

On the Position of Hungarian within the Ural-Altai Typological Belt: Historical and Political Influences

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Abstract: The position of Hungarian as a Uralic language within the “Ural-Altai typological belt” is contradicted both by the historical sources and the linguistic evidence. According to the Uralic theory, the Hungarians would originate from the assumed “Uralic proto-community” (living, several millennia ago, on the western side of the Ural Mountains), whilst the historical sources from the 9th/10th century all agree that the *Magyars* were nomadic people of the steppes, living within multi-lingual and multi-ethnic Turkic tribal confederations, originating, ultimately, from Central Asia. Still according to the Uralic theory, Hungarian should be a language quite similar to the other languages classified as Uralic, such as Finnish; however, Hungarian is more similar to Turkic than to any other Uralic language. Thus, the questions arise: Why has the traditional Uralic classification of the Hungarian language and peoples been established, and maintained, despite all the odds? How have the above reported contradictions in the linguistic data and historical sources been dealt with? I shall argue that these contradictions have been maintained by “reinterpreting” the sources as well as the linguistic data, this in turn being implemented because of historical and political motivations.

Key words: Hungarian, Turkic, historical-comparative linguistics, historical sources, political influences

1. The Position of Hungarian as a Uralic Language within the Ural-Altai Typological Belt is Contradicted by the Historical Sources

Hungarian (hence **H**) is usually classified as a (“pure”) Uralic (hence **U**)/Finno-Ugric (hence **FU**) language¹ and the Hungarians are claimed to originate from the “Uralic proto-community”, according to the traditional paradigm of historical linguistics. In other words, it is usually assumed that the Hungarians (and the other peoples

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¹ This article is based on an original research of mine, whose results will be presented in a volume (in preparation) titled: *Hungarian as an “Aberrant” Uralic Language*. Some preliminary results of this ongoing research have been already published in Marcantonio (2014) and (2015), and have been presented in two lectures: a) a guest lecture titled: “Hungarian as an ‘aberrant’ Uralic language”, held at the “Department of World Cultures, Asian and African Languages” of the University of Helsinki, on February 21st 2013; b) a talk at a panel titled: “Historical linguistics across history and politics”, a panel I have organised within the framework of the conference “Connecting Disciplines”, held in Rome, on October 16th–18th 2014 (this conference in turn being the 4th conference from the series: “The making of Humanities”, sponsored by the University of Amsterdam and the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome). I would like to stress at this point that, in order not to bore the reader with linguistic details that, however much important, might nevertheless not add anything to the clarity and validity of the arguments and data under discussion, many of these (in this context less relevant) details have been omitted (not to count the issue of restriction of space). Finally, notice that “*magyar*” is the self denomination of what are now widely called “Hungarians”, the two nouns being nowadays used as synonyms.

speaking languages that have been also classified as U/FU), have their ultimate origin in an (assumed) ancient, close proto-speech-community, living, supposedly, somewhere on the (south) west slopes of the Ural Mountains, that is, in Europe, supposedly about 6000/8000 years ago, and speaking the (again assumed) proto-U/FU language, although within this rather univocal classification it is often admitted in the literature (see for ex. Abondolo, 1998, p. 428), that **H** is nevertheless an “isolate” within the family².

However, all existing historical sources that refer to the *Magyars* (starting from the 9th–10th C. written in different languages, and being independent from one another) unanimously and coherently affirm that the *Magyars* were nomadic people of the Eurasian steppes, living within the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic Turkic tribal confederations that roamed that vast area, being variously identified with one or the other of these nomads, including the Huns, the Avars³, the Bashkirs⁴, etc. For example, the traveller and geographer Plano Carpini, while crossing the area of the Volga River (heading toward Mongolia) and collecting information about the people living there, in 1247–1252 wrote:

baschart id est hungariam magnam

Similarly, in 1235 the Hungarian monk Julianus, sent to the east to find, and, possibly, convert the “Volga Hungarians” to Christianity, actually found them in the areas located east of the Volga⁵ and spoke to them in “Hungarian” (whatever Hungarian might have meant at the time). Further, a tomb was recently found in the area of the Volga/Kama Rivers (cemetery of Chistopol), dated back to 1311, with an inscription on it that reads: “*maĵar*”. As a matter of fact, the name of the Volga Hungarians has been preserved in a great number of toponyms (as well as ethnonyms) in that area, in several variants, including *muĉar*, *moĵar*, etc., whereby *maĵar* is another variant, if not the antecedent, of the present day denomination *magyar*, phonetically [máď'ár] (see Róna-Tas & Berta [hence RT&B] 2011: I, p. 29). Despite the sources being clear and coherent, all sort of speculations have been advanced to explain the presence of the *Magyars* in the area “east” of the Volga — a “Turkic area”, not a “Uralic area”— including claims that the *Magyars* “moved back” there “after” the so called “home conquest” (*honfoglalás*), supposedly dated between (around) 894–896 AD (see for example, Zimonyi 2012). This is because of two reasons. First, according to the conventional model, the *Magyars* were supposed to be living west of the Volga, that is, within Europe. Second (again according to the conventional model), the *Magyars* were supposed “to come into contact and live in symbiosis with Turkic peoples” living (mainly) again west of the Volga, the so-called “West Old Turkic” (hence WOT) peoples⁶ — from whom the great majority of the Turkic loan words now present in **H**

2 As a matter of fact, **H** is not particularly close to any other U language, not even to Vogul and Ostyak (with which it is grouped in the traditional family tree, under the “Ugric” branch), let alone Finnish, the major language forming the other, major branch of the traditional U family tree, the Finnic branch. As a matter of fact, several alternative sub-classifications exist, that are more adherent to the linguistic facts and do not encompass these traditional branches; see for example Häkkinen (2012).

3 Indeed, the vast **H** lowland called “*Alföld*”, in some Latin sources is named “*solitudo avarorum*”. There is also a small corpus of Avar words (in Latin and Byzantine sources), that contain some names and titles also present in **H**, such as the title *tarkan*, occurring frequently as a **H** geographical name in the form *Tarján* ~ *Tárkány*.

4 For example, the Bashkirian toponyms/ethnonyms *Mišer* ~ *Mišar* ~ *Mišär* ~ *Mešĉer* ~ *Mižer* ~ *Mižar* ~ *Mižär*, “corresponding” to the **H** toponym and ethnonym *megyer* (for which see below), were attested in the Bashkir region in the 15th and 16th Centuries (according to Russian Chronicles), whilst *Mišer* still occurs nowadays as a family name in Hungary.

5 The “Volga Hungarians”, as mentioned in the text, were living east of the Volga, the area considered to be the beginning of the so called “Inner-Asia” region, the region of the Turkic peoples.

6 RT&B divide the whole of the Turkic peoples into two major groups: “West Old Turkic (hence WOT)” and “East Old Turkic (hence EOT)”. WOT includes: “those Turkic languages spoken west of the Ural Mountains and the Ural River from the 5th century A.D. on. There was a more or less continuous migration of Turkic speaking peoples from East to West in this period [...]. Linguistically speaking the most important group pertained to the Oguric branch, of which only Chuvash is now spoken” (RT&B, II, p. 1071). Thus, WOT

are claimed to have derived (see discussion below). Thus, the historical sources have been basically “reinterpreted” to fit these two tenets of the U theory, as we are going to discuss in detail below.

2. The Classification of Hungarian as a Uralic Language within the Ural-Altai Typological Belt is Contradicted by the Linguistic Evidence

The classification of **H** as U language means that **H** is closely related to the other languages classified as U too, such as Finnish, Estonian, the Saami (Lapp) and Samoyedic languages, etc., at various levels of language, including lexicon, grammar, typology, morpho-phonology, etc. — according to the requirements and the methods of historical linguistics. However, this is not the case. Despite sharing some (mainly typological) features with the other (supposed) U languages, **H** is actually more similar to Turkic than to any other U language, at almost all levels of language, as we are going to discuss in somewhat details below.

The “isolated nature” of **H** is due to the fact that it does indeed share only a few, statistically insignificant, similarities with the other U languages, such as: a) several lexical items, supposedly, “cognates”, although many of them pose more or less serious problems of reconstruction; b) several phonological features, such as Vowel Harmony and avoidance of consonantal clusters in word initial position — these features, however, being present elsewhere in the Eurasiatic area, including Turkic; c) several typological features, such as suffixation, *determinans* preceding the *determinatum*, presence of postpositions, lack of grammatical gender, the use of singular for nouns preceded by numerals and other quantifiers, zero marking for the subject — these, however, once again, being features shared also with the other Eurasiatic languages, including, again, Turkic; d) several, “simple” grammatical, temporal, aspectual and modal suffixes — simple in the sense that they typically consist of one basic, unmarked vowel and/or consonant (sounds that are therefore present in most languages of the world), so that it is really impossible to apply to them a proper comparative analysis (in addition, yet again, many of these simple morphemes are also shared with other Eurasiatic languages, such as the ablative suffix *-t* and *-l*, present also in Turkic, or the first person possessive suffix *-m*, etc.). At this point it is important to highlight that **H** does not share “complex” functional (and grammatical) morphology, that is, its “complex” case suffixes⁷, with any other U language. As to derivational morphology, **H** shares with the other U languages just a few, once again “simple” suffixes, most of its derivational morphology being instead of Turkic origin, as we shall see below⁸. Last, but not least, most of the identified U “sound changes” supposedly “exclusive” of the U languages, are actually shared with the Turkic languages, as amply illustrated by Ligeti⁹ (1986) and RT&B (II, pp. 1069–1146), as discussed briefly below¹⁰.

includes: (Old) Chuvash, Khazar, and other so-called “Bulgharic” peoples/languages, whilst EOT include all the rest, basically those Turkic peoples living mainly in “Central/Inner Asia”.

7 In **H**, like in several other U languages, such as Finnish, for ex. (as well as Turkic), there are so called “simple” and “complex” case suffixes. The simple ones are, indeed, phonetically and morphologically simple (as discussed in the text), whilst the complex ones are indeed phonetically and morphologically more complex, being typically formed as the result of the process of “grammaticalization” (or “exaptation”) of spatial nouns/postpositions, as is the case, for ex. of some **H** (and Turkic) local cases.

8 For a more detailed picture of the state of the art of the U language family see Janhunen (1981) and Marcantonio (2002).

9 For example, with regard to the fricativization of palatal vs velar plosives Ligeti (1986, p. 64) states that it is one of the best documented chapter of **H** vs Turkic convergent developments (“a török–magyar konvergens fejlődés egyik legbővebben adatolt fejezete”). See also RT&B II, p. 1071ff. for many, different examples of **H** vs Turkic convergent developments, and discussion below.

10 The fact that the correlations among the U languages are of poor quality and quantity (basically, statistically “not significant”) is at times recognized by a few Uralists and “magyarists”, such as Csúcs (2008), who admits that a satisfactory reconstruction of the top U node, as well as of the intermediate, key Ugric and Finno-Ugric nodes, has not (yet) been implemented thus far.

In stark contrast with this picture, **H** displays numerous, deep similarities with Turkic, at almost all levels of language (as is known among specialists): a) phonetic/phonological features, such as Labial Vowel Harmony; b) about 500 lexical items, several of which belong to the semantic field of “basic lexicon”, including kinship and body-part terms¹¹; c) numerous typological features, such as: the nature of the stem, typically mono-syllabic and “invariant” through the process of conjugation and declination (apart from ordinary phenomena of *sandhi*); possessive/genitival constructions; sentence structure, etc.; d) a great deal of derivational morphology, the remarkable thing being that both the mechanism of word formation and the actual derivational/formative suffixes are practically the same, these suffixes being etymologically connected; e) several “simple” grammatical, temporal, modal, *Aktionsart* and other types of suffixes, such as the “factitive” suffix *-t(t)-* (several of these suffixes being present also elsewhere in the Eurasiatic area). It must be said at this point that **H** and Turkic do not share complex functional morphology, that is, their “complex” case suffixes (see Erdal, 2004; see also Lewis, 2000 and note (23)). The same applies to the complex temporal, modal, aspectual, etc. suffixes etc. However, as mentioned above, **H** does not share relevant functional or temporal/modal morphology with any other U language either, therefore this lack of correlations in major areas of language can prove nothing, either way. All in all, the Eurasiatic languages (encompassing the traditional U and “Altaic” languages) share numerous (mainly typological and structural) isoglosses, whereby the isoglosses shared by **H** and Turkic are much more intense, deeper and more interconnected than those shared by **H** and any other language in the area (see for a list of isoglosses Marác, 2012a).

Here there is obviously no room to illustrate in somewhat details each of the above outlined areas of correlations between **H** and Turkic, as against the scantiness of them between **H** and the other U languages. I shall therefore limit myself to briefly illustrate just the following two, relevant areas of similarity: (1) “sound changes/developments” and (2) “derivational morphology”. As will become self-evident, the correlations between **H** and Turkic are typically strong and “real”, whilst those between **H** and U are typically weak and, most often, “reconstructed”; actually, on several occasions — one could argue — “fabricated”.

(1): “sound changes/developments”. Contrary to what is claimed in textbooks and also specialist literature, **H** and the other U languages hardly share any of the so called “regular and systematic sound changes/developments” — or better, tendencies, whereby these shared tendencies would be certainly an item of “proof”, a testimony of

11 The great majority of the **H** basic lexicon, including kinship and body part terms, is of Turkic, not U origin (see Marcantonio 2015; see also Janhunen 1981 and Marcantonio 2002 for an assessment of the U comparative corpus). In fact, most of the (few) “correspondences” shared by **H** and U in the field of basic lexicon (as well as other semantic domains) are actually the result of (often unsafe) reconstructions. In contrast, the **H** vs Turkic correspondences are mainly sound and “real”, as once again convincingly shown by the detailed analysis by RT&B themselves. Compare, for ex., nouns such as: *boka* “ankle” (RT&B, I, pp. 145–147), *csipa* “secretion, mucus discharged from the eyes” (RT&B, I, pp. 246–249), *ondó* “sperm” (RT&B, II, pp. 642–645), *térd* “knee” (RT&B, II, pp. 898–901), *sűv* “uncle, nephew, sister/brother-in-law” (RT&B, II, pp. 751–753), *kölyök* “young of animal, kid, puppy, lad” (RT&B, I, pp. 586–588), etc. Compare adjectives expressing basic adjectival concepts, such as: *apró* “small, tiny” (RT&B, I, pp. 68–70), *bátor* (*/bātor/*) “courageous, brave” (see *Bahatur*, a place name attested in 1138/1329; RT&B, I, pp. 106–107), *bölcs* “wise” (attested since 1211; RT&B, I, p. 170), *csúnya* “rough, ugly” (RT&B, I, pp. 274–276), *kicsiny* ~ *kicsi* ~ *kis* “small, little” (RT&B, I, pp. 541–543), *szép* “beautiful” (attested in 1127–1131; RT&B, II, pp. 788–789), etc. Compare also some examples of basic verbs: *basz-ik* “to have sexual intercourse” (already attested as proper name *Bozou* (*/bos-ou/*) in 1221; RT&B, I, pp. 104–105), *bosszant* “to annoy” (RT&B, I, pp. 160–161), *gyarapodik* ~ *gyarapszik* “to increase, put on weight, grow stronger” (RT&B, I, pp. 369–370), *gyárt* “to produce, build” (attested in 1322 as toponym; RT&B, I, pp. 375–376), *gyötör* “to torture, make suffer” (RT&B, I, pp. 404–406), *gyűlöl* “to hate” (RT&B, I, pp. 414–417), *illik* “to suit, fit into something, be proper” (R&B, I, pp. 453–455), *köszön* “to greet, thank” (RT&B, I, pp. 603–604), *szán* “to have pity for, regret” (RT&B, II, pp. 766–771), etc. In addition, as is well known within the field, there is in **H** a pervasive presence of words of Turkic origin in any other semantic domain, including “environment”, “working tools”, “agriculture”, “military, social structure”, “religion”, etc. According to RT&B, this number of about 500 lexical items of Turkic origin is more or less equal to the number of items of U origin as the authors themselves “reconstruct” them.

genetic affiliation among the languages in question — according to the (traditional) paradigm of historical comparative linguistics¹². Not only, those few phonetic/phonological tendencies, identified as being shared by **H** and (some) U languages are actually also shared, and in a higher number, with Turkic, as clearly and exhaustively illustrated by Ligeti (1986) and RT&B¹³. For example, Ligeti, in his volume, on several occasions refers explicitly to the existence of (sound and words) “correspondences” (*megfelelés-ek*) as well as of “convergent developments” between **H** and Turkic. More precisely, Ligeti illustrates the correspondences and the shared, convergent sound developments/tendencies occurring both in the **H** words of Turkic origin considered to be, obviously, “loan-words” — and the equivalent Turkic words that are at the source of the borrowing. Similarly, RT&B illustrate, in a remarkably clear, detailed and systematic way, “all” the (more or less regular) sound changes and tendencies again shared by the **H** words of Turkic origin and their correspondent Turkic word (for which see in particular the chapter titled: “West Old Turkic and Hungarian” (II, pp. 1070–1125), although, unlike Ligeti, RT&B avoid to use the definition “correspondence” or “convergent development”¹⁴. Let us then illustrate this issue with a few examples of (supposedly) U sound changes/correspondences. Within U studies the following sound change is “assumed” to have taken place from the (assumed) U or FU phase into **H**: U/FU **k-* > **-χ~*γ-* > **H** *h-*, in words of U/FU origin, if **k-* is in initial position in the word, and is followed (mainly) by a back vowel. Such a change would have not taken place in other U languages, such as Finnish (hence **F**), for ex., where the proto-sound **k-* would have been preserved, as shown below¹⁵:

- a) **F** *kuolla* (~ *kuole-*) vs **H** *hal* < U **kola-* “to die” (UEW, p. 173);
- b) **F** *kolme* vs **H** *három* < U **kolme* ~ **kulme* “3” (UEW, p. 174)
- c) **F** *kala* vs **H** *hal* < U **kala* “fish” (UEW, p. 119)

The stage of development represented by the spirant *-χ* (o perhaps *γ-*) is actually attested in Old Hungarian (hence **OH**) — a rare event in the general lack of significantly old documents and attestations in the whole of the U area. Precisely, it is attested in the oldest **H** text: *Halotti beszéd* (“funeral oration”, dated about 1192–1195 AD), through the transcription **ch-**:

- d) **OH** *chol-t-a-t* “to-die-Perf.-his-Acc.”, “his being dead, his death” vs Modern **H** (hence **MH**) *holt-á-t* (see example (a) above for the origin of the term “to die”). **OH** *chomuv* vs **MH** *hamu* “ash(es)”, whereby the word is considered to be of “uncertain” U origin (see UEW, pp. 194–195; it is not listed in RT&B either). **OH** *charm-ul* vs **MH** *három-szor* “three times” (see example (b) above for the origin of the term “3”)

Thus, this type of attestation, that reflects the “expected” path of development of the U proto-sound in question, would appear at first to reinforce the validity of the analysis, according to the tenets and predictions of the U theory. However, this is not quite so, because of the following reasons. First, not only the U origin of *chomuv* ~ *hamu* is uncertain, as mentioned, but also the “reconstruction”, and, therefore, the assumed U origin of the terms for “to die” and “3” present serious difficulties (see Marcantonio, 2002, pp. 103, 106, for the analysis of

12 As a matter of fact, one cannot find within U studies a list of well defined “laws”, of the type found within Indo-European studies, as illustrated by Collinge (1985), but only a very few “tendencies”, that are, however, reconstructed, and not “attested”, in addition to representing trivial, common paths of development of common, unmarked sounds. Having said that, it is worth observing that these famous Indo-European laws are not themselves void of (often serious) problems (see for example Marcantonio & Brady, 2012).

13 Both Ligeti and RT&B list all the (at the time) known words, and, in the case of RT&B, also derivational suffixes, of Turkic origin present in **H**.

14 One may speculate that the reason why the definitions “correspondence” or “convergent development” are not adopted by RT&B, is not to attract the attention of the reader to these two fundamental concepts of historical linguistics, since, as mentioned, correspondences and regular and systematic sound changes may occur also (actually, according to a more traditional version of the paradigm, mainly) among “cognates”, that is, among daughter languages. In other words, this fact might be interpreted as an indication that **H** and Turkic could be considered (at least partially) as genetically related.

15 The data presented in this paragraph are drawn from Marcantonio (2015).

U **kola* e U**kolme*; see also Janhunen 1981 for a critical assessment of the validity of these and other reconstructions within the U comparative corpus), whilst the term for “fish” is a so-called *Wanderwort*, occurring in numerous Eurasiatic languages (at least according to the traditional reconstruction). In other words, these terms cannot be safely classified as belonging to the U/FU proto-language (supposing that this proto-language had ever existed), and this, of course, undermines the validity of the argument. Second, as mentioned, the sound change in question: **k- > *-χ~*γ- >h-* occurs also, and with much greater frequency and attestations, in **H** words (including **OH**) of Turkic origin. Actually, as is self evident, whilst proto-U **k-* is indeed “reconstructed”, a “proto-phoneme”, and not an “attested” phoneme, in the case of **H** and Turkic correlations we are dealing with correspondences and sound changes that are “real” and fully attested, as shown in the following examples (for a full list of instances of this sound change and related correspondences see again RT&B I, pp. 425–436):

e) *homok* “sand” (first attestation in 1055 as *humc-a*, *humuc*, etc.); from Old Turkic (hence **OT**) *qumand* **EOT** *kum* “sand” (RT&B, I, p. 430).

f) *harang* “bell” (first attested in 1211 as toponym *Harrang-ud*, and then in 1265 as *Horong*), from **OT** *qoŋraǵu* and **EOT** *koŋragu* “a kind of bell” (RT&B, I, pp. 426–427).

g) *herjő* “hawk” (attested in 1366, perhaps as a toponym: *Heryou*, etc.), from **EOT** *kirguy* “sparrow hawk”, etc. (RT&B, I, pp. 428–429).

The following are just a couple of examples of “correspondences” between **H** and Turkic (correspondences that at times encompass also other languages, such as Mongolian), with particular regard to the correspondence of the initial sound: **H** *gy* (/d’/) vs **OT** *y* vs Chuvash *ś* and Mongolian *ǰ* (for a full list of this type of correspondences see also Ligeti, 1986, pp. 19–22, 196, 203, 313)):

h) **H** *gyomor* (/d’omor/; Accusative *gyomr-o-t*, Plural *gyomr-o-k*) “stomach, bowel” vs **EOT** *yumur* “idem” vs Chuvash *śámxa* (RT&B, I, pp. 398–399)¹⁶.

i) **H** *gyúr* (/d’úr/) “knead, pug” vs **OT** *yoǵur-*, **EOT** *yogur-* “idem” vs Chuvash *śār* and Mongolian *ǰigura* (RT&B, I, pp. 411–412).

(2): “derivational morphology”. As anticipated, **H** and Turkic share a great deal of derivational morphology, that is the suffixes used to “derive” nouns from verbs or adjectives, or other nouns, adjectives from verbs, nouns or other adjectives, verbs from nouns etc., as illustrated, once again, by the exhaustive work by RT&B (II, pp. 1125–1136). As RT&B themselves put it (II, p. 1135):

Almost all derivational suffixes which might have existed in West¹⁷ Old Turkic [WOT] are reflected in Hungarian

In addition — this being particularly revealing of the *status quaestionis* — these morphological correlations are not confined to the mere similarity and/or identity of the actual suffixes, whose etymological connection is self-evident (whatever its origin may be: “borrowing”, inheritance, “shared drift”, etc.), but it extends to the very mechanism of (internal) word formation, as illustrated in the following Table (from Marcantonio, 2015, p. 103)¹⁸:

16 Notice the morpho-phonemic alternation **H** *gyomor* vs *gyomr-o-t* & *gyomr-o-k*, as the result of the syncope of the medial *-o-* (in certain words), phenomenon occurring both in **H** and Turkic (again in certain words), as shown, for ex., in **T** *yumur* “stomach” vs *yumru* “round(ed)”; another shared feature.

17 As already mentioned in note (6), RT&B divide the Old Turkic languages into two major groups: East and West. Independently of whether or not this classification is correct, I maintain it here, for the sake of simplicity and faithfulness when reporting the data drawn from these Authors’ work. It is nevertheless important for the reader to acknowledge that, according to RT&B, in line with the **H** scholarly tradition, the great majority of the Turkic loan words into **H** derive from WOT, and not from EOT, even if the data reported, *de facto*, belie this thesis, as discussed later on in the text. Notice also that WOT, unlike EOT, consists of reconstructions (as is clear from the adoption of */**), and not of attested forms, fact that, again, contradicts the purported (but unrealistic) picture of a Turkic population divided into two main, clear cut branches. For details on this topic see Marcantonio (2014) and (2015).

18 For a detailed study of suffixes and word formation in (Old) Turkic see Erdal (1991).

Table 1 A Sample of Derivational Suffixes Shared by Hungarian and Turkic

Meaning	Turkic	Hungarian
witch	<i>bas-ırkan</i> (< <i>bas-</i> “to press”)	<i>bosz-orkány</i>
beard	<i>sakal</i> (< * <i>sak-</i> “to hang down”)	<i>szak-áll</i> (/sákáll/)
cattle/livestock	<i>bar-um</i> (< <i>bar-</i> “to exist”)	<i>bar-om</i>

As is self evident¹⁹ even from these few examples reported in Table I, the **H** words of Turkic origin and their correspondent Turkic word (their source), share not only the lexical stem and the actual derivational suffix (marked in red), but also their internal structure, through the very same mechanism of word formation (/agglutination). Such a “global” similarity — so to say — is nowhere to be found between **H** and the U language, as is clear from the study by Lehtisalo (1936), who lists and analyses all the (assumed) U “primary” derivational suffixes (supposedly) shared among the various U languages. In other words, there is hardly any transparency with regard to the internal structure of the **H** “word + suffix” and the corresponding “word + suffix” from other U languages. Furthermore, the great majority of these suffixes are of “simple” nature, of the type *-(Vowel)n*, *-(Vowel)r*, *-(Vowel)t*, *-(Vowel)j*, etc., therefore, as discussed, they are not really adequate to undergo a proper comparative analysis (in fact, endings of this type may occur in totally unrelated languages). Whatever the case, only a small percentage of these (assumed) U suffixes is shared with **H**, this analysis being in turn confirmed by Honti, who, in his studies of the U derivational suffixes (1998, 2012, 2012a & b), manage to find only a small, statistically irrelevant, amount of **H** suffixes shared with other U languages, including the languages supposedly closer to **H** itself within the traditional family tree (that is, Vogul (/Mansi) and Ostyak (/Khanty), supposedly forming with **H** the “Ugric” branch; see for details Marcantonio 2015). Last, but certainly not least, several of these few **H** suffixes of presumed U origin are, actually, of Turkic origin, fact that Lehtisalo could not have known at the time, having his analysis been carried out before the publication of the comprehensive volumes by Ligeti and RT&B.

Let us then see an example of this: a suffix²⁰ present in both **OH** and **MH**, previously (erroneously) classified as U, but, in fact, of clear Turkic origin: the suffix *-(Vowel)γ* (velar fricative, in turn from *-(Vowel)k* ~ *-(Vowel)g*):

19 It is not possible here to provide the details of the mechanism of word formation of these, or any other **H** word of Turkic origin, but one can consult the source of the data, once again RT&B (who, in turn, base their analysis also on the work by Erdal 1991). Here I only give some essential information for the reader to grasp the basic principle of word formation with regard to the examples reported in the Table. **H** *barom* (attested from 1247; see RT&B I, pp. 99–102) derives from a Turkic verbal stem *bar-* “to exist” + suffix *-(Vowel)m*, cmp. **OT** *bar-im* “property, livestock”. **H** *szakáll* (attested from 1086; see RT&B II, pp. 758–759) derives from a proto-Turkic noun **sak-ga* “something hanging down”, cmp. **EOT** *sakal*. **H** *boszorkány* (see RT&B I, pp. 158–160), derives from a Turkic verbal stem *bas-* “to press” + suffix *-(Vowel)rkA-* and *-(Vowel)n*; cmp. **EOT** *basırkan* “the one who is oppressing (during sleep), nightmare, etc.”.

20 Here one cannot enter into the complex details of the various functions and behaviour of this deverbal suffix occurring very frequently in Turkic (see at this regard several examples in RT&B II, pp. 1125–1134; see also Erdal 2004, pp. 79, 97, 228–229, 241, 434, etc.), neither into the details of the value of the connecting vowel in the suffixes in question (*-(Vowel)k* ~ *-(Vowel)g* ~ *-(Vowel)γ*), or in other suffixes, the quality of the vowel being regulated by the principle of the Turkic Vowel Harmony (I shall limit myself to use the term “Vowel” all the time, for easiness of exposition, although this is not in line with the Turkic scholarly tradition). As to the functions of these suffixes, here it suffices to mention that this /these suffixes have a general meaning of “agentivity”. For ex., in the Dukham language (spoken by Turkic peoples inhabiting a region of Mongolia and representing what can be defined as an “archaic” phase of Turkic), “this suffix derive adjectives from intransitive verbal stems signaling the quality expressed by the verbal stem” (Ragagnin, 2011, p. 96). In the **H** examples reported in the main text, as mentioned, the suffix has an adjectival/participial (active) meaning in connection with the intransitive verb *menni* (example (k)), and an adjectival/nominal (passive) meaning in connection with the transitive verb *szánt* “to plough, dig”, in the sense of something that is “plough-able” (example (j)).

j) **OH** Σαμτῶ-γ [*szántáγ*] > **MH** *szánt-ó* “field, terrain”; see the verb *szánt* (< *számt*) “to plough, dig”, whereby *-ó* is the outcome of the suffix in question in **MH**, having an adjectival/nominal function. More precisely, *szánt-ó* is a **H** toponym occurring (together with others) in the text: *Veszprém völgyi apácák adomány levele* (“the donation charter of the nunnery of the *Veszprém* valley”), written in Greek before 1002 AD (see Kiss & Pusztai, 2005, p. 302; Lehtisalo, 1936, p. 349). Notice that the verb *szánt* does not appear to be a word either of U/FU origin (not being listed in UEW), or of Turkic origin (not being listed either in RT&B or in Ligeti 1986).

k) **OH** *mene-h* [mēne-γ] > **MH** *men-ő* “going”, whereby *men-* is the stem²¹ of the verb *men-ni* “to go” and *-ő* (/ö:/) is, again, the outcome of the suffix in question in **MH**, having here a participial (active) function. This form occurs in the text: *A tihanyi apátság alapítólevele* (“the foundation charter of the nunnery of Tihany”, issued in 1055). One may observe here that, although the verb is widely claimed as being of U origin (see UEW, p. 272), corresponding, for ex. to Finnish *men-nä*, “to go”, there is nevertheless at least another, non-U language where a similar verb (in sound shape and meaning) occurs: Yukagir *män-* (Yukagir is a “paleo-Siberian” language; are we dealing here with a chance resemblance or a *Wandervort*?)

Thus, this suffix, attested as *-γ ~ -v (/ʏ/) ~ -u* in **OH** (see below example (l)), and as long vowel in **MH** (as a consequence of the disappearance of the velar and subsequent lengthening of the preceding vowel), has its source in the **OT** suffixes: *-(Vowel)k* or *-(Vowel)g ~ -(Vowel)q*. These suffixes may occur in connection with **H** words of supposed U origin, or in **H** words of no-better identified origin (see the above example (j)), as well as in Turkic in general, including the Turkic words that are considered to be the source of the borrowing into **H**, as shown below in examples (l) and (m) below, where we present two **H** words (supposedly) borrowed from Turkic:

l) **EOT** & **WOT** **ǰsna-a-γ ~ ǰǰsna-a-γ* “pig”; cmp. the **OT** stem²² *yas-* “to disband (troops), to un-string (a bow), etc.” (see RT&B I, pp. 296–298; Kiss & Pusztai, 2005, p. 302). This “stem + suffix *-(a)γ*” corresponds to **OH** *gisnav* /dʒisznau/ “pig” (occurring again in the text: *A tihanyi apátság alapítólevele*; see above example (k)), a form that develops into **MH** *disznó*, through the loss of *-γ* and consequent lengthening of the preceding vowel.

m) **EOT** *ingäk* “cow”, from an **OT** stem **in-* + suffix *-g(Vowel)k* (> Middle Turkic *inäk*; see RT&B II, p. 978; Kiss & Pusztai, 2005, p. 302), corresponds to **OH** (*Tar*)-*yneu* (/tar-ineü/), a toponym attested in 1193, and to **MH** *ünő* “heifer, roe doe”.

According to conventional interpretation (see for ex. Kiss & Pusztai, 2005, p. 302), the occurrence of these “U suffixes” would have increased thanks to the influx of similar /identical suffixes into **H** in connection with the adoption of Turkic loan words. In fact, the Turkic words ending in *-k ~ -g ~ -q*, when borrowed into **H**, present two basic outcomes: either the vocalization of the velar sounds (as shown in the above examples), or its preservation, as shown in **T** *čäriγ* vs **H** *sereg* “army” (RT&B II, pp. 716–719). Whatever the case, the relevant fact is that **H** and Turkic, as is evident, share the same basic derivational suffixes, the same process of word formation (through the agglutination of the suffixes in question), and, most often, also the same path(s) of development, the same path(s) of sound-change: a truly “global”, “integrated” system of correlations²³.

21 The **H** verb *menni* is one of those very few **H** verbs that have a “variable” stem, as shown in its conjugation: *megyek* “I go”, *mész* “you go”, *megy* “he/she goes”, *megyünk* “we go”, *mentek* “you (plural) go”, *mennek* “they go”.

22 According to RT&B (I, p. 297) the source of **H** *gisnav ~ disznó* is from a reconstructed WOT stem **ǰasV(owel)-* (+ suffix) “to be or become huge, wide” (a correspondent word for “pig” being present only in Chuvash).

23 Despite this global system of correlations, **H** and Turkic do not share “complex” functional (or complex grammatical) morphology, as already mentioned in the main text (see the list of Old Turkic suffixes in Erdal 2004, pp. 168–182). This would be a major reason why **H** and Turkic cannot be classified as belonging to the same language family. In fact, it is widely claimed that sharing these morphological features, particularly case suffixes, is vital for establishing a genetic connection. However, the relevant fact is that **H** does not share complex functional and grammatical morphemes with Finnish or the other U languages either, so that this argument does not prove anything either way. Actually, in my opinion, the role of both functional and derivational morphology for the purpose of assessing genetic (or other type of) correlations within the Eurasian agglutinative languages needs revisiting — in particular abandoning the strait-jacket of the Indo-European morphological model. In fact, one could argue that the role of derivational morphology in this type of languages (agglutinative) is more important than that of functional morphology. This is because the derivational suffixes represent an intrinsic, necessary part of the process of word formation (as we have seen), whilst functional notions such as “subject”, “direct/indirect object”, “recipient”, “possession”, “location”, “movement towards/from”, etc. may not necessarily be encoded by pure and simple suffixes (not to count that the subject is always unmarked in the whole area), but by other parts of

At this point the question naturally arises: if this is the actual situation both with regard to the linguistic data and the historical sources, why is it that **H** is still nowadays classified as U/FU, within what could be called the “Ural-Altai typological belt” (using Janhunen’s (2007) words; see below), rather than as a “Turkic” language, for example? This is even more so because this is not a newly unveiled linguistic and historiographical situation, but it is a situation that has been known all along, at least since the time of the so-called “Ugric-Turkic (/Turkish) battle” in the late 1800s²⁴. I shall attempt to provide an answer to this question in the final paragraph, by arguing that the establishment of the traditional classification has been influenced by historical and socio-political considerations, whilst in the next two paragraphs (3 and 4) I shall discuss in somewhat more details the issues raised above, that is: how both the historical sources (par. 3) and the linguistic data (par. 4) have been “re-interpreted”, and, at times, even “manipulated”, for them to match the tenets of the linguistic model, the U theory, as established in the 1800s.

3. The Historical Sources Have Been “Re-Interpreted” According to the Tenets of the Uralic Theory

As anticipated, within the framework of the traditional paradigm of historical linguistics, the fact that the **H** “language” has been classified as U, and that the proto-U speech community has been “assumed” as living on the western side of the Ural Mountains, implies that the **H** “peoples” too originate, ultimately, from that area, that is, an area within Europe. However, the historical sources tell us, unequivocally, that the *magyar* peoples came from “Central Asia”. Therefore, as it has been widely claimed, the historical sources must have been “mistaken” or “mythical”, being in contradiction with the “predictions” (so to say) made by the U theory. The historical sources had to be “re-interpreted”, accordingly.

Let us then see some examples of “re-interpretation” of some passages from the most important text that mentions the early *Magyars*: the text *De Administrando Imperio*, written in Greek by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus’, c. 950 AD. The first, relevant passage is from the famous Chapter 38, titled: “Of the genealogy of the nation of the Turks, and whence they are descended” (p. 171 of the edition by Moravcsik & Jenkins²⁵, 1949/1967). The emperor states:

The nation of the Turks had of their old dwelling next to Chazaria, in the place called Lebedia [...]. The Turks were seven clans [...]. They lived together with the Chazars for *three years*, and fought in alliance with the

language, such as “postpositions”, or by particular constructions, such as the “genitive construction”, used to encode “possession” in both **H** and Turkic (but not in Finnish, for example).

24 The “Ugric-Turkic (/Turkish) battle” (*ugor-török háború*) is an academic debate that took place in Hungary, toward the end of the 1800s, between two camps, led by Á. Vámbéry (see for ex. Vámbéry 1869) and J. Budenz (see for ex. Budenz 1871–1873) respectively, where the classification of **H** within the “Ural-Altai belt” was (supposedly) scientifically debated. Although it is usually reported in textbooks and specialist literature that Budenz, who supported the FU origin of **H**, won the academic battle by presenting sound data and arguments, through the adoption of the comparative method (there would be numerous good correspondences between **H** and the “Ugric” (read: FU) languages, but not between **H** and Turkic), this is not at all the case. In fact, Budenz, like all the other scholars of his time, believed in what he defined “the wide Altaic family”, to which the Ugric, the Finnic, the Turkic, the Mongolian and Tungusic languages all belonged. Thus, the debate revolved around the issue of the “sub-classification” of **H**: does it have to be located under the “Ugric node”, or under the “Turkic node”? Budenz argued in favour of the Ugric node, but not really convincingly, recognizing himself, correctly, that the data were not that clear cut, after all. In any case, one can surely claim that the debate, on both sides, was not scientific at all, because the methods of historical comparative linguistics were in their infancy at the time, and were also inappropriately applied. For details and references regarding this interesting debate see Marcantonio (2002, pp. 47–49), Marcantonio et al. (2001) and Maráz (2012b).

25 The edition by Moravcsik & Jenkins (1949/1967) also contains an English translation of the Greek text by Jenkins.

Chazars in all their wars²⁶ [*italics is added*]

This simple, unambiguous passage is usually interpreted as follows, as highlighted by the italics (see for ex. Róna-Tas, 1988):

The [*Turkic*] *Magyars* had of their old dwelling next to Chazaria [...] They lived together with the Chazars for *three hundred years* [...]

As observed by Marcantonio (2014, p. 9), the phrase: “[Turkic] Magyars”, “[Toûrkoi] magyarôî” in Greek, is often reported within **H** and **U** studies as occurring “as such” in the text (see for example RT&B I, pp. 27, 32). However, as is clear, this is not true, this phrase being instead an interpretation on behalf of the **H** historiography, through the “interpolation” of the term “*Magyar*”²⁷. Thus, according to the conventional paradigm, the Emperor here would be referring specifically to the *Magyars*, that is, to what are considered nowadays as the “Uralic Hungarians” (and not to the “nation of the Turks”), but referred to them wrongly: the *Magyars* were not *Toûrkoi* themselves, but were *confused* with them, because the two populations lived in symbiosis with one another, and it was difficult, if not impossible, to tell them apart.

This interpretation is, of course, quite plausible, in principle. However, the following is worth bearing in mind. It is true that in Byzantine historiography there was the habit of globally defining as “Turkic” any no better identified or known peoples of the tribal confederations (those kind of peoples that in Old Greek times would be dubbed with the global name “*barbarôî*”, or those kind of peoples living along the border of, and constantly menacing China, dubbed by the Chinese Annals as *Hsiung-nu*). Furthermore, in view of the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic nature of these tribal confederations, no safe, precise identification of the various co-existing ethnies could have been made then (and can be made now) in any case. Thus, it is indeed quite plausible, in principle (as widely claimed) that the emperor was mistaken in identifying the (supposedly **U**) *Magyars* with Turkic peoples. On the other hand, the emperor main informants on the matter were the very grand children of Árpád²⁸, the Turkic chief that led and accomplished the *honfoglalás* (see note (26)), so that it is not far fetched to assume that the emperor, after all, did know the identity of these nomadic, *magyar* peoples. Whatever the case, the relevant fact here is that even if the emperor was mistaken in his judgement (as well all the other sources), this in itself does not and cannot be considered as a “testimony” of the **U** origin of the *Magyars* — a point that the critics of Constantine’s historical narrative appear not to appreciate.

As to the issue of the “three” years — τρεῖς, in the original — the one exception in the text to the general absence of specific dates, it is most often interpreted as “three hundreds”, as mentioned (Moravcsik & Jenkins 1949/1967, pp. 170–171). This is another relevant point, because the Khazars are considered (at least by some scholars, such as Róna-Tas, 2007), to be a Bulghar Turkic type of population, and the Bulghar Turkic peoples are those very peoples from whom the Hungarians, supposedly, got the great majority of their Turkic loan-words (see

26 The text then also mentions twice the name *Árpád*, the leader who was chosen at some point as chief of the Turks. This figure is considered to be the leader of the **H** confederation of the 9th C., that would have accomplished the **H** home conquest (see below).

27 Actually, to be precise, the term *magyarôî* itself never occurs in the text either; what we find instead is its variant *megyer*, *Μεγέρη* in the Greek script, usually read as *Megyeri*, that is, “of *megyer*”. This is a Greek genitive form, since the emperor is listing the various Turkic clans and their chiefs, thus: the “clan of *megyer*”, etc.

28 Constantine (quoted) reports that the children of Árpád are all dead, but his grand children Fali, Tasi and their cousin, Taksony, are still alive. The emperor also observes that Teveli (another grand child) died too, but his child Termacsú (who visited the court in recent times) got the title of “friend” [φίλος] of the empire court (Moravcsik & Jenkins, 1949/1967, pp. 178–179). Moravcsik (1984/1988, p. 49, footnote (44)) claims that the visit on behalf of the descendent of Árpád who got the distinguished title of “friend” of the empire can be dated to about 948 AD.

discussion below, as well as note (6) and (17)). Given that the Turkic influence on **H** is deep and pervasive, extending to almost all levels of language, it was observed that 'three years' is not a long enough period of time to justify this "state of the art" (if it is assumed that **H** is purely and simply a U/FU language). Given that the text by Constantine has been recognized as containing inaccurate information in other areas of the narration, this particular item of information has generally been regarded as "obviously wrong" (Grégoire, 1937, p. 636; 1952, p. 280; Deér, 1952, p. 108). A correction therefore would have been required: instead of the word τρεῖς, one should read only the initial letter τ', which is the standard way of writing "three hundred" in Byzantine Greek (but see Shepard, 1998, p. 25 for a different interpretation). In other words, there has been a "re-interpretation" by historians and linguists in order for the original text to be consistent with the U linguistic model. As a result, basically all the relevant (textbooks and specialist) literature inform the reader of the "three/several centuries long co-habitation" between the Turkic peoples and the U *Magyars* as if it were a "documented fact", rather than what it actually is: an interpretation, or, one could argue, a "manipulation" of the text by Constantine.

4. The Linguistic Evidence Has Been "Re-interpreted" According to the Tenets of the Uralic Theory

As mentioned above, the classification of **H** as a U language should mean that the correlations shared by **H** and the other U languages — however much scanty they may be — are, nevertheless, of genetic origin. In contrast, the pervasive Turkic (/Asiatic) component present in **H** should be globally classified as "borrowed", as a result of the prolonged, intense contacts between the two populations. This is, in principle, a plausible scenario: it is indeed conceivable that the poor quality and quantity of the correlations existing between the U languages are due to the great antiquity of the family, antiquity that would have caused the dwindling or disappearance of most of the expected correlations, whilst the Turkic component is much stronger due to the fact that it was borrowed relatively recently, in our era (this representing the official paradigm). This being the case, the question naturally arises: what is in the right then, the linguistic, U paradigm or the historical sources? In other words, is there a way to verify what actually happened in the relevant pre-historical and early historical phases of the development of **H**? Scholars of U studies and **H** historiography claim that the linguistic classification is right, since it has been established through the adoption of the "scientific" methods of historical comparative linguistics. As a consequence, the linguistic classification can and must "trump" the historical evidence, or any other item of evidence counter to the conventional paradigm. However, the reality is that the method of comparative linguistics — as well as the principles and tenets of historical linguistics underpinning them — was at its infancy, at its first, uncertain and slippery steps, between the end of the 1700s and the beginning of the 1800s and several of these traditional founding principles and tenets have by now been proven wrong. Neither has there been any attempt, any willingness on behalf of the academic establishment to question and, possibly, renovate at least some of the most out-of-date tenets, despite different, more realistic analyses and models being put forward by several scholars in the field through the years (see for ex. the already quoted work by Häkkinen). Even if these shortcomings did not exist, there are at least two major questions that still await an answer on behalf of the conventional model, actually, two questions that, as far as I know, have not been raised at all, at least explicitly: a) is there "independent" evidence for the thesis of the great antiquity of the U family? b) is there "independent" evidence for the thesis of the borrowing interpretation of all the linguistic elements of Turkic origin present in **H**? Well, the answer to both questions is, clearly: "no". In fact, the thesis of the great antiquity of U cannot be verified

at all, because nowhere in the U area there are old enough documents²⁹ that would allow us to make even a rough estimate at this regard (the argument of the great antiquity being thus a circular one). As to the borrowing interpretation of all the **H** words and suffixes of Turkic origin, such an interpretation is not verifiable either, on the basis of linguistic clues only, for the following, well known reason (within linguistics): borrowed elements typically integrate into their target language, becoming “indistinguishable” from the inherited ones, often at the very time of borrowing. The Turkic “borrowing” into **H**, as mentioned, supposedly goes back to a period between the 4th–5th and the 9th–10th Century AD, so that there has been plenty of time for this integration/assimilation to take place — not to count that this type of integration tends to be more efficient and complete if the donor and receiving languages are typologically/structurally very similar, as is indeed the case here. Interestingly enough, scholars of U studies and **H** historiography claim that the borrowing interpretation does actually have “independent”, extra-linguistic support, and this would be, as mentioned, the very item of information provided by the historical sources according to which: *the “Uralic” Magyars “came into contact” with Turkic peoples for about 300 years*. However, this is not the case: nowhere in the historical sources one can find this distinctive item of information, as discussed above (not to count the fact that in this way credibility is now granted to those very historical sources that have otherwise been dubbed as “wrong” and “mythical”, or the fact that there is nowhere in the Eurasiatic zone any attestation of a “U population” and/or “U culture”). Neither could this item of information have been documented in any case — be it false or true — because of the rather vague, confused way in which the variegated world of the steppe peoples is referred to in contemporary historiography — as already pointed out.

This being the case, the interpretation according to which these early *Magyars* might have actually been themselves a nomadic, (originally Central Asian) “ethnie”, one of the many (more or less mixed) ethnic groups that roamed the Eurasian steppes at the time, can also be reasonably put forward. Not only, there are several “facts” that appear to point toward this direction.

First, the *magyar* language (and peoples) was not assimilated — despite the fact that they were a small bunch of migrants, and were not equipped with any cutting edge advantage over their neighbours — neither during their peregrination in the steppes, nor after their settling in the Carpathian Basin, inhabited by all sort of peoples who spoke (Indo-)European languages (Slavic, Germanic, Romance, etc.), as well as Asiatic languages (Hunnic, Avar, Bulgharo-Turkic, etc.; see Berend et al., 2013), but not, as far as we know, U languages. This is a rather odd scenario in that area of the world, at those times, since all the other nomads that eventually settled in the Carpathian Basin, more or less at the same period and with the same modalities as the *Magyars*, have actually been assimilated, their language disappearing from the face of History (although leaving scanty linguistic remains, here and there). This is indeed the case of the Huns, the Avars, the Bulghar Turkic peoples, as just mentioned, etc. (see Dreisziger 2009 and 2012 for a review of the situation). In other words, it is possible, in principle, that the *magyar* language survived because, as an originally “Central Asian language”, and not as an originally “U language”, it was sustained and revitalized by mixing with the other (originally) Central Asian speech communities that had previously arrived and settled in this very same territory. This would mean that the language(s) of the Huns, the Avars, the Bulghar Turkic and other nomadic groups already living in the Carpathian Basin before the arrival (in one or more waves) of the *Magyars* did not really die out completely. On the contrary, these languages would flow into and/or combine with the *magyar* speech community/communities (all these steppe languages certainly sharing at least the same basic typological and structural features), in this way

29 The oldest document in the whole of the U area is the already mentioned, oldest **H** text “funeral oration”.

contributing in maintaining, replenishing and developing what has then become the **H** language (and peoples) as we know them today, through a long, complex process of “ethnogenesis”, process to which, of course, also the local Carpathian (European) peoples and languages heavily contributed — not to count the influence of Latin, both as a prestige language and the main language of Christianization and administration (see again Berend et al., 2013). That this is a plausible scenario appears to be confirmed by the fact that **H** contains many “basic lexicon” words classified as of “unknown” origin, that is, neither Turkic nor U, nor Indo-European, or other, such as the term for “belly”, “younger sister”, “family”, etc.

Second, the thesis that the borrowing from Turkic into **H** took place (almost) exclusively from WOT languages (see again notes (6) and (17)), so much important for the conventional model and so much emphasized also in RT&B — presumably, because it is quite compatible with the assumption of the “European” origin of the U language family, and, therefore, of **H**, whilst the thesis of borrowing from EOT (Central Asian) languages is not — is belied by the very data the Authors themselves accurately report. In fact, for each single **H** word as well as derivational suffix of Turkic origin listed in their dictionary, RT&B provide not only a WOT “reconstruction”³⁰, a WOT etymology, this reconstruction being, supposedly, the source of the borrowing, but also and always, scrupulously, the corresponding EOT parallel(s) if available — “real” words and suffixes in this case, and not reconstructions. This remarkable collection of data shows that, in the great majority of cases, there is hardly any difference between the “reconstructed” WOT word or suffix, and the “attested” EOT word/suffix³¹. How can it then be argued that WOT was, basically, the “only source” of the **H** linguistic elements³² of Turkic origin, despite RT&B best efforts to convince the reader otherwise? In addition, it has to be observed that RT&B model is not plausible on theoretical grounds either, being, naively, too rigid and unrealistic, judging from what we know nowadays about the way languages work: they certainly do not diffuse, develop, change, disappear, mix with other languages, etc. in such an orderly, mechanical, basically regular and systematic way, as purported by the Authors’ model. This being the case, and given the multi-ethnic/multi-lingual nature of the tribal confederations within which the early *Magyars* lived, it is *a priori* highly unlikely that they borrowed “only”, as well as “regularly and systematically” from WOT languages, or, more precisely, from their “reconstructed forms” — assuming, for the sake of the argument, that WOT existed as a clearly separate entity from EOT, and that we are dealing merely with the process of borrowing.

30 Recall that RT&B provide a reconstruction also because the WOT languages are scarcely attested, apart from Chuvash.

31 Here are a couple of examples of similar/identical East vs West Turkic words. **H** *köldök* “navel, *umbilicus*, etc.”, according to RT&B (I, pp. 584–586) would derive from WOT (reconstructed) **kindik*, but compare also EOT *kindik* “navel”, Chu. *kěntěk*. **H** *gyomor* “stomach, bowels”, according to RT&B (I, pp. 398–399) would derive from WOT (reconstructed) **ǰumur*, but compare also EOT *yumur*. See also the examples reported in the main text for instances of EOT vs WOT similar/identical words and suffixes.

32 It is certainly true, as widely claimed, that several **H** words of Turkic origin present some phonetic/phonological features considered to be “exclusive” of the West Turkic (Bulgharic/Chuvash) languages only, the so-called “rhotacism” and “lambdacism” isogloss, that is, the occurrence in **H** and (essentially) Chuvash (as well as, at times, Mongolian) of *r* and *l* as against the occurrence of *z* and *š* in all the other Turkic (“Common Turkic”) languages, respectively. However, once again, the distribution of the sounds in question is not always clear cut, as one would expect — not to count that there is plenty of relevant words or suffixes that, obviously, do not contain these very sounds, or any other “Chuvash criteria”. It is therefore not always possible to assess the presumed WOT nature of the loan words in question. This fact is at times recognized also in the specialistic literature; see for example Zimonyi (2012, p. 84; see also Zimonyi, 2010 and Ligeti, 1986, pp. 36–48). Even RT&B (who, as we have seen, *always* reconstruct a WOT /Bulgharic form for their listed Turkic loan words) report 268 Turkic loan words in **H** that display no relevant criteria as against 199 loan words that display Chuvash criteria (see Marcantonio 2014 for details and references on this issue).

5. Conclusion: Historical and Political Influences on the “Making” of the Uralic Classification of Hungarian

After having presented the *status questionis* regarding the nature of the **H** language and the historical sources that refer to the early *Magyars*, as faithfully and objectively as I possibly can, I leave it to the reader to make up his/her mind regarding the issue of the origin of the **H** “peoples”. However, on the basis of the linguistic data I believe it can be reasonably argued that the **H** “language”, even if it had been in origin a U language (for which I personally have doubts), it has certainly by now become what could be defined as an “aberrant” U³³ language. In other words, if one accepts the U classification as valid, **H** should, nevertheless, not be classified as a “pure” U language (supposing, for the sake of the argument, that “pure languages”, transmitted only through genetic lineage, do exist in the world altogether), but as “a type of mixed” language³⁴, U and (mainly³⁵) Turkic. This classification is certainly more adherent to the linguistic and historical situation — whatever the origin of the Turkic component might have been: borrowed, inherited, shared drift, or, most likely, a combination of all these and other factors, as typically happens in the processes of ethnogenesis of languages and peoples/nations.

This being the case, one can now answer the question of why **H** was and still is nowadays classified as U within the Ural-Altai belt, an answer that can be provided if we contextualize the “making” of the U theory and the classification of **H** within their historical and socio-political circumstances. As Marácz (2014, p. 1) puts it (see also Marácz (2012b) for details):

It turns out that this language classification was established largely on the basis of non-linguistic factors and circumstances. As a matter of fact, it was put on the research agenda in the aftermath of the Hungarian Freedom Fight of 1848–1849, when the Hapsburg ruling-house installed a neo-absolutist regime, “germanizing” the Hungarian academic institutions. The proponents of the Nordic, but European, “Finnish” connection of **H** enjoyed the political support of the Hapsburg ruling-house, since this propagated a Euro-centric world view, in contrast to those scholars who searched the linguistic relatives of Hungarian outside Europe, in a south-easterly direction.

The thesis that there are political motivations involved in the issue of the linguistic classification of **H** is confirmed by the fact that neither the “Ugric-Turkic battle” (for which see note (24)), nor any previous or subsequent study ever really “proved” the U nature of **H** by providing statistically significant data — contrary to what widely stated in textbooks (Marcantonio, 2002; Marcantonio et al., 2001). Not only, as mentioned, the Ugric-Turkic battle was simply concerned with the sub-classification of **H** within the paradigm and family tree diagram that was widely accepted at the time: the belief in the existence of the “wide Altai” family, to use Budenz’ words (for “Budenz” see again note (24)). As a matter of fact, Budenz’ views were not that distant from the views of those modern scholars who (in my opinion, correctly), recognize the existence of the “Ural-Altai

33 I wish to thank J. Janhunen (personal communication; 2003), for suggesting me the definition “aberrant U language” with reference to **H**.

34 According to some classifications, a “mixed language” combines the grammatical elements of one language and the lexical items of another. Basically, it is a language that does not descend from a single ancestor in the (supposedly) normal way, but which has instead been assembled by combining large chunks of material from two (or more) existing languages. There are certainly ambiguities and problems of definition with the term “mixed”, also because every language is “mixed” to a certain extent, and every linguistic element (lexical, grammatical etc.) can in principle be borrowed, given the right circumstances. Thus, it is rather an issue of “degree” of mixture that is at stake. Whatever the case, this debate is not of relevance here, and by “mixed” I loosely refer to a language that combines material from two (or more) existing languages.

35 It has to be said “mainly” because many other influences have contributed to the “ethnogenesis” of the **H** language and peoples as we know them today, including the influence of other Asiatic languages, such as Mongolian, and that of the Indo-European languages, as already mentioned.

belt”— a modern, more realistic version of the traditional and by now out of date “Ural-Altai” theory, or, to use Janhunen’s words (2001, p. 213; see also Janhunen, 2007 and Róna-Tas, 1998): the “Ural-Altai complex”, the “Ural-Altai areal context” or, better, the “single original area of Ural-Altai typology”, area to be located, originally, in “Central Asia”.

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