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Baročna alkimija na Kranjskem

IZVLEČEK

V pričujoči razpravi je predstavljena poznorenesančna in baročna alkimija v habsburških deželah, zlasti v vojvodini Kranjski, in sicer v kontekstu študija zahodne ezoterične tradicije. V razpravi so obravnavane različne teme, ki so vezane na alkimistično tradicijo na Kranjskem. Najprej so obrazloženi temeljni pojmi, povezani s študijem zahodne ezoterične tradicije. Zatem so na kratko predstavljene osnovne značilnosti alkimije kot ene od zahodnih ezoteričnih tradicij, vključno s kratkim zgodovinskim pregledom te enigmatične tradicije. Temeljni del razprave se osredotoča na alkimistično tradicijo v Habsburški monarhiji in seveda na Kranjskem. Razprava obravnava naslednje teme: poznorenesančno in zgodnjebaročno alkimijo v Ljubljani; povezavo alkimije z rudnikom živega srebra v Idriji; grad Strmol kot prestolnico kranjskih alkimistov in njegove baročne lastnike, ki so bili skoraj vsi vneti alkimisti; alkimistična prizadevanja našega najslavnejšega alkimista Janeza Friderika pl. Raina ter njegovo polemiko s češkim zdravnikom in alkimistom Dobrzenskim ter naposled malo poznana alkimistična in širše okultna zanimanja Janeza Vajkarda pl. Valvasorja. Razprava okvirno predstavi tudi alkimijo na Kranjskem v 18. stoletju in se zaključi s kratkim pregledom dosedanjega raziskovanja alkimije v Sloveniji. Podaja tudi prihodnje možnosti za raziskovanje te tematike.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

zahodna ezoterična tradicija, baročna alkimija, alkimija na Kranjskem, pridobivanje živega srebra, grad Strmol, družina Ruessenstein, Janez Friderik pl. Rain, Johann Ignatius Seitler, Janez Vajkard Valvasor, Ernest Freyer, raziskovanje alkimije na Slovenskem

ABSTRACT

BAROQUE ALCHEMY IN CARNIOLA

The discussion presents the late-Renaissance and Baroque alchemy in the Habsburg lands and especially in the Duchy of Carniola, within the broader context of the study of Western esoteric traditions. The first part of the discussion describes the fundamental concepts related to the study of the Western esoteric traditions. Then follow a brief presentation of the basic features of alchemy as one of Western traditions and a short historical overview of this enigmatic tradition. The main part of the discussion focuses on the alchemical tradition in the Habsburg Monarchy and, of course, in Carniola. It addresses the following topics: the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque alchemy in Ljubljana; the connection of alchemy and the quicksilver mine in Idrija; the Strmol Castle as the capital of alchemists from Carniola and its Baroque owners, all ardent alchemists; alchemical endeavours of Johannes Friedrich von Rain and his dispute with a Czech medical doctor and alchemist Dobrzensky and, last but not least, the little known alchemical and broader occult interests pursued by Johann Weikhard von Valvasor. The article also briefly presents alchemy in the 18th-century Carniola and concludes with a short survey of up-to-date research of alchemy in Slovenia. The discussion also indicates possible future research options of alchemy in Slovenia.

KEYWORDS

Western esoteric tradition, baroque alchemy, alchemy in Carniola, quicksilver mining, Strmol castle, family Ruessenstein, Johann Friedrich von Rain, Johann Ignatius Sietler, Johann Weikhard Valvasor, Ernest Freyer, academic research of alchemy in Slovenia

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S U M M A R Y

Baroque Alchemy in Carniola

In the discussion, alchemy in the Duchy of Carniola is presented. The article is divided into chapters and subchapters. The first chapter presents the growing academic field of Western esoteric tradition studies as well as the role of alchemy in the context of modern academic research. The second chapter describes the basic features of alchemy as one of the

Western esoteric traditions and provides a brief historical survey of the tradition. The third chapter deals with alchemy in the Habsburg Empire in the time of late Renaissance and Baroque. The discussion addresses the following topics: the role of Paracelsianism in the late 16th and early 17th centuries; alchemy and Habsburg emperors; the phenomenon of Rosicrucianism; the role of alchemy and occult sciences in learned Baroque culture; alchemists and occultists as successful members of the Habsburg Court and the phenomenon of public alchemical transmutations in the context of learned Baroque culture. The main part of the article deals with alchemy in Duchy Carniola from the late 16th to the 18th century and addresses the following topics. The first subchapter discusses alchemists from the late 16th-century Ljubljana—most notably doctors, nobles and inventors—as well as the presence of alchemy in booksellers' catalogues. The second subchapter is dedicated to alchemy and mining and deals especially with the connection of alchemy and mining technologies in the town of Idrija. In the 17th century, the Strmol Castle was famous for its owners' alchemical endeavours and could be labelled as the »capital« of alchemists from Carniola. These—especially the three generations of the Ruessenstein family—are presented in the third subchapter. Johannes Friedrich von Rain (1613–?) was undoubtedly the most famous alchemist from Carniola. His life, thought and work are presented in the fourth subchapter, with a specific focus on his alchemical dispute with his contemporary, a Czech medical doctor and alchemist Dobrzensky. The discussion provides a thorough analysis of Rain's alchemical polemic *Praeservativum Universale Naturale*. Johann Weikhard von Valvasor, now famous for his sober and experiment-based scientific endeavours, had a strong interest in the occult as well. As is the case with Newton, authors have often neglected Valvasor's occult and alchemical leanings. These are presented in the fifth subchapter. Alchemy in Carniola was alive well into 18th century and is briefly discussed in the sixth subchapter. The discussion concludes with a survey of up-to-date research of alchemy in Slovenia. It also indicates possible future research options of this topic in the form of translations, critical studies and museum exhibitions.