

**BETWEEN REVIVAL
AND UNCERTAINTY**

**Monastic and Secular Female Communities in Central
Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century**

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**ZWISCHEN AUFBRUCH
UND UNGEWISSHEIT**

**Klösterliche und weltliche Frauengemeinschaften
in Zentraleuropa im „langen“ 18. Jahrhundert**

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Foreword/Vorwort

During the last ten years research on early modern female regular life has increased considerably following intensive discussions on the procedure and consequences of the dissolutions of the monasteries at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Consequently monastic history in the long eighteenth century has come back into focus and – in an attempt to close a long discussed gap – research on female religious life has gained momentum. In German-speaking as well as in Czech and Polish research a number of studies have been published looking at specific convents and the everyday life of the women religious. They explore the cultural, social and economic history of regular and secular female communities in Central Europe in the context of the religious and political developments of the long eighteenth century. To gain a better picture of female religious life in Central Europe the next step would be to combine these detached studies in order to explore broader questions.

This book has grown out of the need of a group of scholars to react to this promising but fragmentary state of research and to merge some of the previous results by approaching specific questions. The shared conceptual approaches such as an emphasis on the “cooperative piety” among monastic and secular women and on the “fluidity” of the line between regular and extraregular life intensified the discussions on early modern female religious life and resulted in the present collective monograph which brings together researchers from five countries.¹

The publication of this collective monograph was made possible by the European Social Fund and its Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness. Within this Operational Programme the Institute of Historical Studies at the Silesian University in Opava (Czech Republic) holds a project entitled “*Historicising Central Europe*” as a *Subject Matter for Sustaining the Development of Human Potential in Research, Innovation, Education and Integration of Current and Future Research Workers in International Research Activities* (CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0031). Due to this institutional and financial support it has been possible to bring the long-term effort of the authors to a successful end.

¹ Both the concept of “cooperative piety” and “fluidity” of the line between regular and extraregular life were formulated by American historian June L. Mechem (†2009) and are explained in the introductory chapter.

The group of contributors to the collective monograph has cooperated over almost two years and was originally formed on the occasion of preparing a panel on *Female Religious Life in East-Central Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century* at the 13th International Congress of the International Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in Graz (Austria) in July 2011. Later on, in April 2012, a graduate workshop for early career researchers under the title *Piety and Fluidity of the Boundaries between Convent and World* was organised to broaden academic collaboration and to include the young generation of emerging scholars.

We would like to express our gratitude to both reviewers of this volume for their kind willingness to invest their time and for their valuable comments. The professional layout and cover of the book are the result of the careful work of Tomáš Rataj to whom we would also like to extend our special thanks.

Finally, we thank the contributors for their collaboration and for their interest in intensifying the discussion on female religious life in early modern Central Europe and also for their patience while this volume was being prepared for printing.

*Veronika Čapková, Ellinor Forster,
Janine Christina Maegraith and Christine Schneider*

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