

# *Fatum necessitatis lex.* The tomb of Ovid in the Hungarian historiography (16–18th century)

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### ABSTRACT

The legend of Ovid's Hungarian tomb appeared in the historiography in the 16th century: besides the numerous Ovid-tombs that turned up all across Europe, Wolfgang Lazius was the first who mentioned in his work *Commentarii Reipublicae Romanae* that the grave of the poet destined to a tragic fate was discovered in Savaria-Szombathely. Then – at the end of the 16th century, probably through Polish influence – a four-line 'epitaph' expanded the narrative. In my paper I aim to enlighten how the legend of Ovid's tomb appeared in the Hungarian historiography of the 16–18th century, how the authors tried to eliminate historical contradictions, and also, I intend to present the different concepts on the creation and the authenticity of the alleged epitaph today.

### KEYWORDS

Ovid, Savaria, epigraphy, early modern historiography, antiquarianism

As is well-known, Ovid died in Tomis, on the west coast of the Black Sea, around 17 AD, exiled by Emperor Augustus due to *duo crimina, ... carmen et error*. No contemporary commemoration of the exact time, place or circumstances of his death was found. The first known source about that is the *Chronica* of Eusebius from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, in which

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he recorded it in the year of 17 AD. Ovid the poet died and was buried outside the town of Tomis.<sup>1</sup> The location of his final resting place is also unknown, likewise, there is no evidence that he would have returned to Italy in his lifetime or his remains would have been taken back there after his death. Therefore, considering the many uncertainties, it is not surprising that the grave of the poet was reported to be found at countless number of places – including in Hungary – since the 16th century, thanks to enthusiastic humanist antiquarians.

The legend of Ovid's grave in Szombathely has been part of the common knowledge since the 16th century: the ruins of the ancient Savaria attracted the attention of travellers and historians very early, and – as it often occurs with such an interest – fabulous-romantic elements soon became associated with the folklore.<sup>2</sup> These always provide a good source of humanist imagination since legends always evolve through the association of objects with real or supposed historical events which then live on enriched with fabulous elements. This is what happened in the case of Ovid's tomb in Szombathely.

The poet's burial place in Savaria was an important part of the works on the city's history until the 19th century – despite the fact that in the 18th century, with the start of data-collecting and source criticism, historiography started to become scientific thanks to the work of Jesuit scholars.<sup>3</sup> The historians of the era started to turn to the sources with criticism, however, the matter discussed in the present paper also provides an excellent example that the development of our scientific historiography was not smooth in many ways. After outlining the history of Ovid's tomb in Savaria and its inscription, I intend to find an answer to the question of why we could not find anyone among our historians even in the 18th century who would have stated that the Roman poet could not have had a grave in Hungary, although they were all aware of the historical contradictions.

<sup>1</sup>*Ovidius poeta in exilio diem obiit et iuxta oppidum Tomos sepelitur.* In Eusebius Caesariensis Werke. Band 7: *Die Chronik des Hieronymus (Hieronymi Chronicon)*. Ed. R. HELM [Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Jahrhunderte]. Berlin 1956, 171.

<sup>2</sup>TRAPP, J. B.: Ovid's Tomb: The Growth of a Legend from Eusebius to Laurence Stern, Chateaubriand and George Richmond. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973) 35–76; József Huszti was the first who wrote a summary about Ovid's tomb in Savaria, see HUSZTI, J.: Az Ovidius-legenda magyarországi vonatkozásai [The Hungarian aspects of the Legend of Ovid]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 4 (1958) 289–300. This was completed by Mária B. Révész with some supplements, see B. RÉVÉSZ, M.: Hozzászólás a magyarországi Ovidius-legendához [Comments on the Hungarian Ovid legend]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 3–4 (1961) 287–292. More recently, see István Tóth's paper with the analysis of the poem: TÓTH, I.: Savaria legendái. I. rész [The legends of Savaria, Part I.]. *Vasi Helytörténeti és Honismereti Közlemények* 1 (1999) 47–60.

<sup>3</sup>On the topic, see SZELESTEI N., L.: A jezsuiták forrásgyűjtésének kezdetei Magyarországon [The Beginnings of the Jesuits' Source-collecting in Hungary]. *Magyar Könyvszemle* 103, 3 (1987) 161–172; On the topic of the historiography in the 18th century, its Jesuit aspects, and the source-collecting methods, see SZABADOS, Gy.: Jezsuita „sikertörténet” (1644–1811). A magyar történettudomány konzervatív megteremtőiről [Jesuit „Success Story” (1644–1811). On the Conservative Initiators of the Hungarian Historical Sciences]. In TÓTH, G. (ed.): *Clio inter arma. Tanulmányok a 16–18. századi magyarországi történetírásról*. Budapest 2014, 203–226, and SOÓS, I.: Történetírás a 18. századi Magyarországon [Historiography in Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century]. In TÓTH 227–252.



## THE ROOTS OF THE MYTH AND THE HUMANIST FORGERIES

The first source reporting about this is Wolfgang Lazius's *Commentarii*, published in 1551. He mentioned in the description of Savaria's antiquities that during the reign of Frederick III, a grave bearing the name of Ovid was found: *Relatum est mihi denique a fide digno sene, Friderici tertii caesaris aetate tumulum effosum cum ossibus, in cuius saxis P. Ovidii Nasonis nomina adscripta fuissent, eaque a lauriensi episcopo, cuius illa est dioecesis, ablata esse.*<sup>4</sup> Our next source is the Czech humanist Caspar Bruschi in 1553, who – in the marginal note next to the biography of Saint Quirin, an ancient martyr of the city – considered it as important to note the story of Ovid's tomb in the description of Savaria: *Sabaria civitas Ungariae [...], ubi inventum est an. Do. 1508. Pub. Ovidii Nasonis sepulchrum, ex testudine magnificum, in quo repertae sunt lampades sex lapideae, et duae laminae inscriptae versibus, una cuprea, altera aurea, quas Schleinicensis arcis praefectus Clemens dictus emit. Testis Leonhardus Creuczerus Posenianus [sic!] concionator S. Stephani Viennae, qui tabulas vidit et versus legit quidem sed non retinuit.*<sup>5</sup>

Lazius wrote that the tomb had been found during the reign of Frederick III, so it had had to be found before 1493, the death of the Emperor. On the other hand, Bruschi dated the excavation to 1508, moreover, he recalled that the finds came to light together with the alleged tomb. What is common in both descriptions is that neither of them mentions the epitaph, despite the fact that the authors of the 17–18th century, quoting the poem generally attributed its first description to Bruschi. The reason behind it is probably the two engraved plates (*duae laminae inscriptae*) he describes. As he wrote, he first heard about them from Leonard Creutzer, a preacher at the Stephansdom in Vienna, but he could not recall their texts. Therefore, Bruschi did not quote the inscription, however, as we will see later, the two metal plates which he mentioned were of great importance in the spreading of the epitaph.

The epitaph is an obvious forgery – as we will see later in detail –; therefore, before we get acquainted with the specific Hungarian reception of the inscription, we would like to give a short summary on the falsification of inscriptions during humanism. As the interest in ancient ruins grew and the first collections of inscriptions began to appear, counterfeiters quickly emerged too. In addition, creating fabrications was stimulated by the growing popularity of antiques among the aristocracy. The earliest known inscription of that kind, for example, certainly existed already in 1303: the Paduan humanist Rolando da Piazzola copied an epitaph in 1303 (*CIL VI* \*6), which was written to the Roman poet, Marcus Annaeus Lucanus.<sup>6</sup>

We need to make distinctions between fake inscriptions based on a series of considerations, e.g. motive, means, opportunity and, above of all, the aim of the forger.<sup>7</sup> For example, the authors of humanist inscription collections often completed the texts (mainly of the broken stones) without indicating it. The other common phenomenon is that ancient texts are difficult

<sup>4</sup>LAZIUS, W.: *Commentariorum Reipublicae Romanae, illius in exteris provinciis bello acquisitis constitutae libri duodecim*. Basileae 1551, 1144.

<sup>5</sup>BRUSCHIUS, C.: *De Laureaco, veteri admodumque celebri olim in Norico civitate, et de Patavio Germanico ac utriusque loci archiepiscopis ac episcopis omnibus*. Basileae 1553, 31, marginal note.

<sup>6</sup>ORLANDI, S. – CALDELLI, M. L. – GREGORI, G. L.: Forgeries and fakes. In BRUUN, C. – EDMONDSON, J. (eds): *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*. Oxford 2015, 42–66. It was listed among the obvious false inscriptions by Theodor Mommsen in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

<sup>7</sup>GRAFTON, A.: *Forgers and Critics. Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*. London 1990, 37.



to read,<sup>8</sup> and it led to fanciful interpretations. In such cases we cannot consider them as deliberate deceptions, rather the results of poor source criticism (unintentional forgeries). However, forgeries invented from scratch and complete, partial or interpolated copies of ancient inscriptions were often made deliberately, mainly based on literary sources, legends or even original inscriptions – such as coins – in order to verify the theories of their forgers (intentional forgeries). To appear genuine, these were copied into antique stones and other items that had not been originally inscribed. If such an item was not available, they made one: this practice became more widespread from the 17th century with the increasing number of private antique collections. In Rome, for example, many forger workshops operated where these ‘antiques’ were made. The most famous among them were the workshops of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi and Giovanni Battista Piranesi.<sup>9</sup>

We can find a large number of forgeries made for historical persons, many of them were generally used by noble families to increase their status. For example, the Orsini (*CIL* VI \*4d) or the Cesi (*CIL* VI \*3440–3442) families collected and also exhibited the alleged epitaphs of their Roman ancestors in their palaces, however, they were all proved to be forgeries later. Apart from these, there was another large group of counterfeits: the epitaphs of famous Roman women, which were also very popular among the forgers. L. Tarquinius Collatinus erected a tombstone for his wife, Lucretia (*CIL* VI \*13); or the ‘epitaph’ of Cicero’s daughter, Tullia, is also well known (*CIL* VI \*3593).<sup>10</sup> ‘Nostalgia stimulated rich productivity: some 10,576 of the 144,044 in the great Corpus of Latin inscriptions are fake or suspect; many of them are the work of imaginative Rennnaissance antiquaries’ – as it is written in Anthony Grafton’s *Forgers and Critics*.<sup>11</sup> It is not surprising then that the tombstones of Ovid, who was exiled from Rome by the Emperor Augustus to the city of Tomis, also appear among the forgeries.

In addition to the aforementioned zealous humanist falsifications there were, therefore, much more visible Roman ruins in the middle ages and the early modern era than in these days, but we still have to put the question: why Ovid? The answer perhaps lays in the fact that students first became acquainted with Latin language and literature through his works. In the contemporary school system’s poetics and rhetoric classes students acquired Latin vocabulary and grammatical rules mainly with the help of Ovid’s texts. Furthermore, they even learned to write poems and poetic letters on their pattern.<sup>12</sup>

The poet’s works were already very popular in his lifetime; in this way, however, they also influenced medieval and early modern authors greatly, since anyone who attended primary education was sure to come across his poems.<sup>13</sup> In addition, several of his writings – such as *Ar*s

<sup>8</sup>MILLER, P. N.: Major Trends in European Antiquarianism, Petrarch to Peiresc. In WOOLF, D. (ed.): *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Vol. III: 1400–1800*. Oxford 2012, 249.

<sup>9</sup>ORLANDI–CALDELLI–GREGORI (n. 6) 51.

<sup>10</sup>ORLANDI–CALDELLI–GREGORI (n. 6) 54–56.

<sup>11</sup>GRAFTON (n. 7) 28.

<sup>12</sup>LENGYEL, R.: Ovidius est magister vitae (et litterarum): Ovidius tanítása nyelvről, irodalomról, életről a 18–19. századi Magyarországon [Ovidius est magister vitae (et litterarum): Ovid’s Teaching About Language, Literature, Life in the 18–19th Century in Hungary]. In BALOGH, P. – LENGYEL, R. (eds): *Római költők a 18–19. századi magyar irodalomban: Vergilius, Horatius, Ovidius* [Roman poets in the Hungarian Literature in the 18–19th century]. Budapest, 2017, 13–34.

<sup>13</sup>On the topic, see the paper of Réka Lengyel: LENGYEL (n. 12.)



*amatoria* or *Amores* – were banned from schools because of their erotic subject.<sup>14</sup> This fact only heightened the interest in his works, and hence his life and mysterious death made him very popular.

The popularity of the poet in the early modern era is shown by the fact that the story of his tomb was not the only one that appeared. According to a narrative, Queen Isabella was given a silver pen with the inscription OVIDII NASONIS CALAMUS. According to descriptions, it was found among the ruins of the ancient Taurunum (now Zimony, part of Belgrade) in 1540. As we see, in addition to his grave, an object belonging to the poet – the pen he might have been using to write his works – was also tied to Pannonia. Given these, it is not surprising that – as we will see later – the epigram that originally became known as the inscription of Ovid’s tomb originally beginning with *Hic situs est vates...* can also be interpreted as the work of an epigone of him.

The first recording about Ovid’s epitaph can be found probably in Tobias Fendt’s engraving from 1574, published in the *Monumenta sepulcrorum...*<sup>15</sup>, where all fifteen ‘ancient’ epitaphs are deemed false or wrongly attributed.

The epigram reads as follows:

FATUM NECESSITATIS LEX.

Hic situs est vates, quem divi Caesaris ira,  
Augusti patria cedere jussit humo.  
Saepe miser voluit patriis occumbere terris,  
Sed frustra: hunc illi fata dedere locum.

Above the engraving, on the tombstone, we can see the inscription *Tumulus Ovidii poetae in finibus Graeciae et Valachiae*. After that, the inscription was mentioned again in 1581. At that time it was reported by Laurentius Surius, the famous oratorian historiographer, that a person named Woinowsky discovered the grave of Ovid in Podolia: *Habebant in comitatu suo Woinuskum quendam nobilem, in Latina, Graeca et Hebraica lingua exercitissimum [...] velle enim se illis Ovidii Nasonis sepulcrum ostendere dicebat. [...] Erat in media valle fons limpidissimus: iuxta hunc acinacibus suis evaginatibus gramen, quod in eo loco copiosum erat, et crassum, demetere coeperunt, donec sarcophagum [...], in eo literarum vestigia invenerunt, quibus a sordibus purgatis, epitaphium Ovidii legerunt.*<sup>16</sup>

The fairly expressive description also contained Fendt’s inscription ‘*hic situs est vates...*’ with only a slight difference: there was ‘*latia*’ instead of the word ‘*patria*’ in the poem. In addition, Mária B. Révész drew attention to the striking similarity between the finding of the Polish Ovid-tomb and a scene in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* of Cicero, which describes the discovering of the tomb of Archimedes in Syracuse.<sup>17</sup> The overgrown tomb, the removal of

<sup>14</sup>The access to the above-mentioned works was therefore very limited for those who interested in early modern Hungary. At the end of the 18th century, even a censorship decree contained the two works by Ovid, so readers were forced to obtain them from abroad or in manuscripts. LENGYEL (n. 12.) 18.

<sup>15</sup>FENDT, T.: *Monumenta sepulcrorum cum epigraphis ingenio et doctrina excellentium virorum: aliorumque tam priscae quam nostri seculi memorabilium hominum: de archetypis expressa*. Breslau 1574, 6; KISS G. – TÓTH, E. – ZÁGORHIDI CZIGÁNY, B.: *Savaria – Szombathely története a város alapításától 1526-ig* [The History of Savaria-Szombathely from the Foundation of the City to 1526]. Szombathely 1998, 238.

<sup>16</sup>SURIUS, L.: *Commentarius brevis rerum in orbe gestarum...* Coloniae 1586, 1026–1027.

<sup>17</sup>Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* V 64–66.



the vegetation or mentioning the barely readable letters may all lead us to the conclusion that the news of finding the Polish grave of Ovid is nothing more than literary fiction based on antique reminiscence.<sup>18</sup>

Several critical voices emerged about the alleged epitaph already among the contemporaries. Joseph Scaliger designated the poet of the text as an outright barbarian who was unfamiliar with all the beauties of the Latin language.<sup>19</sup> Later, Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabaner simply designated the whole story as a fiction.<sup>20</sup> Despite all of that, the inscription was shortly widespread and it became part of the Hungarian tradition too. It was also believed that the poem was written by Ovid himself and it even appeared in some of his opera omnia. The reason behind this was that the poet repeatedly talked about how he wanted to be buried, for example as seen below:

*Ossa tamen facito parva referantur in urna:  
sic ego non etiam mortuus exul ero.  
Non uetat hoc quisquam: fratrem Thebana peremptum  
supposuit tumulo rege vetante soror.  
Atque ea cum foliis et amomi pulvere misce,  
inque suburbano condita pone solo;  
quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,  
grandibus in tituli marmore caede notis:  
'hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum  
ingenio perii, Naso poeta, meo;  
at tibi qui transis, ne sit grave, quisquis amasti  
dicere: Nasonis molliter ossa cubent.'  
Hoc satis in titulo est. [...]*<sup>21</sup>

The fake inscription deliberately imitated – although rather poorly – Ovid's, especially the *Tristia*'s style.

## OID'S EPITAPH IN HUNGARY

The fictitious epitaph became part of the Hungarian tradition towards the end of the 16th century in an almost untraceable way. We can find the first Savaria-related mention of the poem in the biography of Ovid by Ercole Ciofani from 1583. He claimed he had read in the *Synonymia Geographica* by Ortelius, published in 1578, that the grave of Ovid was found in Szombathely,

<sup>18</sup>B. RÉVÉSZ (n. 2) 288.

<sup>19</sup>*Etiam epitaphium ibi repertum nugantur, quod et ausi sunt una cum Ovidianis operibus edere, quod qui non videt ab homine barbaro prodiisse, et omnis elegantiae Latinae imperito, is quid sit Latinus sermo, nescit.* SCALIGER, J.: *Animadversiones in Chronologica Eusebii*. Leiden 1606, 182.

<sup>20</sup>*Ficta mihi videtur omnia.* RABANER, J. G.: *Dissertatio de Ovidii exilio et sepulchro*. In *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Quae extant opera omnia*. Vol. VIII: Vol. 8. *Ibis; Fragmenta; Appendix ovidiana quae continet vitam Ovidii a variis conscriptam et alia quae viri docti de Ovidio scripserunt*. Ed. N. E. LEMAIER. Parisiis 1824, 260.

<sup>21</sup>*Tristia* III 3, 65–77.



bearing the inscription beginning with *Fatum necessitatis lex*.<sup>22</sup> However, if we check the referred work of Ortelius, the poem mentioned by Ciofani cannot be found under the headword Savaria. Ortelius only mentioned there that – according to Bruschius – the tomb of Ovid was found there in 1508.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, one can find the poem in another work of Ortelius, the *Thesaurus geographicus*, issued in 1587. In this volume, after the aforementioned story from Bruschius, he also published the epitaph, however, according to his description, he quoted it from Tobias Fendt's *Monumenta*.<sup>24</sup> Based on the above, it can be clearly seen that the sources do not clearly help to unequivocally determine by whom and when was the poem beginning with *F. necessitatis lex* ... first linked to the alleged tomb of Ovid in Savaria. Therefore, to answer this question, further research is needed. However, from the 17th century onwards, the legend spread relentlessly: it appeared almost in every work mentioning Savaria – usually along with the inscription.

The acknowledged biography of the poet (for example, his exile and the time of his death), the uncertainty of his final resting place and the discovery of his tomb in Szombathely all caused problems to our historiographers. To eliminate these, fairly inventive solutions were provided by them, which can be divided into two groups. One of them involves those who did not question whether Ovid died in Savaria and was buried there. This includes Lazius, of course, who gave the explanation that Ovid received permission from Emperor Tiberius to return to Rome, however, on his way home he died in Savaria, and this is why his tomb was erected there.<sup>25</sup> István Szamosközy, in his excellent work on the antiquities of Dacia, explained the contradictions of the Ovidian tomb in Savaria as follows.<sup>26</sup> Since no source mentions that the emperor ever granted pardon to the poet, it can be assumed that – being an educated Roman – he suffered greatly from the barbarity and loneliness at the place of his exile. His poems also affirm this supposition. Therefore, sometimes he travelled to the nearest city, namely Savaria, to spend time with other educated fellows, and he may have died there during one of his visits.

On the other hand, most of the authors apparently overlooked some really obvious facts. First of all, the city of Tomis (today's Constanța, Romania) is about 1,200 km far from Szombathely, which was an enormous distance at ancient times between the territories of barbaric tribes. Secondly, not only the city of Savaria did not exist at the time of Ovid's death – and especially was not inhabited by educated fellows worthy of the company of the great poet –,

<sup>22</sup>Anno M.D.VIII. repertum est eius sepulchrum, ut memoriae prodidit Abrahamus Ortelius in Synonymia Geographica, ubi Gasparem Bruschiium citat auctorem. Eius autem haec verba sunt: Sabaria Lazio Austriae oppidum est ad Angrum fluvium nomine Stain. Gaspar Bruschius dicit hic anno M.D.VIII. sepulchrum Ovidii Nasonis inventum, testudine magnificum et hoc epitaphio ornatum: *Fatum necessitatis lex* [...] CIOFANI, H.: In omnia P. Ovidii Nasonis opera observationes. Antverpiae 1583, 28–29.

<sup>23</sup>Gaspar Bruschius dicit hic anno 1508 sepulchrum Ovidii Nasonis inventum, testudine magnificum et epitaphio ornatum. ORTELIUS, A.: Synonymia geographica. Antverpiae 1578, 275.

<sup>24</sup>Gaspar Bruschius dicit hic anno 1508 sepulchrum Ovidii Nasonis inventum, testudine magnificum et epitaphio ornatum, quod hic ex Tobiae Fentii monumentorum volumine adiungo: *Fatum necessitatis lex* [...] ORTELIUS, A.: Thesaurus geographicus. Antverpiae 1587, s.v. 'Sabaria'.

<sup>25</sup>Ut credendum sit, exulem Ovidium, posteaquam impetrata gratia, e Ponto rediisset, Sabariae rebus humanis exemptum esse et sepultum. LAZIUS (n. 4) 1144.

<sup>26</sup>Credo autem eum non uno in loco semper constitisse, sed in Pannonias quandoque divertisse, ut taedium solitudinis levaret doctorum virorum consortio, qui isthuc ex Italia frequentes ventitabant, ubi eum tandem mors insperata oppresserit. ZAMOSIUS, S.: Analecta lapidum vetustorum, et nonnullarum in Dacia antiquitatum. Patavii 1593, 30–31.



since it was founded by Emperor Claudius around 50 AD, but not even the independent province of Pannonia was established yet.

Hence, in this case, the point of our discussion is the way of trying to find a plausible explanation to prove the existence of the alleged tomb. With this in mind, the authors always took care to emphasise their ‘credible’ sources (for example, the reliable elderly man in Lazius) to make their stories appear more authentic. This phenomenon is recently called retroactivity, which is generally characteristic of those who show increased sensitivity to a given subject and its truthfulness. It is rather an act of trying to create a tradition by using artificial gestures that never existed.<sup>27</sup> And let’s admit it: which historiographers would not be attracted by the possibility of the great poet being buried in our country? We can find fairly similar examples to our Ovid-tomb in Italy: Livy also had a monument, although it was actually erected in Padua, completed with a bust portrait, which was an excellent example of ancient portraiture.<sup>28</sup>

Later we can see more deliberate opinions. The eminent geographer and historian of the first half of the 18th century, Mátyás Bél was informed about the discovery of Ovid’s tomb among several other Roman monuments from Savaria.<sup>29</sup> He also quoted the epitaph, and referred to Lazius and Bruschi.<sup>30</sup> However, he was cautious about it: as we can see, he used the words ‘*lusit*’ and ‘*comminisceretur*’, which suggests that he had doubts about the inscription. To report more cautiously, some authors did not completely dismiss the possibility that the inscription in Szombathely was genuine, however, they indicated that it might have been part of a symbolic tomb, a kenotaph. Samuel Timon was the first who, in his *Imago antiquae Hungariae*, published in 1733, conceived the idea that a friend of Ovid had erected a tomb there, after the poet’s death.<sup>31</sup>

In the 18th century we mainly come across with this view among others in the *Antiquitates*, the first Hungarian city monograph. The author of the work István Schönvisner dedicated a whole chapter to the alleged tomb in his book about the history of Szombathely.<sup>32</sup> The excellent archeologist Schönvisner, who was professor of antiquities and numismatics at the University of Buda, was the first to compile and critically evaluate sources on Ovid’s tomb in Savaria.<sup>33</sup> After

<sup>27</sup> About retroactivity, see NAGEL, S. – WOOD, CHR. S.: *Anachronic Renaissance*. New York 2010, 251–274.

<sup>28</sup> NAGEL–WOOD (n. 27) 256–257.

<sup>29</sup> About the antiquarian aspects of Bél’s *Notitia*, see also TÓTH, G.: Bél Mátyás, a történész [Mátyás Bél, the Historian]. In BEKÉS, E. – KASZA, P. – LENGYEL, R. (eds): *Humanista történetírás és neolatin irodalom a 15–18. századi Magyarországon* [Humanist Historiography and Neolatin Literature in Hungary in the 15–18th centuries] [Convivia Neolatina Hungarica 1]. Budapest 2015, 157–167.

<sup>30</sup> *Huiusmodi monumenta saepius effodiuntur, ollae imprimis, atque vasa fictilia, lapidi exciso imposita, in quorum nonnullis, dum protraherentur, ardentem in humore quodam scintillam, sed mox extinctam aere, adparuisse tradit LAZIUS. Idem relatum sibi a fide digno senecione, commemorat, FRIDERICI tertii temporibus tumulum effosum esse cum ossibus, in cuius saxis P. OVIDII NASONIS nomen incisum adparuerit. Quod si verum est, haud crasse lusit BRUSCHIUS, dum in sepulchro eodem talem comminisceretur inscriptionem: FATUM NECESSITATIS LEX [...].* BEL, M.: *Notitia Hungariae Novae historico-geographica... Comitatum ineditorum Tomus II in quo continentur... Comitatus Soproniensis, Castriferrei, Szaladiensis et Veszprimiensis*. Ed. G. TÓTH. Textum recensuerunt, notisque instruxerunt B. BENEI ET AL. Budapestini 2012, 400.

<sup>31</sup> *Potuit autem illi Sabariae ab amico quoquam honorarium monumentum poni. TIMON, S.: Imago antiquae Hungariae, repraesentans terras, adventus res gestas gentis hunnicae. Historico genere strictim perscripta. Cassoviae 1733, 150–151.*

<sup>32</sup> SCHÖNVISNER, S.: *Antiquitatum et historiae Sabariensis ab origine usque ad praesens tempus libri novem*. Pestini 1791.

<sup>33</sup> SCHÖNVISNER (n. 32) 86–90.



listing all the sources that argue for or against the existence of the grave, he declared that based on them, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether it was an actual tomb or just a kenotaph.<sup>34</sup> For that reason, he did not completely dismiss the possibility of some sort of a tombstone having been erected for Ovid in Savaria. Since – he said – it was sure that the poet was buried in Tomis, in his opinion, it could have been a symbolic tomb, which – as Samuel Timon supposed – may have been erected by his friends. In the case of the bones that were found according to the sources, he believed that they could have been brought to Szombathely later and buried in the tomb found in the 16th century.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Schönvisner did not comment on the authenticity of the inscription, although, in many cases, he correctly judged others to be false. However, by not discussing the alleged inscription in his work as one of the lost ones, it can be certainly claimed that he did not consider it to be original.

Based on the above, it can be seen that there is no such opinion in early modern Hungarian historiography which *de facto* states that Ovid could not have a tomb and an epitaph in Hungary. Even the authors who were more careful about the question were trying to provide some explanation to resolve and clarify the contradictions. The popularity of the tomb did not diminish later: it formed an inseparable part of the travel descriptions of Szombathely even in the 19th century.<sup>36</sup> It inspired some artists too: for example, a painting attributed to Edward Francis Burney exists, in which a tomb equal to a Roman triumphal arch can be seen. It bears the inscription *D M OVID (Dis Manibus Ovidii)*, and in the surroundings there are the inevitable accessories of the Hungarian landscape: a well, three hounds and men dressed in Hungarian costumes.<sup>37</sup> Even in 1938, when a mosaic was discovered during archaeological excavations in Szombathely's ruin garden, rumours started to spread that the tomb of Ovid was found, and the town's inhabitants were crowding in to see it.<sup>38</sup>

## THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE TOMB AND THE INSCRIPTION

What can be said about the alleged tomb and the epitaph of Ovid? One thing is certain: it did not belong to the poet. Although neither the inscription nor the tomb described by Lazius and Bruschi survived and in fact, as we have seen, none of them was actually witnessed by any source, we cannot rule out the possibility that a tomb was actually found.

<sup>34</sup>*Sed, utcumque haec sint, indicium saltem Ovidiani monumenti Sabariae reperti, sive illud epitaphium, sive coenotaphium fuerit, hoc loco minime praetereundum existimavi.* SCHÖNVISNER (n. 32) 89.

<sup>35</sup>[...] *exulem Ovidium apud Tomitanos quidem extinctum, ac sepulchrali monumento honoratum fuisse, verum postea cineres ejusdem et ossa, urnae inclusa, ab amicorum quopiam Sabariam esse translata, ubi ineunte tandem sexto decimo aerae Christianae saeculo reperta sunt.* SCHÖNVISNER (n. 32) 89.

<sup>36</sup>E.g., see POCOCKE, R.: *A description of the east and some other countries II.* London 1745, 395, or the long description of Richard Bright, who apparently knew well the literature of the Ovid-tomb in Hungary. BRIGHT, R.: *Travels from Vienna through Lower Hungary.* Edinburgh–London 1818, 351–357.

<sup>37</sup>About the painting, see TRAPP (n. 2) 49 n. 52.

<sup>38</sup>GÉFIN, Gy.: *Savariai örökség a püspökkertben [The Heritage of Savaria in the Bishop's Garden].* In FÁBIAN, Á. (ed.): *A kétszáz éves szombathelyi egyházmegye emlékkönyve (1777–1977) [Memorial Book of the 200-year-old Diocese of Szombathely].* Szombathely 1977, 27.



As we can see, an inscription was discovered somewhere on the border between Greece and Wallachia – engraved by Tobias Fendt –, then it was found again in Poland by Woinowsky. In 1583 this was linked to the tomb described by Lazius and Bruschi. According to some researchers, the findings coming to light together with the tomb described by Bruschi are too specific to be considered as humanist forgeries. Archaeologist István Tóth, for example, argues that the tomb may have belonged to an Eastern – certainly to an Egyptian – priest, who resided in the ancient Savaria because of the Isis-cult.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, we can find opposing opinions about the genuineness of the inscription. József Huszti, a classical scholar, clearly considered it as a humanist forgery.<sup>40</sup> In turn, according to the aforementioned archaeologist István Tóth, there is no reason for not presuming it to be of ancient origin since it can be fully inserted in the funerary inscriptions of the 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>41</sup> However, if we consider the adventurous history of the poem (for example, when first published in Fendt's work, it appeared near the 'epitaph' of Euripides), then we have to conclude that even if a grave was actually found in Szombathely in the 16th century, the inscription later related to it was certainly a humanist forgery. Not to mention the fact that the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* lists the inscription among the *falsae* (CIL III \*226).

## CONCLUSION

We know that with the rise of interest in ancient ruins and the appearance of the first collections of inscriptions, forgers also quickly emerged. Knowing this, it is not surprising that the tomb and epitaph of Ovid, exiled from Rome by Emperor Augustus, also appeared among the forgeries. The tomb and its inscription became integral part of the common knowledge in the city and, of course, the works on the history of ancient Savaria from the 16th century. Our historiographers aimed to find an acceptable explanation for the historical contradictions, and right up to the 18th century no one challenged the authenticity of Ovid's resting place in Savaria.

Our scholar historiographers, who already handled their extensive sources with criticism, approached the question more cautiously. However, despite this, interestingly, we cannot find anyone who would have said that Ovid could not have a tomb – either real or symbolic – in Hungary. This also can be considered as part of the aforementioned retroactive past formation: it was important for the authors of the descriptions of the tomb and its inscription to believe and explain that the great poet rests in our country; therefore, even the obvious historical facts could not override their personal attitude towards the subject. The question of the tomb of Ovid shows the slow development of historiography: from the falsification of humanistic inscriptions to the retroactive past formation, which can be observed even in the 18th century in parallel with the development of the critical approach.

<sup>39</sup>TÓTH (n. 2) 56–57.

<sup>40</sup>HUSZTI (n. 2) 298–299.

<sup>41</sup>TÓTH (n. 2) 52–55.



Further research is needed to identify the exact process of the poem becoming part of the Hungarian tradition. Apart from that, the poet's alleged pen, which became the property of Queen Isabella after its discovery in 1540, may also be a question of interest.

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