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An Anonymous Hungarian Account about “the Boundary of the Ruthenians” during the “Founding of the Magyar Homeland” in the Inner Danubian Lands

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Венгерский аноним о «порубежье рутенов» во время «обретения родины» мадьярами в Среднем Подунавье

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In the historical essay “The Acts of the Hungarians”, written at the beginning of the 12th century by an anonymous notary of Hungarian King Bela III, “the boundary of Ruthenians” (*confinium Ruthenorum*) is mentioned to supposedly be located in the basin of the Upper Tisza. Here, according to the Hungarian anonymous, Bulgarian rulers settled part of the Balkan Slavs. Since the possession of Kievan Rus’ and the First Bulgarian Empire never extended that far, most likely, the anonymous author was referring to the south-western border of the area of settlement of the Eastern Slavs. This unknown “Magister P.” only once mentions the polytonym Ruthenia in his essay (the title of Chapter 8), but devotes several chapters to describe the relations of the ancient Hungarians with Rutheni people.

In historical maps, found in the works of foreign researchers, as well as in historical atlases, one can meet the designation of the territory as a part of ancient Russia, which is hardly true, because it was unrealistic in the 9th century for Kiev to control the land located 800 km away from it beyond the line of the Carpathian Mountains. Moreover, as established by Soviet researchers, “Russian land” in the 9th century did not extend

beyond the Gorina river in the west, i. e. was more than 200 km away from the Carpathian Mountains.

The determination of the “boundary of Ruthenians” does not comply with foreign realities of the 12th and 13th centuries, when “The Acts of the Hungarians” was written. While the Upper Tisza basin was already mastered by Hungarian rulers in administrative terms, in the lands of “*marchia Ruthenorum*”, once the north-eastern border of the Hungarian kingdom, there emerged a castle district. The Carpathian ranges had long been a natural Russian-Hungarian border, and the Second Bulgarian Empire, even during its heyday, territorially was noticeably inferior to the first.

In this regard, it can be assumed that the Hungarian anonymous was not referring to Rus', but the ancestors of the Carpathian and Moldavian Rusyns, who, according to the concept of A. V. Soloviev, could also consider themselves part of the Russian ethnos. The small number of East Slavic people who lived in the lands of the Carpathian Basin forced them to seek the protection of the neighboring early formations, especially of Great Moravia, Bulgaria and Russia. At the same time, none of these countries could effectively control the Upper Tisza basin at that time because of its remoteness from their political centers.

The emergence of the ancient Russian state and the desire of the Kievan princes to subdue all the ethnic communities of the Eastern Slavs, including the Ulich and the Tivertsy, could encourage the Bulgarian rulers Boris (852 – 888) and Simeon (893 – 927) to create a barrier against the Russian on the northern borders of their possessions, but it is unlikely that Balkan immigrants lived so far away from the lower reaches of the Danube.

Keywords

Source study of Hungarian mediaeval literature, early history of the Ruthenians and Hungarians, Rusins.

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