

## **Pannonhalma** *(Pannonhalma Castle and Benedictine Archabbey of St Martin)*

*It was founded as the first Hungarian Benedictine monastery in 996 by Prince Géza (972-997), who designated this as a place for the monks to settle, and the it soon became the centre of the Benedictine order. Géza's son, King St Stephen I (997-1038) donated estates and privilege to the monastery.*

*The oldest surviving document to use Hungarian language, the Charter of the Tihany Benedictine Abbey, dating back to 1055, is still preserved in the library of Archabbey. In 1996, "the Millenary Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma and its Natural Environment" was elected among the World Heritage sites.*



## Pannonhalma Abbey



The letter of foundation of Pannonhalma  
The Archives of the Pannonhalma Benedictine Abbey

A Benedictine monastery, founded by Chief Prince Géza in 966, by settling down Czech Benedictine monks. His work was finished by King Stephen issuing a letter of privilege in 1002. Its first abbots known by names were Anasthas and Mór.

At the end of the 11th century the Hungarian dignitaries held a meeting in the monastery, where they accepted the resolution of King Ladislaus's so-called Second

Act. King Coloman received the ministers of Gottfried Bouillon, the leader of the crusaders marching through the country here in the monastery. By 1137 Abbot David had the burnt down church rebuilt and invited the king to the consecration ceremony.

Among the 13th century abbots, Uros was outstanding, who directed the monastery for a long time (1207-1241), he even fought against the Tartars to protect the





Porta Speciosa

monastery. Abbot Uros had the people of the abbacy inventoried, had a special signet made for the convent besides his own one, he increased the number of charters and land possessions of the monastery (there were seven times more charter issues during his directorship than earlier), and the Pope reassured the community of their privileges several times. He accompanied King Andrew II to the Holy Land, and travelled to Rome five times. He also participated in the IV Lateran synod. At the end of his life he remembered the years spent in the monastery in his will.

After 1240 the discipline of the monks loosened, fewer and fewer people left their possessions to the monastery. Abbot Favus tried to help, but the chaotic situation at the end of the 13th century urged the decline of the monastery.

In the age of the Árpád dynasty the monastery was an important scene of literary creation. Around 1090 eighty codices and around 200

pieces of literary work could be found in the library. Among them were the Ernst codex, and around 1240 the *Liber ruber* was prepared here in the scriptorium. St Stephen's larger legend and the St Emeric legend were also written here, and starting from the age of King Stephen, historical records were made here.

SzK

### **The letter of privileges of Pannonhalma**

St Stephen's only charter which survived in a seemingly original form, and at the same time it is the earliest Latin diploma from Hungary.

There are a lot of assumptions about it among scholars, since at the beginning of the 12th century or at the turn of the 12-13th centuries a Benedictine monk enlarged the text of St Stephen's charter and he copied the original one so skilfully that modern scholars identified his handwriting with that of Herbert C, a German clerk, who fled to St Stephen's court from a German chancellery after the death of Otto III.

In this letter of privilege St Stephen assured the Pannonhalma monastery of the same rights as the Benedictine ancient colony, Montecassino had. He took it from the legitimacy of the county bishop (at the beginning he might have placed them under the power of the archbishop), he guaranteed the free election of the abbot, the consecrating and the abbot-Benedictating bishops; he gave liturgic privileges to the abbot, besides those of the church government, enabling him to do the



*the vaults decorated with carved heads*

service in sandals as a bishop, since the chapel (portable altar) marched in front of him.

The so-called immune privilege was a significant one at that time, since it declared that secular officials could not make judgements in matters belonging to the monastery without the permission of the abbot. The composition of the charter is not homogeneous: one part is written in the first person singular, other parts are written in the first person

plural. According to certain experts the text in the first person singular is a later interpolation, while the text in the first person plural was composed by Heribert C.

In connection with the narrative text in the first person singular, it was suspected that it preserves the traces of a heroic song from the age of Stephen. Concerning the interpolation, there are two opposing views: one dates the birth of the charter to the 11-12th centuries, the other puts it to the turn of the 12-13th centuries. King Coloman's signet was attached to the charter later.

SzK



*King Coloman's signet on the letter of foundation of Pannonhalma*

(Source: <http://mek.niif.hu/01900/01955/html/index279.html>)