

BELIEF

AND

KNOW

LEDGE

BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE

The sculpture of St. Luzi and the surveyor's level stand for the two poles «belief» and «knowledge». What did the people of Grisons believe and know, what do they believe and know today? For that matter the borderline between belief and knowledge has never been clear-cut.

«Gods and God» shows the shift from the many «heathen» to the one Christian God. The traditional «'Sagen' and Legends» reflect the coping and coming to terms with real life. «Signs and Miracles» deals with rules, premonitions and events. Finally, «Belief and Superstition» shows that both forms continue to persist.

«Birth and Death» is about medical knowledge but also about lay piety. Lastly the room «Private and Public Schools» mainly covers knowledge as does the section «Prints and Printing Shops».

Belief and knowledge, but also the alleged superstition are today to some extent free for sale in the market place. There is a wide selection and it goes far beyond what the churches traditionally offer.

GODS AND GOD

Up to now only a modest form of cult places from pre-Christian times are known on Graubünden soil. Presumably it was deities of the sun, of springs and water, of trees, fields, and woods that religious worship centred on.

During Romanisation Celtic and Rhaetian goddesses and gods disappeared and were replaced by Roman ones. New gods such as Silvanus or Diana came quite close to the earlier nature deities, so that they were easily accepted. It is conceivable that individual ice-age cult places were further used in Roman times.

According to legend, Saint Luzius or the Christian missionary Gaudentius evangelised in Rhätia during the second half of the 4th century. In 380 Christianity was imposed as state religion in the Roman Empire. All the same the old belief lingered on for a long time. Both the late Roman Emperors such as Theodosius I (379–395) and also Bishop Remedius of Chur (about 800–820) enacted laws to forbid heathen cults. In Chur the statuettes of Mercury, god of trade, and Diana, goddess of the hunt, altars from Sils-Baselgia as well as the cult place St. Luzisteig-Prasax prove that heathen-antique concepts of deities were still widespread. In the cult cave of Zillis the oriental god Mithras continued to be worshipped for centuries. The skeleton of a man tied to the stake, the dispersion of cult objects as well as the blocking up of the cave

lead to the assumption that heathen practices were forcibly put an end to. The Christian notion of a single god had been established.

The early church buildings in the provincial capital of Chur and in the countryside give evidence of the increasing power of Christianity from late antiquity onwards. Examples are the Episcopal church of Chur – built in the 5th century already; the near-by burial place St.Stephan; St.Maria of Sagogn or the church St.Martin in Zillis.

SIGNS AND MIRACLES

A common omen is the alleged disaster-predicting comet preceding the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. A bloody sun and a red cross in the sky were apparently sighted on the morning before the Chur fire of 1574. Also the so-called «Bauernregeln» (farmers proverbs) are based on signs. They usually derive from quite sober observations of nature collected over centuries. According to experience certain weather constellations point to this or that meteorological future, such as lots of or not much rain or snow; or to an early or late «Alpfahrt» (transhumance, seasonal migration between valley and high pastures).

The best-known examples of miraculous rescues are the ex-voto, votive plaques or consecration pictures. They testify how upon intercession – for instance by the Virgin Mary – a sickness or some other danger was averted.

Relics are objects of religious worship and usually consist of a body part or an object that used to belong to a saint. They are still to be found in Catholic churches today. Above all in medieval times many relics were believed to have a miraculous effect. Still today the fulfilment of personal wishes, as well as the salvation of the soul in general is at the centre of every pilgrimage. Well-known for Graubünden is the pilgrimage route to the high lying chapel

St. Mariä-Heimsuchung in Ziteil in the Oberhalbstein. In the Raetian Museum there is also an altogether worldly object called a «relic» by the donors: A ringlet of Friedrich Schiller's hair.

Today one no longer comes across terms very often such as miracles, apparitions and the like in their traditional meaning. It almost seems as though the vocabulary has been deferred to the language of sports or the economy. The surprising victory by Germany in the football world cup of 1954 for example is commonly considered as «the miracle of Bern». We have had the «economic miracle» and hopefully there will be new ones.

«SAGEN» AND LEGENDS

«Sagen» tell of extraordinary events and how the powers that be present themselves. Legends are mostly about miracles in connection with saints and holy places. Also, «Sagen» do not reproduce concrete reality, they are about coping and coming to terms with real life. For Graubünden the traditional motifs come largely from the world of the alpine farmer. Ursula Brunold-Bigler in «Hungerschlaf und Schlangensuppe» lists the following categories:

- Aggressive Landscape – Agitated Weather
- Hardship and Hunger
- Sickness and Healing
- Livestock
- Burdens
- Haymakers and Woodcutters
- Women's Daily Life
- Wives of Emigrants
- Children's Lives
- «Kiltgang» («Windowing», nocturnal rendezvous) and Marriage Strategy
- Birth Control, Infanticide, Sibling Incest
- Married Life
- Men's Fantasies
- Mothers and Children
- Masters and Servants
- Potentates and Common People
- Old People
- Beggars and Gypsies

Modern «Sagen» or urban legends are accordingly about different and new life realities. «Die Spinne in der Yucca-Palme» (The Spider in the Yucca-Palm) or «Die Weisse Frau im Belchentunnel» (The White Women in the Belchen Tunnel) are well-known examples.

BELIEF AND SUPERSTITION

«Superstition» is always what others believe. It diverges from the established norm. It is inconsistent with the prevailing faith as determined by those in power at the time. What incorrect belief is – and such is superstition – remains subject to the changes in regulations and values.

For prehistory we have no definite information on the topic. At least we know of the Romans that for a long time they were quite tolerant concerning religious questions. The medieval church turned against the old heathen deities. However, Christians who digressed from the official doctrine such as the heretics were also considered superstitious. Alongside, however, the Church always had to put up with popular piety, that mixed parochial with superstitious-magical practices. Since the Reformation old and new believers accused each other of having false beliefs. Rationalists and exponents of enlightenment sensed it wherever they saw a deficiency in rationality.

Belief or superstition as to the effectiveness of certain practices and objects brought forth a rich panorama, reaching from an animal as building-sacrifice to the amulet and the «Steinbockpulver» (Capra ibex powder), to the spell book with its charms. Much has been forgotten; some still exists, such as the exorcist in the Catholic Church or the elder bush that bars evil from house and yard.

Examples of common belief are the alleged negative repute of the black cat or the number 13, or the positive one of the horseshoe or the four-leafed clover.

Mechanisation of the modern world has in no way made esotericism, spiritualism, astrology or numerology disappear. On the contrary, it still exists as seen in the rich selection at the newsstand or in the small ads of every newspaper. Just the forms have changed. Today – at least in the western world – it remains up to the judgment of each individual as to what is belief and what superstition.

BIRTH AND DEATH

Birth and death are the fundamental events in everybody's life. Thanks to archaeological finds we are already quite well informed about death and burial in earlier times. Insight into birth and baptism began much later.

From time immemorial women giving birth were attended for sure by experienced older women. These always had at their disposal a rich knowledge of folk medicine. Until far into the 20th century most births took place at home, usually with the help of a midwife. Since the 16th century «midwifery books» were available as a source of information. In 1808 Graubünden founded its own school of midwifery. After World War 2 most births took place at the hospital, with a gynaecologist in attendance. Birth and baptism were accompanied by a wealth of ancient customs, for instance ornate birth announcements, christening blankets, godparent letters or baptismal certificates or booklets. And, after all, believers were always able to look to Mary and the virgin birth of baby Jesus.

The oldest known graves in Graubünden are from the Bronze Age. From the Middle Bronze Age on cremation burial was widespread, as in Lumbrein-Surin. The most important burial grounds of the Iron Age are those of Tamins and Castaneda, the latter with abundant grave goods. In the alpine valleys the

Romans usually favoured inhumation burial, which included tools and food such as for example in Roveredo. The transition from antique tradition to Christianity between the 4th and the 7th century can be seen in the burial ground of Bonaduz. Initially the dead were buried facing west, later facing east and without grave goods.

As in the case of birth and baptism, a varied set of customs also developed around death and burial. Included are for instance artificial flower arrangements, special garments, ornate coffin cloths and crosses, pictures and mementos of the dead. And just as the Virgin with Child is a reminder of birth, Jesus on the cross reminds of death.

PRINTS AND PRINTING SHOPS

The first printing shops in Graubünden were established in the course of the Reformation. In order to spread the new doctrine its exponents made use of printed texts such as bibles, catechisms, prayer- and songbooks. From 1549 onwards Dolfino Landolfi in Poschiavo and his successor printed Protestant texts, which were secretly distributed mostly in Lombardy. In 1560 the New Testament was translated for the first time into Romansh by Jachiam Bifrun. In 1660 the ministers Jon Pitschen Saluz and Jachen Andri Dorta founded a printing shop in Scuol in order to publish religious texts in the Ladin language. Their monumental work of 1679 was a bible in folio format. On the Catholic side in defence against Protestantism a church literature in vernacular developed.

In order to avoid censorship by the authorities in Chur, printers shifted to the villages. Printing shops were started temporarily in Scuol, Cumbel, Luven, Bonaduz, Strada, Tschlin or Rhäzüns. The migrant printer Johann Georg Barbisch carried out various commissions in Chur and in the Surselva from 1672 to 1686 – for the Catholic as well as for the Protestant side.

In Chur printing shops were not installed until the beginning of the 18th century. Mostly official texts of the political authorities were printed there besides the bible of 1718, which was translated into Romansh

of the Surselva. At the end of the 18th century enlightened minds in Graubünden founded several typographical establishments in Chur and the surrounding area. Here works and pamphlets on agriculture, education or on human geography were produced.

Between 1549 and 1803 a total of about 600 works were printed in Graubünden, 250 in Romansh, 160 in Italian and only 130 in the German language. The German speaking regions were able to get their spiritual books from Basel or Zürich, while the Romansh people or the Reformed Italian speakers of the Bergell and Puschlav often had to print their literature themselves.

The Graubünden Press As early as the beginning of the 18th century there were periodical publications in all the languages of the canton. These informed their readers on subjects such as economy, geography, literature or history. However, in the case of political discussions and polemics pamphlets were more useful.

The «Churer Zeitung» which appeared from 1800 to 1856 was the first and for a long time the only political newspaper of Graubünden. Still, advancement towards journalism in the modern sense did not occur until the abolishment of press censorship in 1831. Some papers only survived a short time. The appearance of new publications, which were closely allied to the parties, led for the first time to a competitive situation among newspapers.

The «Bündner Zeitung» (1830–1858) served as a mouthpiece of the liberals. In the Italian speaking part «Il Grigione Italiano» was founded 1852. On the conservative side the «Bündner Tagblatt» appeared 1852. In 1892 the «Neue Bündner Zeitung» was founded as exponent of the right wing of the «freisinnige» (liberal) party. 1919 it changed over to the oppositional democrats. Its dedicated profile often brought it into conflict with the «Freie Rätier» (1868–1974), mouthpiece of the «Freisinnigen», and the «Bündner Tagblatt». In 1975 the «Bündner

Zeitung» became the first non-partisan daily newspaper in the canton.

Lately a consolidation of papers in large media enterprises has become apparent all over Switzerland. In Graubünden the «Südostschweiz Mediengruppe» has taken on this leading position.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The school system in Graubünden is documented as far back as the Early Middle Ages. Education was in the hands of the Church and served the clerical needs. Centres of education were initially the bishopric as well as the writing school of the St.Luzi Monastery in Chur. Later the Benedictine Monasteries Disentis and Müstair were added. In the 15th century the first municipal schools in Chur and Maienfeld were established. In remote regions the mostly poor population hardly had any access to education.

As a rule the upper class of Graubünden tended to have their offspring educated by private tutors. Many sons of leading families studied at universities in Italy, Germany, and France. In connection with the religious wars in the 16th and early 17th centuries the first schools administered by the communities were established. Somewhat later nearly all the larger but also many of the smaller communities ran a village school.

In the second half of the 18th century the ideas of the Enlightenment gave schools new impulses. Private school facilities run and attended by the secular upper class were established in Haldenstein, Marschlins, Jenins, Reichenau and Ftan.

From 1838 onwards the canton supervised the public schools and gradually took over the private sector of education. In 1850 the Protestant and the Catholic Cantonal Schools were merged and became the «Bündner Kantonsschule». 1846 the Board of Education passed the first cantonal school regulation. It set the functions and powers of the school board, of the teachers and inspectors, and determined compulsory education and its duration. In 1859 many progressive ideas and regulations were made mandatory. The provision of teaching material in the different languages posed a special challenge. It took decades until the canton was able to set up public schools of all levels and scope in every area.

School Conditions and Instruction Up to the beginning of the 19th century most schools in Graubünden were in a precarious condition. A large number of communities had neither appropriate teaching materials nor school buildings or school funds of their own. Especially serious was the lack of capable teaching staff. Teachers' pay was meagre, so that the schoolmasters had to depend on moonlighting. In many places instruction was left to the clergy. Communal autonomy, the geographic and economic conditions, the confessional differences as well as the linguistic diversity made the development of the school system difficult.

Over all compulsory education was unknown until 1859. Usually school was only held in winter. School attendance was often irregular. Education for girls remained neglected for a long time.

In 1846 the minimal length of school time was fixed. As a rule school was attended between the ages of 7 to 14. Compulsory subjects were religious instruction, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, singing as well as instruction in the mother tongue. In Italian and Romansh communities German was also taught. Implementation of the directives, however, was only effected in many communities after a fairly long time. Again and again the confessional bias of schools caused conflicts.

MANOR HOUSE AND MUSEUM

Today's Raetian Museum was built by Baron Paul von Buol zu Strassberg und Rietberg as a baroque manor house around 1675. Over the cellar and the ground floor with its carriage passage there are two stately floors. Above these there is a floor for the servants and a spacious attic.

The family von Buol was one of the leading dynasties of the Three Leagues. Paul von Buol belonged to the Churwalden branch. He was married to Narcissa von Planta-Wildenberg. About 1690 he converted to Catholicism. Buol was considered a leading mind of the Austro-Spanish party. He was buried in the cathedral in 1697.

1869 the eminent politician Peter Conradin von Planta-Zuoz made an appeal for a science and art museum for Grisons. He had noticed how objects of cultural value were disappearing from Grisons. 1872 the Raetian Museum opened its doors on the ground floor of the house Buol. 1876 the canton acquired the house. Main focus of the Grisons historical museum remains history, folklore and archaeology.

Impressum

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