

Ondřej Haničák et al.: *Knížata z Lichtenštejna. Páni země opavské a krnovské / The Princes of Liechtenstein. Lords of the Land of Opava and Krnov*

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The princely house of Liechtenstein has undoubtedly left a significant mark in the regions of Opava and Krnov, former centres of two principalities, currently split between Czechia and Poland. From the first decades of the seventeenth century up until the turbulent times after World War II, the members of this powerful noble family ruled over these territories. At the turn of 1614, Karl I, Prince of Liechtenstein, received the Principality of Opava as a fief from Emperor Matthias, and Krnov followed ten years later. These anniversaries provided an occasion to organize a large exhibition, in which several leading institutions (Silesian Museum, LIECHTENSTEIN. the Princely Collections Vaduz–Vienna and many other museums, archives, National Heritage Institutes, parishes, and others) and experts collaborated under the patronage of the House of Liechtenstein.

The reviewed book is a voluminous critical catalogue of the exhibition held at the Silesian Museum in Opava from May 2023 to January 2024. The catalogue is the work of more than twenty authors under the editorial guidance of Ondřej Haničák, an experienced curator and the author of this exhibition. For the exhibition and catalogue, a large and diverse amount of historically valuable and (from the visitor's perspective) attractive exhibits was collected. Featuring parallel texts in Czech and English, the volume uses unifying purple graphic elements that evoke the elite status of this aristocratic family and, together with the large format of the book and abundance of images, contribute to the overall reader's impression. A well-structured name and place index, in addition to the bibliography, facilitates orientation across the catalogue entries.

The volume is divided into three sections. Its main and most comprehensive part is the catalogue itself, which is preceded by a study by Jiří Brňovják. He presents there the Princes of Liechtenstein during the long period of three

and a half centuries in the context of their Silesian estates, starting in the era of Karl I, Prince of Liechtenstein, and ending after World War II. It analyses and summarises their local political, property, and economic strategies and relations to these principalities, and presents some of their diverse activities, the impact of which is still evident in many cases today.

The publication ends with a well-organized edition of an interesting contemporary source, namely the description of the homage paid by the Opava Estates to Prince Karl Eusebius in 1632. As Karel Müller mentions in the introductory editorial note, this print, authored by the Silesian nobleman Jan Václav Sedlnický of Choltice, is preserved in two known copies abroad. The edition, which makes this source available to a Czech audience for the first time, is accompanied by reproductions of four copper engravings and explanatory footnotes, and thus constitutes an excellent supplement to the catalogue.

The catalogue itself is divided into nine thematic units. They contain a varied, valuable, and thoughtfully chosen selection of exhibits, accompanied by erudite and reader-friendly texts. The first section ("Portraits") guides the reader through a portrait gallery of the Liechtenstein princes from the seventeenth to the twentieth century via biographical medallions. Although useful for overall context, the connection between the texts and the portraits (or the main topic) is rather loose and illustrative, although in some cases, they are works by leading painters of the time (e.g., the portrait of Prince Joseph Wenceslas I by Francesco Solimena) or they communicate important facts or details about the socio-economic status of the respective person (e.g., Prince Antonín Florian with the Order of the Golden Fleece or Jan Josef in a uniform with decorations). This might be worth elaborating on, also with regard to possible non-expert readers who might otherwise miss this interesting information. This stands out especially in contrast to the subsequent catalogue entries, which are usually already closely related to the exhibit in question and often explain its context in an thought-provoking way, providing its interpretation or noting interesting details. This is probably mainly due to the function of the section as a kind of introduction to the Liechtenstein family environment.

The second section ("Oppaviae et Carnoviae Dux") reflects the role of the Liechtensteins as landlords with a varied selection of material, including charters, maps, vedutas, militaria, coins or tiled stoves bearing heraldic decoration.

The third section ("Princeps inter pares") consequently showcases the provincial self-government of the principality and the estates' representation in relation to the prince. In the fourth part ("The splendour of the princely majesty"), texts and exhibits show the various forms and media through which the family and display of status was thematised, including genealogical and

heraldic monuments, coins and medals, but also, for example, the only surviving piece of the original set of embroidered horse blankets from the eighteenth century.

The fifth section (“Whose Realm, His Religion”) focuses on the key phenomenon of recatholisation and the development of Baroque religiosity, especially with regard to the activities of orders such as the Jesuits, invited to Opava by the Liechtensteins, or the Minorites, once again active in Krnov and associated with the pilgrimage site of Cvilín. Attention is also paid to funerary and commemorative themes (*castrum doloris* or funeral sermons for family members, linked to these towns). The scope of the sixth section (“Nobility obliges”), loosely structured around patronage and philanthropy, ranges from artistic craftsmanship, through epitaphs, and architectural designs to the construction of the museum in Opava at the end of the nineteenth century, closely linked to the support of Prince John II.

The seventh section (“The Prince’s Bride”), through a series of very interesting exhibits and accompanying entries, reveals the breadth of family ties and their networks in the Central European aristocracy through marriage strategies. It also presents an entire range of female members of the family, whether descended from or married into it, and their activities, such as the cookbook of Eleonora Marie of Eggenberg. In the penultimate eighth section (“Under the Banner of the Imperial Eagle”), a number of unique military objects are presented, ranging from a banner from the time of the suppression of the Bocskai Uprising to adult and children’s Hulan uniforms of the early twentieth century, documenting the military tradition of the family’s long loyal service to the Habsburgs. Finally, the last ninth section (“The Wealth of the Land”) focuses on the economic activities that shaped the natural wealth and cultural landscape of the region, and greatly influenced the local population and their economic opportunities. These ranged from logging to proto-industrial activities (hammers, ironworking), farmyards, technical buildings to steam sawmills, building infrastructure or development of education.

The exhibition and the well-executed critical catalogue are undoubtedly a significant contribution, even for the non-expert audience. Their overall aim, i.e. “the presentation of material monuments connected with the Princes of Liechtenstein as the landowners of Opava and Krnov”, was successful to a great extent.