



Family archives as a source of information about past hydrometeorological extremes in Southern Moravia (Czech Republic)

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Meteorological and hydrological extremes (hydrometeorological extremes - HMEs) cause great material damage or even loss of human lives in the present time, as well as it was in the past. For the study of their temporal and spatial variability in periods with only natural forcing factors in comparison with those combining also anthropogenic effects it is essential to have the longest possible series of HMEs. In the Czech Lands (recently the Czech Republic), systematic meteorological and hydrological observations started generally in the latter half of the 19th century. Therefore, in order to create long-term series of such extremes, it is necessary to search for other sources of information. There exist different types of documentary evidence used in historical climatology and hydrology, represented by various sources such as annals, chronicles, diaries, private letters, newspapers etc. Besides them, institutional documentary evidence (of economic and administrative character) has particular importance (e.g. taxation records). Documents in family archives represent further promising source of data related to HMEs. The documents kept by the most important lord families in Moravia (e.g. Liechtensteins, Dietrichsteins) are located in Moravian Land Archives in Brno. Besides data about family members, industrial and agricultural business, military questions, travelling and social events, they contain direct or indirect information about HMEs. It concerns descriptions of catastrophic phenomena on the particular demesne (mainly with respect to damage) as well as correspondence related to tax reductions (i.e. they can overlap with taxation records of particular estates). This contribution shows the potential of family archives as a source of information about HMEs, up to now only rarely used, which may extend our knowledge about them. Several examples of such documents are presented.

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