

Summary

Convents of Upper Lusatia in the 16th and 17th century between sacral and secular power

Out of the various religious and church structures of Upper Lusatia, the presented thesis focuses on the local women's religious Catholic houses, on the Cistercian convents of Marienthal and Marienstern, and the penitent sisters of Mary-Magdalene's convent in Lauban and on their domains. The period of interest is mostly 16th and 17th century. These abbeys are the only catholic institutions which have survived up to this day in the mainly protestant area.

The introductory debate about monasteriologic research and about the possibilities of applying modern historical methods to the field are followed by an overview of the research dedicated to the area – both from the local and general German, or even Czech point of view. Careful analysis of the utilised resources follows. In assessing the factors that allowed the coexistence of institutions firmly tied to the Catholic Church and of the Protestant majority, it was first necessary to investigate the role of convents in the local society and to explore the earlier pre-reformation events. For the existence of monasteries of traditional orders was, in the early modern era, determined just as strongly by politics, (church) administration and by social and economical factors, as it was by its coexistence with protestantism. The existence was often continuous, tied to an ongoing tradition and to the context of development of the whole area. Since the history of Marienthal, Marienstern and Lauban has not been consistently researched yet, a significant part of this work is basically a positivist description of their history.

Furthermore, we inquire into the process of Protestant reformation in Upper Lusatia, its impact on other local convents and, finally, the first confrontation of the convents and their subjects with the new doctrine. The core of our research deals with the 16th century, when it was necessary to constitute an organisational basis from which further existence of convents could evolve, after the old order and Episcopal structures dissolved. Besides, in the chaos of approx. mid 16th century, all three convents had to struggle with serious economical and social problems. They faced the Protestant reformation, the demands of the reviving Catholic Church, and the increasing pressure from the ruler. Several authorities imposed their power over the convents, sometimes at once, sometimes in mutual disagreement. Apart from a

variety of order authorities, corresponding with earlier order exemptions, even Episcopal and secular authorities intervened in the convents, in the spirit of the Trident decrees.

We deal in detail with the Cistercian monastery in Lower Lusatian Neuzella, which was the first to affect the Upper Lusatian women's religious houses. Moreover, its history bears an interesting resemblance to the one of Marienthal and Marienstern. Further, we deal with the situation of the convents in the context of the Czech Cistercian province, focusing on their relations. Significant were also the ties of the convents to the administration of Upper Lusatian Catholics, founded in 1560s, being a subject of the Bautzen canonry. Finally, we deal with the important, yet overlooked stand of the re-newed Archiepiscopric of Prague and the Czech ruler towards convents in general. Also in this respect, the research of Upper Lusatian convents may extend the current knowledge.

Finally, we present a micro-historic investigation of an internal crisis of the convents – mainly Marienthal – in the second half of the 16th and the beginning of 17th century. It was influenced by the blended influence of various authorities, as well as by general trends in the evolution of women's monastic life of the period. The analysis is appended by notes on the inhabitants of the convents and the history of convent dominions, especially church- and religion-wise.

One of the main goals of the work is to draw attention to a topic almost forgotten in the Czech environment, which is nevertheless closely connected with Czech history. The very existence of Upper Lusatian convents and their diverse contacts with Bohemia in turn authorise us to observe these from the Czech point of view. Also, the selected approach of comparing three convents of Marienthal, Marienstern and Lauban and their history is rather novel.

The influence of external authorities worked against rather free handling of the monastic discipline in the convents, traditional by far not only in this region. This resulted in increased tension. It is apparent that it would be nearly impossible to carry out a reform of a convent order without the support of *bracchium seculare* and of Episcopal power. However, the survival of the convents was equally dependent on reforms as it was on the firm grounding in the feudal and economic system of the time, together with the necessary economic and social standing. In the end, the convents overcame their internal crisis with the aid of the Church and of and secular authorities, the aid most often coming from the Czech lands. This caused the communities' leaning towards Bohemia in a period of strong separatist urge, already apparent in both margraviates, culminating by handing Lusatia over to Saxony in 1635.

In the observed period, the organisational and legal grounding and the social and cultural ties between the Marienthal, Marienstern and Lauban convents evolved into a form which further influenced their development until the beginning of the 20th century (at least). Spiritually and culturally, a certain withdrawal of the convents from the life of their closest surroundings may be observed, in favour of stronger leaning towards Bohemia. Also the social structure of the convents has been altered significantly – starting in the 17th century, their inhabitants were recruited from lower social classes than previously, and they came mostly from the neighbouring Catholic countries.

The work may be perceived as an exploit of women's monastic life, but also as a contribution to the knowledge of intricate spiritual situation in the 16th and 17th centuries, based on the hitherto seldom explored example of monasterial dominions. It is also valuable in the context of the rather topical discussions about religious coexistence or tolerance, questioning even a confessionalist paradigm when most rigidly applied. Thus it is apparent that in the given context, the superiors of all three convents were tolerant towards the extension of Lutheran belief in their dominions, managing to coexist with it in peace until the last third of the 16th century. Only the impact the Recatholisation pressure from Bohemia stirred the religious terms of the dominions again. However, after Lusatia was handed over to Saxony, it was no longer possible to re-establish the earlier state of affairs.