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Blasi and Pastores Romanorum in the *Gesta Hungarorum* by an Anonymous Notary

*Blachowie i pastores Romanorum w „Gesta Hungarorum”
Anonimowego Notariusza*

STRESZCZENIE

Blachowie (Blachi) zostali parokrotnie wymienieni przez Anonimowego Notariusza króla Béli III, pierwszego kronikarza węgierskiego, którego dzieło dotrwało do naszych czasów. Pojawiają się jako wrogowie Rzymian oraz mieszkańcy lokalnych struktur politycznych. W jednym miejscu zostali wspomniani wraz z tajemniczymi pasterzami Rzymian. W artykule próbuję odpowiedzieć na pytanie, kim byli *Blachi*, czy możemy ich utożsamiać z Wołochami, przodkami Rumunów oraz kim byli Rzymianie i ich pasterze. Według powszechnej opinii badaczy Anonim, pisząc o ludzie *Blachi*, miał istotnie na myśli Wołochów. Jednakże takiej zgody już nie ma, jeśli chodzi o odpowiedź na pytanie, czy z Wołochami identyczni byli *pastores Romanorum*. Użycie w tekście kroniki spójnika *ac* sugeruje, że Anonim traktował pasterzy Rzymian jako oddzielną od Wołochów grupę ludności. Pojawiają się oni na zachód od Dunaju, podczas gdy Wołosi byli umiejscawiani na wschód od Cisy. W pasterzach widziano potomków resztek zromanizowanej ludności pannońskiej, papieskich poborców dziesięcin lub walońskich kolonistów z czasów kronikarza. Opowiadanie Anonima próbuję objaśnić w kontekście tzw. Powieści o przełożeniu ksiąg (termin Aleksieja Szachmatowa) będącej fragmentem *Powieści lat minionych*, a opowiadającej o władzy Wołochów (czyli Franków) nad Słowianami pannońskimi. Wydaje mi się, że węgierski kronikarz wykorzystał tu miejscową tradycję Słowian pannońskich o księżach (*pastores*) frankijskich z archidiecezji salzburskiej działających wśród nich. Tradycja ta przechowuje pamięć o frankijskim zwierzchnictwie politycznym i kościelnym nad dawną Panonią w IX w.

Słowa kluczowe: Węgry, Panonia, Wołosi, Słowianie, kronikarstwo

According to the *Gesta Hungarorum*, written by an anonymous notary of King Béla, the Hungarian princes heard about Pannonia from the princes of Rus'. *Dicebant enim, quod ibi confluerent noblissimi fontes aquarum,*

*Danubius et Tyscia et alii nobilissimi fontes piscibus habundantes, quarum terram habitarent Sclavi, Bulgarii et Blachii ac pastores Romanorum. Quia post mortem Athile regis terram Pannonie Romani dicebant pascua esse eo, quod greges eorum in terra Pannonie pascebantur. Et iure terra Pannonie pascua Romanorum esse dicebatur, nam et modo Romani pascuntur de bonis Hungarie*¹. We read here about some rivers full of fish and learn about abundant herds of cattle. This land was accordingly called “the herd of the Romans”. Several nations lived there: the Slavs, the Bulgarians, the Vlachs and (*ac*) the shepherds of the Romans. There were the Romans who grazed on Hungarian fields.

It is the first, but not the only place where the Vlachs occurred in the chronicle. We find more extensive fragments in Chapters 24–27 of the work. The story there is devoted to the fights of the Hungarian incomers with *Gelou quidam Blacus* who reigned in the territory of western Transylvania. The Vlachs and the Slavs lived in his domain, and they chose for themselves the Hungarian leader Tuhutum (or Tétény) after Gelou’s death in combat. The new Hungarian ruler of Transylvania founded a dynasty from which Sarolta, St. Stephen’s mother, descended. The first king of Hungary dethroned Gyula because he refused to be a Christian and opposed him². We read about Vlachs once more, as auxiliary people to the prince of Banat Glad, together with the Bulgarians and the Cumanians³. Glad was already mentioned earlier as Prince of Morisena, an ally of the Cumans and as an ascendant of Ajtony⁴.

As we can see, the Vlachs, or rather *Blachi*⁵, were mentioned a few times as enemies of the Hungarians and inhabitants of local political structures such as the domain of Gelou, who was characterized as a Wallachian ruler. Apart of them, the Romans are mentioned together with mysterious

¹ The last edition with English translation: M. Rady and L. Veszprémy (eds.), *Anonymus and Master Roger. Anonymi Bele regis notarii Gesta Hungarorum. Anonymus, Notary of King Béla, The Deeds of the Hungarians*, J. M. Bak and M. Rady (eds.), *Magistri Rogerii Epistola in miserabile Carmen super destructione regni Hungarie per Tartaros facta. Master Roger’s Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, Budapest–New York 2010 [henceforth: An. Eng.], pp. 26–27. Latin text based on: Ae. Jakubovich, D. Pais (eds.), *P. magistri, qui Anonymus dicitur, Gesta Hungarorum*, in: *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum* [henceforth: SRH], vol. 1, Budapestini 1937 [henceforth: An. SRH], pp. 45–46. Reprint with extensive commentary in postscriptum prepared by K. Szovák and L. Veszprémy, Budapest 1999.

² An. Eng., ch. pp. 24–27, 58–65; An. SRH, pp. 65–69.

³ An. Eng., ch. 44, pp. 92–97; An. SRH, pp. 88–92.

⁴ An. Eng., ch. 11, pp. 30–35; An. SRH, pp. 47–50.

⁵ Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak és vlachok Nyesztornál és Anonymusnál*, in: idem, *Tanulmányok az Árpád-korról*, Budapest 1983, p. 170 explains that at the end of Old-Hungarian period the labiodental *v* was spelled as bilabial *β*, and consequently as the fricative *b*.

pastores Romanorum. Here arises a question important from the point of view of our subject matter: Who were the *Blachi*? Can we identify them with the Vlach people, the ascendants of the Romanians? Who were the Romans and their shepherds? To answer this question we must first review major suggestions in the historiography and next try to examine both the real and legendary situations of the Carpathian Basin in the time of the Hungarian conquest, as well as in the time when an anonymous notary composed the *Gesta*⁶.

Anonymus' Vlach information is important because the first documents mention the Vlachs in the south of Transylvania as late as the 1220s⁷. If we accept the most popular dating of the chronicle composition as about 1200, it will be counted as the oldest information about this people that can be found in all Hungarian sources. Moreover, according to this data they were located in the territories of their later settlement already three centuries earlier and this information suggests that they lived in Transylvania and Pannonia before the Hungarians' arrival there. It was a core for the idea of Dacian-Roman continuity in Transylvania, which started to be a cornerstone of modern Romanian national consciousness and a basis of Romanian aspirations to play an equal role in Transylvania as the Hungarians and the Saxons had played. The theory of Dacian-Roman continuity claimed that it was a Romanized Dacian population who preserved the Latin language and culture after the fall of the Roman power in Dacia. Living in the mountains and dealing with shepherding, the generations of the Roman people – the Vlachs, who called themselves the Rumâni – preserved their ancient heritage until the Hungarian conquest, and did it despite oppressive Hungarian power. Only after 1918 the Transylvanian Romanians, united with their brothers from Wallachia and Moldavia, were able to develop their national culture in their new situation. It is nothing strange that the text of the Hungarian, i.e. enemy chronicler, where *Blachi* occurred so many times, was so precious to them. And it was accepted as a credible source of information without any doubts⁸.

⁶ It is a common opinion that our chronicler was the notary of Béla III, who died in 1196, and when the king was mentioned dead, the chronicler could write his text about 1200. However, recently increasingly more popular is the opinion that he wrote his chronicle in the 1220s or even in the 1230s, but before the Tatar incursion. Cf. An. Eng., p. XXII (L. Veszprémy); M. Homza, *Uhorsko-poľská kronika. Nedocenený prameň k dejinám strednej Európy*, Bratislava 2009, pp. 24–27.

⁷ D. Kosáry, *Historians and Transylvania*, in: *Historians and the History of Transylvania*, ed. by L. Péter, New York 1992, p. 55; Gy. Kristó, *Nichtungarische Völker im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, transl. by T. Schäfer, Herne 2008, pp. 210–211.

⁸ Cf. *Historians and the History of Transylvania, passim*; E. Niederhauser, *A történetírás története Kelet-Európában*, Budapest 1995, pp. 361–421, especially p. 369 (origins of the idea

The Hungarian historiography has discussed the value of the *Gesta Hungarorum* as a primary source from the very moment of its publication. The positivistic methods of source criticism led scholars to general questioning of information given by the chronicler. They underlined his words that he had composed rather a heroic romance, such as *Historia Troiana*, which he had also composed in his scholarly time, the fact that we know from his *Preface*⁹. His story had an aim to describe brave acts of the Hungarian leaders, thanks to which they could settle in a new homeland. It was a legitimization story of Hungarian presence in Europe. These rulers had right to rule because the Árpáds were Attila's descendants; in the same way, they earned it thanks to their victorious fights against the settled people and their estates. It seems that Anonymus deduced the existence of these duchies and their rulers from the toponymy, thinking that a lot of place-names commemorated Hungarian as well as local heroes¹⁰.

However, it would be a mistake to suspect that all his information was false. Let us analyse the existence of the principality of Menumorout. According to our chronicler, he was a prince of Bihar, who was defeated by the Hungarians. A story about him was broken by a narration about Gelou, which we have mentioned above. Only at the end of his *Gesta* the chronicler "remembered" about Menumorout and wrote about his peace treatment sealed by the marriage of his daughter with the Hungarian dauphin Zulta. It was another legitimization argument of the Hungarian power over a part of their new homeland territory. Of course, Menumorout never existed and never ruled over Bihar. But the modern explanation of this name leads us to understand that it was not an invented person. The scholars interpret his name as a compound made of two words. The first one was a Turkish word 'ménü' with the sense 'great', and the second

of the Dacian-Roman continuation). For critical approach to the theory of the Dacian-Roman continuity see U. Fiedler, *Pochodzenie ludności romańskiej (Wołochów i Rumunów) na Półwyspie Bałkańskim. Głos w dyskusji*, „Acta Archaeologica Carpathica” 1997–1998, 34, pp. 119–134.

⁹ An. Eng., pp. 2–3 and An. SRH, p. 33. Cf. L. Hadrovics, *Der südslawische Trojaroman und seine ungarische Vorlage*, „Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae” 1955, 1, pp. 49–135 – according to the researcher our chronicler was an author of the Latin version of *Historia Troiana*, which later was translated into Hungarian (by himself?) and afterwards was a basis for the South-Slavic versions.

¹⁰ Information about the source value of the *Gesta Hungarorum* is contained in all recent numerous editions of this source. Apart of An. Eng. and An. SRH cf. G. Silagi and L. Veszprémy (eds.), *Die “Gesta Hungarorum” des anonymen Notars. Die älteste Darstellung der ungarischen Geschichte*, Sigmaringen 1992 – Latin-German; L. Veszprémy and J. Bollók (eds.), *Anonymus, A magyarok cselekedetei*. Kézai Simon, *A magyarok cselekedetei*, Budapest 1999 – Hungarian; V. Múcska (ed.), *Kronika anonymného notára kráľa Bela*, Bratislava 2000 – Latin-Slovak; A. Kulbicka et al. (ed.), *Anonimowego Notariusza króla Béli Gesta Hungarorum*, Kraków 2006 – Latin-Polish.

one is the Hungarian ethnonym ‘marót’ meaning ‘the Moravian’. Now it becomes clear for us that Menumorout was a personification of the Great Moravian ruler, probably Svatopluk, and Anonymus did not know about him at all¹¹. One can observe some traces of Hungarian – Moravian contacts also in a story of the conquest of Nitra that was defended by Prince Zobor. In fact, it is a name of a hill, on which a famous Benedictine monastery was founded.

As can be seen, Anonymus created his story using several components. He based it on oral tradition of some noble families, he filled it with his language deductions¹² and his own observations. He frequently projected the reality of his time into the past. We encounter such a situation when he mentioned that auxiliary troops of prince Glad consisted of the Vlachs, the Bulgarians and the Cumanians. It reflected the official title of the Bulgarian tsars from the Second Bulgarian State of the Asenid dynasty after 1185, which means from our chronicler’s contemporary time¹³. No wonder because the medieval chroniclers thought in the categories of their own times deducting that if there were no written sources telling the contrary or presenting other options, the past reality did not differ much from what they experienced in their times.

Let us return to the main question: Who were the *Blachi*, the Romans and their shepherds in the chronicle? According to a basic analysis of the problem made by Gyula Kristó, Anonymus, when he wrote about the Vlachs, thought in fact about the Vlachs themselves¹⁴. The same is the opinion of a number of scholars. However, no such concordance is seen when it comes to the question whether or not the *Blachi* were to be identify with the Roman shepherds. Some scholars, not only from Romania, say yes as their answer. One of their argument was that the conjunctive *ac* was used by the anonymous chronicler meaning ‘that is’, which means as an expression of the relation of implication, when one subject is called with another term. They translate the fragment of the Anonymus’ text as ‘the Blachs that is the Roman shepherds’. Dennis Deletant, nevertheless, said that he never met such a meaning of this conjunctive, which always expressed the relation of conjunction, that is a connection of two sepa-

¹¹ For more detailed analysis see R. Grzesik, *Hungaria – Slavia – Europa Centralis. Studia z dziejów kultury środkowoeuropejskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu*, Warszawa 2014, see in Index.

¹² He was an eminent linguist of his time, presenting very high level of language consciousness. Cf. L. Benkő, *Anonymus élő nyelvi forrásai*, in: *A honfoglaláskor írott forrásai*, ed. by L. Kovács, L. Veszprémy, Budapest 1996, pp. 221–247, especially pp. 238–246.

¹³ Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, pp. 164–165.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

rate subjects¹⁵. Therefore, *pastores Romanorum* were not identical with the Blachs. Moreover, Gyula Kristó made an important observation that the Vlachs were mentioned only in the context of the territories located east of Tisza, while the Romans and their shepherds occurred only in historical Pannonia, in territories situated west of the Danube, in Transdanubia (Dunántúl)¹⁶. In many scholars' opinion the Romans were the Romance population but rather of western Romance origins, maybe they were the Latinized people from former Pannonia or the Latinized group of people from the Alps to the Danube (Rhaeto-Romanians or Dalmatians). One understood this term as the Walloons, new settlers in the medieval Hungary or even in political and economic sense as the Papal collectors of tithes or the representatives of the East-Roman Empire, which is the Byzantium¹⁷. Gyula Kristó might be right when he mentioned that our chronicler, who received a classical education somewhere in France (maybe in Orléans), had the ancient Romans on his mind¹⁸.

However, we have to ask whether the traditional belief about the presence of the Romans in Pannonia and their escape to Germany out of fear of the Hungarians is rooted in the ancient times? The Old-Rus' *Primary Chronicle* or *Povešť vremennykh let* seems to offer an answer to this question. We read here about Pannonia as a homeland of the Slavs. They were subordinated to the Vlachs (*Volokhi, Volkhi*). After the Hungarians had come to Pannonia, they expelled the Vlachs and subdued the Slavs¹⁹. According to Aleksey Shakhmatov, this part of the *Primary Chronicle* includes the West-Slavic tradition of the Great-Moravian origin. It is a part of the *Story of the Book Translation* (*Povešť o prelozheniyu knig*), as he proposed to call this frag-

¹⁵ It was E. Gamillscheg, *Blachii ac pastores Romanorum*, in: *Omagiu lui Ioan Lupăș la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani*, București 1943, pp. 270–276 who proposed such a meaning of the conjunctive *ac*. The same A. Madgearu in his brilliant monograph on Vlach question by the anonymous author: *The Romanians in the Anonymous Gesta Hungarorum. Truth and Fiction*, Cluj-Napoca 2005, p. 45. Critics cf. D. Deletant, *Ethnos and Mythos in the History of Transylvania: the Case of the Chronicler Anonymus*, in: *Historians and the History of Transylvania*, p. 75. Cf. also Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, p. 167; *Słownik łaciny średniowiecznej w Polsce*, ed. M. Plezia, vol. 1, Wrocław–Kraków–Warszawa 1953–1958, pp. 895–896 s. v. *atque, acque, adque, ac, hac* with some ground meanings, as: “cum notione addendi; cum notione coniungendi...” et al.

¹⁶ Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, pp. 140, 185; D. Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁷ For a detailed overview see: Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, pp. 134–139 and the commentaries to each edition.

¹⁸ Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, pp. 186–187; L. Hadrovics, *op. cit.*, p. 128 with reference to: J. Gyóry, *Gesta regum – gesta Nobilium. Tanulmány Anonymus krónikájáról*, Budapest 1948.

¹⁹ *Повесть временных лет*, ч. 1: *Текст и перевод*, ed. Д. С. Лихачев, В. П. Адриановая-Перетц, Москва–Ленинград 1950, pp. 21–23.

ment, in which the cultural tradition of Great Moravia was preserved²⁰. Analyses of the Pannonian history of the 9th century show that the Old-Rus' tradition preserved the real facts from the history of the Pannonian Slavs, who were the subject of the Frankish power in the 9th century. The Frankish supremacy collapsed after the Hungarians conquered the land. Therefore, I believe that the *Volokhi* of the *Primary Chronicle* should only be identified with the Frankish Carolingian Empire, which had a dual, German-Romance, ethnic character²¹.

The Anonymus probably did not know the Old-Rus' sources. But he must have heard about the local tradition concerning the Pannonian Vlachs, the Franks. It did not have the Great-Moravian, but rather local Pannonian origins. The Anonymus probably as an educated person changed the name of those Vlachs to the Romans, but he properly noted down that they escaped to Germany. I think that the 'pastoral' interpretation of *pastores Romanorum* is the most reasonable. The Roman shepherds could be priests, mainly from the archbishopric of Salzburg, for whom one should pay tithes. As we know, the trials of Kocelj to weaken the links with Salzburg and to include Pannonia in the Pannonian metropolis of St. Methodius finished unsuccessful²². But they could be the real shepherds of our chronicler, who was aware of what one of the basis of the economic wealth of Hungary was²³.

It could be a next part of the Slavic tradition preserved in the Hungarian medieval historiography. The current research shows that this tradition was richer than anyone could have earlier suspected²⁴. But the story of the Vlach prince Gelou does not belong to the Slavic story. I think the

²⁰ See J. Lešny, *Konstantyn i Metody apostołowie Słowian. Dzieło i jego losy*, Poznań 1987, pp. 82–101; M. Homza, *Svätopluk v európskom písomníctve. Štúdie z dejín svätoplukovskej legendy*, Bratislava 2013, p. 64 mentioned that this tradition has Pannonian origin.

²¹ It is generally accepted by the Hungarian historiography, see a detailed characterization in Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak, passim*, especially pp. 148–150, 161–163.

²² M. Homza, N. Rácová, *K vývinu slovenskej myšlienky do polovice 18. storočia. Kapitoly k základom slovenskej historiografie. Učebné texty*, Bratislava 2010, pp. 21–29, especially pp. 27–28 (part written by M. Homza).

²³ Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak, passim*. We can only indicate the question of the lost *Gesta Ungarorum*, the primary source of the Hungarian chronicle writing, which according B. Hóman, *A Szent László-kori Gesta Ungarorum és a XII–XIII századi leszármazói*, Budapest 1925, pp. 33–34 included the characteristic of Pannonia as the *pascua Romanorum*. Gy. Kristó, *Rómaiak*, p. 181 is very sceptical (according to him the term was used only in a lost chronicle form about 1235), but how to explain the knowledge of pastoral character of Pannonia and the Roman past by Odo de Deuil in 1147, although he used other words in the later Hungarian chronicles. Cf. R. Grzesik, *Kronika węgiersko-polska. Studia z dziejów polsko-węgierskich kontaktów kulturalnych w średniowieczu*, Poznań 1999, pp. 63–65.

²⁴ For more details see R. Grzesik, *Hungaria, passim*.

key to solving the meaning is hidden at the end of this fragment when the Anonymus wrote about the descendants of the Hungarian leader Tuhutum (Tétény). It was the family of the Transylvanian Gyulas, who finally rebelled against St. Stephen and did not want to accept Christianity. The creation of the alleged state legitimized its further incorporation into Hungary in the time of St. Stephen. The alleged founder of the Gyulas dynasty was elected a prince after he had killed Gelou and one of his granddaughters was St. Stephen's mother²⁵. But the reference to the Vlachs as far as northern suggests that they settled there earlier than previously accepted, maybe in the first decades of the 12th century. If not, the Anonymus would have not acknowledged them as the natives living in Transylvania in the time of the Hungarian conquest.

To sum up, the Anonymus, who wrote his *Gesta Hungarorum* about 1200, mentioned the Vlachs, Romans and their shepherds a few times in his work. All these people were separate groups for him. I think that the Vlachs in his Chronicle were the ascendants of the present-day Romanians, while the Romans represented the ancient Empire. The term 'shepherds of the Romans' underlined the economic model in Pannonia. Who were they in reality? I think that the Vlachs were really the East-Romance population who came to Transylvania earlier than previously accepted, maybe in the first few decades of the 12th century. The Romans and their shepherds came from the oral tradition of the Pannonian Slavs and expressed the Frankish political and ecclesiastical domination over former Pannonia in the 9th century.

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²⁵ Cf. W. Swoboda, *Alba Iulia*, in *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich*, vol. 7, issue 2, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1982, p. 347.

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ABSTRACT

The *Blachi* were mentioned several times by the anonymous notary of King Béla III, the author of the first Hungarian chronicle, which preserved until nowadays. They occurred as the enemies of the Hungarians and the inhabitants of local political structures. Once they were mentioned together with mysterious herds of the Romans. In my article I try to answer the question, who were the *Blachi*, if we can identify them with the Vlachs, the ascendants of the Romanians and who were the Romans and their shepherds. According to the common opinion of the scholars when he wrote about the *Blachi*, he really mentioned the Vlachs. However, there is no concordance in the question if *pastores Romanorum* were identical with the Vlachs. The use of the conjunction *ac* suggests that the anonymous notary treated the shepherds of the Romans as a separate group as the Vlachs. They occurred west of the Danube while the Vlachs were located east of Tisza. Some scholar interpreted the shepherds as the rest of the ancient Pannonian population, which was Romanized during the Roman rule, another connected them with the Papal collectors of tithes or the Walloon colonists from the chronicler's time. I propose to connect the notary's story with that of the Rus' Primary Chronicle's fragment named by Aleksey Shakhmatov as The Story of the Book Translation about the Volokh (i.e. Frankish) rule over the Pannonian Slavs. I think that the Hungarian chronicler used the local oral tradition of the Pannonian Slavs about the Frankish priests (*pastores*) from the Salzburg archbishopric, who acted among them. This tradition expressed the Frankish political and ecclesiastical domination over former Pannonia in the ninth century.

Key words: Hungary, Pannonia, Vlachs, Slavs, chronicle writing

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