



WELSH-MAGYAR CONNECTIONS

Excerpts from a private letter by G.D.[1]

„Your finding ancient connections between the Magyar and Celtic languages give the preservation of those languages a far greater importance than that of encouraging people, who speak them to feel that they are as good as any other language. The Welsh language was despised years ago, -- even by some who spoke it. It was not the language of the „top people”, for one thing. When we grew up, the tradition was to forget your Welsh, and learn to speak „nice” English, without any Welsh accent. In that way you stood a better chance of passing yourself off as an „educated” Englishman, especially when trying for the top jobs. To „get on”, you had to „get English” and get out of Wales, to where the better jobs were, in England. That is changing now – but „top” jobs are few and far between in a small country like Wales, and so are a lot of lower paid jobs. The coal mines, the steel works and the quarries used to employ hundreds of thousands of men; most of them are shut down, or just run by a handful of men. The quarries here used to employ about two thousand men a century ago, and now about fifty-odd, driving big machines. No, apart from that kind of status of the Welsh language, its possible connections with Central European languages give it a hair-raising dignity – as the finding of an ancient stone axe can be so stirring, in taking you back to ancient times. It arouses a feeling of wonder, such as we get when we see the sky at night, and the cleverness and beauty of the life around us. To think that the Welsh people may be speaking a language descended from that spoken by proud horsemen of the Asiatic steppes. That, if it were true, would give a lot more meaning to our national emblem, the Red Dragon.

Another very intriguing aspect of that article is the Asiatic origin of the (Sarmatian) dragon, because it brings us a lot nearer to Schliephak’s „hunting” grounds, in his search for the dragon and bull’s horn motifs, on his travels from S.E. Asia to Siberia. Not long after your letter I happened to come across an old number of the „National Geographic Magazine, Oct. 1935. In it were several accounts of dragon and serpent worship in the mythology of the peoples of Tibet and Indo China. So it all seems to link together and so might link little Wales with the Far East.

I am astonished at the apparent Celto-Magyar connections illustrated in one of your enclosures. For instance, near Cambridge there are some low hills known to this day as the „Gog-Magog” Hills. To think that the name has a Scythian-Magyar origin – it amazes me. Again, on the lists of Gaelic, Magyar and English words compared, a Welsh one would be an interesting addition. For example, the first word, „mag” in Magyar for „seed/son” is our word in Welsh for „seed”, as applied to the very young blue mussels when they settle. One word for „son” is „mab” (long in both cases). The name for man is „vir” in Irish, and „gwr” in Welsh...

The Hungarian name of „Manyó” for „old woman” can be compared with the South-western Welsh name of

„menyw” for „woman”. I think that this came from the Irish settlements there long ago, as the North Welsh word is „Dynes” (Dyn is Man). Very interesting likeness between Balaton and our Llyn (Lake) Bala in Wales. Again, the Rivers 'Don' near Aberdeen and at Doncaster – had these indeed, ancient Magyar origins? Regarding the name prefix „Finn”, there is Findochty on the Moray Firth in Scotland (pronounced F'nechty, as the Scots would say it). Again, 'Ku' in Magyar, 'Ci' in Welsh for dog. I could go on... However the likenesses which you have shown, between Magyar and the Celtic languages, are astonishing. One thing that puzzles me, however, are the great differences between Irish and Welsh. When and where did these come about? And what natural forces, like droughts, or the melting of the ice-cap, could have caused the westward migration of our peoples? What a fascinating field to explore.

„More power to your elbow” as they say, in your historical researches. Please let me know if I can help you in any way, ignorant as I am of such matters. But interest is the key to learning – even at 82”

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This letter was published in 1999 issue 8 page 41 of the Journal of Hungarian Studies. The letter shows a fate and oppression of the Welsh people akin to the Hungarian oppression by the Habsburgs. The mantra in education in those days was in both countries: „We are a small country”, our future belongs within a non-native language sphere, whether it may be England or Austria respectively. Our poets and bards were silenced by force and drowned in blood, as our great national poet János Arany memorialized it in his poem *A Walesi Bárdok* (The Bards of Wales). Realizing ancient connections may help in healing our spirit and national consciousness. (Susan Tomory)

[1] The father of this author founded the Welsh National Library

**Arany János:
A walesi bárdok**

***The Bards of Wales*
by János Arany**

Edward the king, the English king,
Bestrides his tawny steed,
"For I will see if Wales" said he,
"Accepts my rule indeed."

"Are stream and mountain fair to see?
Are meadow grasses good?
Do corn-lands bear a crop more rare
Since wash'd with rebel's blood?"

"And are the wretched people there,
Whose insolence I broke,
As happy as the oxen are
Beneath the driver's yoke?"

"In truth this Wales, Sire, is a gem,
The fairest in thy crown:

The stream and field rich harvest yield,
And fair are dale and down."

"And all the wretched people there
Are calm as man could crave;
Their hovels stand throughout the land
As silent as the grave."

Edward the king, the English king,
Bestrides his tawny steed;
A silence deep his subjects keep
And Wales is mute indeed.

The castle named Montgomery
Ends that day's journeying;
The castle's lord, Montgomery,
Must entertain the king.

Then game and fish and ev'ry dish
That lures the taste and sight
A hundred hurrying servants bear
To please the appetite.

With all of worth the isle brings forth
In dainty drink and food,
And all the wines of foreign vines
Beyond the distant flood.

"Ye lords, ye lords, will none consent
His glass with mine to ring?
What! Each one fails, ye dogs of Wales,
to toast the English king?"

"Though game and fish and ev'ry dish
That lures the taste and sight
Your hand supplies, your mood defies
My person with a sight.

"Ye rascal lords, ye dogs of Wales,
Will none for Edward cheer?
To serve my needs and chant my deeds
Then let a bard appear!"

The nobles gaze in fierce amaze,
Their cheeks grow deadly pale;
Not fear but rage their looks engage,
They blench but do not quail.

All voices cease in soundless peace,
All breathe in silent pain;
Then at the door a harper hoar
Comes in with grave disdain:

"Lo, here I stand, at thy command,
To chant thy deeds, O king!"
And weapons clash and hauberks crash
Responsive to his string.

"Harsh weapons clash and hauberks crash,
And sunset sees us bleed,
The crow and wolf our dead engulf
This, Edward, is thy deed!

"A thousand lie beneath the sky,
They rot beneath the sun,
And we who live shall not forgive
This deed thy hand hath done!"

"Now let him perish! I must have"
(The monarch's voice is hard)
"Your softest songs, and not your wrongs!"
In steps a boyish bard:

"The breeze is soft at eve, that oft
From Milford Haven moans;
It whispers maidens' stifled cries,
It breathes of widows' groans."

"Ye maidens bear no captive babes!
Ye mothers rear them not!"
The fierce king nods. The lad is seiz'd
And hurried from the spot.

Unbidden then, among the men,
There comes a dauntless third.
With speech of fire he tunes his lyre,
And bitter is his word:

"Our bravest died to slake thy pride.
Proud Edward hear my lays!
No Welsh bards live who e'er will give
Thy name a song of praise."

"Our harps with dead men's memories weep
Welsh bards to thee will sing
One changeless verse our blackest curse

To blast thy soul, O king!"

"No more! Enough!" cries out the king.

In rage his orders break:

"Seek through these vales all bards of Wales

And burn them at the stake!"

His man ride forth to south and north,

They ride to west and east.

Thus ends in grim Montgomery

The celebrated feast.

Edward the king, the English king

Spurs on his tawny steed;

Across the skies red flames arise

As if Wales burned indeed.

In martyrship, with song on lip,

Five hundred Welsh bards died;

Not one was mov'd to say he lov'd

The tyrant in his pride.

" 'Ods blood! What songs this night resound

Upon our London streets?

The mayor should feel my irate heel

If aught that sound repeats!"

Each voice is hush'd; through silent lanes

To silent homes they creep.

"Now dies the hound that makes a sound;

The sick king cannot sleep."

"Ha! Bring me fife and drum and horn,

And let the trumpet blare!

In ceaseless hum their curses come...

I see their dead eyes glare..."

But high above all drum and fife

And all trumpets' shrill debate,

Five hundred martyr'd voices chant

Their hymn of deathless hate.

*translated by **Watson Kirkconnell***

translator, poet, university administrator, Baptist lay leader (b at Port Hope, Ont 16 May 1895; d at Wolfville, NS 26 Feb 1977). *Master of more than 50 languages and dialects*, Kirkconnell introduced English-speaking Canadians to the literature of "New Canadians" through his own English translations.

published in:

The Magyar Muse
An Anthology of Hungarian Poetry 1400-1932
Edited and translated by Watson Kirkconnell, M.A.
Kanadai Magyar Újság Press, 1933

THE REAL NAME OF THE WELSH From Margaret on October 5, 2009
(Of Welsh ancestry)

I have been trying to take a little time to read about the Celts and I found the following quotation in Stobie, Denise: Exploring Celtic Britain, Collins and Brown, London, 1999, p. 43:

"Even today, the inhabitants of this land are unwilling to give themselves the name 'Welsh', for to do so would be to call themselves foreigners in their own land. The word 'Wales' was Saesneg (Saxon) for stranger or foreigner, so the term 'Cymru' is preferred."

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