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HUNGARY AND THE BATAVIAN MYTH

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Abstract: The Batavian myth was the idea that the Dutch people descended from the Batavians, a German tribe which settled in the Low Countries during the first century BC. Their revolt against the Roman rulers in AD 67, recorded in Tacitus' *Historiae*, remained an inspiration in Dutch historiography and politics up to the nineteenth century. This article focuses on two elements of the Batavian story in connection with Hungarian history. Firstly, the Batavians were soldiers in the Roman army, who encamped in the region of the Danube near Budapest, after having left the Rhine delta. Secondly, the early humanist Dutch chronicler Cornelius Aurelius introduced a Batavian ancestor, a Hungarian prince called Battus. The details of these two independent facts are discussed as part of the history of Dutch–Hungarian relationship.
Keywords: German tribes, Batavians, Hungarians

INTRODUCTION

How old is the relationship between Hungary and the Netherlands? Between 1481 and 1491 a Franciscan monk, Michael de Ungaria, had several collections of sermons published in the cities of Leuven, Leiden and Deventer. This fact has been recorded as the first cultural contact between both countries.[1] But this does not mean anything, as these Latin writings represented the general Christian tradition of Europe, in which national borders did not have much significance. Anyway, some of Pater Michael's other books have been published in Germany. A real connection between Hungary and the Netherlands, understood as an actual encounter of tribes with their own identity, language, literature and science, did not appear before the Renaissance and Humanism eras and the periods of Reformation and Contra-Reformation. Since those times students and scholars travel to and fro, whilst for instance Dutch religious books were translated for Roman-Catholic as well as for Protestant Hungarian readers.[2]

So the historical connection between both nations seems to be not older than the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, in this article, I would venture to project this mutual relationship back to earlier times. I dare to go back as early as Antiquity,

[1] Antal SIVIRSKY, *A Holland–Magyar kulturális kapcsolatok öt évszázada*, Budapest 1986; Dutch version: *Vijf eeuwen Hongaars–Nederlandse culturele betrekkingen*, Den Haag 1987.
[2] Arnoud VISSER (ed.), *In search of the Republic of Letters. Intellectual relations between Hungary and The Netherlands*, Wassenaar 1999.

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when there was no mention of Hungary at all, let alone a glimpse of the present state of the Netherlands. However, there was a time at the beginning of the Christian Era when both territories participated in the same political unity – the Roman Empire. The Rhine as well as the Danube formed its natural borders at the northern end. An important part of present Hungary was included in the province *Pannonia*, together with *Dacia* at the other side of the river as conquered by the imperial armies. The delta of the Low Countries bordered the Roman province of *Germania Inferior*. The so-called Bataven populated the area just north of it. They appear in the centre of the 'prehistoric' Dutch–Hungarian connection, in which myth and reality – or history and folklore – are strongly intertwined as will become clear in my argument.[3]

THE BATAVIAN MYTH

The origins of the Batavians are wrapped in darkness. They probably belonged to the German tribe of the Chats in Central Germany in present area of Hessen. According to oral tradition they hurried to the west about fifty years BC, moving along the Rhine on rafts. They settled down in the area of Gelderland's rivers, in the present Betuwe and the Land of Mose and Waal. They established good relationships there with the Romans, who were about to move the boundaries of their empire from the south. It was in the days of Julius Caesar, who had conquered the extensive region of Gallia north of the Alps, and of his successor Augustus, who made the Rhine the natural border of the empire in the year 12 BC. At that time the Batavians entered into an alliance with the Romans, that would exist for almost a century. In exchange for political and economical benefits, the Batavians looked after the defence of the border against German fellow tribes who populated the northern coastal regions. They even got their own government within the Roman province of *Gallia Belgica*. Their capital was *Batavodurum* at the place of the present Wijk bij Duurstede.[4]

The Romans regarded the Batavians as excellent soldiers. They were even included by preference in the elite regiments of the emperor. Among the most capable and faithful military servants was an officer called Julius Civilis. He only had one eye, but that just symbolised his heroic fame and bravery. However, his career of many years came suddenly to an end, when he and his brother Julius Paulus were accused of rebellion. To all appearance this was quite wrong, but Paulus was killed and Civilis was sent to Rome to be judged at the court of Emperor Nero. However, at his arrival, the latter had just committed suicide. So the trial was cancelled after

[3] This article was published in Dutch in: Arjan van LEUVENSTEIJN, Fred VAN LIEBURG and Orsolya VARGA, *Károli-studies. Hongaarse bijdragen tot de Neerlandistiek* [Károli-tanulmányok. A Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Holland nyelv és kultúra Tanszéke tanárainak esszéi a néderlandisztika tárgyköréből], Budapest 2000 (AMOS, 2), 9–26.

[4] Willem J. H. WILLEMS, *Romans and Batavians: a regional study in the Dutch eastern riverarea*, Amsterdam 1985. Forthcoming: Nico ROYMANS, *Ethnic identity and imperial power. The Batavians in the Early-Roman frontier,* Amsterdam 2004.

all. After that the turbulent Four Emperors Year 69 started, in which several generals struggled for succession, until Vespasianus emerged from the chaos as the winner. During these confusing circumstances Julius Civilis seized the opportunity to take revenge and organised a revolt against the Roman authority.

In a legendary night banquet Civilis announced his plans and his Batavian tribe mates swore fidelity. They met with other tribes on Dutch territory, the Frisians and the Caninefates, who carried out a surprise attack on some military forts along the North Sea Coast. After more successes for the Batavians, the citadle Vetera in German Rhineland, near present Xanten and Bonn, was besieged and captured. But then the fortunes of war turned. The Batavians were defeated near Trier, driven back to their own territory around the Betuwe, and even forced to hand their own Batavian town over to the enemy. After alternating successes both parties became exhausted and the battle stopped near the Waal. Standing on a bridge that was damaged in the middle, officer Julius Civilis and his Roman rival Ceralis negotiated a peace treaty. The Batavian Revolt was over and when the rest of the empire had returned, little had changed.

We know about the course of this struggle from the famous Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus, whose work dates from the years between 100 and 120. In Books IV and V of his *Historiae*, he extensively reported what happened at the northern borders of the empire, to which other sources referred to only in passing.[5] Tacitus' manuscripts were published in print in several West European countries from about 1470 onwards. His works made a big impression as they conveyed information about tribes who once lived in the regions where we now find national states. In the German Empire, for instance, there was great enthusiasm about the history of ancient *Germania* and its inhabitants. It was obvious that what Tacitus had written about the Batavians caused special interest at that time in the provinces of Holland and Gelderland. Both regions bordered on the area near the river that was inhabited by brave allies and Roman rebels.

The first Dutch treatise appeared in 1517 and dealt with Batavian prehistory based upon the information of Tacitus. It was the *Chronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant*, in all probability written by Cornelius Aurelius, an Augustine friar from Gouda. This chronicle, which has been reissued many times, is the source of the idea that would become so popular, that the people of the Netherlands were descendants of the Batavians in Antiquity.[6] At any rate, the northern Low Countries of that time formed a unity that was to develop slowly but surely. Aurelius wrote in essence a history of the province of Holland and was therefore inclined to claim that the cradle-land of the Batavians was not situated in the Betuwe in Gelderland, but in

[5] Loeb edition: *Tacitus, The Histories*, with an English translation by Clifford H. Moore, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, 20–49.

[6] Karin TILMANS, *Historiography and humanism in Holland in the age of Erasmus: Aurelius and the Divisiekroniek of 1517*, Nieuwkoop 1988; cf. Karin TILMANS, Aeneas, Bato and Civilis, the forefathers of the Dutch: the origins of the Batavian tradition in Dutch humanistic historiography, in: J. R. BRINK and W. F. GENTRUP (eds), *Renaissance culture in context. Theory and practice*, Cambridge 1993, 121–135.

the Biesbosch in Holland, somewhere between Dordrecht and Gorinchem. Of course scholars from Gelderland disputed this opinion. Historians from Holland before the eighteenth century did not concede that the latter scholars were right.

However, setting aside this rivalry between the different regions that was so characteristic of the Republic of the United Provinces, the remembrance of the Batavians naturally had a predominant political function during the Eighty Years War. Just as heroically and justly the Batavians had revolted against the Romans under the guidance of Julius Civilis, so the people of the Netherlands had thrown off the yoke of Spanish tyranny under William of Orange's leadership. The comparison was the cause of several disputes regarding the reliability of historical evidence and its application within the strained relations of the Dutch Republic. Yet the story of the Batavian Revolt appealed to the imagination again and again, as is also clear from the arts and literature of the Golden Age. Rembrandt painted the 'Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis' around 1660 for the town hall of Amsterdam, where his paintings usually hung for a short period. Vondel wrote his tragedy about the *Batavische gebroeders of onderdruckte vryheit* (Batavian brothers or suppressed freedom) in 1663. I will come back later to a play about 'the Batavian origins of the Hollanders', produced as early as 1617 by Pieter Cornelisz Hooft.[7]

The great prosperous period of the Batavian past, however, was the latter half of the eighteenth century, when the Dutch Republic fell into political and economical decline. A developing democratic civil movement eagerly mirrored itself on the courage and unity of the Batavians. It became clear, however, that they could not expect any structural reforms from the stadholder Prince William V (whose full name was Willem *Batavus*!). He himself became a target for the opposition group of the 'Patriots', whose revolt was thwarted by Prussia's military invasion in 1787. Many of them stayed in France for more than seven years as 'Batavians'. Then they returned to the Netherlands with the 'Batavian Legion' of the French army and proclaimed the new 'Batavian Republic' by a 'velvet revolution'. The political order remained under this name until 1806, though under changing relative powers and under growing influence of the Napoleonic Empire, which in the end pulled all the strings.

Since 1813, or better 1815, when calm returned to Europe, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands also sought reconciliation and restoration, the glorious Batavian heritage lost its political and social existence. During the Ten Days Campaign of 1831, the Batavian fire flared up for a while but failed in its effort to suppress the Belgian revolt against the northern Netherlands. An episode devoted to the Batavian Revolt was included in Albert Helman's play *Vrij Volk* which was performed in Am-

[7] Ivo SCHÖFFER, The Batavian myth during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in: J. S. BROMLEY and E. H. KOSSMAN (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands V: Some political mythologies*, 's Gravenhage 1975, 78–101. Cf. E. O. G. HAITSMA MULIER, De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken, in: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 111 (1996), 344–367; István P. BEJCZY, Drie humanisten en een mythe. De betekenis van Erasmus, Aurelius en Geldenhouwer voor de Bataafse kwestie, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 109 (1996), 467–484.

sterdam in June 1945, soon after the end of the German occupation of the Second World War. The facts and fiction of the past decades about the Batavians seemed to have found a definitive place in Dutch historical memory. There are numerous publications about these sturdy ancestors, from a nice caricature about the *Opstand der Bataven* to studies about the so-called 'Batavian myth'.[8]

BATAVIANS IN HUNGARY

In Dutch historiography much attention has been given during the centuries to The Batavian Revolt in various forms. How the Batavians fared after their defeat in the year 70 is not well known. The national schoolbooks follow the story soon after the great migrations of the nations in the fourth century. At that time the Romans had left the Low Countries and new German tribes had settled down in the regions above the big rivers. In fact the Batavians disappeared into the darkness of history. We do know that amongst them were many fellows who served in the Roman army as soldiers from the first until the fifth century. From contemporary sources, among them Tacitus' *Historiae*, as well as from inscriptions and documents that were found later, Batavian companies appeared to have been everywhere in the Empire. Initially these units consisted of certain tribes whose membership was by birth, but later also of soldiers of different origins, so that only the name of the regiments would remind us of these ancient people. Nevertheless, there were also ethnic Batavians who belonged to other military units.

It is interesting that there is not less evidence of the Batavian presence in the Danube area at the beginning of the second century, only a few decades after the Revolt under Julius Civilis. A bronze certificate that was presented to a certain Marcus Ulpius Fronto on 16th December 113 was discovered in 1977 in the city of Regensburg, near a castle along the Danube. Marcus Ulpius Fronto served in the first Batavian regiment under the Emperor Traianus. The commander of the regiment was the governor of the province of Pannonia Superior. The regiment camped in the region that is now part of Hungary. Fronto is explicitly said to be a Batavian, the son of a certain Pero. His wife Mattua, the daughter of Silvanus, was a Batavian too. At the occasion of honourable discharge after 25 years of loyal military service, the daughters of Fronto and his wife were also remembered. Vagatra, Sureia, and Sata were privileged to bear their father's name 'Ulpius' which referred to his sovereign, Emperor Traianus.

There have been more Batavians who have left their traces in Hungarian regions of today. A soldier who belonged to a unit of Spanish riders but was a Batavian by

[8] Hans TEITLER, *De opstand der 'Batavieren'*, Hilversum 1998; Wilfried HESSING, Foreign oppressor versus civiliser: the Batavian myth as the source for contrasting associations of Rome in Dutch historiography and archaeology, in: Richard HINGLEY (ed.), Images of Rome: Perceptions of ancient Rome in Europe and the United States in the modern age. *Journal of Roman Archaeology,* Supplementary Series No. 44, Portsmouth, Rhode Island, USA 2001, 127–143.

birth, for instance, lived in Aquincum, a city in ancient Pannonia, situated along the Danube, at the place of present Budapest. This appears from the preserved gravestone, on which his name can no longer be read except for the letters 'Domo Betav[us]'. The stonemason must have changed the 'a' into an 'e' by accident. Furthermore, a certain Flavus, the son of Blandus, died in Aquincum. He also was 'originally a Batavian', and belonged to the cavalry called 'ala Frontoniana'. In the same regiment of about 110, Gaius Petilius Vindex's military certificate has been discovered in the village of Tokod in the bight of the Danube, just north of Budapest.

However, the greatest appeal to the imagination is a Batavian soldier in Roman war service, whose memory has been immortalised by an epitaph that circulated among the lettered as early as the Middle Ages and appeared in several handbooks and anthologies of old Latin texts. It concerns a cavalier in a Batavian regiment during the period of Emperor Hadrianus, Traianus' successor since 117, and ruler of the Roman Empire. During active service in Pannonia near the Danube he proudly exhibited some examples of his military prowess. He tells us about it from his grave in the poem, which now follows in an English translation from the Latin original.[9]

Ille ego Pannoniis quondam notissimus oris
inter mille viros fortis primusque Batavos,
Adriano potui qui iudice vasta profundi
aequora Danuvii cunctis transnare sub armis.
Emissumque arcu, dum pendet in aere telum
ac redit, ex alia fixi fregique sagitta.
Quem neque Romanu potuit nec barbarus umquam
non iaculo miles, non arcu vincere Parthus:
his situs, hoc memori saxo mea facta sacravi.
Viderit anne aliquis post me mea gesta sequatur:
exemplo mihi sum, primus qui talia gessi.

I am the man who, once well known to the river banks in Pannonia,
brave and foremost among one thousand Batavi,
was able with Hadrian as judge, to swim the wide waters
of the deep Danube in full battle kit.
From my bow I shot an arrow, and while it hung in the air
and was falling back, I hit and broke it with another arrow.
Whom no Roman or foreigner ever outdid,
no soldier with the spear, no Parthian with the bow,
here I lie, I have bequeathed my deeds to memory on this ever mindful stone.
Let anyone see if after me he can match my deeds.
I set my own standard, being the first to bring off such feats.

[9] Michael P. SPEIDEL, 'Swimming the Danube under Hadrian's eyes. A Feat of the Emperors' Batavi Horse Guard', *Ancient society* 22 (1991) 277–282.

That Batavians were excellent swimmers was generally known in Antiquity. Tacitus, for instance, wrote in his *Historiae* (IV, 12) that they could pass the Rhine while keeping their weapons and horses. We can read about the above heroic action at the Danube by the historian Cassius Dio (LXIX, 9, 6). He informs us that during Emperor Hadrianus's visit to the forts by the river, on one of his inspection tours along the borders of his empire, the tribes at the other side of the river did not risk an attack on the Romans: 'For the army exercised by him was so excellent, that the cavalry of the so-called Batavians swam across the Danube even in full armour'. From other sources we know that this emperor's visit to Pannonia took place in the first half of the year 118. That was the scene of the swimmer and the archer who speaks in the poem and was enacted sometime between April and July.

There has been some dispute among historians over the question in which Batavian company of thousand brave men this soldier could have served. Some scholars think of certain Batavian companies which we know encamped in Pannonia at that time. However, most recently and perhaps most convincing is the opinion that here the *equites singulares Augusti* is meant, which consisted of a special unit of well trained cavalries which guarded the emperor everywhere. An inscription in Turkey from the beginnings of the third century shows that this elite company was referred to in popular language as the 'Batavian Guard'. In the Vatican Museum in Rome there is still a gravestone of one of the riders who served in this guard and who is mentioned as a Batavian by birth. We know neither the origin nor the place of death of the soldier we referred to above. Perhaps he finished his career in Italy not far from the head quarter of the emperor's bodyguard. It may be that the cited poem was written on his gravestone, together with names and other data and perhaps showed a portrait of him.

That particular gravestone has not been preserved. Only its poem lines are kept, without reference to any source or original location. The epitaph appears in several medieval collections of Latin inscriptions which were re-discovered in French monasteries: one manuscript in Valenciennes from the ninth century, one in Montpellier from the twelfth and one in Paris from the thirteenth century. Additionally there is a fifteenth century codex that is specially devoted to Hungarian and Rumanian texts. One may assume that the grave poem was written during the Carolingian Renaissance, sometime in the eighth or ninth century. In these times a lot of lettered clergymen from the Frankish Empire made pilgrimages to Rome or Jerusalem and collected all kinds of historical data about the ancient empire on the way. During such a journey anyone may have seen the gravestone of the Batavian soldier and written down its text.

In the manuscript of Montpellier as well as in that of Paris, the Batavian soldier is referred to by the name of Soranus. This must have been engraved on his gravestone and therefore the copyist must have noted it, although these kind of collectors were primarily interested in the rest of the text. The name of Soranus refers to the city of Sora in Latium. We know that this is the place of retirement for Emperor Hadrianus's veterans and for many *equites singulares Augusti.*

Soranus was not a 'true' German, but that makes him no less memorable than the Batavian soldiers Fronto, Flavus and their anonymous tribesman in Aquincum.[10]

THE MYTH OF BATTUS THE HUNGARIAN

As we have seen earlier, the history of the Batavians became well known in the Netherlands by the publication in 1517 of Cornelius Aurelius' *Chronycke van Hollandt*. Its author mainly drew on the report of the revolt under Julius Civilis, which was handed down by the Roman historian Tacitus. Aurelius, however, did not produce a factual reconstruction of the history of the Dutch territory of his days. He tried above all to give his Dutch fellowmen their own identity, a feeling of solidarity based upon a glorious national past. To do so, it was not uncommon in early humanist historiography to use rather unlikely theories or fictional stories. Brother Aurelius also practised this style. Besides his incorrect reference to the province of Holland as Batavian's original country, he introduced the myth of a Batavian forefather who was said to have been the founder of the city of Battavodurum.

Who was the ancestor of the Batavians? Aurelius followed the classical tradition of attributing the foundation of a city to a fictional person who also gave his name to that city. As Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, the Dutch city of Dordrecht, for example, owns its name to a certain Dorethus. And so Aurelius told of a prince, called 'Battus', 'Battavus' or 'Batto'. Although such a name was determined in advance to be useful as the prototype of the Batavians, it is unlikely that it was taken from a historical person. A stone was found near Roomburg in 1502, in the neighbourhood of Leiden. Its inscription speaks of a certain Caecilius Bato, deputy commander of the Fifteenth Company of Volunteers, during the reign of Emperor Septimius, which was around the year 200. Aurelius himself mentioned this discovery and it could certainly be possible that this put the idea in his head to have the Batavians descend from a certain 'Bato'!

Much more interesting to us is that Aurelius also fabricated his hero's origin. He writes about a prince, 'coming from Scythia or thereabouts, from Pannonia or Hungary'. Scythia here stands for the extensive area of Southwest Asia, north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. In other words: the present South Russia, east of the Carpate basin, where Hungary and Rumania is situated. The Eur-Asiatic area was inhabited in living memory by nomadic tribes, first described by the famous Greek historian Herodotus in de fifth century B.C. Cornelius Aurelius must have known his nine volume *Historiae*, including the volume in which the Scyths were immortalised. These works, which became available not very long ago, received great interest among scholars in the whole of Western Europe.

[10] See beside Speidel also A. G. ROOS, Soranus. Een Bataaf in Romeinse krijgsdienst, in: Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, *Nieuwe Reeks* 16 (1953) 319–326.

Aurelius may also have known that in his time the Magyars, who had already lived for several centuries in the Carpate basin, were of the opinion that they were related to the Scyths. Typical is the thirteenth century original legend which claimed that the Hungarians descended from the brothers Hunor and Magyar, who hunted deer, an animal that played a significant role in the ancient Scythian culture. Nowadays scholars do not longer endorse the kinship between Magyars and Scyths. They only verify that both tribes once formed part of the same nomadic communities, but that the Hungarians changed into a separate tribe with its own language and culture. Indeed, they lived far from the Danube regions, which was inhabited by Slavic tribes during Roman times. The Magyars conquered the Carpate basin where their descendants have established themselves after the year 900 until the present day.[11]

Of course all of this is after all academical. Our present argument, however, is the curious conclusion of the Dutch chronicler Cornelius Aurelius that the very ancestors of the people of the Netherlands were Hungarians! His commentary on this myth includes still more. Battus had a brother, whose name was Salandus. Both were sons of Mitellus and descended from the people of the Hermondures. As a result of disputes with neighbouring tribes concerning the use of a river from which much salt was mined, the brothers fled to the islands near the Rhine. Battus went to Holland, subsequently called Batavia, the present Wijk bij Duurstede. His brother Salandus moved to the extreme west and called his region Zalandt, now the province of Zeeland. There he built a castle in honour of his father Mitellus, the 'Mittelburch' or present Middelburg...[12]

This Battus-figure, which appeared in 1517, quickly disappeared from the scene in later tradition of Dutch historiography. In their treatises on 'ancient Batavia', learned humanist authors like Janus Dousa and Petrus Scriverius consigned the figure of Bato in its entirety to the realm of fiction. Whilst the poet Pieter Cornelisz Hooft published his tragedy *Baeto, ofte oorsprong der Hollanderen* in 1617, the myth was for a short time at its zenith. But Hooft described 'Baeto' as a son of the Hessen king of the Cats, who left for 'a deserted corner of land, now called Holland'. Hooft derived this 'German' origin of the Batavians from Tacitus's work on the Germans, who still has the best historical claims. Hooft was not only a poet, but a serious historian too, who composed his *Nederlandsche Historiën*, in the footsteps of the admirable Tacitus.

Even so the question remains: why opt for Aurelius's Bato coming from Pannonia or Hungary? The simplest answer seems to me that Aurelius just wanted to give the 'Dutch ancestor' an origin from a far country. Making him of Scythian or Hungarian origin would be the best option in his time and imagination. Or would the idea have run through his head that he could have found the answer in the Dutch chronicle of Johannes de Beke, a 14th century priest? This author is of the opinion

[11] László KÓSA (ed.), *A cultural history of Hungary. From the Beginnings to the Eighteenth Century*, Budapest 1999, 17–23.

[12] [Cornelius Aurelius], *Die cronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant, beghinnende van Adams tiden tot die geboerte ons heren Jhesu, voertgaende tot den jare 1517*, Leiden 1517, division 1, cap. xi.

that the first habitants of Holland came from Central or East European countries. De Beke wrote 'how the Slaves who are called Wilts, cultivated this country'. He moreover thought that when the 'Wilts' had settled down in Holland, ancient Pannonia was conquered by the Sarmati, another early tribe that once wandered through the steppes of South West Asia.[13]

May be I am looking into it too much but I will give the Batavian–Hungarian myth its full weight. I would refrain from claiming that Aurelius knew about the old records of Batavian soldiers in Roman Pannonia, since we have seen that such evidence was available in the form of epitaphs in the medieval monastic world. However, I would like to refer to the fame the Kingdom of Hungary enjoyed in Europe when Aurelius wrote his chronicle. That reputation would sadly decline nearly ten years later, by the death of King Louis in the battle of Mohács in 1526, but had been in ascendancy since the thirteenth century. In that context a fictional descendant of a Hungarian king would make the best testimonial for a young prince. Prince Battus from Pannonia did not only hold such qualification, but also Esmoreit, the main figure in a well-known Dutch play from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Who was Esmoreit? Let us read the lines which describe his origins:[14]

Die coninc van Cecilien es sijn vader
Een wigant hoghe gheboren
Ende sijn moeder als ghi moget hoeren
Es [s]conincx dochter van Hongherien.

The king of Selicia is his father,
A giant of high birth,
And his mother, as you may hear,
Is the king's daughter of Hungary.

The play about Esmoreit is partly based on the story of the young Moses in Exodus 2, as it was known from Jacob van Maerlant's popular metrical Bible of 1271. The Esmoreit figure may be identified as a grandson of Charles II and Mary of Hungary. Their daughter Eleonora married Frederick III of Aragon in 1303, who reigned in Silicia for more than forty years (1296–1337). The play *Esmoreit* is regarded as the oldest text in Dutch language in which the name of Hungary appears.[15] I am not sure if Cornelius Aurelius's chronicle, which was written one and half a century later, might be called the oldest but one. But his curious introduction of Prince Battus is worthy of commemoration in the history of the Hungarian–Dutch connection.

[13] H. BRUCH (ed.), *Chronographia Johannis de Beke*, 's-Gravenhage 1973 (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën 143), part III, line 10.

[14] A. M. DUINHOVEN (ed.), *Esmoreit*, Zutphen 1979 (Klassiek Letterkundig Pantheon 165), lines 190–193.

[15] SIVIRSKY (see note 1).