SUMMARIES

RECENT RESEARCH ON THE PERSON OF THE AUTHOR OF THE „PLOUGHMAN“

Ernst Schwarz

It has now been established that the poet who called himself Johannes de Tepla or de Sitbor was before and after 1400, town clerk, notary and headmaster in Saaz. As the manuscripts of the dialogue „The Ploughman of Bohemia“ were written outside of Bohemia, the possibility that its sources might be found in Bohemia itself was long overlooked. Doskočil was recently able to show that a collected volume of the metropolitan library in Prague had been in the hands of the poet; it contained a Tractatus de crudelitate mortis, which undoubtedly gave him ideas for his dialogue. Thus the sources no longer need be traced to foreign countries such as England, as Burdach, for example, attempted to do. A more exact evaluation of the evidence also throws light on his origin. His father was the parson Henslinus de Sytbor (died in 1375) in the village of Schüttwa south of Ronsperg in the Bischolteinitz district. As Doskočil regards the Schüttwa area in the last quarter of the 14th century as purely Czech, he considers Henslinus a Czech parson and the „Ploughman“ author a notary who was Czech by origin and wrote in Czech and German. Bilingualism was a characteristic feature of the age of Charles IV. Doskočil also ascribes the Czech disputation Tkadlec, which was clearly influenced by the „Ploughman“ dialogue, to Johannes von Tepl.

A careful survey of place-names in the Schüttwa area, which this study undertakes, shows, however, that a number of them had come into the German language already in the second half of the 13th century and that there was a German minority in the district. The parsons were thus compelled to hear confession also in German, as well as to speak German with the German children of the parsonage. This means, however, that the poet’s father cannot be considered a Czech parson. A German — and the name Henslinus suggest that he was such — who understood Czech would also have been suitable for this position.

Tepl, which is probably where the poet studied, was at the time a town on the linguistic border with a mixed population. Around 1400, Saaz was a town that was in the process of losing its German majority in the Council (Rat). It is certain that the notary of such a town would have commanded both tongues. Bilingualism was by no means, as Czech studies assume, common in all Bohemia. It was in the linguistic border zone of the period and
in the towns in the interior which had a mixed population, but not in the peripheral German areas. A more precise knowledge of the linguistic situation of the pre-Hussite era is needed.

CLOCKMAKERS IN BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA IN THE GOTHIC AND RENAISSANCE ERAS

Karl Fischer

Not only manual skill but also knowledge of astronomical reckoning was needed for the construction of clocks in the Gothic and Renaissance periods. The art of clockmaking appears to have been established in Prague by Emperor Charles IV, for the first local clockmaker can be discovered in the second half of the 14th century.

The existence of four mechanical striking-clocks in the Prague of the 14th century can be established: in the Castle, the Episcopal court, the Municipal Hall of the Old Town, and the Carolinum. But such clocks can be found in this century not only in the capital but in other parts of Bohemia as well.

In the 15th century there were a number of clockmakers in Prague at one and the same time. Old municipal books, court records and chronicles show that in the 15th century, there were at least twenty Bohemian towns which possessed striking-clocks. Since mechanical clocks were still a costly affair, they can be found only seldom in private hands.

The builder of the clock in the municipal hall of the Old Town of Prague cannot be identified with absolute certainty, but in all probability it was Nikolaus von Kaaden (c. 1400). The astronomical clock in Olmütz was constructed by an itinerant clockmaker named A. Pohl in the year 1422. It was difficult to find qualified caretakers for these mechanical clocks, the resulting lack of the necessary knowledge causing frequent breakdowns.

The first mechanical clocks divided the day into 24 hours; they were called "Bohemian" clocks, to distinguish them from the "German" clocks, which counted twice 12 hours. As the first hour of the "Bohemian" day coincided with sunrise, this hour and thus all subsequent ones were constantly changing.

In the 16th century, the clocks became an object of daily use for the upper strata; from 1500 on, therefore, both builders of large clocks as well as small-clock makers were to be found in Bohemia. Strengthened by the addition of immigrants from southern Germany, the majority of clockmakers in Prague were of German nationality. This coupled with the better workmanship of the immigrated masters led to protracted conflicts within the guilds.

Despite the large number of Bohemian clockmakers, the demand could not be covered by local production alone. Relatively little data is available on clockmaking in the various country towns. It is, however, evident that the clocks built in other Bohemian towns in the 16th century did not match the standards of the Prague clocks.

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