Appointment by Archduke Ferdinand of Pilgram Marpeck as Mining Superintendent (1525)

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This document is an official copy of the order appointing Pilgram Marpeck, engineer and public official, to oversee and manage for the sovereign the royal mines in the upper Inn valley of Tirol. His appointment as *Bergrichter* made Marpeck the legally appointed official in charge of the whole mining enterprise centred at Rattenberg but also including Kufstein. It was an approximately triangular area with Rattenberg, Kitzbűhel, and Kufstein forming the points of the triangle.

Pilgram Marpeck was born about 1495 to well-to-do parents. His father held the official positions of councillor and mayor of Rattenberg. Pilgram gained a good education, including at least some Latin. He must have apprenticed in the mining profession since he achieved mastery of all aspects of it, including the ability to construct machines. Like his father, he served both as councillor and also mayor of Rattenberg. He held his appointment as *Bergrichter* from June, 1525, until early in 1528, when he resigned because he had become a religious dissenter. He spent the rest of his life as leader and teacher of Anabaptist groups scattered across the Empire, producing a large corpus of letters and works for the edification and guidance of his followers. He was employed by the cities of Strasbourg and Augsburg as engineer and administrator for a total of sixteen years, and as a private engineer in Appenzell, Switzerland, for ten years. He died in Augsburg in 1556.[1]

Rattenberg was a small commercial town lying about 40 km east of Innsbruck, situated between the Inn River and the mountains behind it. It had one east-west main street along which were found the houses of notable citizens including Marpeck's, the courthouse, and the churches. Above the west end of the town was the castle of the Counts of Liechtenstein. A bridge across the Inn linked Rattenberg with Kramsach. The Inn rises in the Austrian Alps west

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[1] See Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008).

of Innsbruck and flowed into the Danube at Passau. It was a major means of transportation between Innsbruck and the Danube, westward to Ulm, and eastward to Vienna and beyond.

Marpeck's appointment in 1525 was twofold. He was the supervising engineer for the mines and smelting works, which called for familiarity with all the technological aspects of mining and smelting. But he was also a law officer. The mining communities of Tirol were composed of migrant workers who came mostly from other mining areas in the Empire, and who did not integrate with local populations. They lived in separate housing, spoke their own dialects, and in Rattenberg had their own section for worship in the parish church. Their dwellings were often located on common land where they also had their gardens. This often created strife with the local population who were thereby deprived of their commons and rights to common pasturage, fishing, and woodlots. Marpeck was the judicial officer, a function parallel to that of the civic sheriff. He was responsible for preserving the peace between the two population groups. His title *Bergrichter* indicates his judicial function.

The miners were engaged in a highly dangerous profession, at least as dangerous as that of the soldier. The constant threat to life and limb often made them bellicose,[2] frequently making demands for improvement of their economic and social lot by means of demonstration, often by the thousands.[3] The mines were second only to agriculture in economic importance for the economy of Tirol. Thus satisfying the demands of the miners and keeping them productive was of the first importance. Marpeck made frequent trips to Innsbruck to mediate disputes and dismantle protest.[4] The *Bergrichter's* function was therefore pivotal to communal peace and welfare.

Then, as now, mining and smelting were technologically and administratively complex undertakings. To begin with, wood was absolutely essential to mining in the sixteenth century. It was used to make charcoal to fire the ore-smelting ovens and to heat and soften the rock face in the mines so the miners could work it with their picks. A third major use was to provide timbers to shore up the mine shafts so the ore could be safely raised to the surface. The purchase and preparation of wood constituted approximately 70% of the cost of mining.[5]

Mine shafts were sunk vertically, on an incline, and horizontally. In all cases the shaft had to be secured against collapse by timber cribs, frames, and supports. The vertical shafts had ladders and lifts for descent and ascent of the miners, which had to be constantly serviced for reliability.[6] Pumps had to be constructed to remove water, which gathered in the shafts.[7] Another hazard was noxious gasses. To remove these gasses ventilating machines were employed.[8] The lifts, pumps, and ventilators were driven by water wheels or by horses walking in enclosed wheels or on moving platforms.[9] It was Marpeck's responsibility to ensure safe working conditions for the miners and to see that all the machines were always in working order.

Ore brought out of the mines was mixed with earth, stones, and other impurities. The preparation for smelting involved breaking and crushing the ore, and carefully sifting and

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[2] Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck*, 46.

[3] Ibid., 122–24.

[4] Ibid., 61–67.

[5] Ibid., 63.

[6] See Georgius Agricola, *De Re Metallica*, trans. H.C. and L.H. Hoover (1912; repr., New York: Dover, 1950), 102–7, 122–24, 129–35, 212–13.

[7] Ibid., 172–200.

[8] Ibid., 200–210.

[9] Ibid., 210.

washing it.[10] Marpeck himself had been involved in 1520 as a private entrepreneur in the transporting of lead sulfide ore from the Schneeberg mines high above the Brenner Pass to the smelters. Lead sulfide was essential for copper smelting. As mining superintendent he had now to purchase this ore and see to having it transported to the smelters.[11]

Emperor Maximilian, grandfather of Ferdinand, was involved in constant wars chiefly against France. He financed his wars by mortgaging the Tirolean mines and smelters to the Augsburg banker Jacob Fugger. The mine works that were indebted were subject to fiscal and legal obligations, for example, the fees (*fron*) rendered to the sovereign equivalent to the rent of the right to extract ore. The superintendent was obligated to collect these fees from the companies which operated the mine as set out in the miners' code. Fines could be levied for contravening procedure or for carelessness. A forfeit was a penalty such as wage deduction for misdemeanor.[12] The salary that went with the appointment amounted to sixty-five marks, equal to 130 guilders. The annual salary of an artisan was approximately 50 guilders. Marpeck was therefore paid a salary plus benefits almost triple that of his artisan employees. The ceremonial robe was a large flowing open cloak with a fur collar and trim down the front on both sides. The uniform normally included a formal hat.

This document gives us a glimpse into one episode of the professional career advancement of an ambitious public official in the sixteenth century. Marpeck's appointment by the brother of Emperor Charles V was a favour few would then have enjoyed. His surrender of all this three years later for religious reasons testifies to the man's strength of character.

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[10] See ibid., 300–310, for a detailed description of washing ore complete with illustrations of the technology used.

[11] For more on this see Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck*, 59–60.

[12] Josef Macek, *Der Tiroler Bauernkrieg und Michael Gaismair* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1965), 45–46.

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The Manuscript

Shelfmark: Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesarchiv, *Oberösterreichische Kammer Kopialbǔcher,*
               Kopialbuch 97, Reihe: Bekennen, 1525.[13]
Size: 19 x 28 cm
Language: Middle High German
Script: Written by a single secretary in a perfect secretarial hand.

The Text

81v   Bilgrim Marchpeckh
                   Perckrichterambt zǔ Ratemberg
       Wir Ferdinannd etc bekennen das wir vnnsern getreǔen
       Bilgrim marchpeckhen zǔ vnnserm perckrichter zǔ Ratem..
       berg bis aǔf vnnser widerrǔeffen bestelt vnnd aǔfge
       nomen haben wissenntlich hiemit in crafft ditz briefs Also
       das Er vnnser perckhwerch allennthalben in vnnsern   5
       Herrschafften Ratemberg vnnd Kǔefstain treǔlich vnd
       vleissigclichen versehen vnnd verwesen. Vnns vnnser
       Obrigkait, herrligkait vnnd zǔgehōrungen vestigclichen
       Hanndthaben aǔch sein vleissig aǔfsehen haben aǔf die
       Walde vnnd holzwerch so zǔ so zu solchen perckwerchen vnnd   10
       Hǔttenrechten daselbst zǔ Ratemberg gehōren. Vnd sonnder..
       lichen zǔ den Ärzkeǔffen was der zǔ des hǔtenrechts not..
       dǔrfften daselbst zǔ Ratemberg ob wir dasselb beŷ seiner
       verwaltǔng widerǔmb zǔ vnnsern hannden nemen
       wǔrden bestehen. Aǔch das treǔlich gearbait, gǔet   15
       schaidwerch gemacht die Schichten ordenlich gestannden
       werden. Vnnd vnns von den grǔeben so nit gefreit sein
       Erfolg was perckwerchs Recht ist. Aǔch die Straffen vnnd
       Pǔessen vleissigclichen einziehen vnnd einpringen. Vnd
       Vnns die jerlich oder wann wir in darǔmb erfordern   20
       aǔf vnnser Raitcamer zǔ Ŷnnsprǔgg verraiten Vnnd aǔs..
       richten gleichs gericht fǔrenn dem armen als dem Reichen
       sonnst aǔch allennthalben vnnsern nǔtz vnnd frǔmben fǔrdň
       vnnsern schaden warnemen, vnnd wennden Vnnd alles das tǔn
       sol was zu aǔfnemen nǔtz vnnd fǔrdrǔng oberrǔerter   25
       vnnser perckwerck aǔch fron vnnd wechsel dienst vnnd
       ain getreǔer perckrichter seinem Herrn zethǔen schǔldig
82r   vnnd verpǔnden ist inmassen er vnns solchs gelobt
       vnnd geschworen sich des aǔch gegen vnns verschriben hat/
       Vnnd wir haben Ime daraǔff alle Jar bis aǔf vnnser   30
       widerrǔeffen fǔnffǔndsechzigkh marckh fǔr Sold vnd

dreŷ marckh fŭr ain hofklaid zŭ geben zŭegesagt treŭlich
Vnnd ungeŭerlich. Mit verkŭndt ditz briefs Geben zŭ
Innsprŭgg am zwainzigisten tag des Monats Aprilis
Nach cristi gepŭrde Fŭnffzehenhŭnndert vnnd im fŭnff..   35
vnndzwainzigesten jares.

Translation

    Pilgram Marpeck[14]
    Mining Superintendent[15] at Rattenberg
We, Ferdinand,[16] etc.,[17] announce by the authority of this letter, that we have appointed and received our faithful servant Pilgram Marpeck as mining superintendent at Rattenberg until such time as we shall recall him. He will faithfully and diligently manage, oversee, and discharge the care of our whole mining enterprise in our jurisdictions of Rattenberg and Kufstein, and to exercise firmly our authority and overlordship and everything pertaining to it.[18] He will assiduously oversee the wood lots and production of timbers for the mines and smelting houses which belong to Rattenberg. In particular, he is to administer the purchase of the ore required for the smelters and determine whether, under his administration, we should again ourselves take them over. He is to assure careful washing of the ore and to keep the mine shafts in good order. And from those mineworks which are indebted he is to render to us whatever is legal. Also he is exactingly to levy and collect any fines and forfeits. These are to be calculated and accounted for annually into our Innsbruck accounting office or whenever we demand such accounting. He will conduct court without discrimination for poor and rich. In all other things he is to promote our benefit and advantage, and detect and ward off any damage to us. He is to do everything that serves the benefit and promotion of the aforementioned mining enterprise, including *fron* and interest. He is obligated and duty bound to be a faithful mining superintendent for his lord.

    In this he has pledged and sworn before us and committed himself to us.

    We have agreed to pay him regularly and fully a salary of 65 marks plus three marks for an official ceremonial robe, until such time as we would dismiss him.

    As recorded in this document, given at Innsbruck on the 20th day of the month of April, in the 1525th year after Christ's birth.

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[14] The manuscript has "Bilgrim Marchpeckh." Marpeck's name was variously spelt in the literature concerning him. Such variation was a common feature of sixteenth-century orthography.

[15] While the German term is *Bergrichter*, Marpeck's appointment included legal and administrative roles. Hence the word "superintendent."

[16] Ferdinand, brother of Emperor Charles V, was at this time Archduke of Austria and in charge of all the Austrian lands including Tirol, the centre of his administration. In 1527 he became King of Bohemia and in 1555 was chosen to succeed his brother as Holy Roman Emperor.

[17] "Etc." is the abbreviation for all of Ferdinand's titles.

[18] For a detailed description of Marpeck's duties and his staff, see Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck*, 63–66.