THOMASIN VON ZIRKLAERE AND GERMAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN LITERATURE

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Abstract
The analysis of a passage in Thomasin of Zirclaere's long didactic poem Der welsche Gast, containing a harsh criticism against Hungarians, needs to be set in the context of a growing imperial influence on Hungary in the High Middle Ages, often justified as assistance for the integration of the newcomers into Christian Europe, as a quick survey of German texts can display. The immediate political background must have been the anti-German revolution which had taken place in Hungary but a couple of years before Thomasin composed his work; the early thirteenth-century Patriarchate of Aquileia, being a centre of German culture, would attentively observe political and cultural developments beyond the Alps. Thomasin's bitter words were clearly intended to please a German-speaking public which must have been disgruntled with the setback of the Germanization process. It is realistic to assume that some of Berthold of Andechs-Merania's retainers, if not the prelate himself, were among the audience; as long as no further evidence is provided, it must remain a mere hypothesis that Thomasin had learnt of Yolanda's faux pas by the time he had completed the poem.

1. Introduction

This article deals with the interpretation of a line in Thomasin von Zirklaere’s Der welsche Gast, an important didactic poem in early 13th century German literature. Thomasin’s words contain a caustic accusation against Hungarians as a people, concerning an unnamed queen – who could be Gertrude of Andechs-Merania or Yolanda de Courtenay.

In particular, Thomasin accuses the Hungarians of lack of triuwe. Triuwe, like the cognate English trust, mainly corresponds to the modern notions of ‘reliability’ and ‘loyalty’, cornerstone of the feudal world order (Ehrismann 1995).

A further analysis of these few words must be carried out considering both the situation at the patriarchal court in Aquileia and the Hungarian-German relations, which may help to shed further light on Thomasin’s background.
2. Wolfgers Court at Aquileia

In recent years, renewed interest has risen concerning the activity as a patron of poets and artists by Wolfgers Erla, first as bishop of Passau (1191-1204) – today a Bavarian town on the very border of Austria – and later as patriarch of Aquileia (1204 to his death in 1218).

Passau already had a tradition of ambitions in Hungary, from the time of bishop Pilgrim in Emperor Otto I’s days well into Wolfgers days. As a Bavarian (or rather Austrian) aristocrat, Wolfgers must have been conscious of the web of relations within the Danube basin, where both his cathedral town and his paternal fief Erla are located; the most important medieval centres of this European region often lie near or on the Danube, such as Ratisbon and Passau in Germany, Linz and Vienna in Austria, Bratislava in Slovakia. Hungary makes no exception, with both Esztergom (then capital and primatial see) and Kalocsa (the other archiepiscopal see of medieval Hungary).

When Wolfgers moved to Aquileia, his role became even more important in imperial politics, since the Patriarchate of Aquileia was then an imperial duchy bordering on Germany, but also on unruly imperial Italy (where in the east the republic of Venice was increasing its power on a regional basis and beyond) and the Magyar Kingdom, which stretched as far as the Adriatic Sea. It is worth noticing, in this context, that the position was held by German noblemen for over two centuries, from Poppo, elected in 1019, to Wolfgers successor Berthold of Andechs-Merania.

Wolfgers had been a protagonist of the complex relations between the German Kingdom and the Papacy at the turn of the century and shortly thereafter. The portrait of this extraordinary man does not show him only as a fine, cultivated churchman, but as a patron of arts and a shrewd politician too, with a strong allegiance to the German Emperors.

It was a time of diplomatic strain. Under Pope Innocent III a new confidence in the authority of the Holy See had arisen. A symbol

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2 Voorwinden 1990. On Pilgrim, see the bold assumptions by Erkens 2011.
3 For a recent contribution on Wolfgers family, centring on their church policy, see Hintermayer-Wellenberg 2010.
4 See the introduction to Wolfgers activity by Boshof 2004, 22–39.