

# Eastern Muslim Groups among Hungarians in the Middle Ages

Erdal Çoban\*

## Abstract

The role of Islam in Hungarian history dates back before the Ottoman reign. The first written records about the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century Hungarians belong to Muslim writers who brought these up on the scene of history with their own ethnic names. In the light of Garnati and other sources, we can designate that there were two Khwarezmian ethnic groups, respectively the Turkified Chwalisians and the As people among Hungarians and these groups joined Hungarians before the Magyar conquest (896) of Hungary. Out of these groups, which were called Ishmaelite or böszörmény by Hungarian sources, especially the Chwalisians later continued to migrate to Hungary together with various Turkic tribes during the medieval period. The Chwalisians undertook significant posts in administrative and financial fields while, at the same time, they became a part of Hungarian army like the As people.

## Keywords

Chwalisians, Hungary, Ishmaelite, böszörmény, Islam, Khazars, the Middle Ages

Today popular idea designates that the only Islamic effect in Hungarian history was the Ottoman-Turkish domination in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, without taking into consideration to what extent it authentically carries an Islamic character. Although this belief has no direct relationship with our subject, it should also be emphasized that the phenomenon of Islam in Hungary persisted mostly among the new conquerors and the immigrants of

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\* Assist. Prof. Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Languages, History and Geography, Department of Hungarian Studies – Ankara / Turkey  
cobanogluerdal@hotmail.com

southern Slavic origin, and mostly in cities that were strategically more important than the rural areas. Besides, the administrators were not primarily concerned with the Islamization of local communities (Dávid 2002: 87-8). Within the context of the Ottoman heritage, it is almost impossible to talk about an overwhelming existence of Islam in Hungary when we compare the Balkans and other Eastern-European countries. Today Islam is represented by a very small community and the Hungarians do not have any immediate concerns about the issue (Lederer 1992: 1).

In this study, as regards to the medieval Hungary's Muslims rather than examining their social evolution preceded Christianity and continued in parallel with the phase of Christianization which began after the year 1000, we would like to acquaint with their ethnic origins and under what circumstances they were included in Hungarian history and the different interpretations related to our study by using comparison method.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, we should indicate that a remarkable part of the detailed and the oldest written information about the migration period of Hungarian prehistory are found among Muslim writers' works. The ancestors of Hungarians migrated to the south after leaving their original homeland in Urals to an area between Kama-Bjelaja at a date not accurately known, and at a date after the 5<sup>th</sup> century they migrated to the southern Russian steppes that enabled them to remain in the Khazar political orbit. In 896 as a result of Pecheneg attacks they settled in the Carpathian-Basin and Pannonia. While Jayhani and his successors reflecting the situation of 870s, described the Magyars as people living along the Volga River and settling down in the northern environs of the Black Sea, they recorded that the Magyars were a section of the Turkic race and were also nomadic. Surely these notes show the symbiotic features of the two communities and the effect of Turkic culture on Hungarian political and social organizations. The significance of these Muslim geographers and historians, who have a special interest in Hungarians, becomes more evident as they were the sources who took *majgar* or *maj'ar* to the scene of history for the first time with their own ethnic names (Róna-Tas 1996: 227). Even in the era of incursions the interest of Muslim writers in Hungarians continued in a more objective way than the western sources.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the early Muslim sources kept silent about the relationship of Hungarians with Islam in particular is quite striking and contemporary Hungarian sources and historically dependable documents on the subject are unfortunately limited. If we examine Hungarian historiography we see that as of the 12<sup>th</sup> century an apparent powerful Christian spirit conceals this phenomenon. In this context, it is interesting that there is only one

citation on the existence of Muslims among Hungarians in the middle ages. This citation comes from a chronicle called Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum*, which was written at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, as other sources show, the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, sheltering a Muslim community in it, was a place of contact for Christian and Islam civilizations in Europe following the Iberian Peninsula and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily. Still it had more humble conditions than the others quantitatively (Szűcs 1987: 12).

The most valuable source concerning our subject is a travel book written by Abu Hamid al-Garnati who was an Andalusian scribe and a pilgrim. Garnati, who was born in Granada in 1080, went to the centers of the Islamic world, to Alexandria in 1114-15 and to Cairo the following year after leaving his homeland like most of his young friends to study science. Then we see him in Baghdad in 1122. After spending time in various places, he stayed in Saksin in the Volga delta for about twenty years (1131-1150) and then he visited the Volga Bulgars. After leaving the Bulgar capital, he reached Hungary in 1150 passing Kiev, Russian Country, and lived three years there. He collected his notes about these travels in two works: *Kitab al-Mu'rib 'an ba'd 'aja'ib al-Maghrib* was completed in 1155, *Tuhfat al-Albab* in 1162 (Garnāti: 11-28). In his first work, comprising his notes on the 12<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian Muslims, he named this country Bashgird land<sup>3</sup> or Unquriyya. While he stated that "They are the first ones who entered the Franc country passing through the country of Turks," he knows very well that Hungarians had migrated to Europe from the steppes. It seems that Garnati had listened to and read texts about the origins of the Hungarians during his residence there (Garnāti: 56, 82).

Garnati, who offers invaluable information about religious relationships as well as various observations, records that numerous or thousands of people who adopted Islam live in Hungarian community and he firstly categorizes them in a general ethnic grouping. The first of these are people of Khwarezm origin and he states that they are "innumerable." (Garnāti: 56). In order to understand when this ethnic group began to live among Hungarians and to see the order in which the occurrence of historical events took place we should firstly look at Hungarian sources. While the chronicler Simon Kézai tells us about Hun-Magyar common past which he filled with an anachronistic fiction around 1283, he writes the following about Csaba –supposedly Atilla's son- and the Hungarians who lived around the Sea of Azov and the Don:

In that case Csaba (...) is the rightful son of Attila; his son's names are Ed and Edemen. Edemen migrated here with his father's and mother's

crowded family when Hungarians went back to Pannonia for the second time. His mother was of Khwarezm origin. Ed stayed in Schytia with his father. The Aba clan was derived from this Csaba. (MEH: 143-44)

The chronicle of Anonymus is unaware of such a Khwarezmian-Magyar relationship, however, while talking about some aristocratic families' customs, he mentions seven "Cumani" *beys* who had joined the Hungarians in their invasions to Kiev before the Magyar conquest, and he says that Ed and Edemen are among these. Apart from mentioning these two names, we find another important point which is in line with Kezai's statements in the following lines of Anonymus: "In that period Grand Prince Árpád granted large lands in the Mátra forest to Ed and Edemen. (...) After a long time, King Samuel who took the name of Aba because of his mercy came from their posterity." (MEH: 118). In this case while Anonymus was referring to Ed and Edemen from whose progeny Abas came from and he called them Cuman, Kezai considered Edemen as half-Khwarezmian because of his mother. The Cuman naming in Anonymus is completely wrong regarding actual chronology. Yet Cumans' penetration to southern Russia began in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and some of these tribes entered into Hungary in 1239. Anonymus either placed this people in his own age to a leading role in the historical event in question or the collective name for all the nomadic Turkic peoples in the old language was Cuman (Györffy 1990: 84). According to some views, the name Cuman in this historical event, which reflects a sequence from the process of nation building, points at the Khazars and this is very probable in terms of time and place. On the other hand, other historical or linguistic evidence strengthen this assumption; for example *Kazár*, *Kozár*, *Kozárvár* place-names are related to them. Furthermore, the chronicle of Anonymus mentions "clans called Khazar" that lived in the field of Bihar Dukedom during the Magyar conquest. In this context the archeological data are also important (Györffy 1990: 50, 85, Pálóczi 2004: 11).

How a Turkic tribe joined Hungarians shortly before the Magyar conquest is also known by foreign sources. According to a record of Byzantine Emperor Constantinus VII (*circa* 952-959), the Kabars, who were from the genus of the Khazars, revolted against the government for reasons unknown now and some of these were slaughtered in the civil war. Some others broke away and settled down among Magyars in Etelköz, probably in the downstream area of the Don. Then they merged. This ethnic group having separated from the Khazars was constituted by three tribes and they adhered to the Hungarian tribal confederation as the eighth clan. But the

emperor does not offer the names of these Kabar tribes (Moravcsik 1988: 46-7). In the light of the above mentioned examples Khazars of Köktürk origin were presented in person among the components of Kabar tribes. However Muslim geographers of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries recorded the subject unanimously and wrote that the Khazar Kaganate had a multinational, multilingual, and multi-religious structure. According to Arabic writers, Khwarezmians represented one of the peoples of different ethnic origin and they undertook important functions in the state. According to Istahri (*circa* 951) and Ibn Hauqal (before 988), their names were *al-hazar al-bulas* or *al-hazar al-halis* and this means “the Chwalisian Khazars” (Togan 1939: 217-8, Czeglédy 1970: 258, Göckenjan 2001: 223).<sup>4</sup> From the same sources we can deduce that they were mercenaries in the kagan’s army which was deployed in western Itil and was formed by 12.000 soldiers (Kmoskó 2000: 28-9, 77).

As is known, the Chwalisians were the ancient settlers of Amu-Darja’s lower course and Khwarezm field that resided in southern Lake Aral and precisely in the Sir Darja’s lower area. In a Syrian source of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Iranian Chwalisians, to whom we come across as *χwalis* for the first time (Czeglédy 1970: 257), began to have a say in trade in time beginning with the previous Islamic periods because of their being an intersection of main commercial roads as well as being good soldiers. It is known that Khwarezmian traders worked in the directions of west and northwest along the Volga River and to obtain the products of the north they especially preferred the capital of the Khazars and they set colonies of short and long duration at the mouth of Volga (Yazıcı 2002: 399). On the other hand, it is also known that a part of these as large and small groups took refuge in the Khazar Kaganate, which was a civilized and an indulgent nation, after the 8<sup>th</sup> century with the Islamization of the area by Arabian conquests; this resulted in the termination of autonomy and had a negative influence in political life (Czeglédy 1998: 23). It appears that they continued their other customary interests in their new homeland. As we learn from Mas’udi (*circa* 943-947), there was a large number of Muslims involved in trade and crafts in here besides Khwarezmian soldiers (Kmoskó 2000: 172). Likewise, when we look at Istahri and Ibn Hauqal’s statements, one of the sources of income for the Khazar treasury came from tariffs and tithe taxes taken from traders and it is very likely that the financial affairs were also in the hands of these Muslim Khwarezmians (Kmoskó 2000: 28, 75, Györffy 1990: 53).

Putting together the information presented previously, it is generally accepted that the Chwalisians living among the Khazars joined the Hungari-

ans through the Kabars although the debate regarding how and when this event had taken place continues. If, as it was claimed, Khazar ruling class' adoption of Judaism caused this revolt, we should ascribe the date to 860 and after. This assumption provided that the Chwalisians, one part of the Kabars, became altogether Muslim and they played a primary role in the rebellion (Györffy 1990: 50, 86). However, as a few proper names and archeological material show (Györffy 1990: 50, Pálóczi 2004: 11), the existence of Jewish Khazar nobles who came to Hungary among the Kabars make the search of religious causes behind the revolt questionable. Besides there is a possibility that a part of the Chwalisians probably adopted the Karaite sect. A Byzantine chronicler named Cinnamus (*circa* 1180-1183) during a later period in 1150 names the Chwalisians as *khalisoi* and explains that they took sides with the Serbs as auxiliary troops of Hungarians against Byzantium. He also claims that a part of these adopted "the impure Mosaic laws" (Moravcsik 1988: 202). The other assumption points out to the difference in historical events bringing two elements together by acknowledging the existence of Muslim Chwalisians siding with the Kabars. The most important ground for this assumption is provided by Baladhuri. According to this account, Muslims escaped from the Khazar country in 854-55 after the civil war because of their religion and then they entered over Caucasia to northern Armenia which was then ruled by Arabs (Marquart 1903: 36-37, Czeglédy 1970: 257). It is also thought that the Kabars separated from the Khazars and joined the Magyars during the same period. However, this Muslim effect prior to the Magyar conquest is not at a full scale; during this period we can mention a small number of Orthodox and Karaite Jews in tandem with a larger number of Muslims coming in through the Kabars (Czeglédy 1970: 257).

The eastern people and Hungarians did not break off their relations even after the conquest. The movements of people on the Eurasian steppes caused some ethnic elements to turn their directions to Hungary and these both contributed a great deal to the nation building of Hungarian people thereby increasing the number of Muslims in the country. Hungarian chronicler Anonymus also shows these in his account about the events in the period of Grand Prince Taksony (*circa* 956-70). The only record in the chronicles about Islam is this:

Upon hearing about his mercy, lots of visitors from various nations flocked to his side. Thus, some noble masters, Billa and Baks, from the land of Bular arrived together with numerous Ishmaelites. The grand prince bestowed an ample amount of estate to them in various areas of

Hungary and he, moreover, granted the Pest castle to them for good. Billa and his brother Baks -Etej came from their posterity –they had a discussion and decided to give two thirds of their folk in service of the mentioned castle and they also separated one thirds to their successors. At the same time a noble valiant, whose name is Hetény, came from the same region (...) (MEH: 138)

Anonymus refers to these immigrant groups in his work with the term *Hismahelita* i. e. Ishmaelite. This term was used for eastern Muslims regardless of their ethnic origin in the official documents during the Árpád dynasty. The name *Bular* is important, however, to determine the point of origin of these nomadic Muslims. This name is the regular variant of *Bohyār*, a word of Chuvash origin (Ligeti 1986: 269) and refers to the capital city of Volga Bulgars, not to the Danube Bulgars, as some claim, because the latter's name in Hungarian sources is *nándor* (Czeglédy 1970: 255, Györffy 1990: 62).

It is known that one of the Eastern European Muslim reservoirs was Volga Bulgaria that lasted until the Mongolian invasions. From Ibn Fadlan's travel book we learn that the Volga Bulgars adopted Islam as the state religion in 922 during the reign of Almish Khan (Togan 1939: 1-2). Bulgars' acquaintance with this faith, however, and its spread in their country must have happened before that time. Ibn Rusta's records also confirm this argument because only after eight years he states that these people became Muslims and they had their mosques, madrasahs, muezzins, and imams in their cities (Kmoskó 1997: 206). Bulgars knew Islam well because they stayed together with the Khazars for a long time and because they carried out commercial activities in Khwarezm territory as well as the capital of the Khazars. At this point we should especially take the role of Khwarezmian or rather Chwalisian merchants into consideration because they set up colonies in the middle Volga region on the caravan routes binding the northern areas to Khazar, Persia, and Central Asia (Yazıcı 2002: 399, Szűcs 1987: 14). The old Russian annals also demonstrate how Khwarezmian traders were influential among the Volga Bulgars as they were in the Khazar Kaganate. It is no mere chance that the Caspian Sea is referred to as *chvalynskoje More*, i. e. "Chwalisian Sea" in these sources (Togan 1939: 217-8).

On the other hand, we also have other information referring to the existence of Chwalises in Volga Bulgaria. Historical details given by the Arab geographer Yaqut are also very important. Yaqut tells us that in 1220, he personally met a colony of Hungarian Muslim students carrying out Is-

lamic law education in Aleppo County. A mullah from this colony had told Yaqut that they came from Volga Bulgharia a long time ago and added these: “Our home is within a nation called Hungary. On the border of this country, we live in about 30 villages, each one being as large as a city” (Szűcs 1987: 14, Kitapçı 2005: 257). The mullah explains that when they return home they will serve as imams for their Bashkir coreligionists and will be respected. His response to another question shows that the Muslims on the southern borders of the country were also employed in military service at the same time (Szűcs 1987: 16, Kitapçı 2005: 258).

We can argue that the warrior Muslims in the Aleppo colony were settled exactly in the region of Sirmion (Szerémség), south of Hungary for border defense. The aforementioned record of Byzantine annalist Cinnamus confirms it too. In addition, the same annalist reports that before 1165 as a result of a truce with Byzantium, the Chwalisians in the same area were forced to leave Byzantine territory by Emperor Manuel to the opposite shore of the Sava River. Cinnamus, referring to the existence of Karaite Jews among Chwalises, states: “(...) The emperor started the besiege of another castle after leaving the place, and resettled most of the Huns [Hungarians] from Sirmion, called Chwalise, who profess another faith but share the same religion with the Persians to here” (Moravcsik 1988: 234, Györffy 1990: 52). Without doubt we can say that, like other Byzantine writers, Cinnamus too archaized the tribe names; although he mentions Persians in fact he means Muslim Seljuks.

Hungarian documents show that a significant part of the Chwalisians lived in the Nyitra county in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and they were lessees of royal revenue (*institores regii fisci, quos hungaricae caliz vocant*). It is very remarkable that the name of one of the prominent members of the community, centurion Etheius, is identical with that of the Etej clan. The members of the clan are descendants of Billa and Baks, the nobles of Volga Bulgharia and this is also mentioned in Anonymus’ work (Györffy 1990: 52, Szűcs 1987: 14). When we take a document dated 1213, *proventus Saracenorum de Pest*, into consideration we see that a significant portion of Muslims of Pest cited in Anonymus were probably Chwalisian traders (Szűcs 1987: 14, Györffy 1990: 62).

At this point one of the problems that needs to be discussed is the exact meaning of the Hungarian word *böszörmény*. The main source for this word is the Persian *musliman*. We also find the word in place-names after the 13<sup>th</sup> century and undoubtedly it was taken over into Hungarian vocabulary through Turkish as it is shown in variants of *bisermin*, *büsürmen*

(Ligeti 1986: 269). The fact that the glossaries written around 1400 used this word as a synonym for Ishmaelite gave way to speculations and some scholars claim that there is no ethnic element behind the name in question but at most this can only be a collective naming of a religious community (Györffy 1990: 54, Pálóczi 2004: 12). On the other hand, some researchers emphasize that we should focus on a name of ethnic group of the steppes. According to this opinion the words *busurman* or *besermin* must have been used to identify Muslim Khwarezmians living in Eastern Europe, especially in the area of Volga Bulgars. Westerners, including Plano Carpini who traveled to Mongolia in 1247, also reported the same word to be used to refer to Khwarezmians (*Terra Biserminorum*). Further, in this context an analogy with *böszörménys* of Hungary appears because of the existence of a tribe part named *Bisirmen*. This group had a custom of immigrating from Khiva and lived among Votyaks and Tatars (Togan 1939: 218-9, Czeglédy 1970: 254).

Pechenegs constituted another side of the ethnic scene in medieval Hungary. This Turkic tribal confederation caused Magyars to leave their land in Etelköz in 895, and penetrated into Hungary from the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup>. We know that there were Christian missionaries in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century among pagan Pechenegs around the steppes of the Black Sea and this is very problematic with regard to its results. Almost synchronously the Andalusian geographer Bakri reports that around 1009 one of the tribes converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism effected by a scribe and this tribe held domination over the confederation (Kmoskó 2000: 252). Especially the last statement should be evaluated carefully because rather than his own personal experiences, Bakri predicated his account on a section of Muslims who were captured in Istanbul and this information was recorded in 1068 a long time after the occurrence of the events in question. On the other hand, because of the breaking down of the confederation, later we do not have any other information than the usual data about an exact success of Islam in reality (Galamb 2001: 185 Golden 2002: 223).<sup>5</sup> However, again as we are informed by Bakri, in this tribal confederation a northern Iranian tribe represented Islam and this ethnic group was the Chwalisians who took shelter in Pechenegs after being captured by the Byzantines and they are named as *huwalis* by Bakri (Kmoskó 2000: 253, Marquart 1903: 72-3).

Still it is true that at least some of the Pecheneg Turks adopted Islam. Thus in 1071 during the blockade of Belgrade fortress by Hungarians, Byzantines and Bulgars sought help from Pechenegs who plundered

southern Hungary a short time ago. According to an 14<sup>th</sup> century source, Acephalus, the Hungarian bailiff's army defeated these and captured the remaining. The clerk describes these Pechenegs, who helped defend the Belgrade fortress held by Hungarians, as Muslim (Györffy 1990: 117). Probably these took place among Pecheneg groups who changed their religion and lived nearby the borders on the Lower Danube (Marquart 1903: 72-3, Györffy 1990: 128).

We only have inconclusive evidence regarding the life of Islam among Pecheneg communities who migrated to Hungary during various periods. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century some Pecheneg groups settled in the northern-western Hungary for border defence. Anonymus explains it as such: "Leader Zulta (...) settled the Pechenegs, who were not little in number, beyond the Mosony morass (...) in order to prevent Germans from ruining the borders of Hungary in the future." (MEH: 137). During the chaos of 1074, Pechenegs' ruler was named as *Zulta* or *Zultan* by the chroniclers and was known to be an ally of King Géza I. This proper name's origin is Arabic and means *sultan* and it entered Hungarian vocabulary through Turkish (TESz: 802-803). Further, the inhabitants of Szerecseny village in Győr County to the east of Mosony Lake cherish the memory of the same Muslim Pechenegs (Györffy 1990: 114, 128). The name of the village in question is related to the name of *saracenus* which describes Muslims in the papal documents and from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward it appears in Hungarian texts as a synonym of Ishmaelite. In a 1196 mandate by King Imre, Pechenegs are mentioned together with Ishmaelites in the border zone of Eszék in the south. Based on this fact, we can say that the Chwalisians were an ethno-genetic part of the Turkic tribal confederation in the early period of the Árpáds (Czeglédy 1970: 254-5).

A group of Cuman-Kipchaks migrated to Hungary in 1239. However they were added to this country's history only after 1246 in their entirety. When we study the sources, we find no evidence of mass conversion of religion within the tribal confederation in Desht-i Kipchak before the Mongol era. Still we can talk about considerable number of Muslims. In this context, religious terms loaned from Arabic, such as demon and prophet, provide evidence because they are included in Codex Cumanicus' vocabulary at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is impossible for Cumans to recognize these terms via Christian missionaries who indicted the Codex. Otherwise we should have run across Christian terms. From a Russian source dated 1184, we learn that Könchek Khan had a Khwarezmian Muslim (*besermin*) man who was knowledgeable in firearms and still we

know that the Khan himself was also interested in Christianity (Györfy 1990: 269). Also according to the notes of Carpini's aforementioned travel book, Islam was mostly represented by Khwarezmians among the Cumans. Carpini reports that the people of the land of *bisermín* are Muslims (*sarraceni*), but they speak Cuman language (Mészáros 1914: 14, Golden 2000: 175-176).

Regarding the Cumans of Hungary we can assume that they brought Muslim elements with them in their cultural baggage upon their immigration. King Béla IV (1235-70) who wanted to strengthen the centralized power against the aristocracy and László IV (1272-90) who was a Cuman on his mother's side gave reserved a place for them in their royal courts and the effects of these are known. For instance, László IV appointed a Cuman, Mizse to the palatinate shortly before his death. Mizse was a saracenus according to the Buda Chronicle and was baptized shortly before his appointment (Wertner 1893: 584). Another piece of information on this subject is the observations of an Ottoman traveler named Sheikh Ali who visited Hungary in 1588. Sheikh Ali befriended lots of Cumans who continued to cherish their customs and spoke their language. He talked to them in their mother tongue, listened to their history, and saw lots of similarities between their history and the Muslims'. It is possible that at least one part of these ethnic elements in the Hungarian plain tried to keep their own religion despite the intense Christianization efforts beginning from 1279 (Mándoky 1993: 13, 34). For the period in question there is no different data to confirm the phenomenon of Islam. Still some texts, which include an ample number of Islamic terms (*Alla* and *Alah*) like some greeting formulas, can only explain the relationship of Cumans to Islam. An indirect evidence of this relationship is the circumcision tradition which was practiced until the beginning of the previous century although it lost its Islamic characteristics regarding its name and ritual (Mándoky 1993: 34-5). According to a view, the strengthening of Islam among Cumans is the result of the mixture of some tribal parts after the breaking down of Pecheneg tribal confederation and especially Chwalise's mixture with Cumans in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Location names, which we see especially in some western border points and others, which also refer to Chwalisians as well as the place and family names in Kipchak language support this view (Czeglédy 1970: 255).

In light of these explanations, it can be said that the Chwalisians were in close contact with various Turkic tribes, more intensively with the Khazars and Volga Bulgars, and arrived in Hungary through their countries. As it is indicated, Sir Darja region, which was the original home of this tribe,

belonged to Iranian linguistic geography. Indeed their names' old style is in the Northern Iranian character. Istahri's account on the language of Chwalisian Khazars also confirms this. According to him, this language is neither Turkish nor Persian and it is not related to another language family either (Kmoskó 2000: 29). However, it is generally recognized that as a result of their coexistence with Turkic tribes, they also became a Turkish-speaking people (Czeplédy 1970: 257). Still the starting date of this process seems problematic. It is also claimed that before the Magyar conquest Chwarezmians were speaking Iranian. According to this, *k-* situated in Hungarian *káliz* form shows that the word entered in that vocabulary through Turkish, but this entry can only be confirmed in Hungarian only after the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Ligeti 1986: 270).

After the emergence of the Hungarian State, the Chwalisians began to live in different parts of the country in their own villages. In laws and official documents these settlements were named as *villae Ysmaelitarum* from 1090 until the Mongol invasion. The Hungarian people, however, named these settlements' dwellers by their own tribal names. Today we can deduct the places Chwalisians lived through toponyms. We see names which still are still cherished in their memory densely in Pilis, Fejér, Veszprém, Somogy, Baranya, Bodrog, Bihar, Szilágy, Nyitra, Zala, and Zemplén counties: *Kálász, Káloz, Kálozd* etc. (Kiss 1980: 310-11, 131, Györffy 1990: 53). Moreover, the Mongolian name of the Chwalisians was *qorumsi*. Therefore, it is possible to run across place-names similar to this form in a couple of places in Hungary. In 1206 *Curumzue* in the Győr County was the oldest of these and it still exists. Probably the Turkish-speaking people in Hungary named them in forms such as this one and the like (Kiss 1980: 354, Györffy 1990: 53-4). We come across in Nyírség and Bihar County, which were dukedom fields, with Böszörmény place names along with Pest, Sáros, and Temes counties (Kiss 1980: 104, Györffy 1990: 54).

Garnati summarizes the role of this ethnic group in the society as such: "People of Khwarezm origin serve the king, pretend to be Christians and they conceal their identities as Muslims." (Garnati: 56). Firstly we should say that they undertake missions in important posts in the administration of the state. As it is known, even when they were under the dominion of Khazars they governed some financial affairs of the state. They collected the traders' tithes and customs taxes. The *vám* word, which is one of the Iranian loan-words in Hungarian, is probably a memorial of the Chwalise-Hungarian relationship and it seems that they undertook tariff collection in Eteköz country (Györffy 1990: 53, TESz: 1084). Again it seems that they

were the ones who transferred Sassanian jewelry handicrafts to the Hungarians in addition to their occupation in minting money (Györffy 1990: 88). In the Golden Bull (*Aranybulla*), one of the pillars of the Hungarian constitution, published in 1222, it is also understood from the accounts about the Jews and Chwalisians that some of them served as lessees of royal revenue (*comites camerae*), minter and money changer (*monetarius*), collector of salt revenues (*salinarius*) in governmental and financial affairs (MTSz.: 272, 277, Kristó 1997: 201-5). They played a key position in trade with the Jews too. Their role in trade in the 12<sup>th</sup> century can be proved through the naming of the Chwalisian Road extending from the road from Szeged to Bátmonostor which was used for salt shipping (Györffy 1990: 53). The fact that the word *tyminus* (tümen) is of Turkish origin which was used for salt measurement in Latin documents is another mark of their importance in salt-trade ([www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/muzulmagy.html](http://www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/muzulmagy.html)). Szeremség, where they lived densely in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, became a significant center for country's vinery via Chwalisian merchants (MoT: 1100).

They were also very effective in foreign trade. Their circle of influence extends to Prague in the north, to the Danube delta in south and to Kiev in east, and “to countries of the Khazars and the Alans” even before the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Ibn Ya’qub, who was an Andalusian Jewish pilgrim, records that the Muslims regularly visited Prague with Hungarian goods in the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Szűcs 1987: 13, 25). There was an important harbor on Danube within Budapest. We think that the harbor was managed by these merchants considering that a document dated 1135 records a Chwalise clan in the same place. The location name Budakalász can be seen here even after centuries (MoT: 1100, Györffy 1990: 53).

The Chwalisians carried their binary functions in the country of Khazars to their new home. During the building of the Hungarian State, the light cavalry troops which fought with nomadic tactics did not lose their importance although the royal army was restructured in the western model. In the 11-12<sup>th</sup> centuries they participated in this organization consisting of the adhered tribes as Pechenegs and Sekels. Like other nomadic military elements, they undertook the duty of advanced guard and rear-echelon in battles in addition to their task of border defense (Pálóczi 2004: 13). For instance, the Kádarkalauz clan was settled to Zala area where there was a border with the German-Roman Empire. German sources refer to them with the names of *Kotziler*, *Koltzil*, *Kolzen* among the Hungarian auxiliary troops. Contemporary sources indicate that the Chwalise warriors comprising of about 600 archers participated in the siege of Milan in 1158

(Györffy 1990: 53, [www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/muzulmagy.html](http://www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/muzulmagy.html)). Again, if we turn to Yaqut's record about the frontier colony of Szerémség, about their way of life, it is stated that the Hungarian mullah in Aleppo had said: "Although we are Muslims, we obey the king, we serve his military and we fight against all of his enemies." (Szücs 1987: 16). He also added that the soldiers cut their beards and dressed like Francs while the others, probably he referred to merchant class, did not practice the same (Kitapçı 2005: 258). Garnati also lived three years (1150-1153) in this area, especially in this colony which fought against Byzantium, and he also encouraged them to wage a holy war for the sake of Constantinople with these words: "I address Muslims in there: Do everything in collaboration with the [Bashkir] king for jihad because you will acquire the jihad's merit in God's sight [in day of the judgment]." (Garnáti: 59).

Contrary to Muslim and Byzantine sources naming the members of this soldier colony as Chwalise, Garnati called them *awlad al-maghariba*, i.e. the grandchildren of Moors (Garnáti, 56). According to Garnati, the Moors who constituted the other part of the Muslim community, serve to king only in wars, more precisely only in "jihad" and live Islam openly in contrast to the Chwalises. He recorded that he taught them theology and although they did not know the Friday prayer previously, they learned about it through his sermons. The pilgrim adds with an exaggeration that they performed the Friday prayer in more than ten thousand places (Garnáti: 56-7). As it is known, the word Moorish means North African or western as is shown by the etymon of the Arabic word, however, to which Hungarian ethnic group belongs is still problematic. It was thought that this group could be Levantine Muslims who were scattered to a vast geography like the enterprising Normans (Czeplédy 1970: 259) or the Maghrebian Arabs who dispersed from Sir Darja to the Hungarian plain. These probably joined the Pechenegs like legionary *abnas* who appeared during the Shiite movements in the age of the Abbasid domain; and because of this Garnati used the term *abna al-maghariba* at another point in his work.<sup>6</sup>

Another claim emphasizes another eastern people. From 1131 Garnati dwelled in Saksin situated in the lower reaches of Volga or presumably in Sarighshin which was the capital of the Khazars once. Both in here and Kiev he met some Muslims and says these about them: "In here thousands of Muslims of Maghrebian origin live but they speak Turkish and they live like a Turk and shoot arrows, everybody here knows them with the name of *H-n-b*." (Garnáti: 38, 54). It was thought that this form pointed to the Huns who drew back to east<sup>7</sup> following the destruction of Attila's empire.

However by correcting the same form to *bajanah*, some identified Maghrebians with a tribe which was a part of Pechenegs adopting Islam. The latter assumption's reference point is also the existence of a legend among Pechenegs both in South Russia and in Hungary about their being westerners.<sup>8</sup> Some others also focused on the same Turkic tribe considering the term in question with references to the Turkish mercenaries in the Abbasid Empire (Baliç 1986: 115). However, these last two views do not seem possible for Hungary because, as it is argued before, we can prove the existence of Islamized Turk-Pechenegs in here with little data.

Another people of the Khazar country is again Muslim Iranians called Alans and the relationship between them and Hungarians are firstly explained in a genesis legend titled "The Miracle Stag," which was preserved by chronicles. According to the legend, Hunor-Magor brothers who go hunting in the surroundings of Sea of Azov marry the daughters of the Alans' prince (MEH: 140). The legend, reflecting the ethno-genesis of Magyars, points that some Iranian groups joined the Hungarian tribes before their conquest. Other historical events also bear testimony to this. For instance in 923-24 Nicolaus Mysticus informs the Bulghar tsar about the possibility that the Alans and Hungarians, whom he describes as western Turks, would act in concert to attack to Bulgars (Moravcsik 1988: 25). Ten years later Mas'udi recounts another side of this relationship during a campaign in the Balkans coordinated by Hungarians:

The four kings sent men to their countries and gathered some of the Muslim merchants who arrived in their countries from the territories of the Khazars, Al-Bab [Derbend] and Alans and from others places when they perceived how great an army was gathered from the Christianized people and the Romans. In addition, they brought together from all these four types who accepted Islam before and who agreed to fight with them only against the heretics. When the troops drew up and the Christianized people were seen in front of the Romans, these merchants in front of Turks [Hungarians] inclined towards them and called upon them to be converted to Islam. They also promised to send them over to the Muslim lands if they agreed to get into the protection of Turks (Kmoskó 2000: 183-4).

From Mas'udi's account we can deduce that together with some Muslim Khazar bodies in Hungarian military, there was also a section of Muslim Alans.

If we again turn back to Mas'udi, he also mentions a second Muslim Iranian people who took refuge with the Khazars coming from the

Khwarezmians because of wars and plague after the expansion of Islam. They were employed in the military servitor of the Khan. Mas'udi also gives information on their inclusion in the military company of the kagan and says that this warrior group was named *Arsiya*. They could serve in the Khazar Khan's army on the condition that they should confess their true religion explicitly and promise not to fight against Muslims (Kmoskó 2000: 171-2, Marquart 1903: 332). According to other historical and linguistic facts, the name Arsi is certainly related to *As(i)*, which is a section of the Alans (Czeplédy 1998: 100).<sup>9</sup> Ibn Battuta even in the 14<sup>th</sup> century fell in with "a race named As" in Saray county along the Volga (it is possible that it is the same with Sarighshin or is close to it) which was described as the capital city. According to him, "all of these people were Muslims" (Aykut 2004: 517). Further, Abul Fida's account seems more illuminating. According to this account, "the As people, who dwell by the side of Caucasian Alans" or the Christianized groups, "are no longer a Turkified people with regard to their life style and beliefs." (Marquart 1903: 111). At the same time, this is in accordance with the description of Garnati concerning the Maghrebians of Kiev, yet they are not Turks in fact, they were only Turkified. The As people were associated closely with other Turkic tribal confederations. For example, Biruni in his text written in 1025 reports that the Pechenegs and As-Alans after having lived in the lower course of Amu Darja migrated among the Khazars. Likewise from his words it is obvious that the Pechenegs powerfully had Turkified their Iranian language (Alemany 2002: 533). Thus, when we take the fact that the name Pecheneg was extended to this ethnic group into consideration, it is probable that the Maghrebian *bajanabs* in Garnati's time were also the As people (Györffy 1990: 58). Another similar feature between the Maghrebians of Hungary and the As people in Mas'udi's history is that both people consented to serve either in the kagan's army or in the Hungarian State on the condition that they would not fight against misbelievers.

It is possible to trace these Muslim Ases whom we can describe as Turkified people through the transformation of their names from signifying ethnicity to locality in Hungary. One of these names is *Oszlár*, *Eszlár* and *Aszlár* which are seen in different counties of the country. Undoubtedly the As ethnic name is related to the Turkish plural suffix *-lar*. The names in question can be dated back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and again there is no doubt that the Alans, who had a close relationship with sphere of Turkish language, were also named in this way (Kiss 1980: 488, 645, Györffy 1990: 56, Çoban 2007: 127). It is remarkable that in Szerémség, to where Garnati also travelled, the sources preserve the name of *Oszlán* village. This name is very

likely transferred to us the name *Varsány* in the 11<sup>th</sup> century for the first time. This latter word's etymon is *asiān ~ osiān* and entered into Hungarian via Chuvash language and this was the Hungarian name of the As people (Kiss 1980: 682, 192, 346, 453, 692, Györffy 1990: 56-7).

If we think about why Garnati qualify this group as Maghrebian, it very possible that during 350 he knows one part of the Alans who escaped from the Huns to west and then established Carthago after their settlement in North Africa because he was also an Andalusian and he knew North Africa very well. Considering the possibility that Garnati either spread this awareness the among Muslim Alans in Hungary or it was known among the 12<sup>th</sup> century Alans who still had a vivid memory of the abovementioned historical event, there is a good chance that they knew their brothers were indeed "maghrebians" (Györffy 1990: 58-9, MoT: 1100).

Even in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the area of the old Khazar Kaganate, the Volga area, continued to carry a resource mission for the Hungarian State which still kept its hands on the east and strengthened its military power with eastern soldiers. Garnati explains that while he was about to leave Hungary and on his way to Saksin, King Géza II gave him a legate and his mission was to collect Muslims and Turks who were poor and weak but mastering in shooting arrows in there. Together with this legate named Ismail Ibn Hasan, who was the son of a Hungarian Muslim emir, they performed their mission in Saksin: "For the mentioned Bashgird king, I gathered arrow shooting Muslims for about a troop." (Garnāti: 65-6).

To conclude, we also need to refer to the subject of sects. Some want to correlate the term Ishmaelite, which is among the names of Muslims given by Hungarian people, to Ismailiyya which is an extreme Shiite sect (Karácsonyi 1985: 18). However we do not have historical details to confirm this. Garnati was interested in sects present in the lands he traveled and he makes a note of this during his first visit to Saksin: "Each one follows Abu Hanifa sect and the Islamic law except the Maghrebians because they are Malikites and strangers are Shafis." (Garnāti: 38). Still he does not make a clear statement about the conditions in Hungary. However, geographer Yaqut who was a fervent opponent of Shiism quoted the statements of a Hungarian Muslim colony in Aleppo and from these it is understood that orthodox Islam was dominant in there: "They were learning Islamic law in Abu Hanifa's sect." (Kitapçı 2005: 256). Thus we have no other choice than adopting the idea that the term Ishmaelite in Hungarian documents is a form of naming which is taken from the Holy Scripture and is related to the prophet Ishmael (Czeglédy 1970: 259, Czeglédy 1998: 108).

## Abbreviations

Garnáti Bolsakov, O. and A. L. Mongajt (eds.) (1985). *Abu-Hámid al-Garnáti utazása Kelet-és Közép-Európában 1131-1153*. Budapest: Gondolat.

MCG Yörükân, Yusuf Ziya (ed.) (2004). *Müslüman Coğrafyacılarının Gözüyle Ortaçağda Türkler*. İstanbul: Gelenek.

MEH Györffy, György (ed.) (1958). *A magyarok elődeiről és a honfoglalásról*. Budapest: Gondolat.

MoT Székely, György and Antal Bartha (eds.) (1984). *Magyarország története. Előzmények és magyar történet 1242-ig. 2*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

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## Comments

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed research on the social status and assimilation of Muslims please see: Berend (2001: 93-148; 237-244).

<sup>2</sup> For translations of Muslim sources regarding Hungarian prehistory please see: MEH: 51-67; Kmoskó (1997); Kmoskó (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Some Muslim writers prior to Garnáti wrote that the Hungarian tribes in the northern environs of the Black Sea and Hungarian tribal sections who lived along the Volga were called Bashkír, which is known today as a Turkic clan. It is interesting that Garnáti also uses the same name for Hungarians in the Danubian Basin. He must have learnt about this name in his previous stop with the Volga Bulgars. See Róna-Tas (1996: 226); Golden (2002: 218).

<sup>4</sup> Some claim that the Arabic names in question mean “pure, mere Khazars”. See Kmoskó (2000: 29, 77) and MCG: 120.

<sup>5</sup> According to some researchers Pechenegs were already Islamicized during the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Please see Baliç (1986: 118) on this.

<sup>6</sup> For K. Czeplédy’s view, see Garnáti: 184-5.

<sup>7</sup> For César E. Dubler’s view see Garnáti: 162.

<sup>8</sup> For I. Hrbek’s thesis, see Garnáti: 162.

<sup>9</sup> Tabari, an Arabian historian refers to *As-ṭarkhan al-Hwarizmi* who in 764-65 entered Transcaucasia as the commander of the Khazar army. It may explain the similarity of Arsi-As names (Togan 1939: 218). Some people also read this people’s name as *arisiyya* and regard it as an organization name (Yazıcı 2002: 396). Some other researchers claim that the ethnic name of *Larisiya* is identical with the name of Lariz which is situated in

North Mesopotamia according to Yaqut's geographical dictionary (Kmoskó 2000: 171).  
For discussions see also Golden (2002: 198-9).

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