

ON THE TRACK OF AN EDITION.
NEW SOURCES FOR THE DATING
OF STEPHANUS BRODERICUS' *HISTORIA VERISSIMA*

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One of the most famous texts ever written by a humanist in the Kingdom of Hungary is the *Historia verissima* of Stephanus Brodericus (Stjepan Brodarić, ca 1480–1539). It is the only source we have describing the events of the decisive battle at Mohács, 1526, written by an eyewitness. Due to its unique status, the text of Brodericus has been analysed and interpreted many times by many scholars, first of all by historians, in the endeavour to reconstruct the course of the battle from the account of Brodericus. On the other hand, literary historians paid much less attention to the circumstances in which this celebrated text was written. According to the literature, Brodericus wrote the *Historia verissima* because he was charged by the Polish King to give an account about the defeat in which the nephew of King Sigismund had died, and because he himself wanted to defend his fellow-countrymen against Cuspinianus, who had accused the Hungarians of cowardice and treachery. It is generally accepted, too, that the *Historia* was written sometime in the spring of 1527 and that it was printed by Vietor in Cracow on 18 April 1527. This date has never been disputed, although not a single copy of this edition is preserved, and the only source that mentions this edition is the *Janociana*, a bibliography written in the second half of the 18th century, i.e. 250 years later.

Recently, however, I came across a new source referring to the origin of the *Historia*, in the light of which the abovementioned date is called into question. In the first part of my paper I am going to prove that Brodericus wrote the *Historia* not earlier than 1528, from which it naturally follows that 1527 cannot be the year of its first edition. In the second part of the paper I am going to answer the question that obviously arises: when was *Historia* published for the first time? The answer to this question is of crucial importance because Brodericus' work played a prominent role in the construction of the Mohács-concept; we can count on its impact on early modern historiography only after the date of the first edition.

Key words: Stephanus Brodericus, *Historia verissima*, first edition

1.

I hope that the kind reader will forgive me for beginning this paper with a personal story. I must confess that in the last decade I have been much engaged with Brodericus, with his diplomatic activity and correspondence and I have expressly devoted much time to his celebrated *Historia verissima*. This is one of the most important texts ever written by a humanist in the realm of the Kingdom of Hungary owing to its author's unique authority: Brodericus not only participated in the battle at Mohács in 1526, and also survived the massacre that followed, but he put down in words his memories of the events. Since this battle is beyond doubt a turning point in Hungarian history, and the only report we have written by an eyewitness is that of Brodericus, his work has an exceptional importance. So on the one hand we have a »VIT«, that is a »very important text«, and on the other, however, a mysterious work: although it is said to have been printed in Cracow, 1527, exactly on 18 April, this first edition has perished entirely. Although generations of philologists have been chasing after it, nobody has ever seen it.

The reader can imagine my enthusiasm when a few years ago one of my colleagues informed me that according to the catalogue of the National Library of Croatia the first edition was to be found in Zagreb. I travelled there, but to my disappointment this information proved to be a mirage, an optical illusion. The National Library in Zagreb does not have any example of this text either. At the background of this sorry mistake stood a very particular method of cataloguing: in the register of old and rare books and printings of the National Library one can find not only items the Library indeed possesses, but also the ones it *would like* to have - in other words, the so-called *desiderata* are catalogued as well. I was very disappointed at the time, but I hope that by the end of this paper I will manage to convince all my readers that the lack of this edition is not a mystery, and that the century-long-hunt was, in fact, bound to be in vain.

In the first part of my paper I am going to focus exclusively on the question of the date of *Historia verissima*'s appearance and in the second part I intend to draw the conclusions of my theory.

2.

As I mentioned before, the greatest philological problem regarding Brodericus' *Historia* is the lack of the autograph manuscript and/or the first edition. Considering the circumstances of early modern publishing, it is not at all surprising that manuscripts of works are lost. On the contrary, it is quite rare for the original manuscript of a printed work to remain, since after the printing of the text the valuable paper was regularly used again. In the case of early modern printings the lack of the first edition would not be an exception either. Just to

mention an example close to Brodericus: not a single copy of the first edition of Brodericus' great counterpart's work – Cuspinianus' *Oratio protreptica* – has been preserved. Nevertheless, given the fact that Brodericus in his *Historia* not only hinted at Cuspinianus' text, but almost quoted from it in his letter written in Dévény (Devín) on 18 March 1527, it is obvious that he must have read it. Therefore, although this first edition of the *Oratio* is lost for us, a printed version must have existed.¹ The very fact that the first edition has not come to us does not mean that it did not exist at all.

What seems to be more surprising is the absence of any contemporary reactions to the *Historia* of Brodericus. This is all the stranger since the catastrophic defeat itself, in which a king lost his life, evoked a significant echo among contemporaries.² Only a fortnight after the battle a hastily summoned consistory in Rome dealt with the events,³ and a few weeks later the Hungarian question was disputed all over Europe, from the Spanish⁴ to the English court. Public opinion was also excited by the battle: we know of at least seven different newspapers in German (the so called *Neue Zeitungen*) that dedicated their pages to the battle and its consequences. The event attracted so much attention that these newspapers or leaflets were reprinted more than 30 times in the subsequent years.⁵ In view of these facts it seems all the more surprising that in a half year

¹ See more about it: Péter K a s z a, »Cuspinians *Oratio protreptica* und ihr Echo in Ungarn«, *Würzburger Humanismus. 15. Neulateinisches Symposium NeoLatina*, Tübingen, 2014, 159–168. Theoretically it cannot be excluded that Brodericus made use of a manuscript version of Cuspinianus' *Oratio*. In fact, however, it is not very likely. Firstly, they were not friends (though they might have known each other), therefore it is hard to believe that Brodericus could have obtained a manuscript of the *Oratio*. Besides, the fact that Brodericus complained about Cuspinianus' accusations against the Hungarians in his letter to Ferdinand of 18 March 1527 leads to the conclusion that the text had already been printed and accessible to a larger audience.

² We know about more pieces of correspondence between Brodericus and his Polish friends written in that period (April 1527), which are of some importance in considering the possibility of an edition. In them there is no hint about *Historia* being recently published. See Stephanus B r o d e r i c u s, *Epistulae*, ed. Petrus Kasza, BSMRAe, Vol. 16. Budapest, 2012, 181–187.

³ See F r a k n ó i Vilmos, »János király és a római Szentszék«, *Századok*, 35 (1902), 697.

⁴ For more on Spanish reactions see K o r p á s Zoltán, *V. Károly és Magyarország*, Budapest, 2008, 53–69.

⁵ One can find a reliable introduction into the issue of leaflets and *Volklied* considering the battle at Mohács in P u k á n s z k y Béla, »Mohács és az egykorú német közvélemény« *Mohácsi emlékkönyv*, Budapest, 1926, 277–294; F r a k n ó i Vilmos, »A mohácsi csatáról szóló egykorú újságlapok a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum könyvtárában«, *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 1 (1876), 8–14; H u s z á r Imre, »Hazánkra vonatkozó külföldi újsághírek a XVI-XVII. századból«, *Századok*, 46 (1912), 517–520. For a thorough bibliography on the leaflets see A p p o n y i Sándor, *Hungarica*, OSZK, Budapest, 2004; K e r t b e n y Károly,

after this widely known battle a report of it should come into existence, written in a widely accessible language, i.e. in Latin, by an author who was well known among his fellow-humanists, i.e. by Brodericus, and printed by one of the most acknowledged publishers of the time, i.e. Vietor in Cracow, but that no one, neither the author nor any of his humanist friends and correspondents, should refer to it. No one would expect an echo from the British Islands, but it is hard to believe that Brodericus' closest Polish friends, such as Piotr Tomicki or Andreas Cricius (Andrzej Krzycki) do not have a word either about it. Or, at least, no such reaction can be found on the pages of Volumes VIII and IX of *Acta Tomiciana*, containing letters and documents from the years 1526–1527. However, nothing would have driven me to rethink the problem of dating if I had not come across a letter sent by Cricius to the chief chancellor of Poland, Krzysztof Szydłowiecki. The beginning of the letter is of the utmost importance for our subject:

Illustris et Magnifice Domine. Discedens a me dominus Stephanus Brodericus vocatus magnis precibus per regem suum, reliquit apud me historiam cladis serenissimi olim Ludovici regis ita a se vere et plane conscriptam, ut quamvis ipse stylum suum extenuet, melius a nemine conscribi potuerit. Eam mitto vestrae Illustritati et magnificae Dominationi.⁶

As we can see, Cricius informs his correspondent that Brodericus, when summoned by his king, on departure from Cricius' estate left behind him a copy of his *Historia* of King Louis' defeat, which (at least according to Cricius) is written so sincerely and clearly that, although Brodericus disdained his own style, no one could have written this work better. Cricius now forwards this work to Szydłowiecki. The text Brodericus entrusted to Cricius was beyond doubt the *Historia verissima*. Two reasons support this claim. First of all, Cricius mentions a historical work (*historiam*) about the defeat of King Louis. Second, he must have had read the same text we have on our hand today, because words of the Polish bishop on the style and value of Brodericus' writing allude to the preface of *Historia*, where the author refers in a humble way to his own literary abilities: »if the style seems to be rude, as it indeed is, I know that there many among people born in Hungary or Poland, who could have decorated it better than me, if they had wanted [...] I was satisfied giving them raw material to chisel and polish with their hatchets and axes.«⁷

Magyarországra vonatkozó régi német nyomtatványok, Budapest, 1880; Carl G ö l l n e r, *Turcica. Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, 1-3, Acad. RPR, București, 1969–78; H u b a y I l o n a, *Röplapok, újságok, röpiratok az OSZK-ban 1480–1718*, Budapest, 1948; N é m e t S. Katalin, *Ungarische Drucke und Hungarica 1480-1720. Katalog der HAB Wolfenbüttel*, München – New York – London – Paris, 1993.

⁶ *Acta Tomiciana*, X, No. 207, 198–199.

⁷ *Si stilus videbitur, sicuti est, incomptior, scimus non deesse plures et in Hungaria et in Polonia natos, qui potuerunt haec, si voluerunt exornare [...] nobis satis fuerit illis*

Cricius' letter is really exciting since in it we finally find a contemporary reaction. But the reaction becomes more intriguing if one looks at the date of the letter. It was written in Pułtusk (Poltowsko) on 18 April 1528. It is at least rather weird that the first contemporary echo we have regarding the *Historia* originates exactly a year after the traditionally accepted date of its publication.

The provenance of the manuscript letter published in *Acta Tomiciana* is a codex of the Library in Kórnik (Biblioteka Kórnicka) that is not available anymore;⁸ therefore one cannot theoretically exclude the possibility that the letter was simply misdated, i.e. that it was in fact written in 1527, and not in 1528. This is not improbable, given the fact that between the two dates (1527 and 1528) there would not be much difference if one wrote using Roman numerals (MDXXVII and MDXXVIII). However, the rest of the letter and the situation which it describes prove beyond doubt that it was written in 1528. In the subsequent lines the Polish bishop refers to Szapolyai being in exile in Poland, which would not be possible before March 1528. Internal evidence proves that the date of the letter is correct.

Unfortunately, Cricius does not mention whether the copy Brodericus entrusted to him was a manuscript or a printed version. Therefore it might be the case that the letter refers to a work printed a year before. Cricius' wording, however, suggests that he is informing the addressee about a recently finished text, of whose existence the chief chancellor had not been aware before. Also, Szydłowiecki certainly did not have a copy of the *Historia*, otherwise it would have been useless to send him one. If we presumed, as the scholars previously did, that Brodericus' report was already printed in April 1527, and in Cracow at that, how could we explain that Szydłowiecki, who spent the spring and summer of 1527 in this very city and who, in the winter 1527–28, personally met Brodericus at the national assembly in Piorków, did not obtain a copy of the *Historia verissima*, remaining unaware of its very existence?

Let us consider the possibility that in his letter Cricius referred to a work, *which had been recently completed*, but had *not been printed yet*. In that case, we do not have any data referring to it from the previous years because before that time *this work did not exist at all*. At first glance it might seem to be a risky proposal, but if one considers the arguments *pro* and *contra*, the evidence appears to be more than convincing.

materiam tantum dedisse rudem illorum dolabris et asciiis levigandam et expoliendam. See Stephanus Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum cum Solymano Turcarum imperatore ad Mohach historia verissima*, ed. Kulcsár Péter, Budapest, 1985, 22.

⁸ Today in Kórnik all that is to be found is the so called third edition of *Acta Tomiciana* collected and edited by Stanisław Górski in 1567. Compared with other manuscript versions, this one was the richest in documents, but unfortunately most of the original volumes have perished by now. The documents related to the year 1528 were preserved in a later copy made for the Karnkowski family, but this particular Cricius letter cannot be found in this collection.

In fact, the arguments in favour of the publication having been in 1527 are not numerous. Nobody mentions the work in 1527, and not a single copy of this edition is preserved. The only argument in favour of it being published is the bibliographical tradition. Although this tradition seems to be quite long and solid, tracing it will get a surprising result. The critical edition of the *Historia verissima* was published in 1985. The editor Péter Kulcsár stated in the preface that the first edition was not available any more, but it had been published in Cracow on 18 April 1527.⁹ As he could not find the edition, he referred to Georg Panzer's bibliography from 1798. The same date of publication may be found in the *Bibliografia Polska* edited by Estreicher in the 1870s,¹⁰ and in the preface of the *Luctus Pannoniae* published by the Hungarian scholar István Weszprémy in 1799.¹¹ Though Weszprémy did not give the source for the date, by 1799 he would have at hand two comprehensive bibliographies, namely the *Annales typographici* edited by the abovementioned Georg Panzer, which the German scholar began to publish in 1783, and the *Janociana*, edited and published by Jan Daniel Janocki. And as Panzer himself, when describing Brodericus' *Historia*, referred to Janocki,¹² the Polish bibliographer's work is the point where our investigation terminates. The *Janociana*, which was published in three volumes in the 1770s, is the source for all later bibliographic records of Brodericus' work. It was used by Panzer and Estreicher, and probably by Weszprémy too. Kulcsár himself, referring to Panzer, whose source (as we have seen) was the *Janociana*, indirectly inherited the date of the Polish bibliography. Therefore, one cannot overestimate the importance of the *Janociana* in the formation of the bibliographic tradition for the first edition of Brodericus' *Historia verissima*.

As far as I know, nobody saw or even mentioned the existence of this mysterious edition before Janocki. It is a telling indicator that two early Hungarian bibliographical companions, the one of David Czvitinger (printed in 1711) and the one of Péter Bod (printed in 1766), both earlier than the *Janociana*, do mention Brodericus' *Historia*, but know nothing about an edition dating back to 1527. They give a list of all other, later editions, recorded by Janocki, too, and well known today, but they give not even a smallest hint about the Cracovian volume. At this point we have to ask ourselves what the basis of Janocki's bibliographical entry

⁹ See Stephanus Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum ...* 15.

¹⁰ Estreicher, Karol, *Bibliografia Polska*, III, 352. Accessible at <<http://www.estreicher.uj.edu.pl/staropolska/index/4616.html>> (2013-12-04).

¹¹ »Broderith Istvánnak a' szerémi és azután vólt Váczi püspöknek a' ki Titoknok korában királyával Második Lajossal az ütközetben jelen lévén a mohácsi veszedelmet leírta és a mingyárt következő 1527dikben Krakóban Hieron. Viotor kinyomtatta...« See Weszprémy István, *Luctus Pannoniae*, Pozsony, 1799. VII.

¹² *Ex Bibliotheca Janociana descriptis*. See Georg Wolfgang Franz Panzer, *Annales typographici*, VI, Norimbergae, 1798, 469–470.

was. Did he indeed have in his hands the printed version, which has perished in the meantime? I don't think so.

Although Janocki's bibliography is usually considered a reliable source, since the author mostly described volumes he saw in the Zaluski Library, I doubt he could have done so in the case of Brodericus. Having a closer look at his entry on Brodericus, one can note that after a short biography Janocki lists the known works of Brodericus. These works, with the single exception of the *Historia*, are letters, and they are listed in a strict chronological order. *Historia* appears among the letters from the year 1526. That is, from our point of view, most notable. It is well known that the text of the *Historia verissima* was copied into every manuscript version of the *Acta Tomiciana*. Because the battle which the *Historia* reported happened in 1526, the text of Brodericus was always inserted into the volume containing documents and letters of that year. These are for the most part contained in the volume VIII. Let us quote Janocki himself:

Verissima Historia Stephani Broderici episcopi Sirmiensis. Sigismundo primo regi Polonorum, ab auctore ipso missa. Ex eiusque autographo in Sigismundi primi actionum regiarum Tomum VIII. p. 199.a – 221.b translata. In lucem autem, omnium accuratissime a Mathia Pyrserio Silesio edita. Cracoviae, apud Hieronymum Vietorem. Die XVIII. Aprilis Anno Domini MDXXXVII.

This means that the autograph was copied into volume VIII of the *Acta Tomiciana*, and a certain Mathias Pyrser published it at Vietor's on 18 April 1527. My opinion is that Janocki mentions the *Historia* in this way because what he held in his hand was not a printed book, but merely volume VIII of the *Acta Tomiciana*, of which he gives the page numbers as well. He added, indeed, that the text was published by Pyrser, but the description does not prove on its own that Janocki indeed saw this particular edition. He probably only mentions it, as he does with all the other editions he was aware of. I do not want to make up bold theories, but it cannot be excluded that Janocki contaminated the information that he gathered. He could see the text of the *Historia* on the given pages of *Acta Tomiciana* and he could well have known from the same collection that a precise date referring to this text was to be found in the abovementioned letter of Cricius. He might have combined the two pieces of information, and/or the date of the letter might have been simply misread or misprinted.

Let us consider some arguments in favour of 1528. We can take it for granted that the work must have been completed at least by April 1528. Therefore this is the *terminus ante quem*. Beside the contemporary evidence, it is worth considering two other factors. *Historia verissima* is obviously written in favour of Szapolyai, King John, the rival of Ferdinand.¹³ It is also known that Brodericus until 18

¹³ See more about it in Kasza Péter, »Because I Can See that Some [...] Tell the Events Differently to How They Happened... Comments to the Story of the Formation of István Brodericus's *Historia verissima*«, *Camoenae Hungaricae*, 4–5 (2007–2008), 47–63.

March 1527 lived in Pozsony (Bratislava) and Dévény, at the court of Queen Mary. In that period he was on the side of those opposed to King John. We also know that Brodericus switched sides (from Ferdinand to John) at the end of March, and his presence in Buda can be proved from 24 March 1527 onwards.¹⁴ If his *Historia*, as the tradition claims, was printed in April 1527, he must have finished it by mid-March at the latest. Why would he have composed a work in favour of Szapolyai if he were a member of the Habsburg party? This problem would be easily eliminated if the real date of writing was a year later, when Brodericus was already in the service of King John.

As the other factor we must not disregard the different circumstances of Brodericus in these two periods. Spring of 1527 was an expressly turbulent time in his life: he switched sides, moved from Dévény to Buda, he had to secure his place at the court of King John; these circumstances are far from ideal for any kind of humanistic activity. But the situation changed in the spring of the next year. Dispatched by Szapolyai, Brodericus was present at the Polish national assembly in Piotrków from December 1527 until the end of February 1528. After the assembly he did not return home, but on invitation from his friend Cricius travelled to Pułtusk, where he stayed till mid-April. These one and a half months were an unusually tranquil time of his eventful life. For instance, as Cricius reports, Brodericus has the opportunity to read.¹⁵ This period of *otium* provided a more appropriate context for humanist activity.

Besides, we must not forget that Brodericus in the preface of the *Historia* writes: *Scimus non deesse plures et in Hungaria et in Polonia natos, qui potuerunt haec, si voluerint, exornare*¹⁶ i.e.: there are many among Polish and Hungarians who could have written this work better. Why does he refer to the Polish humanists? They had not much to do with the battle at Mohács. But if he is writing his text in Poland, in the castle of a Polish humanist, this sentence can be regarded as a courteous gesture. What is more: in the relevant manuscripts of *Historia verissima* (here I mean mostly the different volumes of *Acta Tomiciana*) after the Preface comes an epitaph of King Louis written by Andreas Cricius.¹⁷

Summing up what has been said: we have a contemporary testimony about the *Historia* from the year 1528. Brodericus spent six undisturbed weeks during the spring of 1528 at the estate of Cricius, who definitely saw and read his work,

¹⁴ F r a k n ó i Vilmos, *Magyar Országgyűlési Emlékek I*, Budapest, 1874, 127–128.

¹⁵ In a letter of Cricius sent to his uncle, Tomicki, the Polish humanist reported he was spending his time partly doing his duties partly reading in Brodericus' company (*Tradduco tempus partim in lectione cum Broderico, partim in muniis meis obeundis*). See *Acta Tomiciana*, X, 152.

¹⁶ See Stephanus B r o d e r i c u s, *De conflictu Hungarorum ...* 22.

¹⁷ For more information about the epitaph's significance see K a s z a Péter, »Stemma correctum sive completum. Adalékok a Brodarics-szöveghagyomány kérdéséhez«, *Classica-Mediaevalia-Neolatina VI. Convivium Pajorin Klára 70. születésnapjára*, Debrecen–Budapest, 2012, 99–109.

and composed an epigram for it. In the light of abovementioned facts I would claim that the *Historia verissima* was not completed in 1527, so it could not have been printed by Vietor in that year. Not a single copy of this edition has remained, since it never existed.

In view of this I conclude that the text was composed during the spring 1528 and finished about mid-April of that year in Poltowsko, Poland, on the estate of Andreas Cricius. At least we can take it for granted that a manuscript version must have existed by that time. But when was the *Historia* published for the first time?

3.

As it would be useless to search for the mysterious edition from 1527, the next candidate is the well-known edition of Sambucus, printed in Basel in 1568. At first glance it might seem surprising, even improbable, that this exceptionally important text was printed only some 30 years after its author's death (in 1539), and more than 40 after the events it describes (from 1526). The impact of Brodericus' work on *Turcica* literature provides evidence in favour of this theory. Let us consider the main points.

The famous Hungarian humanist, philologist, manuscript-collector and text-editor Johannes Sambucus (János Zsámboky) had Bonfini's *Decades* printed in Basel in the year 1568.¹⁸ It was the second and more complete edition of this great historiographic masterpiece following the first one by Martin Brenner back in 1543. From our point of view it is important that in the appendix of the second edition Sambucus published the text of Brodericus' *Historia* (except the preface, which he omitted for unknown reasons). This is a widely known edition of which every major library has a copy. It was only *after* this edition that Brodericus' work became a bestseller: during the next one and half century it was printed ten more times. During this period, Brodericus' *Historia* was reprinted within Bonfini's work three times (without changes): in 1581 (Frankfurt), in 1606 (Hanau), and in 1690 (Cologne).

Six years after the Basel edition, i.e. in 1574, the *Historia* appears for the first time separated from Bonfini's work, in the *Historicum opus* edited by Simon Schardius. Schardius collected different accounts describing the formation of the Turkish superpower, and the report of Brodericus giving an account of the tragic and decisive battle at Mohács fitted very well to this theme. The *Historicum opus* was reprinted as well in 1673 in Gießen.

Nicolaus Reusner published for the first time his collection entitled *Rerum memorabilium Pannonicarum* in 1603. The editor's aim was to collect and publish

¹⁸ Antonii Bonfinii *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades Quatuor, Cum Dimidia*, Basiliae, ex officina Oporiniana, 1568, 759-774.

works representing the gradual progress of the Turks in occupying Hungary and pushing forward to Europe. The *Historia* was a pivotal piece of this collection, as it was in the two subsequent editions – in 1627 and in 1770. Both Schardius and Reusner, when it came to the *Historia*, based their editions in a similar way on the text printed by Sambucus.

One can also mention the first separate edition of *Historia*, published in Strasbourg in 1688, edited by Gáspár Khuni. As the title page indicates, Khuni also used Sambucus' version: *Stephani Broderici narratio de proelio, quo ad Mohatzium anno 1526 Ludovicus Hungariae rex periit recognita a Sambuco*.

The abovementioned editions prove that the account of the battle of Mohács did not lose its significance even one hundred years after the battle and it was considered worth reprinting again and again. If an edition of such a pivotal and interesting text existed as early as 1527, how did it not occur to anybody to reprint it during the four entire decades before 1568?

Sambucus usually referred to the sources he used preparing an edition. When he reedited Bonfini, he didn't deny that there was a former, although less complete edition from 1543, made by Martin Brenner. However, when it comes to the text of Brodericus, Sambucus does not mention any former edition. Would he have acted this way, if he had known any previous one? We must keep in mind that Sambucus, as philologist, strove to publish as many inedited, previously unknown texts as possible.¹⁹

While we do not know any single printed version of the *Historia* before 1568, the picture is thoroughly different when it comes to manuscripts. Between 1553 and 1567 Piotr Tomicki's former secretary, Stanisław Górski, completed three versions of the *Acta Tomiciana*, and he copied and inserted the text of the *Historia* into each one of these versions.²⁰ It was not Górski's habit to insert already printed works into Tomiciana. Why would he have made an exception with Brodericus? A more probable answer is that he was aware that Brodericus' account, equally important from the Polish and the Hungarian point of view, remained in manuscript and therefore needed to be copied.

Sometime around 1549 Antun Vrančić, who was going to publish the work of Brodericus together with that of Bonfini, had the *Historia* copied for himself.²¹ Wouldn't it have been easier for him to use the printed version? In my opinion

¹⁹ On Sambucus's activity as a philologist and text-editor see Al m á s i Gábor – K i s s Farkas Gábor, »Szöveggondozás és kapcsolatápolás. Zsámboky János életműve a reneszánsz filológia tükrében«, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 117 (2013), 627–691.

²⁰ For the the manuscript tradition of *Acta Tomiciana* see Ryszard M a r c i n i a k, *Acta Tomiciana w kulturze politycznej Polski okresu Odrodzenia*, Warszawa–Poznań, 1983.

²¹ This manuscript has been recently unearthed in the Episcopal Archive of Győr. See N e m e s Gábor, »Verancsics Antal győri irathagyatéka«, N e m e s Gábor – V a j k Ádám (eds.), *In labore fructus. Jubileumi tanulmányok Győregyházmege történetéből*, Győr, 2011, 325–337.

Vrančić was obliged to have the text copied since by that time, that is about 1549, it was not printed yet.

Last but not least, the reception of the *Historia* seems to support this theory. Brodericus' text deeply influenced historiography. Almost without exception, everybody who dedicated a few pages to the battle at Mohács followed Brodericus' description. This can be proved, when it comes to Latin writers, in case of Miklós Istvánffy, Gian Michele Bruto or Farkas Bethlen,²² and equally in works of Gáspár Heltai or László Lishti, if one considers the accounts of battle written in Hungarian.²³ The common feature of these works is that they were all composed *after* 1568. The text of Brodericus was easily accessible to their authors, owing to the many editions existing at the end of 16th century. On the contrary, authors such as György Szerémi (Georgius Sirmiensis), János Zermegh, or Johann Camerarius, who finished their work *before* 1568,²⁴ conspicuously lack elements that can be traced back to Brodericus as single source. Such an element is, for instance, the inauspicious divination of young Ferenc Perényi, Bishop of Várad, who said on the eve of the battle that Brodericus should be sent to Rome for the canonization of those twenty thousand who would soon lay down their lives for the good of Christendom.²⁵ This detail has such a dramatic power that none of the later historians could resist the temptation to use it. It was quoted by everybody who wrote about Mohács *after* 1568, but by nobody who did so *before*.

The only exception is Paolo Giovio. He seems to know and use the text of the *Historia* in the early 1550s. But this is the exception which proves the rule. Giovio was on friendly terms with Brodericus, and their friendship dating back to the first

²² Bruto arrived in Hungary in the mid-1570s and composed his work as the court historiographer of István Báthory, prince of Transylvania (1571–1586). Istvánffy began to write his work, *Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis* sometime in the 1590s, Farkas Bethlen wrote his great historical compilation from 1670 onwards, to his death in 1679.

²³ Heltai published his *Krónika*, in 1575. On the relation between Brodericus' and Heltai's texts see Tóth Zsombor, »Heltai-galaxis. Írás/tudás, mentalitás és tradíció Heltai Gáspár történetírói munkásságában. Esettanulmány«, *A történelmem terhe*, Kolozsvár, 2006, 82–118. Lishti composed his epic poem entitled *Magyar Márs* in the middle of the 17th century, and as proved by Jenő Pintér, he followed Brodericus almost word by word. See Péter Jenő, »Listius László Mohácsi veszedelmének forrásai«, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 16 (1906), 152–171.

²⁴ Georgius Sirmiensis wrote his work entitled *De perditione Hungariae* between 1544–1547, at the request of Antun Vrančić. The date of birth of Zermegh's *Commentarius* is disputed, but it was most probably written in 1540s. The German humanist Johann Camerarius published his *De clade accepta in Pannonia ad Mogacium et Ludovici regis interitu narratio* in 1562.

²⁵ *Franciscus Pereni, episcopus Varadiensis [...] dixit eum diem, quo pugnandum esset, [...] viginti millibus Hungarorum martyrum [...] duce fratre Paulo Thomory pro Christi religione occisorum fore consecrandum ac pro eorum canonisatione, quod vocant, cancellarium, si is huic bello supersit, in urbem fore mittendum.* See Stephanus Brodericus, *De conflictu Hungarorum...* 45–46.

half of the 1520s, when Brodericus spent four years as resident ambassador of the Hungarian King in the Eternal City. They not only corresponded regularly,²⁶ but during the year 1536, which period Brodericus spent in Italy as the envoy of King John, they met again personally.²⁷ Giovio, who was keen to collect sources for his great historical work, *Historiarum sui temporis commentariorum libri*, being aware of his Hungarian friend's report, could have received the manuscript version from the author himself. Anybody else could and did make use of Brodericus' text only when it at last became accessible to a larger audience in one of the numerous editions which started with the first edition by Sambucus in 1568.

²⁶ See Stephanus Brodericus, *Epistulae*... 28–129; 320–321.

²⁷ See Stephanus Brodericus, *Epistulae*... 489.