

## Names in Brief

*Tana gran*, Der Tannhäuser, 5. 31. In a long review of the places and tribes he has visited or heard about the Minnesinger Der Tannhäuser writes:

die Valwen sint gar ungeriht in Tanagran,  
des horte ich vil die Ungern und die Riuzen klagen.<sup>1</sup>

The passage has given the editors some trouble, but Johannes Siebert's identifications of the "Valwen" as the Cumans and "Tanagran" as a city at the mouth of the Don seem altogether convincing.<sup>2</sup> He comments as follows:

Tannhäuser hat vielleicht über die *Valwen* in *Tana* auch von den Russen Kunde erhalten, die sich zeitweilig im Gefolge des Herzogs Friedrich befanden und den Ort Tanagrad (= Tana-stadt) nannten, woraus er dann des Reimes halber *Tanagran* machte.

The supposed name "Tanagrad," for which Siebert offers no support, does not commend itself to friends familiar with Slavic languages whom I have consulted. While Der Tannhäuser could have learned much from Russians in the entourage of Duke Friedrich, there is no clear evidence that he spoke or understood a Slavic language. Inasmuch as Tana, the modern Azov, was (as my friend Otto Maenchen-Helfen tells me) for a long time the most important Venetian station in the Black Sea, it seems much simpler to think that the poet learned about it from Italians. In the following stanza (5. 33–36) he shows himself to be familiar with Italian politics and says "den voget von Rome ich dicke wol gesehen han." The name "Tana gran" (Tana the great) is appropriate and readily understood and need not be an adaptation of a doubtful "Tanagrad" "for the sake of the rhyme."

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes Siebert, *Der Dichter Tannhäuser. Leben-Gedichte-Sage* (Halle, 1934), p. 100 (5. 31–32). See the note (p. 150).

<sup>2</sup> There is much useful information about the Valwen in K. Schünemann, "Ungarische Hilfsvölker in der Literatur des deutschen Mittelalters," *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, IV (1924), 99–115.