

The Question of Hungarian–Scandinavian Connections from the Beginnings until the reign of King Coloman the Learned

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The aim of the dissertation is to present contacts between Hungarians and Scandinavians from the beginnings until the reign of Hungarian King Coloman the Learned (†1116). The period chosen for the investigation by and large covers the so called Viking Age when intensified activity of Scandinavians can be observed out of Scandinavia. Scandinavians took part in long-distance commerce in Eastern Europe and they also settled down along the important river routes. This historical phenomenon enabled them to get in touch with other peoples, including the Hungarians. In Eastern European context, the written sources call them Rus' and Varangians. These Rus' created different political entities but the most important political formation was the one led by the Rurikids from Kiev (Kievan Rus').

Written sources write mostly about relations between Hungarians and Rus' which raises serious methodological issues. Although we can recognize Scandinavians in the use of Rus', it is obvious that its meaning changed significantly during the period in question and became the name of the ethnically mixed population of the Rus' state. Consequently, the terms Scandinavian and Rus' can not be considered the equivalent of each other. When reading about Hungarian–Rus' contacts in the sources, we do not know or at least we have very limited opportunity to decide who those Rus' were, Scandinavians, Slavs or ethnically mixed community. Hungarians and Rus' came into contact for the first time somewhere along the large rivers like the Volga and the Dnieper in the 9th century. Contacts between them took place on various fields such as commerce, culture, diplomacy, dynastic ties etc. The connection is especially remarkable in the military structures like the Slavic *druzhina* (retinue) and the Byzantine army. Moreover, we must take into account the possible presence of Scandinavians and Rus' – who preserved elements of Scandinavian cultural characteristics – as warriors in 11th-century Hungary as well.