ALEXANDER CSOMA DE KŐRÖS
A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

On June 26, 1823, a fine summer day, a strange wanderer arrived at the Tibetan Lamaist Monastery of Zangla, situated in the Himalayas 3500 meters up, and far from the routes used by tradesmen and pilgrims. He had come from Leh, the capital of Western Tibet or Ladakh, and had a few lines of introduction from the *khalon*, the Minister of the royal court. The letter said that he was going to study Tibetan in the monastery. His name was Skander Beg, but in spite of his Armenian name, clothes and looks, he was quite clearly something else. The Armenians arrived there with the purpose of trading but this guest wanted something completely different. There was something strange about his face, too, but only the lama who received him, Sangye Puntsog, knew what it was. He was a European. The first, the very first one to reach that place. The other monks in the monastery did not even know what Europe was; but Sangye Puntsog knew. He visited the royal court on occasion and had already met Europeans there. He had also met the "great lord" William Moorcroft, the patron of the newcomer. He also knew that the Europeans ruled most of India; they had arrived not so long ago, they were few in number, and yet had power over the native Indians. They ruled those whom the Tibetans had looked upon with respect throughout their whole history. The Europeans' empire already bordered on Ladakh; the frontier ran some 3–400 kilometres south of the Monastery of Zangla, along the bank of the Elephant River, the Langchen-chu, which the Europeans called Sutlej. Nobody knew what they really wanted, and what plans they had for Ladakh where the Tibetans lived.

So Sangye Puntsog was expecting the newcomer. He had been told at the court that for the sake of fostering good relations he would have to heed the strange request, and that the European would pay him for his pains. The guest who arrived from Leh after a walk of nine days was none other than the Hungarian Alexander Csoma de Kőrös. He had not left his country several thousand kilometres away to get to the Monastery of Zangla; he had not even known that the Tibetans existed. He had taken to the road for other reasons, and it was only the caprice of fate that had led him to Tibet where, again by accident, he had met that certain Moorcroft who persuaded him to learn the Tibetan language, unknown to the educated world, and to compile a dictionary and a grammar. This would hardly, he argued, present much of a difficulty to a man who had already learnt fourteen languages, and could just as well add one more. Csoma gave in, and planned to devote a year to this task which he found interesting enough. It was Moorcroft who had told him of Sangye Puntsog, and had recommended that he be his teacher.

At their first meeting, Csoma was 39 years old and the Lama was 50. One of them was an outstanding European scholar, the other an excellent representative of Lamaist culture. The sons of two different worlds, and both reserved by nature to boot. It took them a long time to get to know each other, but their acquaintance developed into mutual respect. The Lama learnt that not every European was necessarily an Englishman and that not every European necessarily represented political power. There were Hungarians among them as well, and scientists. Csoma, for his part, learnt that not all lamas were alike; few among them were truly broad-minded, and, among the cultured ones, even fewer were open and capable of teaching an adult who

Collected Works of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös

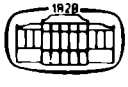
EDITED BY

J. TERJÉK

Tibetan–English Dictionary

BY

ALEXANDER CSOMA DE KŐRÖS



AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ · BUDAPEST 1984

Cover design: Hajnal Bogdán

ISBN 963 05 3818 0 (Vols 1–4)
ISBN 963 05 3819 9 (Vol. 1)

Printed in Hungary

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had come from a completely unknown world. As for the Tibetan language and its literature Csoma found it to be infinitely more valuable than he ever imagined. That is how joint work started on what turned out to be a milestone in scholarship: on making the treasures of Tibetan culture accessible to all.

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How did Alexander Csoma de Kőrös get to be Skander Beg, and how did he get to Tibet at all? Alexander Csoma was born in the small village of Kőrös in Southeastern Europe, in Háromszék County of the Transylvanian Principality of Hungary. A few kilometres from the village lay a stretch of Asian territory, Wallachia, where Ottoman-Turks were the feudal lords. The population of Csoma's birthplace was of a special Hungarian nationality, the Szekler. It was special in that it occupied a peculiar place in the feudal world of contemporary Europe. The Szeklers were neither serfs nor noblemen. They had certain privileges because they had defended Hungary's borders against invaders since ancient times. Alexander Csoma, who came into this world in April of 1784, was, like his ancestors, to live all his life in the small village he had been born in; he was to become a border guard at the age of 16, and was to remain one till the age of 50. And meanwhile, he was to support his family farming his small estate. That is how it looked at the start; but his life took a different turn. His father, after some procrastination, gave in to his son's stubborn wish and permitted his 15-year-old boy to disrupt the generally accepted order of things, and continue his studies. His estate was small anyway, he thought; it would be inherited intact by his younger son. So he took the elder to Nagyenyed, about 300 kilometres off, to the famous Protestant school, the Bethlenianum.[1] He could have taken him to other schools nearer by, but then he would have had to pay for his tuition, and he had no money for that. In Nagyenyed, his son could study free of charge; true, he would have to do some work in return, but after all, it was he who wanted to go to school so much. And anyhow, the school at Nagyenyed was no ordinary place, but the famous, richly endowed institution founded in 1622 by the Transylvanian Prince, Gábor Bethlen.

So it was that Alexander Csoma began his studies in 1799 in the first form, and he had to feel fortunate that he did not have to attend a preparatory course. The pupils in the lower forms were not considered to be real students. They were taught not by real teachers, but by senior students appointed by one of the professors, the *pedagogarcha*, who was in charge of everything concerning the lower forms. There were 8 years of the lower form; from the third form on, teaching was conducted in Latin. And what was taught? In the first four forms, Latin language; in the 5th and 6th forms, classical Roman literature; in the 7th form, ancient Greek, and in the 8th, logic. In the lower forms, the poor children were taught free, and got free room and board. In return, they did all the work around the college. And work was not a game for them: those who were negligent were caned. Like most of the poor Szekler children, Alexander Csoma attended the lower forms as a servitor. He supported himself fully. He spent the holidays in the college, too, or in Szászváros nearby, as a tutor.

He was twenty-two when he finished the lower form. After a strict entrance examination, he was admitted to the upper form, the Academicum Collegium. This meant a fundamental change in the lives of the students, and so in Csoma's life as well; it was at this point that they became real citizens of the college, students; they were called *academites*, or *togati*. The former name referred to their academic rank in the college; the latter to the way the students were dressed. The students changed the

broadcloth suits they wore up to that time for togas, and the lower form pupils were obliged to take their hats off to them and call them "sir". Depending on their study results, they were granted different scholarships from the interests of the endowments, and that was what they lived on. The most lucrative scholarship was the one granted by the prince's foundation; those who won it were the *principists*. Csoma became one of them, and soon also a teacher of the lower form pupils for which he received an extra allowance. His financial situation improved and he was generally respected; the servitor had become a respected *togatus*, and all this he had achieved through his own diligence and learning. The collegians were, of course, taught by the professors; the course of studies in the upper form took seven years: 3 years of philosophy, and 4 years of theology.

Life in the college was organized according to the laws of student republics. Matters were settled by the elected representatives, who participated even in the meetings of the school council *(sedria)*. The life of the residents was regulated by strict rules. The fairly crowded dormitories housed students of both the lower and upper forms without segregation. During Csoma's school years, 37 dormitories accommodated 8—900 students, so he had quite a few people to adjust to. Going outside the college did not offer much diversion; life in the small market town of 3500 inhabitants was very quiet. Because of the great distance, Csoma visited his birthplace only twice, in 1802 when his father died, and in 1809 when he lost his mother. He had only himself to rely on, and had become independent both financially and in spirit while still a child. The thirst for knowledge which had lured him away from home had only grown with the esteem in which he was held for it; and it was by no means indifferent to the little servitor of yore that the knowledge he had acquired enabled him to support himself. He completed his last year of the upper form in 1814, but stayed on in the college for one more year as the elected leader of the student body *(senior)*.

He was fifteen years old when he arrived at the college of Nagyenyed, and spent as many years there finishing his studies. The young boy had become an adult of 31. What did he look like, and what was he like? Fortunately, we can draw a fairly clear picture from the memoirs of his fellow students. He was of middle height, sturdy, stout, tough, always healthy, with a great deal of stamina. He had a longish face, a brown complexion, a high open forhead, a straight nose, black eyes, and dark hair. His clothes were poor but he was always well-groomed and clean; "he wore a suit of broadcloth both in winter and summer; he would never perspire no matter how hot it was, nor ever feel cold no matter how cold."[2] He was extremely economical, and refrained from excess of every kind; he avoided carousings, drinking, dances, gambling, and sweets. Very reticent, he was not too quick in the mind, but was blessed with an extraordinary memory coupled with unbelievable industriousness. As for his character, this is how his contemporaries saw him:

"Always even tempered, neither more vivacious nor more stern. One could never detect traces of high spirits, sorrow, anger, vengefulness, fear or even surprise, servitude or complacency, in short, of any kind of emotion on his face or in his gestures." "His looks were profound, significant, reticent." "The elevating feeling of friendship was as alien to him as hatred or avarice." "He was independent in the strictest sense of the word because he was able to control his will and his emotions." (Sándor Ujfalvy) "I rank Kőrösi among those rare and fortunate people about whom I never heard anybody complain, and neither did he ever complain about anyone." "Even if he was of the contrary opinion, he never argued against anyone very strongly. I do not believe that he was ever really angry with anyone in his entire life. In a word: he lived in his own heart rather than in external objects." (Sámuel Hegedüs) "Moral-

ly he was characterized by unveiled frankness, an open heart, and veracity, so I make bold to say that all his words and speech were as true as the Scriptures." "A fine feature of his character was his gratefulness." (Márton Ungi)[3]

What did Csoma learn in Nagyenyed? He acquired a good knowledge of Latin, and read the classics in the original, a favourite pastime of his till the end of his life. In studying exegetics, he learnt ancient Greek and Hebrew. The change from the Latin alphabet that the latter was, its character, so widely different from that of Greek and Latin, was of great advantage to him later in Göttingen when he came to learn Arabic, likewise a Semitic language. He also learnt French, and two more languages, partly in the college and partly from the people living in the vicinity. One of these languages was German. The Saxons were settled in Transylvania by King Géza in the 12th century; they soon established significant towns which enjoyed royal privileges: Brassó (Kronstadt), Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt), Medgyes (Mediasch), Berethalom (Birthälm), Szászsebes (Mühlbach), Segesvár (Schässburg). Their enhanced importance was given legal sanction in 1437. Thenceforth, the law recognized three nationalities in Transylvania: Hungarian, Szekler-Hungarian and Saxon-German. The other language he learnt in the vicinity was Romanian. The Romanians, seeking refuge from Turkish rule, had moved into Transylvania in small groups in the course of preceding centuries, and by Csoma's days they had settled in small shepherd villages around Nagyenyed. It was from them that Csoma, interested in everything, learnt the language. Finally, it is possible that he also learnt the basics of Turkish during those years; but not counting that, we find that when he finished his studies in Nagyenyed, he had mastered five living—at that time Latin could be counted as one—and two dead languages.

Besides learning languages, he also received the training generally offered by ecclesiastic colleges in Europe in those days. For Nagyenyed kept abreast of the intellectual trends of the age through professors who had attended foreign universities, and its rich library. It hardly needs to be emphasized that the dominant ideas of the time came from France: the secular thinking of the French Enlightenment exerted its influence everywhere, and thus in Nagyenyed, too. It was no accident that Csoma chose to learn French, and read the works of the French *philosophes* in the original. In Europe, the growing strength of the bourgeoisie went hand in hand with the strengthening of national feeling, whose chief manifestation was that the sense of community of those speaking the same language began gradually to replace the strongest sentiment of the feudal world, the sense of unity among coreligionists. Societies were formed for the cultivation of the national language, theatrical companies performed and journals were started up in the mother tongue, and Latin, generally accepted as the language of administration and of education, began gradually to be pushed into the background. The press, the different associations from scientific societies to clubs in cafés, were so many forms of expression of a new and incredibly vigorous public life, a step in the formation of the nascent nation states. This process was already well under way at the time Csoma was a student in Nagyenyed; a society for the cultivation of the Hungarian language and a theatrical society were established within the college in 1791, and in the library a separate collection, "magyar théka" (Hungarothèque) was set up. And as a natural consequence, interest in the national past, and mostly in the origin of the nation, grew significantly. The sense of a common origin created a feeling of community unknown till that time, especially the sense of community among people speaking related languages, i.e. belonging to the same language family. It was at that time that both the Germanic and the Slavic peoples recognized their relatives. The feeling of isolation of the Hungarians living

among them, who found themselves companionless, as it were, grew and gave rise to the inevitable and urgent need to set out and find their brethren-peoples. It was obvious that the relatives of the Hungarians had to be looked for somewhere in the East, but exactly where opinions differed. Contemporary public opinion—in harmony with the data of the mediaeval chronicles—believed that the Hungarians had formed one nation with the Avars and the Huns, and this opinion was shared by the outstanding writers and scholars of the period. Basing their arguments mostly on the famous work of Desguignes,[4] they all took a stand for the Hungarian–Avar–Hun kinship. The most respected among them were György Pray[5] and K. G. Windisch.[6] They both emphasized that the Hungarians were the Türks often mentioned in the Byzantine sources. Others, like J. E. Fischer,[7] and following him, A. L. Schlözer,[8] emphasized the Uighur–Hungarian equivalence. They believed that the Uighur ethnic fragment that had moved to the Irtis River was the ancestor of the Hungarians. This theory was reflected in the work of Ésaiás Budai,[9] too. Others, including Csoma's history professor, Ádám Herepei, followed the 13th century account of Friar Julianus, who located the ancient homeland of the Hungarians in the so-called Magna Hungaria, in Bashkiria. There was also the view that the Hungarians had moved to their present territory from the vicinity of the Caspian Sea. They quoted Sámuel Turkolly's letter (Astrahan, April 1725) in which he wrote that he had found a town named Madzsar and several villages with Hungarian-speaking inhabitants in that area. Again others, referring to the journeys of J. Klaproth, held that the relatives of the Hungarians must have lived somewhere around the Caucasus. There was, however, also another, quite different scholarly view advocated by János Sajnovics (*Demonstratio*, 1770) and then by Sámuel Gyarmathi (*Affinitas*, 1799), namely, that the Hungarian language was related to the Finnish languages. And finally, there were enthusiastic groups of well-meaning dilettantes in great numbers who, with ad hoc references to various words, found "proof" that the Hungarian language was related to almost every other language spoken the world over.

A young man open to novelties, Csoma also got acquainted with the different views. According to the recollections we have of him, quite early on he made up his mind to set out and find the ancient homeland of the Hungarians, to decide which of the diverse opinions was valid on the basis of evidence to be found in Asia, and not while sitting at his desk. His history professor, Ádám Herepei, the highly respected and admired paragon of the students of Nagyenyed, had a great deal to do with his decision. He, too, gave credence to the Hun–Avar–Hungarian relationship. The works of Ferenc Benkő,[10] professor of geography, may also have had an influence on the young Csoma; and he must have gathered inspiration from the rich library as well.

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We can see from what has been related above that Csoma learnt everything that could be learnt at Nagyenyed and that was quite a lot. Still he decided to make use of the opportunity offered by the college to its best students, and to continue his studies abroad. In the summer of 1815, he passed his final exams which entitled him to go to Göttingen on the college's so-called English scholarship. After acquiring the necessary permits, his exemption from military service, and his passport, he made a solemn promise to keep the vows he'd taken, and in January 1816 set out for Göttingen 1500 kilometres away. He arrived in the city on foot. On April 11, 1816 he enrolled at the university where he was to spend more than two years.

In Germany he was subject to a great many new impressions. Although he had seen Saxon towns in his homeland, Transylvania, too, since Brassó and Nagyenyed were undoubtedly full-fledged towns, still it was a great experience for him to get acquainted with "the original". For the towns and even the colleges in Transylvania were organized on the basis of the German pattern, the regulations of the college in Nagyenyed for instance, having been imported from Wittenberg and Heidelberg. The road he'd taken to get to Göttingen had probably led through Buda, Pozsony, Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Leipzig and Halle, and it may be assumed that during the university vacations (a month in the spring, two and a half to three months in the summer) he made trips from Göttingen, and got acquainted with further places and cities. Göttingen itself was unusual for him. Nagyenyed was a market town with 3500 inhabitants; Göttingen was the university town of the Principality of Hanover, and here 15,000 people lived. The university, the Academia Georgia Augusta, was founded in 1734 by the Prince of Hanover, King George II of England. The university comprised a huge library of 30,000 volumes and 5,000 manuscripts; it had a museum, too, a scholarly society and a scientific journal. Life there was exciting and diverse. At the time Csoma was there, there were approximately 1,100 students, about a fifth of them from abroad: Denmark, England, Sweden, France, Switzerland and even from the New World, America. The students did not live in dormitories, but were lodged in private homes. This, too, was new to Csoma.[11] And it was even stranger that the classes were held not in the university building but in the houses of the professors. The students thus ran from place to place all over town to go to classes, and spent their free time reading in the library which was in the university building. The latter was Csoma's favorite pastime, something he looked back on with gratitude twenty years later, too. He seems to have found his real home in the library.

Contact with students of so many nationalities gave new impetus to his heart's desire. They were all for the new national ideal, each with his own objectives in mind. The Burschenschaft student association with its goal of German unity was founded just on the eve of his arrival, in 1815, and soon (in 1817) it was organizing a large-scale demonstration in Wartburg. He learnt that the ideal of national unity and the sense of community of related peoples were not peculiar to Hungary, but were the dominant ideas of the age. It was perhaps of even greater significance that his cherished plan of travelling to Asia did not seem to be so far-fetched in the light of his new experiences as his fellow countrymen had believed. Every day there was some news coming from Asia, the reports and accounts of the different trading companies and travellers. Colonization had opened the roads leading to Asia, and although journeying there was dangerous, it was not impossible. Besides the eagerness of traders for huge profits, there developed another interest in Asia in the European mind: the wish to discover unknown cultures. Explorers of different nationalities competed with each other in giving accounts of their experiences of theretofore unknown writings, religions, and historical rarities, of unheard-of peoples and cultures, and educated Europeans were hungry for more. Almost every month one could read in the journals about strikingly new discoveries, find scientific descriptions which filled the white spots with knowledge and information. However, there were still *terra incognita* aplenty, and Csoma became convinced that the ancient homeland of the Hungarians was to be found in one of them. His conviction was confirmed by the fact that serious scholars at the university were immersed, among other things, in the question of the origin of the Hungarian people. The new interest in Asia had given rise to a new science, Oriental studies. Naturally, Csoma began to read the available literature with great enthusiasm, and attended all lectures where he could hear anything about

it. He saw his long-cherished dream become a focus of scientific interest: scholars who were not Hungarians, and therefore could be presumed free of emotional involvement, were trying to find the key to the mystery of the origin of the Hungarian people. The theory of Uighur–Hungarian kinship had, as we have seen, found its way to Nagyenyed, too; but in Göttingen he finally received more detailed and more precise information as to who these Uighurs were. Desguignes' detailed work published in 1756 contended that the Hungarian people resulted from the merger of some Uighurs and some Western Turkic peoples. This theory was adopted by Fischer, Schlözer and Pray with certain modifications. Csoma had read their versions already in Nagyenyed. In Göttingen, however, he found the latest study by the famous Orientalist, J. Klaproth, who discounted all their arguments, and challenged the equation of the Uighurs with the Ugrians most convincingly. His arguments were based on the analysis of sources, and not on assumptions and arbitrary interpretations of sources of uncertain validity. For Csoma, his approach must have been an example to follow, for a great number of books of doubtful value and questionable methodology had come out on the ancient homeland of the Hungarian people. Klaproth's[12] statements, on the other hand, all had their verification, his sources were subjected to comparative analysis, all in accordance with the rules of classical philology that Csoma knew so well. These were the rules of the new science, Oriental studies, too. This is what he learnt from the professors at Göttingen, primarily from Eichhorn,[13] an Orientalist of high renown, who was curator of the students from Nagyenyed studying on the English scholarship. Eichhorn was also a historian and an exegete who had written an 18 volume work on Biblical and Oriental literature, 3 volumes on the Old Testament and 5 volumes on the New Testament. We know from the recollections of his one-time fellow students that Eichhorn had a decisive influence on Csoma, primarily by turning his attention to the Arabic sources. Csoma was also probably influenced by A. Heeren, the historian and Orientalist, W. Mitscherlich, the professor of classics, C. F. Benecke, senior librarian, and J. F. Blumenbach, the professor of anthropology.

When he arrived in Göttingen, Csoma already knew seven languages. There, attending the lectures, he improved his knowledge of German; he also improved his French by attending special conversation classes. And then came the "new" languages: English, which he learnt from Mr. Fiorillo, and Arabic and Turkish which Eichhorn prodded him to learn. The notes he took in the library lead us to conjecture that besides these three languages, he managed at least to read Italian and Spanish on the basis of his knowledge of Latin and French.

With all these achievements in the field of learning, there was one thing that remained unchanged: the need to economize. The English scholarship was a fairly modest sum of money. In the first year, he managed to get free meals *(libera mensa)* and this helped. In the second year, (1817) he turned to his younger brother for financial aid; he mortgaged one of the small family plots to help him. To make matters worse, the good-hearted Csoma lent some money to one of his fellow students to enable him to travel home; the loan was never repaid, and he missed the sum sorely. From that time on, Csoma's propensity for distrusting people grew stronger—and we need hardly wonder.

He entertained no great hopes when he set out for Göttingen, at least from what he told his friend Ujfalvy in Vienna. He managed to set out on foot only with a loan from Eichhorn. Still, much later[14] he was to write about the years spent in Göttingen with grateful satisfaction: it was there that he kindled the torch by the light of which he clearly saw his objective—to find the ancient homeland of the Hungarians. He

told his friend Ujfalvy that his hopes had come true beyond all his expectations, and attached special importance to having learnt Arabic and Turkish languages in preparation for realizing his plan. Earlier biographies have emphasized the influence exerted on Csoma by Professor Eichhorn, and this is fully justified. More recent data may lead us to conjecture that another important incentive must have been the reading of professional literature; at least, this is what the notes of a contemporary of Csoma's suggest: "He also told me what had made him travel such long distances to faraway lands. During his stay in Göttingen, he read the works and memoirs on Eastern history and literature of Baron Szilveszter Sacy, an Orientalist of high renown in his time, and became convinced that since the Arabs were the most highly cultured people of the Middle Ages, . . . a thorough knowledge of mediaeval times could be gathered only from their writings, which were certain to contain also new data and information about the origin, kinship ties and earlier vicissitudes of our people; for that reason he took up Arabic, and while still in Göttingen familiarized himself with its elements under the guidance of Eichhorn, hoping that he would be amply rewarded for his industriousness in Constantinople where he was sure to find beautiful and rich Arabic manuscripts which would open up new sources unknown to the world so far, sources that would help him to achieve his goal."[15]

It would seem, then, that Csoma was most influenced in Göttingen by the works of Silvestre de Sacy (1758—1838), the French professor of Arabic and Iranian studies. However, his main inspiration in Germany was not the promise of Arabic sources. What it was we hear from a fellow student of Csoma's:

"Kőrösi's main character trait and vital principle was the love for his homeland burning in his heart. His main goal, his heart's desire, was to attain glory for his homeland.—His most ardent desire, at the mention of which his eyes seemed to glow with exultation, was 'to discover the obscure origins of our homeland'. He expressed his surprise 'that so far no one has undertaken to set out to find the cradle, the first homeland of our people, and that the nation itself has paid so little attention to this so far'. Since he frequently talked about this, we vaguely conjectured the enormous plan he was concocting in his mind."[16]

On July 29, 1818 he received permission to leave Göttingen at his own request and in the autumn of the same year he was in Nagyenyed again. He had set out with enthusiasm towards an uncertain goal, and now arrived home with a plan ripe and well-founded, his self-confidence strengthened, and full of overwhelming feeling for his homeland. He was burning with the desire to give an account of the experiences and knowledge gained, and hoped to receive a warm, friendly welcome. Instead, he encountered mostly scepticism, torpor, and indifference. He complained bitterly: "I must hasten to leave this land where even the more mature people are full of prejudice. I have been attacked from all sides with demands that I give up my planned journey, which is pronounced to be the unfeasible imagining of a sick mind. Am I to sacrifice the desires fostered in my bosom since my youth for them, the dream for which I have learnt thirteen living and dead languages, for which I have trained my body through a great deal of misery and poverty? I have struggled against their prejudices for a long time now, and have lost the patience I had."[17] And sure enough even amongst his closest friends he found some who did not hesitate to pronounce him "a fanatic and a fool".[18] Fortunately, there were also other people and other views. First and foremost among them was Councillor Mihály Kenderessy, an outstanding patron of culture in Transylvania, an ardent believer in the Asian origin of the Hungarians, a dedicated supporter of everything that fostered national feeling. Another person of high renown who stood by Csoma was Sámuel Gyarmathi, the first

proponent of the theory that there was a Finno–Ugrian family of languages; we have his account of his meeting with Csoma from a letter to a learned friend: "There is a young man in our country who has fully sacrificed himself for the sake of his homeland. This young man is de Kőrös, a Szekler from Háromszék." "He is ready to dedicate many years of unstinting effort to the noble end of solving the difficult question which many others have been pondering at their desks, and a few have even wandered all over Asia to settle, without expecting reward of any kind but the inexpressible delight of success. May our Lord help him!"[19] It was very probably Sámuel Gyarmathi who urged Csoma to include among the destinations of his journey "Russia, Finland and perhaps Lappland", and to devote some time to learning some Slavic languages first. Kenderessy hastened to help finance his study tour with 100 gold pieces. That is how in February of 1819 Csoma found himself in Temesvár, which had a significant South-Slav population. In the letter he wrote at the end of September, he reports that he had acquired a knowledge of Old Slavonic as a matter of course: "I can read it without a dictionary with ease"; and with that background, it was not difficult for him to understand the different dialects. He paid a hasty visit to Zagreb in Croatia, and then left for Nagyenyed on the first of November, enriched with the knowledge of a new language, Slav.

He was in a hurry to set out before winter, as if afraid that someone would try to dissuade him, or even hinder him in carrying out his plan. He had no passport nor even the hope of obtaining one in the near future. On November 23, 1819 he applied for a temporary border pass,[20] and on the 28th he was already at the Vöröstorony Pass, the Hungarian frontier.

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He did not have too many people to say good-bye to; his former fellow students, though they may once have shared his enthusiasm, had now "grown up" and found jobs either as ministers or as schoolmasters. Others were employed in the state administration, again others worked as administrators on some big estate, or in the worst case, as tutors to some rich noble family. Csoma himself had been offered the post of minister and schoolmaster in Máramarossziget during his last year in Göttingen but he was unable to give up the great plans of his youth. He became totally dedicated to it: he felt he had no choice but to set out to find the ancient homeland of the Hungarians—this was what he had been cut out for. For he saw what others were blind to: at stake was nothing less than the future, the self-esteem, the faith of his homeland. Everything was to be gained if he found the roots, the origins, the ancient home and companions of his people. He imagined how he would embrace his abandoned brethren as a prodigal son, and say: "At last I am among Hungarians".[21] After a year of travel, this is how he explained to his professors in Nagyenyed why he had decided to set out:

"Seeing how different our nation was from all the other European nations in respect of its language, character and clothes, what great uncertainty ruled the whole learned world as to the former location, the origin and ancient history of our people, as to the relationship of its language to other languages; and seeing, furthermore, how gravely mistaken were the foreign writers who, unaware of the character of our national language, and of the habits and customs of our nation, have tried to arrive at its origin and history solely from similarities of names; and finally seeing how some learned sons of our nation have been led astray (though they are right as to the kinship of the language) when attempting to judge the origin of our nation on the basis of these foreign writers, in order to satisfy my own desire and to demonstrate the gratitude

and love I feel towards my nation, I set out to investigate the origin of my homeland in the light of the torch I kindled in Germany, paying no heed to the pains it might cost me, and the dangers I might encounter."[22] It is obvious from his words that he disagreed with the theories of the "foreign writers" who relied merely on verbal similarities in their search for related peoples, and thus identified the Uighurs with the Ugrians, for instance. He thought no more of the "learned sons of our nation" who, though right on the point of linguistic relationship, disregarded the ethnic and the historical ties. It is easy to recognize in this his criticism of the Finno-Ugrian linguistic relationship, or more precisely his protest against treating it as all-important. We may remember that Sámuel Gyarmathi, the first proponent of the Finno-Ugrian relationship, had met Csoma in Kolozsvár several times, liked and respected him, and had even written letters of recommendation on his behalf.

We might well ask: what exactly did Csoma have in mind? Several memoirs, contemporary sources, and his own statements are unanimous in that the immediate goal of his journey was Constantinople, where he wanted to study the Arabic sources. And where did he suspect the ancient homeland of the Hungarians to be? Did the extremely reticent Csoma ever speak about this at all? He did, once. At least unequivocally only once, in the testament which he left with the Englishman, GeorgeWillock, Resident at Teheran early on in his journey. Dated March 1st, 1821, it was put into a closed envelope addressed to the professors of Nagyenyed. Mr. Willock carefully guarded the letter entrusted to him and only posted it, in keeping with Csoma's wishes, when several years had elapsed and he still had heard no news of him. The letter was sent on to the addressees along with one dated May 22, 1823. What was in Csoma's testament? "Trusting in Divine Providence, which so far has so miraculously kept watch over my life, I am now leaving for the most ancient homeland of our ancestors, to Great and Little Bokharia, but if I, God forbid, should be so unlucky as not to complete my mission, I hereby assure the one who will follow in my footsteps to accomplish my goal that having learned Turkish in Constantinople, he may confidently set out to the countries mentioned, and start his investigations there. For from what I have seen so far, I am fully convinced that our ancestors were descendents of these territories who . . . at different times forming different dynasties were forced by the many revolutions in Asia to go to Europe through Syria, Assyria, Armenia, Georgia, and Russia."[23] This was the secret he had so carefully guarded so long. Not out of jealousy, but rather because he wanted first of all to make sure of it. He did not want to add one more to the existing store of assumptions, knowing full well that it would not in any case be credited. He wanted first to acquire proof. But he wanted to bequeath his secret to his nation in the event of his death; thence the sealed letter. He could not foresee that it would be sent home when he was lost in his studies in the monasteries of Tibet. And it was better he did not, for his testament moved no one to set out to verify the truth of his statement. Simply because they hardly understood what it meant, and if they did, they did not believe it.

Csoma, thus, suspected "the most ancient homeland of our ancestors" to have been the homeland of the Uighurs in Great and Little Bokharia, which is no other than Western Turkestan, i.e. Bokhara and its vicinity in today's Soviet Union, and Eastern Turkestan, i.e. the Tarim Basin, the Autonomous Territory of Hsinchiang in today's China. We can conclude from Csoma's letter that his aim was to go to these places, and then follow the way he assumed the Hungarians of old had taken in their wanderings. Today we do not yet know what his whole theory was based on but presumably he was led by Arabic sources. His testament also laid great emphasis on the importance of studying the different sources: "The monuments to be found in the provinces men-

tioned, the analysis of the customs, habits and traditions of these peoples inform the explorer what dynasties our ancestors formed, when and under what names, what deeds they performed, and what reasons they had for going towards Europe."[24]

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This was Csoma de Kőrös's objective when on November 28, 1819 he left his homeland. Nobody awaited him at the stations of his journey, the money he had was no more than what he would have needed to live on for a month or two at home, and he never knew where he would spend the next night. He was on his way to Constantinople when he was forced to change his route on account of the plague, and a few months later he was already in Persia: Vöröstorony Pass (November 28, 1819), Bucharest (early December, 1819—January 1, 1820), crossed the Danube at Rustchuk (January 3), on to Sofia (January 11), to Philippopolis (January 16–25), went along the Marica River, to Enos (February 5–7); from there by boat to Chios (February 10), on to Rhodes, to Alexandria (February 28–March 15), to Larnica, Sidon, Beyruth, Tripoli, Latakia (beginning of April—April 6); from there on foot again to Aleppo (April 12–May 20), to Orfa, Merdin, Mosul; from there on a raft to Baghdad (July 21–September 4); then again on foot to Kermanshah, Hamadan and finally to Teheran, where he arrived on October 4, 1820.

Csoma, as we know, wanted first of all to study the Arabic sources. He was on his way to Constantinople when at Philippopolis he was informed of the plague devastating the Turkish capital; he therefore changed his route and sailed to Alexandria, to visit the libraries either there or in Cairo. However, the spreading plague pursued him. He could have turned back at Aleppo towards Constantinople, but instead, seeming to have decided to postpone studying the Arabic sources until a later date, he set out for Great and Little Bokharia at that point. The world he entered grew less and less familiar. At first, he found Austrian Embassies (in Alexandria and in Latakia); in Aleppo, however, he was able to get his visa certified only at the Italian Embassy, and from Baghdad onwards only the British Embassies represented Europe. Any assistance was of great significance to Csoma who had very little money; much later, he recalled with gratitude all those who had supported him during his journey: József Schäfer, a blacksmith of Tyrolian origin in Alexandria, Ignác Pohle a Czech tradesman in Aleppo, and his agent, Antal Swoboda in Baghdad, as well as Mr. Bellino, secretary at the British Embassy in Baghdad. Although he failed to gain access to the Arabic sources, he still considered his journey fruitful since he had the chance to improve his knowledge of Arabic and Turkish: "As it had always been a very pleasant occupation of mine to study foreign languages and to investigate the history of nations according to time, place and environment, setting myself a specific aim, these were the fields I primarily practised myself in. The delight I found in these occupations while discovering many secrets of times long past is indescribable."[25]

He wrote this letter already from Persia, from Teheran, to his professors in Nagyenyed: "I have spent more than two months now in Teheran, the residential city of Persia, and I am very much hopeful that, unless some great misfortune befalls me, although I have taken a route different from the one commonly suggested, I shall soon be able to prove that my conviction was well-founded." And he declared: "I shall not cease to continue along the path I took when I left my homeland, and with no less zeal than I then possessed."[26] In his letter he asked his professors for financial support for his journey, since he had managed to prove that the trip undertaken alone was possible and also promising: "Having received the money, I shall be home in a year's

time, and then all those who value the honour of their homeland shall hear glad tidings from me in great detail."[27] However, he did not need to wait for the financial assistance to arrive from home, as the Willock brothers at the British Embassy not only took him under their wing but also made fast friends with him. Csoma enjoyed their hospitality for half a year, devoting his time to studying the Persian language, the language of diplomacy in the East. But Csoma's approach to it was not simply functional: he loved studying foreign languages, talking to people in their mother tongue, and he might well have believed that this very language would prove to be the language related to the Hungarian that he was looking for, and through which he would find a related people.

Teheran meant the end of the world for the Europeans; beyond it, there were not even embassies until India, and the roads between Persia and India were ruled by wandering tribes of unpredictable behaviour. So the Willock brothers tried to dissuade Csoma from continuing his journey, but to no avail. They helped him out with 40 gold pieces, to save him financial trouble at least. Csoma, too, was aware of the dangers of his journey; he left all his documents with the Willock brothers and, thinking of his possible death, also the testament already quoted from. He continued his journey on March 1, 1821 and from that time on until November 1824 all trace of him was lost. The donations made from all over Transylvania in response to his letter, a considerable sum, could not be sent to him for lack of an address. While at home concern about him mounted, so that even his death was rumoured, he pushed on to more and more remote places: Nishapur, Meshed (April 18–October 20, 1821), Mew, Bokhara (November 18–23, 1821), Balk, Kulm, Bamian Pass, Kabul (January 6–16, 1822), Daka (January 26), Peshawar, Ravalpindi, Lahore (March 12–23, 1822), Amritsar, Jammu, Banihal Pass, and Srinagar, where he arrived on April 17, 1822.

This stretch of his route abounded in trials and vicissitudes. To begin with, in Meshed, Csoma disappeared for some time. In his later account, he only said in his usual laconic manner that he had been forced to spend a longer period there because of the uncertain state of affairs in the vicinity. The fact is that J. B. Frazer,[28] the well-known British traveller entrusted by the Willock brothers to try to get news of him, found no trace of him. As H. Willock reported: "I have made all the possible enquiries after de Kőrös but so far without any result, só it seems that he was compelled by his poverty to keep in hiding."[29] How he spent his time in Meshed is not known to us. Anyway, his half-year stay in the capital of Horassan certainly improved his knowledge of Persian. When the state of siege in the neighbouring provinces eased, he set out for Bokhara, and arrived there safely after crossing the territory of the dangerous Turkomans (today, Türkmenistan). What happened next cannot help but take us by surprise. We will recall that Csoma had hoped to find the ancient homeland of the Hungarians in this area. Yet after having spent barely five days in the famous oasis town, he made haste to leave it and "without as much as looking back", set out in a completely different direction. In his later account of his journey he only noted briefly that he had been compelled to leave the capital of the then independent emirate by the threat of a Russian attack. But it is beyond our comprehension how such a false alarm could compel him to modify his plans so thoroughly. More surprising is the new route he chose. He could have gone towards Samarkand or Jarkend, i.e. in the direction he had conjectured the ancient homeland of the Hungarians to be. Instead, he chose to go almost in the opposite direction. Csoma was never to give an explanation for this surprising set of moves, which will, thus, probably remain a puzzle forever. Anyway, he rapidly passed through Afghanistan, discovering just by the way the then still unidentified colossal Buddhas in the Bamian Pass, and staying for

a short while in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Then he heard that there were French officers staying nearby and was, quite understandably, happy to join them at the village of Dekka on January 26, 1822; together they crossed the famous and ill-famed Khyber Pass, thus stepping on Indian soil. His travelling companions were no ordinary soldiers, but Generals Allard and Ventura, men in the service of the increasingly powerful Sikh maharaja, Ranjit Singh. They were on their way to Lahore, the capital of the awe-inspiring maharaja. Csoma felt happy in their company, and recalled the time spent with them with pleasure; when later he became uncertain as to how to go on (July 1822), he intended to return to join them in Lahore. In spite of this, he did not spend much time here either, but went through Armisar, the holy city of the Sikhs to Jammu, the capital of the Dogra raja, from where he made his way to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir through the Banihal Pass. From Teheran on, he had got by on his knowledge of Persian, one of the most used languages in Bokhara, Afghanistan, Punjab and Kashmir. Interestingly enough, he had spoken Persian even with the French officers, at least that is what we read in the account given by Jacquemont, a French traveller who had encountered them. The destination of his journey was unequivocal: since he had not managed to reach Great Bokharia, he wanted to get to Little Bokharia. He was on his way to Yarkand, through Leh, the capital of Ladakh.

It is ironic that Csoma, who was in such a hurry, spent more than a year along the Srinagar-Leh route and covered the complete distance (434 km) three times, and two-thirds of it (Leh-Dras: 287 km) twice. His itinerary here was the following: Srinagar (April 17–May 19, 1822), Leh (June 9–July 4, 1822), Dras (July 16, 1822), Leh (August 26–end of October, 1822), Srinagar (November 26, 1822–May 2, 1823), Leh (June 1–July 17, 1823). Clearly, Csoma was not wandering aimlessly back and forth along the difficult Himalayan paths and mountain passes. He had serious reasons for all this, and it was probably the most decisive phase of his life, though he himself did not yet know it. But let us take things in chronological order. From Srinagar, which lay at a height of 1600 metres, he climbed up to Tibet, more precisely, to Western Tibet, a height of 4000 metres. The "gate" was the Zoji-la, the Four Devils Pass, lying at a distance of 110 km. Here he found a completely unknown world. Awesomely beautiful blue mountain ranges loomed up in front of him; then all at once desolate stone deserts made going on seem impossible. He found sparkling sunshine, crystal-clear air, majestic silence, and murmuring brooks with rope-bridges over them, trapezoid-shaped houses with flat roofs and eyebrows above the windows, praying walls along the roads, stupas, Lamaist monasteries, and poor villages with copper-skinned Tibetans, speaking a language written in characters different from anything he had ever experienced. He was eager, however, to make his way towards Yarkand, the presumed ancestral home of the Hungarians. For almost a whole month he waited in Leh for companions for the trip to Yarkand about 600 km away, but all in vain, though Leh was where the caravan roads crossed. Still, he was unable to find a caravan which he could join. After waiting a month, he made up his mind to turn back and go to Lahore. A two weeks' walk brought him to the small village of Dras; here, on July 16, 1822 he met William Moorcroft,[30] 14 years his senior, coming from the opposite direction, on his way to Leh.

The 52-year-old Englishman had an air of self-confidence. No internal conviction had driven him to leave his homeland on an uncertain romantic search in faraway Tibet. On the contrary: he always knew exactly what to do and where to go. He was the plenipotentiary of the British Government of India, entrusted with the most dangerous task of reconnoitring in the small, still independent states adjoining the

British Empire, of exploring the political situation there, offering British assistance to the rulers, but mainly, of fending off the similar initiatives of the competing colonizer, Czarist Russia. Officially he was "Superintendent of the East-India Company's stud-farm on mission to Upper-Asia"; but this would hardly have authorized him to make official overtures to the king of Western Tibet, or to intercept messages like the one written in Persian and sent by the Czarist court to Ranjit Singh. No doubt, he believed in the righteousness of his mission to extend the British Empire as widely as possible, for this, in his view, meant progress and a cultured way of life to the peoples of Asia. Events only served to confirm this idea of his. The power of the British Empire was gloriously on the increase, and he was one of its major active factors. His self-confidence was reinforced also by something else: he never felt the restricting, depressing weight of lack of money. He was a successful man, hurrying to Leh to meet the part of his small expedition sent to the province of Spiti to promote the British interests just taking root there. Csoma de Kőrös, coming from the opposite direction, had none of the advantages mentioned above: he had no institution to support him, had no specific mission to fulfil; he lived on charity, and success escaped him. He had not managed to reach Constantinople, he had been chased out of Alexandria by the epidemic and from Bokhara by the fear of war, and now he had not succeeded in setting out for Yarkand either. However, he spoke 14 languages, and had performed the no less admirable feat of having wandered all over much of Asia on foot. His knowledge and adaptibility arouse Moorcroft's interest. This is how he summarized his experience a year later:

"Mr. Alexander Csoma of Koros in Transylvania resolved to penetrate the eastern parts of Asia for the laudable and patriotic object of ascertaining, if practicable (that) the truth of the reported former connection of the Hungarians with the nabois (= natives?) of the lothi (= bothi?) country.—By a most prudent conduct and thro' a patient fortitude supported by that ardent enthusiasm whence originate enterprises of this complexion he has without accident confronted the difficulties and dangers of a journey by land seldom in respect to length.—Withdrawing from Bokhara this (= with?) a respect of that country being involved in warfare Mr. Csoma as an Armenian traversed Uffghanistan, part of the Punjab, crossed Kashmeer and reached Leh under the hope of finding the road open to Yarkand.—Disappointed in the latter expectation he introduced himself to me in July last on the western frontier of Ludakh . . . "

"I have known this gentleman for five months most intimately, and can give the strongest testimony to his integrity, prudence, and devotedness to the cause of science, which, if fully explained, might, in the opinion of many, be conceived to border on enthusiasm."[31]

Moorcroft made up his mind to include Csoma in some of his plans, and told him that it would be of service to him if someone learnt Tibetan and made a dictionary and a grammar book. This purely scholarly task began to look attractive to Csoma, since he believed it was possible that he would find in the multitude of unknown Tibetan books data which might furnish information about the Hungarians' homeland. This is how Moorcroft described the coincidence of interests:

"As soon as well acquainted with Mr. Csomas peculiar qualifications I suggested the obligation he would confer on the Literate of Europe by devoting a certain portion of his time to obtain an acquaintance with the language and literary treasures of Tibut and Tangoot of which a cursory glimpse had suggested to me the suspicion of their being of no ordinary character.—An examination of this proposition indicated a coincidence with the accomplishment of the aims originally entertained by Mr. Csoma and

had induced in him a resolution to make the attempt." "As well in pursuance of original plans of his own *for the development of some obscure points of Asiatic and of European history*, as of some suggestions stated by me, Mr. Csoma will endeavour to remain in Tibet until he shall have become master of the language of that country, and be completely acquainted with the subjects its literature contains, which is likely, on many accounts, to prove interesting to the European world."[32]

This is how Csoma recalled the encounter which was to exert such a decisive influence on his life:

"I was, on my return, near the frontier of Cashmere when, on the 16th of July 1822, I was agreeably surprised to find Mr. Moorcroft at Himbabs. He was alone. I acquainted him with all my circumstances and designs, and by his permission remained with him. I accompanied him on his return to Leh, where we arrived on the 26th August. In September, after Mr. Trebeck's arrival from Piti, Mr. Moorcroft gave me to peruse the large volume of the Alphabetum Tibetanum, wherein I found much respecting Tibet and the Tibetan literature, and being desirous to be acquainted with the structure of that curious tongue, at the departure of Mr. Moorcroft from Leh to proceed to Cashmere, in the last days of September, I begged leave to remain with Mr. Trebeck, who obtained for me the conversation and instruction of an intelligent person, who was well acquainted with the Tibetan and Persian languages; and by this medium I obtained considerable insight in the Tibetan."[33]

It seems that Moorcroft did not have to prod Csoma too much; true to his consuming interest in everything that was new, he got down to studying right away. Together with Moorcroft's companions, Trebeck and Mir Izzat Ullah, he went back to Srinagar where "considering what I had read and learned on the Tibetan language, I became desirous to apply myself, if assisted to it, to learn it grammatically, so as to penetrate into the contents of those numerous and highly interesting volumes which are to be found in every large monastery. I communicated my ideas respecting this matter to Mr. Moorcroft, who, after a mature consideration, gave me his approbation, favoured me with money for my necessary subsistence, and permitted me to return to Ladak . . . "[34]

At this point a formal contract was concluded which contained the following: Moorcroft was to inform the Calcuttan government of the agreement with Csoma and to this Csoma attached the following clause in Latin:

"Postquam e Litteris Domini Gulielmi Moorcroft Dispositiones has in rem meam tam favorabilis grato animo audivissem totus huic Epistolae subscribo, meque obligo, quidquid in viribus meis erit pro Respublica Litteraria, summo studio et ardore me processiturum.— Alexander Csoma de Koras
Philologiae Studiosus"
(Having learnt with gratitude from his letter about the favourable steps taken by Mr. William Moorcroft concerning my affairs hereby I fully subscribe to them and promise that I will do my very best to serve with all my strength and diligence the cultured public (Respublica Litteraria). Alexander Csoma de Koras, student of philology.)[35]

Both this and Csoma's recollections indicate that Csoma admired Moorcroft and perhaps even overemphasized the importance of his consent and permission. From the letters it seems that now it was not so much Moorcroft as Csoma who was eager for his Tibetan studies to begin. In order to understand Csoma's feelings for Moorcroft, it is necessary to bear in mind some of the circumstances. First among these is definitely Csoma's sense of helplessness; after wandering about for several years, he seem-

ed no closer to realizing his plans than before. All the vicissitudes of this journey, his constant, pressing financial worries must have worn him out. It is quite certain that he desired more and more to belong somewhere, to feel settled at least for some short period of time. The main reason for Csoma's attachment, however, was that Moorcroft gave him something he had not received for a very long time: esteem. He recognized his scholarly abilities, and felt a sincere respect for the noble objectives that Csoma himself considered sacred. An important, influential person who had seen and experienced a great many things and was a man of considerable culture saw him not as a fanatic and a fool as many had done even at home, but, on the contrary, admired him and urged him to see through the goals he had freely set himself. For the first time in a long while, he became friends with someone.

It would be difficult to decide who was more keen by then on Csoma's beginning his Tibetan studies. This is how Moorcroft saw the situation: " . . . A knowledge of the language alone is an acquisition not without a certain commercial, or possibly, political Value.—This acquisition however at present reposes solely upon the industry, health and facilities of one individual whilst the objects at issue appear to me of an importance sufficient to justify a multiplication of the means of obtaining them. In this view of the subject I thought it might be expedient to hold out an invitation to someone of the members of the missionary Society at Serampoor or to a person selected by them to undertake a journey to Ladakh and Mr. Csoma agreed with me upon this point when it underwent a canvass just before his departure.—He stated that if a suitable person would join him in a year from this date he would give him such instructions as might be then in his power towards facilitating his acquaintance with the Language of Tibut.—In the hope that a proper person may be induced to undertake the adventure I beg to submit the notification to you under an impression that possibly the Govt might themselves be disposed to patronize the undertaking ..."

In the report he sent to the government, he also wrote that "Mr. Csoma in pursuance of this design returns without a companion to Lodakh taking letters from me along with the other requisits of introduction addressed to the minister and to other officers of the Govt as also to the Superiors of certain monasteries with whom I am in terms of intimacy.—These display the object of the enterprise and request the sanction and aid of the Govt towards its attainment and the permission of the Lammas for Mr. Csoma to inspect the libraries of their respective communities.—And I have recommended Mr. Csoma especially to the particular attention and friendship of Lanye (= Sanye) Puntzo, the Principal Lamma of Zangla in Zanskarintas whose Establishment I confidently expect will be received as an eminate (= inmate)."[36] At the same time he asked the Asiatic Society of Bengal to assist Csoma's work by providing him with books. And finally, he noted: "It is possible that the contingency of my death, or of delay of the present expedition beyond a certain period mentioned to Mr. Csoma"[37] might raise unexpected obstacles; in that event Csoma was to visit Captain Kennedy in Sabathu with the letter of recommendation he had given him; the Captain would then take care of him. Thus, armed with a bunch of letters of recommendation, on March 2, 1823 Csoma said good-bye to his benefactor, Moorcroft. They never saw each other again, for Moorcroft's premonition of his death came true. This is how Csoma related the conclusion of this episode: "After my return to Ladak I arrived at Leh on the 1st of June 1923, delivered Mr. Moorcroft's and Meer Izzut Oollah's letters and presents to the Khalon. This Prime Minister recommended me in a letter to the Lama of Yangla; gave me a passport, and favoured me with about eight pounds of tea. From Leh, travelling in a south-westerly direction, on the ninth day I arrived at Yangla . . . "[38]

That is how Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, who had set out to find the ancient homeland of the Hungarians, got to lama Sangye Puntsog in the distant monastery of Zangla. As Skander Beg, he had been learning Tibetan for a year, and so was able to converse with the lama appointed to be his language teacher without need for a mediating language. His plans were definite:

"Mr. Csoma is willing to believe that in about twelve months he shall be able to collect materials for a vocabulary in Tibutan and Latin and also for a grammar."[39]

However, the deadline was impossible to keep; Tibetan culture was much richer than he had originally assumed. He spent seven years—with short interruptions—working with Sangye Puntsog, who is worth getting to know more thoroughly.

So who was this Sangye Puntsog whom Csoma always referred to only as "the Lama"? Like all his fellow monks, he had become a novice in one of the red-capped monasteries at a very early age. At the age of thirty-two, he set out on a long study tour of distant lands, visiting Great Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal. During his six-year journey, he walked at least six thousand kilometres. Like Csoma, he went everywhere on foot, but there was an essential difference. Everywhere he was received by familiar monasteries. During his journey he visited Tashilhunpo, the residence of the Panchen Lamas; Lhasa, the Rome of Tibet, the residence of the Dalai Lamas. That is where he acquired the Lhasa dialect, and the official administrative language based on it. In Bhutan he studied astronomy with great enthusiasm. Not long after he returned home, at the age of forty, he married the widow of the Prince of Zangla; from that time on, he lived in the monastery no longer although the monks of the red-capped Lamaist order were permitted to marry. He was the head doctor in Ladakh, and paid frequent visits to the court of Ladakh where he carried on the official correspondence, especially when letters had to be written to Lhasa or Tashilhunpo. He was a man highly esteemed in Zanskar, extraordinarily erudite and broad-minded. He had an excellent knowledge of the Lamaist Canon, of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*, and among the sciences, of medicine *(gso)*, astronomy *(bstan-rtsis)*, linguistics *(sgra)*, poetry *(snyan-ngag)* and dialectics *(gtan-tshig)*. He had an impressive library of his own, and through his connections could easily get books from the monasteries as well. All this we learn from one of Csoma's letters. This is how Doctor Gerard, an outsider, characterized him:

"The Lama is a man of vast acquirements, strangely disguised under modest confidence of superiority, the mildest and most unassuming address, and a countenance seldom disturbed by a smile. His learning has not made him bigoted or self-sufficient, but it is singularly contrasted with his person and appearance, which are humble and dignified and greasy."[40] The last remark of the characterization which cannot help but make the reader smile is a comment on the habits of most Tibetans: because of the extremely cold weather there, washing was a practice fairly unknown. Another outstanding feature of the Lama's character was that, compared to his fellow-lamas, he had an extremely enquiring mind; later, he was to show his interest in the Europeans and British India on several occasions. This openness was almost unheard-of in the world of Lamaism.

On reading the characterizations available about the Lama, we cannot help being struck by the similarity they bear to the descriptions given of Csoma by his one-time fellow students. This, in all probability, was the reason they could work together for so long.

Csoma had to learn two languages simultaneously, spoken and literary Tibetan. The two were widely different from each other not only in pronunciation but in grammatical structure and vocabulary as well. Csoma soon got over these difficulties:

"It was by the medium of the Persian language that I learned so much from the Tibetan, that, after my return to Ladak, I could communicate my ideas to the Lama."[41] "During my residence in Zanskar, by the able assistance of that intelligent man, I learned grammatically the language, and became acquainted with many literary treasures shut up in 320 large printed volumes, which are the basis of all Tibetan learning and religion. These volumes, divided in two classes, and each class containing other subdivisions, are all taken from Indian Sanskrit, and were translated into Tibetan."[42]

In short, soon Csoma was studying the Tibetan Lamaist Canon, the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur;* from this he learned that Lamaism originated in the Buddhism of India. It was then that he started work on a Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary, primarily on the material that has come to be known as *Mahavyutpatti*, which he described as follows: "As there are several collections of Sanskrit and Tibetan words among my other Tibetan writings, I brought with me a copy of the largest, taken out of one of the above-mentioned volumes, consisting of 154 leaves, every page of six lines."[43]

At his request, the Lama collected in the course of three months several thousand words according to definite thematical groups: the names of the gods of the Buddhist pantheon, of the parts of the human body, of animals, of different furniture and objects, of grammatical terms, of numbers, of colours, of monasteries, of sects, and of plants and minerals, and wrote them down according to Csoma's directions.

Besides working on the lists of words, Csoma began to study the extremely rich Tibetan literature, and had different lamas write different syllabi. "The same person at my request, wrote me a short account on grammar, and on the five sciences mentioned in the last place. On about five sheets the history of medicine, and the contents of its eight branches, arranged in chapters after the system of the most celebrated physicians, also in two sheets an account on astronomy, to find the places of the sun, moon, and planets, and to calculate eclipses. I have also in about ten sheets an account of the whole religious system of the Buddhists, written, at my request, in fine capital characters by a Lama of great reputation, a relative and friend of the Lama whose pupil I was. For an account respecting learning in general, and logic in particular, I have the answer of a celebrated Rab-hbyams-pa (doctor of philosophy), who was twenty-five years at Lassa, and now is sixty-five years old."[44]

Since then we have learnt a great deal more about these syllabi, as these precious treasures were sent to Budapest as Csoma's legacy and are now in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The Lama, i.e. Sangs-rgyas phun-tshogs wrote short treatises on the five sciences *(sgra dang snyan-ngag sdeb-skyor sogs-kyi don)*, on medicine *(gso-dpyad yan-lag brgyad-pa, Rgyud-bzhi'i bsdoms-tshig bkod-pa)* and on astronomy *(rtsis-kyi bstan-bcos)*. The renowned abbot of the Rdzong-khul Monastery, Kundga' chos-legs, wrote about the Buddhist religious system under the title "The Questions of the European Skander" *(rgya-gar rum-yul-pa Sken-dhas dris-lan);* while Tshul-khrims rgya-mtsho, a scholar of religion, wrote a short summary of logic and the sciences under the title "The ship penetrating into the sea of learning systems" *(Grub-mtha'i rgya-mtshor 'jug-pa'i gru-rdzing)*. As an example of what these syllabi were like, let us take a look at the one by Tshul-khrims rgya-mtsho. This is what the Lama wrote in the colophon:

"The Rūmi Skandher beg (= Alexander Csoma de Kőrös), who is like the vast, open skies in his unshakable fortitude and his insight demonstrated in sciences, undertaking the ardous journey from the large ocean of the Orient to jasmine-covered Upper Tibet, in his search for Learning, not for his own selfish purpose but for the salvation of all people, and arriving at Zangla, obtained knowledge, through the power

of the prayer, of me, and from Zangla the revered seat of the King of Learning, the earthly governor in Maṅ-yul province, he sent his questions about the Buddhist discourses accompanied with humble asking and valuable presents; and beseechingly urged me that he needed to know how many years had passed since the Lord of Wisdom, the Omniscient, the Companion of the Sun (= Buddha) had departed from the earthly suffering to the Empire of the Quietude (= Nirvāna); and since for establishing this one needs to be equipped with familiarity with chronology which I myself am not trained in I thoroughly studied the legends, chronicles and other books and after careful calculations I found that from the departure of the Omniscient, the Companion of the Sun from earthly suffering to the Empire of Quietude three thousand & seventytwo years have passed till the present year (= 1824) of the fourteenth era named Saving the Sun, when I, the scholar Tshul-khrims-rgya-mtsho—an expert in the Tripitaka and the four Tantras—I, who call myself only Ldum-mkhan, compiled, in my residence, the Sunlit Earth, under favourable time, the book answering the questions titled 'The ship penetrating into the sea of learning systems'."

Csoma's questions were in four main areas:

"The analysis of the word *saṅs-rgyas* (i.e. Buddha) and why Buddha was given this name?"

"Linguistics, logic, technics, medicine, the inner science (. . .) and the minor sciences: metrics, theory of literature and poetry, lexicography, drama, astrology—have these sciences existed in Tibet from time immemorial or have they originated from other countries?"

"How did the science of logic, in the first place, take shape and what is its history; who were its first teachers, and who were the *lo-tsa-vas* (translators) on its appearance in Tibet?"

"Which are the heretic sects incompatible with Buddha's teaching? . . ."[45]

On the basis of the lamas' detailed answers to these questions, Csoma was later to write his studies in Tibetology.

Yet, however fascinated he was by all this, Csoma did not forget about the original objective of his journey either; he was greatly excited to discover the name of the Uighurs in the Tibetan sources:

"In the Tibetan books the name of the Yugurs is written Yoogoor, and their country sometimes is called Yoogera. I could not learn further any other interesting things on the Yoogoors, except that in the 'Stangyur's' register is mentioned a small treatise translated from the Yoogoor language, containing a short account on the wandering from one country to another of an original statue representing Shakya."[46]

So Csoma was making fine progress in his studies, and his enthusiasm, it seems, did not wane. Still, after a year's work, he decided to leave the Monastery of Zangla. We do not know what made him decide to do so. Did the deadline he agreed on with Moorcroft expire? Would it not have been safe to stay there any longer? Or did he merely wish to move to Kulu Province, where the climate was milder? It seems that the move had been suggested by the Lama:

"As I could not remain longer in that country with advantage to myself I left it, having agreed with the Lama to pass the winter, 1824–25, with him at Sultanpore, in Coolloo (whereto his relations, also the wives of two chiefs of Lahool, commonly descend for every winter, and whom he was desirous to visit there), and to arrange the collected materials for a vocabulary in Tibetan and English. The Lama was detained by some business, and prevented for some days leaving Zanskar.—As the winter was daily approaching, by his counsel I continued my march to pass the snowy mountains before the passage would be obstructed by the fall of any heavy snow. I arrived

at Sultanpore, in Coolloo, without any danger, and from thence, passing to Mendee, Suketee, Belaspore, on the 26th of November of the last year I reached Subathoo. On my arrival I expected the Lama would follow me in about ten days. He came not, and at present I have no hope he will join me, as the pass in the Himalaya is now closed against him."[47]

Csoma arrived in Sabathu starved, frozen, and exhausted, but with Moorcroft's letter of recommendation to Captain Kennedy in his pocket, and carrying with him the rich material proving that he had kept all his promises and had worked assiduously on compiling the dictionary. And in all probability, it was joyfully and full of expectations that he arrived at the British outpost, where, however, he got less than a cold welcome; he was treated with outright suspicion. Kennedy at once reported the case to his superiors at Ambala: "An European traveller, who gives his name as Alexander Csoma de Körös, a subject of Hungary, has arrived at this post",[48] and asked for instructions as to what to do with him. The answer arrived the next day: "Be good enough to detain the European traveller at Sabathú until instructions of the agent to the Governor-General at Delhi can be received regarding him."[49] Captain Kennedy's superiors must certainly have known that Moorcroft had indeed concluded an agreement with a Hungarian traveller since, according to the entries in the files, they had received the "contract" on October 10, 1823. Still, for purposes of identification, they requested Csoma to submit a report in a letter dated December 24, 1824. It was at this request that on January 28, 1825 Csoma wrote a detailed account which began as follows: "I am a native of the Siculian nation, a tribe of those Hungarians . . ."[50] and then, as instructed, related his life up to that time in some detail, to the great fortune of posterity, since without this we would know very little about its vicissitudes. His report, however, covered not only the past, but also looked to the future:

"There is yet in Asia a vast *terra incognita* for oriental literature. If the Asiatic Society in Calcutta would engage for the illuminating the map of this *terra incognita*, as in the last four years of my travelling in Asia I depended for my necessary subsistence entirely upon British generosity, I shall be happy if I can serve that honourable Society with the first sketches of my researches. If this should not meet with the approbation of Government, I beg to be allowed to return to Mr. Moorcroft, to whose liberality and kindness I am at present entirely indebted for my subsistence."[51]

The groundless suspicion, the idle waiting about were humiliating for Csoma, as was the patronizing behaviour of the company of gentlemen at the British border station. The indignities he suffered here he reflected on only several years later; at the time, he kept silent and waited. Finally, the government's permission for him to continue his study tour arrived; he was even to receive financial assistance. At the same time, the government called upon the Asiatic Society of Bengal to furnish him with instructions, and to consider him in its employ.

"The Hungarian traveller, Csoma de Körös, had arrived in the previous November at Sabathú, with a letter of recommendation from Mr. Moorcroft, and that, as the Government and the local authorities had became satisfied that the object which he had in view was the study of the language, literature, and history of Tibet, he had been granted permission to continue his journey, and should, moreover, receive pecuniary assistance whilst so engaged. – In return for this, Mr. de Körös has expressed his wish to place the results of his literary labours and inquiries at the disposal of the British Government. It appears to Government desirable that we should take advantage of this opportunity for procuring a good grammar and vocabulary of the Tibetan language, and also translations of some of the historical tracts." "He will also

be requested . . . to be guided by any advice and suggestions that may be offered by you."[52]

For Csoma, the most important thing was that he had a free pass again. He himself must have done some reckoning as to what he had managed to accomplish to that time: in his agreement with Moorcroft, he had undertaken to compile a Tibetan–Latin dictionary within a year, and he felt that he had, on the whole, managed to live up to his task. Meanwhile, however, he had discovered a *terra incognita*, the enormous treasure house of Tibetan literature, the study of which required much more time. He had been running short of money in Zangla, and the Lama also had suggested that they should move to Sultanpore; that is how he had got to Sabathu. The Lama, in spite of his promise, had failed to follow him; and the British had taken him for a spy. Now, however, everything had been clarified; he set off in a hurry before the rainy season set in on July 6, 1825. He took with him his half-finished manuscripts, as well as the letters of recommendation of his newly acquired benefactors, Captain Kennedy and Doctor Gerard. He wavered as to which route to take. The Sutlej Valley was always passable, (though much less comfortably in the summer rainy season), and was also closer to Sabathu. He also suspected that it was no accident that Sangye Puntsog had failed to follow him the previous autumn.

"On leaving Sabathú, on the 6th of June, I was not yet decided which route of the two I should take, whether that by Kulu or Besarh; but being furnished by your kindness with recommendatory passports for either case, and being informed that in the upper part of the Besarh there are some villages in which the language is Tibetan, and that there are some monasteries,—in hope to find an intelligent person in that part for my purpose,—I resolved at Kotgarh to take my journey along the Sutlej by Besarh."[53]

He did find a monastery; moreover, one in which both collections of the Lamaist Canon could be found: the Monastery of Kanum. But he failed to find here a person suitable for carrying out the task at hand. Probably it was then that he realized that very few among the lamas were capable of teaching, and that Sangye Puntsog had a special talent. He made up his mind to go and find him again, and travelled to Zanskar through Spitin and Lahoul. He arrived at the Lama's village, Teesa, on August 12; the Lama, however, was not at home and was expected to return only a month later, towards the end of September. When he did arrive, Csoma made a contract with him: "Now I have made arrangements with him for finishing the works I have planned. He has engaged to dwell and labour with me from the 10th of November till the summer solstice of next year, in an apartment belonging to his own family."[54] In addition to paying him for his efforts, Csoma promised the Lama to take him along when he went back to Sabathu in October of the following year. Csoma was enthusiastic and optimistic again, and moved into the monastery at Phuktal. It was here that he received after a year's delay the letter written him by H. H. Wilson of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who had been instructed by the government to get in touch with Csoma. Wilson was himself a scholar; there was no tone of a "superior" in the lines he addressed to Csoma. Instead of giving instructions, he asked questions; he sent Csoma an issue of the *Quarterly* that had a short article on the Tibetan language in it. In Csoma's view, there were so many errors in it that it was not worth considering. At the time, it never occurred to him that he might later regret his comment. What did concern him was that the Lama did not live up to his promise.

"I was not successful after my return to this place as I imagined on leaving Sabathú that I should be, the Lama being very negligent in assisting me as I desired.—He passed but a few months with me, and I could find and employ no other person

able for my purpose. I am still uncertain what will be the issue of my works, or how far I can bring them, according to my promises."[55]

Kennedy was expecting him to return together with the Lama by November 1826. Csoma arrived only later, in January 1827, and alone. He was extremely dissatisfied with his trip to Phuktal: "I think it sufficient to state, that I was disappointed in my intentions by the indolence and negligence of that Lama to whom I returned. I could not finish my planned works as I had proposed and promised. I have lost my time and cost."[56]

However, he had finished writing the grammar, and the material for the dictionary had been significantly augmented; but it still needed further enriching, and the English equivalents of some of the words were still missing. He had also prepared excerpts of some noteworthy works of Tibetan literature, but these, too, were only half-finished. And he had collected and brought with him a pile of Tibetan books. Anyone else would have been satisfied with such results; but he knew that he could have accomplished even more if the Lama had helped him. Instead of encouragement, in Sabathu he only received some bad news. He learnt from Wilson's letter that in his absence a Tibetan dictionary[57] had been published; it was the one he had seen excerpted in the *Quarterly*, and had considered completely useless. It was also clear from the letter that the government's interest in him had decreased considerably, and they were perhaps no longer interested in what he had accomplished and what his further plans were:

"From Dr. Wilson's letter and the *Quarterly* sent to me I observe, there is nothing yet known of the Tibetan language and literature, and they seem also to be not much interested for them. . . . I will not make any application to Government, as Dr. Wilson advises me. I am already under heavy obligations to Government and to some gentlemen. I never meant to take money, under whatever form, for the editing of my works. I will prepare them to the best of my ability, and afterwards I wish to convince some qualified Oriental scholars of the authenticity and correctness of my communications. And I shall be happy to deliver to your Government all my papers on Tibetan literature, for the received assistance from his lordship in Council and from other gentlemen. My honour is dearer to me than the making, as they say, of my fortune."[58]

His only request was to be able to live in retirement in the vicinity till the end of the year. He did not even attempt to convince the authorities that the pace of scholarly work could not be dictated, and that Tibetan literature was much more significant for universal culture than anyone might conjecture. He was probably quite aware of the fact that the government's interest was to get a practical dictionary as soon as possible. And it seemed that now that this need of theirs had been fulfilled, the matter was settled as far as they were concerned. It must be admitted that the authorities were right from their point of view. All they could see was that the promised work had not been completed, and could not be expected to be in the near future. And in contrast to Csoma's uncertain promises there was the other dictionary, the one from Serampore, all finished and published. Nothing was actually said, since no new application for assistance arrived from Csoma, though he was in dire financial difficulties as he tried to sort out his half-finished works. His only ally was the well-meaning Kennedy. He did his best to help him: arranged for Csoma to be introduced to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, and also wrote a letter to Wilson requesting the Asiatic Society of Bengal to propose that Csoma receive further assistance. His other patron, Doctor Gerard, also put in a word for him with the government. Exasperated with waiting, Csoma made a double proposition: he wanted per-

mission either to go to Calcutta at the end of the year in order to have his completed works published under his personal supervision; or—as he himself would have preferred—to spend three more years, working in the monastery at Kanum. And finally he wrote: "If neither of my wishes can meet with Government's approbation, as uncertainty and fluctuation is the most cruel and oppressive thing for a feeling heart, I beg you to favour me with the Government's resolutions when obtained."[59]

Whether it was thanks to the efforts of his patrons, or a consequence of the Serampore dictionary's having proved to be unusable, finally the government was gracious enough to agree to Csoma's receiving further assistance: a fee of 50 rupees per month, half of which he was immediately to give to the Lama for his pains. However, Csoma was happy and enthusiastic. In August 1827 he set out again, his destination being the monastery at Kanum where, as he had learnt during his second journey, a complete Lamaist Canon was to be found. At last he had three quiet years when he could work undisturbed. "The Lama", Sangye Puntsog, worked with him in Kanum as well. How he got there, we do not know. It is possible that Csoma had gone to fetch him, or perhaps a message inviting him had been sufficient. In any case this time he had got far enough away from his home in Zanskar to have nothing to distract him from his work with Csoma.

The Monastery of Kanum[60] was much closer to the main arteries of Tibetan life than the others Csoma had stayed at, situated as it was along the road leading from India to Great Tibet (Lhasa). Csoma even had visitors during his stay at Kanum, Doctor Gerard, who went to see him in September 1828, being probably the most welcome among them. It seems that Doctor Gerard wished, as it were, to summarize Csoma's efforts which he admired so much, for on his return in January 1829 he wrote a lengthy account of his visit. His letter was addressed to the government, but it soon appeared in almost all the major papers of India and even of Europe, so lively was the account it gave of the reticent Csoma's tribulations and achievements:

"I now turn to the Hungarian, who is far from the least remarkable of the many objects which have passed before me in this journey, and on whose account chiefly I trouble you with so long a letter. I found him at the village of *Kanum*, in his small but romantic hamlet, surrounded by books, and in the best health. He had not forgotten his reception at Sabathú, and was eager to manifest a feeling springing from gratitude. A year and more had passed since we met, and he seemed glad and proud to show me the fruits of his labours. He has been most persevering and successful, and were not his mind entirely absorbed in his studies, he would find a strong check to his exertions in the climate, situated as he is and has been for four months. The cold is very intense, and all last winter he sat at his desk wrapped up in woollens from head to foot, and from morning to night, without an interval of recreation or warmth, except that of his frugal meals, which are one universal routine of greasy tea; but the winters at Kanum dwindle to insignificance compared with the severity of those at the monastery of Yangla, where Mr. Csoma passed a whole year. At that spot he, the Lama, and an attendant, were circumscribed in an apartment nine feet square for three or four months; they durst not stir out, the ground being covered with snow, and the temperature below the zero of the scale. There he sat, enveloped in a sheepskin cloak, with his arms folded, and in this situation he read from morning till evening without fire, or light after dusk, the ground to sleep upon, and the bare walls of the building for protection against the rigours of the climate.—The cold was so intense as to make it a task of severity to extricate the hands from their fleecy resort to turn over the pages."—"[He] collected and arranged 40,000 words of the Tibetan language in a situation that would have driven most men to despair."

"He showed me his labours with lively satisfaction. He has read through 44 volumes of one of the Tibetan works, and he finds unceasing interest in their contents. He seems highly pleased with the prospects of unfolding to the world those vast mines of literary riches."—"He told me, with melancholy emphasis, that on his delivering up the Grammar and Dictionary of the Tibetan language, and other illustrations of the literature of that country, he would be the happiest man on earth, and could die with pleasure on redeeming his pledge."

". . . here I could not help feeling with sympathy the value of such a sum to a man, whose whole earthly happiness consists in being merely able to live and devote himself to mankind, with no other reward than a just appreciation and honest fame."[61]

The letter served its purpose: now it was the Asiatic Society of Bengal that hurriedly offered to double his stipend and to send further books. Csoma, who had so far been grateful for the smallest gesture to help, was suddenly indignant: they should have helped him when he had really needed assistance, and not when he was almost finished with his work. "I was neglected for six years",[62] he wrote reproachfully to the secretary of the Asiatic Society. At the moment, he was no longer in need of help. Kennedy sent on his protégé's flabbergasting refusal with words of apology, but how it was received is not known. In all probability, they found it incomprehensible, an attitude they had hardly encountered before.

The three quiet years spent in Kanum yielded their fruit: Csoma completed his pioneering works on Tibetan culture—the dictionary, the grammar, the word list of Buddhist terminology, and several treatises, the most important among them his excerpts of the Lamaist Canon. This was much more than he had originally undertaken to do. His helper, "the Lama", Sangye Puntsog, returned to Zanskar in June 1830. That is the last we know of him. It is not likely that he and Csoma ever saw each other again, or even corresponded. Neither of them was the talkative type, and they had completed what they had set out to do. Dark days soon descended on Ladakh: Dogra armies invaded the country in 1834,[63] and it lost its independence. How the Lama survived these events, we do not know.

Csoma, too, left the Monastery of Kanum a short while after the Lama, setting out for Sabathu in November 1830. The years of hardship which had taken such a toll both physically and mentally had come to an end. But it had been worth it all, for in his bags he carried the key to the invaluable literature of the *terra incognita.* At last, there was nothing but good news waiting for him in Sabathu, too: he was invited to go to Calcutta to prepare his works for publication. He arrived at the headquarters of the British Government of India on May 5, 1831, probably taking the Grand Trunk line. He had with him the small Tibetan library he had collected over the years; but of yet greater value were his own manuscripts. His day-to-day living standards were also much improved: he was employed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal as a librarian,[64] and received a monthly salary of 100 rupees. His main task as librarian was to catalogue the great number of Tibetan books sent by B. H. Hodgson[65] from Nepal, but the real work was to arrange his manuscripts for the press. One after the other, his articles appeared in the newly started *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*: "Geographical Notice of Tibet" (1832), "Translation of a Tibetan Fragment" (1832), "Note on the Origin of the Kalachakra and Adi-Buddha Systems" (1833), "Translation of a Tibetan Passport, Dated A.D. 1688" (1833), "Origin of the Shakya Race" (1833).

Clearly, the main emphasis was on his major works. In December 1832, H. H. Wilson, Secretary of the Asiatic Society, reported to the government that Csoma's

Tibetan Grammar, Tibetan–English Dictionary and *Tibetan–Sanskrit Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology* had been arranged for the press and were at the government's disposal. The government undertook to cover the expenses of publication. H. H. Wilson's successor, J. Prinsep, began making preparations for their printing in January 1833, and a year later, in January 1834, reported to the government that Csoma's *Grammar* and *Dictionary* had come out in print in 500 copies.[66] The work of printing had been done by the Baptist Mission Press, where new Tibetan type were cast for the purpose. The supervision and proofreading had been done by Csoma himself. In the foreword to the *Dictionary*, Csoma related how he had decided to undertake the task in the first place:

"Though the study of the Tibetan language did not form part of the original plan of the author, but was only suggested after he had been by Providence led into Tibet, and had enjoyed an opportunity, by the liberal assistance of the late Mr. Moorcroft, to learn of what sort and origin the Tibetan literature was, he cheerfully engaged in the acquirement of more authentic information upon the same, hoping, that it might serve him as a vehicle to his immediate purpose; namely, his researches respecting the origin and language of the Hungarians . . . The author necessarily experienced many difficulties in the first years of his Tibetan studies, there being no interpreter between him and the Lama, who knew no other language besides his own; neither had he any European elementary work on this language, except the large quarto volume of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* by P. Giorgi . . ."[67]

Csoma did not forget about the official help the British Government of India had given him during his seven years of work in the monasteries, nor that it had undertaken to publish the two basic works. He recalled with gratitude everyone who had been of help to him in the course of his journeys in Asia, both diplomats and simple, everyday people. And he took the opportunity to express his creed as a scholar: "And he begs to inform the public, that he had not been sent by any Government to gather political information; neither can he be accounted of the number of those wealthy European gentlemen who travel at their own expense for their pleasure and curiosity; but rather only a poor student, who was very desirous to see the different countries of Asia, as the scene of so many memorable transactions of former ages; to observe the manners of several people, and to learn their languages, of which, he hopes, the world may see hereafter the results: and such a man was he who, during his peregrination, depended for his subsistence on the benevolence of others."[68]

He was also aware that his scholarly activities were a milestone in the world of learning. He pointed out as a matter of fact that Tibetan culture, unknown till that time, preserved treasures of much greater value than anyone had suspected, for sacred books of Buddhism were to be found in the Tibetan language whose Sanskrit originals had been lost and forgotten long ago:

"Insulated among inaccessible mountains, the convents of Tibet have remained unregarded and almost unvisited by the scholar and the traveller:—nor was it until within these few years conjectured, that in the undisturbed shelter of this region, in a climate proof against the decay and the destructive influences of tropical plains, were to be found, in complete preservation, the volumes of the Buddhist faith, in their original Sanskrit, as well as in faithful translations, which might be sought in vain on the continent of India. I hope that my sojourn in this inhospitable country, for the express purpose of mastering its language, and examining its literary stores, will not have been time unprofitably spent, and that this Grammar and Dictionary may attest the sincerity of my endeavours to attain the object I had determined to prosecute."[69]

Csoma, not surprisingly, also addressed himself to the question of the relevance of his findings for his countrymen. After all, fifteen years before he had set out to explore the road the ancestors of the Hungarians had once traversed. In the foreword to his *Dictionary*, he noted that studying Sanskrit looked promising from the point of view of placing Hungarian in a family of languages, for, in his view, the two languages were similar to each other, if not in their vocabulary, at least in their grammatical structures. How much of this was objective, and how much wishful thinking? And more generally, how did Csoma's old loyalties survive the tribulations of those fifteen years?

We will recall that Csoma left Hungary almost in secrecy. Once in Teheran, he felt that his journey looked promising; and having managed so far on his own, he felt he had good moral grounds for now turning to his friends for help. His letter caused a great stir at home; contributions came in from all over the country to assist him. But they did not know where to send the money, for Csoma in the meantime had left Teheran. Several inquiries were made about him from the Willock brothers through diplomatic channels, but they had no news to forward. Finally, George Willock considered it right to inform Csoma's countrymen about the carefully guarded secret: Csoma had left his documents and his testament with him. Since two years had passed without his having received any news of him, he sent the documents entrusted to his care to Nagyenyed, Hungary. The documents arriving through this diplomatic channel seemed to mean that there was no hope of discovering Csoma's whereabouts; he had vanished without a trace. Long years passed when suddenly in the spring of 1826 an unexpected, happy headline announced in the Hungarian press: "Our Csoma is still alive!"[70] The good news of Csoma's appearance in Sabathu on November 26, 1824, had got to Hungary through H. Willock from Calcutta; he, we will recall, had got his information from Kennedy's report. By the time the news arrived in Hungary, Csoma was again in the Tibetan mountains. In Hungary, they did not really know precisely where he had been, and, when news arrived that Moorcroft died, Csoma's death, too, was rumoured for a second time. There was uncertainty again till 1830, when Doctor Gerard's memorable article about the monk-scholar of Kanum was published in Hungary, too. Proudly and happily his countrymen read Gerard's appraisal of Csoma's work in the Tibetan monastery. However, they were unable to get in contact with him. Csoma got word from home only in Calcutta when, on April 30, 1832, he was handed a letter written by Neumann,[71] Secretary of the Austrian Embassy in London, together with the sum collected for him throughout Hungary. The letter confirmed him in his original plans; enthusiastically he wrote:

"The objective of my trip to Asia was to explore the Hungarians' first places of settlement. I wanted to discover their historical deeds, and observe the similarities between several Eastern languages and our mother tongue. So far I have arrived at few results in this respect." And after so many years, enriched by so much experience, where did he assume the ancient homeland of the Hungarians to have been? "Undoubtedly, it is in the innermost corners of the Tartar lands close to China that the cradle of the Hungarian tribe must be sought."[72] His original assumption of Great Bukharia (the area around Yarkand) remained his firm conviction.

It is worth observing, however, that Csoma did not tie the location of the ancient Hungarian homeland to presumed linguistic similarities. The Hungarian language, he thought, showed kinship with Sanskrit. Similarity for him was not a genetic but typological category. The similarities between the structures of the two languages, as we have seen, he mentioned also in his foreword to the *Dictionary*. That Csoma studied the structural relationship between the Hungarian and the Sanskrit languages

closely was mentioned in one of the letters written by J. Prinsep: "Since he has lived in Calcutta, Mr.. Csoma has studied the Sanskrit language with great diligence, having found in its structure and in those of some present-day languages originating from it a close relationship to that of Hungarian. In three years' time, if his investigations prove fruitful, he intends to write a study on this subject in Latin, and offer it to his homeland for kind acceptance."[73] For this reason, he planned to travel to North Bengal in January 1834.

Csoma must have felt that his assumptions were not yet ripe for publication; for the time being, therefore, he expressed his gratitude to his country in another way. He had 25 copies of each of his works sent home, and he sent back the funds that had been collected for him, augmented with the money he had managed to save, for use in various worthy causes, in spite of Prinsep's pleas that he consider matters soberly: " . . . Nor could I persuade him that justice to himself required him to retain at least enough to meet his own wants and comfort."[74]

However, Csoma felt that he still owed his country something. In vain the recognition of his having been elected Honorary Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (January 30, 1834), and Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Society of Scholars (November 15, 1833),[75] or that appreciative reviews were to be found of his *Dictionary* and *Grammar* in every journal in India and Europe. Not even the fact that several of his studies and his Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary on Buddhism were ready for the press kept him back. He put everything aside, and decided to make a three-year study tour, and to return to Hungary in 1840 after having completed it. From all this, it is not difficult to conclude what induced him to undertake this new journey. In fact, he made it clear in his passport application: " . . . since I have not yet reached my aim, for which I came to the East."[76] He asked the government to furnish him with a passport in duplicate: " . . . One in the English language, in which he would wish to be designated by the simple title of 'Mr. Alexander Csoma, a Hungarian philosopher, native of Transylvania', and one in the Persian language, describing him as 'Molla Eskander Csoma az Mulk-i Rúm'."[77]

In December 1835, just as the first part of his lengthy study on the *Kanjur* was being printed in the twentieth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, he set out. He wanted to go to Northern Bengal, Nepal and Sikkim; however, he ended up at Titalya which he reached through Kissenganj and Maldah and stayed there, giving up his plan to visit "the . . . hilly tracts". He studied Sanskrit and Bengalee, living much as he had done in the Tibetan monasteries, in a small hamlet, far from the bustle of life and from European comforts. As his only contact was the Asiatic Society, he asked Prinsep to forward to him the letters that arrived from his homeland.

He did not stay for three years as he had originally planned, but returned to Calcutta at the end of 1837. He never made any mention of his studies of Sanskrit and Bengalee either in his letters or in his publications. His hopes and assumptions had proved unfounded. Possessed of a strong critical sense, Csoma gave up his original hypothesis of a Hungarian–Sanskrit relationship when closer study of the material failed to support it. He returned to printing studies on Tibetology: "Notices on the Different Systems of Buddhism", "Enumeration of Historical and Grammatical Works Which Are to be Found in Tibet" (JASB 1838). His more lengthy studies appeared in the *Asiatic Researches* in 1839: on the life of Buddha (Shakya), as well as complete, detailed analyses of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*.

His zest for creative work had apparently returned; his publications unequivocally show his interest not merely in linguistics, but in the whole of Tibetan culture. This must be especially emphasized since already in his lifetime he was being consider-

ed as only a linguist, for his two basic works, the *Dictionary* and the *Grammar*, were so significant that his other treatises paled by comparison in the minds of the reading public. Yet he himself protested against such pigeonholing:

"I beg leave to confess that I am not merely a linguist—I have learnt several languages to learn polite literature, to enter into the cabinet of curiosity of remote ages, to acquire useful knowledge, and to live in every age and with every celebrated nation . . .".[78]

S. C. Malan, the last Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal Csoma was to know, who at the time was learning Tibetan from Csoma, knew how true this was:

"If by 'Philology' they mean the system now in vogue, of 'making' languages, either one language out of two or three, or two or three out of one—then Csoma was no 'philologist' and neither am I, assuredly. But he was far better than that; he was devoted to this one object, was master of several languages, and over and above all, he has, and shall have to the end, the honour and credit of being the founder of Tibetan studies in Europe. He did not scrutinize the intricacies of hypotheses; he had too much sense for that."[79]

In his last years, too, Csoma took no interest in anything besides Tibetology, and led a completely isolated life. Ágoston Schoefft, a Hungarian painter who visited him at the beginning of 1842, mentioned some very unusual habits of his:

" . . . The truth must be told, that I never saw a more strange man than him. He lives like a hermit among his Tibetan and other works, in the house of the Asiatic Society, which he seldom leaves. Of an evening he takes slight exercise in the grounds, and then causes himself to be locked up in his apartment; it therefore invariably happened that when, during my evening rides, I called on him, it was necessary for me always to wait a while till the servants produced the keys to unlock the door of his apartment." There was only one thing that could draw him out of his solitude: "He was cheerful; often merry, his spirits rose very considerably when we took the opportunity of talking about Hungary."[80]

And he still had his dream. The spark was fanned to a flame again and again, so much so that he was unable to remain in Calcutta. In February 1842, he was on the road again, off to Lhasa, through Sikkim, and thence to the scene of his old dreams, the land of the Yugurs. But he only got as far as Darjeeling; in spite of the careful nursing of A. Campbell,[81] he died at dawn on April 11, 1842 of the malaria he contracted along the way. It was as if he had had to set out only so that his place of rest would be the spot most worthy of him: on the slopes of the Himalayas.

Few will dispute the aptness of the recollection of a scholar friend of his:[82] "For I always remember him with gratitude and pleasure; I used to delight in his company, he was so kind and so obliging, and always wiling to impart all he knew. He was altogether one of the most interesting men I ever met."

József Terjék

NOTES

[1] Károly Szathmáry: *A gyulafehérvár-nagyenyedi Bethlen-Főtanoda története* (The history of Bethlen College at Gyulafehérvár-Nagyenyed), Nagy-Enyed 1868; Ferenc Váró: *Bethlen Gábor kollégiuma* (The college of Gábor Bethlen), Nagyenyed 1903.

[2] *Mezőkövesdi Ujfalvy Sándor emlékiratai* (The memoirs of Sándor Mezőkövesdi Ujfalvy), prepared for the press and with appendices by Farkas Gyalui, Kolozsvár 1941.

[3] *Ibid.*; Sámuel Hegedüs: "Egy hazafi szó és egy baráti könny Kőrösi Sándor sirja fölött" (A patriotic word and a friend's tear over Alexander de Kőrös's grave), *Pesti Hírlap*, October

27, 1842; Márton Ungi: "Egy pár töredék vonás Kőrösi Csoma Sándor képéből" (A fragmentary sketch of the portrait of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös), *Vasárnapi Ujság*, No. 26, 1860, pp. 315–316.

[4] Desguignes: *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mongols et des autres Tartares occidentaux*, Paris 1756.

[5] G. Pray: *Annales veteres Hunnorum, Avarum et Hungarorum*, Vindobonae 1761; G. Pray: *Dissertationes historico-criticae in annales veteres Hunnorum, Avarum et Hungarorum*, Vindobonae 1775.

[6] K. G. Windisch: *Kurzgefasste Geschichte der Ungarn*, Pressburg 1774.

[7] J. E. Fischer: *De origine Ungarorum*, 1770.

[8] A. L. Schlözer: *Allgemeine nordische Geschichte*, 1771.

[9] Ésaiás Budai: *Magyarország historiája a mohátsi veszedelemig* (The history of Hungary until the Battle of Mohács), Buda 1811.

[10] Ferenc Benkő: *Napkeleti utazók* (Travellers toward the East), Kolozsvár 1794; Ferenc Benkő: *Magyar geográfia* (Hungarian geography), Kolozsvár 1801–1802.

[11] Jenő Cholnoky: *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Göttingenben* (Alexander Csoma de Kőrös in Göttingen), Turán XXV (1942), pp. 8–20.

[12] H. J. Klaproth: *Über die Sprache und Schrift der Uiguren*, Vienna 1811.

[13] J. G. Eichhorn: *Repertorium der biblische und morgandländische Literatur* (1777–1786); *Einleitung ins alte Testament* (1780–1783); *Einleitung ins neue Testament* (1804–1812).

[14] Csoma's letter to the College of Nagyenyed on December 21, 1820, in: Ervin Baktay: *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor* (Alexander Csoma de Kőrös), Budapest 1962, pp. 51–53.

[15] Ferenc Szilágyi: "Kőrösi Csoma Sándor" (Alexander Csoma de Kőrös), in: *Múlt és jelen* (Past and present), 1842, p. 476.

[16] Márton Ungi: *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

[17] *Mezőkövesdi Ujfalvy Sándor emlékiratai.*

[18] The August 20, 1840 entry in Lajos Gyulay's diary.

[19] Samuel Gyarmathi's letter to Lajos Schédius, April 26, 1819. *MTA I. Osztály Közleményei*, Vol. XXI (1964), pp. 284–286.

[20] Csoma's border pass was dated November 23, 1819. József Terjék: *Emlékek Kőrösi Csoma Sándorról* (Memories of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös), Budapest 1984, p. 129.

[21] Gábor Döbrentei, in: *Berzsenyi Dániel összes művei* (The collected works of Dániel Berzsenyi), edited by Gábor Döbrentei, Buda 1842, Vol. III, pp. 159–160.

[22] Csoma's letter to the College of Nagyenyed on December 21, 1820. *Ibid.*

[23] Csoma's letter to the College of Nagyenyed on March 1, 1821, in: *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, 1825: I, pp. 9–10.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Csoma's letter to the College of Nagyenyed on December 21, 1820. *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] James Baillie Frazer: *Narrative of a Journey into Chorasan, in 1821 and 1822*, London 1825.

[29] H. Willock's letter to Cartwright on April 30, 1822, in: *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, 1825: I, p. 7.

[30] William Moorcroft (1770–1823): *Travels*, edited by H. H. Wilson.

[31] W. Moorcroft's letter to G. Swinton on March 24, 1823, in: *Proceedings of the Csoma de Kőrös Memorial Symposium*, Budapest 1978, p. 15; Moorcroft's letter to Kennedy, April 21, 1823, in: Theodore Duka: *Life and Works of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös*, New Delhi 1885, p. 35.

[32] Moorcroft to Swinton, *ibid.*; Moorcroft to Kennedy, *ibid.*

[33] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 28, 1825, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

[34] *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

[35] W. Moorcroft's letter to G. Swinton on March 24, 1823. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 14).

[36] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 17–18, 16.

[37] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 28, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 35).

[38] *Loc. cit.*, p. 29.

[39] W. Moorcroft's letter to G. Swinton on March 24, 1823. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 16).

[40] G. E. Gerard's letter to W. Fraser on January 21, 1829, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

[41] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on May 25, 1825, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

[42] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 28, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 29).

[43] *Loc. cit.*, p. 30.

[44] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on May 25, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 46).

[45] *Tibetan Compendia Written for Csoma de Kőrös by the Lamas of Zans-dkar*, edited by J. Terjék, New Delhi 1976, pp. 14–15, 13–14.

[46] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on May 25, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, pp. 63–64).

[47] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 28, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 30).

[48] C. P. Kennedy's letter to the Assistant Political Agent at Ambala on November 28, 1824, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

[49] Letter of the Assistant Political Agent at Ambala to C. P. Kennedy on November 29, 1824. *(Ibid.)*

[50] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 28, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 24).

[51] *Loc. cit.*, p. 31.

[52] A. Stirling's letter to H. H. Wilson on July 29, 1825, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, pp. 67, 68.

[53] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on October 16, 1825, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

[54] *Loc. cit.*, p. 70.

[55] Csoma's letter to H. H. Wilson on August 21, 1826, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

[56] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 18, 1827, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

[57] The so-called "Sirampoore Dictionary".

[58] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on January 18, 1827. *(Loc. cit.*, pp. 74, 75).

[59] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on May 5, 1827, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

[60] *Correspondance de Victor Jacquemont pendant son voyage dans l'Inde 1828–1832*, Paris 1835, Vol. I, pp. 266, 300.

[61] G. E. Gerard's letter to W. Fraser on January 21, 1829. *(Loc. cit.*, pp. 82–87).

[62] Csoma's letter to H. H. Wilson on August 21, 1829, in Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

[63] The invader was Gulab Singh, Raja of Jammu.

[64] From July 15, 1831 until his death.

[65] B. H. Hodgson (1800–1894), Resident at Katmandu.

[66] *Essay towards a Dictionary, Tibetan and English*, prepared, with the assistance of Bandé Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs, a learned lama of Zanskar, by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, Siculo-Hungarian of Transylvania. Calcutta 1834: *A Grammar of the Tibetan Language in English*, Calcutta 1834.

[67] *Dictionary*, Preface, pp. VIII, X.

[68] *Loc. cit.*, p. I.

[69] *Grammar*, Preface, p. VI.

[70] *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, 1826: IV, p. 123.

[71] Baron Neumann's letter to Csoma on October 3, 1831.

[72] Csoma's letter to Baron Neumann on April 30, 1832.

[73] J. Prinsep's letter to Gábor Döbrentei on January 20, 1835, in: *Tudománytár*, 1835: VIII, pp. 281–282.

[74] J. Prinsep's letter to W. H. Macnaughten on December 1, 1835, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

[75] He received the diploma only in the spring of 1835.

[76] Csoma's letter to J. Prinsep on November 30, 1835, in: Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

[77] J. Prinsep's letter to W. H. Macnaughten on December 1, 1835. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 133).

[78] Csoma's letter to C. P. Kennedy on May 25, 1825. *(Loc. cit.*, p. 52).

[79] S. C. Malan's letter to Th. Duka on April 17, 1884, in: József Terjék: *Kőrösi Csoma dokumentumok az Akadémiai Könyvtár gyűjteményeiben* (Csoma de Kőrös documents in the collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Budapest 1976, p. 46.

[80] Á. Schoefft's letter of March 16, 1842, as translated in Th. Duka: *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

[81] A. Campbell's report on Csoma's final days in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XIV, p. 823.

[82] S. C. Malan's letter to Th. Duka on October 15, 1883, in: J. Terjék: *Kőrösi Csoma dokumentumok* . . ., p. 38.