

HUNGARY

FROM NINTH CENTURY ORIGINS
TO THE 1956 UPRISING

C. A. MACARTNEY



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C. A. . MACARTNEY

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1962 by Transaction Publishers

Published 2017 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Catalog Number: 2008002649

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Macartney, C. A. (Carlile Aylmer), 1895-1978.

Hungary : from ninth century origins to the 1956 uprising / C.A. Macartney.

p. cm.

Originally published: 1962 under the title: Hungary : a short history.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-202-36198-7 (alk. paper)

1. Hungary—History. I. Title.

DB925.M16 2008

943.9—dc22

2008002649

ISBN 13: 978-0-202-36198-7 (pbk)

PREFACE

My warm thanks are due to my two alleged pupils – sed plus docuerunt, quam didicerunt – Mr J. Bak and Mr L. Péter, for their criticisms and suggestions on respectively the earlier and later chapters of this book. They are, of course, blameless for any errors of fact which have escaped their scrutiny, and for interpretations and judgments which reflect a view of Hungarian history, and of many persons and processes in it, with which they must not be held to agree.

C. A. MACARTNEY
All Souls College, Oxford
November, 1961



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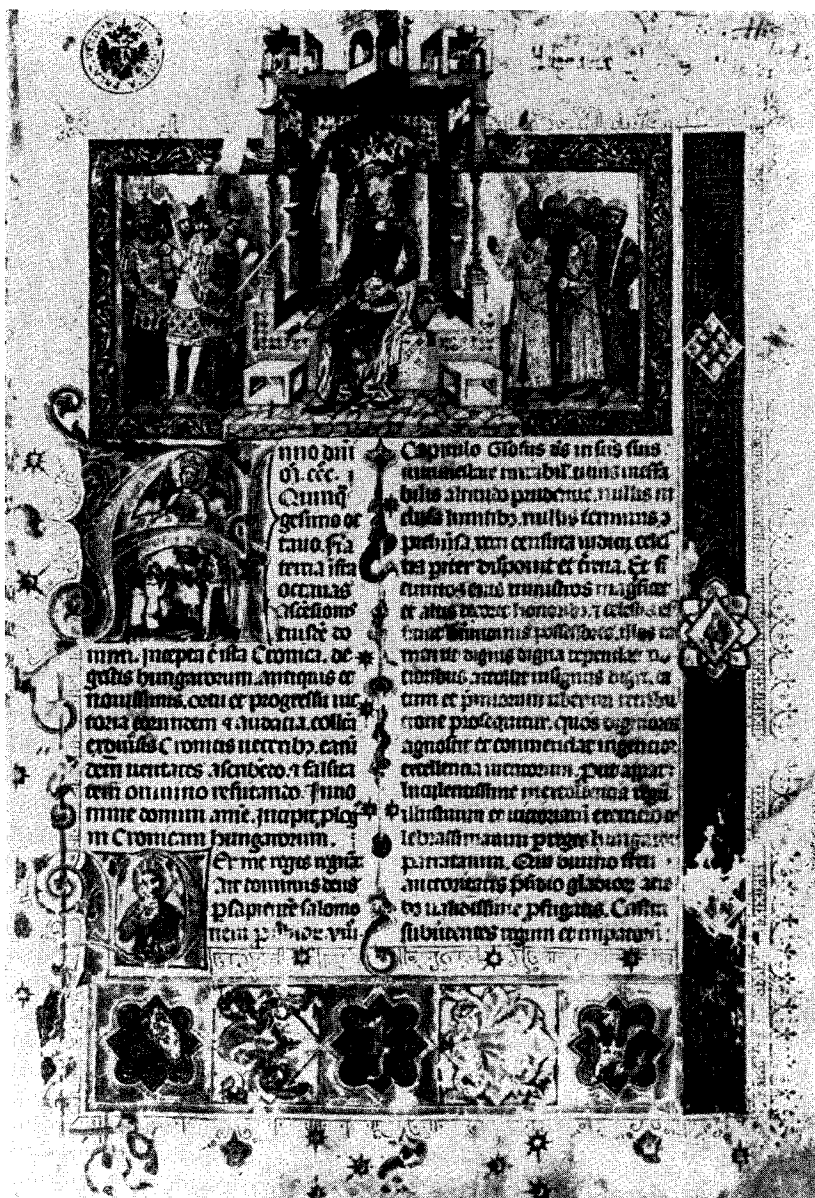
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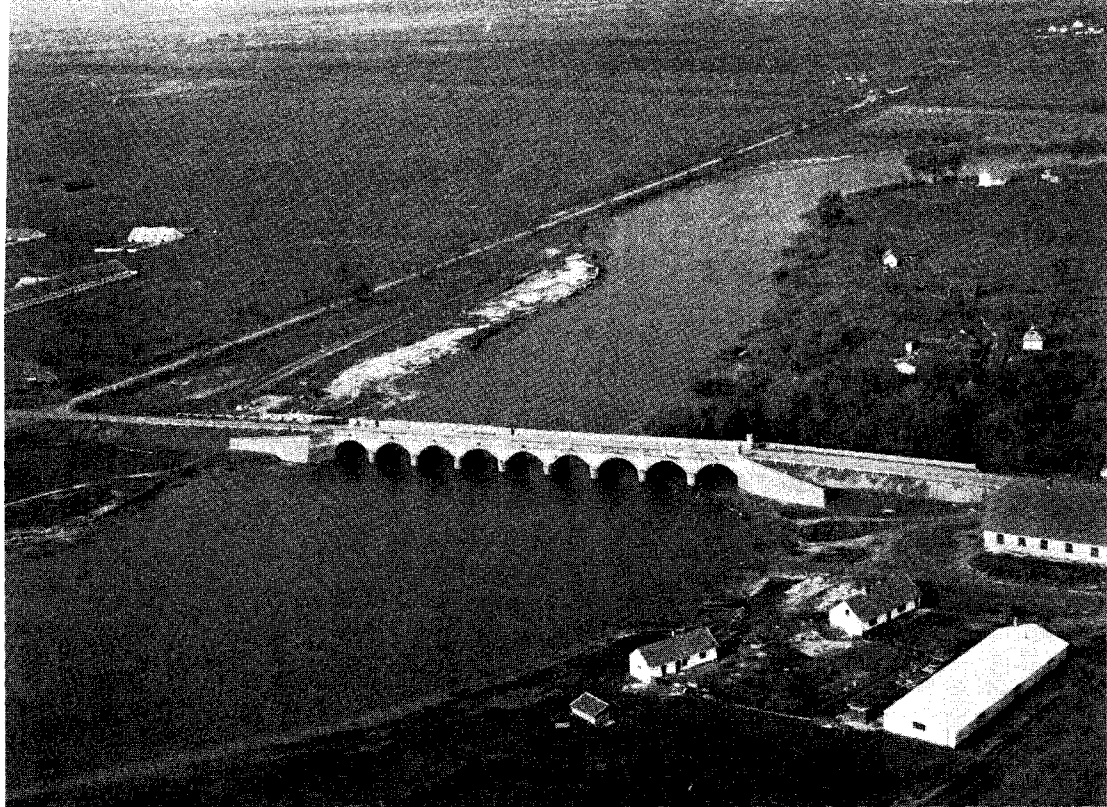
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The Publisher is much indebted to various organisations and individuals for help in obtaining photographs for reproduction: in particular the Hungarian Legation, Radio Times Hulton Picture Library, and Dr Macartney. None of these are responsible for weaknesses in the quality of reproduction of certain plates, which are due to prevailing difficulties in obtaining new photographs of certain historical material.



1. Title page of the National Chronicle of Hungary written in the reign of Louis the Great, c. 1370: ref. p. 43



2 and 3. *The Alföld at Hortobágy* '... an open, featureless expanse, a true steppe-land': ref. p. 3



I

THE BEGINNINGS

NO STATE in European history has a beginning so precisely definable as Hungary. It was brought into being well-nigh full-panoplied, by a single act, when the Magyars, until then a people without fixed abode, entered the basin of the middle Danube, a place at that juncture as good as masterless, and made it their home. This was in the last years of the ninth century A.D.

Many writers, not Hungarians alone, have dilated on the 'natural unity' of the Middle Danube Basin, which now became Hungary. The parts of it seem, indeed, designed by nature to form one harmonious whole. Through the heart of it the great river itself runs a course of nearly 600 miles, most of it through flat or flattish lands which form an oval plain, about 100,000 square miles in extent, 400 miles at its greatest width from west to east, 300 from north to south. This plain is surrounded by a ring of mountains, whose valleys converge on the central plain; of the rivers of Historic Hungary, only one flows north, to join the Vistula; one, like the Danube itself, cuts its own way through the Transylvanian Alps; all the rest join the Danube on its central course. The mountains, which in the north and east form an almost continuous wall, rarely broken, with the dense forests which up to recent times covered their slopes, form a natural defence for the plain, especially towards the east. The products of plain and mountain are mutually complementary, linking their inhabitants in a natural community of destiny.

But if there is to be unity here, it can never derive from uniformity, but only from a synthesis of mutually disparate



Map 1. The Middle Danube Basin

components. And this disparity is not only between plain and mountain. The vast plain itself consists of two parts which differ in important respects, both in their own characters and in their natural connections and relationships with the outer world. The smaller, western portion, which is contained within the crook of the Danube, the Pannonia of the Romans, called by the Hungarians the *Dunántúl* – the land beyond the Danube – hardly deserves the name of plain: it contains some large flat spaces, but most of it is a pleasant, undulating country of hills and valleys, the geographical continuation of the outliers of the Eastern Alps and the Balkans, from which, and from their hinterlands, it is easily accessible. On the other hand, what lies between the left bank of the Danube and the Transylvanian foothills – the *Alföld*, or lowland proper – is an open, featureless expanse, a true steppe-land, a sort of outpost of the vaster Pontic and Caspian steppes, from which only the Carpathian wall separates it; and in that wall, solid as most of it is, there are breaches at least one of which was in the older days easier to force than the crossing of the mighty Danube itself.

Even if we disregard the high mountains and Transylvania, which usually lived its own life, the fates of the two parts of the plain in early times and the Dark Ages were often very different, sometimes sharply opposed. The western half was usually peopled and intermittently controlled from its immediate or remoter central European, or Italian, hinterlands; for several centuries it belonged to Rome. By contrast, the Great Plain was recurrently occupied by waves of nomadic horsemen, the overspill from the seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of these peoples which then filled the Pontic, Caspian and central Asiatic steppes. Scythians, Sarmatians, Huns (with their Germanic subjects), Bulgars and Avars all successively sought in it a refuge from more powerful neighbours, and a home.

These two elements – Europe and Asia – strove for mas-

tery, and neither ever achieved it quite completely. The horsemen, when they arrived, were usually the stronger in the field and some of them carried their conquests across the Danube and as far as the western forests, but in time they always weakened, their empires collapsed and Europe reasserted itself. On the other hand, the Europeans seldom ventured beyond what was for them the greatest of natural defensive lines, the Danube; the Romans themselves, who for a while held Transylvania as well as the west, left the Great Plain alone, even during a long period when its nomadic population was exceptionally weak. There were other times when neither Asia nor Europe was present in force, and when the whole Basin was little more than a nomad's land, and the end of the ninth century A.D. was one of these times. The Avars, the last invaders to enter the Basin in force, had ruled the whole of it for the unprecedented span of over two centuries, but their power, too, had decayed with time, and at the opening of the century Charlemagne had destroyed it utterly. The German Empire had, however, limited its subsequent extension of its political frontiers to the old Pannonia and the areas flanking it north and south, and even there it had done no more than set up a series of dependencies, governed by Slavonic 'dukes', whose allegiance was often insecure. One of these vassal states, Croatia, had made itself fully independent in 869, and Sviatopluk, Duke of Moravia, which then included the area between the Danube and the Gran, had been in open defiance of his overlord for as long.

The East Roman Empire, of which the Serbia of the day was a loose dependency, disputed Syrmia with the Western Empire, but did not look across the Danube-Drave line. Bulgaria may have exercised suzerainty over the Alföld, and perhaps Transylvania, but its rule over either area was at best shadowy. Thus a number of Powers claimed rule over parts of the Basin, but all of them were peripheral to it, their own centres far distant from it. The native

populations ruled by these Powers were as various as they. There were Moravian Slavs in the north-west, Slovenes in Pannonia; in the north, and along the banks of the Tisza, some more Slav settlements, and roaming the plains of the Alföld, a nomadic people of Eastern origin, perhaps akin to the Magyars themselves: the Szekels. The ethnic appurtenance of the then inhabitants of Transylvania is acrimoniously disputed between Roumanian and Hungarian historians, the former maintaining that a Roman, or alternatively, Romanised Dacian, population had survived the Dark Ages, the latter pointing to the fact that all the pre-Magyar place-names of Transylvania are Slav, except four river-names, which are not Latin; also that the first mention of 'Vlachs' in Hungarian documents comes in the thirteenth century, when they figure only as roving shepherds, and not numerous.

In any case, all these populations were sparse. The most densely populated area was probably the foothills and open valleys of the north-west. The upper valleys and mountains of the Carpathians were practically uninhabited. There were only one or two places larger than hamlets in Pannonia, or in the Alföld. Transylvania, too, whatever the ethnic appurtenance of such inhabitants as it possessed, consisted at that time mostly of unpenetrated forest.

Such was the situation in the Basin when the Magyars appeared on the further side of the Carpathian Gate.

To all appearance, the Magyars were just such another horde of Asiatic strangers as their predecessors – the Huns (with whom their victims, and later, their own national legend, mistakenly identified them), the Avars and the rest. The travellers, Arabs and Greeks alike, who first came into contact with them, described them as 'a race of Turks'. Ethnologically, this was incorrect. The linguistic evidence shows that the Magyars' remoter ancestors belonged to the Finno-Ugrian family of peoples whose

habitats in olden days extended from the Baltic to the middle Urals. In their original homes, which were densely forested, these peoples lived a primitive existence as hunters and fishers, hardly acquainted even with agriculture and possessed only of the most primitive political and social organisation. But early in the Christian era some causes unknown to us seem to have driven the Magyars' direct ancestors, who were the easternmost of these peoples, across the Urals, and thence southward into the steppes, and here, under the influence of geography and, presumably, of the Turki and Iranian peoples with whom they came into contact (how far, if at all, this contact took the form of conquest it is now impossible to say), they exchanged their former way of life for the nomadic herdsmen's existence appropriate to their new environment.

They now also became exposed to the fate of all the steppe-dwellers, attack by a stronger neighbour – nearly always on their east – forcing them to change their feeding grounds; an easy matter for nomads provided that their western neighbours, in their turn, were weaker than they. The Magyars' moves west seem to have begun in the fifth century A.D. Recent research has thrown doubts on what had been the accepted version of their movements during the next four centuries, and we may omit a conjectural account of it here. We reach firmer ground about A.D. 830, when we find them established – by all evidence, newly so – above the Maeotis, on the right bank of the Don. This body of them consisted of seven hordes, or tribes, but they had certainly shed some parts of the nation on the way: some 'Magyars' are attested as still living in the Ural steppes in the ninth century, others, a century later, in the Caucasus. The name of 'On Ogur' or Ten Arrows (the word 'Hungarian' is a Slavicised form of this Turkish term) by which their neighbours knew them may enshrine a memory of their earlier condition, or may refer to their organisation in the ninth century, for on the Maeotis they

were joined by three dissident hordes – known as Kavars – of the Khazars, the powerful Turki nation, famous for its conversion to the Israelite faith, which at that time held the mouths of the Volga.

By this time the Magyars were indeed ‘a race of Turks’ to all outward appearance. They subsisted by pasturing their herds in summer over the grasslands round their base, retiring in winter to the shores of the Maeotis and the banks of the Don. Although they now practised a little agriculture, their chief sustenance was meat, mare’s milk and fish. Much of their lives was spent in the saddle, and their raids and campaigns, too, were conducted on horseback. Their favoured arm was the bow and arrow.

If any earlier conquest of the primitive Finno-Ugrians by a more warlike Turki people had ever taken place, all memory, and all trace, of it had vanished. Except for the penal slaves, the Magyars were ‘all free men’; elaborate social differentiation between them was unnecessary, for they supplied themselves adequately with slaves by raiding the neighbouring Slavs. They supplemented their incomes by selling the surplus in the Crimean markets.

The basic social unit was the clan, the members of which acknowledged a real or imagined common ancestry. A varying number of clans went to the tribe. The authority of the tribal chiefs seems to have been hereditary, but when we first hear of them, the tribes were united only in a loose federation, owning no single supreme authority. They were at one time in an alliance, which may not have been quite an equal one, with the Khazars, and according to one source the Khazar Khagan tried to unite them by marrying his daughter to the most powerful of their chiefs, but the marriage proved barren, and with it, the attempt.

The same source ascribes to the Khagan a second, and this time successful attempt with another chief. The Magyar national tradition, ignoring the Khazar element, says that, having decided to migrate, the seven chieftains elected the

most powerful of their number, Árpád, son of Almus, to lead them, swearing with ritual drinking of mingled blood to accept him and his male issue in perpetuity as heads of the nation. (Almus was then still alive, but presumably too old to be an effective leader.) According to this tradition, the decision to migrate was motivated by pressure of population on the feeding grounds; foreign sources reveal that in fact the Magyars had suffered defeat at the hands of a nation newly arrived from the East, the Petchenegs, who had evicted them from their feeding grounds. This was in A.D. 889, and Árpád now led his people westward in quest of a new home. The Kavars came with them, as did half a dozen small hordes of Turki or Ugrian origin.¹ Their journey brought them to the outer slopes of the Carpathians, and by the favour of fortune, to a new life beyond them.

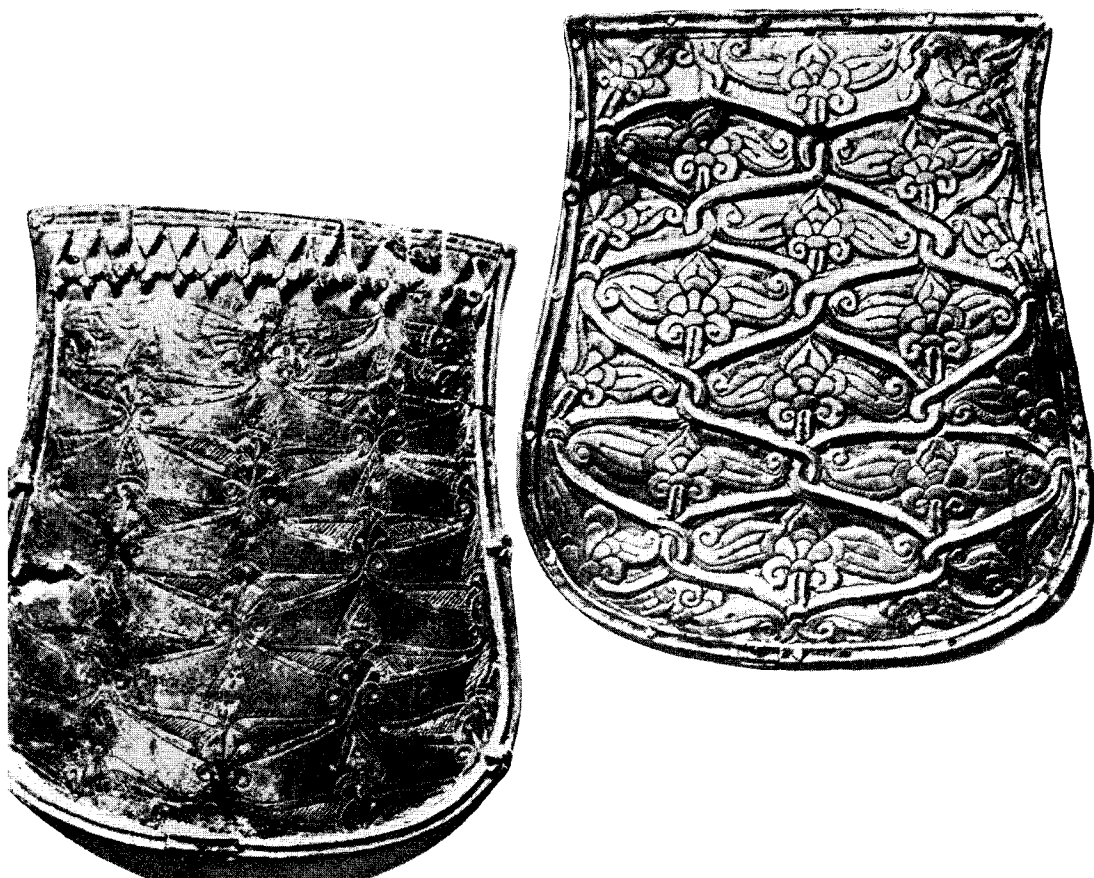
For had the passes been held strongly against them, this would have been the end of their national existence; those not destroyed by the Petchenegs would gradually have lost their national identity, as refugees in foreign lands and mercenaries in foreign armies. But far from finding their road barred, they were actually invited to enter on it. In 892 the Emperor Arnulf enlisted a contingent of them to help him against his rebellious vassal, Sviatopluk. The weakness of the land was revealed to them. In 894 they were back, raiding Pannonia on their own account, and in the autumn of 895 or the spring of 896 the entire nation, with

¹ These smaller hordes figure in the central Hungarian narrative chronicles under the generic name of 'Kuns'. The 'Anonymus' translates this term as 'Cumani'. Hungarian historians have fallen into confusion by identifying Anonymus' Cumans with the Kavars and by regarding the tribes enumerated by Constantine Porphyrogenetos, with the Kavars and the Magyars themselves, as tribes of the Magyars. But the truth is that the cortège consisted of (1) the Magyar nation, subdivided into seven tribes, all calling themselves Magyars; (2) six or seven minor 'Kun' hordes; (3) three Khazar tribes, collectively known as 'Kavars'. The Kavars were so independent that the national tradition retains no memory of them.



4. 'The seven chieftains elected Árpád to lead them': ref. p. 8

5. Silver-gilt pouch-covers of Migration-period Magyars





6. An Árpád dynasty fortress at Esztergom: ref. p. 11

7. Ruins of an early castle at Diósgyőr



their auxiliaries, crossed the mountains for good. A little fighting left them in possession of the Alföld (where the Szekels submitted themselves voluntarily) and put an end to any resistance from Transylvania. The Germans and Moravians patched up their differences in view of the common danger, but by A.D. 900 Frankish rule in Pannonia had vanished. The final destruction of Moravian rule in the north-west came in 906. In 907 a Bavarian army was annihilated at Ennsburg and the Magyars' rule extended up to the Avars' old frontier where the Enns runs into the Danube.

The Magyars had thus entered on possession of their new homes speedily and completely, far more so than, as far as we know, any of their predecessors. It is important to emphasise that what had been done was indeed to establish a nation in a new home, not, as the Normans did in England or Russia, to impose the rule of a relatively small band of conquerors on a subject people. The invaders did not, of course, exterminate the indigenous populations, and may even have admitted some of their chieftains into their own ranks, with their status unimpaired; but most usually, they were allotted as subjects or tributaries to one or another of the Magyar tribal chiefs, or at best, given a semi-free status. The polity was exclusively that of the Magyars and their confederates.

We have no certainty as to the invaders' numbers; one of their chroniclers gives the number of the Magyar clans at 108, which reads like genuine tradition, but his statement that each of the 108 could produce 2,000 armed men seems more dubious. The Magyars and their allies were, however, numerous enough to occupy in sufficient force all the then habitable parts of their new home, viz. the plain, using the term in its widest sense. Árpád's own horde settled in the Dunántúl, between Székesfehérvár, on the site of which, or near it, he made his headquarters, and Buda. Of the six other Magyar hordes, three settled respectively north-west,

west and south-west of the leading tribe, one on the middle Tisza and one on the upper. The seventh, the tribe of Gyula, after first settling in the west, moved to the approaches of Transylvania. The plain of the lower Tisza and its tributaries was allotted to the Kavars, while the 'Kuns' took the northern fringes of the Great Plain.

The invaders did not then attempt to occupy the mountains, which were not adapted to their economy. These, and certain marshlands, were deliberately left as an uncultivated and impenetrable belt, known as 'gyepü', the passages across which were watched by permanent guards, a service to which most of the Szekels were assigned. Beyond this again, there were perhaps isolated outposts.

For the next half-century the Magyars were the scourge of Europe, which they raided far and wide, striking terror into the hearts of their victims with the suddenness of their descents – for their little, lithe horses outdistanced any news of their coming – the ferocity of their attacks, their outlandish and, to Western eyes, hideous appearance, their blood-curdling battle-yells. Historians have counted thirty-three expeditions between 898 and 955, some of them to places as far afield as Bremen, Cambrai, Orléans, Nîmes, Otranto and Constantinople, and there must have been innumerable smaller enterprises of which no record has survived. Most of these raids were simple profit-making expeditions, in which cities and churches were ransacked and gold and treasure carried off, with captives for domestic use, re-export or re-sale in return for ransom. Alternatively, Danegeld was exacted. In addition, the Magyars often hired out their services to one or another warring prince, against his neighbours.

In this half-century they inflicted dreadful damage on Europe, but even for themselves this mode of life was not invariably profitable. Arnulf of Bavaria almost annihilated one of their armies in 917. In 933 Henry the Fowler gave

them a frightful beating near Merseburg. Finally in 955 Otto the Great inflicted a terrible defeat on them outside Augsburg. Their leaders were taken and shamefully hanged and according to legend only seven of the whole host escaped, to beg their way round Hungary, disgraced men for ever.

By now the west had organised its defences, and the Hungarian nation itself was changing. The flower of it had perished in the barren fighting, and among the survivors, miscegenation must have thinned out the old, fiery 'Scythian' blood. Possibly, too, the natural increase of home-bred slaves was enough to make the acquisition of new ones unnecessary.

Another influence was that of Christianity. It was the age when Rome and Byzantium were competing for the souls of the east European peoples. The Eastern church had secured the allegiance of the Bulgars, the Serbs, the Russians and, for a while, the Moravians. Rome had then wrested the Moravians from it and had gained the Slovenes, the Croats and, of course, all the Germans. Both churches were anxious to add the Hungarians to their bag. In the middle of the century the Eastern church gained the adhesion of two important Hungarian chieftains, but the advantage lay with its Western rival. Not only was its faith that of the Hungarians' own Moravian and Slovene subjects, but it was also being vigorously propagated from Bavaria, with which Hungary had drifted into a not unfriendly relationship. The decisive step came about A.D. 970. Árpád's grandson, Taksony or Toxun, died and was succeeded by his son Géza, who, breaking with his father's policy, sent ambassadors to Otto's court and established friendly relations with him. The raids in the west ceased. A great missionary activity set in under the auspices of the Bavarians Wolfgang and Pilgrim of Passau, later reinforced by Adalbert of Prague. Géza moved his capital to Esztergom and surrounded himself with a bodyguard of Bavarian knights, on whom he

bestowed large estates. Progress was delayed by conflicts in Germany, but when Henry II recovered the dukedom of Bavaria in 985, he renewed the old alliance with Hungary. His successor, Henry III, consented to the marriage of his sister, Gisella, to Géza's son Vajk, who had already been baptised under the name of Stephen (István). The marriage took place in 996. A year later, Géza died.

Under St Stephen (he was proclaimed Saint in 1083), the best-beloved, most famous and perhaps the most important figure in Hungarian history, and largely through his personal genius, the transition begun under Géza was completed.

Stephen's own position depended on the success of the new trend, for he was still a young man when his father died¹ and there were elder members of his family alive. One of these, a certain Koppány, claimed the succession under the principle of *senioratus*, and it was only the help of his father's and his wife's heavy cavalry from Bavaria that brought Stephen the victory, after a severe struggle. Then, in A.D. 1000, he applied to Rome for recognition as a king.

He was uniquely fortunate in the moment of his application. Other aspiring rulers before him had made the same request. Sometimes the Pope had rejected it (legend has it that the Duke of Poland applied almost simultaneously with Stephen, and was refused); sometimes he had granted it and the kingdom failed to maintain itself, owing to the Emperor's hostility. Some crowns the Emperor granted, and the absence of Papal endorsement allowed rivals to question their validity. But precisely in A.D. 1000 both the Pope and the Emperor of the day were remarkable figures, and an unique relationship existed between the young Otto III, who dreamed of 'renewing the Empire', and Sylvester II,

¹ The date of Stephen's birth is uncertain. Some chronicles give it as early as 967, but the older of his legends describes him as 'still a child' when he succeeded his father.

who had been Otto's tutor, was still his friend and mentor, and was able to make him see the Empire rather as an oecumenical community of Christian nations than as a Germanic temporal dominion. So it came about that with Otto's agreement, Sylvester sent back Stephen's emissary bearing, if the legend is true¹, the gifts of a crown and an Apostolic cross, joint tokens of Stephen's royal dignity and status and of his authority to establish a national church. The coronation and unction took place on Christmas Day, A.D. 1000.

It is impossible to over-emphasise the importance of these ceremonies. By them both Stephen's own status and that of his people were transformed. The act of conversion changed the Hungarian people from an outlaw horde against whom a Christian Prince was not only free, but bound by duty, to take up arms, into a member of the Christian family of nations, and their prince into one of those rulers by the Grace of God whose legitimate rights his fellow-princes could not infringe without sin. The royal crown made its wearer a true sovereign, not indeed the Emperor's equal in status, but in no respect subject to his overlordship, while the Apostolic insignia made the Hungarian church free of any other authority save that of Rome alone – an enormous reinforcement of the country's real independence.

Coronation also transformed Stephen's position *vis-à-vis*

¹ Some modern historians doubt whether these physical emblems were really sent, and it is certainly impossible to accept without qualification the national tradition which long identified the famous Holy Crown of Hungary, still in existence, with Sylvester's gift, for the circlet which forms the lower part of the crown is demonstrably Byzantine work of the eleventh century; it seems to have been sent, in or about A.D. 1075, to the Hungarian King Géza I by the Byzantine Emperor Michael Dukas VII. There are, however, no technical grounds against assigning an earlier date to the closed upper part with which the circlet has been united (probably under Béla IV), and foreign sources, as well as the Hungarian legend, attest the sending of a crown. The Cross is mentioned only in the Hungarian legend.

his own people, for the political philosophy of the day conceded to a crowned king practically unlimited powers, subject only to the precept of Christian morality that he should exercise those powers with justice and mercy. Hungary was again fortunate in that Stephen had the capacity to attack his new task seriously, and was granted length of years (he died only in 1038) to consolidate it, at home and abroad. The maintenance of Hungary's international status gave him no serious trouble. He easily repelled a single attack, which seems to have been quite unjustified, launched on him in 1030 by the Emperor Conrad; apart from this, and from some minor brushes with Poland and Bulgaria, his reign was untroubled by international conflict. At home, he had one more struggle against a malcontent relative, this time his maternal uncle, who had established a quasi-independent principality in Transylvania, and another against a certain 'very powerful prince' in south-eastern Hungary, named Ohtum or Ajtony, who was probably the last of the Kavars; at any rate, they are not heard of again, as a unit. With the defeat of these two men the royal authority became unchallenged through all Hungary.

By that authority, Stephen seems to have claimed and exercised all the recognised prerogatives of mediaeval kingship: the conduct of international relations, with the *jus belli et pacis*, the *jus legis ferendae*, the right to appoint any man of his choice to any office, the right to dispense justice. In the book of precepts which he had compiled for the guidance of his son, he advises him to take council with elders and to defer to their advice, and his laws mention a 'Senatus', but in a context which suggests that this was a purely advisory body. One document records, in rather obscure language, that a wider body, the 'tota communitas', was consulted on a question of nation-wide importance and its decision accepted, but there is no evidence of a general, institutionalised national assembly.

On the other hand, Stephen believed in law and held that

the laws of every country and people should be appropriate to themselves. He did not, therefore, touch the traditional national structure more than was necessary to adapt it to the new situation. The body of freemen – i.e., the descendants in the male line of the old conquerors, in so far as they had not forfeited their status by rebellion or individual crime, together with any new elements admitted to the same status – retained their special position. They were not merely a privileged class of subjects: they were the sole positive element among them; if not the king's partner in the polity, then at least his counterpart. They, and only they, were entitled to participate in such consultations on policy as took place and to hold public office: they and they alone had direct access to the king's justice. Stephen imposed on them the obligation of paying tithes to the church, but they paid no other taxation; their obligation towards the polity was discharged by military service, which it was their duty and their prerogative to perform whenever required. Lands held by them *jure primae occupationis* were truly their own, and Stephen laid down that they should be free to bequeath them to any member of their families, or to the church. Otherwise, the national tradition had it that a man's land, failing traceable heir, reverted to his clan (it must be remembered that the bulk of the Magyars were then still living in clan communities).

Stephen did not interfere with the institution of slavery, although he set his people an example, which some of them followed, by liberating his own slaves. Manumission did not, of course, confer admission to the national community, but to an intermediate condition of personal freedom, not accompanied by political status. The proportion of the population so situated was, already in his day, considerable, for, besides freed slaves, it included also 'guests' or voluntary immigrants, some of whom were able to contract for relatively favourable terms. Generally speaking, these men of this class, answering to the Saxon *geneats* and

geburs or villeins, paid dues to their lord – the king or another – for their lands.

The soil of Hungary now fell into three categories. There were the lands held by the clans, communally or individually, *jure primae occupationis*. In principle all the rest – and this amounted to a full half of the whole, for besides Stephen's own patrimony and land confiscated from rebels, it included the gyepü and what lay beyond it, as well as unoccupied areas within the belt of settlement – now became formally king's land. Some of this, however, Stephen bestowed in the form of donations, to the church or to private individuals, whose titles now ranked equally with those of the original freemen; and so far as is known, they owed no obligation in return for them except that of personal military service, although the big concessionaries, like their native counterparts, must have been required to bring followers to war. The land retained by the king for his own was divided for administrative purposes into units known by the Slavonic name of 'Megye' (county), each under a king's official, the 'Ispán' (another Slavonic term), who administered the unfree population living on it and collected from them the taxation which formed the royal revenue, national and local. Each Ispán maintained at his 'vár' (fortress) or headquarters an armed force composed of freemen who took service under him, or of persons freed by the king. In Stephen's day there were forty-two such counties. It does not appear that the Ispáns of the day had any jurisdiction over the clan lands near their várs, and the scarcity of várs recorded in the Kun area suggests that Stephen did not introduce the system at all where large masses of freemen were living together. But it was at the várs that the king or his deputy, the 'Comes Palatii', administered justice between the local freemen when they went on circuit, and it is reasonable to suppose that smaller bodies of clansmen followed the local Ispán in battle.