

Abstract

The founding and subsequent convening of the Central Commission for the Preservation and Research of Building Monuments (*k. k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*) in 1850/1853 represents a significant milestone in the history of monument conservation in the countries of the Habsburg Monarchy and has its place in Europe. The present dissertation traces the impact of the Central Commission's activities in Bohemia during the 1850s and early 1860s, which roughly corresponds to the time of K. Czoernig von Czoernhausen's presidency. In the introduction, attention is paid to a review of current texts on early conservation, their authors and the method of treatment of the topic. Then the situation of the preservation of monuments in selected neighbouring and more distant European states (Baden, Württemberg, Prussia, Saxony, Styria, France) is outlined. The beginning of the Central Commission is connected with the recruitment and designation of conservators and correspondents to work at the sites. According to the files of the Presidium of the Bohemian Governorate, the process from the selection of candidates to their designation in 1854 has been carefully described. In the following years, the individual regional conservators and later the correspondents contributed, according to their abilities, both by reports and by active intervention, to the survey and preservation of many building monuments in Bohemia. The conservator for Prague, J. E. Vocel, played a crucial role, and his interest spread to other regions, where other conservators and representatives of the political administration also turned to him for advice. Among the active conservators were especially F. X. Beneš, F. R. Bezděka and J. S. Grüner. B. Grueber, who perceived the affairs of monuments both from the position of an executive architect and without Czech patriotic bias, entered the actual discussions in many places as a correspondent. The agendas of the individual conservators provide insights into individual personalities, monuments, themes, approaches and technical possibilities and, taken as a whole, form a realistic picture of early conservation in Bohemia. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the period press and published texts on monuments, their form and their public focus. In addition, it also analyses the debate of the Central Commission (*Mittheilungen der k. k. Central-Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*) with other institutions and associations through periodicals, in this case with the Archeologický sbor (*Památky archaeologické a místopisné*).