

= Gelou =

Gelou (Romanian : Gelu ; Hungarian : Gyalu) was the Vlach ruler of Transylvania at the time of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin around 900 AD , according to the *Gesta Hungarorum* . Although the *Gesta Hungarorum* , which was written after 1150 , does not indicate the enemies of the conquering Hungarians (Magyars) known from earlier annals and chronicles , it refers to local rulers ? including Gelou ? who are not mentioned in other primary sources . Consequently , historians debate whether Gelou was a historical person or an imaginary figure created by the unidentified author of the *Gesta Hungarorum* . In Romanian historiography , Gelou is one of three early @-@ 10th @-@ century Romanian dukes with lands in the intra @-@ Carpathian region of present @-@ day Romania .

The *Gesta Hungarorum* describes pre @-@ conquest Transylvania as a country rich in salt and gold , which was raided by Turkic peoples ? " Cumans and Pechenegs " ? before the arrival of the Magyars . Archaeological research indicates that a people who cremated their dead inhabited the regions of the Transylvanian salt mines from the seventh to the ninth centuries . Although excavated weapons suggest a military elite , none of the early @-@ medieval Transylvanian fortresses uncovered can be reliably dated before the 10th century . The *Gesta Hungarorum* states that Gelou 's duchy was inhabited by Vlachs and Slavs ; most toponyms recorded by the chronicler in connection with Gelou 's duchy are of Magyar origin . According to the *Gesta Hungarorum* , Tétény (or Tuhutum) , who was one of seven Magyar chieftains , defeated Gelou 's army at the Meze? Gates and Gelou was killed at the C?pu? River as he fled towards his unnamed fortress . Gelou 's subjects then yielded to Tuhutum without further resistance .

= = Background = =

What is known about Gelou comes from the *Gesta Hungarorum* (The Deeds of the Hungarians) , the earliest surviving Hungarian chronicle . The *Gesta* was written during the second half of the 12th century or the early 13th century by an unidentified author , now known as Anonymus . It describes the Magyar conquest of the Carpathian Basin around 900 .

The Magyars , settled in the Pontic @-@ Caspian steppe by the 830s , began a westward migration after their defeat by a coalition of Pechenegs and Bulgarians in about 895 . They crossed the Carpathian Mountains , invading the surrounding area . Gelou is a local ruler described in the *Gesta Hungarorum* as an opponent of the invading Magyars . Anonymus did not write about Simeon I of Bulgaria , Svatopluk I of Moravia or other opponents known from contemporary sources , instead chronicling Magyar battles with local rulers (including Gelou , Menumorut and Salan) not mentioned in other primary sources .

= = Transylvania on the eve of the Hungarian conquest = =

The nomadic Avars dominated the Carpathian Basin from about 567 . In Transylvania , archaeological evidence attributed to them around 630 is clustered in the region of the salt mines at Ocni?oara , Ocna Mure? and Turda , and along the rivers Mure? and Some? . The cremation cemeteries of the Media? group , a sedentary population , were also concentrated around the salt mines in the seventh to ninth centuries . Although the Media? cemeteries have been attributed to Slavs , according to Madgearu " the presence of Romanians in this context should not be ruled out " . The names of many rivers in Transylvania ? for instance , Bistri?a (" swift ") , Cerna (" black ") , Dobra (" good ") and Târnava (" thorny ") ? are of Slavic origin , indicating the historical presence of a Slavic @-@ speaking population . According to Madgearu , two eighth @-@ century spurs unearthed at ?ura Mic? and Medi?oru Mare " suggest the existence of cavalry troops of Slavs and , perhaps , Romanians in Avar service " (since Avar spur use is uncertain) .

The Avar Khaganate disintegrated after the Franks invaded its western regions three times between 791 and 803 . A stone column erected during the reign of Omurtag of Bulgaria commemorates the 829 death of a Bulgarian commander named Onegavon at the river Tisa ,

indicating that the Bulgarians invaded the eastern regions of the one @-@ time khaganate . According to the Annals of Fulda , in 894 Emperor Arnulf sent envoys to the Bulgarians to " ask that they should not sell salt to the Moravians " ; this demonstrates that the Bulgarians controlled , at a minimum , the roads between the Transylvanian salt mines and Moravia .

According to Kurdt Horedt , István Bóna and other historians , Dridu B pottery unearthed in the Alba Iulia region which was similar to ceramic utensils found along the lower Danube demonstrates that the Bulgarians expanded their authority over this region . Other historians (including Victor Spinei) reject this theory , saying that Dridu B ceramics can only prove cultural influences from the Balkan Peninsula . The so @-@ called " Ciunbrud group " of cemeteries , which were also unearthed near Alba Iulia , yielded earrings and clothing accessories analogous to finds from the lower Danube region and Moravia . Spurs , weapons and other Frankish objects unearthed at Iernut , T?rt?ria and other Transylvanian sites demonstrate ninth @-@ century trade with the Carolingian Empire ; similar spurs were also commonly used in Bulgaria and by 10th @-@ century Magyars .

According to historians Vlad Georgescu , Ioan @-@ Aurel Pop and Alexandru Madgearu , the existence of a ninth @-@ century Vlach polity in the Carpatho @-@ Danubian region is verified by the Gesta Hungarorum and contemporary sources . Alfred the Great 's translation of the Historiae Adversus Paganos ? a fifth @-@ century work by Orosius ? referred to " the Dacians , who were formerly Goths " and lived east of the Moravians and the " Vistula country " . The 11th @-@ century Persian scholar Gardizi , who studied the works of the late ninth @-@ century al @-@ Jayhani , wrote about the Nandars ? " a people of Rûm who are all Christians " ? who inhabited the lower Danube and the Carpathians . Pop identifies them as Romanians , but Bóna and Kristó consider them Bulgarians because nándor was the Bulgarians ' Hungarian exonym . An Armenian geographical work mentions " an unknown country called Balak " north of Bulgaria . According to Pop and Georgescu , this demonstrates that a Vlach country existed in the region at the end of the ninth century . Manuscript studies indicate that the reference to Balak was interpolated after 1000 , with the original text describing the " large country of Dacia " and its 25 Slavic tribes . According to the early @-@ 12th @-@ century Russian Primary Chronicle , although the Slavs were the first settlers west of the Carpathians , the Volokhs seized their territory . The Volokhs were expelled in turn by the Magyars , who " took their lands and settled among the Slavs " . Many scholars , including Georgescu and Madgearu , identify the Volokhs as Vlachs fighting the invading Magyars . Other historians , including Kristó and Dennis Deletant , say that the context indicates that these Volokhs were Franks driven out of the March of Pannonia by the Magyars .

Although Romanian scholars have identified about a dozen Transylvanian fort sites in Gelou 's duchy , none can be definitively dated before the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries . The forts at D?bâca and ?irioara were destroyed between the last decades of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th , but their existence before 900 is unproven . At D?bâca , " the evidence published so far , albeit poorly , does contain evidence of a ninth @-@ century occupation of the site " , according to archaeologist Florin Curta . Curta mentions two pairs of bell @-@ shaped pendants , found outside the fort , which are similar to 9th @-@ century Moravian artefacts . An other Romanian archaeologist , Alexandru Madgearu , writes that the bell @-@ shaped pendants were only made after around 965 , because similar jewellery was found at sites dated between the last third of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th century . Pottery finds suggest that the fortress at Cluj @-@ M?n??tur may have been built during the ninth or tenth century . Early @-@ medieval forts at Moigrad , Ortelec , ?imleu Silvaniei and Zalnoc were built at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries , and the fort at Moldovene?ti even later . Legends identify the ruins of forts at Gheorgheni , Gil?u and Ugru?iu as Gelou 's , but they were built during the Iron Age . According to Vlad Georgescu , more than 40 excavated Transylvanian sites can be identified as settlements in Gelou 's duchy .

= = Anonymus ' narrative = =

= = = Gelou and his duchy = = =

According to Anonymus , " Slavs , Bulgarians , Vlachs , and the shepherds of the Romans " inhabited the Carpathian Basin when the Magyars invaded the territory . The chronicler describes Transylvania (terra ultrasilvana , " the land beyond the woods ") as a rich country with salt mines and gold @-@ yielding rivers , inhabited by " Vlachs and Slavs " when the Magyars arrived , and records the names of five Transylvanian rivers or mountain passes . Most ? Alma? , A?tileu , C?pu? and Meze? ? are of Hungarian origin . In the Gesta Hungarorum Gelou is described as " a certain Vlach " and " prince of the Vlachs " , indicating that the Vlachs were considered the dominant Transylvanian population .

According to Anonymus , Gelou " was not steadfast and did not have around him good warriors " . The Vlachs and Slavs of Transylvania were " the basest of the whole world " because " they had nothing else for arms than bows and arrows " ; Transylvanian weakness was the result of frequent raids by " the Cumans and Pechenegs " . According to Ioan Aurel Pop , Anonymus ' description of Gelou 's subjects indicates a sedentary people called to arms . Carlile Aylmer Macartney writes that the Blasii and Picenati words for Vlachs and Pechenegs and the reference to their " bows and arrows " suggest that Anonymus borrowed the text from a work describing the route of the Third or Fourth Crusade across the Balkans ; the late @-@ 12th @-@ century Historia de expeditione Friderici imperatoris refers to Vlachs and Cumanians and their bows and arrows . Based on Anonymus 's narrative , S?l?gean says that Gelou 's polity was small compared with the other five mentioned in the Gesta Hungarorum .

= = = Conquest of Transylvania = = =

Anonymus and the late 13th @-@ century Simon of Kéza wrote that the Magyars bypassed Transylvania after crossing the northern Carpathians . However , 14th @-@ century Hungarian chronicles preserve a tradition contradicting these narratives . In the Illuminated Chronicle , the Magyars first arrived in Transylvania (Erdelw) with their conquest , " remain [ing] quietly in Erdelw and rest [ing] their herds " before moving further west .

The Gesta Hungarorum recounts a meeting of three Hungarian chieftains ? Teteny (or Tuhutum) , Szabolcs and Tas ? after their victory over Menumorut , who is described as lord of Bihar . They decided that " the border of the realm of Prince Árpád " (the head of the Magyars) " should be at the Meze? Gates " , forcing the local population to build a stone @-@ and @-@ timber enclosure at the new border . Tétény soon sent a spy , " father Agmánd Apafarkas " , to reconnoitre the land east of the Meze? Gates . The spy informed him of Transylvania 's wealth and its ruler 's weakness . Before the invasion , Tétény " sent his envoys " to Árpád for permission . With Árpád 's consent , Tétény hurried to the Meze? Gates ; according to Madgearu , his attack was " clearly targeted toward the salt mine district " of Transylvania .

Gelou " gathered his army and rode speedily " to the border to stop the invaders . Tétény crossed the forest in one day , forcing Gelou to retreat to the Alma? River and fight the Magyars there . The next day , Tétény divided his army and " sent one part a little way upstream " to cross the Alma? and surprise Gelou . Gelou was defeated , with many of his men killed or captured . Although he fled from the battlefield towards " his castle beside the Some? River " , Tétény 's soldiers chased and killed him on the banks of the C?pu? River , near the place where the village Gil?u (which was first mentioned in the 13th century) is located . When they heard about their lord 's death the inhabitants of Transylvania conceded , acknowledging Tétény as their new lord . They swore an oath of loyalty to him at a place later named A?chileu (in Hungarian , Eskell? , which derived from eskü , meaning " oath " in Hungarian , according to Anonymus) . Anonymus ends his account of the Hungarian conquest of Transylvania by saying that Tétény governed Transylvania " peacefully and happily from that day , but his posterity possessed it only up to the times of the holy King Stephen " (who conquered the province around 1000) .

= = In modern historiography = =

The Gesta Hungarorum 's reliability ? particularly regarding Gelou , Glad , Menumorut and the other

rulers described as fighting the conquering Magyars ? has been debated by scholars since the publication of the chronicle during the late 18th century . Most Romanian historians (including Vlad Georgescu , Alexandru Madgearu and Victor Spinei) believe that Anonymus ' story of the three dukes and their realms is reliable . According to Florin Curta , Romanian archaeologists " made every possible effort ... to prove that the Gesta was a reliable source for the medieval history of (Romanian) Transylvania " during the excavations at D?bâca (Gelou 's assumed seat) between the late 1960s and 1980s , but they were " embarrassed that no substantial evidence was found to prove the Gesta right " . Madgearu says that Anonymus ' " account about the conquest " of Transylvania " combines data taken from oral tradition with invented facts " , but " Gelou was a real person and his name could be considered authentic " . Spinei also writes that most reports in the Gesta Hungarorum " are not inventions , but they have a real support , even if here and there some anachronisms occurred . " He cites the role of the Cumans as an example , saying that the Hungarian word translated by Anonymus as " Cumans " (kun) originally referred to any nomadic Turkic tribe . Other historians (including István Bóna , Dennis Deletant , Pál Engel and Gyula Kristó) write that Anonymus had no real knowledge of the Carpathian Basin (including Transylvania) at the time of the Hungarian conquest and invented all the opponents of the Hungarians because he needed characters to be defeated by the conquerors . According to this view , Gelou is one of a half @-@ dozen " imaginary figures " ? including Laborec , Menumorut and Zobor ? named by Anonymus for a river , hill or settlement . If this theory is true , Gelou was named after Gil?u (Gyalu in Hungarian) , a Transylvanian village in which Gelou dies in the Gesta . According to Tudor S?!?gean , the village of Gil?u was apparently named for the duke . Zoltán Kordé says that the names of the village and the duke may have Hungarian or Turkic origins .