

Title: Magyars as “Asiatic Horsemen” in Hungarian and Slovak Narrative
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This paper considers the likelihood that images of the ninth-century Magyars arriving in the Carpathian Basin as fierce Asiatic conquerors, often romanticized by Hungarian writers, have contributed to negative stereotypes now exploited by nationalist politicians in neighboring Slovakia (relations between Hungary and Slovakia are perhaps the worst between any two EU member nations). Hungarian historian Paul Lendvai (*The Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat*, Princeton: 2003), commenting on the “heathen barbarians” notion, writes that “[u]ncritically accepted... myths of origin are significant components of emotionally charged xenophobia...” but also notes that, *inter alia*, nineteenth-century Hungarian historian Karl Szabó approved of the image of ferocious horsemen as reflective of the “Magyar national character.” The present work compares the rhetoric of politicians such as Slovak National Party chair Ján Slota, who has described of the original Magyars as “Mongoloid types with bowed legs and disgusting ponies,” with older Slovak works, namely the nineteenth-century polemical tract of Ludovít Štúr (codifier of literary Slovak) *Old and New Age of the Slovaks*, in which the conquering Magyars “lived on robbery and horsemeat” and “swigged blood in affirmation of [a] treaty, because they were still pagans.” This study considers as possible sources of this narrative Hungarian historical and literary accounts: the thirteenth-century *Gesta Hungarorum*, (by Hungarian Anonymous, commissioned by King Béla III), the seventeenth-century poet Miklós Zrínyi, and the nineteenth century’s Mihály Vörösmarty and János Arany. In addition to similarities in imagery, the paper finds more direct evidence of textual links between the Hungarian and Slovak narratives—e.g., *Old and New Age* (like Ivan Stodola’s 1931 play *King Svätopluk*) refers to the erroneous toponym ‘Zobor’, which was almost certainly borrowed from *Gesta*.