

**International Doctoral Conference *Three Centuries in the Heart of Europe. European Aristocracy in the Early Modern Period*, Hradec Králové – Pardubice, October 2 and 3, 2025.**

October 2 and 3, 2025, saw the participation of numerous young researchers from Europe and the United States of America in Hradec Králové and Pardubice to attend the ninth edition of the International Doctoral Conference *Three Centuries in the Heart of Europe. European Aristocracy in the Early Modern Period*, organized by doctoral candidates Anna Z. Adamčíková (Institute of History, University of Pardubice / Le Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur les Langues Et la Pensée, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne) and Jakub Benko (Department of Auxiliary Sciences of History and Archival Studies, University of Hradec Králové), in collaboration with the Department of Auxiliary Sciences of History and Archival Studies of the University of Hradec Králové and the Institute of History of the University of Pardubice.

The young researchers, coming from the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, Italy, and the United States, delivered various presentations in English on aristocratic power and governance, diplomatic relations and noble networks, court culture, patronage and artistic expressions, the aristocracy's role in economic and social transformations, ecclesiastical aristocracy, aristocratic estates, correspondence and family archives as sources for historical research, crisis, adaptation, and decline of noble privileges.

Specifically, the conference opened on the morning of October 2 at the University of Hradec Králové with institutional greetings and a welcome from Monsignor Prokop Brož, Auxiliary Bishop of Diocese Reginae Gradecensis.

The honour and responsibility of opening the conference fell to Csongor Cziráki (Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest), who, in his presentation titled *Trent Reform. Turkish Threat, Family Building. Catholic Prelate on the Frontiers of the Habsburg Empire* (Bishop György Széchényi of Veszprém, 1648–1658), analysed the figure of Bishop György Széchényi during his episcopacy (1648–1658) in the Diocese of Veszprém, bordering the Ottoman Empire, and his role in the construction of the Széchényi family.

The second lecture of the day was also linked to the theme of the ecclesiastical career, with the title *Hungarian Ecclesiastical Elite in the Second Half of the 17th Century – The Patronage of an Archbishop*, Dorottya Piroska B. Székely (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) presented the patronage network of the Archbishop of Esztergom from 1666 to 1685, György Szelepcshény, through the careers of the Archbishop's relatives, the officials of his episcopal court, and the clerics promoted by him to higher ecclesiastical or governmental positions.

Patryk Kuc (Jagiellonian University, Kraków), on the other hand, examined the distribution policy of monarchs and ecclesiastical institutions in Early Modern Poland (*Church*

and *Royal Estate Administrators in Early Modern Poland*). By analysing three different areas of Poland, the speaker attempted to identify the criteria that guided the selection of leaseholders, highlighting the differences between the average administrators.

The presentation *The Episcopal Archive in the Early Modern Period as a Historical Phenomenon*, by Ladislav Holoubek (Episcopal Archives of the Diocese of Hradec Králové), focused on the role and importance of episcopal archives after the Council of Trent in the Church's attempt to create a *societas perfecta*, whose order was also intended to be reflected in the production, organization, and preservation of ecclesiastical records.

Eneo Branelli (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, University of Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid), in his *Just a Family Archive? New Perspectives from the Barberini Archive*, presented the Archive of the noble Roman Barberini family, preserved at the Vatican Apostolic Library, highlighting the role and importance that noble family archives have not only for the family's own history, but also for the history of the institutions linked to the family, for which, in many cases, we only have scarce information preserved in these archives.

Through titular calendars and petitions for specific appointments to the Land Court, Michael Nguyen (Palacký University, Olomouc), in his presentation (*Appointing Assessors to the Moravian Land Court during the Reign of Charles VI*), focused on the composition and appointment of members in the Moravian Land Court, among the foremost provincial institutions and a highly desirable stage in the careers of the local nobility, during the reign of Emperor Charles VI (1685–1740).

Analysing the rise of the Abensperg und Traun family, Nelly Eisenreich (University of Vienna), in her lecture (*Aristocratic Officeholders as Regional Distributors of Power in the 17th Century Habsburg Monarchy. The Lower Austrian Counts of Abensperg and Traun and their Ties to the Estates*), highlighted the role of the Landmarschall's office for its aristocratic holders and their role in the political and social structures of the Habsburg monarchy.

With her contribution (*The Economic Activities of Princess Sofia Agnes of Dietrichstein, Born as Countess of Mansfeld, in the Second Half of the 17th Century*), Veronika Šubrtová (University of Pardubice), focused on the economic and patronage activities carried out by Princess Sofia Agnes of Dietrichstein (1619–1677), owner and, after her brother's death, sole administrator, of the North Bohemian manor of Šluknov.

Hanna-Lisa von Lenthe (University of Vienna) presented a particular case of evolution in the representation of the image of power through the coins minted by the Austrian Neufürsten between the 16th and 17th centuries (*Evolving Images of Power. The Changing Self-Representation of the Neufürsten Through Coinage from the Early to the High Baroque*).

Finally, the first day of the conference concluded with the presentation by Ondrej Šály (The Institute of History at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava), titled *Aristocracy*,

*So-Called Middle Nobility and Petty Nobility in the Hungarian Kingdom: an Economic Perspective*, which examined the definition of nobility within Hungarian society of the Early Modern period and the importance of the economic perspective for the concept of nobility.

Before dinner, the group was accompanied by Anna Z. Adamčíková MA, and Dr. Ladislav Holoubek to the Bishopric Library of the Diocese of Hradec Králové, where they were able to observe and browse the precious manuscripts, incunabula, and printed volumes preserved in the library.

For its second day, the conference moved to the University of Pardubice. The young researchers' presentations were introduced by a lecture given by Professor Thomas Nicklas of the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, who reflected with the audience on the recent acquisitions of French and English historiography regarding the modern and contemporary concept of nobility.

The professor's lecture then gave way to the presentation (*From Ancestry to Identity. The Genealogical Pursuits of Přemyslav (III) of Zierotin*) by Pavel Lasztovicza (Palacký University, Olomouc), who, through the papers and genealogical research of Přemyslav (III) of Zierotin (1630–1673), highlighted how important genealogy was during the Early Modern period as a means of legitimization and consolidation of one's status and position within the noble elites for noble families.

*Career Building in the Court of the Habsburg Archdukes in the 16th Century* was the title of the contribution by Zoltán Ujj (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest). The scholar analysed the court of the Archdukes Maximilian (1527–1576) and Ferdinand (1529–1595), sons of Ferdinand I (1503–1564), in the 1540s, studying the factors and qualities that allowed people to enter the Archdukes' courts and progress in their careers.

Emily Deelen Porta (Complutense University of Madrid), on the other hand, focused on the role played by Margaret of Austria (1584–1611) at the court of her husband Philip III. In her contribution *Queen, Lady-in-Waiting, and Confessor Between Madrid, Tuscany, and the Empire: a Power Network for the House of Austria's Interests (1599–1624)*, she re-evaluated the political role played within the court by the Queen through the power network created by Margaret between Spain, Tuscany, and Austria.

Drawing on extensive archival research, with her study (*Dressing the Court: Material Culture, Economic Strategy, and Social Identity in the Lives of Early Modern Austrian Ladies-in-Waiting*), Nathalie Schiffer (University of Vienna) reconstructed the material realities and symbolic dimensions of aristocratic dress from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, focusing on two Austrian ladies-in-waiting: Magdalena von Hardegg (1595–1657) and Maria Josepha von Thürheim (1691–1726).

Weronika Paszek (University of Silesia in Katowice) shifted the focus to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1740 and 1745. Her presentation (*From violent*

*invasions of ways (...) I will defend myself – on the Conflicts of the Nobility: the Dispute over the Property of the Sobieski Family*) analysed the issues of conflict resolution among the nobility through the example of the dispute over the Sobieski estate in the eighteenth century between husbands and children of the royal granddaughters and close relatives and creditors of the Sobieski, including the Grand Marshal of Lithuania Paweł Sanguszeko (1680–1750).

Diplomatic history was the undisputed protagonist of the subsequent contributions.

Olivér Gillich (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), in his *Aristocrats in the Service of Eastern Diplomacy: Friedrich von Breuner Permanent and István Nyáry Extraordinary Habsburg Ambassadors in Constantinople at the Beginning of the 1580s*, has examined the relationship between Friedrich von Breuner, permanent ambassador in Constantinople from 1581 to 1583, and the extraordinary ambassador István Nyáry in 1582–1583, when the Ottomans celebrated the circumcision of the Sultan's eldest son.

Veronika Hřebíková (University of Pardubice) focused on the figure of Guillaume Ancel, French envoy at the court of Emperor Rudolph II (1552–1612) for nearly three decades from 1576 to 1602, through his regular reports to France, which also concerned the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg monarchy and the religious situation in the Czech lands (*Diplomatic Mission of the French Envoy Guillaume Ancel at the Court of Rudolph II*).

Viktor Róbert Sinka (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) returned to Constantinople, presenting the figure of Friedrich von Kreckwitz (1550–1593), the last permanent Habsburg envoy to Constantinople in the sixteenth century, the only envoy of Silesian origin, who served between 1591 and 1593, when the Long Turkish War started (*Between Two Worlds: The Last Habsburg Ambassador in 16th-Century Constantinople*).

From Constantinople to Piombino, in the seventeenth-century Tuscany: with his paper *Diplomatic and Legal Battles of the Small Italian Aristocracy in the Imperial Court as Proxy Disputes for Control Between Allies. The Case of Piombino in 1624*, Alfonso Patón Roldán (Complutense University of Madrid) outlined the factions within the Appiano family, one supported by the Spanish Monarchy, the other endorsed by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, after Prince Jacopo VII Appiano's death (1603), showing how this dispute, concluded in 1624 by the Aulic Council, was exploited by the surrounding great powers as a means of expansion and influence.

The conference was then concluded by the presentation of Caroline Fish (Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana), who examined how debates over precedence in the Imperial court's female hierarchy reflected the rising prominence of ambassadors in Hispano-Imperial diplomatic relations and became a battle ground for inter-dynastic tensions. In her contribution (*Elite Expectations: Women, Precedence, and Spanish Diplomacy*

*in the Seventeenth-Century Imperial Court*), the scholar asserted that Spanish ambassadresses were a pivotal aspect of Spanish diplomatic practice and a means of asserting Spanish power beyond the political sphere represented by their husbands.

The visit to Pardubice Castle after the end of the conferences suitably sealed the conclusion of an interesting and stimulating conference, varied in its themes and presentations, and which gave rise to a lively debate and a fruitful exchange of ideas over the two days.

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