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THE COEXISTENCE OF LUTHERANS AND CATHOLICS: ITS REFLECTION ON ART WITH EXAMPLES FROM THE CZECH-MORAVIAN HIGHLANDS IN THE 16TH CENTURY

Current literature about 16th century art usually evaluates the relationship between the Catholic and non-Catholic part of this region in the context of its artworks. Liturgical space is usually seen either from a Catholic or non-Catholic point of view, or a combination of both attitudes. Nevertheless, regional art does not have to belong to one of these sides, but can serve different congregational communities together. A good example of this can be seen in the church in Pacov. By contrast in Lutheran Jihlava, the main centre of the area, the Catholic Church was suppressed and local medieval cloisters throughout the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century only just survived. The effect this had can be seen influencing wall painting in the Catholic church, where similar motifs were used for the decoration of the town hall and local houses.

This text refers to the specific regional area on the border of Czech and Moravia as a reflection of art tendencies and the abundant church life in the area. The methodological foundation of this text is mainly cultural-historical, in order to place the period and situation in context. The first part of the article introduces the history of the area, the second part illustrates the religious aspect, and the third part is focused on surviving works of art and of wall paintings in the context of religion.

During the 16th century, the Czech-Moravian Highlands went through enormous economic development, which influenced both new building construction and the creation of works of art. Traditional Utraquism,¹ rooted

¹ More about Utraquism and art e.g. conferences almanacs: *Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice* (1–9), Main Library, Prague 1996–2014. www.brrp.org [accessed

in Czech and Moravian lands from the time of the Hussite Wars in the 15th century, developed by stages into newly-arrived Lutheranism. The ideas of Utraquism closely matched those of the Catholics and Lutherans in the region, who were in constant dialogue not only in the field of religion, but also concerning questions of power, e.g. the responsibility of town councils. In this period, many artworks were created, but only a few of them have been preserved till today, and so can speak to us of the 16th century world.

Common Catholic themes were used by Protestants, albeit in a different form. Sometimes it is possible to see unusual themes associated with Lutheranism itself, or even with older Utraquism. The following text attempts to describe the specific situation in Czech lands during the 16th century and its reflection on wall paintings, using a specific example from the border of Czech and Moravia. The information presented can be understood as belonging to Central European or European art, and can help raise international awareness of how Lutheranism influenced regional art, and how the Catholic church coexisted with it.

Historical Background of the Area

Some basic information about the history and religious situation of the area, its theological differences and the economic situation, must be mentioned first, in order to have a clearer understanding of the background of these particular wall paintings.

During the 16th century, the area was mostly divided into separate towns with minor noble families.² This was unlike other parts of Bohemian lands of that century, which for the most part were under the rule of the powerful Rožmberk and Pernštejn noble families. Nevertheless, for the area the 16th century was a century of trade, especially trade in cloth, craft and silver mining. The main centers were towns such as Jihlava, Havlíčkův Brod and Pelhřimov.

Jihlava was an old royal town important for its silver mines. and was a significant trade crossroads. The main source of its income was the craft³ and drapery industry,⁴ which enabled a high standard of living

05.04.2017]; *Public Communication in European Reformation*. Eds. M. Bartlová, M. Šroněk. Praha 2007; *Pravda zvítězila. Výtoarné umění a husitství 1380–1490*. Ed. M. Bartlová. Praha 2015; *Umění české reformace*. Eds. K. Horníčková, M. Šroněk. Praha 2010.

² The only relevant noble family member can be found in the South part of the current area of Vysočina region, where lived Zachariáš of Hradec, member of Hradec lineage.

³ Apart from drapery, also the hat-making and beer industry; R. Pisková [et al.], *Jihlava*. Jihlava 2009, p. 283.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 283. At the end of the 16th century Jihlava had almost 700 master drapers; A. Vošahlík, *Jihlava*. In: idem, K. Kibic, J. Wagner [et al.], *Paměť měst. Městské památkové*

for its inhabitants⁵ and also for the arrival of a number of foreign artists, mainly from Germany and Italy.⁶ As a town with predominantly German inhabitants, Jihlava had always been a source of German influences, with religious works being no exception. Here, in the largest city of the region, there is preserved the majority of the Renaissance wall paintings found in this area. Czech kings and emperors of the Holy Roman Empire usually stayed at the city en route to Vienna or Prague. Directly in the centre were two houses for the king and his entourage, which were used for overnight stays and a break during their journey.⁷ The art orientation of Jihlava was extensively influenced by external influences gained through contacts with foreigners. In contrast, the cities around Jihlava were mostly Czech.

Havlíčkův Brod, a competitive town located on the Czech side of the border, was populated mostly with Czech citizens.⁸ Its prosperity during the 16th century was rooted in trade, craft and silver mining;⁹ along with the nationality issue, this was one of the major reasons for conflict and a source of competition with Jihlava.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the town's prosperity never reached the standard of Jihlava. Pelhřimov is less important compared to these two towns, even though during the 16th century it prospered economically, which enabled it to rebuild the older town center, which had been destroyed by fire, in the new Renaissance style. Its circumstances, as well as the confidence of the citizens, is best illustrated by the unusual situation that occurred when the town freed itself from bondage.¹¹ Slightly separated from these events stands Telč, the important seat of Zachariáš of Hradec, the highest land chamberlain.¹²

rezervoace v českých zemích. Praha 1981, p. 98. In 2007 a book about silver mining in Jihlava was published: *Stříbrná Jihlava* (Brno 2007).

⁵ Many of them came from Bavaria, Saxony, Lusatia, Brandenburg, Glatz, Silesia and Austria. The percentage of Czech citizens was only 10%; R. Pisková [et al.], *Jihlava*, p. 270–271.

⁶ A. Bartušek, A. Kába, V. Fejt, *Umělecké památky Jihlavy*. Havlíčkův Brod 1960, p. 54; R. Pisková [et al.], *Jihlava*, p. 265.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

⁸ At the beginning of the 15th century there was still a large German population; P. Nocar, *Havlíčkův Brod, ohlédnutí za historií našeho města*. Havlíčkův Brod 2008, p. 8.

⁹ V.V. Štěch, *Umělecké památky. Německý Brod*. Praha 1945, p. 4.

¹⁰ The theme of the relationship between religion and nationality in Czech lands is explored in the article: J. Pánek, *Nation and Confession in the Czech Lands in the pre-White Mountain Period*. In: idem, E. Doležalová, *Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformations: Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*. Prague 2011, p. 139–153.

¹¹ L. Martínková, *Říčanští z Říčan*. In: Z. Martínek [et al.], *Pelhřimov*. Praha 2014, p. 166–175.

¹² The title of highest land chamberlain was the fourth most important provincial title for officials of the estates.

This Catholic centre lived mainly from the fishponds and fields around the town.¹³

The Religious Situation

This seems to be more complicated than the history of the area. In the first half of the 16th century Utraquism was the most common faith, which stemmed from the time of the Hussite movement during the 15th century. Jihlava traditionally was Catholic, a religion which its inhabitants adhered to throughout the Hussite wars. Everything changed with the arrival of the German protestant preacher Paulus Speratus in 1522.¹⁴ Under his influence, most citizens soon turned to Lutheranism. A small group of Catholics remained faithful to the Minorite and Dominican cloisters, which languished in the centre of a Protestant city, but survived until re-Catholisation after 1620. The situation in the city became so critical that in 1562 all Catholic masses, except those held in Catholic cloisters, were prohibited.¹⁵

Other cities also adopted Utraquism. During the second half of the 16th century, most inhabitants converted to Lutheranism, even if not to the same extent as in Jihlava, and this faith still prevailed. The previously-mentioned towns were quite different from a religious point of view, and developed differently. Even in the 15th century in Havlíčkův Brod, Utraquism together with Catholicism still dominated, and it was not until the 16th century that the nobility moved away from Utraquism and the population converted to Protestantism.¹⁶

Pelhřimov was until the 1660's mainly Utraquist, but then underwent a transformation to Lutheranism.¹⁷ A quite interesting situation can be seen in Pacov, traditionally also an Utraquist town. Throughout the century, similar to the situation in Pelhřimov, parish priests often preached in competing Christian denominations, and this applied even to Catholic priests.¹⁸ These irregularities helped slowly eliminate the differences between the various religious groups, with the final differences only being in the order of the communion, celebrating the religious holiday of John Hus,

¹³ Telč. *Historické centrum*. Eds. J. Kroupa, O. Jakubec. Praha 2013, p. 25; J. Hrdlička, M. Hrdličková, E. Melmuková-Šašecí, J. Bláha, *Telč – 900 let (1099–1999)*. Telč 1999, p. 22.

¹⁴ J. Válka, *Dějiny Moravy*. Vol. 2: *Morava reformace, renesance a baroka*. Vlastivěda moravská 6. Brno 1996, p. 15; J. Mikulec [et al.], *Církev a společnost raného novověku v Čechách a na Moravě*. Praha 2013, p. 309–321.

¹⁵ Catholic masses were reinstated in 1622 (R. Pisková [et al.], *Jihlava*, p. 259); after the Battle of White Mountain, a crucial moment of religious diversification in Czech history. This information refers to the parish church of St. Jacob.

¹⁶ V.V. Štěch, *Umělecké památky*, p. 4.

¹⁷ L. Martínková, *Královské město (1596–1618)*. In: Z. Martínek [et al.], *Pelhřimov*, p. 204.

¹⁸ J. Vondráček, *Dějiny města Pacova a okolí*. Vol. 2 [unpubl. ms.]. Pacov 1945, p. 103.

and the inclusion of children at the communion service. The only problem was seen between the different sects¹⁹ living in the town, and the fragile coexistence did not last long. Soon Lutheranism went its own way and Catholics continued with Utraquism. Any thoughts of a better time were pre-empted by purposely appointing Protestant priests.²⁰ Despite this, the Catholic community was still the second largest in the town. Taking all this into account, it is almost unbelievable that all groups used just one church, the church of Saint Michael.

The only strictly Catholic town and district of the area can be found in Telč, historically the dominion of the Hradec family. The most important 16th century ruler, Zachariáš of Hradec, resolutely suppressed all other religious groups and sects not of the Roman Catholic faith.²¹ This rare situation inside a predominantly Protestant kingdom can serve as a suitable comparison with Protestant parts of the area, and this applies even for art, and especially wall paintings, which decorated not only churches, but also the facades of town houses.

Wall Painting in the Context of the Catholic and Lutheran Religion

A few fine examples of Renaissance interior wall painting and on the facades of city houses have survived, unfortunately mainly in fragments. The majority of it remained in Jihlava. Lutheranism had been influential in the city for the first half of the century, and when the paintings were made, all the burghers were already Protestants and this influence is noticeable in them to this day. Upon further inspection, these paintings reveal a closer connection to German art than other cities of the region, a product not only of the German inhabitants but also of the trade connections with neighbouring countries. This enabled the flow of German engravings to the city, and for the subsequent inspiration it generated to be used in wall paintings.

It is possible to divide the wall paintings in question into several groups according to type: illusive architecture, decorative ornaments, single figures (mainly allegorical) and figural scenes. The most obvious inspiration of German art can be seen in figural scenes and figures.

¹⁹ Quite important parts of the town were inhabited by other religious groups and sects, e.g. *Unitas Fratrum* or sect from Vlášence.

²⁰ A. Pitrmann, *Pacov, rodné město Antonína Sovy*. Praha 1945, p. 17.

²¹ The other Catholic nobilities were Pernštejn and Rožmberk families; F. Hrejsa, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu*. Vol. 5. Praha 1948, p. 247.

The best preserved examples of single figural painting in Jihlava are two allegories at Masaryk Square 14 and 57. The first instance can be compared with the work of the Swiss-German artist and engraver Jost Amman, from the series of *Gynaeceum* and others artworks from that time, mainly from Germany (Nuremberg, Augsburg – Bavaria) and Switzerland.²² A typical theme is Fashion; figures with distinctive clothes and dresses worn in Protestant parts of Europe and inspired by Spanish fashion.²³ Characteristic is a high collar and overcoat, usually, though not always, black.²⁴ This is sometimes complemented by a small hat. Such figures are not seen in other parts of the area, and do not feature in wall painting or figures of contemporary nobility, or at least no such paintings were maintained until today. Some single figures can be seen in Pelhřimov, another city where the Protestant faith prevailed over others religions in the 1660s and 1670s, on the sgraffito façade of the house at Masaryk Square 14.²⁵ The main theme of the façade décor is the Virgin Mary on a crescent moon accompanied by three figures.²⁶

The church of Saint Adalbert in Havlíčkův Brod also represents a few allegorical figures of the Virtues, and although its pattern has not been discovered yet, some influence can be seen of the work of Jost Amman. The painting likely originated at the end of 16th century, when the town was already under the influence of Lutheranism. The most interesting scene is probably the personification of Theology and the attributed figure of John Hus painted in the presbytery vault. Two lively figures deep in discussion have highlighted hands as a symbol of argumentation, while behind them are depicted other symbols, the Ten Commandments and a cross with a Bible. John Hus is accompanied by a figure, probably an angel, to repre-

²² For example painting of Ursula Praun by Nicholas Neuchatel (Nuremberg 1568) or drawing of a woman clothes from Augsburg and Nuremberg (*Codex iconographicus monacensis* [further BBC Cod.icon] 341, Augsburg 1580).

²³ More about renaissance fashion for example: E. Currie, S. Vincent, *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion*. Bloomsbury 2017; U. Rublack: *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*. Oxford 2010; eadem, *Clothing and Cultural Exchange in Renaissance Germany*. In: *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*. Eds. R. Muchembled, W. Monter. Cambridge 2007, p. 258–288.

²⁴ E.g. drawing of BBC Cod.icon. 361, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

²⁵ L. Martínková, *Královské město*, p. 204.

²⁶ Composition with theme of Virgin Mary on crescent moon survived at St. George church in Božejov at domain of Utraquist Jan Kryštof of Leskovec. Another examples of Assumption of the Virgin in Utraquist art can be found at an altar of Assumption of the Virgin from Náměť in Kutná Hora where are painted wings and central panel accompanied by sculpture of Virgin on crescent moon in front of it. Depiction of this type (Virgin Mary with small Jesus on crescent moon crowned by angels) decors also title page of Smíškovský graduale, late gothic manuscript of Utraquist nobility family came from Kutná Hora (1491). This depictions represent allegory of Religion; *Pravda zvítězila*, p. 209.

sent him as the righteous person. In this context Lutherans followed the earlier Utraquism tradition and maintained this important figure as a predecessor of Luther himself. Because of this, the style of decoration and the figural scenes are executed in a different style than in similar themes in Jihlava. Outlined lines are less noticeable, but still constitute an important part of the whole artwork. The single figure can be seen also in Božejov. Figures of apostles are painted alone, and in contrast with Lutheran art still maintain the late Gothic form.

Catholic wall painting survived only in fragments in Jihlava cloisters, but its affiliation to the faith is undisputable. In view of their poor economic situation, it is a small wonder that any wall painting was done at all. The style of these painting was composed of three types; the first one very close to the style of burgher and Protestant art in Jihlava, the second one evocative of Dutch or German art, and the third one reminiscence of late Gothic ideals.

Wall painting characterized by a distinctive black line survived in the church of the Holy Cross belonging to the Dominican cloister. A decoration of plant tendrils growing from a centre stalk situated at intervals along cross ribbed vaults represent the only Renaissance decor in the church. All ornamentation revolves around the vault's central keystone, and in some corner locations is accompanied by a text. A similar character of decor is used in Jihlava in a few houses and particularly in the town hall. The ground floor of the town hall is constructed by cross vaults repeating a different but reminiscent theme. Ornamentation of a different kind can be seen at 14 and 57 Masaryk Square.²⁷ Unlike burgher artworks, Catholic painting aspired to higher levels of proficiency, using ever more elaborate details and displaying the precise style of the experienced artist. The embellishment decorating the walls of the transept of the Dominican cloister are slightly different. Fragments of former paintings show evidence of Dutch and German influences. Figures have smooth skin; any figures or objects are highlighted by black lines according to the style of the church. This almost miraculous high-quality painting, at a time of great hardship in the Dominican order, may have another explanation. Archive documents reveal that the Dominicans came out of Jihlava at the beginning of the 17th century, and until 1621 the church also conducted protestant services.²⁸ Because of the burghers' better financial situation, there was a comparatively high possibility of creating wall

²⁷ Similar plant decors were used also in other town, e.g. in Velké Meziříčí where decorated ground floor cross vaults of the town hall also.

²⁸ V. Svěrák, *Vztahy mezi dominikánským klášterem a měšťskou radou v Jihlavě v době reformace*. In: *Dominikáni v Jihlavě v proměnách staletí*. Eds. T. Čemušák, T. Sedlák. Jihlava 2012, p. 17.

painting during this period. One of the paintings, however, contains the date 1569, which contradicts this.

The last type reminiscence of the late-Gothic period is represented by the painting in the presbytery of the Minorite church, The Assumption of the Virgin. Illusive and extravagant net vaulting (around 1500) decorates the former tall space behind the main altar, which is nowadays divided into two floors. Late-Gothic forms were not often used in wall painting, and no examples of late-Gothic forms from the second half of the 16th century have survived.

Styles used in Catholic centres in Jihlava (mentioned above) documented different approaches to wall painting in the second half of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. In some illustrations, a style closer to Protestant art was used; others observed the old tradition and followed western art. Not all examples of Renaissance wall painting can, with certainty, be compared to simple Catholic art. A relatively stronger Catholic position was achieved in Pacov, as was also mentioned above. The Saint Michael church in Pacov displays wall paintings of Old Testament scenes accompanied by texts, all of them emphasizing Christian virtues connected with love towards one's neighbour and humility. The church attracts our attention also because of its multi-religious function in the town and its openness to all faiths, not only for Lutherans as one might expect. All of these religions, Lutheranism, Catholicism and Utraquism, found expression with interior wall painting, but nevertheless a patron was probably a member of a noble family. At that time Pacov was the property of the protestant Španovský lineage.²⁹ The main sources of inspiration were derived from the art of Virgil Solis, and all the scenes on the gallery were accompanied by texts. Some scenes were inspired by the book of Nicolaus Reusner, a German lawyer and humanist poet active in Wittenberg, Augsburg, Strasbourg and Basel, who worked for Emperor Rudolph II. The book *Emblemata. Mors morte pianda*, published in 1581, is one of his works on Christian ethics and philosophy. Soon after its publication, paintings in the church came into being. The scene *Moses with Brazen Serpent* is also inspired by Solis's engraving, but from another series.³⁰ These sources act as excellent examples of the Lutheran influence on the art of Czech Protestants, but also examples of the connection with foreign countries and the strong influence of religion. Scenes from the Old Testament were painted

²⁹ During the second half of the 16th century, the owners of Pacov were Jan (1565–1582) and Michal Španovský (1584–1600), a patron was probably one of them; J. Vondráček, *Dějiny města Pacova a okolí*. Vol. 3.

³⁰ Unknown series; W.L. Strauss, *The Illustrated Bartsch*. Vol. 19/1. New York 1987, p. 593.

more to express Protestant ideals, with moralizing images capable of serving all religions. The more specific Lutheran themes were painted near the choir stalls on the south wall where fragments of former paintings still survive. In the middle of the wall is situated a seated figure, under it kneeling kings with crowns removed from their heads. This illustrates a theme from the Apocalypse (Rev. 17:1–18), one of the warnings in the book, and in accordance with the Protestant view of the world. More neutral scenes from the Old Testament are painted in view of the nave, while a significant scene of Lutheran ideology is rather hidden away. In this context, we have to ask the question why the most significant part of Lutheran religion was painted in the rear of the church, and whether this was by intent. Taking into consideration the decoration that remained inside, the scene from the apocalypse was perhaps painted in the only place where there was enough room for it.

One of the most famous examples of Catholic wall painting is in the Telč chateau, a Unesco Heritage monument. Its chapel is decorated with scenes in stucco by an Italian artist, while the interior of the complex used designs by Flemish artists. One of these was Virgil Solis, author of the engravings which inspired wall painting in Jihlava and Pacov. The embellishment of the chapel is mostly made of stucco with scenes on the theme of resurrection (above), and is completed by wall paintings representing the muses of music.³¹ Here can be seen one of the rare meeting points of all religious art, the celebration of music and through this art the portrayal of God himself, which is a vital element of both Protestant and Catholic liturgies.

A Few Final Words

The art connected with the Lutheran faith was rooted in the area of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands mostly in German Jihlava. However, soon after this religion became dominant, other towns adopted these sources of inspiration from German lands. Lutheranism is closely connected with the art of the areas mentioned here, even if the themes and compositions are often very similar to Italian or Dutch art. Religion in the context of art considerably affected the consciousness of the town dwellers, its cultural relevance and its perception.

Even though we do not usually connect these wall paintings with Lutheranism today, it still forms a part of a town's appearance and the interiors of

³¹ More about iconographic conception of the chapel see: K. Křížová, *K některým částem výzdoby renesančního zámku v Telči*. „Památky a příroda“ 1979, vol. 9, p. 534–540; V. Korčáková, *Ikonaografický program pohřební zámecké kaple Věšch svatých v Telči*. „Průzkumy památek“ 2001, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 21–36.

its churches. This gives us better awareness of the Renaissance era, in more ways than we realize. Catholic and other art originated mainly from external sources and achieved a slightly different effect. The patterns of the same artists were employed and inspired both groups, although often achieving a different result. This research also reveals the strong connection and dependence on German art, shown in a different light than we normally see it.

Lutheran art is mainly characterized by distinctive black outlines, and featuring depictions of figures and plant motifs, as seen in the Dominican church in Jihlava, which was a Protestant church for only twenty years. During the 16th century, the coexistence of Catholics and Lutherans in Jihlava was quite problematic, and the poor economic state of the Catholic church didn't allow for renovation of their convents and churches, or for new artworks. On the other hand, the church of Saint Michael at Pacov represents an example of the coexistence of multiple religious groups, as exhibited in mutual tolerance and the usage of one church for their services. Even though the town probably wasn't completely peaceful, this example shows the relatively peaceful environment for several faiths, and gives us a more detailed view of 16th century life. The more usual situation was for Catholicism and Utraquism to be replaced by Lutheranism, as in Havlíčkův Brod and Pelhřimov. The examples of artworks mentioned illustrate the abundant church life of the time, and even though the focus is on a relatively small regional area, there is ample evidence of church disunity and theological differences.

Keywords:

Wall painting, 16th century, Czech-Moravian Highland, Lutheran art, Catholic art

The Coexistence of Lutherans and Catholics: Its Reflection on Art with Examples from the Czech-Moravian Highlands in the 16th Century

A b s t r a c t

The development of art genres in the 16th and the beginning of 17th centuries outside the centers of power was influenced by the diverse religious situation, which is reflected in the art décor of municipal buildings and temples of worship. In mural paintings we can see particularly the blending of contemporary Utraquism and Catholicism with Protestantism, which itself was built on the Utraquism rooted in the Czech environment since the Hussite Wars. Although by the end of 16th century all the territory of Bohemia and Moravia was already under the influence of the Lutheran Church, the influence of German art is most evident in the art décor of houses in Jihlava; other cities (Pacov, Havlíčkův Brod) also followed German patterns, but the style itself was influenced by the Czech environment. Even though the artistic scene seems to be clearly defined, the artwork produced by the local Catholic environment is a testament to the blending of forces across the various confessions.