

THE MINING TOWN OF PLATTEN. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND MARRIAGE PATTERNS

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This study attempts to show both the outside influences on the parish of Platten (district of Neudek) and those radiated by the latter on its surrounding area. The author deals with questions of the geographical situation, transport, economy (mining), settlement, dialect, and especially the origin of matrimonial partners. Six periods of 25 years each are compared by means of maps showing area of origin.

Platten was founded as a Saxon mining town in 1532, and as its dialect reveals, was settled from Saxony. In the initial period of its existence, it had wide-ranging trade connections, and its tin-mining attracted miners from distant places. Thus the first map of origin does not show the normal central concentration, but rather a great dispersion with focal points on the periphery. From St. Joachimsthal, where mining had gone into a decline, came not only migrants, but also the ideas of the Reformation.

In 1556, Platten became part of Bohemia, and its economy was henceforth oriented toward the Bohemian area, and especially Egerland. At first the matrimonial partners continued to come from Saxony (Map No. 2). The unfavourable climatic and geographical situation worked to hinder the development of substitute industries when mining began to decline.

To escape the Counter-Reformation, most of Platten's inhabitants moved to Saxon territory, founding Johanngeorgenstadt there in 1654. Those who remained in Platten continued to maintain ties with their relatives in Johanngeorgenstadt. But as a result of the confessional frontier, the area of origin of the married couples increasingly shifted from Saxony to Bohemia (Map No. 3).

Although mining in Platten prospered once more in the 18th century, the map of origin for this period (Map No. 4) shows a central concentration, with a decrease in number coupled with growing distances. In other words, while Platten's reputation in the 16th century had attracted people from more remote places, it appears to have been an unknown town in the 18th century, enjoying mutual ties only with its immediate neighbourhood.

With industrialization (Map No. 5), Platten won contacts throughout the world, but compared with other industrial towns, its economic strength remained modest. Although the coming of the railroad brought Platten closer to Neudek, there was no corresponding increase in the number of matrimonial partners coming from Egerland. Marriages with persons from places in the vicinity of Platten where an Erzgebirge dialect was spoken continued to dominate the picture (Map No. 6). If one adds to this factor the large percentage of purely local marriages, it is clear why the Erzgebirge character of the town could be preserved and there was no absorption into a developing larger Sudeten German-wide area of origin. However, the impact of radio, films and tourism in the thirties furthered the latter process, blurring local peculiarities. Although the frontier acquired its sharpest expression in the interwar period, the influence of Saxony again became stronger, the number of Saxon matrimonial partners, which up to then had been steadily falling, once again increasing.