The usage of the European historiographical form of annals can be divided into three periods. The first one started in Roman Antiquity, when for example Cato the Elder and Cicero described the method of writing annals. The *Pontifex Maximus* registered the pieces of information on whitened notice boards (*album*), and records of the most important events of the year were added to the inscriptions on bronze tablets (*tabula*), which stood at the Regia in the Forum. The main characteristic features of the annals are strict chronology and simple, clear style. Its advantage was the – theoretically – exact chronology, while its disadvantage was that this genre could not show the connection between the elements of some long lasting events. The fragmented details showed no causal link between events, therefore critical analysis did not operate in this form. We can agree with Ronald Mellor’s opinion: without causation there can be no true history. Nevertheless, Mellor had to recognize the influence of the *Annales Maximi*. “These annual records decisively shaped the formal structure of Roman historical writing, which tended to follow their year-by-year account. The effect of such a structure continues to appear even in such literary historians as Livy and Tacitus.”

The second wave gave the *annales* a widespread international role in the Middle Ages. In Western Christianity there were two genres of chronological history-telling: the older one is the annals, the new one is the chronicle. It is sometimes very difficult to decide which text belongs to the genre of annals, and which to chronicles. The differences can be summarized as follows: in the *annales* contemporary authors (regularly monks) typically registered particular or national events, while the *chronica*, as a retrospective and homogeneous type of work, told universal history.

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But both of them represented the ecclesiastical point of view, and their chronologically arranged contents were more suited to show the discrete and various signs of the divine power and might. The simply recorded events separated by years did not need the critical attitudes of a pragmatic historian. For secular subjects like ethnogenesis, deeds of a hero or a nation, which required thematically arranged composition, there were other forms rooted in the Roman Antiquity, too: the *gesta* or *historia*.²

Although the genre of the *annales* was a widespread form of European medieval historiography, in Hungary only one piece of it remained from the Middle Ages, namely the *Annales Posonienses*. It is important to emphasize that the whole genre of the world chronicle was missing from Hungary during the Middle Ages.³ What is the reason for the supremacy of the *gesta* type in the Hungarian medieval historiography? There are two reasons for this phenomenon, as politics has an interior and a foreign aspect. Writing annals was a custom in German territories, referring for instance to the authority of the *Royal Frankish Annals*.⁴ Although the Western Roman Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom were allies in the first decades of the new millennium, they later became enemies, after King Péter (1038–1041, 1044–1046) a vassal of Germany was dethroned. In 1046 a heathen rebellion broke out too, and most of the clergymen were killed. The new, independent King András I (1046–1060) had to replace them immediately with new priests. He could not ask hostile Germany to send them, he had to turn to the French territories.⁵ The new “Latin” priests who arrived in Hungary brought with themselves the usage of the *gesta* genre instead of the German-type annals. This is the first part of the answer why the leading historiographical genre was the *gesta* from the beginning in the course of the reign of King András I. During the 13th century the features of the chronicle appeared, but the importance of the *gesta* remained. Pure ones (for example *Gesta Hungarorum* of King Bela’s⁶ Anonymous Notary), and mixed *gesta-chronica*-style compositions

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³ The first Hungarian world chronicle was written in the early modern period. More interesting than this thematically universal book was the first historical work which had been written in Hungarian language. Székely István, *Chronica ez világnac ieleis dolgairol* [Chronicle on the famous matters of this world] (Krakkó [Cracow], 1559).
⁶ The glorious king mentioned by Anonymous Notary was very likely King Bela III of Hungary (1172–1196). The *Gesta Hungarorum* was written probably after 1205.