

DOMINICANS AND BALNEOLOGY IN THE BOHEMIA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES (1650 – 1720)

DOMINIKANCI I BALNEOLOGIJA U ČEŠKOJ I SUSJEDNIM ZEMLJAMA (1650. – 1720.)

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SUMMARY

The paper tackles the question of balneological treatment available for the members of the Order of Preachers in Central Europe between 1650 and 1720. I took advantage of a strict record keeping procedure within the Dominican order, which required that all members obtain a written permission from the Father Provincial before taking any journey beyond local boundaries. As all the records were kept in so called “Provincial books” (Libri provinciae) it was possible to identify travelling permits issued for balneological treatment and collect data about visits to spas from the entire Czech Province.

Keywords: Dominicans, balneology, spa, early modern period, Bohemia

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INTRODUCTION

The Order of Preachers (*Ordo Praedicatorum*), also known as the Dominican Order, was founded by St Dominic de Guzman at the beginning of the 13th century. As its main mission was to preach among the growing population of medieval cities, it is not usually considered to be the best source of information about the history of medicine.¹ Unlike orders such as Merciful Brethren (*Ordo hospitalarius S. Ioannis de Deo*) or the Order of St Elizabeth (*Sorores hospitalariae S. Elisabethae*), which focused primarily on providing health care, the Dominicans saw their mission elsewhere.²

However, given the carefully regulated life of Dominican friars and nuns, official records provide a useful insight into several medical issues such as ailments of individual members, which had to be dealt with on a daily basis. The whole community was also forced to respond to general crises such as plague epidemics. In this paper, I would like to focus on the growing importance of early modern balneology. Although my research draws from the archive of the Czech Province, the results are related to a wider Central European context.

¹ Although there have been studies concerning Dominicans and medicine published recently in *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica*. See S. Krsić, *Apothecary activity in Dubrovnik Dominican Monastery from XVIIth to the Beginning of the XIXth Century*, *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica* (further abbreviated as AMHA) 9, 2011, No. 1, pp. 19-32; S. Krsić, *Prirodnoznanstvenici i medicinska bibliografija u dominikanskom samostanu u Dubrovniku*, AMHA 8, 2010, No. 1, pp. 83-108.

² The relationship between medicine and religious institutions became recently focus of research in several Central-European countries. It is impossible to offer a representative summary here, thus I shall mention only few examples: U. Augustyniak – A. Karpiński (edd.): *Charitas. Miłosierdzie i opieka społeczna w ideologii, normach postępowania i praktyce społeczności wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej XVI-XVIII wieku*, Warszawa, 1999; S. Anagnostou, *Jesuiten in Spanisch-Amerika als Übermittler von heilkundlichem Wissen*, Stuttgart, 2000; S. Horn, *Des Propstes Heilkundlicher Schatz, medizinische Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts in der Bibliothek des ehem. Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftes St. Pölten* (= Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte Niederösterreichs Band 9), St. Pölten, 2002; A. Rzhacek-Beđo, *Medizinische Wissenschaftspflege im Benediktinerkloster Admont bis 1500*, Wien – München, 2005; K. Černý, *A Century of Miracles. Miracles of Jesuit Saints in Bohemia 1620-1720*, *Virus. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Medizin* 7, 2008, pp. 175-183; E. Hoško, *Briga Hrvatskih franjevacu za bolesne članove od XVII. do XIX. stoljeća*, AMHA 9, 2011, No. 2, pp. 265-278; N. Kujundžić – M. Glibota – S. Inić, „Mnoge različite likarie od bolesti glave“ – fragment ljekaruše iz arhiva Franjevačkog samostana u Sinju, AMHA 9, 2011, No. 2, pp. 225-236; A. Nikić, *Pharmacy of Friars Minor in Dubrovnik as Franciscan Contribution to the History of Pharmacy*, AMHA 4, 2006, No. 1, pp. 153-162; A. Škrobonja, *Sveti Franjo i njegova subrača – pomoćnici bolesnima i zaštitnici od bolesti*, AMHA 9, 2011, No. 2, pp. 279-292; A. Muzur – A. Škrobonja, *Miraculous Healings as a Time- and Space- Conditioned Category – The Example of St. Thecla*, *Collegium Anthropologicum* 26, 2002, No. 1, pp. 325-335.

THE CZECH PROVINCE AND *LIBER PROVINCIAE*

Before I focus on balneology, I would like to take a brief look into the history of the Czech Dominican Province and discuss my primary source – the diary of the Father Provincial. Only a few years after pope Honorius III had established the Order of Preachers, the new religious order was introduced to Kingdom of Bohemia, probably by the Dominicans from Poland.³ As a result, Czech Dominican convents were initially part of the Polish Province. At the turn of 1300, Dominican convents reached a critical mass sufficient to establish an independent Czech Province. Over the 15th century, male and female convents kept spreading all over Bohemia. After 1420, all Catholic orders, including the Dominican, suffered severely from the Hussite wars and the subsequent Utraquist movement, which did not favour monastic forms of life. The Czech Province was reduced to only a few convents facing all kinds of difficulties, most notably poverty and very low discipline.

The beginning of the Thirty Years' War in Europe heralded a new era for Czech Catholics. As a result of an unsuccessful Czech Estates Rebellion (1618-1620), the kingdom lost most of its ancient liberties, including religious freedoms. The Habsburg emperors started a long and cumbersome process of reinstating the dominance of the Catholic church in Central Europe. The new political course also affected religious orders. Several orders, most notably Jesuits, were either re-introduced or newly introduced into Bohemia, and orders with medieval roots were allowed to claim back their former properties. It seems that a profound internal crisis effectively prevented Czech Dominicans from fully taking the advantage of this unique opportunity. The province remained weak, poor, and undisciplined. Only since 1650, after several interventions of the Father General in Rome, had the Czech Province begun to gradually transform into a healthy and efficient religious institution. The process took half a century and culminated in 1707, when

³ For further reading about the history of the Czech Province of the Order of Preachers see T. Černušák – A. Prokop – D. Němec, *Historie dominikánů v českých zemích*, Prague, 2001; M. M. Buben, *Encyklopedie řádů a kongregací v českých zemích*, III/1, Prague 2006, pp. 11-130; J. Zouhar, *Církevní dějiny Noëla Alexandra OP v kontextu evropské církevní historiografie na přelomu 17. a 18. století*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis 49, 2009, pp. 15-42; T. Černušák, *Proměny řeholního života na Moravě od pozdního středověku do doby moderní* (2009) a PhD thesis from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Masaryk's University in Brno; J. Zouhar, *Česká dominikánská provincie v raném novověku (1435 – 1790)*, a PhD thesis defended at the Faculty of Education (Charles University in Prague) in 2007, this work contains an exhaustive list of further reading on the history of Dominican Order, see pp. 4-9 and 250-259; the thesis was recently published as J. Zouhar, *Česká dominikánská provincie v raném novověku: (1435 - 1790)*, Prague, 2010.



Narrow Husova street in the centre of Prague with the Dominican monastery. The office of Father Provincial was and still is located in the building on the left, which is connected with the church of St Gilles (sv. Jilji) seen in the background. (Photo by: Karel Černý)

Uska Husova ulica u središtu Praga s Dominikanskim samostanom. Ured Oca Provincijala i dalje je u zgradi na lijevoj strani, koja je spojena s crkvom Sv. Egidija u pozadini. (Foto Karel Černý)

Silesian convents, which had been under Polish administration for more than a century, were returned to the Czech Province.

In the mid-17th century, Father Provincial Godefridus Marequis started profound reforms on all levels of administration, from the poorest convents to the Provincial's office. One of the useful instruments to implement this change was the so called *Provincial Book* (*Liber provinciae*). The *Provincial Book* is in essence a diary of the Father Provincial, documenting succinctly all the decisions taken by his office as part of daily management. Between 1650 and 1720, the book had grown into three volumes in folio, now preserved at the National Archives in Prague.⁴

Although associated with the position of the Father Provincial, the records were probably kept by his secretary. Due to the day-to-day nature of recording, virtually every piece of information is provided with precise date. Entries were added regularly, if not every day, then at least several times a week.

As the four-year term of office expired, the Father General in Rome would appoint a new Father Provincial. During these intervals, the book was kept by the Father Vice-Provincial, so the transition went smoothly from person to person without a hiatus. Overall, in only a few cases was the diary neglected, such as the Father Provincial's disease or disability. As a result, the diary tracks changes in the Province's management exceptionally well.

Among the entries regularly recorded by the Provincial's office are the leaves issued to the members of the Order to visit a spa. They reflect strict control of mobility exerted by the Order over its membership. Dominican friars were not allowed to leave their convent without Father Superior's permission. Normally, the members would leave the convent in pairs to attend to their daily chores and would remain in close vicinity of the convent, usually within city walls. Even these short local journeys required permission from the superior, who had power to grant a maximum one-day leave. If a Dominican wanted to embark on a longer journey, for instance to visit his relatives, go to a pilgrimage, or visit a spa, he had to receive a written consent from the Father Provincial, as without this document, he would be

⁴ National Archives of the Czech Republic, *Archiv české provincie dominikánského řádu*, Ms. No. 8, *Liber provinciae Bohemiae* 1653–1670; Ms. No. 9, *Liber provinciae* 1670–1693; Ms. No. 10, *Liber provinciae* 1693–1721. These three manuscripts are further abbreviated as *Liber provinciae* 1653–1670, *Liber provinciae* 1670–1693 and *Liber provinciae* 1693–1721. Also note that the manuscripts are partially paginated and partially foliated, therefore the references in this paper follow the system employed by each quoted passage.

considered a fugitive. Leaving the convent without a permit was seen as a gross breach of discipline. Each convent was responsible for its members, including the liability to pay for all the damages or costs incurred outside the convent. Indeed, historical records document several such cases of stray friars, who for various reasons roamed Central Europe begging for food and misbehaving.⁵ This only increased the strain on the already poor Czech convents. Control of mobility was part of the financial recovery of the Province during the second half of the 17th century, and imposing stricter discipline was seen as pivotal.

The value of information which can be gleaned from the *Provincial Book* is limited by the form in which an ordinary permission to leave the convent was recorded. For example, a 1678 record reads as follows: “14 [die] *Septembris data fuit licentia R. P. Joanni Hoch tempore sibi opportuno eundi ad Thermas Teplicenses curandi valetudinem suam.*”⁶ Only a few months later, in the spring of 1679, the text reads thus: “1^a [die] *Aprilis data fuit licentia R. P. Priori Brunensi Christophoro Dietel eundi Thermas Carolinas propter necessariam curam suae necessitatis juxta exhibitam fidem medici.*”⁷ Both records bear mention of the date, the name of the applicant, sometimes the name of the convent, and usually the destination. Additionally, some entries also mention the period a member was expected to spend in a spa and note that the visit was recommended by a physician. These occasional references to medical advice are important inasmuch as they prove that trips to various health resorts were truly related to the medical needs of friars.

Records such as the above remained fairly short throughout the studied period. Often they provide even fewer pieces of information, as the Father Provincial obviously did not feel the need to record medical needs of his subordinates in detail. It is regrettable for a historian of medicine that the diagnoses are completely omitted. The diary records but a few cases of illnesses, mostly those debilitating a friar to perform services in a local community. But with one or two exceptions, these cases were not related to spa treatment.

Before I move on to the next section, I would like to make one last point about permissions given to the female members of the Order – the Dominican nuns. They lived in complete isolation from the secular society. Once they

⁵ For further details on discipline in the Province see K. Černý, *Disciplína a další aspekty řádové organizace v české dominikánské provincii (podle zápisů provinciálů z let 1653 - 1721)*, *Folia Historica Bohemica* 25, 2010, No. 2, pp. 67-111.

⁶ *Liber provinciae 1670–1693*, p. 105.

⁷ *Liber provinciae 1670–1693*, p. 110.

entered the Order, they were virtually sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in one building with a very few opportunities to see the outside world. Unlike male convent superiors, abbesses had no authority to grant permissions for even short visits outside the monastery walls. The next section of this paper will show how this rigid regime was increasingly contested during the 17th century, partly as a result of the growing importance of balneology, which necessitated that nuns were granted at least the minimal freedom to travel in order to satisfy their medical needs.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates the growth of balneological treatment among Dominicans.

Table 1 - Numbers of visits approved by Father Provincial for various spas divided into decenniums.

Tablica 1. Posjeti toplicama odobreni od strane Oca Provincijala, po desetljećima

	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	1700s	1710s
Baden bei Wien	0	0	0	1	3	18	5
Bochoř	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cheb	1	5	1	12	0	14	2
Jelenia Góra	0	0	1	0	0	5	0
Karlovy Vary	0	5	6	8	5	10	9
Lądek Zdrój	0	0	0	0	0	5	12
Stary Zdrój	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Šternberk	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Teplice	0	0	3	1	4	12	18
Trenčianské Teplice	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
Velké Losiny	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Not identified	0	0	0	7	1	4	9

The visits are presented by decades and destinations.⁸ Between 1651 and 1720, there were overall 209 visit records with only 21 (10%) not stating a destination. The remaining 188 records mention destinations in the

⁸ The tables and graph provided in this paper do not reflect growing numbers of members of the Czech province. The demographic statistic for the province is presently unknown.

historical regions of Bohemia (Cheb, Karlovy Vary, Teplice)⁹, Moravia (Bochoř, Šternberk, Velké Losiny)¹⁰, Lower Silesia (Stary Zdrój, Jelenia Góra, Łądek Zdrój),¹¹ Upper Hungary (Trenčianské Teplice),¹² and Lower Austria (Baden bei Wien).¹³ The number of visits to the spas had been rising throughout the studied period with one exception in the last decade of the 17th century. This rise does not necessarily reflect better accessibility of balneological treatment for the members of the Order, but rather the growth in membership resulting from the consolidation of the Province in the second half of the 17th century and the sharp rise in 1707, when the Silesian convents joined in nearly doubling the number of convents and monasteries in the Czech Province. The number of Dominican nuns also grew, as I will explain in detail further below. On the other hand, the results clearly show that the Dominican province as a whole became more and more accustomed to sending its members to spas.

The table also illustrates differences in the popularity of destinations; some, such as Cheb and Karlovy Vary, keep appearing in the records throughout the studied period, while others are mentioned occasionally. It is likely that the annexation of Silesian convents gave rise to the interest in Lower-Silesian spas such as Łądek Zdrój or Jelenia Góra. Visits to spas in Slovakia and Austria suggest that border crossing did not present a problem for friars.

Figure 2 compares the records between genders.

While first male permits were issued as early as the 1650s, nuns were allowed to visit spas no earlier than the 1680s and in negligible numbers (only

⁹ Cheb is a city located in the westernmost part of Czech Republic with several mineral springs. Historical sources usually refer to it by its German name Eger. The town of Karlovy Vary has remained famous as a health resort to this day. Abroad it is better known under the German name Carlsbad. The city of Teplice (often referred as *Thermae Döplitzenses*) is a well known health resort located in northern Bohemia. Its springs of mineral water were known at least since the 16th century.

¹⁰ Bochoř is a small place located near the town of Přerov in Czech Republic and is still a health resort. Moravian town of Šternberk is located in the vicinity of the town of Olomouc. I was unable to verify whether it had ever been a spa. Velké Losiny is a thermal spa, which is referred to as *Thermae Ullensdorf*.

¹¹ Lower-Silesian spas, located in today's Poland, are usually referred to in the *Liber provinciae* under their German names. Stary Zdrój (Altwasser) is now a part of the town of Wałbrzych. Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) belongs to Cieplice Śląskie. Łądek Zdrój was known as *Thermae Landecenses*. It is a town in the Polish region called Województwo dolnośląskie.

¹² Trenčianské Teplice is located in Slovakia. The place is still a popular health resort.

¹³ Baden bei Wien is probably the oldest spa on my list, as its history stretches back to the ancient Roman times.

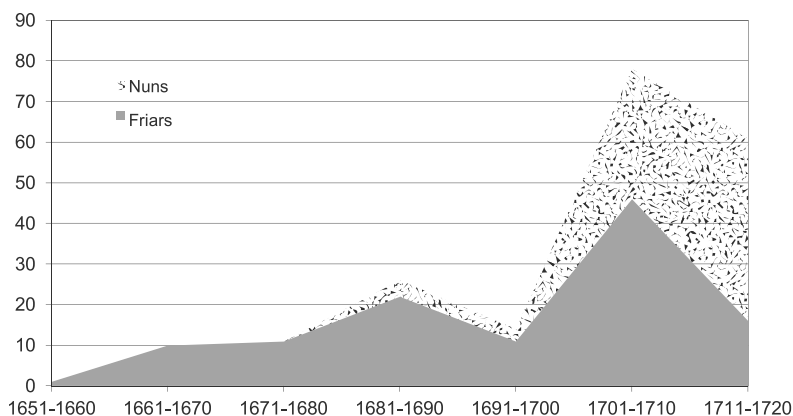


Figure 2 - Share of male or female visitors divided into decades.

Slika 2. Udio muškaraca i žena kojima je odobren odlazak u toplice po desetljećima

three in the 1680s and four in the 1690s). This unfavourable ratio started to change in the first two decades of the 18th century and especially after 1710, when the number of male visits dropped. The sharp rise in the number of nuns allowed to visit the spas at that time nearly made up for the fall in the number of friars.

This gender disparity has its roots in the way the Dominican Order was originally conceived during the Middle Ages. The mission of friars was to spread faith among the city folk through preaching and lecturing, while nuns were seen as inherently unable to deal with the dangers of the secular world and were expected to retreat within monastery walls. This role was first challenged by the work of Mary Ward (1585-1645), who tried to establish, for the first time in history, a Catholic female institution outside the cloister.¹⁴ Her efforts met strong opposition, and she spent the rest of her life defending the active role of women in the life of the holy Church.

Therefore it is not surprising, that Dominican nuns, who had to cope with their medieval legacy, had very limited mobility. In fact, the second half of the 17th century in the Czech Province saw even tighter restrictions on nuns' liberties as part of the general attempt to impose greater discipline within the Order. The diary of the Father Provincial documents several provisions aimed to limit the contact of nuns with the outside world. In 1653,

¹⁴ E. Giles, *Mary Ward*, in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York 1912. Retrieved from the internet version on January 20, 2013 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15551c.htm>>.

during his inspection of St Anna monastery in Prague, Father Godefridus Marequis forbade the nuns to use an “antiquated privilege” to occasionally host female visitors within the cloister.¹⁵

Doubts about the extent of liberties to be granted to nuns resurfaced on several occasions during decades that followed. When Father Provincial considered granting a leave to a nun to visit a spa for the first time, he did not dare to make this decision alone, but handed it over to the Father General in Rome, and the diary records that the reply came in March 1679. It was probably negative as there is no information that the nun visited the spa after all. Her name was Catharina Schislin; she was the abbess of the monastery of St Anna in Brno (Moravia) and died a year later.¹⁶ The question appeared on the agenda again in 1684, during a process against Schislin’s successor, abbess Anna Harrin. Harrin wished to visit a spa, but fearing that the Provincial would turn her down, she decided to bypass her superiors and obtained the permit from a local bishop and her personal confessor, who was a member of the Dominican Order as well. However, as soon as the Father Provincial learned about her defiance, Anna Harrin was suspended from her position. The whole thing was considered to be a grave breach of religious discipline, and the Father Provincial forwarded the decision about both Anna Harrin and her confessor to Rome (as he had no authority over the bishop). They were reprimanded, stripped of their privileges, and sentenced to a long house arrest.¹⁷ The cases of Catharina Schislin and Anna Harrin show that, at least until 1685, the mobility of Dominican nuns was strictly limited, and not even medical issues were an exception.

My belief that the dynamics of nuns’ visits to spas is related to the changing attitude toward women inside the Dominican Order is further supported by another non-medical phenomenon, which shows striking similarities. During consolidation, the Czech Province had to sort out administration of female monasteries, which had to follow very different property management rules than did male monasteries. Since the beginning of the Order, friars were expected to earn their daily bread by begging. In return for material support, the lay community received spiritual care. The idea of holy poverty was therefore a substantial part of Dominican discipline. The nuns, on the other hand, were confined to cloister walls and could not make a living

¹⁵ *Liber provinciae* 1653–1670, p. 3, 35.

¹⁶ *Liber provinciae* 1670–1693, p. 110. Note that both monasteries in Prague and Brno were consecrated in name of St. Anna.

¹⁷ *Liber provinciae* 1670–1693, fol. 147r.

through contact with lay people. To grant them a certain level of financial security, their monastic communities were allowed to own property, including real estates.

The difficulty arose with the management of these estates. Secular goods were perceived as inherently corrupting for male members of the Order, so they were forbidden to participate in the daily management, but the nuns could not oversee the property either, because they were forbidden to leave the cloister. As a result, the estates were managed by local reeves (magistrates), who were employed by the monasteries. They were allowed to enter the cloister and confer regularly with the abbess in order to carry out her orders. Unfortunately, the nuns had no means of control over the magistrates, and reeves regularly abused their position. Dominicans were fully aware of this problem.¹⁸ The dilemma of estate administration eventually forced the Fathers Provincials to choose the lesser evil, as they started to grant occasional leaves of absence to abbesses in order to oversee the estates and participate actively in their management.¹⁹ Perhaps it is a mere coincidence, but in 1703 – four years before Czech Dominicans discussed the issue of nuns' property and subsequently loosened the rules concerning mobility – Barbara Babthorpe received papal confirmation for Institute of Mary, the first modern religious institution, which built upon the legacy of Mary Ward²⁰ This suggests that the first decade of the 18th century brought a general change in attitude toward nuns' personal liberties that concerned the whole Catholic Church rather than the Czech Province alone. Although I cannot rule out a possibility, that the growing numbers of nuns leaving monasteries for various reasons may have also been related to discipline issues within the Silesian part of the province. Silesian monasteries were merged with the Czech province in the same decade when the change happens. At this point however I have no proof which would support this eventuality.

¹⁸ Liber provinciae 1693–1721, fol. 92^v-92^r.

¹⁹ See the permissions given subsequently in Liber provinciae 1693–1721, fol. 123^v, 129^v, 167^v.

²⁰ Barbara Babthorpe was the fourth successor of Mary Ward, whose modern religious institute was originally suppressed by the papal decision in 1630. See E. Giles, *Institute of Mary*, in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York 1912. Retrieved from the internet version on January 20, 2013 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08054a.htm>>.

Table 1 shows gender differences through the distribution of spa visits by destination.

Table 2 – Share of male or female in individual destinations.

Tablica 2. Udio muškaraca i žena po pojedinim toplicama

Destination	Friars		Nuns	
	n	%	n	%
Baden bei Wien	17		5	22,7
Bochoř	0	0,0	2	100,0
Cheb	22		11	33,3
Jelenia Góra	3		3	50,0
Karlovy Vary	34		9	20,9
Lądek Zdrój	3		14	82,6
Stary Zdrój	0	0,0	5	100,0
Šternberk	1	100,0	0	0,0
Teplice	26		12	31,6
Trenčianské Teplice	3		6	66,6
Velké Losiny	0	0,0	4	100,0
Total	109		71	39,4

I was able to identify 180 visits to spas where both the gender of the patient and the destination were clearly specified. Note that nuns were granted fewer travel permits than friars, 71 (39.4%) to be exact. This means that an average destination would have a ratio of 60:40 in favour of men and if the percentage of female visitors, which is given in the last column of the table, is higher than roughly 40% the destination was preferred by nuns. If it is lower, the place was preferred by friars. Given the small sample, however, for destinations such as Bochoř, Stary Zdrój, Šternberk, Trenčianské Teplice, or Velké Losiny, preferences are only speculative. The case in point is Stary Zdrój, as this destination was actually visited only once by a group of five nuns, who went there together.

On the other hand, major spas like Karlovy Vary, Cheb, Teplice, and perhaps Lądek Zdrój seem to demonstrate a certain general tendency, with the

first three tipping slightly in favour of friars and the last in favour of nuns. Although I would hesitate to draw a clearcut conclusion based on these numbers, further research that would compare Dominican records with contemporary medical literature could confirm that some destinations were recommended for male or female visitors.

CONCLUSIONS

I would like to wrap up the analysis of balneology in the Czech Dominican Province with a few points. First, the 1650-1720 records in the *Liber provinciae*, seem quite useful from the demographical as well as medical point of view. The Order of Preachers was a well-defined social group. Members lived in roughly similar conditions, with strictly regulated diet and daily schedule, wore similar clothes, and so on. For this pre-statistical period we could hardly find a group more suitable for a long-term observation. No other social group (burghers, nobility, peasants) showed similar preoccupation with uniform way of life. Furthermore, members of the Catholic orders were the only ones whose lives were systematically recorded over long periods.

On the other hand, the Father Provincial's diary provides very limited information for diagnostic purpose. Dominican superiors were not physicians; they were not interested in details, and therefore did not provide information on ailments that bothered their Order. Sorting the spas according to gender preference has yielded only partial results. Although we can speculate that there is a link with specifically "feminine" diseases, its nature cannot be evaluated without further research.

Second, during the second half of the 17th century, Dominicans in Central Europe gradually accepted the idea to seek medical treatment in health resorts. Permissions to visit a spa were usually granted only in serious cases, as even during the latter decades, the proportion of visitors per year was relatively small in comparison with the overall number of Dominicans in the province, which I estimate to be hundreds. The involvement of physicians, recorded occasionally, shows that convent superiors valued their opinion and that it overrode limitations imposed by the Order.

It is also important to bear in mind that Dominicans cannot be considered a medical avant-garde. If anything, they were probably among more conservative social groups, and yet they seem to have taken advantage of an established network of health resorts spanning several Central-European regions. This suggests that balneology may have been popular with the rest of

the contemporary society. The Czech Dominican Province was not wealthy. Provincial administration and individual convents struggled with financial difficulties throughout the second half of the 17th century. Therefore, the continuous and growing accessibility of balneological care for its members probably means that this form of medical treatment was not limited to the upper classes.

Lastly, gender disparity, is perhaps the most interesting finding, as it demonstrates not only the difference in personal liberties between friars and nuns, but also how they changed over time. In other words, the medieval idea of total isolation of Dominican nuns from the outside world gradually gave in to more tolerant (and practical) policies.

SAŽETAK

U ovome se radu propituje dostupnost balneološkog liječenja članovima Reda propovjednika u središnjoj Europi između 1650. i 1720. Zahvaljujući strogom postupku praćenja kretanja članova Reda, za svako je putovanje izvan mjesta u kojem se nalazio samostan, provincijal izdavao dozvolu, koja se bilježila u tzv. provincijske knjige (Libri provinciae). Na temelju tih zapisa, bilo je moguće izdvojiti dozvole za posjete toplicama radi liječenja i prikupiti relevantne podatke za cijelu Češku provinciju.

Ključne riječi: *Dominikanci, balneologija, toplice, rano moderno doba, Češka*