

The thesis is concerned with the study of Czech popular religiosity during the transition from a "pre-modern", heteroreferential society, through enlightened modernisation transformations, to the beginnings of a modern, autoreferential society. It is because of this, together with the importance of external institutional changes, that the author has chosen the period from the so-called Rebellion of Opocno (1732) to the issue of the Protestant Decree (1861), which equalised Protestant churches with those of the Catholics. This period of interest includes the issue of the Tolerance Decree, the development of the Czech national movement, the revolution of 1848, and the issue of the so-called Protestant Provisory. The thesis focuses mainly on the region of Eastern Bohemia, since this contained the highest concentration of secret non-Catholics in the pre-Tolerance period, together with high concentrations of the allowed Protestant confessions (Augsburg and Reformed confessions) and unallowed sectarians later; moreover this area became the most important source of small Protestant churches and transformed the sectarian movement later on.

The research has combined historico-sociological and historico-anthropological approaches in order to gain a deeper understanding of the religious ideas of unprivileged sections of the public. Due to the character of (accessible) sources, the lack of popular sources as such and the influence of their origins, consistent attention has equally been paid to the "genres" on the borders of intellectual/social elite discourse and popular religiosity. Among the popular sources, literary works of the period have been widely analysed, as well as their (popular) reception and influence; popular and semi-popular texts have been compared with elite literature, both in terms of form and content. Religious literature of the period, printed as well as hand-written, constituted the most important type of source.