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The digitalization of Early Modern sources : the case of normative regulations regarding Moravia in the Early Modern period

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THE DIGITALIZATION OF EARLY MODERN SOURCES: THE CASE OF NORMATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING MORAVIA IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Abstract:

The paper presents a new project, focused on the digitization of the normative regulations from the Early Modern Period for Moravia. It is aimed at the description of their function in society and emphasizes their significant role for the sovereign's regulation of the behaviour of the populace in various areas of life. Despite that, they have not been systematically treated so far by researchers. Digitization is to help make this important source collection accessible.

Keywords:

normative regulation, digitization, Austrian monarchy, Moravia, 17th – 18th centuries, official processes

Normative regulations are documents that contain the general guidelines of various aspects of social life. Their texts include the provisions (in paragraphs mainly) that regulate different areas of public life. According to them, the behaviour of society was managed and controlled. The analysis of those regulations enables us to better understand the period in question and to follow their development over time. These regulations were circulated throughout the country, in order to reach every resident. From the beginning of the Early Modern Period, they were issued in a printed form.[1]

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[1] K u l í ř o v á, Květa – S a n d e r, Rudolf: *Patenty.* Katalog sbírky patentů Státního ústředního archivu v Praze. [Patents. The Catalogue of the Patent Collection in State Central Archives in Prague] Praha 1956, p. 4.
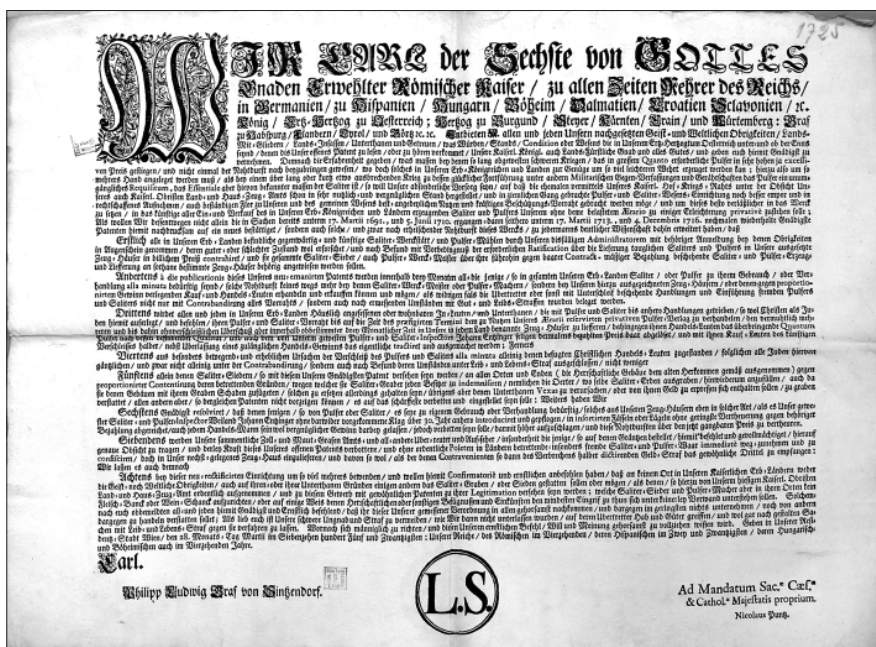
Fig. 1: Example of a normative regulation.

So far, printed normative regulations have not been systematically exploited by researchers in this country. There are merely a few studies, which, as a rule, focus on only specific issues. First of all, the authors of these studies described the financial regulations (from the perspective of numismatics), and, to a certain extent, economic and traffic provisions.[2] It is difficult to say why the regulations have not been paid sufficient attention so far. This may be due to the complexity of the texts in question, because of the difficulty of their language and also due to their high number.

A large number of the printed regulations has survived until our times. They have never been collected, documented and properly researched. They were assembled (gathered) only into collections usually called "collections

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2   P o š v á ř , Jaroslav: *Administrativně ekonomická opatření na Moravě v 18. a první polovině 19. století*. [Administrative-economic Regulations in Moravia in 18th and the first half of 19th century] Brno 1974; P o š v á ř , Jaroslav: *Dopravní opatření na Moravě v 18. a první polovině 19. století*. [The Traffic Regulations in Moravia Moravia in 18th and the first half of 19th century] Acta Universitatis Brunensis - iuridica. No 23, 7, 1977, pp. 201 – 217; P o š v á ř , Jaroslav: *Patent Karla VI. z r. 1723 proti přepychu*. [The Patent of Charles VI against Luxury from 1723] Vlastivědný věstník moravský, 1972, p. 226.

of patents". Such sets are only a composite of all sorts of printed documents by various publishers.[3]

Project

Now, I would like to present our project called "Normative regulations database to Moravian history of the 17th and 18th centuries". The aim of the project is to assemble and create an inventory of normative regulations that were directed at Moravia in the 17th and 18th centuries, including also their digitalized pictures. The following aspects are of particular concern to us:
- Documenting of normative regulations.
- Area – we will concentrate only on Moravia as a historical country.
- Completeness – Aspect of completeness is very important, because it enables the discovery of which kinds of issues and at which times they were modified (edited) by the sovereign.

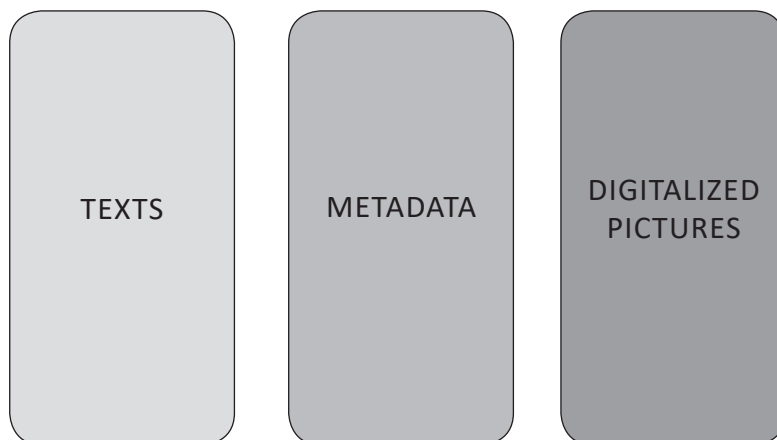The project will consist of three parts:

Fig. 2: Architecture of the project.

Metadata
This section will consist of a basic inventory and description of assembled items of normative regulations. This part will be linked with digitalized sources and, in some cases, with texts.

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[3]   For example, there are three collections of patents in the Moravian Provincial Archive – G 18, G 19, G 20. See K o c m a n , Alois et al.: *Průvodce po státním archivu v Brně*. [The Guide through the State Archives in Brno] Brno 1954.

Digitalized Sources

The digitalized sources will consist of digitalized pictures of each regulation page. Regulations were usually printed in the form of booklets. In the case of some more extensive regulations the resulting sets may contain a large number of images, in some cases over a hundred. The creation of the digitalized page images will be the main goal of the project. The pictures will facilitate general access to the content of the regulations, in this way, their text will be made available to all interested researchers.

Text

In the future the more important normative regulations may be edited and commented on. This, however, will be more an exception than a rule. They will be provided in two language versions (German, Czech), if necessary, because the normative regulations were printed in the two provincial languages, respecting the bilingual composition of the population.

Metadata

Several fields will be included in this part:
- Dates of the sources (regulations)
- Place of issue (mainly Vienna and Brno, but also other places are possible – Laxenburg)
- The actual editor

The editor, and originator of the text, was the sovereign: at the time of absolutism there was no other way. Thus the regulations were published in two ways.

1) They were printed in Vienna and sent into the country by post, numbering about eight hundred copies (in case of Moravia), with an accompanying certificate. It was the so-called "reskript". Afterwards the documents were circulated throughout the country by the supreme land governing office and by the regional offices to municipalities and aristocratic authorities. In this case the names of the court offices were printed under the text.

2) The regulations were passed from the court to the supreme land governing office by means of the "reskript", whose texts included the actual paragraphs of the regulations. In this case the "reskript" contained a command for the regulations to be printed in a sufficient number of copies and to be circulated throughout the country "more solito", as usual, as described above. In this case, the names of the officials of the supreme land governing office were printed under the text.

Some of these normative regulations were common throughout the monarchy, but each country could get its own specific patents. To de-

cide whether the regulation was issued at the Viennese court or at the supreme land governing office in the country is a fundamental distinction and is one of the basic characteristics of diplomatics.

- Keyword(s) – the content will be described by means of key words (mail order, fee-order, mendicant-order and so on). This field represents first phase of description.
- Abstract – briefly characterized content, but more specifically as in the previous field. In this section, it will also describe the interrelationships among the regulations or any (potential) attachments.
- Diplomatic type (patent, open decree, announcement, notice). In diplomatics, normative regulations were published in different forms: mainly in the form of patents, but also in the form of open decrees, announcements (since Joseph II) and occasionally by notices.[4]

Fig. 3: Various diplomatic types (open decree, patent).

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[4] S v i t á k , Zbyněk: *Z počátků moderní byrokracie. Nejvyšší zeměpanský úřad na Moravě v letech 1748–1782*. Brno 2011, pp. 466–481.

- Language. The normative regulations were printed (edited) in the two provincial languages (German, Czech).
- Print: this field will contain whether the regulations were printed or written (especially in old times), and the number of pages – so that it is possible to determine the edition or the reissue under the same date.
- Registration dates (archives, archival collection, signature).
- Notes – additional details.
- References: a) link to digitalized source, b) link to the edited text.

Sources

The largest sets of normative regulations are to be found in different collections of patents that originated as a result of official activities. There are three collections of patents in the Moravian Provincial Archive, but they are not complete. The completion of the material requires further exploration, especially in the collections of the central institutions that received, printed and circulated the regulations throughout the country. The patent collection in the Vienna State Archives is impressive, indeed, but for financial reasons, we will turn to it only in case of emergency, because it can be assumed that digitalization abroad is expensive.

Project phases:

a) In the first phase, the project is intended as a working tool for internal use. It will serve to complete the set of normative regulations of the 17th and 18th centuries until the time of Francis II. The process of source management will be divided according to the rule of the respective sovereigns.

b) In the future, after the reaching of this primary goal, the option will arise to open the digitalized resources to the public.

Current status of the project:

We consider as the most suitable for us to choose the reign of only one sovereign and to assemble the full body of his/her normative regulations. As the point of departure, the reign of Charles VI was chosen, as there is a sufficient amount of sources to be collected during the reign of this sovereign. A methodology for identifying patents can be developed there, first of all the searching for patents in other types of sources and archival funds. This can help us in the search for materials from the earlier periods (prior to the rule of Emperor Leopold I), where the assembling of materials can represent a considerable challenge. The reign of Charles VI, thus, will be the vantage point from which our examination will move forward and backward.

We are currently working on an inventory of normative regulations from the reign of Charles VI. This set is almost complete. Now, we already have a list of items (regulations issued in his reign) in an Excess-file, which describes the individual documents, including the respective metadata. Initial talks with experts from the Faculty of Informatics were held regarding the software to be used. Expert advice is crucial for the second and subsequent phases of the project since making the normative regulations accessible to the public is a question of the appropriate technical equipment and facilities.

DIGITALIZACE RANĚ NOVOVĚKÝCH PRAMENŮ: PŘÍPAD NORMATIVNÍCH NAŘÍZENÍ PRO MORAVU V RANÉM NOVOVĚKU

Článek představuje nově zamýšlený projekt, který je zaměřený na digitalizaci normativních nařízení z doby 17.–18. století pro Moravu. Tyto písemnosti byly vydávány panovníkem, který jimi předepisoval chování obyvatelstva v různých oblastech. Doposud jim nebyla badateli věnována systematická pozornost, přestože přinášejí důležitá panovnická rozhodnutí a korekce života tehdejší společnosti. Navíc jsou uložena v archivech většinou v několika fondech, což ztěžuje orientaci v nich.

Digitalizace předpokládá vznik databáze, která se bude primárně skládat z digitalizovaných obrazů normativních nařízení a metadat, jimiž budou popsána. V článku je představena jejich zamýšlená struktura. V další fázi bude databáze postupně, zejména u nejdůležitějších normativních nařízení, doplňována o jejich texty.

Digitalizace tohoto významného pramenného souboru je žádoucí proto, že dojde k roztřídění a uspořádání normativních nařízení a zároveň ke zpřístupnění jejich textů badatelům (klasické ediční zpracování by bylo časově náročné). Komplexním zpracováním nařízení je možné sledovat vývoj panovnických zásahů do života společnosti v čase. Z celého souboru se předpokládá nejprve zpracování nařízení z doby Karla VI.