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*Císařský orel a vábení Orientu. Zámořská obchodní expanze
habsburské monarchie (1715–1789)*

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Both Michal Wanner and Karel Staněk are already well known to the historiographical community as specialists in the field of overseas expansion and trade. While Karel Staněk so far focused mainly on the Portuguese Empire, Michal Wanner concentrated on the problems of Anglo-French relations in India and various trade companies (mostly on English, Dutch, French, and Austrian East Indian Companies). The reviewed book is a result of their long-time work and tries to cast light on the Austrian colonial and trade experience in Asia.

In their monograph Staněk and Wanner focus on the problem of the overseas trade expansion of the Habsburg Monarchy throughout the 18th century. Their study is based mainly on extensive archival research of various provenance (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, and Great Britain). The authors worked with a substantial number of edited sources and secondary literature. The reviewed book is divided into five sections.

The first chapter brings the reader to the period of the War of Spanish Succession, when the Austrian archduke Charles became the Spanish counter-king. When his older brother Joseph I died in 1711, Charles became the ruler of the Habsburg Empire (as Charles VI). The European powers had to face an immense threat of the birth of a single powerful empire, which they could not stand, since the same threat was the reason why they did enter the war. Although Charles did not keep either the title or the rule over the Spain after the signing of the treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt, he was able to maintain some pieces of the Spanish succession. Besides the part of the Apennine Peninsula, it was most importantly the Austrian Netherlands with the port of Ostend, which was crucial for the future of the Austrian overseas trade.

According to Staněk and Wanner, Charles VI learned from his ten years long engagement in Spain that his Empire depended too much on the support of Great Britain. He was able to

fully understand and appreciate the vitality of both his maritime partners, Great Britain, and Netherlands. This vitality emanated from their modern economics, which inspired him to think about the reforms which would transform his empire into a more powerful unit. Along with this, an idea of long-distance commerce became extremely popular in Vienna.

The second chapter encloses the tale of the birth of the empire and its ports. The Austro-Turkish War of 1716–1718 ended by the treaty of Passarowitz, which granted the Habsburg Monarchy considerable part of nowadays Serbia and thus the Empire got its largest territorial extent. The peace treaty was followed a week later by a very important commercial treaty between Vienna and Constantinople, which, apart from considerable commercial liberties, granted the free navigation on the Danube River towards the Black Sea and the commercial penetration of the markets in Persia. Despite the complications caused by the issues of safety and bad shipping lane on the Danube and the fact that most of the trade had to be effectively carried by land, the above-mentioned resulted in increased commercial activities of Vienna and the Ottoman Empire. The authors pay attention to the development of the commercial activities in the Habsburg Monarchy, e.g., the appearance of the first coffee houses in Vienna and Prague or the

activities pursued by minorities such as Jews and Armenians.

Third and fourth chapters are a study of the Oriental Company and of the Austrian Netherland and the history and the administration of the city of Ostend prior to 1722, and they close the first, introductory part of the book.

In the second part of the book lays the key to the understanding of the Austrian activities in Asia. This part consists of six chapters which are dedicated to the establishment, rise, and fall of the General Imperial India Company, known as the Ostend Company. Fifth chapter analyses the activities of independent trading consortiums, which preceded the establishment of the Ostend Company. The authors reveal the character of the overseas navigation, the composition of crews and the problems they had to face when confronted by the Dutch, British and pirates. The following chapter analyses the establishment of the Ostend Company and its structure; including the shareholders and their social origins, the relationship of the Ostend Company towards the elites in Brussels and Vienna, which is based on the extensive study of correspondence between the court in Vienna and the Ostend Company. The authors proved that it was mostly the relation to the imperial court which became fatal to the Ostend Company, since it was the question of the Austrian succession

and the problem of the international recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction that influenced the Ostend Company's future destiny. It is a known fact that Charles VI had to sacrifice the Ostend Company to get the support of the Great Britain, but the book reveals the course of negotiations and the efforts of the Emperor to keep both the Ostend Company and Maria Theresa on the throne along with the indivisibility of Austrian inheritance. Considerable attention is paid to the lesser-known events in the Czech context, such as the consequences of the Quadruple War in 1718–1720 and the subsequent congresses in Cambrai, Paris and in Soissons whose course is relevant for the Anglo-Austrian relations and the fate of the Ostend Company.

Considerable attention is paid to the practical work of the Company, its overseas navigation, everyday troubles the sailors encountered, as well as to the required knowledge and contemporary technical progress related to the overseas navigations and expeditions, including the typology of vessels and routes. In the eight chapter the authors analyse the character of the most important business activities of the Ostend company in Asia, namely in Mocca, in India (Bengalian Bankibazar and Cobelon on the Coromandel Coast) and in Chinese Kanton. They pay attention to the course of trade, including the conditions which pre-

ceded the loading or the unloading of the cargo.

In the third part, the reviewed book reveals the fate of the Austrian Littoral in two chapters. We have seen in the second chapter how the ports of Fiume and Trieste were declared free ports in 1719 and how the free shipping in the Adriatic contributed to the commercial activities between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire and Persia. In this part of the book, the authors examine the extent of the business activities between Vienna and Constantinople and the subsequent development of the diplomatic activities and the establishment of consulates which accompanied the intensified trade contacts. The thirteenth chapter is a study of the city of Fiume, whose importance was secondary compared to the case of Trieste.

The fourth part of the reviewed book consists of two chapters in which the authors analyse the rise and fall of the Imperial Asiatic Company, which crowned the attempts of the Habsburg Monarchy to penetrate the Euro-Asiatic trade in the form of privileged trading company. The fifth part is the conclusion.

In the text of such a large extent I found only minor inaccuracies. On the pages 224 and 227, there is a wrong date of Anglo-French alliance – 1717 (correctly it is 28 November 1716, in 1717 the Netherlands joined

the Anglo-French alliance and thus a triple alliance was born).

In the overall evaluation of the book, it must be mentioned that the study represents an innovative, erudite and in the Czech milieu almost unique approach. The activities of the Habsburg monarchy in overseas were sufficiently mapped neither in

the world historiography nor in the Czech one so far. The book is a substantial contribution to the history of the Habsburg Monarchy in the eighteenth century and could be recommended to both the professional and public.

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