

ARCHBISHOP *Markus Sittikus* – THE BUILDER

Only under Archbishop Markus Sittikus von Hohenems does Hellbrunn emerge from the darkness of history. But we have hardly any archive sources dealing with Hellbrunn, no comments from the builder and not a single comment from a contemporary other than the description of the highly lavish and utterly festive place of pleasure known as Hellbrunn by the chronicler and secretary to the archbishop, Johann Stainhauser. But Stainhauser was too little educated and also had insufficient interest to leave for us anything other than a dry description, which showed everywhere how little he actually had to say. He names not a single artist and we learn not even the name of the builder of the cathedral from him.

Such a source creates assumptions and myths, which when often retold assume an apparent vestige of truth. We wish to point to some, and question others. Was Markus Sittikus a Medici? Was he brought up in Italy and how was he educated? Which works comprised his library? Where did he get his stimulation? Do we know of his itinerary, his journeys, the places he stayed at and persons he contacted? How long was his stay in Rome? If one considers the opinion of Duke Maximilian of Bavaria after his election to archbishop, that he had too little in his head and had never studied, one must doubt a so-called humanistic education and be sceptical of all statements that Markus Sittikus had drawn up a “programme” for Hellbrunn or he certainly had precise ideas. Evaluation of Hellbrunn is dependent on the answers to these and other questions, because if we are honest, despite numerous individual examinations we are still unable to read the “text” of Hellbrunn, only to spell it out, so to speak.

Markus Sittikus, youth and education

Markus Sittikus was born in 1574 in Hohenems, his mother Hortensia described him as “docile” compared to his hot-tempered brother Kaspar, who was one year older. He lost his mother already at the age of four and was brought up by Bartolomeo Bedra, the court chaplain to Cardinal Carlo Borromeo. At the age of eight in 1582 he went with his brother Kaspar to the Collegio dei Nobili in Milan in the care of his uncle, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, who designated the priest Girolamo Mazza as his mentor. Certainly due to the deep impression made on him by his uncle, who was canonised in 1610, Markus Sittikus showed willingness to take up the clerical profession; he was pious, polite and well mannered. In 1584 he went to his uncle Cardinal Marco Sittico Altemps in Rome

accompanied by his tutor Bartolomeo Bedra and his mentor Girolamo Mazza, and from 1585 studied at the Collegium germanicum already as an eleven-year old; in 1586 he received four lower ordinations. Within 18 months he broke off his studies at the Collegium and returned to his homeland. The apparent reason was that his mentor could not bear the climate of Rome. But it was more likely the election of his cousin Wolf Dietrich to Archbishop of Salzburg because it left free the canonicate, the post of canon in Constance, which Markus Sittikus then received and, naturally, the incomes that went with it. Furnished with the Constance sinecure, Markus Sittikus went to the Jesuit University at Ingolstadt and studied the Humaniora and Latin there. At the age of fifteen he additionally received Archbishop Wolf Dietrich's Salzburg Canonicate, in 1589 he was also a canon in Augsburg; this accumulation of canonical positions was possible because the respective obligations of presence were limited to only a few months. In 1591 he began to study law in Bologna, nothing is known of graduation. From 1593 to the middle of 1594 he stayed in Spain and attempted at the court at Madrid to collect military payment due to his father who had died in 1587; due to the high cost of his stay he left Spain prematurely. Markus Sittikus was fond of travel and was constantly embarrassed by a lack of money, his cousin Wolf Dietrich helped again and provided him with the benefits of Salzburg. He provided him with a monthly revenue and named him diplomatic representative to Salzburg at the Papal court. He was honourable treasurer to Pope Clemens VIII and was connected in friendship to the papal nepotist, state secretary, Pietro Aldobrandini the relative and favourite. In 1601 he resided at Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati, which was famous for its aquatic games. Very near by was Villa Mondragone of his uncle, Cardinal Marco Sittico Altemps, which was also famous for its aquatic games.

Markus Sittikus becomes Archbishop of Salzburg

In a rapid procedure in 1612 Markus Sittikus was elected the new archbishop. His predecessor and cousin Archbishop Wolf Dietrich was in a warlike confrontation concerning salt with the Bavarian electors and during the occupation of Berchtesgaden was taken prisoner and deposed. Markus Sittikus was considered half Italian and thus excited hardly any political resistance, moreover he was recommended to the canonical chapter by Cardinal Aldobrandini. It was no easy inheritance. The Bavarian electors demanded the costs of the war from him, membership of the Catholic League and also demanded that he should put an end to all superfluous holding of court. If Wolf Dietrich, seen canonically, was initially a prisoner of the Pope at Salzburg Fortress, Markus Sittikus was then obliged to bear responsibility for the imprisonment of his relative. He survived his cousin, who died in prison in 1617, by only two years.

The architect and the artists

Still in the year of his election he called Santino Solari (1576 – 1646), an upper Italian from the Intelvi Valley high above Lake Como on the borders of Switzerland, to be his cathedral builder. The foundation stone of the new cathedral was laid in 1614: the new building progressed to the roofs of the apses and the side aisles by the time Markus Sittikus had died in 1619 – hardly reaching the roof, I must already climb into the moat relates the grave inscription. Building progress under Markus Sittikus is easily read on the building statuary of the cathedral facades, the apses and the side aisles bear large heraldic shields on the crown with the ibex of Hohenems and the Salzburg lion in embrace. In both storeys of the main façade is a heraldic beast, the ibex, as a decorative element, but according to identification of the pictorial depictions only the lower part was completed under Markus Sittikus.

Already in his first spring as archbishop, in 1613, Markus Sittikus began building the “Villa Suburbana” of Hellbrunn, the complex was completed in its essential parts in 1615. We possess no building plans and no building documentation that could give us more exact insights into the building planning and progress. But we have two magnificent paintings with reliable depictions of the garden from the years 1618 and 1619 – the two portraits of Markus Sittikus, attributed to Mascagni, the later in the palace, the earlier in the State Gallery at Polička in the Czech Republic. There also exists a large copper engraving, a unique piece, which depicts the entire complex in its original state and must also be dated to around the time of completion, around 1620.

We can be certain that Santino Solari was active as an architect and perhaps as a sculptor, because he is given the title of *statuarius idem et architectus*, as sculptor and architect, and he decorated the palace and gardens with his stone statues. Fra Arsenio Mascagni (circa 1570 – 1637), a Servite monk from Florence was the creator of the picturesque furnishing of the palace and a Fra Gioachino appears in the invoices as the fountain master, he could have been the hydraulic master or water technician who was responsible for the technology of the automats and pump plants. Hieronymo Preosto and Bernardo Zanini were named as sculptors, but other than their wages we know nothing of them. Although we know the names of these sculptors, we are unable to attribute statues to them because their sculptural trademarks are not known. We can attribute with certainty numerous figures to the important sculptor Hans Waldburger (1570 – 1630), although no written document has been preserved. The situation is similar for the sculptor Hans Conrad Asper (circa 1588 – 1666) from Constance, of whose activity at Hellbrunn is no written documentation, but can be brought into connection with several figures.

Auszug aus: Hellbrunn - Schloss, Park und Wasserspiele
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