

Saint Andreas-Zoerard: a Pole or an Istrian?

Scholars interested in the medieval church history of Central Europe generally agree that Saint Andreas-Zoerard, patron of the cathedral church and diocese of Nitra, and widely venerated by Catholics in Slovakia, was of Polish origin. In the available sources, the first mention of Zoerard's presence in Poland is by Johannes Longinus, recte Jan Długosz, in his *Annales regni Poloniae*, a monumental work basically completed in 1466, some 450 years after the saint's death. Długosz noted that *Swywardus qui et Zorardus*¹ lived as a hermit in the vicinity of Czchów in the valley of the river Dunajec, whence he moved, *ex Polonia*, to Hungary, where he attained distinction as a Confessor, while his companion Benedict, also of Polish origin, received the crown of a Martyr. Although the narrative by Długosz contains several facts taken over from a source dating back to the eleventh century, the reference to Zoerard's saintly life in the vicinity of Czchów is Długosz's own contribution. During Długosz's lifetime there was, in the vicinity of Czchów, a church under the patronage of *Sanctus Gverardus*², and local tradition connected a cave in Tropie, near Czchów, with a hermitage. It was apparently upon these circumstances that Długosz based portions of his narrative. However, a scrutiny of the relevant sources and a survey of literature concerning the life of Saint Andreas-Zoerard provide no evidence or arguments in support of the saint's alleged Polish origin, nor is the local tradition in southern Poland sufficient proof for the historicity of his sojourn north of the Carpathians.

The first biography of Andreas-Zoerard, of which parts have been quoted directly or indirectly by Długosz, was written by Maurus, Bishop of Pécs, a contemporary of Zoerard. Maurus, as *puer scholasticus*, met Zoerard in person while in the abbey of St. Martin in Hungary. Later, as abbot of the same monastery, Maurus assembled information on the life of the saint from conversations with Benedict, the pupil and companion of Zoerard, and from the saint's superior, Abbot Philip of the Benedictine monastery of Zobor near Nitra. Maurus compiled his *Legenda Sanctorum Zoerardi et Benedicti* sometime between 1064 and 1074, possibly in connection with endeavors leading to their canonization, which took place in 1083. Parts of the *Legenda* by Bishop Maurus have been utilized by the biographer of Stephen, the first king of Hungary. This biography was written for the canonization of Stephen, the solemnities of which took place also in 1083. The extant

¹ De SS. Zoerardo et Benedicto, in: AS Julii. T. 4. p. 330. Modern editors of Długosz use in place of *Swywardus* the unvarranted form *Swiradus*.

² S. a. 1326; Stanislaus plebanus de Sancto Gverardo, in: Theiner p. 278.

manuscripts of the three variants of St. Stephen biographies refer to Zoerard only under his monastic name of Andreas. None of the extant manuscripts of the *Legenda S. Zoerardi* nor of the *Legenda S. Stephani* contains any information which would allow one to deduce that Zoerard was of Polish descent³.

The most reliable manuscripts (in the codices M, L, and H, according to the classification of the editors of the Legends) from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, when describing the arrival of Zoerard in Hungary, provide the following variants:

Legenda S. Zoerardi (Ms. B)
Zoerardus hanc in patriam
de terra Poloniensium advenit
... et Andreas nominatus eremi-
ticam vitam agere statuit...

Legenda S. Stephani (Mss. M, L, & H)
Venerunt et alii duo de terra
Poliensi herematicam vitam causa
contemplationis eligentes...
Andrea... alter Benedictus

Długosz introduced the variant:

Duo viri... Swywardus...
et Benedictus, ambo
anachoriticam ducentes
vitam, ex Polonia egressi
intraverunt Pannonias...

Similarly, two copies of *Legenda S. Stephani* by Bishop Hartwick (Mss. B 2 & C) from the late fifteenth century replace *de terra Polensi* with *de terra Poloniae*. The substitutions of *ex Polonia* or *de terra Poloniae* for *de terra Poliensi* or *terra Poloniensium* need some explanation, because the equating of the form *Polonia* and *Poloniensis/Poliensis* is to be questioned on philological and historical grounds.

Długosz failed to notice that the places associated with the veneration of *Sanctus Swywardus, qui et Zorardus* north of the Carpathians were not yet considered in the 11th century as forming part of *Polonia*. The Dunajec Valley at that time formed part of the land known as *Krakowsko, Ziemia Krakowska, or Cracovia* in Latin. *Polonia* or *Polska* denoted only the region around Poznań. Even in 1296, *tota terra Polonia* referred only to the region of Gniezno-Poznań. In 1303 distinction was still made between *Cracovia ac Poloniae regnum*. The term *regnum Poloniae* for all of the component parts of the kingdom came into use only during the first half of the 14th century⁴.

Since neither Maurus in the eleventh century nor the authors of the *Legenda Sancti Stephani* could have used the terms *Poliensis/Polonensis* or *ex Polonia* for territories along the Upper Vistula river associated by

³ The *Legenda SS. Soerardi et Benedicti* and the three variants of *Legenda S. Stephani regis* have several editions, the best being published, in: SRH vol. 2, pp. 347—440. An extensive bibliography of editions and of studies is attached to the entry „Andrzej-Swierad” in: *Hagiografia polska*, vol. 1, pp. 79—91.

⁴ On the use of „Polonia”, cf. Baszkiewicz *passim*. Conclusions on p. 273.

Długosz with Zoerard, the terms *Poliensis/Polonensis* must have been used for a territory other than the neighborhood of Czchów in the diocese of Cracow. It seems, therefore, apparent that it was Długosz or the fifteenth century copyist of the *Legenda Sancti Stephani* who misled by the fact that the region of Cracow was known in the fifteenth century as part of *Polonia*, made the anachronistic substitution of *ex Polonia* for *Poliensis*. Still, the substitution has to be questioned also on philological grounds.

One may note that the authors of the various Legends knew their grammar and used it consistently. In the *Legenda S. Zoerardi* and in the *Legendae Sancti Stephani* (in which references to St. Zoerard are made) the territorial entities are in all instances defined correctly e. g. *Pannoniae patria, Pannoniorum termini, partes Bulgarorum, Hungaria, terra Boemorum, etc.* In the case of Poland, we might expect a form such as *terra Polonorum*, or even the pleonastic *terra Polonaie*, but not *Poliensis*. In one of the manuscripts of the Life of St. Stephen in Hartwick's rendering, in which the form *de terra Poliensi* is used in connection with Zoerard, Mieszko, prince of the Poles, is referred to correctly as *Poloniorum dux*, and not *Poloniensis* or *Poliensis dux*.

The suffix *-ensis* is normally used only with names of cities and small islands to express the community of citizens. The suffix may be used with ethnic names if the group of people acts, e. g. in warfare, outside their own territory. If Zoerard had been from Poland, then the forms *de terra Polonensium, de terra Poliensis* could not have been used.

If one looks for a geographical definition *Polensis/Poloniensis* that can be associated with the ecclesiastic history of East-Central Europe and of Hungary at the time of Zoerard and King Stephen, then there is only one place to consider — namely, Pola in Istria. This city and the whole region of the Patriarchate of Aquileia play an important role in the ecclesiastical history of East-Central Europe in the 11th century. In sources for the study of that region, the adjective *Polenses* is, in fact, frequently used, but only in connection with names of individuals connected with the city of Pola e. g. *Olmannus et Andreas fratres de civitate Polensi, Antonius Polensis episcopus*. The rural region around the city of Pola was defined in antiquity as *ager Polensis* and in the Middle Ages the form *finis Polensis* was used⁵.

But from the name *Pola* there is not only the form *Polenses*, but also the form *Polonenses, e. g. Gerboldus [episcopus] Polonensis (s. a. 967)*⁶.

We may note here that a large group of Benedictines, led by St. Romuald, future founder of the Cameldolese Order, left Ravenna to participate in the conversion of the Magyars and made the first part of the journey by boat, landing in Parenzo or the neighboring Pola, where there was a Benedictine monastery suitable to accommodate the journeying missionaries. The time of this mission coincides with the arrival of Zoerard in Hun-

⁵ These illustrations are taken from the first three volumes of Kos.

⁶ Cf. Ughelli coll. 476.

gary. Zoerard could have joined this group in Istria, known as *fines Polensis*. In fact, Bishop Maurus stresses the rural background of Zoerard when he introduces the saint in the narrative as *ex rusticitate quasi rosa*, a definition reasserted with the subsequent *de terra Poliensi* — obviously a reference to the rural character of the territory around Pola, i. e. the famous *ager Polensis*. At the time of the arrival of St. Romuald and his group, Zoerard was not yet a monk in his homeland, but *sancti spiritus instinctu tactus ex rusticitate*... he departed *de terra Poliensis* for Hungary, where in the Benedictine monastery of St. Martin on *Mons Pannoniae* he met the young Maurus, the future bishop and his biographer.

It was from *Mons Pannoniae* that Zoerard journeyed to Zobor near Nitra, in present-day Slovakia, where he received the garb of a monk from Abbot Philip. On the occasion of his taking the vows, Zoerard changed his name to Andreas — the same name, incidentally, as that of the patron saint of the monastery near Pola, and a favorite saint of the Istrians. A sojourn of Zoerard in the monastery of *Mons Pannoniae* (located south of the Danube near Győr) prior to his trip to Zobor is logical only if he entered Hungary from the south. It is also evident that Zoerard could not have been a Benedictine hermit in his homeland, as suggested by Długosz.

The Istrian-Dalmatian background of Zoerard-Andreas was perceived in the fifteenth century by Antonio Bonfini (1427—1502), who in his *Historia Pannonica* wrote without much hesitation:

„...ex ea Dalmatiae parte, quam Polianam dicunt, [advenerunt] eremitae duo... Andreas... et Benedictus”⁷.

This passage was noticed by the erudite Bollandists, who, in turn misled by Długosz and the seventeenth century Polish biographers of Zoerard, suggested that the printed editions of Bonfini's *Pannonia* carried a misprint or misreading of his manuscripts. The Bollandists imputed that, in place of *ex ea Dalmatiae parte quam Polianam dicunt*, there must have been *ex ea Sarmatiae parte quam Polianam dicunt*⁸. The Bollandists failed, however, to check the entire text of Bonfini where there is ample evidence that he knew Poland under the name of *Polonia* and not *Poliana*⁹, and that he distinguished Poland from Sarmatia. On the same page where Bonfini made another reference to *Polonia*, he identified the Prusses of the Baltic region as Sarmatians¹⁰. One should note also that Bonfini was

⁷ Bonfini p. 119.

⁸ Cf. comments to „De Sancto Stephano”, in: AS September. vol. 2. p. 565.

⁹ Bonfini p. 117. On the same page, where Bonfini made the reference to Poliana, as quoted above, in another context he stated; Misca Poloniae dux... and Polonis destinata corona.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 117.

a *sui generis* expert on Sarmatia and it would never have occurred to him to bring missionaries from Sarmatia to Hungary (cf. e. g. Bonfini *Decades* . . .).

There seems to be ample evidence that from Maurus to Bonfini all references to Zoerard have associated the Saint with the city of Pola and not with Poland. It appears that Długosz was the first to make the link between Zoerard and Czychów in the Dunajec Valley and, anachronistically, with Poland.

Długosz was familiar with some versions of the *Legenda Zoerardi* and he also knew that near Czychów there was a church dedicated to *Gverardus*¹¹, in a place named today Tropie. There are reasons to believe that Długosz was misled by the similarities between the two names: *Gverardus* and *Zoerardus*. The form *Gverardus* reflects the name of *Gerardus*, and not of *Zoerardus*. The pronunciation of the name has undergone some strong palatalization, as suggested by the spelling *Gverardus* (cf. the French *Gérard* and the spelling of Długosz: *Swywardus*)¹². From this form, the population of Tropie created, through „folk etymology”, the ‚Polonized’ name of the saint, namely *Żurawek* („The Little Crane”)¹³. Such a transition would not have occurred if the saint had a meaningful Polish name from the beginning, as, for instance *Swirad/Wszerad*, which has been currently suggested by several scholars¹⁴. The similarity between the Polish pronunciation *Żerard* (French: *Gérard*) and the spelling *Zoerard* led to the misleading substitution by Długosz.

There is enough material available to reconstruct the history of the church in Tropie and of its patrocinity. Some of the documentation was actually assembled by the parish priest of Tropie in the early seventeenth century and has been preserved in the parochial books of the church¹⁵. Be it a correct or mistaken assumption, the parish priest of Tropie in the early seventeenth century believed that his church was built in 1240 in honor of *Gryrad alias Suirad*, a bishop killed by the Hungarians and subsequently canonized.

Tropie and the church of *Gryrad alias Suirad* belonged from the thirteenth century to the Osmorog-Gerałt family. The family, prominent in Polish ecclesiastical and political affairs, came to Tropie from Silesia¹⁶. The *Gerałt* part of the family name *Osmorog-Gerałt* is derived from the name *Gerard(us)*¹⁷. A member of the family, *Gerardus filius Spicimiri*, canon regular of the Cathedral Church of Cracow, acted *i. a.* as Papal dele-

¹¹ The form *Querardus* is attested in a document dated 1326. Cf. note 2.

¹² Wojciechowski in his: *Szkice historyczne* (1904) has suggested that the form *Gverardus* was pronounced in „Italian way”. Cf. e. g., the fourth edition of *Szkice historyczne* (1970) p. 83.

¹³ For details cf. Milik pp. 25, 26, 112, 115, 120.

¹⁴ Ibidem in Index: *Swierad, Świrad, Wszerad* with reference to authorities.

¹⁵ The Text has been published by Kapiszewski pp. 78—79.

¹⁶ Semkowicz pp. 16—23. Conclusions quoted by Kapiszewski.

¹⁷ Cf. Milik p. 120, note 36.

gate in deliberations concerning the murder of a priest by Duke Conrad of Mazowia (c. 1187—1247). This *Gerardus* became abbot of the monastery of Opatów, and subsequently *Rutenorum episcopus* (c. 1254)¹⁸. There seems to be a close relationship between the names *Geralt/Gerard* and *Gryrad*, the bishop killed by the Hungarians. *Gryrad* is, in fact, *Gerard*, a bishop who was martyred by the Hungarians, and he is one of the saints canonized in 1083 together with *Zoerard*, *Benedict*, *Stephen*, and *Imre*. It now seems evident that the church in Tropie was built by the *Geralt/Gerard* family in honor of the family's patron, *St. Gerard*, and not for *Zoerard*, as assumed by *Długosz*.

The church of *Sanctus Gverardus* in Tropie was devastated by the Polish Antitrinitarians sometime between 1560 and 1562. After being rebuilt some fifty years later, it was rededicated by the Catholic diocesan authorities of Cracow in 1611¹⁹. In the meantime, printed versions of the *Life of Zoerard*, based on *Długosz*, appeared in Polish. In 1579, for example, the Jesuit *Piotr Skarga* published his enormously popular *Żywoty Świętych (Lives of the Saint)*, including the „*Life of St. Andreas, the Pole, hermit Zoradek vel. Żórawek*”. In 1596 *Stanisław Sokółowski* in his *Officia Propria S. S. Patronorum Regni Poloniae* listed an *officium* in honor of *S. Suirardus* and of his companion, *S. Benedictus*. All the Polish hagiographers made use of *Legenda Zoerardi* by *Maurus*, but at the same time, all of them followed the suggestion of *Długosz* that *Zoerard* was the same person as *Swyrard (Swywardus qui et Zorardus)*. The rededication of the church in Tropie in 1611 was inevitably made, not to *S. Gerardus*, the bishop killed by the Hungarians, but to *S. Zoerardus*. For the solemnities, relics were acquired from Nitra, the resting places of *Saint Zoerard*.

In the hagiographic literature concerning *S. Zoerard-Andreas*, the only source that remains a solid basis for analysis is the one written by *Bishop Maurus*, a contemporary of the Saint. The *Legenda S. Zoerardi* by *Maurus* lends no support to the contention that the Saint came to Hungary from Poland. The conclusion suggested by the text is that *Zoerard-Andreas* came to Nitra from *terra Poliensis/Poloniensis*, that is, the rural surroundings of the city of *Pola*.

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¹⁸ Cf. *Kapiszewski* p. 78; *Wojciechowski* pp. 61, 63, 65, 349.

¹⁹ *Hagiografia Polska*. vol. 1. p. 86.

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Abbreviations

AS = Acta Sanctorum

SRH = Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum. Vol. 2. Budapestini 1938

