

Summary

Koloredov: Economic relationships
in a proto-industrial region at the end of the 18th century
and in the first half of the 19th century

The settlement of Koloredov was established at the end of the 18th century on a parcel of land owned by the local lord of the subject town of Místek (on the Moravian bank of the Ostravice River), in the vicinity of another subject town, Frýdek (on the Silesian bank). During the 18th century, the Frýdek-Místek region underwent a process of proto-industrialization; this process was manifested particularly in home-based textile goods production, a trade which experienced rapid growth during the first half of the 19th century. Proto-industrialization in the Frýdek-Místek region has already been explored by Milan Myška, and his research has served as a preliminary foundation for this thesis.

Koloredov's position on the newly built imperial road (*Reichsstraße*) linking Moravia and Galicia offered interesting opportunities for the population of this small community (which hardly had any agricultural land) to earn a living. Large numbers of merchants (mainly selling cattle and textile goods) travelled along the main road, and this traffic was encouraged by the nearby markets in Místek and Frýdek. Essentially all sources (whether they concern textile manufacturing shops or bread-shacks) repeatedly report that these markets were attended by large numbers of both Christian and Jewish merchants. Koloredov became a hub for textile goods production

and other businesses that served these markets and the proto-industrial activity of the region as a whole.

A key source of information on the development of various types of local businesses can be found in correspondence between tradespeople and the local estate authorities; Koloredov was a subject village, and the businesses that operated there were in the ownership of the local lord, with the tradespeople in the position of tenants. When the textile manufacturing shops were still leased to tenants on a short-term basis (approximately up to the middle of the 18th century), it was not necessary to keep permanent records of the lease contracts, because the lord retained sole control over all real estate. However, when a system of hereditary tenancy (*Erbpacht*) came into effect during the second half of the 18th century, the lord remained the ultimate owner, but the legal responsibility for real estate passed to the hereditary tenant. It therefore became necessary to formulate a precise definition of the terms and conditions of the tenancy, to institutionalize these terms and conditions in the form of a legal contract, and to archive the contractual documentation. The tenants and the landlord (represented by the estate authorities) subsequently discussed and negotiated on various issues, and these discussions and negotiations reveal the complex nature of economic relationships as well as the everyday problems that small businesses faced. The participants included not only the tenants who operated textile-related businesses (such as fulling mills or mangles), but also a range of other business operations. These sources have been preserved as part of the archives maintained by the estate authority, and they have served as a key source for the research presented in this thesis. Koloredov was located on the Hukvaldy estate, which had its own estate authority; the estate belonged to the assets of the Olomouc Diocese, which ran its own central administration controlling the individual estate authorities. As a result of this administrative structure, the correspondence held in the archives covers a wide range of subjects; besides the negotiations between the local estate authority and the tenants, there was also extensive correspondence between the estate authority and the central authority in Olomouc.

Another reason for the remarkable extent of the source material (which is considerably larger than is the case for many villages with a much longer

history) is the importance of Koloredov's role. The village was situated close to both subject towns (Frýdek and Místek), yet it was also sited on land belonging to the lord, and so it was not subject to these towns' control. This meant that over the course of time, various businesses emerged under the lord's ownership. The most important businesses were mangles and fulling mills (which had operated at the site even before the village was founded), but other key businesses were a distillery, inns, a Jewish eating-house, and a tannery. Besides these, documentation also indicates the existence of a small forge and bread-shacks (which did not bake but sold bread), as well as plans for a potash works (which was never actually built).

Entrepreneurs were well aware of Koloredov's importance. Many of them came either from neighbouring towns or from rural communities in the near vicinity, but from the end of the 18th century onwards, increasing numbers of entrepreneurs came to the village from further afield in order to set up businesses there (especially Jews, who faced considerable intolerance from townspeople). Jews were not permitted to be tenants of textile manufacturing businesses, but they were well aware of the Frýdek-Místek region's commercial potential, and they frequently traded as textile goods merchants. To be permitted to reside in Koloredov, they had to present a reason for the lord to "tolerate" their presence. An official order issued at the end of the 18th century permitted Jews to run distilleries, tanneries, potash works, and Jewish eating-houses. These were precisely the types of businesses that Jewish entrepreneurs established in Koloredov during the period under investigation – or at least that was the impression they sought to give. Although they resided in the village, most Jewish entrepreneurs remained essentially part of town life, as their interests did not lie in agriculture and their networks of contacts extended beyond the immediate local community; they were attracted to Koloredov by the close proximity to the markets in Frýdek and Místek. Most Jews were de facto involved in some form of trading, though publicly they attempted to present themselves as being engaged in agriculture or another of the permitted trades.

A very important consideration for these Jewish entrepreneurs was the presence of a large Jewish population; Jews had come to the Frýdek-Místek region from various parts of Moravia, Silesia, and especially Galicia

to work as merchants. “Local” Jews attempted to profit from their presence by selling food and drink to them. A Jewish eating-house was established in Koloredov already at the end of the 18th century, and it became an important facility for the “local” Jewish community. The eating-house initially provided income and served as a reason for the Jews’ presence to be officially “tolerated”. Information about the business activities of the “tolerated” Jews proved to be very important in the research, as it showed how closely they were connected with other local tradespeople and merchants. Indeed, these relationships were so close that some Christian entrepreneurs were willing to perjure themselves to help Jews – and this eventually created problems for them. In the 1830s and 40s, the Jewish community fell on hard times as the hand-woven linen trade and small-scale woolworking fell into decline, but the local community behaved in a genuinely Christian manner towards them, and tried to help them.

The reasons for this pauperization were very similar to those which impacted negatively on the tenants running the textile manufacturing businesses. The main problems they faced were the growth of competition and a decline in markets. The major economic boom that came around the turn of the 19th century brought a constant increase in the number of people interested in running new businesses. The estate authority in Hukvaldy was able to prevent a second Jewish eating-house from being built in Koloredov, but it was unable to do anything about the Jewish eating-houses that were being opened on the Silesian side of the river, in Frýdek. In fact, the authority did not even attempt to prevent more inns from opening, instead issuing the necessary permits to aspiring inn-keepers. The estate received income from these businesses, because each new inn-keeper was contracted to buy beer from breweries owned by the local lord.

All the entrepreneurs mentioned above could be collectively characterized as merchants; none of them focused solely on their own trade without being involved in buying and selling. All of them were in a position to sub-let their tenant businesses because they earned enough money through their trading activities. They were capable investors (because investment was a common activity for them), and they became astute speculators.

Jewish entrepreneurs attempted to “cover their tracks” by engaging in trades that were permitted (the Jewish eating-house, tannery, potash works and farms), but in reality they took advantage of the wealth of commercial opportunities offered by the Frýdek-Místek region, and they were involved in buying and selling a wide range of goods: silverware, ironmongery, wine, cattle, or small items such as buttons and ribbons. A Christian businessman named Johann Kolčář purchased the Koloredov mangle from František Knězek despite the fact that he was officially a trader in clarified butter, which he sold in Vienna. We can assume that in reality he traded not only in butter, but also in cloth; the textile-making businesses were often run by people who merely used them as an opportunity for selling their own textile goods.

On the basis of the sources investigated, it is possible to distinguish two distinct phases in the economic life of Koloredov and the near vicinity. Approximately up to the second decade of the 19th century, the main issue discussed by entrepreneurs and the estate authorities concerned the pressure on existing businesses due to high demand, and the need to establish new businesses. It was repeatedly noted that the growing demand for linen made it essential to set up a new mangle, so in 1810 there were discussions on building a third mangle in the village. Demand for woollen cloth was also growing, so there was a need to establish a third fulling mill. However, during the subsequent decades, the tenants repeatedly complained about a slump in business and the general climate of economic decline. During the 1820s, the purchase prices of some textile manufacturing operations reached enormous levels; for example, in 1821 the Brojač family from Frýdek bought a mangle for 15 750 gulden, only to complain constantly about its poor profitability. A major problem was the competition provided by burghers in Místek. However, Metternich’s absolutist regime applied relatively liberal economic policies supporting free competition, so the complaints of the Koloredov tenants fell on deaf ears. Tenancy of an estate-owned business proved to be an increasingly unviable option, because (unlike the townspeople) the tenants had to pay relatively high rents to the local lord. This affected not only the textile businesses, but

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also the distillery, which had to compete with burghers who produced liqueurs and other spirits in their own properties, where they had installed modern systems for distilling spirits from potatoes.

Koloredov fits perfectly into the theory of proto-industrialization, though unfortunately it is not possible to assess the role played by home-based production. Some pieces of textile manufacturing equipment have been found among the personal estates of Koloredov's inhabitants, indicating that they were involved in such production, but no more conclusions can be drawn from this. Nevertheless, available sources point to several conclusions with sufficient certainty: that people produced goods for markets beyond the immediate region; that manufacturing and trading had close links with (and were partially controlled from) urban centres where the guilds and tradesmen's associations retained a strong presence; that proto-industrial relationships developed hand in hand with the duties of subjects and the development of a large feudal estate; and that proto-industrialization displayed certain specific regional characteristics, and should be researched as a regional issue. This thesis integrates regional history with a microhistorical approach. It does not merely outline the history of a village, but also attempts to show how events in this particular village were manifestations of a wider process. It seeks to depict a change in people's activities and behaviour, and to ask "large historical questions on a small scale".

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