

**David TROJAN**

***Tobiáš z Benešova. Biskup – hospodář – politik***

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Tobias of Benešov (sometimes wrongly referred to as Tobias of Bechyně) was the bishop of Prague for almost twenty years (1278–1296) in the turbulent times of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the Bohemian lands, this period was influenced by the crisis years following the death of King Přemysl Otakar II, which were marked by the captivity of young Wenceslaus and the subsequent rule of Otto V, Margrave of Brandenburg, the rise of the Přemyslid kingdom under the independent rule of Wenceslaus II, and, above all, the ongoing “transformation” of the Bohemian lands.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Prague diocese at the time of Tobias of Benešov was investigated in the presented book by David Trojan, which is a modified and revised version of the author’s diploma thesis. However, Trojan has already published some inspiring preliminary studies on the subject, dealing mainly with administrative and economic issues.<sup>2</sup> The presented publication is not a classical biography of the bishop,<sup>3</sup> but rather a comprehensive analysis of the Prague bishopric in the time of Tobias of Benešov. At the beginning of the review, it can be stated that following the collective monograph on

the Fourth Lateran Council,<sup>4</sup> Trojan’s monograph is another important contribution to the history of the Bohemian church at the end of the Přemyslid era, i. e. at the time of the growing political, economic, administrative, and judicial emancipation of the Bohemian Church.

<sup>1</sup> See overview J. KLÁPŠTĚ, *The Czech Lands in Medieval Transformation*, Leiden – Boston 2012.

<sup>2</sup> D. TROJAN, Českokobrodsko. Majetková proměna a osídlení jednoho regionu (13.–14. století), in: *Historie – Otázky – Problémy*, 13, 1, 2021, pp. 9–26; D. TROJAN, Kouřimský děkanát. Jeho struktura a topografie v předhusitské době, in: *Sborník archivních prací*, 72, 1, 2022, pp. 7–202; D. TROJAN, (Arci) biskup a jeho faráři, in: *Historie – Otázky – Problémy*, 14, 1, 2022, pp. 43–55.

<sup>3</sup> The last attempt to write a biography of Tobias of Benešov was undertaken by Jaroslav Kadlec, see J. KADLEC, Bischof Tobias und die Prager Diözese während seiner Regierungszeit (1278–1296), in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg*, 6, 1972, pp. 119–172.

<sup>4</sup> R. ANTONÍN et al., *Čtvrtý lateránský koncil a české země ve 13. a 14. století*, Praha 2020.

The book is divided into three parts: The Bishop, The Manciple, and The Politician. This division may seem strange at first, since these episcopal activities were largely interconnected. However, the author himself never conceals that one sphere of the episcopal activity merges with another.

In the first part, titled The Bishop, the author highlights Tobias's activities as a diocesan administrator, a judge, and, most importantly, as a person responsible for the flock of sinners entrusted to him. Trojan points out how Tobias (probably due to his noble origins) successfully established himself in the Prague diocese despite the turbulent times in which he assumed his office. In the following passages, Trojan presents a picture of Tobias as a relatively successful manager of his diocese. The author, for example, highlights the multidimensional nature of the bishop's approach to ecclesiastical institutions. He also discusses topics such as Tobias's relationship with the papal curia and the metropolitan of Mainz, or the structure of the episcopal chancery.

The second part, which is the most comprehensive, discusses the life of bishop Tobias as a maniple. The author analyses not only the gains and losses of estates or the economic life of the diocese, but also the form of amelioration of estates (e.g. in the form of colonization activities) and the introduction of emphyteuses into the diocesan economy. Trojan concludes that bishop Tobias of Benešov was the one who completed the emancipation of the Prague episcopal see and en-

forced the reform program which the Prague bishops had been trying to promote since the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. An important factor that (quite paradoxically) contributed to the transformation of the episcopal estates was their plundering at the time of political instability during the youth of Wenceslaus II. Bishop Tobias thus left the diocese in good shape with a consolidated economic base for his successors.

The third part is called The Politician. In the introduction, Trojan first discusses Tobias's noble origins (from the Benešovići family), which appear to be a crucial factor in his success in political life and in the economic and administrative dimensions of his episcopacy. Tobias's overall successes must be viewed through the prism of his noble origins. The fact that certain vices such as nepotism and favouritism of close relatives also derived from Tobias's noble mentality is the flip side. Trojan then briefly summarises the basic outlines of Tobias's political role in the late Přemyslid Bohemia – in particular the role of the bishop in the turbulent times after the death of Přemysl Otakar II, Tobias's relationship to Wenceslaus II and his court, and the appearance of his own episcopal court. Given the recent scholarly attention this matter has received,<sup>5</sup> Trojan's concise and factual last chapter is appreciated. The third part then con-

<sup>5</sup> See especially J. ŽEMLIČKA, *Do tří korun: Poslední rozmach Přemyslovců*, Praha 2017; D. DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ, *Královský dvůr Václava II.*, České Budějovice 2011.

cludes with a chapter devoted to the image of Tobias in historical memory.

In his book, Trojan has made a precise and critical analysis of all available sources, demonstrating great insight into the subject and detailed knowledge of the economic and spiritual administration of the Prague diocese. The main contribution of the research lies in the detailed analysis of the economic activities of bishop Tobias. With his approach, Trojan has made a conscious entry into the discourse on Bohemian medieval “transformation” – a contribution that should be welcomed.

The publication is clearly structured; however, it can be argued that the book could benefit from a different order of chapters, as the chapter three

seems in many respects to open the discussion. Since the interpretation does not follow a chronological framework, it would also have been helpful to add a chronological table at the end of the book with key moments of the development of the Prague diocese.

In conclusion, nevertheless, it should be explicitly stated that the image of bishop Tobias and his episcopate in Trojan’s book is plausible and worthy of reflection by church historians. Trojan has avoided any attempt to glorify the bishop. The resulting image of bishop Tobias can be summed up as that of a confident nobleman who was also a successful manager, housekeeper, and administrator of the diocese.

*Martin Šenk*