

THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF THE DUCHY
OF FRIEDLAND

An Analysis of Imperial and Royal Privileges

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In 1623, the imperial commander Albrecht von Wallenstein was ennobled to *Reichsfürst* of Friedland. The following year, the estates he had acquired in north-western Bohemia were officially proclaimed the Duchy of Friedland. Thus began the brief ten-year history of a unique constitutional formation that has frequently been described as a “state within the state”. This study undertakes an in-depth analysis of the contents of the privileges gradually bestowed upon Wallenstein by Emperor Ferdinand II to define and regulate the power of the ruler of Friedland. These privileges have hitherto not been paid sufficient attention in historiography.

The study identifies 14 documents relevant to the legal status of Friedland and concludes that despite the dispensation from obligations and the immunity conferred by the privileges, the duchy undoubtedly remained a part of the Kingdom of Bohemia. However, this connection became factually manifest only through the Bohemian taxation system and the Duke of Friedland’s right to participate in the sessions of the Bohemian Diet – an opportunity Wallenstein never made use of.