



## NÉMETH, GYULA

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**NÉMETH, Gyula** (Julius Németh, b. Karcag, Hungary, 2 November 1890; d. 14 December 1976), Hungarian Turcologist ([FIGURE 1](#)). He is believed to have been Cumanian by origin (Kakuk, 1977, p. 8; 1978, p. 208), although the name Németh ('German') in local practice was often assigned to people who were supporters of the German-Austrian invaders of the region. In his early years he made several trips to Turkey: Istanbul in 1907, Aydin and Smirna in 1908. From 1909, as the fellow of the prestigious Eötvös College, he studied in the Budapest University under the guidance of Zoltán Gombócz, Bernát Munkácsi, Ignác Goldziher, and Armin Vámbéry. Between 1911 and 1914, he studied in Leipzig, Kiel, and Berlin. He made a fast and brilliant career. In 1915 he was qualified as lecturer of the University of Budapest. In 1916 he became extraordinary professor and in 1918 ordinary professor of the Turkish Department. In 1922 he became corresponding member and from 1932 regular member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

In 1930 he published his most important and, by its impact on Hungarian ancient history, most significant work *A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása* (Formation of the Hungarian Conquerors of the 9th century) in which he explored the role of the Turkic tribes in the ethnic formation of the Hungarian people.

His scholarship was devoted almost entirely to various aspects of Ottoman-Turkish studies. A few works of his, however, reached over to Iranian studies too and made lasting contributions to this field. While he was working on a



series of Ottoman Manuals for Sammlung Göschel, he paid special attention to the Persian-Arabic elements in the Turkish language partly because of their unusually large number, partly because of their unique status. He established that the Persian elements had got into the Oghuz languages (Southern Turkic group) through direct contact. As for the Arabic loanwords, in his opinion, most of them had found their way into Turkish through Persian transmission. In his view, Persian-Arabic elements played a positive role in the formation of the Ottoman literary idiom. They reflect the most significant social change in the history of the Turks, when the nomads became sedentary and followed the Iranian lifestyle. “This extraordinary social change was accompanied by extraordinary transformation of the language” (Németh, 1951, p. 315).

Exploring the unusual status of the Persian-Arabic elements in the Turkish vernacular, Németh developed the theory of *mixed language structure* and presented it for debate to the General Assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 11 December 1951. According to his observation, the Ottoman-Turkish language had a dual grammatical system, which was manifest in the different treatment of the native elements from the Persian-Arab loans in morphology, word formation, and to some extent, phonetics. For example, the Persian *eżāfa* in the Ottoman Turkish occurred only with Arabic or Persian constituents, phrasal verbs were created only on Arabic or Persian bases, while the palato-alveolar harmony was binding in Turkish words only, and not in Arabic or Persian ones. Németh came to the conclusion that in the use of its vocabulary the Ottoman Turkish obeyed a dual set of rules governing morphological and phonemic processes. He applied his theory to the *Turkish vernacular*, the every day Turkish, as he repeatedly pointed out. He was not talking about the difference between the literary idiom and the everyday language, as S. Kakuk understood it (Kakuk, 1977, p. 11; Idem, 1978, p. 209). Lajos Ligeti, Zsigmond Telegdi, Lajos Tamás, and László Gáldi—the best linguists of the Hungarian Academy—commented on Németh’s lecture providing supportive materials from other languages. Ligeti expressed some concern about the technical term “dual language system”. He suggested the term “mixed languages” for idioms that possessed these phenomena (A kevert nyelvrondszer kérdéséhez ... , pp. 332-33). Telegdi’s five-page comment is very important also for those who study Modern Persian, and, to some extent, for general linguists. He expanded on the nature and origin of Persian phrasal verbs (he calls them compound verbs or verbal paraphrases), which he developed into a long article a year later. He stated that Turkish abounds in phrasal verbs borrowed from Persian. The Turks kept the Arabic or Persian

nominal part unchanged but translated the Persian derivative auxiliary into Turkish (Idem, pp. 340-41). What Telegdi meant to say was that the Turks did not create these phrasal verbs guided by the rules of a second language system. They picked them from the storehouse of ready materials transferred from Persian.

A word list on the back of a document dated 1422 CE, discovered in the Hungarian National Archives, was the object of Németh's research of the Yazygian (Hungarian *jász*) people, their presence in Hungary, and their language. He identified the document as a glossary of Yazygian words and phrases mostly with Latin and in six cases with Hungarian glosses. With remarkable philological skill and erudition he was able to restore almost all elements of the text and authenticate them with an impressive critical apparatus. He would consult his fellow scholars, especially the Iranist János Hartmatta, and include their views into his publications irrespective of whether they were in agreement with him or not. He compared his findings partly with Yazygian data already established in Hungary and partly with the two dialects, Iron and Digor, of the Ossetic language. With this new data he reviewed Yazygian personal and place names found in Hungarian documents and made important corrections in their forms. He also found that Yazygian was so close to Ossetic, that they constituted two different dialects of the same language, rather than two different Iranian languages. From the two dialects of the Ossetic language it was the Digor that showed greater similarity to Yazygian.

In recognition of his scholarship, in 1930 Németh was granted the privilege to establish the Department of Turkish Philology and Hungarian Ancient History. In view of the importance of Persian for Ottoman studies, in this department he also provided home for Iranian courses. For decades, lecturers and native speakers from Persia would teach classical and modern Persian language and literature and colloquial Persian according to his program.

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