



Az 1196–1235 közötti magyar történelem nyugati elbeszélő forrásainak kritikája [A critical study of the Western narrative sources of Hungarian history from 1196 until 1235]. By Tamás Körmendi. Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2019. 229 pp.

For over eight decades, scholars of medieval Hungary have had at their disposal the three volumes of the alphabetical repertory (or rather chrestomathy) by Ferenc Albin Gombos, which offers a corpus (albeit one far from complete) of the sources on Hungarian history between the Conquest of the Carpathian basin by the Magyars at the end of the ninth century and the extinction of the Árpád dynasty in 1301 (*Catalogus fontium historiae Hungaricae aevo ducum et regum ex stirpe Arpad descendantium ab anno Christi DCCC usque ad annum MCCC*). Although the *Catalogus fontium* has been an essential tool for scholars since it was published in 1937–1938, no attempt had been made, until the doctoral thesis by Tamás Körmendi defended at Eötvös Loránd University in 2008, to accomplish a critical handbook examining the European chronicles, *gesta*, and annals collected by Gombos and containing information about Hungary in the Árpád era. The present volume is a revised version of Körmendi's dissertation, which discusses the Western narrative sources of a shorter time period covered by the successive reigns of Emeric (1196–1204), Ladislaus III (1204–1205), and Andrew II (1205–1235). Körmendi, an associate professor, vice-head of the Institute of History, and head of the Department of Auxiliary Sciences of History at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest), has also devoted attention, in his earlier writings, to the Latin language of the Greater Legend of Saint Stephen, the establishment of Hungarian rule in Croatia, and the history of coats of arms in medieval Hungary. The work, which is Körmendi's first monograph, offers a philological and historical analysis of the narrative sources on Hungarian history between 1196 and 1235.

The Hungarian national chronicle (the so-called fourteenth-century chronicle composition) contains little information on the events of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Therefore, in addition to charters, foreign narrative sources prove essential for any understanding of the period. Although studies focusing on political history have, since the publication of the two-volume synthesis on the history of the Árpád era by Gyula Pauler in 1893 (*A magyar nemzet története az Árpádbázi királyok alatt* [History of the Hungarian nation under the kings of the house of Árpád]), been exploiting the passages related to Hungary from the

annals, chronicles, and *gesta* written beyond the borders of the Carpathian Basin, Hungarian scholars have limited knowledge of the texts themselves. Körmendi addresses this shortcoming by examining the narrative sources which contain information concerning the aforementioned four decades of Hungarian history.

In the preface to his volume, Körmendi specifies the criteria according to which the corpus of his analysis is established. His research has a wide geographical scope. By defining Western sources as texts from the lands of Latin Christendom, the book covers histories from Great Britain to Poland and from the Italian Peninsula to the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. It does not deal with the historiographical tradition of the Kingdom of Hungary; however, the *Historia Salonita* by the Dalmatian chronicler Thomas the Archdeacon (of Split) is part of the corpus. Despite the fact that in the period under examination the Adriatic coast was ruled by the kings of Hungary, Dalmatian historiography proves independent from the Hungarian tradition. The monograph discusses only medieval narrative sources in the classical sense of the term. Therefore, the humanist literature of the Renaissance era is not taken into consideration: this explains the absence of the chronicle of Krakow's canon Jan Długosz and the *Annales Boiorum* of the Bavarian historiographer Johannes Aventinus from the source material treated in the book. Using these criteria, Körmendi aims exhaustively to collect the narrative sources containing any information relevant to Hungary and Hungarians between 1196 and 1235. He compiles his sources primarily on the basis of the *Catalogus fontium* by Gombos, but as he mentions in the introduction, the list of the three-volume repertory can be completed with a few items, such as the lives of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary by Ceasarius of Heisterbach or the French poet Rutebeuf. (Due to its different genre, the extensive hagiographical literature on the Árpád princess is not subject to his analyses, however.) The texts are mostly Latin-language sources, but the corpus also includes a few vernacular chronicles (e. g. the Old French accounts of Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Robert de Clari on the fourth crusade).

The volume consists of four main parts. A chapter giving a chronological overview of the events of Hungarian history appearing in the Western narrative sources is followed by two case studies providing examples of the types of analyses that can be carried out on the basis of the corpus (I shall return to the subject below). The most important and extensive part of the work offers an encyclopedic inventory of the annals and chronicles, which include accounts on the Hungarians of the historical period between 1196 and 1235. This unit classifies sources according to their geographical origin, with the

exception of the last three subchapters, which are thematic and are dedicated to the crusaders' accounts and the histories of the two mendicant orders. As regards the geographical groups, it should be noted that German chronicles are the most numerous among the narrative sources in the corpus. In addition to historiographs of the German provinces, chroniclers from the French, British (Scottish), Iberian, Italian, Dalmatian, Polish or Bohemian territories also provide information related to the Kingdom of Hungary at the end of the twelfth and during the first decades of the thirteenth century. The eleven subchapters, which are often further subdivided into smaller units according to smaller geographical regions (such as Saxony or Flanders), describe, one by one, a total of 150 texts. Within the units, the sources follow each other in the chronological order of their genesis (from firsthand accounts to late Medieval tradition). The entries of the encyclopedic part of the book begin by summarizing, on the basis of the findings in the secondary literature, the most important knowledge on the annals, chronicles, and histories of the corpus. Following this general presentation of the sources, which indicates their author (if known), their historical context, the presumable date of their creation, the period they cover, their manuscript tradition, and their influence, Körmendi carries out, in the second part of the entries, a critical analysis of the chronicle passages related to Hungarian history. He attempts to determine the origins of the information on Hungary and the historical value of the accounts.

Körmendi's thorough examination of the texts allows him to establish the philological relations within the corpus and the hierarchy of the narrative sources giving accounts of the same events. One can observe that information usually flows between annals and chronicles written within the same geographical area: the monastic annals of Austria are, for instance, closely connected and take passages from one another. At the beginning of each subchapter of the encyclopedic part, Körmendi specifies the information that can be found in the source material of the region and indicates which groups are formed by the philologically related texts. The chronicles mention Hungary especially in cases where there existed, in the period under examination, direct contacts between the territory in question and Hungary. While Thuringian sources seem to be concerned with the figure of Saint Elizabeth (the daughter of King Andrew II and wife of Louis IV, Landgrave of Thuringia), Bohemian chroniclers cite the dynastic marriage between Ottokar I Přemysl, King of Bohemia and Constance of Hungary, daughter of the late Béla III, in 1199. The chronological overview in the first chapter of the book shows clearly that some events of Hungarian

history were of great interest to chroniclers from all over Europe. As Körmendi points out, three episodes received particular attention: the siege of Zadar by the crusaders in 1202, the assassination of Queen Gertrude of Merania in 1213, and the crusade conducted by Andrew II in 1217–1218 are well known among the medieval authors in the corpus.

The second and the third chapters of the volume present two (relatively) rich historical traditions in the form of independent case studies. The first focuses on the depiction in the sources of the capture of Prince Andrew (the future Andrew II), who was rebelling against his elder brother Emeric in 1203. The second analysis examines the large number of texts giving accounts of the aforementioned murderous attack against Queen Gertrude, the first wife of King Andrew. The 27 annals and chronicles providing details on the death of the royal consort are classified into five groups according to the type of information they contain. The studies show that the findings of philological investigations can be used to draw historical conclusions. In the first case, Körmendi affirms that the most cited sources on the conflict between Emeric and Andrew (the *Historia Salonitana* by Thomas the Archdeacon and the annals of Klosterneuburg) lack credibility and then tries to reconstruct the events mainly on the basis of the brief account in the annals of the monastery of Admont in Styria. As regards the tradition concerning the assassination of Gertrude of Merania, it should be noted that Körmendi, who considers the analysis of the narrative sources of the tragic event as a first step to further inquiries, has devoted elsewhere another study to the the circumstances surrounding the murder.¹ In the concluding words of his book, Körmendi stresses that his comprehensive analysis of the corpus also allowed him to make some minor corrections concerning the chronology of the history of the Árpád era.

To summarize, Tamás Körmendi's volume, inspired in part by the work of Wilhelm Wattenbach on the narrative sources of medieval German history (*Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter bis zur Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*), is a much-needed handbook for experts on Árpád-era Hungary. Körmendi has developed his own method to carry out a thorough analysis of a well-defined group of foreign narrative sources on Hungarian history which can serve as a model for scholars seeking to continue basic research on medieval annals and chronicles mentioning Hungary and the Hungarians. The critical observations

1 Tamás Körmendi, "A Gertrúd királyné elleni merénylet körülményei" [The circumstances of the murder of Queen Gertrude]. In *Egy történelmi gyilkosság margójára. Merániai Gertrúd emlékezője, 1213–2013. Tanulmánykötet*, ed. Judit Majorossy. (Szentendre: Ferenczy Múzeum, 2014.) 95–124.

Körmendi formulates on the texts offer further nuance to the findings in the previous literature in philology. As the sources examined provide information primarily on the foreign relations of the Kingdom of Hungary, the book will prove an essential tool for anyone interested in the foreign affairs of the kings of the Árpád dynasty between 1196 and 1235.

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