



# BIOGRAPHIES OF A REFORMATION

Religious Change and Confessional  
Coexistence in Upper Lusatia, 1520–1635

MARTIN CHRIST

# Biographies of a Reformation

# STUDIES IN GERMAN HISTORY

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*Religious Change and Confessional  
Coexistence in Upper Lusatia, 1520–1635*

MARTIN CHRIST

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,  
United Kingdom

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First Edition published in 2021

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020951601

ISBN 978-0-19-886815-6

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198868156.001.0001

Printed and bound by  
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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*For my parents,*

*Anne and Thomas*



# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Lyndal Roper, for her continuous help, support and assistance, both when writing the thesis that this monograph is based on and during the later stages of this project. Without her guidance and helpful comments, my research would have missed so many crucial elements. Her work will always be an inspiration and to be able to work with her has been the greatest privilege.

I would also like to thank the other members of the early modern Germany workshop at Oxford, whose suggestions have shaped this thesis and my thinking: Mette Ahlefeldt-Laurvig, Ryan Asquez, Natalie Cobo, Clare Copeland, Ryan Crimmis, Johannes Depnering, Duncan Hardy, Tom Hamilton, Kat Hill, John Jordan, Christopher Kissane, Jan Machielson, Hannah Murphy, Carla Roth, Cecilia Tarruell, and Edmund Wareham. I am also grateful to Jamie Page, Ben Pope, Saskia Limbach, Natalia Nowakowska, Glyn Redworth, Róisín Watson and the anonymous reviewers for OUP for insightful criticism and helpful comments.

During a year I spent in Dresden, I was very lucky to receive guidance on German archives, theoretical frameworks of religious change and much more from Gerd Schwerhoff and his *Lehrstuhl*, especially Matthias Bähr, Sebastian Frentzel, Alexander Kästner, Ulrike Ludwig, Katerina Matasova, Cheryl Petreman, Eric Piltz, and Hiroyuki Saito.

In Upper Lusatia, I was fortunate to encounter many helpful individuals who were all too happy to share the treasures of their region with me. The archivists have been very kind in letting me stay past opening hours and helping me in any way they could. I would like to especially thank Thomas Binder, Jürgen Görner, Siegfried Hoche, Uwe Kahl, Silke Kosbab, Birgit Mitzscherlich, Anja Moschke, and Grit Richter-Laugwitz. Friedrich Pollack of the Sorb Institute, Bautzen, has helped me with many issues revolving around the Sorbs. During visits to Prague, Wrocław, Bolesławiec and Lubań I have benefited from the help and friendship of Petr Hrachovec and Jan Zdichynec. Reinhard Hoffmann has sent me many local publications and I would also like to thank him. Kai Wenzel and Lars-Arne Dannenberg provided many important pointers, especially regarding the regional literature.

At the very beginning of this project was my Masters thesis and my supervisor in St Andrews, Bridget Heal, who first drew my attention to Upper Lusatia. Without her, none of this research would have happened and over the years, I have benefited immensely from her unwavering support and her helpful

suggestions. Even before then, Beat Kümin first sparked my interest in early modern German history and I thank him for his continued interest.

The book benefited from a one-year stay at Tübingen, where the comments and suggestions of Renate Dürr, Philip Hahn, and Irina Saladin shaped this book. I would also like to thank the other members of the department for their helpful suggestions.

In Erfurt, Susanne Rau and Jörg Rüpke provided the opportunity to refine my approach further, while the insights of Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenko, Martin Fuchs, Elisa Iori, Sara Keller, Asuman Lätzer-Lasar, Emiliano Urciuoli, and Simone Wagner have helped me at the later stages of writing this book. I am also grateful to Maximilian Senger for his help with the index.

I thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council as well as the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, Dr.-Gregorius-Mättig-Stiftung, Balliol College, the German History Society, Santander, and Upper Lusatian Scholarly Society (*Oberlausitzische Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*) for their financial assistance with this project.

Part of this research was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—FOR 2779. I would like to acknowledge this support as part of the Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies ‘Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Foundations’, based at the Max Weber Centre, Erfurt.

My thanks also go to the advisory board and editors of *Studies in German History*, especially Len Scales, for including my monograph in their series. I would also like to thank Cathryn Steele and the staff of OUP for their support.

An earlier version of chapter two appeared as ‘The Town Chronicle of Johannes Hass: History Writing and Divine Intervention in the Early Sixteenth Century’ in *German History* (2017). Parts of chapter five appeared in ‘Between Domestic and Public: Johann Leisentrit’s (1527–1586) Instructions for the Sick and Dying of Upper Lusatia’ in Marco Faini, Alessia Meneghin (eds.), *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 82–106 and ‘Catholic Cultures of Lutheranism? Confessional Ambiguity and Syncretism in Sixteenth-Century Upper Lusatia’ in Kat Hill (ed.), *Cultures of Lutheranism: Reformation Repertoires in Early Modern Germany* (Past and Present Supplement 12, Oxford, 2017), pp. 165–188. I thank Oxford University Press and Brill for the permission to reprint parts of these articles in this monograph.

I am also indebted to my friends Tom James, Sebastian Neu, Anh Nguyen and Florian Seubert for their interest in my work and continual encouragement. I am especially grateful to Trang Nguyen for all her support, in many big and small ways. My brothers, Karl and Andi, have always been there to make me appreciate the more important things in life. Finally, my parents, Anne and Thomas, who have always had my back and provided unwavering support. This book is dedicated to them.

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# List of Abbreviations and Conventions

AB	=	Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, Oddział we Bolesławcu, Bolesławiec
AW	=	Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, Wrocław
BW	=	Bibliotheka Uniwersytecka Wrocław UL. (University Library, Wrocław)
CDSR	=	Codex Diplomaticus Saxoniae Regiae
CWBZ	=	Altbestand der Christian Weise Bibliothek, Zittau
DAB	=	Diözesanarchiv Bautzen (Domstiftsarchiv)
NA Prague	=	National Archives, Prague
NLM	=	Neues Lausitzisches Magazin
NLM NF	=	Neues Lausitzisches Magazin, Neue Folgen
St B	=	Staatsfilialarchiv und Stadtarchiv Bautzen
St G	=	Stadtarchiv Görlitz
St K	=	Stadtarchiv Kamenz
St Lö	=	Stadtarchiv Löbau

All German and Latin sources are rendered in English in the main body of the text. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own. Spellings of place names are unified to the most recognizable early modern version, so Lauban is not called Lubań. Budissin, another name for Bautzen, is the one exception to this and has been normalized as Bautzen. In line with recent scholarship on the Sorbs, the terms 'Sorb' and 'Wend' (*Sorbe* and *Wende*) are used interchangeably throughout.



# Introduction

## A Royal Visit

On 25 May 1538, the King of Bohemia, Ferdinand I (1503–1564), rode from Bautzen to Görlitz to receive the town's homage.<sup>1</sup> The council had prepared extensively for this visit, calling all citizens to the town hall and instructing them to put up horses and the kings' entourage without complaints.<sup>2</sup> Much was at stake for Görlitz, one of the most prosperous towns in the region. The king of Bohemia ruled the region and only rarely visited Upper Lusatia. Ferdinand arrived with other dignitaries, including a papal nuntius, two bishops, one from Vienna and the other 'tall and beautiful', the chancellor of the Bohemian crown and the bailiff of Upper Lusatia.<sup>3</sup> First, 90 armed riders wearing 'liver-coloured' coats with their insignia and 'liver-coloured hats with yellow riders' caps' ('lebirfarbe woppenrocke . . . lebirfarben hueten, vnd gelben reiterkappen') went to meet the king once he was nearby.<sup>4</sup> On his way, Ferdinand saw 30 pieces of artillery on the nearby *Landskrone* Mountain which the town council had displayed there and which were fired when he rode past.<sup>5</sup> Half a mile before the city, 430 foot soldiers (*Knechte*) dressed in white and red in honour of the Austrian regal colours waited for the king and his men, forming a guard of honour to walk in front of him into the town. Welcoming the king, the schoolboys and their teacher sang a song, which, according to a later source, moved the king so much that he shouted towards them: 'you are all my sons'.<sup>6</sup> Near the city gate, the council, dressed all in black, one of the most expensive colours in early modern Europe, greeted the king.<sup>7</sup> They then handed the bailiff a small box covered in a red-white chequered fabric containing the town seal and key to the city gate. The bailiff returned the box to the councillors with the royal order to continue well and diligently, as they had done before.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joachim Bahlcke (ed.), *Geschichte der Oberlausitz. Herrschaft, Gesellschaft und Kultur vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts* (2nd edition, Leipzig, 2004), p. 101; Johannes Hass, E. Struve (ed.), *Görlitzer Rathsannalen: 1521–1542* (Görlitz, 1870), pp. 367–79.

<sup>2</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 375.

<sup>3</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 370.

<sup>5</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 370.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Knauthe, *Das Gymnasium Augustum zu Görlitz: in seiner alten und neuen inner- und äußerlichen Gestalt der verflossenen 200 Jahren, bey desselben Jubel-Feyer den 25. und 26. Jun. 1765* (Görlitz, 1765), pp. 12–13.

<sup>7</sup> On clothes, see Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010), especially pp. 81–125.

<sup>8</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, pp. 367–79.

Finally, the procession entered the city through an alley formed by more armed men standing on either side. Once inside the town, the group grew larger still. It was joined by clergy and more schoolchildren with their teachers. Monks and priests, almost all of whom wore their ‘deans’ coats’ and ‘dressed in gold’, gave the party the grandeur of a medieval church procession.<sup>9</sup> In front of the procession, the clerics carried chalices, crosses, and flags. The group then entered the main church of Görlitz, that of Saints Peter and Paul, where the organ, trumpets, and choir played *Te Deum Laudamus*.<sup>10</sup> There, the king prayed before the altar. Afterwards, the Lutheran preacher Benedict Fischer carried out the *collecten*. The Catholic clerics travelling with the king disapproved of the open display of the monstrance with the sacrament on the altar because it seemed Lutheran to them.<sup>11</sup>

Afterwards, the king went to the town hall where he lodged. For the rest of the day, he rested but he went to the church of the Franciscans the next day where he participated in a mass performed by the administrator of the Saxon province.<sup>12</sup> He chose to celebrate mass in this church, rather than the church of Saints Peter and Paul, where he had been the day before. After the service, he returned to lunch where he was offered ‘everything that could be acquired at that time’, including game and fish and a choice of 25 different wines and local beers. The wines, ‘red and white’, were from the Lower Lusatian towns of Guben, Senftenberg, and Sommerfeld, three from Bohemia and some ‘spiced [with] rosemary, sage and vermouth’.<sup>13</sup> After the lunch, the council gave the king presents and supplications for his consideration. One of the presents was truly remarkable: It was a nef, a cup in the shape of a ship, which could ‘sail’ across a table by clockwork, greatly pleasing the king. A small number of nefs survive, but most of them have legs or pedestals, making the moveable Görlitz one a particularly valuable item.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that during this time, the council also showed Ferdinand a recently completed mural containing portraits of Bohemian rulers and their wives on one side of the room, and a scene of Law and Grace on the other.<sup>15</sup> Ferdinand rode around the town with the present and former mayors to inspect the fire protection and

<sup>9</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 372, ‘diacon rockenn . . . jn guldene stucke gekleidet’.

<sup>10</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 373. See also CWBZ, A 30, *Collectanea Lusatia Abrahami Frenzelii—tomus sextus*, Annales Budissinenses 1174 bis 1585, fol. 948.

<sup>11</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 378.

<sup>12</sup> For royal support for the Franciscans, see also NA Praha, Lž III/1/38, Kart. 232, fol. 4r.

<sup>13</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, pp. 373–4, ‘zu der zeit zu bekomenn möglich . . . rote und planke . . . an gekrewterten rosmarin- salben- wermutwein etc.’. For Lower Lusatia more generally, see Joachim Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration im Widerstreit. Die Länder der böhmischen Krone im ersten Jahrhundert der Habsburgerherrschaft (1526–1619)* (Munich, 1994), pp. 51–5; Heinz-Dieter Heimann, Klaus Neitmann, Uwe Tresp (eds), *Die Nieder- und Oberlausitz—Konturen einer Integrationslandschaft, Bd. II: Frühe Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Charles Oman, *Medieval Silver Nefs* (London, 1963).

<sup>15</sup> Because the mural was only discovered and restored in 2010, there is no scholarly work on it yet. For some preliminary findings, see Kerstin Micklitzka, André Micklitzka, *Görlitz: Sehenswürdigkeiten, Kultur, Szene, Umland, Reiseinfos* (Berlin, 2016), p. 55.

walls after dinner that night. Finally, at five in the morning, the king left Görlitz to ride to Buntzlau (today Bolesławiec) in Silesia.<sup>16</sup>

The king was impressed by Görlitz, by both its cuisine and architecture. A barrel of the wine he had most enjoyed during his stay (from the Rhine region) was sent after him. Ferdinand also requested a drawing of the church, which, according to the town scribe and mayor who recorded the events, was ‘illuminated in the brightest manner’ by the sun when Ferdinand was in it.<sup>17</sup> One year later, he asked about the painting again, suggesting that this was not a request out of politeness on the part of Ferdinand but that he was genuinely interested in the drawing. It was finally sent to him long after his visit. The Bishop of Vienna was supposed to print a written account of the visit but, for unknown reasons, that never happened.<sup>18</sup>

Described in these terms, the visit of the king, impressive and important though it may have been for the councillors, seems quite common. How remarkable it truly was becomes clearer in a retelling of the same event from the eighteenth century:

the council of Görlitz set out to prove themselves because of the religion during the entrance and presence of the king so that they would not fall from favour. They had no married preachers, about whom the king would have been angriest, and not tolerated them so far. Some Franciscan monks were still present, in addition to whom the council assembled many more as well as the minister of the province. The Lutheran preachers had kept many popish things, e.g. vestments, chasubles, the mass in Latin, lights, etc. and many things that had been put aside were taken out again. In this way, Lutherans and Catholics presented themselves to the royal majesty.<sup>19</sup>

Ferdinand I thought he was entering a Catholic church. In previous years, he and his predecessors had ordered their towns to put an end to any advance of the Reformation.<sup>20</sup> However, the Reformation had made serious inroads into the urban fabric of Upper Lusatia. Some of the councillors were faced with a problem: If they showed their Lutheranism too openly, Ferdinand might punish them.

<sup>16</sup> For a comparison of Silesia and Lusatia, see Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration*.

<sup>17</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 378, ‘Den tag ist die kirche durch die sonne auffs hellist durchleuchtet’.

<sup>18</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, p. 379.

<sup>19</sup> BW, 1947/68, Christian Knauth, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Religions und Kirchen Reformation bey der Stat Görlitz von A. 1517 bis A. 1567 aus Documenten, Actis publicis, Missivis, Annalibus und hin u hergesandenen Nachrichten zusammen getraget u mit groß fleis aufgefertiget* (1767), pp. 86a–86b. For later references to vestments, see also AB, 2884 *Glöckner und Custodien-dienst bey der Pfarr Kirche zu Lauban (1558–1809)*; St K, 5586b, *Organisation und Verwaltung der Kirchensachen und Bauten sowie Ausübung des Jus Patronatus [Patronatsrecht] (1504–1731)*.

<sup>20</sup> For the broader context, see Joachim Bahlcke (ed.), *Die Oberlausitz im frühneuzeitlichen Mitteleuropa. Beziehungen—Strukturen—Prozesse* (Stuttgart, 2007).

There was a simple solution: The Lutheran population simply pretended to be Catholic. Indeed, the town council was so eager to show themselves as more Catholic than they were that they requested for a monk from nearby Schweidnitz to come to town for the king's visit. In a letter from 13 May 1538, the council requested from the provincial administrator Benedict von Löwenberg that he should send the Franciscan monk Michael Hillebrand to the town so that he could come to the monastery and attend the procession for the king.<sup>21</sup> The king was kept happy with this display of supposed Catholicism, even though the papal nuntius travelling with him noticed that something was probably not quite right when he saw the host displayed openly on the altar, and not locked away between services.<sup>22</sup>

The episode illustrates how the Catholic king of Bohemia influenced religious proceedings in Lutheran Upper Lusatia. However, the king, who was normally resident in Prague, did not have the power (or time) to prevent the introduction of the Reformation.<sup>23</sup> Both Lutheran and Catholic councillors celebrated mass with the king, presumably also partaking in a communion in one kind and any other Catholic, liturgical actions. At the same time, the Catholic monks supported the Lutheran town council by being present in the church and there is no indication that the king received any complaints of a religious nature. This kind of pragmatism and religious flexibility was typical of Upper Lusatia, where a Lutheran majority coexisted with a royally protected Catholic minority as well as various other religious groups.

As a peripheral region on the western border of Bohemia, a side land (*Nebenland*) of the Bohemian crown, Upper Lusatia was ruled by the king of Bohemia and his representatives.<sup>24</sup> In Upper Lusatia, Saxon and northern German influences combined with Bohemian and Slavic elements to create a unique region that contained an idiosyncratic mix of identities (see Map 1). The towns within the region had a considerable degree of power which was frequently challenged by the rural nobility.<sup>25</sup> Upper Lusatia was a margraviate (*Markgraftum*) ruled by an ever-changing array of territorial overlords without ever having a ruling dynasty solely

<sup>21</sup> RAG, Liber Missivarum (1536–1540), fol. 530v, '...So wir uns kurzlich Romischer Kor. Mat., unsers allignedigisten herns, gluckseligen zukunfft vorsehenn, bieten wir freuntlich, Ewer Acht wolle sich nicht beschwerenn, geschick zu machen, auff die zukunfft Irer Mt. mit einem bruder, sunderlich mit dem lectori Michael Hillebrande, alher ins closter und zu der proceß und infurung Irer Mt. vorfugen, dem closter und dem rathe zw erlicher notdorfft ... 13.5.1538'.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Koller, 'Die Sorge um die "vigna inculta et abandonata". Die römische Kurie und die Lausitzen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert' in Joachim Bahlcke (ed.), *Oberlausitz im frühneuzeitlichen Mitteleuropa*, pp. 152–73.

<sup>23</sup> For a broader analysis of the side lands (*Nebenländer*) and their integration into Bohemia as a whole, see Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration*, especially pp. 32–55.

<sup>24</sup> There are various Czech studies which focus on the relationship between Bohemia and Upper Lusatia, for an overview of some recent scholarship, see Jan Zdichynec, Petr Hrachovec, 'Bericht zur tschechischen Forschung über die Ober- (und Nieder-)Lausitz zwischen 2000 und 2007' in *NLMNF* 11, 2008, pp. 121–37.

<sup>25</sup> AW, 196053, *Verschiedene Differenzen des Landes mit den Sechsstädten betr. 1522–1715*.



Map 1 Upper Lusatia in early modern Europe

responsible for the region. From 1158 to 1635, the region belonged to the sovereign of Bohemia and therefore to a number of different rulers. When Bohemia became a Habsburg territory in 1526 it was ruled by the South-German royal house until 1635, when it came into the possession of Electoral Saxony.<sup>26</sup> The competing interests and jurisdictions of royal actors, rural nobility, powerful clergy, and urban elites resulted in a patchwork of power, where different individuals continuously tried to expand their privileges.<sup>27</sup> Due to the ever-changing dynasties, the region oscillated between being perceived as

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Fickenscher, 'Die Oberlausitzer Stände und ihre politischen Beziehungen zu Böhmen während der Habsburg Herrschaft (1526–1618)' in Lars-Arne Dannenberg, Matthias Herrmann, Arnold Klaffenböck (eds), *Böhmen-Oberlausitz-Tschechien. Aspekte einer Nachbarschaft* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2006), pp. 81–108, p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> AW, 196053, *Verschiedene Differenzen des Landes mit den Sechsstädten betr. 1522–1715*. For attempts to expand the power of convents, see, for example, AW, 2193, *Akten die wahl des Klostersvoigts zu Marienthal und Streitigkeiten zwischen demselben und der Abtissin des Kloster Marienthal, 1621–1751*.

part of the Holy Roman Empire, the kingdom of Bohemia, and something altogether different.<sup>28</sup>

The royal bailiff (*Landvogt*) and his deputy, the *Amtshauptmann*, were the local representatives of the king.<sup>29</sup> They resided in Ortenburg Castle in Bautzen, in the centre of town near the town hall and main church. The three Upper Lusatian estates, consisting of the six towns of the Lusatian League, the rural nobility, and the convents, met regularly for diets. As in other parts of the Habsburg Empire, the kings usually sided with the nobility during conflicts, leading to complaints by the towns.<sup>30</sup> In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Lusatian League prospered and the rural nobility frequently requested their powers to be curtailed by the king. The *Decisio Ferdinanda* of 1544 was an answer to this, as it strengthened the nobility's jurisdictional powers. But the *Decisio* was no definitive legal document, rather it announced further investigations which should lead to a final decision.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, tensions between the Lusatian League and the nobility continued.

Within the Habsburg monarchy, the multiconfessional nature of Upper Lusatia was not unique.<sup>32</sup> The Habsburgs ruled over other territories with similarly complex religious and political structures, both in the Holy Roman Empire and Bohemia. In some of these regions, for example in Styria, a forceful recatholicization by royal orders took place.<sup>33</sup> But scholars have long stressed that religious coexistence in the Bohemian lands could also be peaceful for most of the sixteenth century. Examples include the toleration of the Utraquists in the Bohemian lands, but also the accommodation of Anabaptists in regions like Moravia.<sup>34</sup>

The generally peaceful coexistence of Catholics and Lutherans in sixteenth-century Upper Lusatia fits this pattern of religious pluralism. Lutherans and Catholics negotiated their own contracts, for example when it came to the use of shared churches. In other regions of the Habsburg monarchy, for instance Tyrol in western Austria, Habsburg rulers not only turned a blind eye to Lutheranism,

<sup>28</sup> Joachim Bahlcke, Volker Dudeck (eds), *Welt—Macht—Geist. Das Haus Habsburg und die Oberlausitz 1526–1635* (Görlitz, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> For instructions to the bailiff, see St B, 50009–164, *Aufzeichnungen und Abschriften Oberlausitzer und Niederlausitzer Landessachen*.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Zdeněk V. David, *Finding the Middle Way* (Washington, 2003), pp. 180–2.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann Knothe, *Geschichte des Oberlausitzer Adels und seinen Güter vom XIII. bis gegen Ende des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1879), pp. 65–6.

<sup>32</sup> Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration*. For a recent overview of the Holy Roman Empire, including the Habsburg monarchy, see Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* (London, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Regina Pörtner, *The Counter-Reformation in Central Europe: Styria 1580–1630* (Oxford, 2001). See also Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia. Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge, 2009); Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration*, pp. 227–60.

<sup>34</sup> For a general overview, see Philip Haberkern, 'The Lands of the Bohemian Crown: Conflict, Coexistence, and the Quest for the True Church' in Howard Louthan, Graeme Murdock, *A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe* (Leiden and Boston, 2015), pp. 11–39.

but actively protected non-Catholic beliefs and encourage peaceful coexistence.<sup>35</sup> After initially condemning the spread of Lutheranism in Upper Lusatia, the Habsburg kings of Bohemia legitimized coexistence later in the sixteenth century by accepting contracts allowing Lutherans and Catholics to share churches. Moreover, in 1611 Matthias II confirmed the privilege of the town of Bautzen to carry out services according to the Augsburg Confession.<sup>36</sup> The lenient religious policies of many Habsburg kings were necessitated by external pressures, as they relied on taxes and soldiers from these territories.

While Upper Lusatia fits some of the Bohemian patterns, it has some distinguishing features. Bohemian groups like the Utraquists or the Bohemian Brethren were never tolerated in Lusatia because they attacked and lay siege to a number of Lusatian towns, including Bautzen and Görlitz.<sup>37</sup> During the Hussite Wars of the fifteenth century, Catholics even temporarily came to the Lusatian town of Zittau and set up an administration in exile there, making the town a centre of Catholicism opposed to any Hussite initiatives.<sup>38</sup> There is no indication that significant Utraquist communities existed in Lusatia in the sixteenth century. And, unlike in Moravia, Anabaptists were not tolerated in Lusatia and they were one of the few groups which were actively challenged and exiled in Upper Lusatia. Moreover, the connections to Saxony resulted in no serious recatholicization efforts taking place in Upper Lusatia, as it became a Saxon territory after 1635.<sup>39</sup> The geographical proximity to Saxony also resulted in a particularly strong influence of the University of Wittenberg and Philipp Melanchthon, at least from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards. And although the Habsburgs ruled over lands with Zwinglian tendencies, within a Bohemian context the presence of this particular group was special. Finally, the presence of a non-German ethnic group, the Sorbs or Wends, influenced the shape of religious reform in Lusatia. As recent work on this topic has shown, the dynamics between Sorbs and Germans resembles more closely the situation in the Baltic States.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of a ruling dynasty solely responsible for Lusatia resulted in patterns of rule, which have received significant scholarly interest. Karlheinz Blaschke has called the region a ‘republic of estates’ (*Ständerepublik*), where the three estates (rural nobility, convents, and towns) decided what policies were enacted on their

<sup>35</sup> M. A. Chisholm, ‘The Religionspolitik of Emperor Ferdinand I (1521–1564): Tyrol and the Holy Roman Empire’ in *European History Quarterly* 38/4 (2008), pp. 551–77.

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Fischer, *Homagium Budissinense. Zwo Huldigungspredigten* (Leipzig, 1612), unpaginated preface, [p. 2].

<sup>37</sup> Richard Jecht, *Geschichte der Stadt Görlitz* (Görlitz, 1923), pp. 127–243.

<sup>38</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> On religion in Lusatia after 1635, see Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 10024 Geheimer Rat (Geheimes Archiv), 09506/05, *Exclesiastica Lusatae Superioris [Kichensachen der Oberlausitz] (1429–1710)*.

<sup>40</sup> Susanne Hose, Madlena Mahling, Friedrich Pollack (eds), *Reformation und Ethnizität. Sorben, Letten, Esten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Bautzen, 2019).

lands, independent of the kings of Bohemia.<sup>41</sup> This view has rightly been criticized in recent works on the Upper Lusatian constitutional setup.<sup>42</sup> The urban elites did not act independently of other important actors and did not manage to concentrate all political power in their hands, as the republic of estates thesis would suggest. The king of Bohemia functioned as a distant but powerful justification for the urban elite's actions. They derived legitimacy from the privileges that generations of kings of Bohemia had given to them.<sup>43</sup> Paying homage to a new king of Bohemia, who would come to Bautzen and other towns and received the tributes of the town elites, strengthened this sense of a powerful royal presence in distant Prague, as was also the case with Ferdinand's visit.<sup>44</sup> Johannes Hass, mayor and town scribe of Görlitz, stressed for example, how important Emperor Sigismund (1368–1437) was for his town.<sup>45</sup> Sigismund had given the town additional privileges which significantly increased its power.<sup>46</sup> So important were these privileges that the council of Görlitz commissioned a portrait of him which they placed in the town hall, right in the centre of political power.<sup>47</sup> Later, Bautzen's town council also commissioned a depiction of King Rudolf II which survives on a central tower and was probably initially placed above one of the city gates (Figure 0.1).<sup>48</sup> The role of the king of Bohemia was therefore a variable one. In most instances, he was a distant power cited to legitimize the councils and their actions, but in some cases, he could also directly influence the policies of the towns.

Central to the political structure of Upper Lusatia was the Lusatian League (*Sechsstädtebund*), consisting of six towns which came together in the alliance in 1346 (see Map 2).<sup>49</sup> It was initially formed as a protection against robber knights, and subsequently developed a significant degree of freedom, which has even been

<sup>41</sup> See, Karlheinz Blaschke, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Oberlausitz* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2000), pp. 66–86; pp. 108–113.

<sup>42</sup> Lars Behrisch, *Städtische Obrigkeit und Soziale Kontrolle. Görlitz 1450–1600* (Epfendorf, 2005), p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> For some privileges, see AW, 196000, *Volumen documentorum varii generis privilegiorum et concessionum, 1544–1679*; St B, 50009–190, *Aufzeichnungen und Abschriften Oberlausitzer und Niederlausitzer Landessachen*, for example fols. 135–190, 214–221, 546–590; St B, 68002 – 53, *Statuten der Stadt Bautzen von 1596*

<sup>44</sup> On the confirmation of privileges during royal visits, see also, AW, 195950, *Sammlung einiger Nachrichten von Observantien Gebräuchen, Privilegien und dsgl. welche den Görlitzer Kreis und dessen Gerechsamte betr. . . . 1602–1773*, p. 55.

<sup>45</sup> See also Duncan Hardy, 'The Emperorship of Sigismund of Luxemburg (1410–37): Charisma and Government in the Later Medieval Holy Roman Empire' in Brigitte M. Bedos-Rezak, Martha D. Rust (eds), *Faces of Charisma: Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 282–314.

<sup>46</sup> Alexandra Kaar, 'Sigismund von Luxemburg und die Sechsstädte der Oberlausitz unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Stadt Bautzen' in *NLM NF* 14 (2011), pp. 21–40.

<sup>47</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, pp. 410–58.

<sup>48</sup> Kai Wenzel, 'Rex sedet in medio. Das Reliefbild König Rudolfs II. am Bautzener Reichturm' in *NLM NF* 11 (2008), pp. 27–56.

<sup>49</sup> Alexandra Kaar, 'Der Oberlausitzer Sechsstädtebund vom 14. bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts' in Ferdinand Oppl, Andreas Weigl (eds), *Städtebünde. Zum Phänomen innerstädtischer Vergemeinschaftung von Antike bis Gegenwart* (Innsbruck, 2017), pp. 157–86.



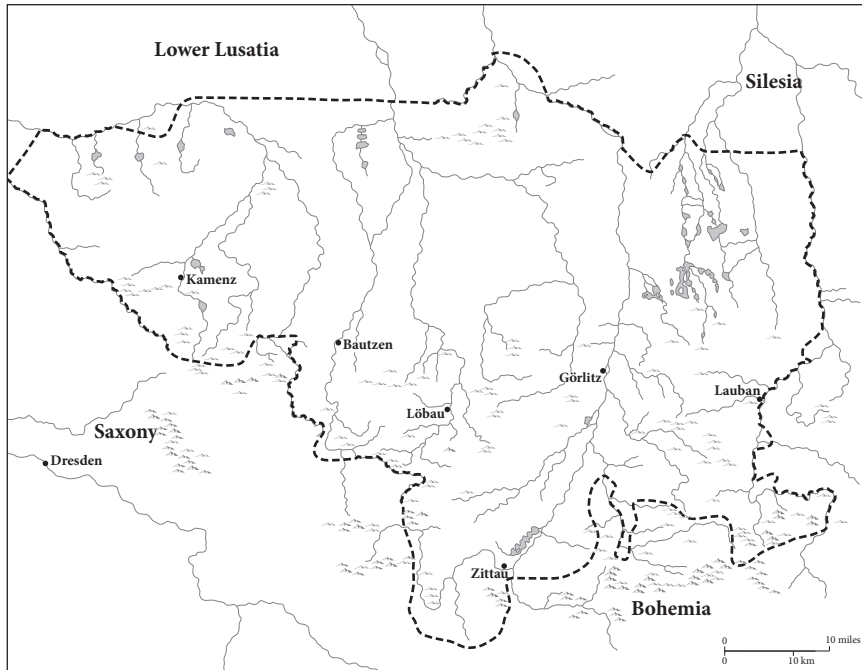
Figure 0.1 Relief with King Rudolf II on the Bautzen Reichenturm (© Kai Wenzel)

compared to the kind of autonomy imperial free cities enjoyed.<sup>50</sup> Although such town coalitions were far from exceptional in the medieval period, this particular alliance is remarkable for its long-lived nature (1346–1815) and the considerable power which the towns managed to carve out through prolonged negotiations and collective policies.<sup>51</sup> This monograph focuses on these six small and middle-sized towns (Bautzen, Görlitz, Zittau, Löbau, Lauban, Kamenz) which are situated in the very East of today's federal state of Saxony, with one town (Lauban/Lubań) located in Poland. The representatives of the Lusatian League met weekly in Löbau due to its favourable geographical position.<sup>52</sup> The towns varied considerably in size and economic importance, and they show how religious change functioned in a peripheral region which contained a range of religious groups and was not very high on the agenda of its ruler.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Binder (ed.), *666 Jahre Sechsstädtebund* (Görlitz and Zittau, 2012). On imperial free cities, see, for example, Thomas Lau, Helge Wittmann (eds), *Kaiser, Reich und Reichsstadt in der Interaktion* (Petersberg, 2016); André Krischer, *Reichsstädte in der Fürstengesellschaft. Politischer Zeichengebrauch in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Darmstadt, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> For other town coalitions, see Roland Deigendesch, Christian Jörg (eds), *Städtebünde und städtische Außenpolitik—Träger, Instrumentarien und Konflikte während des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Ostfildern, 2019); Oppl, Weigl (eds), *Städtebünde. Zum Phänomen innerstädtischer Vergemeinschaftung*.

<sup>52</sup> Behrisch, *Städtische Obrigkeit*, p. 38.



**Map 2** Map of early modern Upper Lusatia, based on a sixteenth-century map by Bartholomäus Scultetus

Usually the towns cooperated and supported each other financially and politically, but even within the coalition itself, tensions could erupt on rare occasions and result in feuds between the six towns.<sup>53</sup> The beer feud (*Bierfehde* or *Bierkrieg*) between Zittau and Görlitz is a late fifteenth-century example where the unity between the towns was threatened, whilst its resolution shows how much importance the towns ascribed to the alliance. In 1490, Görlitz thought that Zittau had illegally provided beer to villages within the beer mile (*Biermeile*) of Görlitz, in which only beer from Görlitz was supposed to be sold. Representatives of the town council went so far as to encourage the destruction of beer convoys to Zittau. In retaliation, Zittau stole cattle from Görlitz. In this matter, the towns turned to Saxony, not Bohemia, for legal advice and the central court of Meissen intervened. It decided in favour of Görlitz and when Zittau refused to (or could not) pay the fines, the other four towns paid parts of the penalty.<sup>54</sup> The peace within the coalition was so important to the towns that they were willing to pay on behalf

<sup>53</sup> Löbau financially supported Zittau after a town fire, for example. St Lö, Dep. Loeb. 37b, *Rats-Rechnungen, 1562–1564*, fol. 10r.

<sup>54</sup> Katja Lindenau, *Brauen und Herrschen. Die Görlitzer Braubürger als städtische Eliten in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Leipzig, 2007), pp. 52–6.

of another town.<sup>55</sup> A small proportion of the fine was also paid by the rural nobility, a rare example of a fruitful cooperation between the towns and the nobility for the sake of peace.

Upper Lusatia shows the importance of conceptualizing religion in a holistic way, without solely focusing on the Lutheran Reformation. By considering Catholic, Zwinglian, and other responses to the religious changes of the sixteenth century, it is possible to see how different religious groups mutually influenced each other. Zwinglians, Philippists accused of ‘crypto-Calvinism’, and ‘mystics’ also played an important role in the history of Upper Lusatia. In a region defined by complexities, we can gain a better understanding of the early modern world with all its blurred boundaries and contradictory policies. Upper Lusatia is particularly rich in religious groups and the presence of a Slav minority population with their own language, the Sorbs or Wends (*Sorben* or *Wenden*), further complicates the situation.<sup>56</sup>

In the towns of the Lusatian League, Sorbs were present in Bautzen, Kamenz, and Löbau. Most of them were Lutherans and later sources date the first Lutheran converts among Sorbs remarkably early.<sup>57</sup> In 1520, wrote Christian Knauth in the eighteenth century, the first Sorbs saw the light of the Gospel. He connected this particularly to Paul Bosack from Postwitz, whom he recorded as the first Lutheran preacher in the region.<sup>58</sup> Amongst the Sorbs, the first generation of Lutheran preachers was particularly important. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Wittenberg was the most popular destination for Sorbs wanting to become preachers. Almost every second one went there; most of the others went to the University of Leipzig.<sup>59</sup> The shortage of Lutheran, Sorb preachers led to artisans and teachers being ordained as preachers.<sup>60</sup>

While Upper Lusatia was exceptional in its constitutional setup, it can illuminate broader developments in the early modern world, particularly regarding the formation of religious identities. This monograph focuses on small and middle-sized towns in the former German Democratic Republic. These are particularly valuable when considering religious negotiations because they remind us that large, South German free imperial cities were not the norm and that smaller towns

<sup>55</sup> Hass, Struve (ed.), *Rathsannalen*, pp. 32–46.

<sup>56</sup> On the Sorbs, see Friedrich Pollack, “In allen Merkwürdigkeiten der Wenden-Nation”. Zur Konstruktion von ethnischer Alterität in der frühmodernen Sorbenkunde’ in *Lëtópis* 59/1 (2012), pp. 3–21; Friedrich Pollack, “Vohr das arme wendische PawersVolck gut rein Evangelisch predigen”. Geistlichkeit und ländliche Gesellschaft in der frühneuzeitlichen Oberlausitz’ in *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie*, 63/1 (2015), pp. 12–33; Gerald Stone, *Slav Outposts in Central European History. The Wends, Sorbs and Kashubs* (London, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> For a more recent analysis, see Stone, *Slav Outposts*, pp. 83–91.

<sup>58</sup> Christian Knauth, *Derer Oberlausitzer Sorberwenden umständliche Kirchengeschichte* (Görlitz, 1767), p. 191.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Pollack, *Kirche—Sprache—Nation. Eine Kollektivbiographie der sorbischen evangelischen Geistlichkeit in der frühneuzeitlichen Oberlausitz* (Bautzen, 2018), p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> Stone, *Slav Outposts*, p. 85; Pollack, *Kirche—Sprache—Nation*, pp. 81–91.

had to negotiate with their territorial overlords, more so than free imperial cities.<sup>61</sup>

A. G. Dickens' dictum that 'the Reformation was an urban event' still resonates with historians.<sup>62</sup> But usually what they mean when thinking about the urban Reformation and its negotiation and imposition are large towns in certain parts of the Holy Roman Empire. This trend started with the first studies of the urban Reformation by Bernd Moeller who largely focused on urban centres in southern Germany and Switzerland due to his focus on imperial cities.<sup>63</sup> While scholars have worked on religious coexistence in larger towns, smaller towns have not received the same attention. Yet small and middle-sized towns were far more common than the large free imperial cities and they can offer telling comparisons with the better-researched examples in the South.

There have been some significant advances in the study of religious coexistence.<sup>64</sup> More recently, territorial towns have received some attention, most notably in David Luebke's analysis of 'liturgies of accommodation' in Westphalia.<sup>65</sup> Luebke shows that many liturgical elements were shared between confessions and that pluriconfessional towns were common in Westphalia. Earlier work, for example, by Jesse Spohnholz, has shown that religious negotiations could prevent conflict and that violence was not the most common way of dealing with daily quarrels.<sup>66</sup> A study of Upper Lusatia furthers our understanding of religious coexistence by

<sup>61</sup> Some recent work on South German territories includes Daniela Hacke, 'Kommunikation über Räume. Religiöse Koexistenz und Konflikt in Dorfkirchen der Eidgenossenschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit' in Susanne Rau, Gerd Schwerhoff (eds), *Topographien des Sakralen. Religion und Raumordnung in der Vormoderne* (Munich and Hamburg, 2008), pp. 280–305; Christopher W. Close, *The Negotiated Reformation. Imperial Cities and the Politics of Urban Reform, 1525–1550* (Cambridge, 2009); Emily Fisher Gray, 'Lutheran Churches and Confessional Competition in Augsburg' in Andrew Spicer (ed.), *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 39–63; Daniela Hacke, *Konfession und Kommunikation. Religiöse Koexistenz und Politik in der Alten Eidgenossenschaft (Die Grafschaft Baden, 1531–1712)* (Cologne, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> A. G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (London, 1976), p. 161.

<sup>63</sup> Bernd Moeller, *Reichsstadt und Reformation* (Berlin, 1987). The book first appeared in 1962. See also Lorna Jane Abrey, *The People's Reformation. Magistrates, Clergy, and Commons in Strasbourg, 1500–1598* (New York, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> See Ole Peter Grell, Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002); Joachim Bahlcke, Karen Lambrecht, Hans-Christian Maner (eds), *Konfessionelle Pluralität als Herausforderung. Koexistenz und Konflikt in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit. Winfried Eberhard zum 65. Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 2006); Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and London, 2009); Howard Louthan, Gary Cohen, Franz Szabo (eds), *Diversity and Dissent: Negotiating Religious Difference in Central Europe, 1500–1800* (New York, 2011); Andreas Pietsch, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (eds), *Konfessionelle Ambiguität. Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2013); C. Scott Dixon, Damar Freist, Mark Greengrass (eds), *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2009).

<sup>65</sup> David M. Luebke, *Hometown Religion. Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia* (Charlottesville, 2016), especially pp. 49–74. See also David M. Luebke, 'Passageriten und Identität. Taufe und Eheschließung in westfälischen Kleinstädten (1550–1650)' in Jan Brademann, Kristina Thies (eds), *Liturgisches Handeln als Soziale Praxis. Kirchliche Rituale in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Münster, 2014), pp. 237–52.

<sup>66</sup> Jesse Spohnholz, *The Tactics of Toleration: A Refugee Community in the Age of Religious Wars* (Newark, 2011).

focusing on a region that was ruled by a Catholic territorial lord and, as such, had to negotiate its religious policies particularly strongly. Unlike in Westphalia, where a Catholic bishop and Lutheran town councils competed for power, in Upper Lusatia the balance of power, in theory, was clear: the Catholic king of Bohemia ruled the region. The religious negotiations on the part of the councils were therefore all the more remarkable because later in the sixteenth century they openly disobeyed their king. The case of Upper Lusatia shows that recent studies on toleration and religious pluralism are right in emphasizing that, in the words of Benjamin Kaplan, religious conflict was ‘neither inevitable nor universal’.<sup>67</sup>

More broadly, historians have become increasingly reluctant to chart a rise of toleration from the Middle Ages, a ‘persecuting society’, to modern times.<sup>68</sup> Instead, they now emphasize the complex and varied nature of tolerance and intolerance, stressing that there was significant toleration in the Middle Ages and, on the other side of the chronological spectrum, intolerance persisted well into the Enlightenment. Rather than focusing on radicals and polemicists, there is now an increasing body of scholarship on those early modern individuals, who sought to avoid conflict in a meaningful way.<sup>69</sup> General works of synthesis, as well as detailed case studies, have largely debunked the idea of the rise of toleration.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, as Alexandra Walsham has pointed out, the very meaning of tolerance was different in the early modern period. Convincing someone of the erroneous nature of their beliefs, including forcefully, was a kind of ‘charitable hatred’ which ultimately benefited the community at large. Walsham showed that ‘it was widely believed that persecution of a false religion and its adherents was not merely permissible but, moreover, a laudable and virtuous act of devotion and piety’.<sup>71</sup> This kind of persecution never occurred in Upper Lusatia and both Lutherans and Catholics displayed a significant degree of leniency towards the other group. Instead, the kind of ‘tolerance of practical rationality’ which Bob Scribner has described was the norm.<sup>72</sup> Individuals rarely attacked each other because they

<sup>67</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, p. 98.

<sup>68</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 1–38.

<sup>69</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way*, p. 6–8.

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*; Marjorie Elizabeth Plummer, Victoria Christman, *Topographies of Tolerance and Intolerance. Responses to Religious Pluralism in Reformation Europe* (Leiden, 2018); Luebke, *Hometown Religion*; Victoria Christman, *Pragmatic Toleration. The Politics of Religious Heterodoxy in Early Reformation Antwerp 1515–1555* (Rochester, 2015). See also Daniela Blum, *Multikonfessionalität im Alltag. Speyer zwischen politischem Frieden und Bekenntnismisernst (1555–1618)* (Münster, 2015) for a microhistorical study which shows that the Peace of Augsburg did not lead to a decline of conflicts on a daily basis.

<sup>71</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 39.

<sup>72</sup> Bob Scribner, ‘Preconditions of tolerance and intolerance in early modern Europe’, in Grell, Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance*, pp. 32–47.