

Paleographical Analysis of Scribes' Hands in the Boskovice Land Register inv. no. 44

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Sedláček, P. (2021). Paleographical Analysis of Scribes' Hands in the Boskovice Land Register inv. no. 44. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 13/2021/1, 85–95.

<https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2021-007>

The study deals with the land register of the town of Boskovice, inventory no. 44 (1784–1790), from the paleographic point of view. It especially focuses on the handwriting identification of the scribes that participated in its functioning in the 18th century. In addition to elementary questions about determining the style of writing and the way of using abbreviations, it tries to observe possible integration of humanistic elements into neo-Gothic cursive (“Kurrent”).

Key words: *Town of Boskovice; land (municipal) registers; paleographic analysis; scribes; 18th century; Kurrent*

Preface

The presented study is a small probe into the world of writing activities in the office of the town of Boskovice, namely making protocols in land books (registers) during the 18th century.¹ It focuses on the 1784–1790 land register, consisting of 116 folios, deposited in the State District Archive in Blansko, in the Archive of the City of

¹ To the land registers of the town of Boskovice more e.g. Sedláček, P. (2015). *Pozemkové knihy města Boskovice 1694–1786*. In *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, řada společenských věd* 29, no. 2, pp. 79–96. Generally to land registers: Tichý, A. (1931). *Pozemkový katastr a pozemkové knihy*. Praha: J. R. Vilímek (58 pp.). Chocholáč, B. (1993). *O studiu pozemkových knih*. In *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, řada historická*, C 40, pp. 51–61. Chocholáč, B. (1993). *Pozemkové knihy – neprávem opomíjený historický pramen*. In K. Schelle, P. Průcha (eds.), *Historie a současnost veřejné správy*. In *Sborník příspěvků z vědecké konference*. Brno, pp. 8–11. Sedláček, P. (2019). *Soupisy pozemkové*. In K. Schelle, J. Tauchen (eds.), *Encyklopedie českých právních dějin*. XV. svazek. Plzeň-Ostrava: Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o., pp. 24–26. More also Čechová, G. – Hladík, C. – Holl, I. – Radimský, J. – Volf, M. (1961). *Soupis starých pozemkových knih*. In *Archivní časopis* 11, pp. 6–16. Hanzal, J. (1964). *Současný stav a úkoly studia českých pozemkových knih*. In *Sborník archivních prací* 14, pp. 39–56. Polák, S. (1966). *Knihy pozemkové a knihy městské (Poznámka k diplomatické terminologii)*. *Archivní časopis* 16, pp. 208–215. More about the land registers of the Central Bohemian Region: Volf, M. (1966). *Výsledky soupisu gruntovních knih ve Středočeském kraji*. In *Sborník archivních prací* 16, pp. 50–127. The South Moravian Region is reflected by Štarha, I. (1967). *K soupisu pozemkových knih v Jihomoravském kraji*. In *Archivní časopis* 17, pp. 200–205.

Boskovice, under inventory number 44². This is the nineteenth book of that archive file.³ All the scribes who participated in the keeping of the land register will be introduced one by one.

The core of this study is a detailed paleographic analysis⁴ in which the individual scribes will be addressed elementary questions about the type of writing which is, however, due to the century when the source matter originated, almost exclusively German neo-Gothic cursive. But we will try to observe possible integration of humanistic writing, too. A natural part of the analysis is the research of abbreviations, i.e. their eventual development, frequency and occurrence. The peculiarities of manuscripts, individualization of scribing norms and other specifics of scribes' hands will be monitored in detail. For the plausibility of our conclusions in the field of paleography, it is necessary to take into account the possibility that the scribes may have worked in the office for many years, which opens up space for reflection on possible changes in their manuscript. However, the very distinction of scribes' hands is an ambiguous matter that requires a multi-sided view.

Office material of the 18th century no longer offers the possibility of observing the gradual integration of German variants into the Czech neo-Gothic cursive because the "archaic" neo-Gothic Bohemica already is a script of the past at that time, although sporadically (and rather at the beginning of the observed century) we can still see a few rounded elements of letters, typical of the Czech "neo-Gothic". However, the Neogotica Germanica fully gained a dominant position. Just marginal is the occurrence of humanistic script, it is only used in Latin language phrases and various legal terms.

Paleographical analysis

Just looking at the time span that the researched land register covers, it is obvious that the writing material is paper. Its more precise age and provenance can be deduced from watermarks (filigree)⁵ which appear in No. 44 register, too, but they were not the subject of our interest in this study.

² Státní okresní archiv Blansko (SOKA), Archiv města Boskovice, inv. no. 44.

³ Skutil, J. – Chalupa, L. (1973). Archiv města Boskovic 1463–1945 (1953). Katalog, inventář. Blansko: Okresní národní výbor, p. 14.

⁴ See a study on the paleographic analysis of another Boskovice land register, inventory no. 43: Sedláček, P. (2020). Paleografická analýza písařských rukou v pozemkové knize města Boskovice (1768-1784). In Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, řada společenských věd 34, no. 2, pp. 14–28.

⁵ Kašpar, J. (1987). Úvod do novověké latinské paleografie se zvláštním zřetelem k českým zemím, sv. I. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, p. 22. A more detailed description of watermarks, e.g. Flodr, M. (1974). Filigranologie. Úvod do studia filigránů. Brno: Univerzita J. E. Purkyně (205 pp.).

Modern Age writing instruments were, of course, quills and ink, and cheap goose quills were used for ordinary writing. In the 18th century, it is quite common for fonts to be slanted, usually orthogonal, so it is obvious that the quills had obliquely cut points that were getting narrowed over time for cursive purposes. The development of the quill tips led to a decrease in the shaded font, however, by pressing on the writing instrument it was possible to increase the stroke.⁶ Until the beginning of the 19th century, each scribe made his own ink which certainly varied its quality. The most abundant ink in the researched book is dark black, i.e. oak gall ink, without metal admixture. In some of the records, however, we can observe faded, gray-colored ink which can be attributed to the age of the text. If iron is present in the ink, the text turns reddish, rusty or brown.⁷

In the territory north of the Alps, the neo-Gothic writing prevailed in modern times, and in the 18th century, when the researched land register was written, the German variant, Neogotica Germanica, already prevailed over the more rounded Czech neo-Gothic cursive. That Kurrent taking over the majority position is in harmony with the growing influence of the Habsburg office. The neo-Gothic semi-cursive, Kanzleischrift, only appears in some records as the heading or highlight font. However, we can also come across the so-called mixed script, combining elements of the humanistic style with the neo-Gothic style, so it is the neo-Gothic-humanistic cursive.⁸

A detailed paleographic analysis resulted in the distinguishing of six scribes' hands which influenced the functioning of the researched volume. A seventh hand only wrote a short note closing the register in 1850. It should be noted once again that the distinction of the scribes' hands is not unequivocal, it requires a multi-sided view. Differences in duct, module and weight may indicate a different scribe, but it is necessary to decide according to the degree of their representation.⁹ Also, we must take into account the fact that professional scribes knew and used different shape modifications for the same letter. In the analysis, we consider the duration of their action, too, because with increasing age, certain changes in manuscripts cannot be ruled out. The final appearance of the font is also affected by the cutting of the pen, its wear, the writing material itself, including the space on it, but it is logically also determined by the fatigue of the hand if it made more entries during the day. The situation when a scribe strictly adheres to the standardized pattern of individual letters brings the greatest difficulty in distinguishing the scribes' hands, as the space for the integration of individual features into the duct is considerably limited.

⁶ Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 25.

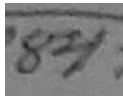
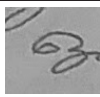
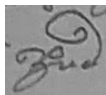
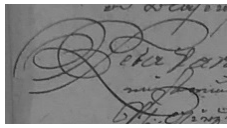
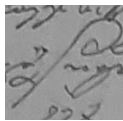
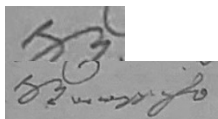
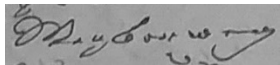
⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁸ Ibid, p. 47.

⁹ Pátková, H. (2008). Česká středověká paleografie. České Budějovice: Veduta, p. 45.

After the mentioned foreword, we are going to proceed to a thorough analysis of the scribes' hands participating in the functioning of the researched land register. For better clarity, the analysis of each of the scribes is preceded by a table summarizing the most important findings from the research of his writing.

Manus 2

Individuality of the hand	Record Year	Folio	Brief description of individuality
	1784	9v	Numeral eight has an open bow at the top and a small (sometimes functional) loop.
		1r	Minuscule «d» has an open bow and the stem is extended up to the ascender line where it twists.
		2r	
		1r	The effort to decorate the records is evident in the majuscular letter «L» the upper loop of which is richly decorated.
		2r	The tall «S» is twisted at the upper end of the stem.
		2r	A typical combination of letters «S» and «t» where the scribe completes the final arc at «S» and from there he begins the initial stroke «t».
		3r	«W» is written an almost identical way. Cf. the words «Starssih» and «Wegboroweg».

The writing activity of Manus 2 is abundant and its production reached the greatest intensity in the 1760s. In the researched book we are analyzing it through records from 1784. It is a neat and easy-to-read handwriting, the only obstacle in its decipherment can be thickening of lines or extension of tall letters or fall letters

and consequent interfering with letters in the neighboring lines. We can prove the production of this scribe in inventory numbers 40, 41, 42, 43 land registers, too.

Manus 2 uses abbreviations especially for the word “pán” /lord/ which is reduced to “P:” (sometimes supplemented by a sign in the shape of a vertical loop). A month name is often not written in full either, its abbreviated form is ended with a colon – e.g. “Sept:”¹⁰ – or its beginning is replaced with the corresponding numeral, e.g. “8bris”.¹¹ The scribe sometimes facilitates his work in dating formula where he replaces “Anno” with just the first letter, or omits one “n”. Another variant of this word is omitting all its consonants and leaving just the vowels “Ao”. Often abbreviated phrases include “Act: et int: ano et die ut supra”¹² the first part of which means “Actum et intabulatum anno...”. In some cases, Manus 2 superscribes suffixes, namely in dates, e.g. “27o 8bris”.¹³

Before embarking on the analysis of the duct of letters, the way of writing numerals is worth mentioning, too. They do not represent the ideal space for the identification of scribes’ hands, it is true, but a few favorite individual features can be observed here as well. As for number eight, we notice the upper bow open at the top and ending with a loop which might serve (and in a few cases it does) as a connection to the following numeral.

A researcher’s attention is at first glance caught by the way Manus 2 writes minuscular “d”. Its ductus does not allow continuous writing, namely connection to the right. Its form most closely resembles Kašpar II type.¹⁴ The bow is open and the stem is conspicuously extended to the ascender line where it twists into a snail shell shape. The same element can be observed in letter “z”. The majuscular “L” in the introductory dating shows an effort to decorate the records; it is accomplished by a richly decorated upper loop which often begins even below the baseline. The tall “s” has a simple ductus but we can notice the scribe’s liking for twisting the upper end of the stem, similar to the already analyzed minuscular “d”. Thanks to these elements, Manus 2 handwriting acquires its distinctive character. The combination of letters “S” and “t” is another example of the scribe’s specificity. The neo-Gothic shape majuscular “S” has a slender, vertically extended loop, with the ends twisting into arches.¹⁵ And we can see that letter “t” is immediately appended to the arch on the right, its initial stroke copying the end stroke of the majuscular “S”. This creates a unit that may – viewed individually – suggest today’s

¹⁰ SOKA Blansko, AM Boskovice, inv. no. 44, fol. 5v, 6r.

¹¹ SOKA Blansko, AM Boskovice, inv. no. 44, fol. 10r.

¹² Ibid.

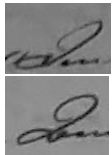
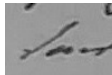

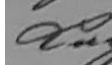
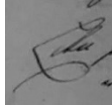

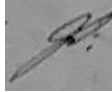
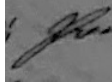
¹³ Ibid.

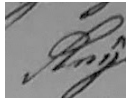
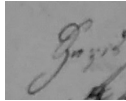
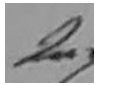

¹⁴ Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 55.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 74.

written “N”. And it is quite interesting that Manus 2 writes majuscular “W” an almost identical way. When deciphering “St” or “W” individually, ie. without reading the rest of the word and without context, the resolution would be almost impossible. The only nuance is the length of the stroke which in letter “S” decreases towards the baseline after the completion of the loop and the subsequent arc led to the right and up. This stroke is shorter in the “S” and “t” binding, while it is slightly extended further down in majuscular “W”.

Manus 5

Individuality of the hand	Record year	Folio	Brief description of individuality
	1785	16v	Majuscular «A» resembles the Arabic numeral 2 in its form.
		20v	Minuscular «d» often looks, as a result of fast and cursory writing, just like an oblique line, possibly with an arc at the upper end.
	1784	16r	
	1785	16v	Letter «k» has an arcade-shaped arc at the top of the ascender line which smoothly passes to the right inclined stem, at the lower end of which is a functional loop.
		18v	The form of majuscular «L» resembles letter «C» which ends at both ends with loops in the opposite direction of writing.
		19r	
		15v	The stem of majuscular «P» is turned to the left at the upper end and a loop is formed at the lower end, it resembles a bag that smoothly passes into a thrust forming a bow.
		18v	

	1785	16v	Majuscular «R» is written in one stroke and attracts attention by a large kink in the middle of the stem.
		14v	Only in folio 14v, the loop forming majuscular «S» is accompanied by an arc leading to the lower zone.
		16v	The initial stroke of minuscular «t» resembles a roof (in other cases, rather an arc) connected to the upper end of the stem which is equipped with a functional kink at the base.
		20v	

Manus 5 represents a scribe whose production dates back to the 1780s and who usually wrote shorter records. His writing is rather cursory, not very easy to read, and at first glance it attracts attention by its noticeable inclination to the right, and in most cases, rather faded ink. The Manus 5 handwriting is so distinctive that when identifying scribe's hands, its typical features can be recognize even at a cursory glance, and the subsequent observation of the letters duct will confirm our original opinion. The production of that hand relates to land registers No. 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 respectively. Through the length of its records, Manus 5 is not a scribe suitable for abbreviation research because he does not use many of them in the relatively short records. In general, we can say that he uses those mentioned above.

A specific feature of the examined scribe's handwriting is the majuscular "A" the shape of which strikingly resembles the Arabic numeral two. In addition to its form, it also attracts one's attention by a significant inclination to the right. It is a typical feature of Manus 5 and our analysis of further letters below will confirm that it is even more striking in many of those other cases. The minuscular "d" is based on its Kurrent form with a properly open arc in the middle zone (it means between the baseline and the headline),¹⁶ however, a modification of this form caused by fast writing can be seen quite often. The adjustment to the speed of writing is manifested by the fact that the scribe de facto forms only an oblique stem (often it is not even an arc) at the end of which he builds just a small loop that

¹⁶ Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 56.

merges with the stem or is not even tightened to the stem. So it basically is a kind of curve. Another proof that the Manus 5 font is considerably slanting to the right, with some letters slanting even more, is the minuscular “k”. Its form goes beyond all the types described by Jaroslav Kašpar. The ductus of that letter begins at the ascender line where an arc in the shape of arcade is constructed and it smoothly passes into an slanting stem at the lower end of which a functional loop is formed. The “k” formed in this way may remind us of the majuscular “C” II type,¹⁷ or majuscular letter “L”. The majuscular letter “L” is also an interesting duct in the Manus 5 handwriting. At first glance, it may again remind us of letter “C” which ends at both ends with loops leading the opposite direction of writing. In the case of majuscular “P”, in addition to the already mentioned slant, we also notice its duct. It is based on the humanistic form that Kašpar mentions under type VII.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it does not lose the typical Kurrent features, i.e. the stem leading from the ascender line to the lower zone and the connection of the bow from the right side, located to the upper and middle zone. Written by the examined scribe, the stem is turned to the left at its upper end and a loop is formed at the lower end which can be described as a bag that smoothly passes into a stroke forming a bow to the right of the stem – and that is making it similar to the just mentioned humanistic form. The majuscular “R” is written by Manus 5 in one stroke without a bag and with an arc at the base of the stem.¹⁹ The kink in the middle of the supporting pillar is very conspicuous. The entry in 14v folio is interesting in the title line with the word “Zápis”, or actually, “Sapis”. The scribe usually makes this word with letter “S” at the beginning, but in this case, an arc is led into the lower zone under the “S” forming loop and it turns to the left at its end. The letter made this way evokes the impression that he wanted to rewrite the originally made letter to “Z”. The shape of minuscular “t” is closest to the VIII type described by Jaroslav Kašpar.²⁰ The initial short oblique stroke, resembling “the roof” of the Arabic numeral one, or sometimes more in the shape of arc, is attached to the upper end of the stem. At its opposite end, a loop is constructed, often used as a link to the next letter.

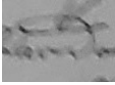

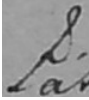

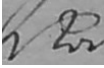
¹⁷ Cf. Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 68.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 135.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 111.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 100.

Manus 6

Individuality of the hand	Record year	Folio	Brief description of individuality
	1787	33r	The horizontally oriented loop of minuscular «d» points to the left and «roofs up» the previous letters.
			The majuscular «F» and «T» have a strongly written bar that connects to the stem base at the baseline.
			The majuscular «K» is conspicuous by a stroke in the shape of Arabic numeral eight from which a stem descends. The stem bottom ends with a loop/kink that can be used as a link to the following letter.
			The humanistic majuscular «M» is not stretched to the width. The middle stem does not reach the base line.
			The majuscular «R» is written without a bag and the arc at the base is broken. The large loop on the stem, located in its upper part, attracts attention.

The Manus 6 scribe belongs among those whose productive period falls into the 1780s. The records made by him are also short and their number is small. The writing is very cursory, untidy and relatively difficult to read in some passages, as various large loops disrupt the duct of other letters. The lines are led straight. The research of his handwriting is possible in land registers Nos. 41, 42 and 44. Like the previous scribe's hand, Manus 6 is not the most suitable scribe to research abbreviations, as the records made by him do not contain many of them for their short extent. In the researched book he only made one record.

In the specific writing of the researched scribe we first notice a large, horizontally oriented loop of letter «d», leading to the left and often reaching up to the beginning of the word that the minuscule occurs in or even exceeding it.²¹ The majuscular letters «F» and «T» are more likely based on humanistic script than neo-Gothic, and like today's forms of these letters, in case of Manus 6 they bear certain identical

²¹ See the table.

elements. At first glance, we notice a strongly written bar that sometimes connects to the stem base on the baseline. The majuscular “F” is written in two strokes, while the “T” in one which corresponds to IV type described by Jaroslav Kašpar.²² The majuscular “K” in the researched scribe’s production is written in a form that does not correspond to any of those described by Jaroslav Kašpar but it is identical with the form we can find in other Boskovice books, such as the chronicle by Antonín Johann Pardubský where that letter is written the same way by a scribe marked P7.²³ The ductus is interesting for its initial stroke, making a loop in the shape of Arabic numeral eight. A stem comes out of it, equipped with a kink at the base which can be used for quick connection to the next letter. The humanistic “M” corresponds in form to V. Kašpar’s shape²⁴, however, our scribe does not stretch it to the width and its middle stem does not reach down to the base line. The majuscular “R”, like in case of Manus 5, is written without a bag and with a broken arc at the base, and a large loop is constructed on the stem, but compared to the previous scribe’s hand, it is moved further to its upper part.

Result

The source material for the paleographic probe into the office material in the serf town of Boskovice in the 18th century was a land register, deposited to the State District Archive in Blansko, the Archives of the City of Boskovice, inventory No. 44. It covers the years 1784 to 1790 and counts 116 folios. A detailed analysis identified 3 scribes’ hands that participated in its keeping. The fourth scribe, who was reliably recognized but not included in the paleographic analysis for the purpose of the study, is an official who made a record in May 1850 of the closing of the researched book and its subsequent handover to the District Court.²⁵ The text thus reflects only those scribes who were active creators of its predestined content.

One of the key questions of our research was the integration of humanistic script into the German neo-Gothic cursive, holding in the 18th century the dominant position in the area north of the Alps including the Bohemian-Moravian territory. Humanistica cursiva or semicursiva is not surprising in Latin words and phrases, or in terms with a Latin basis but suffixes already corresponding to the national language, as it was very common in Central Europe.²⁶ However,

²² Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 136.

²³ Sedláček, P. (2014). *Paleografický rozbor kroniky Antonína Johanna Pardubského 1714–1858*. Masaryk University, Brno, pp. 37–38. (master’s diploma thesis)

²⁴ Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 134.

²⁵ More about e.g. Sedláček, P. (2019), pp. 24–26. Štarha, I. (1967), p. 201.

²⁶ Kašpar, J. (1987), p. 46.

we were primarily interested in the integration of humanistic elements into the Kurrent style. Some of the versions of majuscular “P” produced by Manus 5 are close to the humanistic form but their neo-Gothic features are preserved, i.e. the stem leading from the ascender line to the lower zone and with the bow attached from the right, reaching into the upper and middle zone. In some cases, however, the stem due to fast writing turns into a loop which evokes the appearance of the bag and thus the modern, contemporary form. In the case of Manus 6, the letters “F” and “T” are based on the humanistic script. In the researched land register, the hand marked with number 5 made most of the records, while fewest of them were made by Manus 6 – just one.

The performer research is a snippet of a more extensive paleographic study that will include other land registers from the same archival collection, too. The recognized scribes from other books will undergo detailed comparison the result of which will be an opportunity to trace the activities of scribes in Boskovic in a certain period of the 18th century, their workload, the individualization of standardized writing and possible changes in the handwriting on the timeline.