

I. BORONKAI

UBI ASINI EXONERANTUR

We find under the above title one of Janus Pannonius' two-lined epigrams in its Teleki-edition. (Epigr. I, 277).¹ The words of the little poem are the following:

**Dura, viatores, deponite pondera lassi,
Nam jubet hic asinos exonerare locus.**

It is not a significant verse. The ones who recently — in its original form or in translation — published it did not comment on it; certainly for the reason that they did not consider it being any more than some sort of a quibbling. Most probably they are right thinking this.²

It is only Tibor Kardos who explains the epigram — in the following way: "The poem is talking about a shed, a drinking fountain similar to the caravansaries which have been found in many places along the main roads in Italy. The fundamental attitude of Janus in this period — originating from his infant prodigy consciousness — is disdain of people, mostly common people. Here also he identifies the lay-by-out of the common wayfarer (most probably they travelled on donkey's back) with the drinking fountain of a donkey."³

It is also worth discussing that in Hungarian the poem may be read in the translation of Gyula Takáts who has given it the title Donkey-put-up which is not quite appropriate. His interpretation in the second part of the second line is more exact: "here is the donkey lay-by-out."⁴

It is already a question: is it possible to give a more exact explanation concerning its origin, its title, its message? Is it possible that Janus had a concrete personal experience which made him write the epigram and if the answer to this question is yes: where and when? More exactly: it is supposable that the word *locus* in the poem does not generally mark a "place" of some kind but it marks a certain "locality"?

I think the key is given to us by the work of a contemporary author. Aeneas Silvius de Piccolominibus the excellent humanist, later pope under the name of Pius II who also stood in connection with Janus, wrote his

autobiography, the *Commentarii* in the last years of his life.⁵ In the 4th book of this he reports in details on his voyage by which at the end of the Congress of Mantova (18th January 1460) he returned to his residence, staying for shorter-longer periods in the towns or little settlements he passed by. According to the witness of the 6th chapter he probably left Bologna on the 26th of January, he spent the night from the 26th to the 27th in Pianoro where he received important news about the alarming situation of the Kingdom of Naples. "*Venit deinde presul — he continues his report — ad locum, cui Asinorum exoneratio nomen est, in summo Appenino, non sine graui labori (sic) niuosa pluuiosaque die peracta, et modo uehiculo, modo sella portatus*".⁶

We quoted the text of the codex and not of the edition on purpose. We did this because this latter returns the name in question in *Scaragliasini*-form. We meet the Italian form also in the latest translation of the *Commentarii*, in the one of Giuseppe Bernetti who puts it down in the following way: *Scaricalasino*.⁷ It is undoubted that the former as well as the latter Italian forms are really the translations of the Latin — or in other words — the Latin is the scientific-humanist correspondence of an even earlier dated *volgare*-form. Be as it is something which is certain is that we are not facing an arbitrary translation; we can satisfy ourselves about this for example on the basis of *Lessico Universale Italiano* which says the following about *Scaricalasino*: "*vecchio nome del centro di Monghidoro, in prov(in)cia di Bologna*".⁸ *Monghidoro* however — we have to add this — is found in the *Appenines*, 41 km far from Bologna, in the 840 m height of the *Futapass*.⁹ So I think Janus as well was not put to writing this amusing poem by his civilian-annoying mood but by the fact that he somehow met this funny-named place. The question is however — how? It may be that he only heard about it but it is also possible that he himself has been there.

József Huszti in his monograph¹⁰ about Janus records several voyages of the young student-poet. In 1454 for instance Janus went to Bologna¹¹; but his other, longer trip in 1458 is much more believable during which — starting from Padove — he even reached Rome and Narni.¹² The main stations of this trip are recorded by Vespasiano da Bisticci in his series of autobiographies, in the chapter about Janus. He of course does not go into details, as Huszti says: "*we continue to be in obscurity concerning the route of Janus*".¹³

According to what has been above mentioned I think it verisimilar that the poet touched the village of *Scaricalasino* by his trip of 1458, the smile-provoking name of which he was made to write the epigram.

¹ *Iani Pannonii*. . . Poëmata. Pars prima. Traiecti ad Rhenum 1784. 578.

² Sándor V. Kovács (ed.): *The Works of Janus Pannonius in Latin and Hungarian* Bp. 1972. 136–137., 518.; Tibor Klaniczay (sel. and noted): *Janus Pannonius. Humanists in Hungary*. Bp. 1982. 31.

³ Tibor Kardos (ed.): *The Poems of Janus Pannonius*. Bp. 1978. 243. The "in this period" concerns the years from 1447 to 1454 in Ferrara.

⁴ Sándor V. Kovács: *op. cit.* 137.; Tibor Klaniczay: *op. cit.* 31. and Tibor Kardos: *op. cit.* 84.

⁵ *Pii Secundi Commentarii rerum memorabilium, quae temporibus suis contigerunt.* Frankfurt 1614. One partly diverse and much more rich version of the work can be read in the library of Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome, in the contemporary manuscript form named Cod. 147. (Its microfilm in the microfilm-theque of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under the mark A 5105. I quote the text of this.)

⁶ Fol. 119a = *Pii Secundi Commentarii* 96.

⁷ *Giuseppe Bernetti* (a cura di): *Pio II* (Enea Silvio Piccolomini), *I Commentari*, II, Siena 1972. 12.

⁸ *Lessico Universale Italiano di lingua, lettere, arti, scienze e tecnica*, XX. Roma 1978. 212.

⁹ *Lessico Universale Italiano*, XIV. Roma 1974. 144.

¹⁰ *József Huszti*: *Janus Pannonius*. Pécs 1931.

¹² *Huszti*: *op. cit.* 42–43.

¹³ *Huszti*: *op. cit.* 175.

¹³ *Huszti*: *op. cit.* 182.