CENTRAL EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL TEXTS

General Editors
JÁNOS M. BAK, URSZULA BORKOWSKA, GILES CONSTABLE, GERHARD JARITZ, GÁBOR KLANICZAY

Anonymus and Master Roger

Anonymi Bele regis notarii Gesta Hungarorum

Anonymus, Notary of King Béla The Deeds of the Hungarians

EDITED, TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY
MARTYN RADY AND LÁSZLÓ VESZPRÉMY

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Master Roger's Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars

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400 West 59th Street, New York NY 10019, USA
Tel: +1-212-547-6932
Fax: +1-212-548-4607
E-mail: mgreenwald@sorosny.org

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CONTENTS

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

In general, the Central European Medieval Texts (CEMT) series—which attempts to present in good editions original Latin narratives of the region together with up-to-date, annotated English translations—may no longer need special justification, now that this fifth volume has reached the "half-way mark" of the planned ten. However, the organization of the present one may.

In this volume we print the text and translation of two narratives, the subjects of which lie some three hundred years (and more) apart. The *Gesta Hungarorum* of the anonymous notary is a literary composition about the mythical origins of the Hungarians and their conquest of the Carpathian Basin. His narrative ends with the first grand princes of the tenth century. The *Epistola in miserabile carmen super destructione regni Hungarie* of Master Roger is an epistle which includes an eyewitness account of the Mongol invasion in 1241–2, beginning with an analysis of the political conditions under King Béla IV and ending with the king's return to the devastated country. However, the two authors are by no means so far from each other as the setting of their narratives might suggest. Roger may have been born just about the time when the notary wrote his *Gesta*, and would thus have been merely one generation younger. Moreover, one may argue that the Mongol destruction of great parts of the country gave King Béla a chance for a "new foundation" of the kingdom that had been established at the time when the story of the *Gesta* ends. Thus, our decision to present these two short narratives together is not as inapposite as it may look at first sight. We hope our readers will not find it inappropriate either.

CEMT was born out of renewed interest in Central (or East Central) Europe on the one hand and the difficulty to access the medieval narratives of the region, especially for those less fluent in Latin than older generations were, on the other. So far, we have been able to present texts from Bohemia, Croatia (Dalmatia), Hungary and Poland, and we hope to continue on this road. Our principles remain the same: we print the best available critical edition of the original version, usually without full philological apparatus but with extensive annotations to the translation for readers less familiar with the history and geography of the region. Financial restraints, well known to our readers everywhere in the academic world, have hindered us from keeping to our original plan of publishing a volume a year, but we still hope to complete at least the first round of major narrative sources within the next five to six years.

We are still open to suggestions for texts to be considered and eager to hear from volunteers who would care to join our team of editors and translators. We hardly need to add that we welcome financial support of any kind from granting agencies so as not to have to rely exclusively on the goodwill and enthusiasm of our colleagues in preparing the editions and translations.

The General Editors are grateful to the editors of *The Slavonic and East European Review* (UCL, SEES) for allowing us to utilize for this volume the earlier English version of the *Gesta*, translated by Martyn Rady (published in their journal in 2009). The Central European University Press gave, in spite of its tight budget, the usual careful attention to the publication of this book; we are indebted to its management and production team.

Spring, 2010.

J. M. B - U. B. - G. C. - G. J. - G. K.

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL

ch.	chapter
d.g.	*de genere* (of the kindred...)
ed.	edited by
lit.	literature
n.	note
p./pp.	page/s
trans.	translated by

(Notes in the *apparatus criticus* to the Latin text follow the conventional abbreviations)

TITLES CITED IN ABBREVIATION

CEMT	Central European Medieval Texts. Budapest: CEU Press, 1999 sqq.
DAI	Constantine Porphyrogenitus. *De Administrando Imperio.* Edited by Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967.
Dares	*Daretis Phrygii De Excidio Troiae Historia*. Edited by Ferdinand Meister. Leipzig: Teubner, 1873.

DRMH	*Decreta regni mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*. Edited by J. M. Bak et al. 5 vols. Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks &c., 1989 sqq.
Engel, *Realm*	Pál Engel. *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526*. Translated by Tamás Pálosfalvi. Edited by Andrew Ayton. London: I. B. Tauris, 2001.
Excidium	*Excidium Troie*. Edited by Alan Keith Bate. Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters, vol. 23. Frankfurt, Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 1986.
Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker*	Hansgerd Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker und Grenzwächter im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*. Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, 5. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1972.
Göckenjan, *Mongolensturm*	*Der Mongolensturm. Berichte von Augenzeugen und Zeitgenossen 1235-1250*. Translated and edited by Hansgerd Göckenjan and James R. Sweeney. Ungarns Geschichtsschreiber, 3. Graz: Styria, 1985.
Györffy, *Geographia*	György Györffy, *Geographia historica Hungariae tempore stirpis Arpadianae. Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza*. 4 vols. Budapest: Akadémiai, 1963-98.
Historia Alexandri	*Historia Alexandri Magni. Historia de Preliis. Rezension J2.* 2 vols. Edited by Alfred Hilka. Meisenheim an Glan: Anton Hain, 1976-7.
Hungarian Chronicle	*Chronici Hungarici compositio saeculi XIV*. Edited by Alexander (Sándor) Domanovszky. In SRH 1, 219-505.

MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA	Auctores antiquissimi
SS	Scriptores
SSrG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum `
MTA	Magyar Tudományos Akadémia [Hungarian Academy of Sciences]
PSRL	*Polnoe sobrannie ruskikh letopisei* [Complete collection of Russian chronicles]. 41 vols. St. Petersburg and Moscow: Arkheograficheskaia Kommissia, Nauka, Arkheograficheskii Tsentr, AN SSSR etc., 1841-2001.
RA	*Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica/Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke*. 2 (4) vols. Edited by Imre Szentpétery and Iván Borsa. Budapest: MTA, Akadémiai, 1923-87.
Regino	Regino von Prüm. *Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*. Edited by Friedrich Kurze. MGH SSrG, 50. Hannover: Hahn, 1890, and reprints.
Silagi, *Gesta*	*Die "Gesta Hungarorum" des anonymen Notars. Die älteste Darstellung der ungarischen Geschichte*. Edited by Gabriel Silagi. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991
Simon of Kéza	*Simonis de Kéza Gesta Hungarorum/Simon of Kéza, The Deeds of the Hungarians*. Edited and translated by László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer. With a study by Jenő Szűcs. CEMT, 1. Budapest: CEU Press, 1999.

SRH	*Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*. Edited by Emericus (Imre) Szentpétery. 2 vols. Budapest: Academia Litt., 1937-8.
Thomas of Split	*Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum/Archdeacon Thomas of Split, History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*. Latin text by Olga Perić. Edited, translated and annotated by Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol and James Ross Sweeney. CEMT, 4. Budapest, CEU Press, 2006.

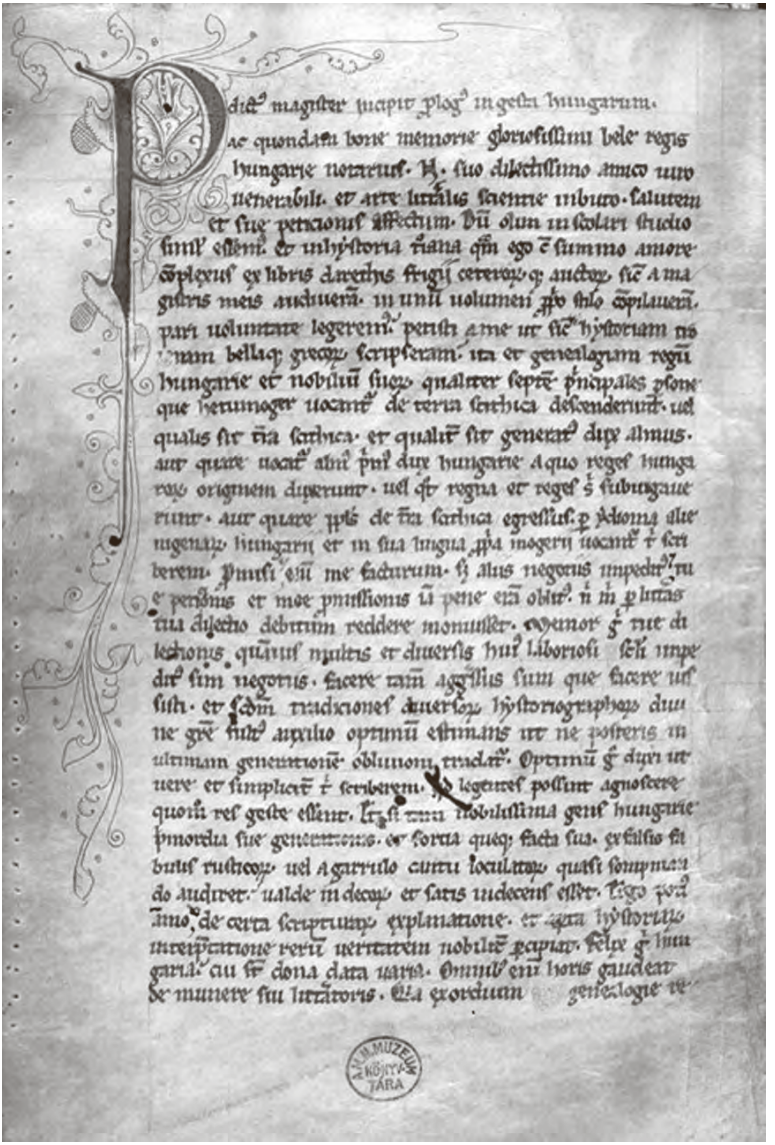
LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ANONYMI BELE REGIS NOTARII GESTA HUNGAROROM

ANONYMUS, NOTARY OF KING BÉLA THE DEEDS OF THE HUNGARIANS



First page of the *Gesta Hungarorum* (OSZK Clmae 403, fol. 1v)

INTRODUCTION

The *Gesta Hungarorum* of the anonymous notary of King Béla is the oldest extant chronicle of the history of the Hungarians.[1] In his seminal study of the narrative sources of medieval Hungary, C. A. Macartney described it as "the most famous, the most obscure, the most exasperating and most misleading of all the early Hungarian texts."[2] Purporting to be an account of the background, circumstances and immediate aftermath of the Hungarian settlement in the Carpathian Basin in the late ninth century, the chronicle was probably composed in the early years of the thirteenth century and reflects the literary tastes and political concerns of its own age.

MANUSCRIPT AND EDITIONS

The *Gesta* survives in a sole MS of 24 folios (48 pages of which two are blank), 17 by 24 cm in size, written in a Gothic minuscule that on the basis of its hand and decoration may be dated to the mid-thirteenth century. The writing and the elaborate initial P of the incipit (see fig. 1, p. XVI), are characteristic of that time. It is clearly not an autograph. There are many scribal errors, especially in the manner of abbreviation and in respect of proper names. So, for ex-

[1] It is, however, more than likely that the early parts of the so-called "Hungarian Chronicle", known only from later copies, were written earlier, but whether the author of the *Gesta* knew them cannot be established with any certainty. The scholarship on this issue up to his own times is summarized in C. A. Macartney, *Studies in the Earliest Hungarian Historical Sources*, 7 vols in 8 parts (Budapest and Oxford, 1938–51); republished in C. A. Macartney, *Studies on Early Hungarian and Pontic History*, ed. Lóránt Czigány and László Péter (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 65–560.

[2] C. A. Macartney, *The Medieval Hungarian Historians: A Critical and Analytical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 59.

ample, the word *civitatem* ('city'), abbreviated as *civitēm*, was rendered in the extant manuscript as *civitem*, which makes no sense. Most tellingly, in ch. 45, where the author wrote about Neopatras (present-day Ypatri in Greece), which fits the story of a Hungarian raid into Byzantine territory, the copyist misread the capital N and made out of it a better known name: "Cleopatra."[3] It is not clear whether the extant text is complete, and not much should be made of the author's failure to discuss a subject promised earlier in his text.[4]

The fate of the copy through the centuries is not known. Catalogue evidence suggests that it had reached the Imperial Library (*Hofbibliothek*) in Vienna some time between 1601 and 1636, when Sebastian Tengnagel, court librarian and later director, registered it as *Historia Hungarica de VII primis ducibus Hungariae auctore Belae regis notario,* pasted this into the MS, and added numbers both to the chapters and to the folios. The *Gesta* was later mentioned in the catalogue of the court librarian Mattheus Mauchter in 1652 as *De gestis Hungarorum liber*, and by Peter Lambeck in 1666. Their successor, Daniel Nessel suggested in 1692 that it should be edited. In 1711, David Czvittinger wrote a detailed report of the *Gesta* in his encyclopaedic *Specimen Hungariae Literatae*. Some time before 1780, Adam Kollár, director of the Hofbibliothek, had a manuscript from the collection of Schloss Ambras near Innsbruck bound with it, but they were later (in the first part of the nineteenth century) separated. It was then that the *Gesta* received its present leather binding, impressed with a gilt two-headed imperial eagle.[5] The manuscript came to Hunga-

[3] See below, p. 99.

[4] The MS ends with a rhyming couplet which suggests that at least a break was intended there, but a discussion of events promised in ch. 15 (p. 45) is not followed up in the surviving copy.

[5] The history of the MS in the Vienna library was reconstructed in detail by Emil Jakubovich, "Az ambrasi gyűjteményből való-e Béla király névtelen jegyzőjének kódexe" [Is the codex of the anonymous notary of King Béla from the Ambras collection?], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 34 (1927), pp. 84–99, with full bibliography. (Also available online: http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00021/00179/pdf/084-099.pdf.)

ry in 1934 under the terms of the 1932 Treaty of Venice (in which the treasures of the Hapsburg Empire were distributed among the successor states) and is now held in the Széchényi National Library as Clmae 403.

The text was first published in 1746 by Johann Georg von Schwandtner in his *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, with a preface by the learned polyhistor, Matthias Bél[6]; four reprints followed in the subsequent twenty years. János Letenyei translated the *Gesta* into Hungarian in 1790 and gave the author the name "Anonymus," which has remained ever since. Between then and the end of the nineteenth century, the MS was re-published more than a dozen times. A scholarly edition, with critical annotation, was first published by Gyula Pauler and László Fejérpataky in 1900, and a revised edition by Emil (Aemilius) Jakubovich and Dezső (Desiderius) Pais in the first volume of Imre (Emericus) Szentpétery's *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum.* A full-tone facsimile edition was published more recently. The Latin text has been translated several times into Hungarian, as well as into Romanian, German, Slovak, and Polish. The present English-language version, based on one published in *The Slavonic and East European Review*,[7] is the first parallel edition, with critical apparatus, of the Latin text and an English translation.

AUTHOR AND DATE

Despite two hundred years of scholarly effort, the identity of the author has not been established. He describes himself in the first line of the text as "P who is called master, and former notary of the late King Béla of good memory," but virtually every word in this sentence poses problems. The initial P, together with *dictus*, was read by some (thus by Schwandtner in the *editio princeps*) as

[6] For the editions and translations, see Bibliography, pp. 229–41, below.

[7] *The Slavonic and East European Review* 87/4 (2009), pp. 681–727.

an abbreviation for *praedictus*, that is "aforementioned," on the assumption, from the empty page preceding the text, that in the extant copy a "title page" had been erased which originally gave the full name of the author (even though this would be unusual for medieval MSS). This hypothesis was rejected even before it was established with modern technology that the empty page contains merely an erased faulty beginning of the *Gesta* and no indication of any name of an author. Then, the P was understood as the initial of the author (although no dot follows it, as might be expected were it the abbreviation of a name). Accordingly, scholars hunted for an author called Peter, Paul or such like, but although some were suggested, none could be unequivocally connected to the *Gesta*.

That the author called himself "*dictus*" *magister* has caused needless headache to scholars. The humility formula, implying something like "although unworthy" (and typical for ecclesiastics) was widely used; indeed, there is even a similar wording in a charter from 1226 by Abbot Uros of Pannonhalma.[8] Speculation about the author not having in fact obtained a degree and other similar constructions are irrelevant.[9] Nor is the term *notarius* (which the author previously, perhaps in his younger years, had been) problematic. Although there were no notaries (public) in medieval Hungary, the staff of the gradually emerging chancellery, small in number, had ever since the late twelfth century been described as notaries.

A further problem arises with the identity of King Béla, the deceased former sovereign of the author. There were four kings of Hungary called Béla. Béla I, one of the exiled sons of the blinded Vazul, a relative of St Stephen, reigned briefly between 1060 and

[8] See László Erdélyi, ed., *A pannonhalmi Szt. Benedek rend története*, 12 vols. (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1902–1916), vol. 1, p. 680, and a similar wording from the year 1221, vol. 12, p. 201.

[9] In fact, in the time of Anonymus the title *magister* did not imply a university degree or teaching license; see Rainer Maria Herkenrath, "Studien zum Magistertitel in der frühen Stauferzeit," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 88 (1988), p. 5 (pp. 3–35).

1063. Béla II "the Blind," blinded as a child together with his father, Prince Álmos, by King Coloman, reigned from 1131 to 1141. Béla III, who returned from Byzantium where he had been for a while heir presumptive to Emperor Manuel, was king between 1172 and 1196. Finally, there is Béla IV, Hungary's ruler during the Mongol invasion and acclaimed "restorer" of the kingdom, who reigned longer than all his namesakes, from 1235 to 1270. The basic difficulty of identifying the author and dating his writing is compounded by the fact that very few charters were issued before the 1220s (and even less survived). Accordingly, the names and properties (estates, castles, etc.) mentioned in the *Gesta* cannot be cross-checked with the evidence preserved elsewhere in order to establish more exactly the time of the chronicle's composition.[10]

From the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century the central issue was the "reliability" of the author: that is, how well informed he was of the events he related, and, thus, how much reliance may be put on his pieces of "information." In respect of his reliability, it was assumed that the earlier he could be shown to have composed his account, the better; for if he wrote in the eleventh century—or at least in the early twelfth—he might be supposed to have "known" more precisely what happened in the ninth. On the other hand, it had to be conceded that many expressions or references in the *Gesta* pointed to a later composition, maybe even as late as the end of the thirteenth century. The debate over the four Bélas could fill a library and elicited some very acute and valuable philological and historical insights, which it is hardly necessary to rehearse here. For some time now, the scholarly consensus—though not without some scholars holding out for a different dating—is that Anonymus was formerly employed by Béla III and thus wrote his *Gesta* some time after 1192.

Even accepting this date as a *terminus post quem*, the exact date of the *Gesta*'s composition is still debated. Presently, most historians (disregarding the minority who still doubt the connection

[10] The few instances where some hints at historical persons can be found are noted below, see e.g. n. 4 on p. 43; n. 1 on p. 44; n. 3 on p. 51.

to Béla III) suggest a date later than the traditional "ca. 1200." The concern to justify Hungarian claims to the territory of the kingdom vis-à-vis Byzantium or to explain the involvement of the royal house in the affairs of Halich, relevant in the years immediately following Béla's death,[11] speaks for an early thirteenth-century date. How much later it could have been written is an open question, depending on the weight given to linguistic and historical (charters &c.) evidence. However, considering the probable age of the author and the fact that it is unlikely that the Mongol invasion of 1241 would not have left traces in the *Gesta*, the *terminus ante quem* could be as late as the 1230s.

While the name of the author remains an enigma (and in our times the need to find names for anonymous authors, a matter central to scholarly enquiry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[12] is of less importance), some features of his career can be culled from the text. It has been assumed—partly based on his formulaic reference to "schoolmate N."—that he studied at a French or (more likely) Italian university or cathedral school, but his rather simple Latin and limited familiarity with the Classics speaks against that. It would have been, for example, obvious to borrow from Vergil when telling the story of the foundation of a new homeland, but he never did.[13] His schooling was more probably that of a notary and his style is closer to the rather unsophisticated urban chronicles of his time than to that of university-trained authors. Anonymus's literary models are taken more from "popular

[11] Between 1205 and 1213, King Andrew II led almost yearly campaigns to Halich, supporting different claimants to its throne; after 1205/6 he used the title *rex Galicie et Lodomerie* in his royal style; and in 1214 he made his son, Prince Coloman, king of Halich; see George A. Perfecky, "Hungary and the Hungarians in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle," *Hungarian Studies* 8 (1987) 1-2, pp. 19–29, with extensive quotations from primary evidence.

[12] Compare the eighteenth-century efforts by Russian scholars to identify the author of the anonymous Primary Chronicle; see Oleksiy Tolochko, "On Nestor the Chronicler?" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, forthcoming (2010).

[13] Compare, among others, Cosmas of Prague, whose chapter on the settlement of the ancestors in Bohemia is thoroughly indebted to the *Aeneid*, or Dudo of St. Quentin, who used Vergil for his story of the Normans' foundation of their duchy.

readings" than from the Classics or ecclesiastical authors. The occasional word or term from such authorities must have reached him second hand. He may, however, had travelled abroad, as he was familiar with some areas of Western Europe, and it is unlikely that the books he read (as discussed below) would have been available in Hungary

The author's knowledge of place names, major roads and castles, especially in the north-eastern part of Hungary, and the frequent echo of formulas of charters in the text confirm his closeness to the itinerant royal court.[14] His linguistic abilities are unclear: he seems to have known some Magyar, but whether it was his first language is uncertain, since sometimes he uses Hungarian "case endings" in the Latin, as if unaware of Hungarian grammar. (It has also been suggested that he took these forms from some long-lost, heroic songs and retained them unchanged.) Still, many of his etymologies are correct and betray a knowledge of the vernacular. He felt, for example, that an ending –d implied a Hungarian diminutive (e.g., Borsod, ch. 18, p. 49 and elsewhere).[15] It has been demonstrated that he knew little if any Greek but may have had a grasp of some Turkic language (he was possibly the first European writer to call the Black Sea as such, which suggests some acquaintance with Turkic).[16] His occasional etymologies based on

[14] It is worth noting that from the forty-eight castles mentioned by Anonymus, forty-four have been identified by archaeologists as being built in the Árpádian age (though, of course, not in the ninth century); see István Bóna, *Az Árpádok korai várai* [Early castles of the Árpadians], 2nd ed. (Debrecen: Etnica, 1998).

[15] It has been suggested that the words *contra stare* for 'resist, stand up against' hide a Hungarism as mirror translation of Magyar *ellenállni* 'stand against,' since the expression is very rarely found in Medieval Latin; however, it may come from the Bible. Possible Hungarisms are also suggested in János Harmatta, "Remarques sur le lexique du latin médiéval et la substrat hongrois," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 13 (1975), pp. 335–44.

[16] Georges I. Bratianu, *La mer Noire* (Societas Academica Dacoromana. Acta Historica, 9), Monaco, 1969, p. 45; János Horváth, "Meister P. und sein Werk." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 17 (1969) pp. 17–48; 18 (1970): 371–412, 19 (1971) 347–382. However, naming the Pontus Euxinus 'Black Sea' occurs also in Nordic texts, e.g. in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings*, ed. Snorre Sturlason and Erling Monsen, p. 1 (Cambridge: Heffer, 1932), and in

Slavic words are correct. But these are only hypotheses. Whether our notary obtained higher ecclesiastical preferment after service in the chancellery cannot be ascertained, although it is supposed by most scholars. That he did not identify himself as such may have been due to the stylistic demands of the humility topos.

GESTA REGUM – GESTA NOBILIUM[17]

More relevant than the exact identity of the author is his purpose in writing, the *causa scribendi.* Even if we disregard the witty construction of Szabolcs de Vajay, who played with the idea that the *Gesta* was but a "game" among intellectuals,[18] there are many other possible guesses as to the author's intentions. Anonymus may indeed have intended to give a historically-grounded account of early Hungarian history that was not based upon the songs of minstrels and the yarns of yokels,[19] and that comported with the historical fashion of his times. To present a respectable or even illustrious *origo gentis*—in this case, the descent of the Hungarians from the undefeated Scythians—was a common endeavor in the Middle Ages.[20] Similarly, to establish an elegant genealogy for the ruling dynasty—here by associating it with Japhet, son of Noah, and

the *Morkinskinna* (c. 1220), ed. Finnur Jónsson, pp. 84–5 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1932), thus, the form may have reached Anonymus from other directions as well.

[17] We borrow this subtitle from the Romanist János Győry's book, *Gesta Regum – Gesta Nobilium. Tanulmány Anonymus krónikájáról* [*Gesta Regum – Gesta Nobilium*: Studies on the chronicle of Anonymus] (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1948).

[18] The well-known medievalist Szabolcs de Vajay, wrote a tongue-in-cheek novel, published (appropriately anonymously!) with the title *Én, Anonymus* [I, Anonymus] (Budapest: Argumentum, 1998), in which he has the notary write a spoof *Gesta* for the amusement of a friend.

[19] See below, Prologue and ch. 42, pp. 5 and 91.

[20] On rhetorical-literary history writing based on Classical sources, see Reginald W. Southern, *Aspects of the European Traditions of Historical Writing*, vol. 1, *The Classical Tradition from Einhard to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Series, 20, 1970, pp. 173–96. See also Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis:*

with the Old Testament Gog and Magog, and even more so, with Attila the Hun, the "scourge of God,"—fits well with the legendary stories of other ruling houses. The notary did even more, assigning to the landowning clans and kindreds of his time heroic ancestors from the "conquest age," who received their estates from none less than Árpád, chief of the ninth-century Magyars, and "hold it ever since," as the author repeatedly confirms. As a member of the chancellery, he may have had access to donation charters, even if there was hardly any central register of such grants in his time (nor was there any later). Throughout the Hungarian Middle Ages, the proems (*narrationes*) of these documents often referred in detail to past heroic deeds[21] as the reason for the grant of an estate *in perpetuum*. The exploits of the heroes and the suitable prizes obtained for them, as told by the notary, reflect this perception of service and reward. Indeed, it was not long after 1200 that the leading families began to refer to a real or legendary ancestor of their kindred when describing themselves as being *de genere &c* ('of the kindred of...').[22] By lauding the descent of the royal house and of the kingdom's leading families, the *Gesta* may thus have been welcome both to the court and to the king's great men, the author's lords and contemporaries. Moreover, Anonymus did not tire to underline that Árpád consulted his retinue every time before deciding on a campaign or embassy, while in the so-called "blood contract" the legendary chieftains (the "principal persons" in his usage) were guaranteed that they and their offspring would forever hold the possessions they had obtained and would not be left out of the prince's council.[23] The oath additionally contains in rudimentary form what became the oft-discussed "right of resistance" of the no-

Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen, Orbis mediaevalis, 7 (Berlin : Akademie-Verlag., 2006).

[21] See Elemér Mályusz, "La chancellerie royale et la rédaction des chroniques dans la Hongrie médiévale," *Le Moyen Age* 75 (1969), pp. 51–86, 219–54.

[22] Indeed, almost all of the kindreds mentioned by the author as descendants of the legendary heroes are documented from around 1200.

[23] See chs. 5–6, p. 17–19 below.

bility, codified in the famous Golden Bull of Andrew II of 1222.[24] All these notions coincided with the concerns of the ever more powerful aristocracy of the early thirteenth century, one of the possible intended "audiences" of the retired notary.

In contrast to most historians of his age, Anonymus, even though most likely a clerk, did not denigrate the pagan ancestors of the Magyars but rather emphasized that God or the Holy Spirit had led them in their battles and exploits.[25] Of course, the conviction that victory is granted by God to the just side, and thus that the victors must have had divine support, was general in the Christian Middle Ages,[26] but the notary went further than this. He underlined more than once that the pagan Magyars were granted victory and obtained new land with the express support of God. Only once did he admit that the Hungarians of the tenth century were bent on conquest and the ruthless subjection of peoples—but then right away added that they were compelled so to act, otherwise they could not have bequeathed land and power to succeeding generations.[27] The Christianization of the people by St Stephen is noted briefly and one who resisted it, condemned,[28] but in the *Gesta* none of the usual "discontinuity" can be detected between the distant heathen past and the Christian age. Thus a divine legitimization of all past deeds of the "ancestors" was interwoven with the "national history." Subsequently, the "mission" of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin became a basic tenet of Magyar national identity, with or without a religious or metaphysical content.

[24] See *DRMH* 1, 32-5, and Josef Deér, "Der Weg zur Goldenen Bulle Andreas II," *Schweizer Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte* 10 (1952), pp. 104-38.

[25] See chs. 4, 8, 23, 37, 39, 44, 46, 49, 50, 56 etc., pp. 15, 23 and so on, below. See László Veszprémy, "*More paganismo*": Reflections on Pagan and Christian Past in the *Gesta Hungarorum* (*GH*) of the Hungarian Anonymous Notary," in Ildar H. Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery* (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming), ch. 10, and the other articles in the same volume.

[26] For which, see e.g. 1 Macc. 3.19: "For the success of war is not in the multitude of the army, but strength cometh from heaven."

[27] Ch. 44, p. 97.

[28] Ch. 57, p. 1279 with the closing rhymed lines.

METHOD AND SOURCES

Anonymus's account is above all else a "toponymic romance" that seeks to explain place-names by reference to imagined events or persons, and vice versa. Not having had any reliable information on the early history of the Magyars, nor of the events surrounding their arrival and settlement in the Carpathian Basin, Anonymus had to invent the past on the basis of what he knew of his own time and assemble it in the narrative form popular in his age.

The notary's basic "method" was to explain the toponymy of the late twelfth century by reference to events and people living in the ninth and tenth centuries and to invent persons whose names he took from toponyms. He also sensed, correctly, that names of places, waters, and mountains or hills tend to preserve the memory of olden times or of their earliest inhabitants and first known owners. In fact, Hungarian place names are often derived from some ancient owner, without any morphological change. (Therefore, the many place names in the *Gesta* are valuable clues to the old Hungarian language, at least as it was spoken ca. 1200). It was by conflating persons with places that Anonymus arrived, for example, at the names of the warrior Csepel, of the Vlach lord, Marót, and of the defeated leader of Slavs, Salan. These personal names were all taken directly from contemporary toponymy, respectively the name of the island on the Danube immediately south of modern Budapest; that of two villages, both called Marótlaka (now: Morlaca), near Cluj[29]; and that of the ford of Szalánkemén/Slankamen on the confluence of the Danube and Tisza rivers.

Although Anonymus got the names of the earliest Hungarian rulers right, as well as some of the early tribal chieftains, he described the Hungarians beating Slavic, Vlach and Bulgarian leaders whose names—as mentioned above—are not attested anywhere else. The Magyars allying themselves with the Cumans (who

[29] To complicate matters further, the word *marót* meant a Moravian in Old Hungarian!

appeared in Europe only in the late eleventh century) and, more incredibly, defeating "Romans" are particularly impressive items of his phantasy. All in all, his description of power-relations north of the Danube in the late ninth century is not supported by any other account. As he had no knowledge of the peoples encountered by the Magyars of the ninth century, he populated the region with those whom he knew from his own time or whose names appeared among the toponyms of his country. For good measure, he also added some, such as the Romans, derived from his own reading of popular histories.

Nevertheless, there are bits of history also known from other sources in Anonymus's work, and at least a few of his heroes can be confirmed from information given by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Liudprand of Cremona, the Annals of St Gall, and the continuator of Regino of Prüm.[30] For much of the early history he borrowed extensively from Regino. As well, he plainly relied in part on diverse (unknown) written accounts, some of which would later feed into the "Hungarian Chronicle" known from a fourteenth-century compilation, but possibly going back to some centuries before.[31] (The Hungarian Chronicle also tells of the shaven Cuman heads being sliced like unripe gourds.[32]) The extent

[30] See below, chs. 55, 57 (p 121). Constantine Porphyrogenitus's mid-tenth century account, *De Administrando imperio*—henceforth *DAI*—thus records 'Almoutzis' and his son, 'Arpad', as Hungarian leaders (ch. 38)—ed. Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), pp. 172-3; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 63, 71-2, 107, 298. For the Western sources, see below, esp. chs. 53–5 (pp. 115–21). Regino's account is known to have circulated extensively in Central Europe. According to Macartney (*The Medieval Hungarian Historians*, pp. 82-3), Anonymus may have also borrowed from an account of the Third Crusade.

[31] The relationship of these—and possibly others—to each other is a complicated issue (on which see also above, n. 1, on p. XVII) and would lead too far to be discussed here. A brief summary is offered in László Veszprémy, "Gesta Ungarorum," in *Europas Mitte*, vol. 2, pp. 542–50; see also László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer, ed. and trans., *Simonis de Kéza, Gesta Hungarorum/Simon of Kéza, The Deeds of the Hungarians* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 1999)—henceforth, Simon of Kéza—esp. pp. xii–xiv.

[32] Ch. 8, below; cf. ch. 102, SRH 1, p. 368.

to which the author relied upon "oral traditions"—which he dismissed twice, but quoted once!—cannot, however, be tested, but it is not unlikely that the major clans had traditions of their own origins as well as minstrels who recited heroic songs about these. There are many stylistic elements in the *Gesta*, such as "formulaic" repetitions, that are typical of lays of this type. Alas, little can be said about these possible oral traditions, as the first surviving fragment of a vernacular "heroic song" is from the siege of Šabac, anno 1478—clearly far too distant from our notary's time to tell us anything about what he might have heard.

Based on his toponymic constructions and on some oral or written traditions, Anonymus decided to write a story of the Hungarians wandering westwards and occupying step by step, partly with victorious battles, the Carpathian Basin using the narrative modes he had learned from the stories of the siege of Troy and the exploits of Alexander the Great.

According to the expectations of his age, when chroniclers were no more satisfied by merely reporting what they read or heard but wished to authenticate their narrative,[33] Anonymus right away mentioned Scripture and Dares Phrygius as his authorities. Indeed, he relied on both. His Biblical references, mainly from the Pentateuch but also from other books of the Old Testament, are not surprising in a clerical author. Dares and his *Excidium Troie*[34] came to be Anonymus's model not only by direct borrowings, but in the

[33] See Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiévale* (Paris: Aubier, 1980), pp. 300–31, and idem, "L'histoire entre l'éloquence et la science. Quelques remarques sur le prologue de Guillaume de Malmesbury et ses Gesta regum Anglorum," *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres. Comptes rendues des séances de l'Académie des inscription et belle lettres* 1982 (126, no. 2), pp. 357–69.

[34] The account of the fall of Troy by pseudo-Dares Phrygius was composed ca. 600 AD and much read in the centuries following. See *Daretis Phrygii de Excidio Troiae Historia*, ed. Ferdinand Meister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873), esp. chs. 12–13, pp. 14–7; *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, trans. R. M. Frazer Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1966), pp. 131–68; *Excidium Troiae*, ed. E. Bagby Atwood and Virgil K. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1944); *Excidium Troie*, ed. Alan Keith Bate, Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters, vol. 23 (Frankfurt–Bern–New York: Peter Lang, 1986).

overall structure of short but informative accounts naming important protagonists and main events.[35] For the lively battle scenes, Anonymus's guide was one of the popular romances about Alexander the Great.[36]

Legal expressions abound in the Gesta. Some of them have a good pedigree, such as the word *embola* for 'a troop' that comes from Justinian's *Codex* (1.2.10 etc.) and appears in twelfth-century commentaries as well. But it is unlikely that Anonymus read any of these. We may rather assume that he found the word in some model charter or formulary. His pun on *exercitatior – exercitatione* (ch. 55, p. 118–9) is also hardly his invention, since it appears in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (9.3.58), but was no doubt similarly transmitted to him in some handbook or charter. Most of the legal terms are, however, borrowings from chancellery practice, identifiable from the—however few—Hungarian deeds of his age or earlier.

Among the *artes dictandi*, Anonymus used, beyond doubt, that of Hugh of Bologna, the *Rationes dictandi prosaice* (ca. 1119–30),[37] already in the first few lines of his work. (Indeed, this is a strong argument against placing him in the eleventh century.) However, he did not follow it in the rest of his writing as his formulations are quite pedestrian. Excepting a few puns and not very imaginative metaphors, his style is plain, though mostly clear

[35] There are, indeed, examples of codices in which such texts are bound together. One such, from Monte Cassino, now in the Bibliotheca Laurentiana, contains the *Exordia Scythica*, Dares Phrygius and a commentary on the *Aeneis*; in another (in Bamberg) a probably Neapolitan story of Troy and an excerpt from Virgil are found together. Our notary may have perused a similar codex; see István Kapitánffy, "Anonymus és az *Excidium Troiae*" [Anonymus and the *Excidium Troiae*], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 75 (1971), pp. 126–29 (reprinted in idem, *Hungarobyzantina*: *Bizánc és a görögség középkori magyarországi forrásokban* (Budapest: Typortext, 2003), pp. 194–203.

[36] E.g. the *Historia Alexandri Magni. Historia de Preliis. Rezension J2*, ed. Alfred Hilka (Meisenheim an Glan: Anton Hain, 1976–7); see also the Bibliography.

[37] Hugo Bononiensis, *Rationes dictandi prosaice*, in *Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ludwig Rockinger (Munich: Franz; 1863; repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 47–94.

and informative. The few rhymed sentences would not qualify as *prosologium* (verse inserts into prose) and one cannot find any of the more demanding rhetorical devices usual in twelfth- and thirteenth-century writings.

After all this, it hardly needs to be emphasized that the *Gesta* is in no ways a source of information for the events it pretends to narrate, but rather for the ideas about them current in the Hungary of the notary's times and for the literary skills of its author.

RECEPTION

There are very few documents from the Middle Ages that carry such heavy political baggage. Soon after its publication in the eighteenth century, German scholars of the Universities of Halle and Göttingen dismissed it as a baseless tale, and called the author a "*Fabelmann*" (fairy-tale teller), particularly on account of his faulty description of the Rus' principalities. In fact, these chapters of the *Gesta* offered a striking parallel to the description in the Russian Primary Chronicle (first published in 1767) of the Hungarians' passage by Kiev on their way to their new homeland. But August Ludwig Schlözer and Johann Salomo Semler argued that the principalities mentioned by Anonymus did not exist in the ninth century. They also pointed to Anonymus's uncritical and inconsistent use of Regino.[38] Other German readers also noted the absence of any reference to Germans in the kingdom of Hungary, which is, in fact, a strange omission. While the *Gesta*'s authenticity in the strict sense of being a narrative composed in the Middle Ages, rather than a later forgery, was rarely doubted, it was nevertheless decried as not being a "true record."

[38] E.g., Johann Salomo Semler, *Versuch den Gebrauch der Quellen in der Staats- und Kirchengeschichte der mitlern Zeiten zu erleichtern* (Halle: Gebauer, 1761), pp. 27–33; August Ludwig Schlözer, *Nestor, Russische Annalen in ihrer Slawonischen Grund Sprache* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1805), vol. 3, pp. 107–48.

Within the kingdom, it was a Slovak priest, Georgius Szklenár, who in 1784 and 1788 first registered doubts as to the *Gesta*'s reliability. His study was a seriously critical assessment, based on good philology, but he, too, dismissed the notary as "a liar" on account of his failure to include the location of Great Moravia.[39] On the other hand, Anonymus's account was given full credit when it served nationalist interests. The Romanians of the eighteenth-century Principality of Transylvania (at that time under Viennese rule) turned to him for support. In the *Supplex libellus Valachorum,* submitted to the Vienna court, the authors claimed the right to be one of the historic "nations" of Transylvania beside the Hungarians, Székely and Saxons. They argued on the basis of Anonymus's narrative that, even though Prince Gelou/Gyalu of the "Vlachs" was defeated by the Magyars, his subjects swore an oath of allegiance to the chief Tuhutum/Tétény. Hence their descendants should be accepted as a constituent community of the Principality.[40]

All such challenges were rejected by patriotic Hungarian (and Saxon) authors, some of whom added serious scholarship to the study of the text. The first major monograph in defense of Anonymus, Daniel Cornides's *Vindiciae anonymi Bele Regis notarii*, published posthumously in 1802, addressed virtually all the issues of dating and authenticity that were to be discussed in the subsequent two centuries. While he did not come down unequivocally on the date (hesitating between Bela II and and III), he mustered almost all problematic points which have featured in one way or another in the debates down to our day.[41]

[39] Georgius Szklenár, *Vetustissmus Magnae Moraviae situs*, (Posonii: n. p., 1784), and *Hypercriticon examinis vetustissmi Magnae Moraviae situs et vindiciae Anonymi Belae Regis scribae*, Ibid. 1788. The author could not foresee that the question of the location and extent of "Magna Moravia" will be a major issue of debate some two hundred years later, beginning with Imre Boba's *Moravia's History Reconsidered: A Reinterpretation of Medieval Sources* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971)—and still not settled.

[40] *Representatio et humillimae preces universae in Transylvania valachicae nationis se pro reqnicolari natione qualis fuit...* (Iaş, 1791).

[41] A few overviews of the controversies around the *Gesta* are listed in the bibliography, below, p. 233.