

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

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## **Življenje in prehrana v koprskem samostanu sv. Klare ob koncu 18. stoletja**

### IZVLEČEK

*Samostan sv. Klare v Kopru je bil ustanovljen leta 1301. Redovnice so temeljno skrb posvečale molitvi in kontemplaciji, ukvarjale pa so se tudi z vzgojo (predvsem plemiških deklet). Čeprav so duhovno živele odmaknjeno (klavzura), lahko na osnovi njihovih kupoprodajnih in zakupnih pogodb sklepamo tudi o njihovem živahnem gospodarskem delovanju. Ohranjena blagajniška knjiga za obdobje med letoma 1771 in 1798 pa priča o njihovi skrbi za raznovrstno prehrano v samostanu. Temeljila je na mesu in žitu, a so si jedilnik dopolnjevale tudi z jajci, sirom, raznovrstnimi stročnicami, zelenjavo ter svežim in suhim sadjem. Izdatki za nakup začimb, kave in čokolade kažejo na njihov izboren okus in skrbno pripravo hrane.*

### KLJUČNE BESEDE

*Koper, samostan sv. Klare, prehrana, 18. stoletje*

### ABSTRACT

#### *LIFE AND DIET IN THE ST. CLARE CONVENT IN KOPER AT THE END OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY*

*The St. Clare Convent in Koper was founded in 1301. The nuns dedicated themselves almost entirely to prayer and contemplation, and to some extent to education (especially of noble girls). Although they pursued a life of spiritual seclusion (claustration), their purchase contracts and lease agreements offer a glimpse at their vibrant economic activities. The preserved account book for the period 1771–1798, however, testifies to their concern for a varied diet in the convent. The diet was based on meat and grains, supplemented with eggs, cheese, different kinds of legumes, vegetables, as well as fresh and dry fruit. Expenditure on the purchase of spices, coffee, and chocolate reveals their exquisite taste and careful preparation of food.*

### KEY WORDS

*Koper, St. Clare Convent, diet, 18<sup>th</sup> century*




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## S U M M A R Y

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### Life and diet in the St. Clare Convent in Koper at the end of the 18th century

The St. Clare Convent in Koper was founded in 1301. It mostly received girls of wealthy families from Koper and its surroundings. Mother Superior of the convent was an abbess (elected for the period of three years) and her assistant a vicar. Although no regulations (constitutions) of the convent have been found, it is possible to conclude on the basis of the convent's property that the nuns lived in observance of the *Rules* issued by Pope Urban IV (hence the name Urbanist Clares), who in 1263 issued an amended and modified *Rules of Pope Innocent*. The Clares—divided into choir sisters, who had taken solemn vows, and conversae, lay sisters who had not—also engaged in education (primarily of noble girls). Parents paid 40 ducats annually to cover their daughters' boarding fees. The boarder girls were to be separated from the choir sisters and novices. Their entrance into the convent (enclosure) was decided upon by the entire chapter. They were to observe the rules of claustration and parlours like the nuns, and they were to wear woollen dresses of black, dark or white colour. In all appearance, the length of time a girl would remain in the convent was agreed upon beforehand (not longer than until the age of 25).

Life in the convent was organised in accordance with the established rules. Contacts with the outer world were limited. It was only upon a special permission that the nuns and boarder girls were allowed to talk with their acquaintances in a special parlour (*parlatorio*), in the presence of at least one listener (*ascolatrice*) or a nun determined by her. Outside visitors were denied entrance into the enclosure; however, in exceptional cases and upon special permission, some visitors were also allowed access into this section of the convent (e.g. surgeons for blood-letting or tooth pulling, masons for wall repairs, stove makers for stove repairs, etc.).

Girls entered the convent paying the dowry (in the form of movable and immovable property); initially, the average value of the dowry amounted to somewhere between 50 and 200 ducats, later 400 and more (up to 1000 ducats). The dowry contracts list houses, warehouses, sometimes even farmsteads, vineyards, olive groves, meadows, fields or gardens, salt fields, and so forth. In most cases, the dowry consisted of the income derived from leasing out individual buildings or properties, and it was only seldom paid forthwith, in money.

The convent remained in operation until 1806. Upon its dissolution it housed eighteen nuns (fourteen choir sisters and four conversae who were moved to the Monastery of St. Blaise in Koper), two maids and two doorkeepers, and a male attendant.

Although the nuns pursued a life of spiritual seclusion, their purchase contracts and lease agreements offer a glimpse at their vibrant economic activities and a preserved account book for the period 1771–1798 testifies to their concern for a varied diet in the convent. Unfortunately, the examined sources contain no descriptions of dishes the conversae prepared in the convent kitchen and much less of menus or the like. From the prohibition to give away pastry to lay people and sell them outside the convent, which is mentioned in the visitations, it is possible to infer what kinds of pastry were prepared by the nuns (especially the conversae). There are several mentions of cakes (*buzzolai*), biscuits (*savoiard*) and *pignoclate*. Judging from the bishop's instructions, they allegedly prepared soup only once a week from 1736 onward and minestrone on other days, but in the absence of menus (precise meal plans) it is impossible to confirm whether or not the aforementioned instructions were observed.

Given the amounts of money used, the diet of the Clare Sisters of Koper in the period 1771–1798 was based on meat and grains, for which they spent 112,263.2 lira or about 36% of total food expenditure on different kinds of meat and fish, and roughly the same amount for rice, various kinds of grains, flour, semolina, bread, and pasta (111,691.84 lira or 35.44%). An important supplement to a balanced diet (especially during fasting) was eggs, which amounted to 8.56% of food expenditure, and dairy products (8266.2 lira or 2.62%), particularly cheese and butter. For various kinds of vegetables (apparently they did not use potatoes), legumes and sometimes mushrooms, they spent 9433.47 lira or 2.99%, and 8095.94 lira or 2.57% of total food expenditure for the purchase of fruit, chestnuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, and almonds. The nuns also spent a considerable amount of money for the purchase of honey and various kinds of sugar (13,840.36 or 4.39%) and a noteworthy amount for coffee (941.86 lira or 0.3%) and chocolate (437.2 lira or 0.14%), which was in the 18th century considered a luxury only nobility could afford. The purchases of various kinds and types of spices as well as liquors (3477.29 lira or 1.1%) attest to the refined taste and careful preparation of food. To drink, the nuns bought wine and marc, and they spent some money on vinegar (altogether 18,977.64 lira or ca. 6% of total food expenditure).