

Abstract

**Studies and Correspondence of the priests-to-be of the Bohemian Brethren
in 1610–1618**

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Two wooden boxes were found during the reconstruction of the former Minorite monastery Na Karmeli at Mladá Boleslav in 2006. The boxes concealed the so-called Archives of Matouš Konečný. The Archives contained documents that originated in the office of, or were addressed to, one of the four bishops of the Bohemian Brethren, Matouš Konečný (1569–1622), whose seat was at Mladá Boleslav. A significant part of the discovery consists of correspondence addressed to Bishop Konečný.

A substantial part of the correspondence are documents related to the dispatch of young aspiring Brethren priests for study at educational institutions abroad. Along with letters of the students themselves, sent from Bremen and Beuthen an der Oder (Bytom Odrzański in Poland), where the young men attended academic grammar schools (*gymnasia illustria*), the boxes contain the students' pledges and accounts of their expenditures. The students' reports are supplemented with the correspondence of their teachers.

The collection of letters from students and teachers as well as other documents being thus thematically delimited, our principal objective was to perform an analysis of their content and to prepare an edition of the documents. Another aim was to glean from the students' correspondence and accounting records knowledge about a variety of aspects of the young Brethren's everyday life and study. We expected the documents to provide the answers to a range of questions concerning the reasons that led the Bohemian Brethren to send young aspirants to the priesthood to study abroad, and the motives for the choice of Bremen, and later Beuthen an der Oder, as the place the students headed for in order to acquire experience and knowledge. We wanted to learn what routes and means of travel the students took to reach their destinations, what subjects they studied, what books – the purchase of which they entered in the accounting records – they used, what evidence could be found about the outcome of their study efforts as well as how their stay abroad was funded. In addition, we pursued the answer to the question where the young men gained their primary education. We also focused on a history of the academic grammar schools in Bremen and Beuthen an der Oder during the study stay of the young Brethren. The *gymnasium illustre* belonged among the schools that were not entitled to confer academic titles, but their constitution was very close to that of universities.

The introductory essay is followed by an editorial part, which makes available all the pledges (7 texts), the students' letters including two letters of Brethren bishops (164 texts), the teachers' letters (26 texts), and the students' accounting records (27 texts). All documents are edited in conformity with the requirement of scholarly editorship, at the same time making them accessible to the lay public.

Keywords: Bohemian Brethren; the Archives of Matouš Konečný; priest-to-be; Gymnasium illustre; Bremen; Beuthen an der Oder; education; study; correspondence; 1610–1618