Confession and name: Male names of German Protestant nobility in the 16–17th centuries

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The article deals with names given the 16–17th centuries ruling elite in order to study influence of the confessional and other factors on naming. The author focuses on the male names of Württemberg and Dresden rulers within period after the Augsburg Peace to the Thirty Years' War. Concerning house of Württemberg, offspring of Duke Friedrich I (1558–1608) up to the children of the Duke Eberhard III are studied. Saxon house of Wettin is limited to children of Elector August I and their offsprings up to the heirs of Johann Georg II. The study involves a wide amount of archival materials and, in particular, the funeral sermons, made by confessors. Author concludes that most names were absolutely neutral, regardless to the elite faith. Luther called to stop the practice of christening in honor of the old saints in favor to biblical and old German names, but for his adherents from elite social class this question was hardly relevant. In contrast, a significant influx of new names from Catholic houses, especially obvious in the history of Württemberg, or reproduction of Moritz-name in Wettin family, demonstrate that naming was influenced by dynastic interests. In spite the importance of confessional consciousness in the period, family roots and dynastic course were to overcome confessional limits.

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Key words: confession, Reformation, the House of Wettin, the House of Württemberg, Luther, naming

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