History of Czech Registers

The Development of Parochial Vital Registers in the Czech Lands with Special Intention on the East Bohemian Areas (the Historical District of Chrudim) by Karel Kysilka

In genealogical search the parochial Records in Vital Registers referring to the Births/Baptism, Marriage and Death (in Czech Matrika, matrikniha, in German Matrikenbuch) are the most used, though not the only available source. In the following article I would like to describe their development on the territory of the Bohemia and Moravia, with the special interest to the region of the former Chrudimsky kraj (Chrudimer Kreis - the District of Chrudim) that included the towns and cities of Chrudim, Policka, Litomysl, Lanskoun- Landskron, Pardubice and Vysoke Myto.

The West European countries have richer and older history of the Vital Registers going back to the 13th century. Already the Lateran Council in 1137 and the Council of Paris in 1212 provided the duty of recording the Vital Statistics of the Christians. Unfortunately the duty and the reality were different things.

The basic instructions in keeping the vital records were set by the Trident Council in 1563. The duty of parishes, parochial circuits (in Czech: farnost, fara, in German Pfarramt, Kirchensprenger) were to establish two kinds of books where the most important data referring to sacrament of baptism and the matrimonial state should be written. The duty of recording the information on deceased people came later.

The Archdiocese of Prague set this liability twice - in 1564 and 1605, resp. 1614 (records of deceased people). The rise of the Registers was however before these dates. The first Registers in Bohemia appeared in 1530s and the alleged number of the Registers in 1564 was 22 and by 1600 there were additional 15 - 20 books.

The oldest Register is the Register of Marriages (in Czech Oddac matrika, matrika oddan ch, in German Trauungsbuch) from the north west Bohemian town of Jachymov (Joachimsthal) - from 1531 and Abertamy (Abertam) -from 1534. The Parish of St. Jindrich in the New Town of Prague boasts of the Baptismal Register (Matrika narozenych, krestni matrika, in German Taufbuch, Taufregister) from 1582. The oldest book at the territory of the District of Chrudim is the Baptismal, Marriages and Deaths Registry Book of the parish of the royal town of Vysoke Myto (Hohenmauth) of 1609. During the first years of the 17th century a huge number of registers appeared throughout Bohemia, though many of them were destroyed during the 30 year war. The estimated number of Registry books is about 1200 by 1650. In
District of Chrudim in the time before the war or shortly thereafter 7 books were started. Among them are the ones of the town of Litomysl (Leitmischl - 1622) and of nearby parishes of Cerekvice (even 1618), Luze (1623) and Literbachy (Lauterbach, today Cista - 1629). In 1624 the first register was founded in the market town Hlinsko and in following years 1625 and 1626 in the towns of Lanskroun (Landskron) and Usti nad Orlici. The district town Chrudim has its first register since 1630 and today the largest city in the region - Pardubice since 1633.

All these books reflected the births, marriages and deaths and all were written in Czech except of the pure German town of Lanskoun. These registers reflect the complicated religious relations of that time and are even written in the spirit of Protestant reformation.

Here is the complete list of registers in the district of Chrudim for the period 1600 - 1650:

before 1620, - 2 Books, Vysoke Myto (1609), Cerekvice (1618)
1621 - 1630, - 7 Books, Litomysl (1622), Luze (1623), Hlinsko (1624), Lanskroun (1625) Usti n. Orlici (1626), Lauterbachy (Cista - 1629), Chrudim (1630)
1631 - 1640, - 7 Books, Pardubice (1633), Roven (1635), Ceska Trebova (Boehmisch Trubau - 1635), Sezemice (1636), Nove Hrady (1638), Prelouc (1637), Jablonne (1636)
1641 - 1650, - 3 Books, Brandys nad Orlici (1641), Holice (1642), Policka (1642),

The contents of the records was very simple and brief. For instance the names of the bride (nevesta) and the groom (zenich), names of the witnesses (svedek), time and place of the marriage (oddavky). The more comprehensive determination - the parents of both, domicile was missing in most cases.

The baptismal records comprised the name of the child (dite), the baptismal date (not the date of birth !!) (den krestu), parents (rodice) and witnesses, name of village. The records were stylized in one sentence for a long period. The records were either in Czech or Latin in Czech speaking areas later also in German even in these regions.

Two samples from the praxis:

"Letha panie 1686, dne 15 mesice kvetna po trech ohlaskach ja, P. Antonius L., spravce tohoto farniho chramu, jsem pocestneho mladence XY a pocestnou pannu YZ v manzelstvi spojil. V pritomnosti svedku AB, BC."
AD 1686, on the day 15th of the month May after three banns, I, P. Antonius L., the administrator of this parrochial cathedral, coupled the honorable lad XY and honorable virgin XY in matrimonial ties. In presence of witnesses AB, BC thereof.

Actum Augezd. Roku 1647 dne 12 Xbris ja, Antonin Hradek, farar tohoto kostela jsem krtil dite jmenem Dorotha, otce Josefa Dvoraka a matky Dorotha.

Actum Augezd (= name of village) AD 1647 date 12 Xbris (= Decembris) I Antonin Hradek, the priest of this church christened the child Dorotha, of father Josef Dvorak and mother Dorotha."

Beginning the 1760s the records are kept in columns and the repeated words could have been thus deleted: The columns were: village, date, groom, bride, parents, witnesses. Since 1770 there was a duty to record the House No as well.

The emperor's Joseph II Patent provided to keep the vital records in triplicate, one of the copies was regularly given to the diocese. The Registers became the public document. It was recommended that the alphabetical indices to the books should be kept.

At the beginning one common register was kept for the whole parish, since 1784 there were registers kept for every village of a parish separately.

Until 1950 the books were stored at the rectories and kept by the priests. Then after this date all old (dead) books had to be given and stored in the State regional Archives and the live registers were kept by the state clerks in so called matricni urady (Vital register authorities), concentrated in the central communities (some 10 - 15 per one district). The concentration of the registry books in the Archives was a good idea which helped the researchers, and as well the condition for storage are more favorable for the books than if they were kept in separate parishes until today.

It makes difficulties for the researchers to find some entries in registers for certain parishes, if these parishes came into being later, say during the second half of the 18th century. Therefore it is necessary to search in the nearby villages, where the parish was established even before this date. For instance: Cesk Hermanice, today district Usti nad Orlici. The parish was formed in 1740, though the registers were kept already since 1711 for the circle of the filial church. But this church existed already in 1641 and the respective parish in the 17th century was Brandys nad Orlici. Therefore the records for the period 1641 - 1711 will be in the registers of the parish of Brandys.

I am stating the list of the parishes in the east bohemian region (today s districts of CHRUDIM - CR, PARDUBICE - PA, SVITAVY - SY, USTI N. ORL. -UO) with the name of the parrochial village/town in Czech (the German names may substantially
differ) In parenthesis the abbrev. of district. Then the date of establishing of the parish and the year since when the registers are kept. And remarks.

BESTVINA (CR) 1726 parish, before HERMAN, Registers since 1700
BOHDANEC (PA) 1650 parish, registers since 1663. Older records could be in PARDUBICE. Missing records from period 1685 - 1747.
BOJANOV (CR) parish renewed in 1674. Registers 1674.
BOROVA (SY), 1787 parish, 1787 registers. The older records from 1642 in registers of the town of POLICKA. Separate Protestant registers since 1848.
BRANDYS N. ORL. (UO), 1640 parish, registers 1641
Bystre (SY), the parish reclaimed after 30 year war, registers since 1677 ( of the death since 1685). Before these dates probably in POLICKA
Bystrec (UO), 1778 parish, registers since 1784. Previous entries in JABLONNE N. ORL.
CESKA TREBOVA (UO). Parish and registers since 1635 (matrimonial and death since 1640)
CESK HERMANICE (UO) parish since 1740, books kept since 1711, older records in BRANDYS N. ORL since 1641
CESK LIBCHAVY (UO), registers since 1770
CISTA (old name LITRBACHY) (SY), registers since 1629, parish 1630.
DAMNIKOV (UO), filial church to Lanskroun, registers since 1666, parish since 1754. Some entries in CESKA TREBOVA and TREBOVICE.
DASICE (PA), registers since 1652, when the parish already existed.
DOLNI CERMNA (UO), Parish 1671, registers from the same year, older records since 1626 USTI NAD ORLICI.
DOLNI DOBROUC (UO), parish since 1765. Older records in USTI N. ORL. betw. 1626-1671, later DOLNI CERMNA (1671 - 1765)
DOLNI LIBCHAVY (UO), registers since 1778, before this year USTI N. ORL.
DOLNI UJEZD (SY), parish before 1630, registers since 1653.
DRITEC (PA), in the 17th cent. at DASICE (registers since 1652), later SEZEMICE (registers since 1636). The parish and registers since 1755.
DVAKACOVICE (CR) Protestant registers since 1783.
HERMANUV MESTEC (CR), old parish, registers since 1656
HLINSKO (CR) the perish existed in 1630, registers from the same year.
HNATNICE (UO) the registers since 1770.
HOLICE (PA), old parish, registers since 1642, some records for the oldest period at ROVEN.
HORNI CERMNA (UO), Protestant registers since 1820.
HORNI HERMANICE (UO), originally at USTI N. ORL (registers since 1626), later from 1636 at JABLONNE. The parish and own registers since 1748.
HORNI JELENI (PA), registers since 1693.
HORNI SLOUPNICE (UO), originally at LITOMYSL (reg. since 1622), since 1663 at CEREKVICE (reg. since 1626), own registers since 1711, when the parish was organized. Protestant registers since 1780.

HRADISTE (CR), Protestant registers since 1784.

HROCHUHV TYNĚC (CR) Parish and registers since 1652.

CHOCEN (UO), old parish, registers since 1674.

CHOLTICE (PA), until 1786 at SVINCANY (reg. since 1683), own registers from 1786.

CHRAST (CR), Oldest records probably at PARDUBICE (since 1633), parish and own registers since 1709.

CHROUSTOVICE (CR), registers since 1665.

CHRUDIM (CR), old parish. Registers since 1630.

CHVALETOVICE (PA), Protestant registers since 1791.

JANOV (UO), originally at CISTA - LITRBACHY - registers since 1692, parish and own reg. since 1786.

JEDLOVA (SY), originally parish BYSTRE (reg. since 1677), resp. older in POLICKA. Own registers since 1690, missing data from 1735 - 1755.

JABLONNE N. ORL (UO), old parish, registers since 1636.

JENISOVICE (CR), originally parish of LUZE (reg. since 1623), own registers from 1755.

JEZBORICE (PA), parish existed until 1731(no reg. from this period) then at MIKULOVICE (reg. since 1738), own registers since 1756, parish renewed in 1871.

KAMENICKY (CR), originally parish of HLINSKO (reg. since 1630), own registers for the local church since 1787, parish since 1855.

KARLE (SY), older records at LITOMYSL, own reg. since 1695.

KLADRUBY (PA), originally at PRELOUC (reg. from 1637 - only bapt., marriages and death since 1650), own registers from 1717, parish since 1856. The Jews see PRELOUC.

KNAPOVEC (UO) registers since 1784, parish since 1856.

KNIROV (UO), originally parish of VYSOKE MYTO (reg. since 1609 !), own registers for local church 1787, parish 1864.

KOROUHEV (SY), after 1623 at POLICKA, later BYSTRE, own registers since 1690. Parish 1856. Also the Jews.

KROUNA (CR), after 1630 at HLINSKO, own registers since 1737. The Jews.

KROUNA (CR), Protestant reg. after 1781.

KRUCEMBURK (CR), originally within the parish HLINSKO (reg. since 1630), own reg. since 1664, parish from 1697.

KRUCEMBURK (CR) - Protest. reg. since 1782

KUNETICE (PA), originally SEZEMICE (reg. since 1636), own reg. for local church from 1785, parish 1856.

KVETNA (SY), oldest records at LITOMYSL (reg. since 1622), since 1695 at
KARLE (reg. 1695), own reg. since 1814. Parish established in 1860.
LANSKROUN (UO), old parish, the registers since 1625 (but only fragment for the
town without villages), otherwise regularly since 1666.
LANY NA DULKU (PA), originally see JEZBORICE, local registers since 1788,
parish 1855.
LICIBORICE (CR), in 17th cent. at BOJANOV (reg. since 1674), own local reg. from
1765, parish 1853.
LITOMYSL (SY), very old parish, until 15th century seat of the bishop of
LITOMYSL., Registers from 1622. The older were destroyed during the Thirty Year
War.
LOZICE (SY), Protestant (Kalvinist) registers since 1838.
LUZE (CR), old parish, reg. since 1623.
MIKULOVICE (PA), parish and registers since 1720.
MLADOCOV (SY), For the 17th century see DOLNI UJEZD (reg. since 1653), Local
reg. since 1780. Parish 1807.
MICOV (CR), originally at RONOV (reg. 1689), own reg. 1784. Ind. parish 1856.
MORASICE (SY), parish 1656, registers from the same year.
MORAVANY (PA), sub parish at ROVEN (reg. 1635), local reg. since 1785, parish
established 1854.
NASAVRKY (CR), originally at BOJANOV (reg. since 1674), then in period 1712-
1785 at TRHOVA KAMENICE, own local reg. since 1786.
NOVE HRADY (CR), old parish, reg. since 1638.
NOVY JIRI (UO), originally at BRANDYS N. ORL. (reg. starting 1641), local reg.
since 1807, parish 1850.
OPATOV (SY)
OPATOVICE (PA) originally at HRADEC KRALOVE (not listed here), change of
district since 1769, when local registers.
ORLICKA (UO), local reg. since 1784.
PARDUBICE (PA), old parish, reg. since 1633. The data for 1690 - 1701 missing.
POLICKA (SY), old parish, reg. since 1642
POMEZI (SY), originally at POLICKA, later BYSTRE, own reg. from 1735.
PRACOV (CR), for oldest period at BOJANOV, own reg. since 1784, parish 1857
PROSEC (CR), 1638 see NOVE HRADY, since 1754 own reg., this year parish
already existed.
PROSEC (CR) Protestant reg. since 1790 (the community founded 1783).
PREDHRADI (old name RYCHMBURK) (CR). Local reg. since 1737, parish since
1753.
PRELOUC (PA), old parish, reg. since 1637
PUSTA KAMENICE (CR), in 17th cent. SKUTEC (reg. since 1661), later KROUNA
(reg. since 1737), own registers since 1784. The oldest record maybe even at
HLINSKO.
RADHOST (CR), originally until 1784 at CHROUSTOVICE (reg. since 1665), own reg. since 1784. Parish estd. 1855.
RANA (CR), originally at SKUTEC, own reg. 1749.
ROHOVLADOVA BELA (PA), in 17th cent. see BOHDANEC (reg. since 1663), local reg. from 1784, parish since 1807.
ROVEN (HORNI ROVEN (PA), parish already 1635. Registers from the same period.
ROSICE (PA), originally at PARDUBICE (reg. since 1633), own reg. from 1784, parish 1855.
RETOVA (UO), orig. parish USTI N. ORL (reg. 1626), own reg. 1784
SEBRANICE (SY), originally together with DOLNI UJEZD (reg. since 1653), separated in 1664. Registers 1664.
SEC (CR), for oldest period see BOJANOVI, own reg. since 1765. Parish 1850
SEMANIN (SY) parish established 1841. For older period see OPATOV
SEZEMICE (PA), old parish, registers since 1636 (marriages), 1646 (bapt.).
SKUTEC (CR), parish since 1655, registers 1661
SLATINANY (CR), see CHRUDIM, own reg. a parish since 1801 only.
STARE ZDANICE (PA), reg. since 1756
STASOV (SY), see BYSTRE, own registers from 1784, parish 1856.
SVINCANY (PA), parish 1683, reg. 1683, older maybe at PARDUBICE.
SVOJANOVA (SY) registers and parish since 1670, older maybe POLICKA and
BYSTRE
SVRATOUCH (CR), Protestant reg. since 1782.
TELECI (SY), Protestant reg. 1783
TRHOVA KAMENICE, originally at BOJANOVI, parish from 1712, when first registers.
TRNAVKA (PA) Protestant reg. 1801
TRSTENICE (SY), for oldest period see CISTA - LITRABACHY, own reg. 1813, indep. parish 1895.
TREBOSICE (PA), orig. at PARDUBICE, own reg. 1784, parish 1856. The Jews in Duban.
TREBOVICE (UO) - in 17th and beg. 18th cent. see LANSKROUN and CESKA
TREBOVA. Own reg. 1784, parish 1859.
UHERSKO (PA), see CHROUSTOVICE, own reg. 1782, parish 1857.
UJEZD U CHOCNE (UO), for older period see CHOCEN, parish and reg. since 1785.
USOBI (UO) parish and reg. 1677
USTI NAD ORLICI (UO), old parish, reg. since 1626.
VCELAKOV (CR) see HLINSKO for oldest period, reg. since 1737.
VEJMANOVICE (PA), see PARDUBICE (reg. 1633), CHRST (reg. since 1709), indep. parish 1720, reg. same year.
VRACLAV (UO), see VYSOKE MYTO (reg. since 1609 !!!), local reg. from 1741.
parish 1856.
VRBATUV KOSTELC (CR), originally parish ZUMBERK (reg. since 1662), local own reg. 1787, parish 1856.
VYPRACHTICE (UO) see LANSKROUN, later JABLONNE. Own reg. 1784. Parish 1853.
VYSOKE CHVOJNO (PA) originally at HOLICE (1634), parish since 1711.
Registers since 1734. The first registers for 1711 - 1734 perished.
VYSOKE MYTO (UO), old parish, the oldest registers in the region: 1609 !!!
VOJNUV MESTEC, reg. since 1676.
ZAMRSK (UO), oldest records see VYSOKE MYTO, own local registers since 1683. Parish 1805.
ZDECHOVICE (PA) see PRELOUC for oldest period, parish 1689, registers 1689.
ZICHLINEK (UO), see Lanskroun for oldest time, Own reg. 1784, Parish 1859.
ZUMBERK (CR) parish and reg. since 1662.

Though I can not guarantee up to 100% that the list is accurate and complete, I hope I have helped some of You with locating of your villages and with the instruction how to start search in Czech Archives.

The respective ARCHIVES for this region of EAST BOHEMIA is the STATE REGIONAL ARCHIVES at ZAMRSK near VYSOKE MYTO. Nat. Route No. 35 from HRADEC KRALOVE to OLOMOUC.

Karel Kysilka

eipziger platz 5, 90491 Nürnberg, Tel. 0911/564989