

ANDA and KOMA

Borbála OBRUSÁNSZKY*

Abstract: The Eurasian nomadic tribes have a very tight friendship connection: the independent, equal righted tribe chieftains conclude an oral contract by drinking blood. That was the most important connection of the foreign, non-relatives people. The kind of alliances were widespread among the nomadic people. We can see it in the first Greek historical record of Herodotos, who described the life of Scythes. That tradition can be observed in the later big states as the Avar, Juajan, Khitan, Hungary and the Mongolian Empire, too. We could see, that the anda custom has remained until the nowadays way of life, but the friends strengthen their friendship by changing presents.
Keywords: Alliance, Mongolian, Brotherhoodship

The earliest known Hungarian chronicler, Anonymus or P. Master, recorded in the 13th century the ancient history of the Hungarians. In his chronicles he noted the existence of a special blood-alliance among the seven leading Hungarian tribes¹, whose customs were unknown in Western-Europe in the Middle Ages, and which shows important similarities with the brotherhood contract of the nomadic civilisation in the Eurasian steppe. The oath itself served not only an alliance, but could also constitute the establishment of a nomadic state, as among Mongolian tribes at the end of the 12th century. In my view this type of alliance was the first constitution of the nomadic state.

Only the above-mentioned chronicle refers to the Hungarian tribe alliance, in which the seven leading tribes concluded an eternal alliance with each other and divided social duties amongst themselves. According to this source, the independent tribes elected as their leader by common consent Almos, who was himself the chieftain of the Magyar tribe. The tribes further determined the duties both for the prince and for the other "signatories". As the nomadic peoples, like the Hungarians, concluded verbal oaths, all points of this contract remained only in oral form. With the spread of written culture towards the end of the 12th century, Anonymus recorded this ethno-genesis and the foundations of the state.

* Historian, orientalist, University of Pécs, Asia Centre
1 Anonymus, 4.

Some Hungarian historians believe that the text of the oath was invented by Anonymus, seeing how it was recorded 400 years after the alliance was concluded. On the other hand, in nomadic culture the origins of leading tribesmen are always preserved very accurately even in oral form, which is likely to have been the case with the brotherhood alliance. The ceremony and customs described by Anonymus resemble those of the Scythes as recorded by Herodotos, or of the *anda* alliance which existed among the Mongols. Comparing all of these texts, it appears that the ceremony documented by Anonymus was one establishing a state among the Hungarian people, who occupied the Eurasian steppes since ancient times.

The great Greek historian Herodotos wrote a history of the known world, in which he described the history and lifestyle of the Scythes, the first Eurasian nomadic people surrounding the Mediterranean sea. Included in this history was an account of the establishment of a brotherhood alliance,² which was identical to that of the Hungarians and the Mongols.

Let us now investigate the social connection with the nomadic Mongols, who established the largest empire in the world in the beginning of the 13th century.

Some Mongolian-speaking tribes had previously established an empire in Northern China in the 10th century, known as the Khitai or Liao empire. A considerable amount of information about this empire is available to us, through the dynastic chronicle *Liao Si*. This chronicle documents some ancient customs, including the brotherhood alliance: in 905, it is recorded that two friends exchanged horses and gowns and agreed to become brothers;³ in 983 it is recorded that the king and one friend ceremonially exchanged their arrows, bows, saddles and horses, the primary tools of the nomadic warrior.⁴

The Mongolian tribes or peoples were unified by Chinggis Khaan in the 13th century, with the creation of the Mongolian Empire. The deeds of the Great Emperor, documented in the same century, include details of brotherhood alliances among tribe leaders sharing equal rights. From these records, it is clear that a complicated system of alliances had developed in the society of the steppe. We can even go so far as to say that the conclusion of an alliance with the leader of another tribe was of crucial importance in the political life of the steppe. The most important brotherhood alliance was agreed between Yisugei Bagatur of the Khamag Mongols and Tooril Khan of the the Kereits. This alliance was inherited by their descendants, as described in the Mongolian chronicle.⁵

2 Hérodotos. IV.70.

3 Liao-si. p.239.

4 Liao-si.p.261.

5 MNT.150.

The death of Yisugei Bagatur left his son, Temujin, as an orphan. Temujin wished to recover the power exercised by his father over the various tribes. He first concluded brotherhood alliances with his friends, beginning with Boorchu, with whom he recovered horses that he had lost to thieves.⁶ Later, when Temujin's wife Borte was kidnapped by the Merkits, Temujin turned to Tooril for help. He offered Tooril the gift of a black sable fur, and asked him for assistance in getting back his wife. Tooril Khan of the Kereits confirmed the brotherhood alliance that he had concluded with Yisugei, and gave an oath to recover Temujin's wife and even his scattered people.⁷

The *Secret History of the Mongols* describes the *anda* custom as one by which the two parties to the agreement shared the obligation to help one another in fighting common enemies, and in recovering stolen goods.⁸ Such a contract served as a military alliance on the one hand, and on the other hand as an organising element for the state, as the contract was concluded between people sharing equal rights. In some cases the two parties elected a single leader, who founded a super-tribal organisation. In some cases the alliance established a social net, as well, since following the death of the husband of the family an orphaned son could turn to his father's *anda*.

In Hungarian history we can see that the seven tribal leaders united their tribes into a single state on the occasion when they elected Almos as a leading prince above them. But the prince did not enjoy absolute rule, as the oath establishing the alliance between the seven tribes indicated that the state should be governed collectively. According to the historical chronicle:

As long as they and their descendants remain alive, they shall always elect their leader from among the offspring of the chieftain Almos... Those goods, which they have assembled together, shall be divided equally... Those princes who elected Almos by their own consent shall never enter the chieftains' council or any other state office, and nor shall their sons either. If any of the descendants should betray the prince or stir up strife between the chieftain and his relatives, may blood fall on them, as the leaders' blood fell in the oath taken to the chieftain Almos... Should anyone from among the family of Almos or his offspring wish to break this oath, may they be cursed for eternity!⁹

The oath of the Hungarian tribes regulated the election of the emperor and the duties of the tribal leaders. Looking at the various Eurasian brotherhood alliances, we can see that the oath and the ceremony always contained the same elements.

6 MNT p. 96.

7 L. 6th note

8 MNT p. 117.

9 Anonymus, 6.

According to historical sources the Scythes, Hungarians and Mongols would all cut their fingers or arms, and pour their blood into a vessel at the time of the oath; afterwards all participants would drink commonly from this vessel. Such a ceremony signified that the blood of the allied parties had been united, creating a mutual bond which would be inherited by their descendants.

I have found two instances of the election of princes by the Mongols similar to that conducted by the Hungarians. The first occurred in 1189, when Chinggis Khan was elected prince by the united tribes, who concluded alliance and agreed to share the administration of the state.¹⁰ Some years later, the tribes fighting against Chinggis concluded an alliance and elected as prince Jamuka, the *anda* of Chinggis Khan. The ceremony paralleled that of the Hungarians:

...these tribes gathered in the spring of Alkui-bulag in order to elect Jamuka. They killed one stallion and a mare and they sealed their alliance with an oath. Afterwards they moved to beneath the Ergüne-river, and the wide edge of the island, where the Ken river flows into the Ergüne, and Jamuka was elected Gur-khan.¹¹

The other, more significant alliance was constituted in 1206, when Chinggis Khan was elected above the allied princes, as the Great Emperor of the United Mongols.

According to Mongolian historical data, the Khagan was elected by 80 *andas*. These were rewarded by the great king, as we can see in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.¹²

In my opinion, the blood-alliance contributed not only to the unification of the nomadic state, but also protected the “democratic system”, because the oath ensured that the emperor could not attempt absolute rule without rousing the anger of the tribal chieftains. We can see from the Hungarian and Mongolian examples that the emperor was not an autocrat, as the most important questions of society – war or peace, new laws, reforms, etc. – were always discussed by the assembly of chieftains or military leaders, who governed by consensus. Thus the Mongolian assembly was known as the first “eye”, or agreement.

In Hungarian history we cannot find the text of any other oath, but we can find records of how important the oath itself was. The first law promulgated by the first Hungarian king, St. Stephen, states that if the mighty break his oath they are to be punished by having their hand cut off, or by paying a fine of 50 steer, whereas if

10 MNT p. 123-125.

11 MNT p. 141.

12 MNT.p. 202.

other, free men do so they are also to be punished by having their hand cut off, or by paying a fine of 12 steer.¹³

There are no historical sources which make direct mention of the articles of the blood alliance, but there is some indirect evidence.

When the king begins to rule without the descendants of the tribal chieftains or without his advisory council, and when the king appoints foreigners to important offices, he is resisted by the great officers. The best example of this can be seen when after the death of King Stephen, his cousin Orseolo Peter from Venice inherited the kingdom according to Stephen's wishes. When he began to appoint foreigners, he was opposed by the Hungarian nobles. When the king continued to ignore their voices, the nobles convoked an assembly whereby they dethroned Peter and they elected Stephen's son-in-law, Aba Samuel, as ruler of the kingdom. But as Aba Samuel was unable to rule, the assembly of nobles elected a new king from among the former king's clan.¹⁴

In my opinion the association between king and nobles has regulated the oath of the blood alliance for centuries. When the nobles and the king concluded a new law named the "Golden Bull" in 1222, they included a very unique chapter, the "right of resistance". According to this item the nobles had the right to resist the king without punishment if the king broke the ancient laws. This article may have been derived from the oath of brotherhood.¹⁵

Elements of the Hungarian blood alliance have been preserved until recent times in the folk tradition. Older people still call their close friends "koma". According to ethnographers, the institution of the *koma* is similar to the *anda*, as a form of relationship between non-blood relatives who come from the same social group. There are *koma* friendships between men and women as well. *Komas* play together from childhood, as did Temujin and Jamuka, and remain friends throughout their adulthood, helping one another in times of need. In some parts of Hungary *komas* reconfirm their bond during religious holidays. As we can see in the Mongolian chronicle, childhood *andas* like Chinggis and Jamuka reconfirm their alliance once they reach adulthood.¹⁶

Komas exchange a type of *koma* "vessel" in spring, during the Easter holiday, or in summer, on the day of Mary (August 16).¹⁷ According to Mongolian custom, the exchanging of gifts occurred at the lunar New Year.

13. First law of St. Stephan. 178. In: Corpus Iuris Hungarici.

14. Kepes Chronicle 75.

15. Aranybulla. In: Corpus Iuris Hungarici.

16. MNT p. 116.

17. Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon. Vol. 3.p. 247.

After marriage *komas* do not break the connection with one other, but rather serve as god-parents for each other's children. In the northern part of the Hungary the husbands of women *koma* call each other *koma* as well. A further interesting point is that the friendship is inherited by their children, who also call each other *koma*.

Similarly, the Mongolian people have preserved the ancient *anda* custom; the name *anda* itself also remains in use. Following the establishment of the nomadic state, the ancient custom changed, losing its function of social organisation. The *anda* had a less important role in society, but retained their friendship connection. Eventually they gave up the custom of spilling blood, in favour of other forms of expression of their friendship: the Mongolian *anda* exchange horses, at which time they use a red bridle, where the red colour refers to the ancient blood ceremony. The *andas* sometimes climb a hill and take their oath by an *obo*, particularly in the Altai region or in Sukhbaatar country.¹⁸

Bibliography

- Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*, 3. Főszerkesztő: Ortutay Gyula, Bp, 1980.
- Mongolok Titkos Története*, Fordította: Ligeti Lajos, Gondolat, 1962.
- Anonymus, (1975), *Gesta Hungarorum*, Fordította: Veszprémy László és Pais Dénes, Budapest.
- HÉRODOTOSZ, (1997), *Görög-perzsa háború*. Fordította: Muraközi Gyula. Osirisz,
- Képes Krónika*, Fordította: Bellus Ibolya. Budapest, 1986.
- Corpus Juris Hungarici*, (CD kiadás), Budapest, 2000.
- Magyar Néprajz. 8. Társadalom. Budapest, 2000. Főszerkesztő: Paládi-Kovács Attila. In: Nagy Varga Vera: A testvérré fogadás intézménye. pp.532-535.
- LÉVAINE Gábor, Judit Komatál, "A barátságkötés és ennek változatai az énekes népszokások között", *Ethnographia*, 1963. pp. 230-259.
- G.N. Potanin, (1893), *Tangutsko-Tibetskaya okraina Kitaya i Central'naya Mongoliya*, St.Peterburg., Vol. I.
- Б.Я. Владимирцов, (1934), Общественный строй Монголов. Москва-Ленинград.,
- РАШИД-ад-дин, (1946), *Сборный летописей*. I-III. Москва.,
- SERRUYS, Henry, (1972), *Oath in the Qalqa Jirum*, In: Oriens Extremus., pp. 131-141.

18 According to my collection from 2002. summer. In the Altai mountains above Altan Shiree hill there is a big obo, where they do the anda ceremony. Declared by: Baasanjav, driver, Dzavhan country, Uliastai sum

BORBÁLA OBRUSÁNSZKY

LIAO-si, (1949), *The history of the Chinese Society Liao*. Edited by Karl Wittfogel és Feng Hszia Cheng. Philadelphia,.

НЯМБУУ, Х., (1992), *Хүндэтгэл дээд хөх Монголын төрийн ёсон*, Өндөрхаан.

ДАЛАЙ, Ч. (1992), *Монголын түүх*, (1260-1368) УБ.

ДАЛАЙ, Ч. (1994), *Монголын түүх*, Их Монгол улс. 1206-1260. УБ.

ДАЛАЙ, Ч. (1996), *Хамаг Монгол улс*, УБ.

БОЛДБААТАР, Ж., Д. Лүндээжапан, (1997), *Монгол улсын төр*, эрх зүйн түүхэн уламжлал. УБ.

ГОНГОР, Д. (1970-1978), *Халх товчоон*. I-II. УБ.

МОНГОЛ ёс, заншил. Их тайлбар толь. Эмхэтгэгч, (1992), *Ч. Арьяасүрэн*, Х. Нямбуу. УБ.