

## WOMEN AND "SECOND SERFDOM" IN BOHEMIA

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This article examines, as an indicator of womens' position in the economy, the possibilities for women in early modern Bohemia to be the leading person in an independent household. In Bohemia, in the period under scrutiny, the percentage of women leading households was extremely low compared to the rest of Europe. Moreover, between 1591 and 1722 this percentage decreased significantly, with socio-economic factors progressively losing their influence. Research has identified several factors which, all over pre-industrial Europe, determined womens' economic

dependence. The current study proves that these factors did not have considerable influence in Bohemia. On the contrary, it seems that the situation of women leading a household was characterised by the “second serfdom”, accompanied by a strengthening of feudal and communal institutions. Great landowners used their growing power to deter women from leading households, as they viewed them as a financial risk. Communities and even single subjects also managed to use the power of the landowners for their own purposes.