

Who were Martin Luther's parents-in-law?

New research results on Katharina von Bora's kinsfolk lead to (D-06688) Schkortleben (near D-06667 Weißenfels/Saale).

New results in research on the topic of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora, for which the deserted village of Sahla near Schkortleben plays a certain role, were now provided and made available by Jürgen Wagner. He was born in Weißenfels and has been living in Düsseldorf for the past couple of decades. However, he is still strongly linked to his hometown in central Germany. On today's occasion of the "Lutherin's" anniversary, he pursues the question of: Who were Martin Luther's in-laws?

The search for birthplace and ancestors

For centuries, genealogists and historians with an interest in the Protestant Reformation have been debating about who were the parents of the on January 29, 1499, born Katharina von Bora, wife of the German reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546). At the end of the 19th century, one was still searching for Katharina's birthplace in at least six different locations, amongst others (D 06925) Löben in the district of (D-06886) Wittenberg and (D-06804) Muldenstein, district (D-06773) Gräfenhainichen. Since about 1905 though, experts agree that only Lippendorf to the south of Leipzig - entirely excavated and cleared away in 1980 - comes into consideration.

Specialists primarily rely on records mentioning Lippendorf in the years 1482 and 1505. In these documents, a Hans von Bora and his wife Katharina are stated first and later a Jhan von Bora and his wife Margarete "zu Lippendorf". Since 1900, it was assumed that Hans and Jhan von Bora were the same person, for no valid reason. In this context, the 1505 appearing Margarete was to have been Katharina von Bora's stepmother. There is even the very touching legend, that little Katharina was sent into the nunnery in Brehna, at the instigation of this stepmother.

Jürgen Wagner looked into history more closely. Since 1999, he has been collecting every obtainable piece of news about the family von Bora. Furthermore, he checked the information through archival research and has come to astounding

results. He had already published his doubts towards traditional beliefs of the "Lutherin's" origins in the form of numerous essays within the genealogical journals "Genealogie" and "Genealogical Research in Central Germany" (original title: "Familienforschung in Mitteldeutschland") in 2005 and 2006. In 2006, he voiced the guess that Katharina von Bora could be more closely linked to the deserted village of Sahla near Schkortleben than investigated, so far. Henceforth, he presents a further essay in which he introduces an own and completely new approach towards this old question.

Findings challenge theory

In the latest paper, the author lists a legal record from the year 1531 which gives evidence of a law suit between the brothers von Bora about an inherited property in Kieritzsch, district of (D-04552) Borna, but which had not been recognised by the literature until then. This document conveys some new insight into the paternal family relationships of the "Lutherin". Besides that, it also explains why those family members ran a small agricultural business in quite a distance to Wittenberg. For the local history, it is of importance that Katharina's paternal ancestors and kinship owned the long lost manor Sahla near Schkortleben in the years between 1438 and 1494. (Sahla was situated exactly where the Autobahn A 38 Göttingen – Leipzig crosses the river Saale, today.)

In addition, Jürgen Wagner offers an alternative view to the traditional ideas regarding the Reformer's wife's maternal family relationships. These considerations take the numerous contradictions from previous papers in account that were pointed out by the latest scientific literature. Especially the legend about a stepmother is rejected.. As a result, only the in 1505 mentioned Jhan von Bora from Lippendorf and his wife Margarete, of unknown origin, can be considered to be the biological parents of the "Lutherin". Because genealogists have not payed much attention to this Margarete as yet, the author concludes that the family background from Katharina von Bora's mother, despite extensive literature about the Katharina who was mentioned 1482, has to be regarded as rather unresearched.

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