

Ugor, ogur or ugor? Remarks on the name „Finno-Ugrian”

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Since long I was perplexed about the fact that the designation of a linguistic family and in consequence the name of an entire branch of scholarship is of obscure and debated origin. The current name *Ugrian*, *Ugric*, *ugor*, *ugrisch*, *ugrilainen*, *ougrienne* was conceived as the name of the branch of the linguistic family to which the Hungarian, Vogul and Ostyak languages pertain. The designation **Ugr-* was thought to be of Turkic origin. I see nothing disturbing in the fact that a name of a language or a linguistic family does not come from the speakers of that family. In fact *Russian* is not of Slavic and *French* is not of Roman origin. Neither do I see any problem in the fact that a linguistic family is labeled by a name which none of the people designated by it ever used. *Indo-* in *Indo-European* was never used by any of the Indo-European speakers, nor is *European* a name of any people or language. Such designations emerge from a convention and are used by consensus. What disturbed me was the unclear origin of the name. The only scholar, who have seen in recent times most of the problems involved was ISTVÁN VASÁRY (1982), who expressed his doubts on the generally accepted views. In this paper I try not to repeat what he wrote. I shall make some marginal remarks and try to make a few steps forward.

The literature uses to refer to the basic work of ZSIRAI on Jugria (1930). Zsirai is quoting Gombocz „Abban alig kételkedhetünk – mondja GOMBOCZ –, hogy a magyarok szláv *ogrin* neve (gör. Ουγγροι > lat. *Ungri*) a magyarokra értett tör. *on(o)gur* népnév átvétele” (NyK. 1926, 192). Nem kételkedem én sem, s hogy mégis szóba hozom ezt a kérdést, sőt szükségesnek látom kissé részletesebben kifejtetni a GOMBOCZ tömör fogalmazásában idézett tételt, azt egyedül a *Jugria* szó etimonjáról és hangtani sorsáról adandó magyarázatom teszi indokolttá.”

In spite of Zsirai, I do doubt two of the statements of Gombocz. I do not think that the Latin name came through Greek mediation and it is not clear for me what is in the background of the parentheses around the (o) of *on(o)gur*.

Zsirai after reviewing the history of the research on the origin of the name of the Hungarians continues:

„1. Az alapalak a bolgár *onogur* népnév, amely azt jelenti 'tíz nyíl' (*on* 'tíz', *ok* 'nyíl' z ~ r képzővel ellátva: *oguz* ~ *ogur*) ⇒ 'tíz törzs' ⇒ 'tíz törzsből álló nép.'” (ZSIRAI 101).

Here begin the serious problems. It is true that in the Kül tegin (so to read and not Kü!l) and Bilge kagan inscriptions we come across the *On Oq budun* 'the people of the ten arrows', but in Old Turkic there is no denominal suffix -z/r and in Old Turkic there is no rule according to which a fortis stop /k/ would change to a lenis stop /g/ in intervocalic position or before r/z. The word *toquz* 'nine', by the way referred to by Zsirai, in Old Turkic never becomes **toğuz* or **toğur*. We have *Toquz Oguz* 'the Nine Oguz' in the Old Turkic sources and *tuɣur* 'nine' (< **toqur*) in the Volga Bulgharian inscriptions. Further Old Turkic words as *yog* 'nqn-existent' became *yogad-* 'to be annihilated' and not **yogad-* and *öküz* 'ox' is clearly opposed to *ögüz* 'river'. Later from the 13th century on, maybe even earlier, in some Kipchak languages a lenisation is going on, and in the Oguz languages after long vowels there is also a lenisation. But *Oguz* cannot be a Kipchak word and *oq* 'arrow' has everywhere a short vowel.

There did exist a plural in *-z* as in *ben 'I' : biz 'we'* and it was suggested that this plural, occurring only in the pronominal declination and from there as plural suffixes in the conjugation, had originally the function of marking a dual. We cannot find any traces of a dual in any of the Altaic languages in spite of some claims, but even if this would be the case, a dual after the word 'arrow' would mean 'two arrows', and nobody claimed that *On oguz* would mean 'twenty arrows'. The idea of the etymology of Onogur has to be credited to NÉMETH (1922) who following MUNKÁCSI (1895) proposed it supposing that *-z* is a suffix. He simply stated „...az *oguz*-ban levő *-z* egyszerűen képző, melynek természetével még nem vagyunk egészen tisztában, de megvonta kétségtelen” (NÉMETH op. cit. 152). How great the authority of Németh may be, we have to take farewell from the etymology of *Ogur/z*.

This in itself makes not too much trouble since there are two types of ethnonyms. One type has clear etymology but the other type has been carried from one people to the other so many times that its original etymon can not be always detected.

Zsirai goes on: „Rendkívül fontos következtetése NÉMETHI GYULÁNAK, akinek az *onogur* név itt vázolt megfejtését köszönhetjük, hogy az *onogur* > *onugur* név még a törökben hangszabályszerűleg **ongur*-rá válhatott (some examples of Németh follow). On this alleged rule NÉMETH (1922) made a more clear statement: „1. Többé-kevésbé ismeretes (bár részletes kutatása még nem történt meg) az a török hangtörvény, hogy egy háromtagú szó középső magánhangzója igen gyakran kicsik [note]. Ennek a hangtörvénynek alapján feltehető egy török **ongur* alak.” (NÉMETH 1922, 150). The examples quoted by Németh in the footnote are the following: *alın* 'forehead', *boyun* 'neck', *isim* 'name', which became *alnım* 'my forehead', *boyun* 'his neck', or *ismim* 'my name' respectively. These cases are different from that of *onogur*, because they are words with possessive suffixes and what is more important all of them, as correctly noted by Németh, with the closed vowels *ı*, *i*, *u*, *ü* in their second syllable. This may have been the reason why we do find *onogur* > *onugur* in the argumentation of Németh. Németh has also other examples of the disappearance of vowels in the second syllable, but none of them has the same structure as *on+ogur*. In fact the rule is, that in Old Turkic polysyllabic words before a suffix which has a stressed vowel the preceding closed vowel disappears if and only if there is a sonant (*l*, *r*, *n*, *m*) in the syllable. E.g. *adaq* becomes *adaqı* and never **adqı*, *ıduq* becomes *ıduqım* and not **ıdqım* etc. Though Németh did not formulate this rule, his intuition based on his excellent knowledge of the Turkic languages suggested that he has to look here after a closed vowel before a suffix. He supposed that the following occurred **on+oq+Vz* > **onuq+Vz* > **onug+Vz* > **onguz* > **ongur*. However as we have seen neither the change *o>u* nor *q>g* is motivated and *-z* cannot be here a suffix.

That Németh has seen the difficulties of his explanation is clear not only from his cautious wording not taken over by Zsirai, but also from the fact that he gives alternative reasons for supposing **ongur*.

The second argument of Németh was, that some Hungarian loan words reflect the disappearance of the second vowel of the Turkic original. So e.g. Common Turkic *sazaqan* is in Hungarian *sárkány* 'dragon' < **šaraqan*. Since the feature is known in Hungarian this does not oblige us to suppose that the disappearance occurred in the Turkic original.

The third argument of Németh is, that we find *-gur* in such names of the 5th century as *utur-gur*, *kutri-ğur*, and this is a parallel feature to the well documented form *Ğuzz* of *Oğuz*.

It is true that forms like *-gur*, *-guz* may reflect a disappearance of the first vowel, but the natural way of disappearance of a vowel in such cases was before a stressed final syllable *ogúz* > *ugúz* > *guz* and parallel to this **ogúr* > **ugúr* > *gur*.

The whole reasoning of Zsirai is based on the fact that a non Slavic *ongur* gave in Slavic *ogur* and this became according to the rules of denasalisation in Old Russian *ugur*. This is correct but is it also true? If it is true that A becomes B is it necessarily true that all B were formed from A? Are all types of syllables like **ugur* from **ongur*? What happened, if Russian borrowed *ugur*? Of course the same. Nothing points to the supposed nasalised *o* in the Russian or Arabic sources in the case of Jugria. The only reason for supposing the nasalised *o* was, that the name *ungar*, *ungarus* etc. reflects a nasal. Zsirai argued that the name of Jugria, Ugria is the same as the name Ugrī used for the Hungarians.

Recently Péter Király collected all materials pertaining to the name of the Hungarians in the early Cyrillic sources (1974). Concerning the Slavic form **ongre* he stated „Érdekes viszont, hogy ez az orrhangzós alak a legréggebbi szláv nyelvemlékekben nem fordul elő (examples from the 10th century on follow)” (KIRÁLY 1974, 59). That it existed we know only from Polish *węgie* and Greek Ογγροι (read *Ungri*). None of these are however Old Russian or Old Church Slavic forms. In the earliest versions of the Legend of Cyrill and the Legend of Method we find ОУГР and not *УГРы, or *УГРи or something similar. This however do not disturb much, since the copyist may have changed the nasal to the *ou* graphic.

If we control the chronology of the Greek data which show Ογγροι (read *Ungri*) or Ογγρια (read *Ungria*) we find that none of them is earlier than the 10th century. In fact for the first we find data from the middle of the 10th, for the second only from the 11th century (see MORAVCSIK 1983, II. 223–227). All of them point to the Hungarians. This means that they cannot be used for the reconstruction of the earlier forms of *Jugria*, *Ugria*, *ugorskij*. As I pointed out above I do not think that the Slavic form came to Latin by Greek mediation and my reason for this was just the chronology of the Greek data.

That the Turks living in the late Avar Empire were Onogurs was supposed by many of us (see Boba, Bóna etc.). The *Uangariorum marcha* quoted from a document dated to the 8th May of 860 by T. OLAIOS (1969, 87–90) and discussed since then more times has to be read as *Wangar*- which is a West Slavic form with a prosthetic *v*- of *Ungar*. This name is also reflected in many registers of German monasteries dating from a time before the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin. The forms are *Hungarius*, *Hungaer*-, *Hunger*-, *Huonger*-, *Ungarus*, *Unger*-, *Onger*, *Wanger*, all from between 731 A.D. and the end of 9th century (see the data in KIRÁLY P. 1987, 162–180, 314–331). Whatever is the origin of the name Hungarian and the Wangars, Ungars etc. of the Carpathian Basin these data pertain together.

The data on the Onogurs in the Byzantine sources begin in the 5th century in the work of Priskos Ονογυρροι and finish with the work of Theophylaktos Symokattes in the first half of the 6th century who has the form Ουννογυρροι.

Thus *Onogur* because of chronological, and the name of the Hungarians *Ungar* etc. because of geographical, reasons have to be excluded from the possible sources for the etymon of *Jugria*, *Ugria* etc.

What could be then the origin of *Ugri*, *Ugria*, *ugorskij* etc.? Already Munkácsi asked in 1895 „De hátha a *ju-γur* csak az *un-ugur* név utórészének mása, mely tudvalevőleg magán álló *ogur*, *ugur* alakban többször is található bizánci íróknál, s melynek egykori önálló létét a vele kapcsolt különböző összetételes népnévből is következtethetjük?” (361). More clear was his summary:

- „1. Az *ugor*, *ogur* név eredetileg az ókorbeli nyugati török törzsek összefoglaló jelzője, szemben a keletebbre lakó és tőlük nyelvjárásilag is különböző *o-γur*-okkal, akik magukat közönségesen *türk* néven nevezték s nevezik mai is.

2. Az ősi ugor nyelvcek maiglan élő egyetlen maradványa a keverékjellegű *csuvas* nyelv.
3. Csak történeti és műveltségi érintkezés révén jutott az on-ugor, vagy szláv fejlődésben ugor a magyarokhoz, illetőleg a jugor név a vogulokhoz s osztjákokhoz." (MUNKÁCSI 1895, 387).

This was not accepted by Gombocz, Németh and Zsirai and on their authority by others. The argumentation of Munkácsi was not clear and convincing. His reasoning on the nasal forms and the prenotation could be refuted. The first problem with the hypothesis of Munkácsi was however that the Greek data were not quite clear. Priskos has *ουρωγοι*, Menandros *ΟΥρουρπος* (acc.), Theophylaktos *Συμοκattes Ουρουρως* (gen.), and *ΟΥρωρ* (pl. acc.). The data of Priskos may or may not be independent from the data of Strabon (around 7 B.C.) who mentioned the Urgoi between the Donetz and the Bug (VII, 3.17). The second reason for the doubt in the suggestion of Munkácsi was that there was a too great chronological distance between the few Greek and the Russian data.

Both difficulties can be now removed. The ethnonym *Ugur* is the *r*-Turk form of the name *Oguz*. The relationship of the two forms are the same as in the name of the 'ox' in Turkic, Common Turkic *öküz*, Mongolian *ükür*, *üker* (\Leftarrow *r*-Turkic). The *Ugur* name is figuring not only in the Greek but also in the Chinese sources. In another paper I am going to show that in the formation of the language of the Old Mongolian Kitans and in the ethnic composition of the Kitans Turkic groups played an important role. This Old Mongolian tribal confederation appeared in the early 5th century. They were the rulers of the steppe in the 10th–12th centuries. They founded the Chinese Liao dynasty in 916 and were destroyed by the Jurchen Chin dynasty in 1114. A part of them, the Kara Kitaj migrated to the West, their ruler proclaimed himself as *gurkan* in 1125. Their western Empire was terminated by the Mongols of Chingis kan. The history of the Liao dynasty has been written by their successors, the scholars of the Chin and the Yuan dynasties. Their official history, the *Liao shi*, contains rich material on the history of Eurasia. Among the tribes mentioned in this Chinese source the *Yu-gu-li* with other characters the *Wu-gu-li*, also written as *Yu-jue-lyu* and *Yu-jue-li* appear. Already CHAVANNES (1897), OTTO FRANKE (III, 284–5) and recently HERBERT FRANKE (1969, 21) recognized that this tribal name is identical with or very near to the name of the leading clan of the Zhuan-zhuan or „asiatic Avars”, the *Yu-jiu-lyu*. The Zhuan-zhuan were destroyed by the Turks in 551/2 A.D., some parts of the confederation moved to the West. The reconstruction of the name of the leading clan shows a form like *Ugur(i)*. In the 10th century their name slowly changes into a form like **Yugur*, *Yügur*, *Yüger*. The prenotation may be, the palatalization is possibly a Kitan feature, but it may also reflect the change in the name of the people. The Ugur > Yugur people were, however not necessarily Mongols. According to the *Liao shi* they lived far from the Liao Empire, persons were sent into exile to them. They had long hair, they lived to the North-West, in a very cold region; they were fishing and sent furs to the Kitan court.

Masudi, the traveler, who died in 956 mentioned in his geographical work that a group of the West Siberian Kimäk people were called Yigur. These Kimäk groups lived in the 10th century around the river Irtysh. The Shaḥ of Khwarezm in a letter dated to 1182 wrote that several Kipchak groups came to pay tribute, among them the son of the ruler with several Yughur-zadagan (MINORSKY 1937, 180, 310; BARTHOLD *Sočinenie* II/1, 834–36). This means that Chinese and Arabic sources speak of the same people. I would add here that the *Ugur*, *Yugur* names are not identical with the name of the *Uyghur*, at least not in the 8–12th centuries.

Summing up: the name Ugrian (*ugur*, *ugor* etc.) in the learned name Finno-Ugrian has two different pasts. The one which has nothing to do with the Onogurs or the Hungarians. It is true that from a hypothetical **ongur* a Russian *ugur* even *ugor* can be formed and the *y-* could have been a Russian phenomenon, however not every *ugur* comes from an *ongur*. In fact Ugur is a tribal name, itself an *r-Turkic* form of *Oguz* the latter of unknown origin. The name *Ugur* may have denoted one of the tribes of the tribal federation *On ugur*. The name *Ugur* can be traced back in the sources until the 5th century, and later we can continuously follow the name in Chinese, Arabic and Russian sources. The people of the Vogul and Ostyak group were named after those Ugurs.

On the other hand the Hungarians got their name from the Onogurs in the Carpathian Basin, and from this the form Ugri, Ugur developed in all Slavic languages where denasalisation occurred. The two coincided from the 12th century on. In the later time the two names became mixed and they are mixed sometimes even today. I do not think that this does any harm. We have only to know about it.

The name Finno-Ugrian was used in the last time in the belief that Ugrian was the name of both groups, that is of the Hungarians and of the Ob-Ugrians the Voguls and Ostyaks. In fact Ugrian became the same name of the two groups. Though the argumentation of Munkácsi was not impeccable, he was right. A not rare case in scholarship.

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