Gundelfingen, Heinrich von

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1440s–1490, Switzerland. Author of several historical and geographical works about the Habsburg dynasty and the Swiss Confederation in Latin and Middle High German. Born in Konstanz as the illegitimate son of Nikolaus, provost of Beromünster (near Lucerne), Gundelfingen studied in Heidelberg and Freiburg im Breisgau, where he was at first denied the title magister for his moral conduct but later became the first professor of poetics in 1471. He held several ecclesiastical benefices in Freiburg and Lucerne and a canonicate in Beromünster. After 1486, Gundelfingen resided in the convent of canons in Waldkirch near Freiburg, where he died in 1490. His work is equally committed to the Swiss Confederation and to the Habsburg dynasty, who fostered his career. Thus, it reflects the peace treaty between Habsburg and the Confederation known as Ewige Richtung in 1474.

His Latin History of Austria (Austriae principum chronic epiteome triplex, 1476) falls into three parts: A) a fictitious prehistory of the Habsburg dynasty leading up to King Rudolf I, based mainly upon → Leopold von Wien; B) a genealogy from the Roman family Pierleoni up to Gundelfingen’s patron Sigmund of Tyrol (1427–96); C) the “great deeds” of the latter concerning the Ewige Richtung and the Burgundian wars of 1474–6. Anticipating the denouement of the war, Gundelfingen allegorises Sigmund being sent by heaven in order to defeat the despotic Burgundian duke Charles the Bold. An appendix contains the succession of the dukes of Tyrol (Comitum Tyrollis successio) 1269–1439, partly based on → Matthias von Neuenburg. An illuminated manuscript has survived in Vienna (ÖNB, cvp 516); a contemporary copy ibidem, cvp 3500. Though this is considered to be Gundelfingen’s chief work, no critical edition has so far been undertaken.

In 1479, Gundelfingen wrote a panegyric to the Swiss Confederation, containing a description of Caesar’s Helvetia and again a praise of the Ewige Richtung. The text is known in Romont, Kapuzinerkloster, cod. Gund., 11r–12v. After 1480, Gundelfingen anonymously composed a Latin version of the → Herkommen der Schweizer und Oberhasler, extant together with other writings of his in the same codex, cod. Gund., 7v–10v, and in a copy by Hartmann → Schedel (Munich, BSB, clm 951, 202r–209v). Gundelfingen’s authorship of the contemporary Middle High German version of the Herkommen is uncertain.

In 1488, Gundelfingen wrote the first biography of the recently deceased Swiss eremite and subsequent saint Nikolaus von Flie (1417–87) along with a liturgical composition entitled Historia Nicolai Underwaldensis eremita, of which no medieval manuscript is extant. Gundelfingen also wrote contributions to contemporary history, an oration about the Hegauer feud in 1480 (autograph: Sélestat, BM, cod. K 1209a, 1r–4r) and a lament about the capture of King Maximilian I in Bruges (Flanders) in 1488 (autograph: Freiburg i. Br., UB, cod. 356a, 13r–16v).

Other writings contain praises to the cities of Lucerne 1480/81 (Amoenitates urbis Lucernensis, Latin version lost, German version extant in the chronicle of Melchior → Russ Jr.) and Berne 1486 (Topographia urbis Bernensis, cod. Gund., 1r–7v). In 19 Latin distiches, Gundelfingen also praised the church of Waldkirch (In laudem Waldkirchen ecclesiae, autograph in Sélestat, BM, cod. K 1209a, 1r–1v).

Bibliography

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