

F O R E W O R D

Foreigners and Diplomats at Polish and Bohemian Royal Courts from the 13th to the 18th century

Royal courts were a real centre of a state in the past. They engendered not only the surroundings of a sovereign, the most important person in the country, but also a place where duties and functions of the authorities were implemented in the best way. One of the most important of these were contacts with the outside world, i.e. other countries or royal courts. For this reason, there were numerous foreigners in the circles of each monarch who were indispensable to communicate with foreign countries but also to provide the royal court with necessary specialists in various fields who could not always be replaced by countrymen. International colouring was also added to the royal courts by foreign diplomats sent by foreign rulers. All these foreigners made the circles of a king or a duke to always have a somewhat cosmopolitan and, consequently, a unique nature which distinguished it against the entire country. In this respect, Poland and Bohemia were not different from the rest of Europe. However, they had their own specificity deriving from being situated between the eastern, western and southern part of Europe. At the same time Bohemia was decisively closer to the West and Poland had stronger ties with the East, simply because of the connections with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Due to their proximity, both countries influenced each other for years, but they also competed with each other, which was reflected in their history. For some time they were also ruled by the representatives of the same dynasties — the Přemyslids and Jagiellons. Their mutual relations were particularly close at that time. This publication is a result of co-operation between researchers working on the royal courts in Bohemia and Poland. It includes studies and findings regarding various epochs and historical episodes but always — to a lesser or greater extent — associated with the presence and activity of foreigners in the circles of Bohemian and Polish monarchs.

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