

Patrozinien in Deutschland: Towards a pilot project

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In the second issue of *Concilium medii aevi*, Helmut Flachenecker set out the parameters for a systematic study of patronal cults in German-speaking lands. This review of issues and sources was accompanied by a list of 70 essential works of reference, categorised under 14 regional and country headings¹.

The way lies open now for the compilation of a powerful research tool, a comprehensive inventory of religious devotion in the Middle Ages. At the time of writing, a total of about two dozen historians and other cultural scientists are engaged in 15 European countries on the construction of such inventories, which together feed into the project known as TASC, the Transnational Database and Atlas of Saints' Cults.

TASC takes as its aim the creation of an electronic record of devotion which is built up through the examination and recording of all categories of evidence for cults divine, angelic and saintly (documentary, archaeological, topographical, *et cetera*), and the arrangement of the evidence on a parish-by-parish, commune-by-commune basis. The record should comprehend every known church and chapel and their constituent altars and images, as well as features in the natural and man-made landscapes and other commemorations of religious cult such as pilgrimage and fair days. Where no evidence is found (lack of an identified patron of a surviving but otherwise unrecorded altar, for example), its absence is recorded, also, because it is important to recognise the limits of current knowledge. It is equally important that the evidence is mapped, and therefore the project's partners are endeavouring to link the construction of their inventories with electronic mapping of the boundaries of ecclesiastical units (principally parishes)².

¹ Helmut FLACHENECKER, Patrozinienforschung in Deutschland, in: *Concilium medii aevi* 2 (1999), pp. 145-163.

² See the various articles which constitute the forthcoming volume, Graham JONES (Ed.), *Saints of Europe*, Stamford (2000).

To assist towards the start of work on a database and atlas for the German-speaking lands, the director of TASC, Graham Jones, is to work for one month in the autumn of 2000 at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte, Göttingen, in collaboration with Dr Flachenecker. He will be engaged in a pilot programme to test the likely time and workload involved in the construction of a database and electronic atlas to record the patterning of *patrocinia* in a number of medieval dioceses in Germany for which informative and accessible sources are available: namely Bamberg, Bremen, Freising, Eichstätt, Halberstadt, Hildesheim, Mainz (northern part), Merseburg, Minden, Münster, Osnabrück, Paderborn, Regensburg, Speyer, and Verden.

The proven methodology to be employed in this pilot programme will build on similar work in the British Isles and in Spain, for which funding has been awarded both at national and institutional levels. Week One will be devoted to cartography (sources, modalities, sample mapping, and consequent issues), Weeks Two and Three to the computerisation of sample data, and Week Four to the analysis of the material and composition of a written report.

TASC is systematic and comprehensive, and therefore scientific. It is also collaborative and interdisciplinary, and hence synergetic. Dated and sourced information is collated from as many categories of evidence as are relevant and available. In one case it may be the dedication of a church or an altar, in another the naming of a feature in the landscape such as a ‘holy’ well or spring, in another the probable identification of a patron saint from the iconography of a statue or a wall-painting. Cults divine and angelic are included as well as the saintly because it is crucial that the picture of devotion is inclusive. Related contextual data supplements the raw evidence of devotion: place-name elements, for example, or the names of principal land-holders at key dates.

These records are ordered spatially, following the geography of administrative and topographic units and the layouts of individual buildings. By mapping the material using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), it can be sorted, interrogated, and spatially presented as variously as it is categorised. The database and atlas can be disseminated electronically via Internet and CD-Rom, as well as by paper publication. However, important though it will be as a tool for researchers, this can never be more than work-in-progress. Additions and amendments

will be continuously sought and applied, so the inventory will be held by internationally recognised and accessible academic data archives. These will include the ECAI (Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative) clearing-house for cultural metadata, administered from the University of California at Berkeley with technical assistance from the University of Sydney in Australia.

TASC is a tool for research. It does not, of itself, provide answers to academic questions or address issues of public policy and information. Nevertheless, most TASC investigators will include commentaries as the third leg of their research outcomes, alongside database and mapping. Few researchers can be expected to resist the urge to deploy their particular specialist knowledge in order to test or explain their provisional findings. Most funding bodies and institutions look for interpretive meat on dataset bones. A number of essays based on this work have already been published, with others to follow. Such commentaries underpin TASC's contribution towards a better knowledge and understanding of the material as it bears *inter alia* upon a range of historical, geographical, artistic, literary, cultural, anthropological and archaeological themes.

There are many specific advantages in having such a resource. Its usefulness is wide-ranging. For example:

It enables single cults to be examined comprehensively across time and borders, or in defined periods and places, and in comparison with others. It also allows such cults to be profiled according to the relative frequency, distribution and dating of specified categories of devotion.

It enables snapshots of devotion to be taken of particular places at particular times and in particular circumstances.

It provides a wide-canvas panorama of devotion, a view of the wood as well as the trees which makes it possible to avoid the 'blind' selectivity of assessment and analysis on the basis of 'cherry-picking'.

It allows significant patterns to emerge which are susceptible to investigation and hence open to explanation. Such patterns may be spatial, temporal, or thematic. Why do certain cults turn up at certain types of places? What processes of choice are indicated? What is the ‘meaning’ of a cult and its subject to its devotees? How often and in what manner are cults supplanted and why? What relationships between individual cults can be observed? Are hierarchies of settlement matched by hierarchies of cult? And so on.

It proceeds from an interdisciplinary base and finds use across disciplinary borders. It aims to assist, and bring together historians (general, cultural, local and regional, of art and of religion), geographers (historical, human and economic), social scientists (cultural and social anthropologists, ethnographers and folklorists), students of the written and spoken word (hagiographers and scholars of literature and diplomat generally, linguists and etymologists), and those concerned with material culture (archaeologists, curators, and architectural historians). The use of common data fields enables investigators to be drawn from varied backgrounds and to pursue individual lines of inquiry.

Though most current partners share an interest in medieval society, some are concerned also or solely with later periods, including the modern. Some work on single religious traditions or phenomena. Any risk that such cases would distort the overall dataset is avoided by the requirement that research parameters be declared in the accompanying commentary. Users of TASC may then include or exclude these tranches of evidence at will.

TASC also has a role in relation to aspects of public policy, including the provision of general public information. Religious devotion is a key component of ‘European culture’ (as it is for other cultures) and numerous forms of its expression are widely shared. Thus the same saints have been venerated for centuries by groups of people in different parts of Europe, often ignorant that they shared their devotion with populations far away and little known, if at all. At the same time, regions of Europe, even individual communities, have claimed and celebrated their own local saints, without realising that associated legendary motifs, forms of commemoration, and expected benefits of veneration are often identical, springing from common roots. Detailed

information on saints' cults can therefore shed significant light for policy advisers and decision-makers on the balance and tensions between the universality of 'European culture' and cultural particularity in Europe's component regions.

Contemporary public interest in saints and their cults generally (regional and universal) has never been greater, resulting in a huge demand for information. Yet scholarly response to this demand, linked so intimately with issues related to regional culture on the one hand, and overarching 'European culture' on the other, is hampered. Knowledge and understanding of local saints, so crucial to the sense of identity of regions and communities, has greatly diminished over the last two centuries; while the deep commonalities of meaning attached to the veneration of the universal cults of Christendom remain largely unexplored. Both fields suffer from the absence of a corpus of evidence which underpins, contextualises, and stimulates scientific research (while at the same time providing a source of academic and public reference). Such a corpus as TASC would also assist significantly the preservation of a core element of the European cultural heritage, and its enhancement as a means for more clearly and deeply understanding that shared heritage as a whole, including inter alia its regional components, its origins (often outside Europe as historically defined), and the patterns of its development, character, and meaning.

Europe is part of a wider world, a fact it must willingly grasp as its union develops. European religious culture is rooted both in the Continent and beyond, informed by pre- and non-Christian systems as well as by early forms and expressions of Christianity itself. The study of this early diffusion is already reflected in TASC, as is the transmission of religious culture to the New World and elsewhere. One of TASC's North American partners is exploring dedications planted in Canada by migrants from France; another the Mediterranean cults of southern Louisiana. From an Australian scholar with a Middle Eastern background has come a survey of pilgrimage sites in Coptic Egypt, to be supplemented in due course by the computerisation of a thirteenth-century list of churches and monasteries.

TASC is a long-term enterprise which will outlive the present partners. Nevertheless a start has already been made with the aid of competitive national and institutional funding. Now the

next phase is being planned, involving the intention to apply for European Union funds to allow a three-year pilot project to commence in 2002.

The pilot programme to be prepared at the Max-Planck-Institut will play a crucial role in a key proposal, namely to take TASC forward by covering a number of transects of Europe through collaborative research. These transects would comprise contiguous areas of neighbouring countries. One may involve areas of two or three countries in central and eastern Europe, Romania, Hungary, and Croatia. Another might involve Finland, other parts of Scandinavia, and parts of Russia, notably Karelia. A third (one which the work at the Max-Planck-Institut would benefit most clearly) is intended to link Germany, the Low Countries, northern France, and one of the regions of England closest to the Continent, probably East Anglia. Alongside these transects, individual regional investigations (in Spain, Italy, Iceland, and the Celtic-speaking countries, for example) would generate a series of comparative studies from contrasting areas.

Important results have been achieved already in a number of countries. In England and Wales the pre-Reformation dioceses of Lincoln and Worcester have been covered (twelve historic English counties), together with the parochial and monastic dedications of the dioceses of Hereford, St David's, Llandâf, St Asaph and Bangor, and part of the dioceses of Lichfield and Chester. Work is also in progress on the dioceses of Bath and Wells, Salisbury, and Southwell. The GIS maps are still in the pipeline, however. The database records, to be made publicly available at the British Historical Data Archive, University of Essex, so far number about 15,000. A searchable sample, with some (non-searchable) maps, is at but this early sample will be revised soon, since many devotions now have medieval as opposed to post-Reformation dating.

In Spain, the titular dedications of Catalunya have been committed to database (together with a more comprehensive coverage of a representative comarca, the Conca de Barbera), and a large inventory of saints' cults exists for Navarre. A survey of cults has been made in the diocese of Bologna in Italy, and a comprehensive survey has been published for Iceland down to AD 1400. The pilgrimage sites of the Netherlands have been surveyed and published, and a list of such sites has been drawn up for Coptic Egypt. Pre-Reformation Roman Catholic parochial dedications in

Finland have been identified, and Orthodox parochial and monastic dedications in the Republic of Karelia. Preliminary work has begun to extend TASC methodology to Ireland, and is already in hand for Romania and other areas of central and eastern Europe.

The grounds for this high-value project were laid down at a preliminary meeting in 1999 (held at the University of Leicester) to which scholars from several European and North American countries contributed. A second colloquium is to be held this October at the Dutch Institute in Rome, in cooperation with the P.J.Meertens-Instituut, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science. In respect of 2001, an application has been made for European Science Foundation support for a workshop in September to be hosted by the Central European University, Budapest. This will address two important issues: the recovery of ancient parishes in areas for which little or no documentary evidence survives, and the inclusion in a single database of material from more than one religious tradition.

A volume of collected essays developed from papers delivered at the 1999 Colloquium is due for publication later this year under the title *Saints of Europe: Studies towards an investigation of cult and culture*, ed. G.Jones (Paul Watkins, Stamford). Select material from the coverage of Wales and the Marcher Counties of England is also to be published this year as G.Jones, *Saints of Wales: an inventory of religious devotion* (Celtic Studies Publications, Andover, Massachusetts, and Aberystwyth).

The strength of TASC lies in its partners and associates (corresponding institutes and scholars). Additional workers are welcome in the vineyard, whatever their field of interest. Also places are still available at the Rome Colloquium (October 23-27). TASC's present Director, Graham Jones (e-Mail addresses: gkj@aber.ac.uk and grj1@le.ac.uk), will be delighted to hear from anyone interested.

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