THE “TROJANERKRIEG” AND THE COMPOSITION OF
ULRICH FÜETER’S BUCH DER ABENTEUER

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Introduction

Among the noteworthy figures at the end of the fifteenth century in Germany, Ulrich Füeter stands out for his versatility as a painter, poet, and historian. He has left little evidence of his work as a graphic artist, although there is good reason to attribute to him a portfolio of drawings of Wittelsbach princes with accompanying verses (Fichtner 2002). He is also the author of a Bayerische Chronik (Spiller 1969) as well as of several literary works representative of the style and values of the later Middle Ages in southern Germany, including an early prose version of the story of Lancelot (Peter 1972). His most important literary achievement is the so-called Buch der Abenteuer, which is the subject of this article.

This massive work, consisting of more than 11,500 seven-line Titurel-strophes, is customarily divided into three books: Book 1 contains the dedication, the “Trojanerkrieg”, and a series of adventures of persons connected with the Holy Grail, including Mörlin, Gaudin, Galoes und Gamoreth, Tschionachtolander und Sigun, Parcival und Gaban, and Lohengrin, as well as the story of the transfer of the Grail to India; Book 2 comprises seven shorter epics in the Arthurian tradition, i.e., “Floreis und Wigoleis”, “Seifrid de Ardemont”, “Meleranz”, “Iban”, “Persibein”, “Poytislier”, and “Flordimar”; and Book 3 contains only the strophic “Lannzilet”. In view of its size, it is not surprising that this work had been edited and published only piecemeal over more than a century. In 1964, however, Nyholm’s edition of Book 1 containing the story of the Grail opened a new phase in the study of this work by providing a reliable text of, and an informative introduction to an important part of the work. Recently, a complete edition of Books 1 and 2 has appeared, followed by two editions containing all of Book 3 (Thoelen 1997; Lenk 1989; Voss 1996). These publications now make it possible to look at the work as a whole, and to revisit
some of the questions about the work which have not yet found convincing answers.

1. Nyholm’s edition and the “Trojanerkrieg”

Nyholm’s edition of 1964 included all of the Arthurian material of Book 1, but he left out the section known as the “Trojanerkrieg” because he regarded the subject matter as unrelated to the history of the Grail (Nyholm 1964, v). In a subsequent publication, he referred to the “Trojanerkrieg” as an “interpolation” (Nyholm 1967, 7). While this lacuna was filled by an edition of the “Trojanerkrieg” which appeared a few years later (Fichtner 1968), the very fact that a portion of the work was regarded as a foreign body raised questions about what conception the author was trying to give form to, questions which have remained unanswered to this day (Thoelen 1997, II, 528). The purpose of this article, first, is to give an account of the composition of the Buch der Abenteuer, in both senses of the word - what its structure is, and the process by which that structure was achieved - and second, to review the evidence for the origin and placement of the “Trojanerkrieg” in it.

This investigation will view the work from several perspectives. First, there will be an attempt to establish a chronology of the composition of the components of the work, based on the language of the text. Second, the physical state of the manuscripts, especially the main manuscript, Cgm. 1, will be examined. Third, the historical circumstances in Bavaria at the time of the composition of the Buch der Abenteuer will be considered. Each of these inquiries will contribute to our understanding of the evolution of the Buch der Abenteuer and of the place of the “Trojanerkrieg” in it.

2. Dating of Book 1

As to the dating of the Buch der Abenteuer, the outer limits, so to speak, are clear. Inasmuch as the Buch der Abenteuer was dedicated to Albrecht IV. as duke of Bavaria, it must have been composed between 1465, when he began to rule jointly with his brother Sigmund, and his death in 1508. Nowhere in the Buch der Abenteuer is there any direct statement as to the date on which any part of the work was written. On the other hand, there is a reliable point of reference in Füetrer’s Baye-