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BETWEEN THE NORM AND THE EVERYDAY PRACTICE. THE AUTHORITIES OF THE CHAMBER ESTATES OF PARDUBICE, PODEBRADY AND KOLIN BETWEEN 1614 AND 1702

Theses of Doctoral Dissertation

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2021

Content

Theme and main topic(s) of the doctoral thesis

These theses sum up the most crucial findings presented in my doctoral dissertation which deals with the hierarchy of the Bohemian chamber estates (with special focus on estates Pardubice, Podebrady and Kolin) between 1614 and 1702. In the strictest sense of the term, Bohemian chamber estates after 1526 meant the property purchased (or confiscated) by Ferdinand I or his descendants and was considered as private property of the sovereign. He could thus manipulate them without supervision of the Bohemian noblemen (and traditional land institutions in which they usually had a key word). The revenues generated from the estates (*camerale*) were intended to finance the court and the administration of the estates. In the course of the 16th century, thanks to original and newly associated territories, two chamber complexes were established. The smaller part consisted of estates Zbiroh, Točník, Králův Dvůr, Křivoklát with Krušovice and Přísečnice and it was well known for forestry and iron deposits. However, the core of the dominion laid along the river banks of Elbe, expanding from Brandýs in the west through Přerov, Lysá, Poděbrady and Kolín to Pardubice in the east. Even after some territorial losses which the dominium suffered at the end of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century, with its length of 116 km and the size of 2580 km^2 it occupied considerable part of the Czech lands. The largest estate was Pardubice (745 km^2) which, in the middle of the 17th century, consisted of an eponymous administrative centre Pardubice, town Přelouč, five other small towns and approximately 130 villages or its parts. Just for a point of comparison, the size of Poděbrady estate (at the same period consisted of two towns and 47 villages) was 315 km^2, estate Kolín 118 km^2.

Administration of Chamber dominium

Chamber dominium was meant to provide resources for the needs of the monarch, his family, and the court. As already stated, the owner of chamber–goods was the ruler of Kingdom of Bohemia, i. e. in the Early Modern Period representative of the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family. Ferdinand I, brother of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, ruler of the Habsburgs' Austrian hereditary lands and (from 1526) king of Bohemia and Hungary, established new sophisticated system of control and administration in order to centralise and rationalise the administration of these territories and its finances. On the top of the hierarchical pyramid stood Court Chamber (Hofkammer, *Dvorská komora*) supreme financial authority of the monarchy, the superior authority and administrator of ruler´s estates, and then Bohemian (Royal) Chamber (Böhmische Kammer, *Česká komora)* as a subordinate agency. Among other things, Bohemian office coordinated the administration of chamber estates belonging to the Czech lands and represented the main authority for patrimonial officers and local authorities such as town councils, headmen and village officers. Last but not least, both chambers had departments that took care of accounting books (Buchhalterie, *dvorská účtárna/ účtárna české komory*) and those which collected money from particular estates – Rentamt, in Bohemia called *úřad mistra komory*, later *rentmistrovský úřad*. Both offices regularly sent visitation commissions (*vizitační komise*) whose members were given instruction (or instructions) indicating not only which estates they should visit but also which fields and topics they should investigate. All previously mentioned offices (and their representatives) have their parts in my thesis because without knowing and fully understanding the genesis and the mechanism of the administration, communication, various official and personal relations, quite complicated circulation of money and other sources, it would not be possible to understand the reality of chamber estates and their apparatus.

Estate officers

Beside these central authorities each chamber estate also had its officers who should administrate and take care of the area. That meant to try to improve economic conditions of the estate constantly, propose ideas that could help to increase income, record all income and expenses, and also guarantee judicial and executive acts. Members of apparatus were also entrusted to collect taxes as well as help with recruitment and other claims of state etc. Most estates were headed by a governor/hetman (*hejtman*), who represented the main authority on the estate. Sometimes he had 'a deputy' (*místohejtman*) who helped him with some tasks, especially those which required travelling and therefore longer absence from residence of the estate. This person took on some responsibilities relating to financial agenda as well. It could be said also in regard to burgrave (*purkrabí*), a person who was entrusted to care about the main residence of the estate as well as manor farms belonging to the ruler. Estates in question had their tradition in forestry and therefore each of them had its forest management for which the representative was called forstmistr (*lesmistr*). Likewise, fish pond farming was a very important part of the estate´s economy so it was provided with its own administrative 'unit' with an appointed fishmistr (*fišmistr*) at the head.

Very important and quite numerous parts of the administrative machinery were represented by local offices of scribes. They were responsible for book–keeping as well as for dealing with correspondence of the office (or – if they were asked and usually against payment – of helping inhabitants of the estates with their agenda), for recording all income and expenses in the 'section' they were entrusted to supervise. They also had to regularly (instruction demanded once a week) make total sums of income and expenses, submit it for control and defend the treasuries against trespassers. The main accountant and bookkeeper of the estate (*důchodní písař*) had to send biannual accounts to Bohemian Chamber and handed revenues from the estate. It means he was also responsible for controlling other scribes, their accounts and cash in their treasuries. Second 'persona' responsible for very important resort was the scribe that took care of the property of the estates´ orphans (*sirotčí písař*). There were also scribes who took care of the finances and accounts of landlord breweries (*správci/písaři pivovarů*), those who recorded cereal crops (*obroční/obilní písař*), transfers and sales of real estates or composed missives *(listovní písař)* wedding contracts, testaments and inventories of the property that belonged to the lately departed inhabitants (*písař pojezdný*) etc.

Main Topics

Firstly, the dissertation presents the hierarchy and social–economic structure of offices and its changes and restrictions as well as duties or competences of hetmen, burgraves, forstmistrs/fishmistr or different scribes. It also follows their motives for being patrimonial officers and their ideas about careers, qualifications (those they had versus those required from central authorities), guarantees (*kauce, rukojemství*) that they had to make before they were allowed to become members of apparatus as well as salaries, natural, material, and other rewards. Each officer should have been instructed about his duties and received official text (instruction) which contained information vital for doing his "job" right. Some of these instructions (especially those for hetmen) were preserved to this day so it is possible to compare them and point out the differences among older and newer versions. There is yet another very important comparison, and that is the one of instructions contra correspondence, hetmen´s (or others) records or relations of visitation commissions and accounting offices that revealed a lot of differences between norm and everyday practice. This approach also helped to detect manifestations of patronage or clientelism and different connections among officers themselves, officers, and representatives of Bohemian or even Court Chamber. Finally, the thesis points out constants and changes in dynamic of the administration and communication with superior as well as local authorities and officers.

Throughout the text, neuralgic parts of administration are presented that were present on every estate during the whole period. We are talking about disobedience of rules presented in instructions, disorders and manipulation in accounts and other forms of patrimonial evidence or arrears and embezzlements (and ways of coping with them) which were very common (and for the ruler's treasury also very sinister) issues as well as loans from patrimonial treasuries. It was a very common practice (especially with regard to orphan´s money) that different subjects were granted loans from treasuries, and rulers repetitious prohibitions issued in the course of 16th, 17th and 18th centuries had not change that. After all, even the ruler himself did not adhere to his own commands and he was often the one who owed large (or even the largest) sums of money to orphan´s treasuries – both dominical as municipal (existed only in towns entitled to have their own treasury and evidence of town orphans and their property). Orphan´s treasuries were a great temptation for representatives of different groups within the estates and manorial officers or town council provided a great amount of loans with interests, from cash deposited in treasuries and remarkably wide clientele took advantage of it. Not only the Habsburg sovereign and some of its patrimonial officers themselves, but also local noblemen, usually representatives of 'lower' nobility, burghers (or burghers with coat of arms) and serfs were among them. This theme was not left out of research either and plays its part in the thesis.

Methods and sources of the Dissertation

Modernization theory, methods and methodological inspiration

A profound analysis of the archival sources (see below) accompanied by a comparative method is a cornerstone of the thesis. Prosopographic method also proved to be promising and useful in research of patrimonial officers, especially in those parts where it went hand in hand with biographical method. Carefully choosing and balancing those methods and "tools" helped enormously to get a closer idea on the staffing and administrative practice and simple life of local authorities and their representatives. Regarding other inspirations in the field of research on early modern administrative organization, one of those very valuable was Max Weber concept of rationalization and bureaucratic theory, or rather its critics. Another one, with wide reception and also very wide critique across human sciences has been the concept of Gerhard Oestreich social discipline. Suggested critics question the global (in)validity and (im)possibility of use in various states and environments and pointed out numerous cases where those constructs do not concur with results of their research. In this context it was necessary to get acquainted with the works of H. Schilling and S. Breuer, which brings, among other things, a comparison of the theories of M. Weber, N. Elias, G. Oestreich and M. Foucault, possibilities and limits of their use. The issue of (non) enforcement of norms and their reflection by their objectives was presented for example by P. Blickle, J. Schlumbohm or H. Schnabel – Schüle. The latter emphasizes the concept of so–called horizontal (interpersonal) controls applied within individual local communities in contrast to disciplination "from above."

Other concept to have in mind is H. R. Schmidt´s self–regulation of each individual which Schmidt sees as a main aspect in accepting or declining various type of disciplination practice and rules. These issues and approaches were applied to the Czech lands in the works of T. Winkelbauer, S. Ogilvie, M. Weber, J. Pánek, M. Bastl, A. Stejskal, P. Matlas. There is also a couple of collective monographies or projects comparing financial historiy, the development of (self–) administrative authorities and the bureaucratization process (not only) in Central Europe that established some topics important even for this thesis and its aims. One cannot forget to mention such projects as "Frühneuzeitliche Institutions in their social context. Practical local politics, justice and governance in "internationalen Vergleich", "Herrschaftsverdichtung, Staatsbildung, Bürokratisierung" or "Finanzen und Herrschaft. Materielle Grundlagen fürstlicher Politik in den habsburgischen Ländern und im Heiligen Römischen Reich im 16. Jahrhunder." Findings and results of these projects as well as knowing other works of historians connected with them (S. Brakensiek, M. Hochedlinger, T. Winkelbauer, P. Rauscher, M. Hengerer, J. Hrdlička etc) are vital for complex view and understanding of modern theories, their limits and in sum, for theoretical and methodological background of a historian (or other researcher) who study (not only) administrative history of Habsburg monarchy in early modern period.

Archival Sources

The source base of the dissertation consists of documents stored in the National Archives in Prague in the first place, especially in the funds of Stará and Nová manipulace (Old and New Manipulation). Both collections include documents created by the activities of three former Bohemian offices, namely the Bohemian (Court) Office, the Bohemian Governor's Office and – most important for the needs of this work – Bohemian (Royal) Chamber, from the Middle Ages (early 14th century) to the mid–18th century. These are therefore artificially (not organically) created units in which documents were divided into files and boxes by the names of persons, by the names of towns and estates and by subject. Other crucial fund is titled České oddělení Dvorské komory (Czech Department of the Court Chamber) which used to be stored in Vienna and was moved to Prague in 1920 as part of an archival separation. As can be seen from the name and the original place of storage, this unit is based on the materials of the registry of Bohemian department of the Court Chamber which was superior authority for the Bohemian, later also the Silesian Chamber and the Moravian rentmaster’s office from 1526 till 1749.

All three funds contain a wide range of sources for Court as well as Bohemian Chamber, its central administration, chamber estates and its offices or staff itself. Some documents are placed in thematic cartons, so the focus went on them in the first plan. However, previous experience with Pardubice estate and its officers has shown that equally valuable material is scattered in many other cartons which specifications do not suggest that. Therefore, it was necessary to expand the field of interest even to other archival units that contain materials related to economic, financial, religious, and other matters. An absolutely irreplaceable source of information is the rich official correspondence exchanged between the officers and the central authorities (in this context I again emphasize the Czech Chamber), oaths, reverses, resignations of officials, accounts recording the salaries of officials or proposes on restricting amount of officers and their rewards. In both funds, there are also references to the preparation, modification and publication of instructions or regulations addressed to hetmen or other members of apparatus. In many cases, not only the original documents are deposited, but also their concepts, related correspondence and other materials which reveal what changes they underwent before finalization. Some biannual accounts recording the revenues of chamber estates and other documents related to the financial agenda are also hidden in this vast amount of archival material.

Finally, dissertation is also largely based on the material stored in the State Regional Archives in Zámrsk (Velkostatek Pardubice) and in Prague (Velkostatek Poděbrady and Kolín). These archives contain instructions on the administration of the estate, books of copies of instructions, regulations, and other messages for the hetmen, documents send by hetmen (or his office) to the Bohemian Chamber and other authorities, book of oaths, land registers, accounts of estates and other documents connected with patrimonial administration etc. Various types of records show various role of officers in the reality of estates and proves that these personalities were not seen (and presented) just as an "extended hand" of the chamber or monarch, but also as mediators of peace, guarantors of order or protectors of orphans and other inhabitants of the estates. All of materials are therefore essential not only to get an idea of the activities of the office but also as sources of valuable data on the persons of the officials themselves.
The inclusion of the State Regional Archive in Třeboň may seem somewhat surprising, but only at first glance. The immense wealth of material deposited in the South Bohemian archives are generally known and they contained, among others, also chamber instructions for various representatives of administration.

The documents showing officers as members of estate town centres were not left behind during the research. Probe aiming to this part of everyday life of officers was grounded foremost on funds from SOkA Pardubice (Archiv města Pardubice) or SOkA Nymburk (Archiv města Poděbrady) which provide, among other things, an insight into the activities of administrators as local property owners and honoured (and yet sometimes problematic) members of local communities.

Objectives and results of the Research

One of the main reasons for the gradual centralization and bureaucratization of the official staff subordinated to the monarch and the two chambers was the desire to unify the administration of finances and their targeted use for the repayment of the monarch's and chamber's debts, while at the same time creating a kind of financial reserve for the private use of the monarch and his court, as well as for the financing of the war effort. Along the way, some singular (even titular) officials were surrounded by other persons and created offices, specialised bureaux with their own staff and their own agendas, where the desire for interconnectedness, horizontal and vertical control is evident. The emphasis on written communication and strictly observed hierarchy has therefore increased, and there has also been an ongoing, continuous effort to make all records, especially accounting, clearer and better. These requirements were linked to higher demands on the representatives of the individual offices, on the quality of their work and on the strict observance of instructions and regulations. However, due to the heavy debt of the Chamber and the monarchy's treasury, attempts were also made throughout the period under review to reduce the number of officials, to limit expenditure on salaries, deputies, business trips, support staff, etc. The central authorities were thus in more than one case faced with a stalemate, where they needed a highly functional apparatus, for which, however, they spent only the necessary amount of money and other sources.

It has already been mentioned above that the administration of the chamber property was not only a matter for the Court or the Bohemian chamber, but for a rather extensive and multi–tiered system of other offices and bureaux whose agenda affected the complex. On the one hand, this elaborate system might have promised to fulfil the ideal of a bureaucratic, qualified staff made up of the leading experts of the time, supervising the chamber goods with a firm hand and subject to constant peer control. In practice, however, there were repeated competitions not only between the chambers, but also between the chambers and the accounting offices, or between the officials of the various estates etc. During the period under review, the representatives of the offices that were presented in the thesis (and, one can assume, some that were not) submitted their opinions, suggestions, comments and observations, which sometimes more, sometimes less, reflected the everyday reality of individual estates and all of them should be taken into account during research. A certain constant that runs like a red thread through virtually the entire period under study is the long–standing assumption that a functional administration rests essentially on three pillars: 1) qualified staff, 2) the most accurate (especially accounting) records, and 3) consistent and frequent control and supervision. The ideal state – i.e. both (1) a maximally functional system with a minimum of errors, especially in the human factor, and (2) a chamber complex generating the maximum possible revenue – was not to be achieved by major structural changes, but by improving and complementing the traditional, i.e. already proven, framework (administration, bookkeeping, etc.) into which the new initiatives were implemented.

This approach was also reflected in the wording of the instructions to the various authorities. The framework of the texts for a given office thus remained more or less the same over the centuries, only to be supplemented or updated as necessary, until a major change in concept, regulation of staff, etc. took place. In parallel with these main instructions, office regulations were issued, defining the duties of the office staff attached to the various offices, as well as supplementary instructions, resolutions, regulations, time–limited tasks. These documents specified the modus vivendi given by chamber, hetmen´s and other instructions and are as essential sources for researchers as the instructions themselves, as they tell more about the actual situation. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that each of the offices was a manifestation of early modern, traditional society, which had its own rules and specifics. It is with these specific features of the time in mind that certain concepts (bureaucracy, qualifications) must be viewed and possibly (re)defined for the purposes of the work. For example, the bureaucracy of estates can be labelled as a bureaucracy if this label is based on an increased emphasis on hierarchization, mutual (horizontal and vertical) control and written office. At the same time, however, it must be stressed that the private and public spheres of the office and its representative were not strictly separated, and official service could be (and was) granted as a kind of reward that had a certain symbolic and representative overlap. In many cases, it was also closely linked to the property base of the person concerned and to his or her clientele (and other) relations with other persons, whether they were lower nobles, burgesses or serfs who had been recruited to the service. Similarly, the question of qualification should be approached – qualification at the time did not mean university education, but primarily previous service in the chamber administration or other offices (and thus knowledge of economic, accounting and other agendas), or other merits in the service of the ruling family (military, credit, etc.), both on the part of the person concerned and other members of his family. The knowledge (especially in the field of law) that was required of the chamber councils, was more concrete in the instructions of 1682 and especially 1719, but this does not mean that it was soon strictly required at this or other levels.

At the same time, correspondence, sessions and other material show that the everyday life of officials was far more varied than the instructions and regulations indicate. In some cases, officials even deliberately and consciously failed to observe them and prefered their own interests and profit over the emperor´s (i. e. prohibition of buying up properties on individual estates, loans from the estates' and orphans' treasuries). Therefore, both the court and the chambers sought ways to prevent unwelcome practices and to protect the chamber's income from damage. In addition to tightening control mechanisms and adding items to the instructions that were forbidden to staff, officials were forced to make guarantees (recognisance and surety bonds) before taking office, the introduction, urging and regular renewal of which was intended to compel the potential offender to make good the financial and material damage. References in the texts to disorder, failure to follow instructions, poor workmanship or even incompetence or poor work ethic on the part of the staff are fairly frequent but did not always lead to the removal of the person concerned. In reality, the Chamber had very limited enforcement mechanisms and a not very sophisticated system of possible sanctions, which were applied inconsistently, depending on the situation and the social status of the person concerned.

Similarly, the problem of the ubiquitous and omnipresent arrears to the treasuries is symptomatic of the reality of the chamber estates. Arrear (r*est)* essentially meant the difference between the expected profit, specified by comparing all incomes and expenses recorded in the accounting books, and the real amount of money deposited in patrimonial treasuries at the time of comparison. The largest amount of arrears was usually detected during biannual controls of accounts and revenues or thanks to inspections and visitations conducted by the Bohemian chamber. Afterwards, an investigation ensued. Part of arrears was caused by debts of inhabitants as well as other persons that had trade relationship with estates (merchants, craftsmen). Part of them came of unpaid loans from patrimonial or orphan's treasury which were – again and again and with the same, virtually zero result – officially forbidden. Yet, as already mentioned, it was common praxis (especially with regard to orphan´s money) that different subjects were granted loans from treasuries and rulers repetitious prohibitions issued in the course of 16th, 17th and 18th centuries hadn´t change that. Then, there were sums that (according to the proclamations of the scribe or other officer in question) were given to the Chamber officer, commissioners, envois of a monarch, merchant houses or Habsburg creditors but could not be proven with acquittance (*kvitance*) were counted in. The fact that the Bohemian Chamber did not withdraw money only twice a year but sometimes also during visitation or control of other persons authorized by Bohemian as well as Court Chamber did not help to clarify the situation. All expenses that exceeded the limits of financial and natural resources earmarked for manorial office (*deputát*) and were not approved by the Bohemian chamber beforehand were also classified as arrears, When the Chamber´s "accounting department" deducted these sums, the remaining arrears was considered as a personal debt of the officer. After that, the official had been given a certain period of time during which he had to clarify (or justify) the deficiencies. Yet, even if he didn´t manage to prove that he was not the one who should have been blamed, the penalties were in most cases limited to (sometimes only temporary) deposing the person from his position and pay the arrears. He was not forbidden to continue with his 'career" in the future and his honour was not questioned.

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Summary

The dissertation deals with the topic of patrimonial officers of chamber estates Pardubice, Poděbrady and Kolin between 1614 and 1702. It presents not only the structure and form of bureaucratic machinery, duties and competences of its representatives but also changes of their motives for being officers and approaches to their official duties and careers. Furthermore, it introduces dynamic of the administration and communication with superior as well as local authorities such as the Court and especially Bohemian Chamber (and its accounting offices), town councils, headmen, village officers and local serfs. Finally, it describes neuralgic parts of the administration (clientelism, arrears, embezzlements etc) and ways how the superior authorities tried (or failed trying) to diminish them. Author also follows process of bureaucratization and professionalization or, to be precise, its manifestations and reflection (in)to the environment of the estates as well as attempts to discipline officers of chamber estates. All of aforementioned topics are based not only on sources describing the "official theory" (such as instructions and regulations) but mainly on analysis and comparison to other materials (correspondence, relations of visitation committees, official books and other records written by officers itself etc). This method proved to be vital for capture and examine disproportions between norms and everyday practice of patrimonial offices and its representatives. It also helped to find line between continuities and changes in formal narrative as well as in day–to–day reality. Life stories and carriers of chosen persons are presented in footnotes or in the main text, especially when they are symptomatic of some of the described phenomenon. Appendices at the end of the thesis (including original texts of instructions, oaths of officers, correspondence etc as well as pictures referring to the topic) are meant to support and clarify the research and close the thesis.

Keywords: chamber estates, Pardubic, Kolin, Podebrady, administration, patrimonial officers, instruction, visitation, Bohemian Chamber, rules versus reality, bureaucratization, professionalization, social discipline, clientelism, arrears

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