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Chronica Hungarorum in Silesia : the First Printed Book in Hungary and the Silesian Thread

Bibliotheca Nostra : śląski kwartalnik naukowy nr 4, 30-37

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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**CHRONICA HUNGARORUM IN SILESIA.
THE FIRST PRINTED BOOK IN HUNGARY
AND THE SILESIAN THREAD**

„*Finita Bude anno Domini MCCCCLXXIII in vigilia penthecostes: per Andream Hess*” – It was completed by Andreas Hess in Buda in 1473 A.D., the day before Pentecost [*Chronica Hungarorum*]. The history of printing in Hungary started with this closing line (colophon) of the Buda Chronicle. The small folio containing 70 leaves (133 printed pages) has survived in ten copies.

We have some important information concerning the printer. Judging by his name Andreas Hess was a typographer of German origin, who worked as an assistant in Georg Lauer’s printing office in Rome¹. Hess arrived in Buda in late spring, 1471 at the invitation of László Kárai², provost of the Cathedral of Buda, to create the first Hungarian incunable with the cast types brought from Italy. However, all we know about Hess we know from his book. He completed his work on June 5th, approximately two years after arriving in Buda. We have an indirect explanation for this delay which is related to his frank confession, that for a long time he had wondered to whom to dedicate his book [*Chronica Hungarorum*, transl. Horváth János, p. 3].

Undoubtedly, the *spiritus rector* of Hungarian printing was János Vitéz (c.1408–1472), Archbishop of Esztergom. Vitéz always receptive to technical innovations, must have been captured by the idea of reproducing books in many copies with the help of a set of movable cast types. In addition, the bibliophile Vitéz, when founding the University of Pozsony (today: Bratislava) in 1465, must have been aware of the fact that books in sufficient numbers were of vital importance for education [Gabriel, 1969, pp. 37-50].

¹ The printing workshop of Georg Lauer had printing activity between 1470–1482 in Rome. [*Clavis Typographorum Librariorumque Italiae 1465–1600*, p. 196].

² László Kárai lived from the first half of the 15th century to before 1488 in Buda, worked as a provost, and a vice-chancellor between 1473–1483. Hess mentioned Kárai: *Chronica* f. 2^r „Ladislauum praepositum ecclesiae Budensis”.

The following timeline can presumably be drawn up: László Kárai as a delegate in Rome in the autumn of 1470 invited Andreas Hess to Buda upon János Vitéz's request. The typographer did not count as a young assistant by that time since, as he put it in the dedication of the *Chronica*: „I have made considerable progress”³ in printing. Hess must have received an attractive offer promising privileges, the opportunity to establish his own office, financial support and guaranteed orders. However, the situation dramatically changed in Hungary from the second half of 1471, as the relationship between the King of Hungary and the Archbishop of Esztergom deteriorated so much that apparently they even came to blows [Engel, 2001, p. 318; Kubinyi, 2008, pp. 91-93]. The last straw was when the Archbishop offered the Hungarian throne to the son of the Polish Casimir IV Jagiellonides.⁴ Although King Matthias (1443–1490) reconciled with János Vitéz before the Christmas 1471 (a minor victory won by the younger Casimir at a battle in Upper Hungaria must have played a part there), a few months later, in March 1472 the archbishop was already under house arrest in Esztergom where he stayed until his death in August [Foldesi, 2008, p. 103]. The establishment of the first printing office in Hungary, however, did not start the way Hess had hoped.

Although we do not have any contemporary sources concerning the reception of the *Chronica* based on the provenance of the surviving copies, we can say that the book was primarily distributed in the Central European region. One of the ten copies had a very special history. Andreas Hess, the typographer of Buda naturally had no idea one day a copy⁵ of his book would travel overseas, to the Library of Princeton University, New Jersey founded in 1746. Out of the dozen libraries at Princeton Campus it is the Firestone Library that keeps the oldest and most valuable incunabula. It is here one can find the famous Scheide Library, considered as the most beautiful private collection in America thanks to the bibliophilism shared by the Scheide family (grandfather, son and grandson) [Axtell, 2006, pp. 472-473]. Along with the valuable Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach and Abraham Lincoln manuscripts their collection of early printed books is also outstanding: one can find copies of the four oldest printed Bibles as well as rare old books on America from the sixteenth century [Needham, 1976, pp. 85-108].

The Buda Chronicle may have been of interest to its former owners through the centuries, not just due to the position it held in the history of European printing, but also because of its artistic rubrication. The Princeton copy was illuminated throughout by a contemporary illuminator. The

³ *Chronica* f. 2^r „pro voto meo aliquantisper profecissem.” [The first leaf is blank.]

⁴ Saint Casimir (1458–1484), was a crown prince of Poland, who became a patron saint of Poland.

⁵ Princeton, Scheide Library, WHS S2.11A.

initials and the double dots, used instead of commas and painted in red ink, all praise the artistry of its illuminator, who put the centred titles in boxes and decorated them with ribbons. He painted a monk above the colophon, also in red ink. This playfulness can be witnessed in the chapter on the twelfth century: here one can see an elegantly depicted stork standing on an anvil, with its beak pointing to the title of the chapter. The page with the dedication and the one detailing the Biblical beginnings are also beautiful to behold. The initial P of this latter page is painted in several colours and decorated with trailers. Since the book is severely cropped – the Princeton Buda Chronicle copy is the smallest among the ones known – not only have important marginalia been lost or become indecipherable but parts of the decoration are also gone, for example the hind part of the stork mentioned above. In the book there are two additional fine bird depictions, probably having the function of *nota bene*.

How could a copy of the *Chronica Hungarorum* get from the workshop set up in the Royal Palace in Buda to one of the oldest and most prestigious university libraries of the United States of America? The first clue is provided by a note underneath the dedication to László Kárai: „Mgr. Johann Czuly from Glogau of Upper Silesia.”⁶ According to this note the former Polish owner of this book („czuły” means sensitive in Polish) lived in Głogówek (Upper Silesia) in the sixteenth century. Two painted coats of arms decorating the first page may have belonged to him. One is smaller with a golden cross on black background, the other somewhat bigger with an antlers-like form set above green hills in three parts in a blue field and a vertically divided red-gold-red shield. A former owner in the fifteenth century also made marginalia in the incunabulum in coal black ink, highlighting the contents, underlining some of the text and sometimes reflecting on the words. From time to time he made a note in the margin of something he found worth noting, for example about the river Togata: „Another big river is called Togata, starts in the country of the Scythians and is meandering through deserted forests, moorlands and snow covered mountains where the sun never shines; finally it arrives in the land of Irkania and turns towards the North Sea.”⁷ The fifteenth century reader of the *Chronica* may not have been aware of the old Hungarian name of the river Irtysh and found strange its similarity with the Latin word *togata* meaning ‘Roman comedies’. He may have taken it for a mistake and corrected it in the margin to „togala”.

⁶ *Chronica* f. 2^r „M(agister) Joannis Czuly Ab ober Glogaw(iae) Siles(iensis).” Głogówek of Upper Silesia (*Oberglogau* in German) can easily be confused with Głogów of Lower Silesia (*Glogau* in German).

⁷ *Chronica* f. 3^v „Alter vero fluvius nomine Togata valde magnus, in regno nascitur Sciticorum, qui per silvas vadit desertas paludes, et montes niveos ubi sol nunquam lucet, discurrens intrat tandem in Irkaniam, et ibi vergit in Mare Aquilonis.”

It is also worth noting that the name of Zeiselmauer (in the margin it is „Czeislmaur”), a village in Lower Austria is highlighted: „After they [the Huns] had been faced with the Romans’ courage and military prowess they reassembled their troops and turned towards the town of Tolna where their enemies were gathering. Allegedly Detrik and Matrinus confronted them at Cezmaur and during a nine-hour-long battle which started in the morning, the Romans were defeated.”⁸ When enlarging the note one can see clearly that the word „Cezmaur” was surrounded by dots by its reader. The place where the Romans were defeated was Tulln an der Donau, merely 6 miles away from Zeiselmauer, which was mistaken for the similarly named town of Tolna⁹, also upon the Danube in Hungary (*civitas Tolna* or *civitas Tulna*). The manuscript Andreas Hess had used must have preserved the name of the Austrian Tulln in a corrupted form. The presumably Hungarian scribe must have known the Hungarian town only and not heard of the Austrian one. This is probably how the name Tolna was three times mistakenly included in the first folio; the fourth time the mistake was recognized and corrected by someone, maybe László Kárai, well-versed in the geography of Hungary. In the light of this another detail relating to the former owner of the incunabulum gives food for thought. He underlined the part which said that Tolna was considered a town of Pannonia (*urbes Pannoniae computata*), then underlined the part of the sentence where it was stated that Tolna was at three days’ march from Vienna (*tres rastas distat a Vienna*): „When seeing how much damage his troops suffered during the battle, on the second day of the battle Detrik marched towards the town of Tolna, which was then considered a town of Italians among the towns in Pannonia. The town of Tolna is situated in Austria, three days’ march from Vienna.”¹⁰

Does not this highlighting indicate that the former owner of the incunabulum recognized the misprint, namely that the town of Tulln in Lower Austria is the one which is three *rastas* away from Vienna? The Hungarian translation of „three days” is also problematic. The two Austrian towns, Tulln and Vienna are 19 miles from each other. If calculating with contemporary German measure (*germanische Rasta*) then it is not even 9 miles (3 X 4900 metres). But if it calculated in old Hungarian miles (3 X 8937,4 metres), which would be obvious in a Hungarian chronicle, then the dis-

⁸ *Chronica* f. 5^r „Experientes igitur in prelio precesso animositatem Romanorum, et armorum paraturam resarcito exercitu, versus Tolnam civitatem, ubi se inimici eorum collegerunt, Huni perrexerunt. Contra quos Detricus cum Matrino in Cezmaur dicitur occurrisse et a mane usque ad nonam preliantes, Romani sunt devicti.”

⁹ Tolna (*Tolnau* in German) is a Hungarian town, which lies 84 miles south of Budapest, on the right-bank of the Danube.

¹⁰ *Chronica* f. 3^r „Videns autem Detricus tantam cedem accidisse sui populi in prelio, post congressum, altera die perrexit versus Tolnam civitatem, que tunc erat civitas Latinorum inter urbes Pannoniae computata. Tolna civitas est in Austria, tres rastas distat a Vienna.”

tance between the two towns would be more or less correct. There are only two copies where Hess failed to correct Tolna to Tulln. In the Princeton copy the correction (civitatem tullinam) was made at the section where the Buda Chronicle relates the victorious military campaign of the Hungarian King Samuel Aba (†1044) in 1042, invading Austria as far as Tulln.

The former owners of the copy of Paris were also misled by the name of Tulln an der Donau. A note written by Georgius Biccus can be found in the margin of the left-hand side of the page: „hodie vocant Tulnerfeld” which means ‘in our days it is called Tulnerfeld’. The geographic region (Tullnerfeld) is mistaken for the name of the town (Tulln). Another former owner, perhaps in sixteenth century, wrote in the right-hand margin: „Tolna, ubi sanctus colomanus martirio coronatus est” which means ‘Tolna, where Saint Coloman was crowned for a martyr’. This is incorrect, because according to legends Saint Coloman (†1012), a monk of Irish origin, was murdered in Stockerau, Lower Austria and not in Tulln, on the southern bank of the Danube. However according to the Chronicle of Anonymus Leobensis¹¹, Saint Coloman was arrested near Tulln because he was accused of being a spy. The Chronica Austriae was written by Thomas Ebendorfer¹² in which the author took over this story from Anonymus Leobensis „Cumque in Austriam devenisset prope circa Tulnam detentus est pro scipulatore Bohemo” [Scriptorum rerum Austriacarum, 1721-1745, p. 765], „prope Tullnam ut proditor regionis a Sclavis et Bohemis tunc patrie offensis transmissus detinetur” [Nieder Korn-Bruck, 1992, p. 14].

Finally we could add that the first owner of the Princeton copy was mostly interested in the stories of the Hunnic-Hungarian legends and, with a few exceptions, left the period of the Hungarian kings mostly unmarked. Here there are no underlining or indicator drawings on the pages. The marginalia made by another hand is clearly more recent, because they seem to be from the sixteenth century and may have been made by Czuli of Silesia mentioned above. In the Chronica Hungarorum he highlighted the explanation of the name of Tata¹³ in West Hungary. According to the Buda Chronicle (a fictitious) Count Deodatus founded the Benedictine abbey in Tata. It was him, accompanied by Adalbert (c.956–997), the bishop of Prague who christened Saint Stephen, King of Hungary. Stephen, on his turn out of respect for his Godfather, did not address him by his name but called him *tata*.¹⁴ Later the name of Deodatus was no longer fashionable

¹¹ Anonymus Leobensis was a clericman in 14th century, a native of Leoben in upper Styria, lecturer at the Dominican monastery in Vienna.

¹² Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464) was an Austrian historian, professor, and statesman.

¹³ Tata (*Dotis* in Latin) is a town in northwestern Hungary, which lies 44 miles west of Budapest.

¹⁴ A pun, difficult to translate, here the word would be a nickname for an old man.

and the place was (beginning of underlining:) „called Tata. That is why the monastery was also called like that.”¹⁵

Unfortunately the ownership of the Princeton copy following the sixteenth century cannot be reconstructed. We can assume that its subsequent owners were not Hungarian and the incunable was probably kept within the region of Silesia, maybe in a private collection. Somehow the book was then acquired by Friedrich Georg Henrici (1844–1915), Lutheran church historian and lecturer at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose grandson sold the incunable treasured by the family at auction after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990. At the auction organised by Hartung & Hartung in Munich the Buda Chronicle was sold at the record price of 420,000 Deutschmarks. Later on a renowned book collector, the youngest William H. Scheide bought it from the Kraus Company, presumably in January, 1991 for his library.

His grandfather, William T. Scheide (1847–1907), who had made a fortune in the oil business, retired in his forties and could afford to devote the last third of his life to bibliophilism. He bought the first book of his library when he was eighteen as a young telegrapher at the Pittsburgh Railroad Company [Boyd, 1947]. The oldest Scheide, initially an *omnivoreous bibliophile*, soon specialised and, as an admirer of Italy his attention turned to medieval documents, manuscripts and incunabula. His son, John H. Scheide (1875–1942) who proved to be inept for business, systematically enriched the by then quite prestigious collection. The Scheide son, a graduate of Princeton in 1896, became one of the most important book collectors of America in the 1920s and 30s. The grandson, William H. Scheide (1914–2014), musician and researcher of Bach added not only valuable original scores to the collection, but acquired special Bible editions as well [Wolf, 1976, pp. 67-71]. Finally in 1959 the library was moved from the family residence in Titusville, Pennsylvania to the Firestone Library mentioned above, thanks to the youngest Scheide who is also a Princeton graduate (1936).

The most distant copy of the Buda Chronicle, as a part of the Scheide private collection, is in good company with the beautiful Bible editions of the first masters of European printing: Johann Gutenberg, Johann Mentelin, Albrecht Pfister, Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer [Goff, 1973, pp. 72-84].

¹⁵ *Chronica* f. 13^r „sed Tata extitit vocitatus unde etiam ipsius monasterium taliter est vocatum.”

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Chronica hungarorum na śląsku.

Pierwszy druk na ziemiach węgierskich oraz śląski ślad

Streszczenie

Gdy Andreas Hess publikował „Kronikę Budy” 5 czerwca 1473 na Zamku Królewskim, miał poczucie ważności tego przedsięwzięcia. *Chronica Hungarorum* opowiada w języku łacińskim historię Madziarów od ich mitycznych początków, do koronacji króla Mathiasa w 1458 r. Wiadomo o dziesięciu egzemplarzach, które przetrwały w różnych częściach całego świata, dwa z nich znajdują się na Węgrzech, a pozostałe są przechowywane w różnych kolekcjach. Według najnowszych badań, János Vitéz, arcybiskup Esztergom zaprosił Andreeasa Hessa (który prawdopodobnie był pochodzenia niemieckiego) z Rzymu do Budy w końcu 1470 r., w celu utworzenia drukarni na Węgrzech. Jednak Vitéz popierając dążenia do tronu węgierskiego księcia Kazimierza Jagiellończyka, stracił tę protekcję. Arcybiskup wziął udział w spisku przeciwko królowi Mathiasowi (jesienią 1471 r.), wkrótce po tym zmarł (w areszcie domowym, w sierpniu 1472r.). Publikacja kroniki utrudniła toczącą się wojnę domową. W artykule przedstawiono pełną historię egzemplarza z Uniwersytetu w Princeton, czyli jego pochodzenie, właścicieli, marginalia (także o charakterze ludycznym). Ponadto, przedstawiono nieznaną okoliczność, dotyczące powstania wczesnych druków węgierskich.

Słowa kluczowe: Biblioteka Narodowa Széchényi'ego, zbiory specjalne, inkunabuły, *Chronica Hungarorum*