A NEW ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE BRUNSWICK ORIGIN OF AGATHA, THE ANCESTRESS OF SCOTTISH AND ENGLISH KINGS[1]

by Armin Wolf[2]

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In the dispute about the Brunswick or Russian origin of Agatha, who came to England in 1057 with her husband Edward the Exile, there has been as yet no evidence that the name Agatha was in use in Saxony at the time of her birth, about 1023/30.

In Russia there lived an *Agafia* who married Prince Vsevolod of Gorodno in 1116. She was a great-grand-daughter of Grand Prince Yaroslav of Kiev († 1054),[3] the claimed father of Agatha.[4] Agafia, however, must have been born at least two generations later than Agatha and her existence does not prove that the name Agatha was used in Russia at the time when Agatha was born.

On the other side, Brunswick belonged to the bishopric of Hildesheim, 44 km to the west. Between 1010 and 1022, Bishop Bernward erected the still existing and recently restored huge basilica of St Michael where he was buried. On the capital of the north-eastern column in the central nave of this church the names of three saints are engraved very legibly. The second of these names runs in majuscule letters: *S[ANCTE] AGATHE.*[5]

The important Bishop Bernward, the educator of Emperor Otto III, had travelled to Rome in 1000/01, where Agatha had been venerated since the 6th century. The Hildesheim inscription at such a prominent place shows that the cult of Agatha existed, or was introduced, within the neighbourhood of Brunswick some years before the birth of Agatha. This offers an additional supporting argument for the proposition that Agatha, the mother of Saint Margaret, was the daughter of count Liudolf of Brunswick († 1038), the brother of Emperor Heinrich III,[6] and son of *princeps* Brun of Brunswick and the later Empress Gisela († 1043).[7]

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1 This note is a supplement to the author's article "Who was Agatha? The Ancestress of Scottish and English Kings," *Foundations* 3 (6) (2011): 503-523, especially pp.514ff.

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3 Nikolas de Baumgarten, "Généalogies et mariages occidentaux des Rurikides russes du Xe au XIIIe siècle" *Orientalia christiana* IX, 2, num. 35, (Rome, 1927): Table V 15.

4 Norman W Ingham, "Has a missing daughter of Iaroslav Mudryi been found?" *Russian History* 23 (3) (1998): 231-270, esp. p.268 note 93. De Baumgarten, however, does not recognise a daughter Agatha of Grand Prince Yaroslav.

5 Christoph Schulz-Mons, "Das Michaelis-Kloster in Hildesheim," *Untersuchungen zur Gründung des Bischofs Bernward (993-1022)*, vol. 1 p. 239, vol 2 ill. 163, 171 & 185, (Hildesheim, 2010).

6 *Edwardus vero Agatham filiam germani imperatoris Heinrici III in coniugem accepit.* Felix Liebermann, ed., *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen*, (1879), 24.

7 For the relations of Agatha see my article on Agatha's cousin Ida of Elsdorf: "Wer war Ida von Elsdorf? Die Verwandtschaft '*der Tochter eines Bruders Kaiser Heinrichs III. und einer Schwester Papst Leos IX.*' und die Tochterstämme der Brunonen" *Rotenburger Schriften* 92 (2012): 45-67, with large genealogical table, soon also in a collection of essays: Armin Wolf, *Verwandtschaft - Erbrecht - Königswahlen, (Studien zur Europäischen Rechtsgeschichte*), (Frankfurt, 2013). Ida of Elsdorf's daughter Rikenza became the stem-mother of the house of Oldenburg to which the branch of Battenberg belongs and finally Prince Charles of Wales.