SOURCE PUBLICATION

THE THOUSANDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SURVIVING WRITTEN RECORD OF THE TOPONYM *LITHUANIA*, 1009–2009

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MIX. ...Obiit Recharius, Patherbrunensis episcopus, cui successit Meinwerck. Sanctus Bruno, qui cognominatur Bonifacius, archiepiscopus et monachus, XI suae conversionis anno in confinio Rusciae et Lituae a paganis capite plexus, cum suis XVIII VII id. Martii petiit coelos. Obiit Wigbertus, Merseburgensis episcopus, cui successit Thiatmarus...

“Annales Quedlinburgienses”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, III, ed. G.H. Pertz (1839), p. 80

1009: Bishop Rethgar of Paderborn died and was succeeded by Meinwerk. St Bruno, whose other name is Boniface, archbishop and monk, was beheaded by pagans on the border of Rus' and Lithuania in the eleventh year of his monastic life, and sought heaven along with eighteen of his [followers] on 9 March. Wigbert bishop of Merseburg died and was succeeded by Thietmar.

This annalistic record for the year 1009 notes the death of bishop Rethgar of Paderborn and his succession by Meinwerk, who was ordinary of that see from 1009 to his death in 1036. He is known as the second founder of the diocese. That same year the bishop of Merseburg, Wigbert, was succeeded by Thietmar (Dietmar), who is most famous for the chronicle he composed. This historical source also provides an account of the murder of St Bruno-Boniface of Querfurt at the hands of pagans on the borders of Prussia and Russia. However, the Quedlinburg Annals quoted *in extenso* above is one of the earliest texts to mention the death of the missionary martyr and is

notable for being the first written record of the toponym Lithuania (*Litua*), stating that his murder took place on the border of Rus' and Lithuania. For this reason the Annals have achieved almost epic status in recent Lithuanian historical consciousness and formed the grounds for a decade of national celebration in publishing and support for public works, culminating in the millennial celebrations of 6 July 2010.¹

The Quedlinburg Annals survive only in a sixteenth-century manuscript copy made by the Saxon archivist Peter Weiss (1534–98) and preserved in Dresden at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, where it bears the shelf mark Q. 133. The entry for 1009 is on folio 31v.² This chronicle is a representative of the Saxon tradition of early writing about St Bruno, several other examples of which (*Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, *Annalista Saxo* and *Annales Magdeburgenses*) also locate the martyrdom on the borders of Rus' and Lithuania.³ There are three other traditions of Brunoniana, known for convenience as the Bavarian version (Wipert's eleventh-century *Hystoria de predicatione episcopi Brunonis*⁴), which sets events in Prussia; the Italian version centred on St Peter Damian's *Vita sancti Romualdi* and the Aquitanian tradition of Ademar de Chabannes' *Chronicon*.⁵ These relate the story of Bruno's unsuccessful mission to a king of Rus'. We know from a letter to Emperor Henry II written probably late in 1008 by St Bruno that he had discussed a mission to the pagan Pechenegs with Grand Duke Vladimir of Kiev.⁶

It is impossible to say exactly where St Bruno was murdered or who the object of his mission was. Traditionally Polish historians have taken the line that the mission was to Rus' and that the martyrdom probably took place on the border between Jotvingian

¹ Z. Kiaupa, 'Tūkstančio metų kelias', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis 2009:1*, p. 5–18; E. Aleksandravičius, 'Tūkstantmečio klausimas: kas sieja senąją ir naująją Lietuvą?', *ibid.*, pp. 19–29.

² *1009 metai: Šv. Brunono Kverfurtiečio misija*, ed. I. Leonavičiūtė [*Fontes ecclesiastici historiae Lithuaniae*, 5] (Vilnius, 2006), p. 71 with a facsimile on p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 116, 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186, 188.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 192–200; 208, 210.

⁶ *Epistola Brunonis ad Henricum regem* in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, series II, vol. 4, part 3 (Warsaw, 1973).

and Rus'ian territory.⁷ D. Baronas has drawn important light to the international context of the mission and its links with Rus'.⁸ E. Gudavičius concedes that the name of the pagan prince involved in the mission as given in the Bavarian version of the story could be connected with Rus' – that *Nethimir* may be a corruption of 'Vlethimir' (Vladimir).⁹ Recently there have been vigorous unconvincing attempts, based chiefly on the alleged Lithuanicity of the apparent names of the pagan princes Nethimer (according to Wipert¹⁰) and Zebeden (the king's brother, according to the *Vita et passio S. Brunonis*¹¹), to turn the Quedlinburg text into evidence for the baptism of Lithuania itself (nebulous as such a concept must be).¹² All that can be said for certain is that in 1009 a Magdeburg-educated Benedictine monk, Bruno of Querfurt, was murdered by pagans on the borders of Lithuania and Rus' and that this is evidence that by the beginning of the second Christian millennium Lithuanians had developed sufficient stability and social organisation so as to be able form a recognisable communal structure capable of being identified and recorded in central European historical sources. And that is a reason for celebration.

⁷ J. Tyszkiewicz, 'Brunon z Querfurtu I jego misje', *Fasciculi historici novi, t. II, Z dziejów średniowiecznej Europy środkowo-wschodniej, Zbiór studiów* (Warsaw, 1998), pp. 35–48.

⁸ D. Baronas, 'Paskutinė šv. Brunono Kverfurtiečio misija geopolitikos kontekste', *LIM* 2001:2, pp. 5–34; idem, 'The year 1009: St Bruno of Querfurt between Poland and Rus'', *Journal of Medieval History*, 34 (2008), pp. 1–22.

⁹ E. Gudavičius, 'Šv. Brunono mikrohagiografijos klausimas', *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 23 (2009), p. 33. Almost a decade ago R. Mažeika pointed out that the names Netimir/Nawtemer/Nedamir occur in several later sources referring to Prussians and also (Western) Slavs – R. Mažeika, 'Pirmojo Lietuvos vardo paminėjimo ir šv. Brunono biografijos šaltinių interpretacijos problemos', *Lietuvos krikščionėjimas Vidurio Europos kontekste*, ed. V. Dolinskas (Vilnius, 2005), p. 70.

¹⁰ *1009 metai*, p. 186.

¹¹ The surviving Querfurt city archive manuscript is a sixteenth-century copy of a version extant in c. 1400 – *ibid.*, pp. 161, 174. A scribal confusion with the biblical name Zebedee is hardly impossible.

¹² This view is becoming accepted unquestioningly in Lithuanian society, encouraged by speculative writing on the part of professional historians – A. Bumblauskas, 'Lithuania's Millennium – Millennium Lithuaniae. Or What Lithuania Can Tell the World on this Occasion', *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 23 (2009), pp. 10–18.