

Spaces for Diplomacy

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Spaces for Diplomacy



Prague, the Court of Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612)
and Diplomats

Edited by

Tomáš Černušák, Jiří Hrbek, Štěpán Vácha

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Tomáš Černušák, Jiří Hrbek, Štěpán Vácha

Introduction

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century and in the first decades of the seventeenth century, Prague, the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, underwent a radical and multilevel transformation. In this period, the city could be described as a genuine metropolis, a place where the threads of international politics converged amid a varied and vibrant cultural, economic, and religious life. The multinational and multiconfessional agglomeration attracted a great many people of different social strata. There were members of the House of Habsburg, princes of the Holy Roman Empire, church dignitaries, and diplomatic missions. Aristocrats from many countries pursued their own personal or family interests, career ambitions, and opportunities, and many of them had palaces built or renovated on the streets of Prague. Yet like any big city, Prague also attracted a mix of charlatans and adventurers. One such group, by no means insignificant in number, were the merchants who purveyed the luxurious and other specific goods that were in increasing demand among the city's residents. Complementing these merchants were a variety of artists and specialist craftsmen, who left a very clear mark on the city in the form of new building projects, works of art, and other artefacts, many of which have survived to the present day.

Behind this transformation of the metropolis on the river Vltava, we can sense the consequences of the long-term presence of the imperial court, the specific character of which was, to a large degree, shaped by the persona of Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612), well known for his collecting hobbies and patronage of the arts and architecture. However, unlike Prague's remarkable medieval development in the fourteenth century, when Emperor Charles IV wanted to make the city the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, Rudolf II's personal involvement was very limited. He did not interfere with the city as a whole through grandiose urbanistic concepts, the majority of his activities instead focusing on the Prague Castle complex, its immediate surroundings, and certain selected undertakings, such as the Royal Game Reserve. The ruler and his court were not so much actors as they were accelerators and moderators of the transformation of the social structure of the city and its economic conditions, cultural sphere, confessionality, and spatial dimensions.¹ On the one hand, there was the Renaissance agglomeration,

1 On the transformation of the town during the reign of Rudolf II in the context of his court, see Jaroslava Hausenblasová and Michal Šroněk, *Urbs aurea. Praha císaře Rudolfa II.* (Prague: Gallery, 1997); Eliška Fučíková et al., *Rudolf II. and Prague. The Court and the City* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Eliška Fučíková, *Prague of the Reign of Rudolph II* (Prague: Karolinum Press,

consisting *de jure* of three and later four independent royal towns (Old Town, Lesser Town, New Town, Hradčany), in the vicinity of which there was also the Vyšehrad fortress and multiple farmsteads and homesteads separated by expansive fields, vineyards, and forests. On the other side of the relations equation, we find the royal court, most often situated within the socially and spatially separated complex of Prague Castle, though occasionally it also occupied one of the smaller suburban locations (e.g. summer palaces or castles of the so-called chamber estates in Central Bohemia). The town and the court were connected by people who embodied mutual ties, such as court craftsmen (members of the city's guilds). The question that many contributions in this book attempt to answer is whether diplomats can be considered such persons and what the diplomatic space of the early modern period was like on the example of one residential town at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

For a long time, the phenomenon of the royal court was peripheral to the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This began to change with the acceptance of the works of Norbert Elias.² In examining the subject of court society, he shifted attention from the mere bureaucratic and administrative role of the court to its function as a power center and an informal hub in which to establish personal ties.³ This opened up space for the development and formation of new interpretative directions, influenced in no small measure by other scientific disciplines, particularly sociology and anthropology, and whose acceptance in combination with a comparative approach gave rise to a new understanding of the historical significance, functions, and roles that the court fulfilled at various levels in early modern society.⁴ Some of them may appear to be contradictory. An important function of the court was to limit access to the sovereign; on the other

2015); Michal Šroněk, *De sacris imaginibus. Patroni, malíři a obrazy předbělohorské Prahy* (Prague: Artefactum, 2013).

2 Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969). On the reception and later criticisms of Elias's work, see Leonhard Horowski, "Hof und Absolutismus. Was bleibt von Norbert Elias' Theorie?", in *Absolutismus – ein unersetzliches Forschungskonzept?*, ed. Lothar Schilling (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 143–172.

3 Ronald G. Asch, *Der Hof Karls I. von England. Politik, Provinz und Patronage* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 1–2.

4 Of the numerous works on the subject of the court, see Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt, ed., *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. A Global Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); René Vermeir, Dries Raeymaekers and José Eloy Hortal Muñoz, ed., *A Constellation of Courts. The Courts and Households of Habsburg Europe 1555–1665* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021); Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, ed., *La corte di Roma tra Cinque e Seicento. „Teatro“ della politica europea* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998); Marcello Fantoni, ed., *The Court in Europe* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2012).

hand, however, the court did allow social elites to participate in the power process by means of their integration into the court milieu.⁵

A number of scholarly papers developed this direction of research and, using various models, identified one of the core elements of the functionality of this system, i.e. the relational networks that helped distribute power and thus served as one of the key power mechanisms.⁶ At the same time, however, the court also fulfilled the role of a cultural center, whose influence typically extended beyond its borders and radiated further into the space. Here, the sovereign could present his status, wealth, and tastes through a varied cultural life and a diverse collection of artistic artefacts. Thanks to its political relevance, the art of the sovereign's court gained an added power value and often became the norm or at least a model for the greater surroundings.⁷ Of considerable importance was the function of the court as a center of piety, expressions of which largely relied on the use of symbolic communication (e.g. in the form of various festivities and ceremonies), by which means cultural activities were also artistic artefacts. The basis for this was an understanding of sovereign power as being derived from God, who gave his anointed one a mandate to administer earthly affairs, something that courts of various confessional orientations had in common. The devotion of European rulers to the Christian religion constituted a standard part of their representation, making use of various forms, including artistic ones: "from the performance of religious rituals to the patronage of chapels to religious decorations, artwork and music."⁸

An interesting opportunity to uncover new or different perspectives in our understanding of the diverse aspects of the court can be found in the use of spa-

5 John Adamson, "Introduction. The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court 1500–1700," in *The Princely Courts of Europe. Ritual, Politics and Culture Under the Ancien Régime 1500–1700*, ed. John Adamson (London: Weidenfeld&Nicolson, 1999), 7–8; Erin Griffey, "Introduction," in *Early Modern Court Culture*, ed. Erin Griffey (London: Routledge, 2022), 2. For more details, see Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastian Derks, ed., *The Key of Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

6 From classical works, see Linda Levy Peck, *Court, Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1993); José Martínez Millán, ed., *La Corte de Felipe II*. (Madrid: Alianza, 1994); Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, ed., *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Rubén Gonzáles Cuerva and Alexander Koller, ed., *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions. Political Groups at Early Modern Centres of Power (1500–1700)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

7 Erin Griffey, ed., *Early Modern Court Culture* (London: Routledge, 2022); Richard L. M. Morris, *Court Festivals of the Holy Roman Empire, 1555–1619. Performing German Identity* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

8 Griffey, "Introduction," 7. See also Adamson, "Introduction," 24–33.

tial analysis. Its acceptance in the interpretation of findings obtained from various historical sources can help in a number of areas to “see more,” perhaps even allowing us to view history in a different way or to uncover entirely new and hitherto unknown relationships.⁹ There have long been discussions in different countries and by various authors about perceptions of space. In recent decades, they have been substantially influenced by the interpretative methods of cultural anthropology and sociology, which are ideally suited to the study of historical events and phenomena. Important impulses are found in the writings of sociologists such as Georg Simmel, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and Maurice Halbwachs,¹⁰ whose work has recently been continued by the German sociologist Martina Löw. According to her understanding, space is not merely a topographically defined fixed place; rather, it is “eine relationale (An)Ordnung sozialer Güter und Menschen an Orten.”¹¹ Therefore, instead of having a predetermined value and definition, space is dynamic and variable, particularly in relation to various activities or perceptions of a person as an individual or as a member of a social group. These considerations have been the basis for scientific projects focusing on the interpretation of various types of spatial contexts, such as analysis of the public space, (often in the context of an early modern city),¹² or the sacred space with its overlaps into both the public and the private space.¹³

The question of space also ties in with the courts of the early modern period. Relevant scholarly works usually point to the fact that it would be too simplistic to identify the court with only one or more residences of the sovereign as

9 Susanne Rau, *Räume. Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Nutzungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), 122.

10 For a summary of the development and transformations of the methodological approach to space, see Rau, *Räume*, 71–107.

11 Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 224–230.

12 Gerd Schwerhoff, ed., *Stadt und Öffentlichkeit in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011); Susanne Rau, *Räume der Stadt. Eine Geschichte Lyons 1300–1800* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2014); Gerhard Fouquet et al., ed., *Social Functions of Urban Spaces through the Ages. Soziale Funktionen städtischer Räume im Wandel* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2018); Marc Boone and Martha Howell, ed., *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

13 Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, ed., *Zwischen Gotteshaus und Taverne. Öffentliche Räume in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004); Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, ed., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton, ed., *Defining the Holy. Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, ed., *Topographie des Sakralen. Religion und Raumordnung in der Vormoderne* (München: Dölling und Ganitz, 2008); Jennifer Mara DeSilva, ed., *The Sacralization of Space and Behavior in the Early Modern World. Studies and Sources* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

topographically fixed buildings.¹⁴ As relates to the aforesaid, we might understand it more as a space of action, that is, a space created and inhabited by people, filled or transformed by their mutual interactions,¹⁵ which had a close bearing on the basic functioning of the court as a center of power, culture, and religion.¹⁶ This corresponds to the definition of the three dimensions of the court, i.e: “the palace, the ruler with his great nobles, and the ruler with his council,”¹⁷ which combines the topographical and personal aspects of the hierarchically structured royal court. The court space can therefore also be interpreted as dynamic or as having an extensive character, which meant that on many levels it was closely intertwined with its nearer or more distant surroundings, namely with the residential city.

According to Jeroen Duindam, we might understand the court as a series of concentric circles. The foundation was the immediate space of the sovereign, narrowly defined by his palace or perhaps even just his apartment, through its extension into the surrounding urban space all the way to the presence of the ruler and his closest cohort in the countryside; in the case of Bohemia, this would have been at chamber estates, which from the time of Ferdinand I had been considered part of the personal property of the sovereign. With regard to the actions of the members of the court society, the court was not necessarily the only center of power. The royal offices, situated either directly within the palace or in nearby buildings and with strong connections to the court of the sovereign, on whose behalf they carried out the agenda delegated to them, could thus represent certain alternative and parallel centers of power.¹⁸

14 Malcolm Smuts and Georg Gorse, “Introduction,” in *The Politics of Space: European Courts ca. 1500–1750*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, George Gorse and Malcolm Smuts (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009), 24–25; Adamson, “Introduction,” 7; Griffey, “Introduction,” 4.

15 Marcello Fantoni, “The City of the Prince: Space and Power,” in *The Politics of Space: European Courts ca. 1500–1750*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, George Gorse and Malcolm Smuts (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009), 40.

16 Adamson, “Introduction,” 7–8; Griffey, “Introduction,” 2.

17 Jeroen Duindam, “Versailles, Vienna and Beyond: Changing View of Household and Government in Early Modern Europe,” in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. A Global Perspective*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 404.

18 Jeroen Duindam, “Palace, City, Dominions: the Spatial Dimension of Habsburg Rule,” in *The Politics of Space: European Courts ca. 1500–1750*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, George Gorse and Malcolm Smuts (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009), 62–63. See also Adamson, “Introduction,” 12; Elisabeth Narkin, “Princely Residences,” in *Early Modern Court Culture*, ed. Erin Griffey (London: Routledge, 2022), 139–155.

Relating closely to the question of space is time, the new perception of which signifies to many historians the beginning of the modern era.¹⁹ At the advent of early modern diplomacy, time played an important role in several ways: namely, it was the perception of distances that had to be crossed for reasons of travel as well as for the exchange of information.²⁰ The common denominator of both of these factors was the need to ensure political communication between individual diplomats but also between diplomats and their sovereign. In the early modern period, various methods were used simultaneously to achieve this objective: the time-consuming travel of ad hoc delegations, the maintenance of a permanent diplomatic representation in a foreign country, and later the organization of meetings of diplomats at (peace) congresses, i.e. at a specified time and place. We find evidence of the first two methods at the Rudolfinian court in Prague. In addition to diplomats, however, the information built into their mutual correspondence also travelled around Europe: its speed (or lack thereof) depended not only on the distance between the sender and the recipient but also on the functioning of the postal connection or the level of efficiency of the constructed communication network.²¹ In any case, diplomatic correspondence was crucial for subsequent political decision-making. In practice, there was a direct proportionality between the time needed to obtain answers to the questions that the diplomat directed to his sovereign and the degree of independence of the given diplomat. The time aspect was crucial both for the establishment of the format of the international congress (for the first time in Münster and Osnabrück),²² but also for defining the role of the ambassador during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²³ His status as an envoy of the highest rank made it possible to not waste time waiting for an answer: the ambassador not only represented his sovereign but was directly identified with him. He was his alter ego. This theoretical construction allowed flexible decision-making without time delays.

19 Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik historischer Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008).

20 Michèle Fogel, *Les cérémonies de l'information dans la France du XVI^e au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); Sabrina A. Baron and Brendan Dooley, ed., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006).

21 Klaus Beyrer, "Brieftransport in der Frühen Neuzeit. Entwicklung und Zäsuren," in *Briefe in politischer Kommunikation vom Alten Orient bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christina Antenhofer and Mario Müller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 169–184.

22 Rainer Babel, ed., *Le diplomate au travail: Entscheidungsprozesse, Information und Kommunikation im Umkreis des Westfälischen Friedenskongresses* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2005).

23 William R. Roosen, "The True Ambassador: Occupational and Personal Characteristics of French Ambassadors under Louis XIV," *European Studies Review* 3 (1973): 121–139.

The diplomat had to have a refined sense of time, because it was necessary to control ceremonial action, which was largely based on temporality. It is no coincidence that descriptions of various court festivities devoted attention to the timeline along which a certain event unfolded.²⁴ Arriving on time, joining the procession at the right place and time, or the planning of a trip to the countryside so that the diplomat might “fortuitously” catch the sovereign there during a period of rest, thereby increasing the likelihood of an audience. All of this required a masterful handling of time, which, in addition to its objective dimension, clearly visible in the ever-increasing sophistication of mechanical devices,²⁵ was also perceived as a subjective quantity; with a bit of luck, it could be successfully manipulated to create one’s own system of time management.²⁶

Yet the diplomat was not always a mere master of time. Often, he had to conform to the time of the sovereign whose surroundings he was active in. Court time was based on a calendar of cyclical church holidays and secular festivities, usually associated with the person of the emperor or king and his family. In addition to Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, there were the birthdays and name days of members of the ruling dynasty, the time of carnival, the expectant waiting of Advent and Lent, and the hunting season, when there were changes to the sovereign’s schedule, particularly to the ratio between his time for work (*negotium*) and his time for leisure (*otium*). However, the diplomat also had to respond to noncyclical festivities: celebrations of victories on battlefields, coronations, the birth of a royal child, or, conversely, mourning after the death of the sovereign. Moreover, in all these instances we see traces of his role as a man between two worlds, because he needed to reflect the goings-on not only at the court where he was executing his diplomatic mission but also those at the court that had sent him there. His duty was to commemorate the greatness and important events associated with his sovereign and his family in a foreign milieu, if possible at the appropriate time and without unnecessary delay.

The court and its extensively conceived space were also frequently used by diplomats, who represented their own sovereigns and their unique interests there. Traditional historiography has typically focused on diplomacy, which it saw as a web of impersonal political liaisons between (early) modern states. In

²⁴ Thomas Rahn, *Festbeschreibung. Funktion und Topik einer Textorte am Beispiel der Beschreibung höfischer Hochzeiten (1568–1794)* (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 2006).

²⁵ Otto Mayr, *Uhrwerk und Waage: Autorität, Freiheit und technische Systeme in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1987).

²⁶ Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken, “Introduction,” in *Temporality and Mediality in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 1–14.

recent decades, this view has been transformed, and the history of diplomacy has become the history of diplomats, agents actively creating relationships between European rulers. Diplomats were increasingly perceived as actors whose work in the sphere of foreign relations was conditioned and influenced by their origin, education, social and cultural ties, personal and family interests, or other circumstances entirely outside their diplomatic mission.²⁷ Diplomats are perceived by contemporary historical science as courtiers with long-term engagements at foreign courts on behalf of their own sovereign. According to this view, the sociocultural practices of diplomats “were not the consequence of foreign policy, international law, and political thought but their basis,” and “a study of these practices reveals more about the nature of early modern diplomacy than the assumptions that underlie the traditional state-focused, Eurocentric paradigm.”²⁸

Another methodological change was the detachment of the figure of the early modern diplomat from the concept of the modern state, of which he was to serve as a representative. In the world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were individuals who did not fit into the formal framework of statutory diplomats, but by their actions they took on tasks, functions, and roles important for the formation and development of relations between European actors.²⁹ It was not only other sovereigns who could be represented on various levels at a foreign court but also religious communities (religious orders), imperial cities, important military commanders, or economic networks (the Hanseatic League). In lower diplomatic posts and in the grey area of agents or even spies, we encounter individuals of varying social status and professions, such as officers, artists, merchants, religious, and often women in the role of mothers, wives, widows, or mistresses.³⁰ This opens up an extensive space for research into various aspects of

27 John Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 1–14; Tracey A. Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History,” *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (2016): 441–456; Dorothee Goetze and Lena Oetzel, “A Diplomat Is a Diplomat Is a Diplomat? On How to Approach Early Modern European Diplomacy in Its Diversity: An Introduction,” in *Early Modern European Diplomacy. A Handbook*, ed. Dorothee Goetze and Lena Oetzel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 3–4.

28 Jan Henning and Tracey A. Sowerby, “Introduction. Practices of Diplomacy,” in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017), 2.

29 Birgit Tremml-Werner and Dorothee Goetze, “A Multitude of Actors in Early Modern Diplomacy,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 407–422; Henning and Sowerby, “Introduction,” 1–21.

30 For example, Roberta Anderson, Laura Oliván Santaliesra, and Suna Suner, ed., *Gender and Diplomacy. Women and Men in European Embassies from the 15th to the 18th Century* (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2021); Maurits Ebben and Louis Sicking, ed., *Beyond Ambassadors. Consuls, Missionar-*

the negotiations, communication, strategies, and alternative functions of official diplomats as well as for the study of other activities that upon first glance seem to have little connection to the diplomatic mission, since these persons may have been acting in parallel in the role of patron, cultural mediator, or member or head of an interest faction or relationship network.³¹ In recent years, important works have also been published tracing from various perspectives the nondiplomatic or informal functions of official diplomats who applied their skills to other areas of human activity and in doing so often facilitated their foreign policy mission.³²

Although in recent decades significant attention has been paid to various aspects of the reign of Rudolf II,³³ we still lack a comprehensive historical evaluation pertaining directly to the issue of his Prague court and the role he played in relation to the various social classes within the Habsburg monarchy and to the city of his long-term residence. Major comparative publications on royal courts mention the Prague court only peripherally.³⁴ Perhaps it is with regard to the connection between Rudolf's court and the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia that this question has finally become the subject of research, particularly by Czech

ies, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Noldus, ed., *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, ed., *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010).

31 Of the many works on these questions, see e.g. Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, ed., *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Guido Braun and Susanne Lachenicht, ed., *Spies, Espionage and Secret Diplomacy in the Early Modern Period* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2021); Hillard von Thiesen, *Diplomatie und Patronage. Die spanisch-römischen Beziehungen 1605–1621 in akteurzentrierten Perspektive* (Epfendorf: biblioteca academica, 2010); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Roma papale e Spagna. Diplomatici, nobili e religiosi tra due corti* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010). For a summary evaluation see Dorothée Goetze and Lena Oetzel, ed., *Early Modern European Diplomacy. A Handbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024).

32 Stefano Andretta et al., ed., *Esperienza e diplomazia. Saperi, pratiche culturali e azione diplomatica nell'Età moderna (secc. XV–XVIII). Expérience et diplomatie. Savoirs, pratiques culturelles et action diplomatique à l'époque moderne (XV^e–XVIII^e s.)* (Rome: Viella, 2020); Stefanie Freyer and Siegrid Westphal, ed., *Wissen und Strategien frühneuzeitlicher Diplomatie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 3–100.

33 On the life and work of Emperor Rudolf II, see in particular Robert J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World. A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Josef Janáček, *Rudolf II. a jeho doba* (Prague: Svoboda, 1987); Karl Vocelka, *Die politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II.* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981).

34 Compare e.g. Jeroen Duindam, "The Archduchy of Austria and the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary. The Courts of the Austrian Habsburgs c. 1500–1750," in *The Princely Courts of Europe. Ritual, Politics and Culture Under the Ancien Régime 1500–1700*, ed. John Adamson (London: Weidenfeld&Nicolson, 1999), 165–187.

scholars.³⁵ The first attempts to analyze its structure can be traced back to the 1980s, when it was presented by Josef Janáček in a separate chapter of his well-known monograph on Rudolf II.³⁶ In the ensuing decades, interpretative approaches were influenced and enriched by historical anthropology, as is evident from various expert studies published up to the present day, which have focused not only on analysis of developments and transformations in the personnel of Rudolf II's court but also on his relationship with the surrounding city and influence in society or in various social strata.³⁷ In this context, the publication of a series on the court list of Rudolf II by Jaroslava Hausenblasová,³⁸ who continued her research in several other studies, was of great importance.³⁹ An identical methodological shift can be seen in connection with research on the multilayered aspects of the work of foreign diplomats of European powers. Their presence, more or less permanent, at the court of Rudolf II had considerable overlap and also contributed to strengthening the internationalization of the domestic aristocracy. Researchers have primarily focused on the diplomatic representatives of the Spanish king and the pope, who, with regard to their political or religious priorities, likely relied most on the relational network composed of members of court society.⁴⁰

35 Dana Dvořáčková-Malá, "Ke genezi dvorského bádání," in *Dvory a rezidence v proměnách času*, ed. Dana Dvořáčková-Malá et al. (Prague: Academia, Historický ústav AV), 197–203.

36 Janáček, *Rudolf II.*, 222–231.

37 Namely see Eva Drašarová, "Dvůr Rudolfa II. Příspěvek k organizaci a personální skladbě dvora středoevropských Habsburků v 16. a na počátku 17. století," *Sborník prací členů Socialistického svazu mládeže Státního ústředního archivu v Praze* 2 (1989): 42–86; Václav Bůžek, "Rudolf II. - jeho vláda, dvůr, mecenáš a kulturní prezentace ve šlechtických sídlech," in *Dvory a rezidence v proměnách času*, ed. Dana Dvořáčková-Malá et al. (Prague: Academia, Historický ústav AV), 167–208; Marie Buňatová, "Between the Imperial Court and the City: Court Merchants in Prague in the Era of Rudolf II," *Comenius. The Journal of Euro-American Civilization* 10 (2023): 167–182.

38 Jaroslava Hausenblasová, ed., *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II. Eine Edition der Hofstaatsverzeichnisse 1576–1612* (Prague: Artefactum, 2002).

39 Jaroslava Hausenblasová and Zdeněk Hojda, "Pražský rudolfínský dvůr mezi hradem a městem," in *Život na dvoře a v rezidenčních městech posledních Rožmberků*, ed. Václav Bůžek (České Budějovice: Pedagogická fakulta Jihočeské univerzity, 1993), 115–136; Jaroslava Hausenblasová, "Die 'Höflinge' Kaiser Rudolfs II. - Beitrag zur Begriffsbestimmung," in *Rudolf II, Prague and the World. Papers from the International Conference. Prague, 2–4 September, 1997*, ed. Lubomír Konečný, Beket Bukovinská and Ivan Muchka (Prague: Artefactum, Institute of Art History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 1998), 239–243; Jaroslava Hausenblasová, "Prager Elitenwandel um 1600: Böhmischer und höfischer Adel zur Zeit Rudolfs II.," in *Krakau, Prag und Wien. Funktionen von Metropolen im frühmodernen Staat*, ed. Marina Dmitrieva and Karen Lambrecht (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 173–184.

40 Tomáš Černušák and Pavel Marek, *Gesandte und Klienten. Päpstliche und spanische Diplomaten im Umfeld von Kaiser Rudolf II.* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

No examination of the presence and influence of diplomats at the imperial court and in Prague can be fully understood without considering Rudolf's patronage and collecting activities. These were not merely signs of the flourishing cultural life of the time but also played a key role in the diplomatic and political workings of the court. In the sixteenth century, collecting was a common practice among royal courts, where the owning and accumulation of rare and valuable objects reflected not only personal taste but also a display of wealth, cultural superiority, and social status.⁴¹ Various artefacts and products of nature were kept in a *Kunstkammer* ('cabinet of curiosities, wonder-room') as confirmation of the artistry of humankind and the vast diversity of nature. Although a *Kunstkammer* was primarily intended as a private museum, it also served to showcase the wealth, knowledge, and interests of its owner. The importance of collecting activities in Rudolf's private and political life is evidenced in a number of contemporary reports, the authors of which were mostly diplomats. In particular, the envoys of the Italian princes included negotiations for the importation of artworks in their Prague agendas, informing their patrons on how such works were presented at the imperial court and mediating contacts with artists and collectors.⁴²

A key aspect of premodern diplomacy was the widespread practice of gift-giving, which fulfilled an important role in strengthening personal ties between rulers as well as in the attainment of political goals.⁴³ In the Renaissance, by far

41 Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *Kunstkammer. Early Modern Art and Curiosity Cabinets in the Holy Roman Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 2022); Andreas Grote, ed., *Macrocosmos in Microcosmo. Die Welt in der Stube. Zur Geschichte des Sammelns 1450 bis 1800* (Opladen: VS Verlag, 1994); Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, *The Mastery of Nature. Aspects of Art, Science, and Humanism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, ed., *The Origins of Museums* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

42 Simone Bardazzi and Guido Carrai, "Costantino de' Servi, architetto e informatore medico, alla corte di Rodolfo II. Nuovi documenti circa le relazioni tra Praga e le corti principesche italiane," *Studia Rudolphina* 21–22 (2022): 86–114; Adriana Concin, "Splendid Gifts and a Florentine Architect for Emperor Rudolf II. Antonio Lupicini at the Imperial Court in Prague (1578–1580)," *Studia Rudolphina* 20 (2020): 24–49; Jürgen Zimmer, "Turin – Dresden via Prag. Savoyen und Sachsen am Rande einer Gesandtschaft in den Jahren 1604/1605," in *Dresden – Prag um 1600*, ed. Bekeť Bukovinská and Lubomír Konečný (Prague: Artefactum, 2018), 121–145; Barbara Ghelfi, "Le pitture spontano al fine quel che non possono spuntare i nostri stenti, et le nostre fatiche. Doni artistici di Cesare d'Este a Rodolfo II (1598–1604)," in *La corte estense nel primo Seicento. Diplomazia e mecenatismo artistico*, ed. Elena Fumagalli and Gianvittorio Signorotto (Rome: Viella, 2012), 93–133; Elena Venturini, *Le Collezioni Gonzaga. Il carteggio tra la Corte Cesarea e Mantova (1559–1636)* (Mailand: Cinisello Balsamo and Mantua: Silvana Editoriale, 2002).

43 Lars Kjær and Gustavs Strenga, ed., *Gift-giving and Materiality in Europe, 1300–1600. Gifts as Objects* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); especially on Prague, see Ivana Horacek, "The Art of the Gift. The Objects of Geopolitics During the Reign of Emperor of Rudolf II," in *Hans von*

the most appreciated aspect of a gift was its material value; therefore, the most common items dispatched as gifts were luxury artefacts, such as jewellery crafted from precious materials, textiles, furs, and rare natural products.⁴⁴ The emperor, however, expanded his scope of interest to encompass paintings, valuing the remarkable execution and artistry of famous masters. At Prague Castle, in addition to the *Kunstammer* there was a separately organized collection of paintings. Aware of his supreme status, the emperor often sought to acquire artworks by unscrupulous means, placing indiscriminate demands on other sovereigns in exchange for political concessions and favours. In this respect, the Prague court became well known as a place where art objects functioned as an effective ‘currency’, enabling diplomats to negotiate and to gain an audience with an emperor who was otherwise inaccessible.⁴⁵

In order to grasp the extent and form of the Prague collections, which during the Thirty Years’ War ceased entirely to exist, one must examine not only the testimonies of visitors but also period inventories.⁴⁶ In the beginning, modern historical research centered on the naïve idea that Rudolf’s *Kunstammer* and picture gallery, differing greatly from the installations of modern museums and galleries, were essentially a depository or storeroom. This seemingly chaotic arrangement was thought to reflect the emperor’s lack of artistic discernment and taste, perhaps even providing a figurative reflection of his deranged mind.⁴⁷ It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that an unbiased assessment took hold, at which point Rudolf’s collections were no longer seen as a random jumble of arbitrary objects and bizzareries, regardless of their actual value, but rather as a systematic and rationally arranged collection.

Aachen in Context. Proceedings of the International Conference, Prague, 22–25 September 2010, ed. Lubomír Konečný and Štěpán Vácha (Prague: Artefactum, 2012), 223–226; Ivana Horacek, “The Art of Transformation. Kunstammer Gifts between Emperor Rudolf II and Elector Christian II of Saxony,” *Studia Rudolphina* 12–13 (2013): 32–50.

⁴⁴ Marina Belozerskaya, *Luxury Arts of the Renaissance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

⁴⁵ Ghelfi, “Le pitture,” 119.

⁴⁶ Jürgen Zimmer, *Die Schatz- und Kunstammer Kaiser Rudolf II. in Prag. Inventare und Listen im Kontext weiterer Quellen von 1576 bis 1860* (Prague: Artefactum, 2021).

⁴⁷ Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens* (Leipzig: Klinghardt & Biermann, 1908), 80–81; earlier, Josef Svátek, “Die Rudolfinische Kunstammer in Prag,” in *Culturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen*, ed. Josef Svátek (Vienna: Braumüller, 1879), 237–239; see also František X. Harlas, *Rudolf II., milovník umění a sběratel* (Prague: František Topič, 1918), 65–66.

Alphons Lhotsky was among the first to point out that other princely collections of the time were similar in composition to the one in Prague.⁴⁸ However, meaningful progress in the discussion came only after the Second World War, with the discovery of the original inventory of Rudolf's *Kunstammer*.⁴⁹ The inventory, which was regularly updated between 1607 and 1611, lists various items arranged into distinct sections, forming a comprehensive system corresponding to the cosmological and museological theories of the period. The overall rehabilitation of Rudolf II's image, to which the historian Robert Evans contributed with his influential monograph, also led to a reassessment of the Prague collections. No longer viewed as evidence of the alleged madness of their owner, but instead their diversity and system of organization were signs of great erudition and a broad cultural purview. Ultimately, the collections became seen as a symbolic representation of an emperor who both understood and controlled the universe.⁵⁰

In the late 1970s, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann broached the idea of a political interpretation of Rudolf's *Kunstammer* as "an expression of his imperial magnificence and a symbol of his claims to power," mirroring the external world (macrocosm) in its variety and abundance.⁵¹ Kaufmann also emphasized the role of the *Kunstammer* in diplomacy and court protocol, pointing to tours of the collections given to foreign envoys, by which the emperor (not *in persona* but through his chamberlains and valets) demonstrated the strength of his empire. A short time later, Karel Vocolka would follow the same line of interpretation in his monograph on the political propaganda of Emperor Rudolf II. Vocolka viewed various types of art and collected items as tools for promoting imperial power and as components of the developed diplomacy between the Prague court and other sovereigns.⁵²

48 Alphons Lhotsky, *Die Geschichte der Sammlungen. Erste Hälfte von den Anfängen bis zum Tode Kaiser Karls VI. 1740* (Vienna: Ferdinand Berger, 1941–1945), 238–239.

49 The inventory is available in a modern edition by Rotraud Bauer and Herbert Haupt, ed., *Das Kunstammerinventar Kaiser Rudolfs II., 1607–1611* (Vienna: Schroll, 1976). The value of the inventory was first appraised by Erwin Neumann, "Das Inventar der rudolfinischen Kunstammer von 1607/1611," in *Queen Christina of Sweden. Documents and Studies*, ed. Magnus von Platen (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1966), 262–265. On the Prague *Kunstammer* in general, see Beket Bukovinská, "Die Kunstammer Rudolfs II. Entstehung, Niedergang, Wiederentdeckung," in *Das Haus Habsburg und die Welt der fürstlichen Kunstkammern im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Sabine Haag, Franz Kirchweger and Paulus Rainer (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2015), 229–253; Beket Bukovinská, "Ein Inventar, mehr als ein Inventar – eine Kunstammer, mehr als eine Kunstammer," in *München – Prag um 1600*, ed. Beket Bukovinská and Lubomír Konečný (Prague: Artefactum, 2009), 165–177.

50 Evans, *Rudolf II*, 162–195.

51 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "Remarks on the Collections of Rudolf II. The Kunstammer as a Form of Representatio," *The Art Journal* 38 (1978): 22–28; most recently Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "Zur Zierd. Revisiting the Prague Kunstammer," *Studia Rudolphina* 17–18 (2018): 141–153.

52 Vocolka, *Die politische Propaganda*, 197–208.

In the shadow of the publications by other researchers who continue to build on Kaufmann's thesis about the status value of Rudolf's artistic patronage and collecting,⁵³ we find a unique attempt by the scholar Eliška Fučíková from the mid-1980s to develop an anthropological perspective.⁵⁴ In her studies, she counters that visits by diplomats to the *Kunstkammer* were rare occurrences and that official court ceremonies did not involve tours of the collections. Many objects with political-symbolic potential (such as captured Turkish standards) were, in fact, stored in closable cabinets and chests and were thus unviewable. According to Fučíková, the Prague *Kunstkammer* was, first and foremost, a private museum, intended primarily for the pleasure and private study of its owner or, on occasion, serving as a source of inspiration for court artists.

More recently, Evelyn Reitz, and Jessica Keating have developed a symbolic conception of the Prague *Kunstkammer* as a microcosm, the structure and organization of which are in fact a reflection of the outside world. In their view, the *Kunstkammer* is not merely a collection of curiosities and art but, above all, it is a symbolic model of the world, in which order and harmony are derived from the thoughtful arrangement of diverse objects. This approach emphasizes not only Rudolf's passion for collecting but also the deeper philosophical and scientific principles that seek to understand and systematize the complexities of nature and culture into one coherent whole.⁵⁵

When addressing the diplomatic space of the imperial court in Prague, alongside the *Kunstkammer* and picture gallery, one must not overlook the residential palace. Here, state rooms were used for official audiences and political meetings, while anterooms provided a venue for daily networking between the envoys, courtiers, and high officials. Additionally, there were living chambers in which

53 Namely Friedrich Polleross, *Die Repräsentation der Habsburger (1493–1806)* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2022), 106–114; Friedrich Polleross, "Kaiser und Fürsten. Netzwerke der Kunst und Repräsentation im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation," in "... einer der größten Monarchen Europas"? *Neue Forschungen zu Herzog Anton Ulrich*, ed. Jochen Luckhardt (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2014), 24–26.

54 Eliška Fučíková, "Die Kunstkammer und Galerie Kaiser Rudolfs II. als eine Studiensammlung," in *Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Wien, 4.–10. September 1983. Vol. 4: Der Zugang zum Kunstwerk. Schatzkammer, Salon, Ausstellung, „Museum,”* ed. Jacques Thuillier (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 53–58; Eliška Fučíková, "The Collection of Rudolf II at Prague. Cabinet of Curiosities or Scientific Museum?," in *The Origins of Museums*, ed. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 47–53.

55 Evelyn Reitz, *Discordia concors. Kulturelle Differenzierung und ästhetische Einheitsbildung in der Prager Kunst um 1600* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 536–550; Jessica Keating, "Hidden in Plain Sight. On Copiousness in the Kunstkammer of Emperor Rudolf II," *Journal of the History of Collections* 33 (2021): 447–458.

the private affairs of the ruler himself were conducted. Attempts to reconstruct the imperial palace have often fallen outside the focus of professional interest or have been undertaken with a delay, following behind the discussion about the form and accessibility of the collections. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the palace, *Kunstammer*, and picture gallery together formed a cohesive, functional unit. The first illustrative image of Rudolf's residence was proposed by Ivan Muchka, who drew on descriptions of the audiences of envoys and baroque floorplans of Prague Castle.⁵⁶ The process of recreating the imperial palace in chronological perspective using archival sources and careful analysis of the spatial layout of the castle was further defined by Petr Uličný.⁵⁷ While his texts are characterized by a deep insight into architectural changes and their political context, the richness of ancillary detail can at times obscure the main line of argument. This occasionally affects the clarity and persuasiveness of the conclusions, which may then come across as somewhat speculative.

New methodological impulses can be found in a collective monograph on the Vienna Hofburg, in which a large team of authors applies sociological and cultural-anthropological approaches to architecture.⁵⁸ The book examines the architectural development of the palace, its expansions and renovations, and its various functions within the political and cultural life of the imperial court. It demonstrates clearly that a comprehensive understanding of a building can only be achieved through an interdisciplinary interpretation that combines construction history with political and cultural context. The premise of such an approach is that the appearance of a building is not only determined by its walls and architecture but above all by the people who inhabited it and gave it meaning through their actions. It is the human presence, the dynamics and interactions, that breathe life into a building and determine its historical and cultural significance. This perspective also prompts a reconsideration of why Rudolf II chose Prague as his main residence and what made Prague Castle a better fit for him than the family residence in Vienna. While strategic reasons are often cited – such as

56 Ivan Muchka, "Die Prager Burg zur Zeit Rudolf II. Neue Forschungsergebnisse," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 85–86 (1990): 95–98.

57 Petr Uličný, "The Making of the Habsburg residence in Prague Castle. History of the Journey of the Imperial Palace from the Centre to the Periphery," *Umění/Art* 65 (2017): 377–395; Petr Uličný, "Erotica & sapientia. Rudolf II's Early Years at Prague Castle," *Umění/Art* 69 (2021): 390–415; also in Czech, Petr Uličný, "Hledání velkoleposti. Rezidence císaře Rudolfa II. na Pražském hradě v letech 1600–1612," in *Architektura Albrechta z Valdštejna. Italská stavební kultura v Čechách v letech 1600–1635: Vol II*, ed. Petr Uličný (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017), 825–907.

58 Herbert Karner, ed., *Die Wiener Hofburg 1521–1705. Baugeschichte, Funktion und Etablierung als Kaiserresidenz* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014).

Prague's proximity to the empire and its distance from the Turkish threat, or disagreements with relatives whom he wanted to keep at a distance – the city's aesthetic and symbolic significance must also be taken into consideration.⁵⁹

The genius loci of Prague Castle, namely its location above the city and the extensive gardens, provided the emperor with a unique blend of privacy and access to nature, both of which were defining factors of his lifestyle. Rudolf's natural inclination to seclusion materialized in a sophisticated network of covered corridors that allowed him to move unnoticed throughout the residence and also to observe the goings-on not only in the residence but in the gardens and city below. During his long reign, the emperor reshaped Prague Castle according to his vision, turning it into a place from which he could both govern and pursue his hobbies and personal lifestyle, blending unnoticed observation with a deep passion for the arts and sciences. The understanding of Prague Castle as Rudolf II's living environment offers significant research potential, but it is still in its infancy, since we still have no detailed map of everyday life at the imperial court or a clear picture of how the residence functioned within the larger urban context.

The contributions in this book represent the culmination of an international conference organized by the Institute of History and the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, held in Prague on 26 and 27 September 2023. Its aim was to characterize and identify the space of diplomats at the court of Rudolf II and, if possible, link it to topographically defined places in the Prague agglomeration and beyond. We also wanted to determine whether there was a tendency for diplomats to somehow transform or modify the space in relation to specific actions, and whether a role was played by the distinction between the emperor's exclusively private chambers, the semiprivate rooms, and the spaces reserved for the exercise of power, audiences, and diplomatic negotiations.

It is no coincidence that many of the contributions contained within this volume focus on diplomats of the Holy See in service at the imperial court. This has to do not only with the importance of such diplomats at this stage of the early modern period but also with the fact that a substantial part of their correspondence from the reign of Emperor Rudolf II has already been made available to the public in the form of critical editions.

⁵⁹ Heinz Noflatscher, "Monarchische Willkür? Zur Demission des Wolf Rumpf und Paul Sixt Trautson am Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1600)," in *Tirol – Österreich – Italien. Festschrift für Josef Riedmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Brandstätter and Julia Hörmann (Innsbruck: Wagner, 2005), 496; Hausenblasová, *Der Hof*, 20–21; Janáček, *Rudolf II.*, 203. See also Friedrich Polleross, "Tradition und Recreation. Die Residenzen der österreichischen Habsburger in der frühen Neuzeit (1490–1780)," *Majestas* 6 (1998): 104–108.

The topic is opened by ALEXANDER KOLLER, a leading expert on nunciatures, who examines the early days of Rudolf II's reign, when his court in Prague was just taking form. Koller points out that the nuncios were not primarily tied to a certain locality but to the ruler himself, moving with him wherever he and his court went within his monarchy. The imperial court is thus the first specific space inherent to the nuncios, and it constituted their dominant field of interest. Another area of focus is the territory of the Czech lands, which the individual diplomats had the opportunity to get to know directly during their travels, and finally there is the residential city, undergoing a major transformation into a leading European center of diplomacy.

The main topic of the study by GUIDO BRAUN is the creation of social space through communication. The author focuses on the papal nuncios at the court of Rudolf II and changes in their political strategies during his reign. By comparing the communication possibilities of the nuncios over an extended period, Braun was able to trace the transformation of the Rudolfinian court, which reflected the transformation of the emperor himself at the end of his reign, a time when he remained secluded behind a wall of silence, when his court ceased to be a dominant communication hub and a space for dynamic social interactions. Another fundamental point of Braun's study is an emphasis on ties between the building of social networks of papal nuncios and the language competences of the envoys and the members of their entourage, which gave rise to possibilities for obtaining relevant information and establishing contacts with Czech-speaking and German-speaking social elites.

The topic is further explored, albeit for a different period, by TOMÁŠ ČERNUŠÁK, who namely emphasizes the fact that the work of the nuncios in Prague was influenced by the role (or roles) they performed. Primarily, it was their status as diplomatic representatives of the pope in his dual function as head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Papal State, which also placed the nuncios in a unique position as related to the functioning of the imperial chapel, i.e. they also fulfilled sacred functions. The rank of bishop entitled them to actively engage in religious service within the different variants of the Catholic liturgy, but they could also represent purely private interests, be it their own or those of other persons. Each of these roles, which typically cannot be completely separated from one another, had its dominant topographic delimitation. Here we can include the representative spaces of the imperial palace, for instance, or the important sacred space delimited by Catholic churches and its extension into the streets and squares during religious processions. As venues for negotiations, the nuncios frequently used the residences of Catholic courtiers and aristocrats as well as the residences of the nuncio themselves, the location of which varied.

The contribution from Hungarian historian TAMÁS KRUPPA focuses on representatives of the Hungarian and Transylvanian elites at the court of Rudolf II, who was also the King of Hungary. In this case, therefore, despite the fact that Transylvania was a principality straddling the border between the Habsburg monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, the representatives in question are not those of a foreign power. Here, because of the administering distant territories within a single state, diplomacies intermingled, and Kruppa demonstrates this in the relationship between the Hungarian representatives and papal nuncios. The absence of reliable information channels often led to political miscalculations and blunders, which were committed not only by the Habsburg but also by the papal politics aimed at this outpost of the Christian world. Problematic communication in space and in (real) time thus became one of the causes of instability and periodically recurring Hungarian uprisings.

The study by ŠTĚPÁN VÁCHA and MARKÉTA JEŽKOVÁ presents a thorough analysis of how Rudolf II used the art collections at Prague Castle as part of his diplomatic strategy and representation of imperial power. The authors focus on the question of the accessibility of these collections, which turns out to be more complicated than it seems at first glance. The space of Prague Castle was divided into different zones, the accessibility of which differed according to the social status and diplomatic importance of a given visitor. While some privileged guests had access to Rudolf II's most intimate spaces, the greater diplomatic public was not provided an opportunity to view the collections until after 1601, when they were moved to newly built representative halls. The authors also emphasize the role of the emperor's personal servants and court artists, who functioned as intermediaries and guides, thus rounding out a unique situation in which diplomacy, politics, and art intertwined.

The study by SYLVA DOBALOVÁ examines the importance and functions of the recreational buildings that formed an extension of Rudolf II's residence in Prague. Not only were the summer palaces, gardens, and game preserves symbols of the power and wealth of the sovereign, but they also served as informal settings in which to establish diplomatic relations. For the envoys, they provided unique opportunities for informal meetings with influential figures of the court, which was easier in the environs of gardens and summer palaces than during official audiences at Prague Castle. The study emphasizes that although these spaces are considered marginal, they played an important role in the formation of court contacts and were carefully administered for use as a significant component of imperial representation.

VÁCLAV BŮŽEK focuses his attention on a topic that has yet to receive much attention from researchers, that of the activities of Bavarian agents in Prague during the reign of Emperor Rudolf II. Through a precise analysis of historical sour-

ces, he shows that in addition to persons working in parallel in the imperial service, whose status in relation to the Bavarian dukes was that of client, there were also agents with different missions, typically dispatched to the imperial court for a limited period. All these diplomatic actors used a variety of spaces for their activities depending on the nature of their mission, be it intelligence gathering or direct negotiations regarding Bavarian interests. In addition to the imperial palace, where audiences with the emperor were held, such spaces included the residences of individual power actors working in Prague.

As the reign of Rudolf II neared its end, the political situation became increasingly dramatic. In the midst of the fraternal dispute between Rudolf II and Matthias, in which the Bohemian Estates threatened an armed uprising against the emperor, who did not want to repay them for their loyalty, the Saxon Elector Christian II sent his diplomats to Prague. This mission is the central focus of KATEŘINA PRAŽÁKOVÁ, who informs the reader on how the three Saxon envoys gradually familiarized themselves with the matter, how they created space for negotiations and the mediation of a reconciliation between the estates and the emperor, and the venues they used for such endeavors. Thus, Pražáková describes the creation of a ‘position in the middle,’ which took place in a relatively short span of time between May and July of 1609. Her detailed study seeks to identify the international context for the issuance of Rudolf II’s famous “Letter of Majesty” on religious tolerance.

The contribution of the Spanish historian RUBÉN GONZÁLEZ CUERVA is a detailed probe shedding light on the intriguing bipolarity of the spatial presence of representatives of the Hispanic monarchy in Prague in the first years of the reign of Emperor Rudolf II. Empress Maria, who until her departure to Spain in 1581 represented the power exponent of the country and its interests of paramount importance, reliably ensured the dynastic and confessional unity of both branches of the Habsburg family through her personal status and its presentification within the spaces of the imperial palace and with the advantage of direct and frequent contact with her son, the ruler of the Roman-German Empire. The diplomats of King Philip II, whose residences were situated in Prague’s Lesser Town, used “discreet court channels through the flexible Empress’s household” for negotiations with the emperor and his ministers.

In his study, GIORGIO ROTA analyses the intensive diplomatic contacts between the Holy Roman Empire and Safavid Persia from 1600 to 1612, when several Persian envoys took turns at the court of Emperor Rudolf II. With the primary goal of creating an anti-Ottoman alliance, these missions represented the peak of relations between the two empires, which until then had maintained only sporadic contacts. The author examines in detail the ceremonial entrance of the envoys into Prague, their reception by the emperor, and their participation in social

events. Lodging, the organization of entrance processions, and other ceremonial activities were all signs of the status and importance that Rudolf II attributed to the Persian delegations. At the same time, the author draws attention to the lack of Persian sources, which makes it difficult to fully understand the events from the perspective of Persia and its court.

Tudor diplomacy at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had different foundations than the continental variety. Such is one of the main conclusions reached by HANA FERENCOVÁ on the example of Englishmen in the Prague of Rudolf II. The English queen, Elizabeth I, did not permit a permanent embassy in the residential city of the Central European branch of the Habsburg family, and she obtained information about the area, including the probing of possibilities for support of the Dutch revolution led by local Protestant elites, through ad hoc delegations as well as from English travelers, who often carried out tasks bordering on espionage. Among them were young men on cavalier journeys who came from important aristocratic families and often continued their careers in the official diplomatic service. Thanks to their accounts, the English court gained an idea of the Central European area and possibilities for exploiting it in pursuit of the objectives of the island kingdom.

On the basis of the individual contributions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1 Prague Castle

From the beginning of his reign, Rudolf II clearly preferred Prague Castle as his main residence, which he rarely left, and this tendency became even more pronounced after 1600, when the emperor suffered a serious health crisis. The choice and establishment of Prague Castle as the dominant residence of the imperial court fundamentally changed the political and spatial coordinates of Central Europe, and the diplomats of the most important powers, such as the papal nuncios (A. Koller) or the Spanish envoys (R. González Cuerva), had to get used to the new reality. In the case of Prague Castle, however, it was not a structural monolith but a space divided into a number of spheres, the differences between which were determined by the complex architectural development and tradition of use by the Czech kings, estates and authorities, and not least by the ceremonial order and personal preferences of the emperor himself. He initiated building activities aimed, among other things, at creating a place for an extensive art collection, the form of which is attested by foreign diplomats who were allowed to visit the premises of Rudolf's collections (Š. Vácha – V. Ježková).

The premises of Prague Castle were partly public, reserved for the exercise of power, the holding of audiences and official diplomatic meetings, and partly private, including, in addition to the emperor's private suite, the rooms in which the famous Rudolphine collections were installed. Access to individual rooms was determined not only by their purpose or location, but also by the position of the diplomats themselves, their importance and the way they were connected to the ruler they represented, as in the case of Bavaria (V. Bůžek) or Saxony (K. Pražáková). In addition to permanent envoys and agents, there were also ad hoc envoys who came to Prague from as far away as Persia (G. Rota) or English travellers who were also used for diplomatic purposes (H. Ferencová). However, access to the Knights' Hall (*Ritterstube*) or the anteroom was regulated by strict ceremonial rules, as was the Council Hall (*Rathstube*), where Rudolf II probably held the most audiences. The emperor's private rooms remained closed to most foreign diplomats, and tours of the areas immediately surrounding Prague Castle, which were largely seen as a continuation of the emperor's private collections (the Lion's Court, the stables), were the exception.

There are only a few reports about the possibility of meeting the emperor while hunting in the preserves near Prague towns (Stromovka, Hvězda) or about the operation of the royal garden with the belvedere, where Rudolf's predecessors Ferdinand I and Ferdinand of Tyrol held court festivities (S. Dobalová). A very special case is the use of the private rooms of the Old Royal Palace by the Empress Maria for diplomatic negotiations at the beginning of Rudolf's reign (R. González Cuerva).

2 Urban residences of important courtiers and religious buildings of Catholic orders

The court of Rudolf II did not just include the monarch, who was bound by the rules of court protocol, and his closest servants. For diplomats, it was particularly important to deal with important courtiers and officials who influenced the emperor or were involved in his decisions in various ways. Until the last years of Rudolph's reign, when the wall in front of the emperor became almost impenetrable, his court served as a hub of communication and a space for establishing new social contacts, and as such it extended beyond the boundaries of Prague Castle to the palaces of Prague's towns and beyond (e.g. during hunts or on other informal occasions). The houses of prominent courtiers and the fields outside the city walls became parallel centers of power, if the imperial court is understood as a social space (G. Braun). In addition, the papal nuncios were closely associated with "is-

lands of Catholicism” in an otherwise predominantly Protestant environment, such as various monasteries and churches (T. Černušák). A certain radial pattern can be observed in the case of urban residences, where most of them are concentrated either directly in the area of Prague Castle (Rožmberk or Lobkowitz palaces) or in its immediate vicinity – in Hradčany or in the Lesser Town, i.e. on the left bank of the Vltava River. More distant locations of these buildings in the Old Town (Jesuit College with the Church of St. Salvator) or even in the New Town of Prague were rather rare. At the same time, it should be noted that most of the sacred and profane buildings themselves had an internal division into private and public parts. The latter consisted of the reception or representation hall of the town aristocratic residence, where communal meals or festivities were held, and its sacred counterpart was the parish or monastery church, which was open to the public. The private part of the palace, on the other hand, contained the study of the owner or rooms for consultations and secret meetings (T. Černušák, A. Koller).

3 Diplomatic residence

Diplomats not only interacted with the leading courtiers, the emperor or members of the Habsburg family in Prague, but also with each other. They gained valuable information and contacts with a wide range of sympathetic individuals, whose reports they collected, transcribed and compared with other sources. Thus, there was a rather diverse mix of clients and patrons in Prague, people who were geographically and kinship related, or connected for the purpose of achieving long-term and short-term goals (V. Bůžek). There were also representatives of estates from various parts of the Danube Monarchy, including envoys of the Hungarian Diet, Transylvanian princes and individual Hungarian nobles. Their partners were not only courtiers or the Emperor, but also members of the Bohemian estates or foreign ambassadors, including the papal nuncio (T. Kruppa). The diplomats’ own residences were also used for this purpose, usually in the Lesser Town or Hradčany. In the case of the papal nuncios, their residences also had a sacred dimension, including strict liturgical use, since most of them were also bishops.

The subject of the diplomatic space or the residential areas of Prague during the reign of Emperor Rudolf II is by no means exhausted by the contributions in this book. There are a number of uncertainties for which further source research is needed, as well as a number of white spaces that await more detailed treatment. More attention could also be paid to the functioning of the public space between

the residences, which was permeated by the presence of diplomats. For example, the participation of papal nuncios and Spanish or Venetian envoys in liturgical and funeral processions (for example, after the death of Emperor Maximilian II or at the funerals of important nobles) has been mentioned only in isolated cases. It does not include the well-classified meetings of spies or agents in taverns, squares, town halls or palace gardens, as recorded in the reports of envoys and the diaries of Rudolphine courtiers. Particular attention should be paid to the moments when the emperor and his court left the residence city and went to one of the rural residences on the chamber estates in central Bohemia (e.g. Brandýs nad Labem). However, the scope of the diplomats at Rudolf II's court may have been even wider, as it is likely that they travelled to the country estates of leading nobles throughout Bohemia and Moravia. A broader Central European comparison with the functioning of the residences of other members of the Habsburg family in Innsbruck or Graz, or with the residences of important imperial princes, would also be useful. Only after further source research will it be possible to describe the basic features of the functioning of the diplomatic space in Central Europe at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Editorial note

Because this publication contains many names of persons of various provenance, the editors have taken every effort to unify them. The names of rulers, popes, and other generally known historical figures are thus given in their established English variant, whereas for other names we have decided to respect territorial and linguistic origins.

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