás eseményei” fogadtatása: Állásfoglalások, vélemények és további többirányú kutatások* [The Reception of Péter Király’s “The Disputed events of the Establishment of a Homeland:” Reactions, Opinions and Further Multidirectional Research]. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola, 2010. Pp. 120. Illustrations. AHEA: E-journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association, Volume 5 (2012): <http://ahea.net/e-journal/volume-5-2012>

land were listed, in addition to the Ungari — suggesting that they constituted an ethnic group by themselves. Besides finding references to the ancestors of Hungarians, Király has also found mentions of geographic places connected to them such as the “lands of the Hungarians” or the “Hungarian border.” The earliest of references to the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin, according to Király, come from the second half of the 6th century. On this basis Király declared that the beginning of Hungarian settlement of that land can best be dated to the late-6th century (p. 206, re-stated on p. 214). He argues that they may not have come on their own but in the company of better-known tribal confederations such as those of the Huns, the Avars, the late-Avars or Onogurs, and the Bulgars (another Turkic-speaking people).

The sub-theme of Király’s monograph deals with the marauding expeditions that the post-conquest elite of Hungary had undertaken from the end of the 9th century to the middle of the 10th and suggests that, in the light of the historical evidence these might better be described simply as “military campaigns”. (Király’s volume is completed by an English summary (pp. 237-238), indexes, maps, and an appendix featuring colour illustrations.)

The second volume under review here is an eclectic combination of a supplement to the earlier book and an overview of reactions to it. In this book, which is edited by one of Király’s younger colleagues, András Zoltán, Király outlines his journey from being a university student in pre-World War II Czechoslovakia to becoming a researcher in Hungary of early medieval codices, chronicles and monastic documents mainly in Central Europe that mention or describe events relating to the peoples of the Carpathian Basin largely before the 10th century. The little book also contains reactions, both published and unpublished, of several scholars to Király’s 2006 book, along with Király’s responses to these. There are also sections in this publication that supplement the original sources that were described and often copiously quoted in the original work.

However arbitrary it might sound, I will refer only to two sections of this book, both from the part dealing with other scholars’ reactions to Király’s arguments. One comes from the comments of the also veteran (Király is in his 90s) archaeologist István Erdélyi, who points out that the theory of the “Dual Conquest” usually attributed to the above-mentioned Gyula László and János Makkay, derives from the 1880s, from the scholar László Réthy (1851-1914). Erdélyi also opines that the question of the first settlement of the Hungarians’ ancestors in the Carpathian Basin will be solved when the origins of the Székely people will be clarified. After all, Erdélyi declares, “the ancestors of the Székelys never changed their language, [they] spoke Hungarian from the very beginning” (p. 46 – my translation, ND). In this connection I might mention that in my earlier review of Gábor Vékony’s book on Hungarian origins and the so-called Hungarian conquest, I suggested that Hungarians are the descendants of the early Székelys — who had settled in the Carpathian Basin hundreds of years before the 9th century. (See the 2009 volume [vol. 36] of the *Hungarian Studies Review*, pp. 153-169.)

The other comment on Király’s 2006 ideas I want to mention is by the volume’s editor, András Zoltán. He remarked that, as a linguistic historian, he would be relieved if it would turn out that the ancestors of the Hungarians “percolated” into the Carpathian Basin, “without any martial noise,” centuries before the end of the 9th century (p. 73). This view is eerily reminiscent of Pál Lipták’s theory of the settlement of the Hungarians’ ancestors in East Central Europe, even though Zoltán doesn’t mention Lipták’s 1983 book. (*Avars and Ancient Hungarians*, cit. especially p. 160).

At this point me might ask what are the chances that Péter Király’s work, crying out for the revision of the historiography of Hungarian ethnogenesis, will result in a reassessment of the currently dominant theory of the Hungarian conquest? Notwithstanding a limited number of early and sometimes even positive reactions to the book by a handful of specialists, the answer probably is that Király’s work will probably achieve nothing of the sort. Rather, I suspect that Király’s 2006 book, just like the publications of Gyula László, János Makkay, Pál Lipták, Dezső Simonyi, Gábor Vékony and others before it, will be ignored by the vast majority of Hungarian academics — and it will most likely remain unknown to Hungary’s general reading public.