



The Miracle Stag, as a Common Actor in the Origin Myths of the Turkic and Iranian Peoples and the Urartu Culture

Türk ve İran Halklarının Köken Mitleri ile Urartu Kültüründe Ortak Bir Aktör Olarak Mucize Geyik

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Abstract

The deer motif is an extremely important figure in the folklore of the Turk and Iranian peoples. In the origin story of the Hungarians, the Miracle Stag sent by the Celestials shows the way to the new homeland. The conquering Hungarians believed that the deities appeared in the form of different animals, such as the Turul bird in addition to the deer, and conveyed important information to them. In the case of the fraternal Turk people, the similarity is not surprising. Monuments reflecting Urartu's sense of identity are unexplored from this point of view: depictions of deer are common in the north and south, in the Caucasus and Anatolia, but such relics are rare in Urartu's territory. This study, using the method of literary source analysis, draws attention to the phenomenon itself and its possible causes by researching the roots of the Hungarian origin legend that can be traced back to the border of Urartu.

Keywords: *Miracle Stag, animals, Turk peoples, archeological findings, Urartu*

Özet

Geyik motifi Türk ve İran halklarının folklorunda son derece önemli bir figürdür. Macarların köken hikayesinde Göksellerin gönderdiği Mucize Geyik yeni vatana giden yolu gösterir. Fetheden Macarlar, tanrıların geyiğin yanı sıra Turul kuşu gibi farklı hayvanlar biçiminde de ortaya çıktığına inanıyor ve onlara önemli bilgiler aktarıyorlardı. Kardeş Türk halkları arasında benzerlik şaşırtıcı değildir. Urartu'nun kimlik duygusunu yansıtan anıtlar bu açıdan araştırılmamıştır: Geyik tasvirleri kuzeyde ve güneyde, Kafkaslar'da ve Anadolu'da yaygındır, ancak Urartu topraklarında bu tür kalıntılar nadirdir. Edebi kaynak analizi yöntemini kullanan bu çalışma, Urartu sınırlarına kadar uzanan Macar kökenli efsanenin kökenlerini araştırarak olayın kendisine ve olası nedenlerine dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mucize Geyik, hayvanlar, Türk halkı, arkeolojik bulgular, Urartu*

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The Miracle Stag in Hungarian sources

The Miracle Stag is a mythical leader sent by the Celestials, also known in Hun legends and Hungarian folklore. Arnold Ipolyi, former Bishop of Nagyvárad (Oradea, Romania), art collector, ethnographer and art historian, claimed that ancient, pagan Hungarian godheads emerge in our myths not as animals such as turf birds and deer (Ipolyi, 1929). Hungarian researchers (Kristó, 1970; Györffy, 1993; Berze – Nagy, 2019) refer to both Eastern and Western parallels in the diversified motifs. In Hungary the legend of the Miracle Stag has survived in Simon Kézai's *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (The Deeds of the Huns and Hungarians) (Kézai, 1901; de Kéza, 1999). According to this fable two brothers named Hunor and Magor, as sons of Menroth and Eneth, from whom Huns and Hungarians originated, were led during their hunt by a deer to a new area at the swamps of Meith. Six years later, they found the wives of the sons of Belar, who were abducted. The two daughters of Dula, the prince of the Alans, were married to Hunor and Magor, from whom the Huns (Hungarians) came. The legend consists of three main motives: a) two brothers, leaving their old home, establish a new home; b) a disappearing and re-emerging animal: a deer or Miracle Stag leading them through a river; (c) the motive for the abduction.

The legend of the Miracle Stag can also be found in the *Chronicon Pictum* (Illustrated Chronicle) written by Márk Kálti around 1360 (Kálti, 1993). There was probably an ancient origin legend about the Hungarian prehistory in the 11th century, which, unfortunately however, did not subsist.

According to the greatest Hungarian experts, the source of the Miracle Stag fable may have been this 11th century origin legend (Kristó, 1970; Györffy, 1993; Berze - Nagy, 2019). Diós, however, claims that the conquering Hungarians brought with them the Eastern-rooted Miracle Stag legend, which was later confused with the legends of Christian patron saints of hunters and foresters - St. Eustachius and St. Hubertus (Diós, 2000).

However, while the literature generally agreed that abducting women is an ancient legend of the Hungarian people, the motif of the deer-chasing brothers is one of the most controversial issues in the Hungarian proverb research. Like the Miracle Stag, the myth of the two founding brothers is also ancient and widespread. In connection with the two heroes of the Nart epics dating back to the Bronze Age, Ahsartag and Ahsar, and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, George Dumézil saw the related social structure elements behind the phenomenon, which can be traced from the Caucasus to Italia and to Scandinavia (Dumézil, 1968).

In the mythology of the Turks, deer is most probably the most significant animal, along with the *Turul* bird, as evidenced by a number of archaeological finds. It seems to be obvious, however, that each type of such deer depictions definitely have different meanings and carry distinct messages (Szabó, 2019). A

sharp choice must be made as to whether the investigated phenomena refer to roe deer (female deer) or stag (male deer). Only stags are allowed to be hunted, killed, or sacrificed to Gods, whilst wounding or killing a roe is considered a serious sin. In the excavations, there are frequent traces of the presence of the male deer, either as a prey animal, as a sacrificial offering, or as a symbol of power. The deer is a very special animal: a symbol of origin, fertility, rebirth, part of the astral world. The deer is often depicted nursing a calf or decorated with the symbols of the astral triad. In the depictions, however, the similar interpretation is clearly distinct from this in terms of its meaning: the deer, as the antlered creature that leads to the new homeland, helps the passage between the things of this world and the world of the gods, which also appears in the Hungarian legend (Szabó, 2020/B, p. 342-363).



Figure 1: Miniature of the hunt of the White Stag, with Hunor and Magor in the foreground¹

The Miracle Stag in the Hungarian *regös* songs is always mentioned. In the ancient Hungarian culture, the *regölés* may have been the shamans' singers. It can be seen in written form for the first time in Gáspár Heltai's work *Dialogus on the the danger of drunkenness and overcrowding*, written in 1552 Nemeskürty, 2000).

In Búcsú, in the Vas county, according to the version recorded at the turn of the century, the Miracle Stag had a thousand horns, a thousand burning candles on the tip of the horn, and two golden crosses on its kidneys (Sebestyén, 1902, p. 25-41); according to the version recorded in Dozmat, the Miracle Stag has the rising bright sun on its forehead, the beautiful moon on its side, and the celestial stars on its right kidney (Sebestyén, 1902, p. 42-48).

Miracle Stag in the East

It cannot be claimed that we do not have the results of research mapping the national identity of Urartu culture (Lang, 2012; Van Loon, 1966), however, it can

¹ Anonymus (P. Magister) - *Chronicon Pictum*, facsimile edition stored at the University of Maryland Library Webplace: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FeherSzarvas-ChroniconPictum.jpg> (Accessed: 12. 06. 2021.)

be stated with absolute certainty that no researcher has so far made findings related to deer depictions. The representation of the deer is also widespread in the Caucasus and Anatolia, but in the territory of the Kingdom of Urartu we hardly find such findings (Çifçi, 2017). This is especially evident when the depictions of the Urartu bronze belts are taken under scrutiny (Curtis, 1996, p. 118-136), because its impact specified the imagery of the corresponding Caucasian tools as well, in nearly each aspect (Castelluccia, 2017) – excepting only the deer the examination of which would be the task of the present study.



Figure 2: Stag plaque, 400-300 BCE, gold, cast in shell mold, Scythian, western Asia, Cleveland Museum of Art²



Figure 3: Miracle Stag in the illustration for a *regös* song (Klement, 1981)

Studying the Hungarians' occupying the Carpathian Basin, and examining the relationship between the artefacts of the 9th and 10th centuries and the legend of Hunor and Magor from the point of view of archeology, Gyula László drew attention to the fact that in the antler hut, the reindeer-related notions of the Stone Age may live on (László, 1967). János Makkay reviewed the topic primarily in terms of Indo-Iranian parallels and Greek mythology motifs (Makkay, 2006). From the totality of the data, it can be clearly seen that the depiction and reverence of the red and reindeer can be observed as widely as since the Stone Age, as large as its habitat. However, the representation of the red deer is much more common in Paleolithic and Mesolite materials. Although this is evidenced by the highest proportion of reindeer bones in the Lascaux Cave, it was not in the first place among the hunted animals, so it was not the most decisive source of food at that time. Probably precisely because of its rarer occurrence and peculiarity, its more spectacular and larger, shapelier antler, its body, the red deer was chosen for depictions and ceremonies. This predominance observed in the representations and occurrences of the finds was further inherited in the whole area of its distribution in the later ages as well.

² File:Stag plaque, 400-300 BCE, gold, Scythian, Cleveland Museum of Art.JPG. Webplace: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stag_plaque,_400-300_BCE,_gold,_Scythian,_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art.JPG (Accessed: 06. 12. 2021.)

Female features, fertility, antlers - date back to the ancestry of the sacred notions associated with the deer, probably even to a period earlier than the cave paintings of the Upper Paleolithic, when even the reindeer was dominant, where the female also had antlers. Archaeological and environmental data suggest that during the last post-glacial warming, a more widespread and rapidly reproducing red deer took the lead and the reindeer were pushed further to the North. The importance of the red deer is shown by the fact that in the Neolithic rock paintings in the Italian Alps where a man is sitting on his back, and in Siberia a depiction was found along the Yenisei where a man with an arrow is sitting on a deer and chasing reindeers (Jankovics, 2004, p. 26) In the notions and depictions related to the deer, more or less differences can be observed from area to area and from period to period.

In the south-eastern part of Turkey, in the historical Upper Mesopotamia, deer can already be seen on the famous columns of the 12,000-year-old Göbeklitepe. For thousands of years after the abandonment of the sanctuary, there is no further significant data from the area. In these southern, drier parts, the ibex, a wild goat that traditionally bears horns and does not fall in both male and female individuals, can already be seen on Neolithic vessels. The deer reappears on small sculptures from the 4th millennium in northern Iran on a pot (Sialk), and in Anatolia. There are already data from the later written sources in Mesopotamia. In the Sumerian mythology formed from the middle of the 4th millennium, both the wild goat and the deer were created by Enki (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 51). In the list of kings of the past, Arwi'um, who ruled for 720 years, is specifically named, as the son of the Hind (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 125). About Utu, the son of the Sun and, among others, the god of the dead, BC. 4/3. we can also read about Enmerkar, the king of Uruk, who ruled at the turn of the millennium, that his ambassador calls his lord "Aratta en, a unbridled deer who in the depths of the mountains the True Cow gave birth to" (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 135). As for this context, Innin, the mistress of heaven, the daughter of the moon god Nanna (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 147., 419), who is referred to elsewhere also as a good-sounding Cow (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 319), true Cow (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 135., 147), or strong Cow (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 319). Innin is also the goddess of Venus, her father, the moon god, and her brother-husband, the third member of the celestial Triassic in addition to the sun god. She was also considered the mistress of all areas, who had a celebration in Nippur for the sixth month of the year (August – September according to our calendar), in the name of whom was also the word *sickle*, referring to the harvest. Then, a thousand years later, in the growing Gilgamesh tradition, her mother, the goddess Ninszuna, who is brought to the fore, is considered the mistress of wild cows (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 432125). She is also mentioned as "true Cow" (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 275) who also gave birth to Gudea (c. 2144–2124 BC). In addition to the written sources,

the importance of the deer in Sumerian mythology is most spectacularly derived from the copper alloy BC. It was made around 2500 and shows the Imdugud relief unearthed at Tell-Ubaid in Iraq in 1919. On a frieze, which is one of the largest Mesopotamian metal sculptures, a lion-headed eagle stands with its legs on the tail of two deer bulls below, facing in opposite directions (The 259.08x106.68 cms frieze is located in the British Museum. Inventory number: 114308). It is clear from the by no means complete list that from the end of the 4th millennium the deer appeared in Mesopotamia in connection with the role of women in mythology. Through the person of Goddess Innin, mistress of all areas, she is already part of the celestial Triassic, as the celebration associated with the August-September harvest, where the sickle also appears naturally. The fact that in Mesopotamia, with the exception of shorter periods, the representation of ibex is more common in a given geographical environment, and there is no marked local Neolithic antecedent to deer-related customs, collectively points to the possibility that these phenomena, which can be grasped from the second half of the 4th millennium, entered the area as a new element from outside. The wider natural geographical environment and the Sumerian sources themselves point more to the north, when, for example it is mentioned that Innin gave birth to the unbridled deer in the depth of the mountains (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 151-152), and an, the mistress of the barley fields, is said to have come from the mountains (Komoróczy, 1983, p. 151-152). Thus, the above-mentioned data, taken as a whole, show that the deer-related habit elements, which had already developed much earlier and were widespread in much of Europe and Asia, were found in Southern Mesopotamia during the 4-3. millennia BC, and merged mythological motifs into a documented unified system of symbols related to female fertility. Their effects were then – as otherwise elements, connectable for farming, metalworking, etc. – radiated in a circular fashion, and had a wide back effect and spread on the steppe as well, where, however, only from the 1st millennium BC onwards, deer representations appear in greater numbers.

From the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, the number of deer depictions increased again in the central part of Anatolia, in the territory of the later Hittite Empire. Their importance is well illustrated by the fact that deer have a prominent role in the symbols of power found in the early Bronze Age royal tombs of Alaca Höyük, through the bronze standards of the imperial period friezes, and in the Kastamonu bronze vessel (Yalçın & Yalçın, 2018, p. 91–122). This trend continues around the turn of the millennium, in the Neo-Hittite period, in the stone carvings of Karkemis, Arslantepe, and can be seen on a number of small bronze sculptures while chasing the antlered wild, most often. Fragmented Hacıbebekli stele found in the south of Turkey and Karasu relief found just 3 kms from the Euphrates - with the red deer on its back, the protective god of nature, Kurunta / Tuntija, with a sundial above his head, and also similar depictions are

known from Gölpınar and Yeniköy (Burney & Lawson, 1958, p. 211–218). Also among the Hittite finds is a deer-shaped silver drinking vessel from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art with a religious scene around its neck. There is also a god standing on the back of a deer in front of the goddess sitting on a stool, holding a bird of prey (a hawk?). In her left hand and a small cup in her right. The two deities are separated by a mushroom-shaped incense. To the left of the man standing in the deer is a bird of prey (falcon?). In his right hand is a stick with a curved end, and in front of him are three men who offer various things to the deity. In the third field a deer dropped behind a tree can be seen, the hunter is indicated by the hanging quiver and bow, as well as the two pierced spears that close the scene. Many elements of the scene come back in later periods. The deer found in the royal tombs and the relief of the Nature God also indicate well that the deer were associated with high social status, i.e. the deer appeared in these cases as a symbol of power. In addition to the indication of antlers, for example, the penis, which is clearly visible on Hittite bronze standards, also makes it clear that this interpretation refers to bulls of the noble animal species, these representations can no longer be linked to female fertility.



Figure 4: Red deer bull as a symbol of power
(Alaca Höyük B, Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi, Ankara)³

From the turn of the 1st millennium BC onwards, the strengthening of the links towards the steppe can be felt in the northern part of the Iranian territories as a whole. South of the Caspian Sea, Sialk's famous site stands out in many ways: here, after the antecedents of the 4th millennium, the depiction of deer became emphasized again, indicating that relations between the southern and northern territories had been one of the mediating centers here for millennia. On the other hand, Hungarian research has long assumed a connection between the finds here and the objects of the Prescrite period in the Carpathian Basin (Kemenczei, 1990, p. 29-42; Szabó, 2017, p. 85-109; Szabó, 2019, p. 50-77, Szabó, 2020/A, p. 117-139). Especially from the deposits of Amarlu and Marlik

³ Webplace: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/AlacaStandarteStier.jpg>
(Accessed: 04. 07. 2021.)

in the northwestern province of Gilan, we know of small bronze statues depicting antlers, and deer-shaped drinking vessels and rythons, which are a novelty among the object types. The gold finds of Marlik are quite special, where in one of the cups the deer stands next to the sacred tree. These findings are researched fairly uniformly from Central Asia in the BC. It is considered a legacy of Iranian-speaking peoples at the end of the 2nd millennium - the beginning of the 1st millennium.

The natural route of the southern migration of the Iranian-speaking peoples along the shores of the Caspian Sea led through the Caucasus (Абаев/Абаев, 1949; Makkay, 1998; Козаев/Козаев, 1998). In the area of the mountain range separating Europe and Asia, a number of well-known archaeological finds from the late Bronze Age Koban culture show the significant role of deer (Доманский /Domantsky, 1984; Техов/Техов, 2002). However, the lesser-known data of the Nart epics known to many Caucasian peoples, which preserve Bronze Age traditions to this day, may be much more interesting than the material (Чиби́ров/Тsibirov, 2008; Канукова/Kanukova, 2000). On the way to Ahszartag, who was looking for his brother, he met the blind sister of Uarhag, whose husband was the table companion of the Sun. He cured the elderly woman's blindness by mixing a drop of morning dew from a cow's milk into milk (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000). And in the garden of the narts, the tree that produces wonderful golden apples with life-giving power, which healed man from all its diseases, and all wounds - only he didn't save anyone from death -, protected from thieves with a soldered fence made of deer antlers (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 51). Soslan, one of the bravest nart warriors, was honored to kill a golden-haired deer led with a silk cord thrown at his antlers in the land of gumias after his host "*performed a ceremony - prayed over him, lifting a small tree to the deer's forehead*" (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 147). And other times, when he was on his one-year-old raid, the wounded deer ran away, collecting the drops of blood from the fallen, and on the trail came to a small cottage where two lads lived, who were breastfed and raised by their mother, who had been turned into golden deer. The boys were just grieving that their mother was dying because someone had seriously wounded her with an arrow. According to the curse, the golden deer can only be rescued by the nart who has wounded him, and he drops of the blood of the scavenger's blood mixed with it in warm water. Soslan finally managed to save the golden deer and turn it back into a woman (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 186-189). The old, revered Urizmag told the council of elders, in the nihas, that on his hunt the sun shone in the reeds and a golden-haired queen stood before him, but his fired arrows were diverted by some mysterious force, his sword knocked out of his hand (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, 245). Thirsty for glory, Soslan was determined to try to kill the golden deer as well. However, with his weapons, he could not injure the magnificent animal

either, but he followed in his footsteps, which led to a cave between the mountains. It was only there that it turned out that "...in the image of the fallow deer followed the daughter of Aciruhs Sun, guarded by seven giants." Soslan is saved from being torn apart by the giants, with a picture of the Sun and Moon on his back, which they knew immediately that he was the groom of the daughter of the Sun. However, the extremely expensive engagement gift, the kalim, could only be collected with the help of the deceased, his first wife in the land of the dead, Veduha (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 247-248). On his journey through the land of the dead, one of the many miracles, when three tubs boil on a tall mound, bubbling under which deer antlers burned instead of wood (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 255). Soslan then lived beautifully with the daughter of the Sun, and in the image of a deer. At a spring day he even rejected another girl who offered herself to his wife. To his loss, for the offended daughter of Balsag, who lived in heaven, killed him in revenge with his father's weapon, the wonderful wheel of destiny (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 273-274). Hamic, the other notable nart, though, a white deer seen in a meadow in the middle of the forest, came into contact with the Bicent nation living under the ground, from which he chose a wonderful wife that what she touched never died out (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 343-350). At other times, the three famous narts, Urizmag, Hamic, and Soslan, chased the white deer and reached the depths of the mountains, where they were captured by the giants, who nearly devoured them (Канукова/Kanukova, 2000, p. 387-389.). It is clear from the stories of the Caucasian epics that at the narts, the deer takes the heroes that follow him across the borders of the worlds, helping them to gain rebirth, renewal, and sacred knowledge. Of course, this Miracle Stag, whether golden-haired or white, is a roe in all cases. Among the archeological finds, the depiction of the Luristan bronze oatmeal and the gilded silver plate unearthed in the kurgan of the Seven Brothers is clearly evidenced by the fact that the deer wearing the antler is breastfeeding (Makkay, 2006, p. 24).

It is also telling that in the epics it is common to mention the killed deer as the most important prey animal, we do not even find any indication that they might be thought of as a symbol of power. This is also interesting because, given both the parallels of the period - and the territorial proximity, the Hittite effect would not be surprising. However, we will find examples of relationships in the opposite direction.

The deer depictions of the Iranian peoples of the steppes, the Scythians and their relatives from Central Asia to the Carpathian Basin form one of the most beautiful groups of archeological finds, including two particularly important Hungarian finds, the golden deer of Zöldhalompuszta and Tápíószentmárton. Based on the parallels, the deer representations found in the Cuban countryside,

Kelermes, Kostromskaya, Kul-Oba, from 7-6th centuries BC, the representations in Hungary can also be dated to this age.



Figure 5: Red deer bull in sacrificial pose (Tápiószentmárton, Hungarian National Museum, Budapest; Photo: Vágó, Ádám (Tarbay, 2015)

The almost exact replica of the golden deer of Tápiószentmárton with its contracted legs is the earliest known piece of the style, from the 8th century BC can be seen on the gold plate of an 8th century Ziwiye treasure, which, on the one hand, indicates that it was made by a master belonging to an Iranian workshop circle. On the other hand, the significant temporal difference between the two finds also suggests that there is something constant in the background of the representation that does not change. It can be clearly seen in these representations that an important and widely accurately repeated detail of the foot posture is that the deer's hind legs overlap with the region of the midfoot of the front limb. The fact that one has to think of something that is widely visible is also shown by the fact that on the gold plate in Ziwiye itself, in addition to the deer, the footprint of the ibex is completely similar. Based on the posture of the animals, one could even think of a resting position, however, the hind limbs are not overlapping with the middle of the forelegs even when resting. All this shows that the footsteps of the golden deer of Tápiószentmárton do not have to look for formal precursors in nature. It could only be a man-made condition. In the case of the killing of a sacrificial animal and the testing of a stallion, the animals are tied to the gait with precisely repetitive movements for thousands of years, by placing the legs on top of each other in a certain order. From this point of view, it is tellingly important that in the case of a ligament, the hind legs are at the bottom, the front at the top, just as it can be seen in the representations of more than two and a half thousand years. Based on all this, the Tápiószentmárton find and the animals depicted in a similar position can be connected with the customs related to the presentation of the deer sacrifice. This interpretation also explains the completely identical footprint of the deer and ibex seen on the Ziwiye gold plate, but several other species: horse, camel, wild boar, etc. also to represent. It is clear from the data that only the bull can be hunted, killed, offered as a victim, the (antlered) roe injured, let alone killed, a serious sin that would have resulted in punishments

affecting generations. Soslan is already almost torn apart by the giants because he shot and followed the deer roe, and as a punishment for Agamemnon the wind stopped and his ships heading for the siege of Troy did not move because he hunted a roe in Artemis' grove. The Ziwiye treasure find is a particularly beautiful and spectacular example of the close ties between the peoples of the Ancient East and the steppe. According to Natalya Lvovna Chlenova, Scythian animal depictions are directly rooted in the art of the Ancient East. Examples of bent-legged antlers from Kerkuk she mentions seals dating back to the turn of the 3rd millennium BC (Членова/Tschlenova, 1984, p. 3-11). However, it should be noted that despite the apparent similarity, there is a fundamental discrepancy in the most important details: the seals are depicted with deer indeed, but there the legs are not under the animal, but on either side, and do not touch, they do not overlap. However, this seemingly small discrepancy is crucial for interpretation. The deer is in a natural, resting pose in the depictions of the seals, as opposed to the artificially contracted, connected limbs of the Tápiószentmárton find and the animals depicted in a similar position. Due to the slightly lateral position, the head faces sideways or backwards, and the legs pulled next to it do not touch (Членова/Tschlenova, 1984, p. 3). Thus, in fact, the presumed genetic relationship between the two seemingly similar representational types is missing, the two images represent completely different ones, and the meaning content associated with them is also fundamentally different. Thus, in the case of representations similar to the Tápiószentmárton find, it is worthwhile and necessary to rethink the issues of the origin and system of relations previously assumed in the research.

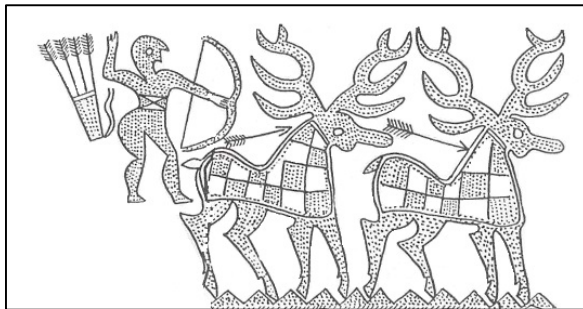


Figure 6: Representation of the Miracle Stag on the bronze plate of the Koban culture Tli, Tomb 350 (South Ossetia, Техов/Tehov, 2002, p. 210.)

The golden deer of Zöldhalompuszta is also worth taking a closer look at in terms of posture. Clearly a red deer with an antler on its head, however, the penis is still not visible in the detailed representation. The animal clearly turns backwards and looks at something. The unsuspecting deer depicted in the hunting scenes usually looks ahead. This is also typical in animal fights when the antler animal is unexpectedly attacked by a predator. The fighting deer in nature face

their opponents, fight with their heads down, not looking back. A deer turning backwards can be seen depicting a gilded silver plate unearthed in one of Luristan's bronze sabers and the Seven Brothers Kurgan. One of the common features of these two depictions is that both heifers are suckling their calves and watching them (Makkay, 2006, p. 24). Again, the depiction testifies to an accurate observation of nature down to the smallest detail. When suckling, the calf's neck bends slightly upwards. In this position, the esophageal reflex works, allowing the milk to enter the maw (fourth stomach). Otherwise, the milk would end up in the foregut, where it spoils, causing gastroenteritis, in which the animal can die. Based on all this, the golden deer of Zöldhalompuszta, the antler roe suckling a calf, is thus a symbol of fertility, renewal, rebirth, a symbol of origin, fertility, rebirth, part of the astral world. Who is often referred to in the Mesopotamian texts as the Holy Cow, who is an antler roe suckling her calf, or an animal adorned with symbols of the astral Triassic, turning back in the depictions. In the depictions, it is well separated from this, but in terms of its meaning, the interpretation is similar: the deer as an antlered creature leading to its new homeland, helping the passage between the worlds. In some versions of the tale, it is an escaping, alluring, female-turning animal that usually appears in hunting scenes. The gold ring of the Mycenaean tomb, which can be used as a seal, also draws attention to the fact that the direction of the hunting scene is also important: it passes from left to right in front of the viewer - just as the sun in the sky, for example. Based on the reviewed data, it can be clearly seen that the deer appeared in these cases on the one hand in connection with the calendar holidays and on the other hand in connection with the turning points important for life and the community.

Particularly beautiful deer depictions can be seen on bronze plate belts found in the area of Koban culture in the Caucasus, which in many respects resemble the metal belts of Urartu. John Curtis features Urartu belts with a structure divided into right and left, space shared horizontally and vertically, themes related to hunting, travel, depictions of hunters, soldiers, horses, carriages and various wild animals, are often chosen with plant or geometric motifs (Curtis, 1996, p. 118). He also draws attention to the importance of separating the Transcaucasian and technologically different Urartu bronze belts, which are often influenced by the art of the ancient East, especially Assyria, and which often depict wonderful beings and mythological scenes. Caucasian belts do not feature the fusion of different animal figures, the depiction of wonderful creatures. He has also been opposed to several authors directly linking depictions of the Caucasus region to the animal style of the Russian steppe since that Dagny Carter's book (Carter, 1957, p. 125) an increasingly winning view (Lang, 2012, p. 281-293.) is that this is a very simplistic picture, with Trans-Caucasian art much more of a subgroup within the larger artistic cine of Eurasian cultures (Curtis, 1996, p. 118). As a

result of his research in his monograph, Manuel Castelvuccia also concluded that the independent artistic traditions that had existed in the Caucasus since the Bronze Age continued into the Early Iron Age. Through the mediation of the Kingdom of Urartu, there were noticeably strong Mesopotamian influences on the area, while the influence of the peoples of the Iranian Plateau and the steppe was less detectable. Masters of Koban culture have always decorated their objects with animals in their immediate vicinity according to local tastes and traditions (Castelvuccia, 2017, p. 392). According to the explorer, one of the most characteristic of the legacy of the Koban culture is the 92.5 cm long 15.3 cm wide plate found in the 350th tomb, the surface of which is filled with a man wagon or hunter and various animal shapes (Техов/Техов, 2002, p. 210). Of these, we would now like to draw attention only to the animal visible behind the carriage, defined by the explorer as a deer (Техов/Техов, 2002, p. 20-21) and the antler deer. Unlike other wild animals, these, apart from the antlers, do not have a pronounced mark of a male. The wide-eyed man firing his arrow aimed at two antlers, punched like a chessboard on their bodies, which the author interprets as a hunting scene (Техов/Техов, 2002, p. 213.). However, it is important to note that the arrows were not drilled into the animals and, in addition to the antler, separate male sex traits were not depicted in these individuals either. It is quite clear that this is not about hunting, but about the early motif of the invulnerable deer, also known from the Hungarian proverb. The same scene familiar from the Nart epic, where Soslan also fired his arrows at the Miracle Stag in vain, because she was inviolable. This, together with archaeological observations and analyzes, shows that the depiction on the plate reflects local, Caucasian tastes and beliefs in every detail, despite the Urartu precursors, a metalwork of the Koban culture, which was confirmed by the results of archeometallurgical studies (Scsiev et al, 2020, p. 31-42).

Based on the above, it is also clear that the Miracle Stag leading the two Hungarian leaders, Hunor and Magor, to their new homeland belongs to the deep-rooted saying, which spreads from Mesopotamia through the Caucasus to a wide area of the steppe. However, projecting the mentioned types of depictions and sites on the map, Urartu is surprisingly almost white in the middle: We do not know any common depictions of the significance of deer from the territory of the kingdom, only small, sporadic memories (Gökce, 2020, p. 35-57). Yet, as the bronze belts of the Caucasian Koban culture show in the Urartu pattern, the deer is also an important player in the northern neighborhood of Urartu. In addition, the indigenous population of the area dates back to the 3rd millennium BC onwards, it was strongly influenced by newer and newer waves of the Caucasian cultures. Furthermore, the deer bones found in almost all their settlements clearly show that they hunted the noble animal and consumed its meat, and this game was also part of their diet. The deer figures, which rarely appear on belt plates,

stamp prints, and oatmeal marks, indicate that this animal was also unknown to the art of Urartu. However, despite all this, we know no trace of his official respect. The famous Meher Kapi inscription, which lists animals, bulls, sheep and cows sacrificed to their gods, especially the god Haldi does not contain this animal-deer is not on the list either (Gökce, 2020, p. 34).



Figure 7: László, Gyula: Hunor and Magor chase the Miracle Stag (Arany, 1991, p. 55.)

Ali Çifçi recently highlighted two main elements among the factors shaping the political and economic institutions and society of the Kingdom of Urartu: The natural environment, topography and climate of Eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus, northwestern Iran, and the constant threat of the Assyrian army. These circumstances also determined the decisive importance of animal husbandry within agriculture, not as well as the not insignificant industrial activity, especially mining and metalworking, the chain of citadels built along the southern borders in the defense efforts, the transformation from society to the tribe. In order to strengthen the royal power, the ruler began to establish religious, political, economic, and military institutions. These are the establishment of the kingdom (I. Sarduri, 834-825 BC) and the construction of temples, the open-air shrines, with their accompanying gods and ceremonies, from the end of the 9th century BC, they played a role in shaping the identity of the newly formed kingdom and maintaining the country until its fall (Çifçi, 2017, p. 12). Although the assessment of the Urartu identity is not uniform (Zimansky Buhály, 2017, p. 9-15), it is clear that the rulers from the end of the 9th century BC, in parallel with the protection of the territorial integrity, constantly sought to develop their own symbol system. Part of this was that in the Akkadian literature which was already written in the time of Ispuini (828-810) they switched from the Akkadian to the use of the Urartu language, and in the pantheon gradually the god Haldi came to the main place.

The lack of deer representations in the official Urartu symbol system, even in the presence of the deer in everyday life, confirms that the Urartu sense of identity developed in a consciously organized and controlled manner, partly independently of local foundations, in accordance with the ruler's intention.

Separability from the surrounding peoples and the formulation of the differences could have been important aspects in the selection of the individual elements - following the roots of the Hungarian proverb, the territory of the former Urartu Kingdom, wedged between the Caucasian and Mesopotamian traditions, may seem like a white spot.

Conclusion

In Urartu art, the deer is always a male animal, as is often indicated by the representation of the phallus and the antlers. Deer are depicted running, standing or walking (Gökce 2020, p. 44. Fig. 8). In hunting scenes on metal belts, seal impressions, horse harnesses and in the wall paintings of Erzincan/Altıntepe, the deer is driven on foot or in a cart and is killed with arrows or spears. The clothing and equipment of the hunters clearly show that this is a sporting activity of people of high social status, part of social prestige (Pınarcık et al. 2017, p. 398; Gökce 2020, p. 48). Prey is an addition to the diet, as evidenced by the deer bones common in Urartu settlements or the remains of a deer found in a large pot in Karmir Blur (Gökce 2020, p.50). Taken together, this suggests that late Hittite traditions associated with deer were continued in Urartu, where hunting was primarily a physical activity, in line with religion, food needs and economic goals (Pınarcık et al. 2017, p. 398). We know of no examples of the antlered female deer as a symbol associated with fertility, which was widespread in Mesopotamia and later among Iranian peoples, in the Urartu area. This indicates that the later Turkic peoples could only have become acquainted with it through contacts with the Iranian peoples, just as the Hungarians did with their original myth.

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<p>The authors declare that ethical rules and scientific citation principles have been followed in all preparation processes of this study. In the event of a contrary situation, Ege University Journal of Turkish World Studies has no responsibility, and all responsibility belongs to the authors of the article.</p>
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