



**DANA DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ, DVŮR JAKO TÉMA. VÝZKUM PANOVNICKÉ SPOLEČNOSTI V ČESKÉM STŘEDOVĚKU – HISTORIOGRAFIE, KONCEPTY, ÚVAHY, PRAHA 2020, HISTORICKÝ ÚSTAV (PRÁCE HISTORICKÉHO ÚSTAVU AV ČR, MONOGRAPHIA A 90), 360 PP., ISBN 978-80-7286-342-6**

Dana Dvořáčková-Malá has been dealing with the issue of the Bohemian medieval court for a long time, and her work has significantly influenced the current form of Czech research on the royal court.<sup>1</sup> In her latest monograph, however, she does not focus on the court itself but presents a reflection on the Bohemian court as a distinct topic in historiography. The author aims to introduce and evaluate the current state of the research, and in five chapters, she gradually describes the paths applied in the history of court research, discusses the methodological approaches to date, and outlines the possibilities and limits of future research. This basic concept is already quite innovative in Czech medieval studies — similar reflection has so far been given mainly to the history of universities.

The author begins the first chapter by describing how the Bohemian medieval court was reflected in historiography before court research was established as a coherent medievalist topic. After a thorough analysis of the work of František Palacký, the author then turns to all major syntheses of the Bohemian medieval history published up to the beginning of the 20th century. She then focuses on two main periods of the beginnings of court research — the end of the seventies and the beginning of the nineties of the 20th century. The contributions of German historical science are not neglected either. For the beginnings of Czech court research, the author highlights the influence of Lenka Bobková, Ivan Hlaváček, František Kavka, Josef Macek, and Ferdinand Seibt. Especially, the precise contextualization of the origins of individual works in time and space (particularly within the normalization period in Czechoslovakia) and the author's employment of unpublished texts (as in the case of Macek's study of the court) needs to be positively evaluated.

The section about the beginnings of the research is consistently followed by the second chapter, in which the author gives a brief outline of the famous German *Residenzenforschung* project and also points out its influence on Czech historical science, where it has developed a distinctive form. At this point, it is necessary to mention the three conference proceedings *Dvory a rezidence ve středověku*, whose impulses weave through the book like an imaginary red thread.<sup>2</sup> Attention is then briefly devoted to

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- 1 At least the following monographs can be mentioned from the extensive publishing activity: D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ, *Královský dvůr Václava II.*, České Budějovice 2011. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ — J. ZELENKA, *Curia ducis, curia regis: panovnický dvůr za vlády Přemyslovců*, Praha 2011. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ — J. ZELENKA et al., *Přemyslovský dvůr: život knížat, králů a rytířů ve středověku*, Praha 2014. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ — J. ZELENKA et al., *Ženy a děti ve dvorské společnosti*, Praha 2015. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ et al., *Dvůr a církev v českých zemích středověku*, Praha 2017.
  - 2 D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ (ed.), *Dvory a rezidence ve středověku*, Praha 2006. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ — J. ZELENKA (eds.), *Dvory a rezidence ve středověku II. Skladba a kultura dvorské společnosti*, Praha 2008. D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ — J. ZELENKA (eds.), *Dvory a rezidence ve středověku III. Všední a sváteční život na středověkých dvorech*, Praha 2009.

the research connection between the court and travel, such as the compilation of itineraries. In the third chapter, the author discusses what the study of court offices and persons at court has looked like so far; prosopography in particular has proved to be pivotal in this area. The author then outlines further possibilities of the research, for example, court offices, noble and kinship courts, the relationship between the court and the offices, as well as purchases and consumption at courts. The shift in the perception of the court as a household proves to be stimulating. However, according to the author, a new comprehensive analysis of the court offices or the royal office is still lacking, especially for later periods.

In the fourth chapter, the author studies the family and everyday life at court. The royal family at court has not been considered a separate subject of research until relatively recently and therefore represents a scope for future research. The final fifth chapter focuses on the court as a system — it provides a reflection on the definition of the court and its functioning and points out the possibilities of the interpretation of sources, both those informing on the court from the outside and those originating from the court environment. The issue of monarchical representation is discussed as well. In this case, sociological findings appear to be groundbreaking — Niklas Luhmann's contribution is rightly highlighted. The application of these conclusions is aptly illustrated in the study of Jan Zelenka, who pointed out that courtly ideals had to be fulfilled only within the given royal court. Throughout the book, the author successfully emphasizes the possibilities of interdisciplinarity, whether it is the collaboration of history with art history, semantics, archaeology, literary studies, sociology, or anthropology.

Some summaries at the end of each sub-chapter of the publication seem a bit peculiar. Considering that some of these sub-chapters are relatively short — sometimes only two or three pages long — a half-page recapitulation of the given text does not always seem entirely necessary. These chapter conclusions are also not completely consistent in their content, as sometimes they merely summarise the preceding text, while at other times they discuss information not mentioned until then instead. Occasionally, rather paradoxical situations of the author ending a chapter several times appear as well. Thus, for example, the reader may encounter two paragraphs beginning with the formula "In conclusion" (pp. 191, 193) within three pages. However, this is only a minor stylistic shortcoming. In terms of the content, it should be remarked that despite the brevity of some of the sub-chapters, the author always manages to succinctly summarise the subject matter without omitting more fundamental studies on the given topic. In this respect, it is also necessary to appreciate both the scope of the sub-chapters and the not-so-traditional placement of the notes and comments at the end of each of these sub-chapters, as in this form they greatly facilitate the use of the book for a convenient and at the same time professional familiarization with the given topic.

In individual research overviews, it may happen that a reader familiar with the issue may miss some other scholarly studies, but the author's selection is undoubtedly very comprehensive and successful and, as the author herself aptly states in the conclusion, a selective choice is not a flaw of the historical work. The author is certainly right in this statement, because thanks to her subjective and at the same time erudite selection and her methodology, the publication goes beyond the framework of other





works which also set out to acquaint the audience with the current state of research, and thus offers the reader far more than a dry textbook overview.<sup>3</sup>

Dana Dvořáčková-Malá's publication *Dvůr jako téma* is a readable and well-structured contribution to the history of court research. The book provides a valuable reflection on the history of Czech medieval studies and may serve as a very useful tool for all those interested in the topic of the Bohemian medieval court, both heuristically and especially methodologically. Thanks to the author's long-term interest in the given topic, this monograph is not just a mere annotated list of literature, but an insider's view of Czech historiography. For potential future researchers, the author's effort to point out the blank spots in the Czech court research is certainly encouraging.

**Martin Šenk**

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3 See for example the dense, unpersonalized style of German overview publications, such as those offered by the *Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte* or *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte*.