TRACES SHEET · PDF · VOLUME 02

# Tracing the Years of Dearth

*Places, landscape and source clues for further investigation around Volume 02.*

## From the book into the landscape

The hunger crisis of 1770–1772 cannot be read from a single monument. Its traces lie in the landscape, settlement structure, historical registers and archival records. This sheet is therefore not a fixed walking guide but an invitation to historical investigation.

### 1 · Scharfenstein: few fields, much forest

Pietzonka describes the settlement below the castle as having only a few fields within a ring of forest. For food supply this matters: a region with limited arable land is particularly dependent on successful harvests and access to grain from elsewhere.

Look for: How closely do valley, river, slope, forest and settlement lie together? Where would larger fields even have been possible?

### 2 · The Zschopau: weather becomes visible

For January 1770 Pietzonka reports thunder and high water in the Zschopau. The river is therefore not merely scenery; it forms part of the historical weather sequence with which his account of the crisis begins.

Look for: How strongly does the narrow valley shape the settlement? What could high water mean for roads, mills and low-lying ground?

### 3 · Castle and manor: power and provisions

In Pietzonka's account the social differences of the crisis become especially sharp: while people below are starving, he points to grain and meat held by castle and manor. For 1772 he also cites a Scharfenstein record concerning theft of meat and grain involving Marie Sophie Stilpner, Carl and Gottfried Mehner.

Look for: How close were small houses to the seat of authority? How visible might social inequality have been?

### 4 · Großolbersdorf: a register as evidence

One particularly important trace is not a building but a register. Pietzonka reports that the Großolbersdorf register of deaths stops after 18 July 1771; by then 75 people had already been buried that year. For 1772 he gives 154 deaths.

Research question: What can a death register reveal about a crisis – and what can it not explain?

### 5 · Roads and routes: the great wandering

Pietzonka describes hundreds of people leaving their homes during the crisis. Roads thus become historical spaces themselves: they connected markets and settlements, but in times of need also became routes of migration.

Look for: Which natural obstacles had to be crossed in the Ore Mountains? What role did valleys, ridges and river crossings play?

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## 6 · The forest: support and conflict

The forest supplied wood, mushrooms, berries, beechnuts and acorns. Game, however, was bound to manorial rights. Pietzonka describes poor people nevertheless turning to the forests' game during the hunger years. The forest thus becomes livelihood, refuge and conflict zone at the same time.

## Historical investigation: six questions

- Where can you still see today how little arable land the narrow valley offered?
- How close were simple houses, castle, mill, forest and river?
- Which routes connected Scharfenstein with neighbouring settlements and markets?
- Which archives or church records could provide further evidence about mortality and family events?
- Which statements come directly from records or registers – and which are Pietzonka's interpretation?
- How does our understanding of poaching change when we consider the hunger crisis and contemporary hunting rights?

## Before investigating on site

Historical sites may have changed, been built over or be privately owned. Always check current access, opening hours and property boundaries locally. This sheet is not a route description and does not grant permission to enter private property.

**SOURCE NOTE**

*Working basis: Johannes Pietzonka, Karl Stülpner – Legende und Wirklichkeit, 2nd edition, Sachsenbuch 2006, especially pp. 17–22. For scholarly work, the registers and archival references cited by Pietzonka should, where possible, be checked against the original holdings.*

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