SPELLING VARIATIONS IN 19TH CENTURY CZECH

1. 1850 – 1900

Modern Czech spelling principles (i.e. the letter-sound correspondences used in modern Czech) are used in this period. This, however, does not mean that in 1850-1900 all words are spelled in the same way as nowadays. Especially, in most borrowings the original (foreign) spelling was used (cf. 19th century *thema, poesie, engagement* and their modern equivalents *téma, poezie, angažmá*). The spelling of most such words has been changed later on, in 1957, to correspond with the usual Czech letter-sound links. This, however, was no regular change: whether a word has kept its foreign spelling or started to be spelled the Czech way depended largely on its frequency in Czech and the degree of its integration into the Czech morphological system.

2. 1843 – 1849: *W>V, AU>OU*

In addition to the spelling of borrowings mentioned above, the orthography of this period is different from modern Czech in using *w* in place of *v* in Czech words (pre-1849 *woda, piwo* – post-1849 *voda, pivo*) and *au* in place of *ou.* The latter change was only implemented in words where *au* corresponded with the pronunciation *ou*; in words where it was pronounced as *au* (mostly at syllabic boundaries, e.g. *naučit*) the spelling remained unchanged.

3. 1810 – 1843: *J>Í, G>J*

In addition to the spelling of borrowings and the using of *w, au* in place of the modern *v, ou*, the orthography of this period differed from modern Czech in using *j* in place of *í* and *g* in place of *j* in Czech words (e.g. pre-1843 *gegj* – post-1843 *její*). Some printers tried – with varying degrees of consistency – to distinguish the pronunciation of *g* as *g* (mostly in borrowed words as *gramatika* or *groš*) from its pronunciation as *j* (in Czech words) by using the spelling *ğ* (*g* with carron, UTF-32 decimal 487) for the first and *g* without carron for the latter. The letter *g* has only been replaced with *j* in words where it was pronounced as *j* (as in the English *yet, yellow*). In Czech after 1843, *g* is used wherever the pronunciation is *g* (as in the English *grow*), while *j* corresponds to the pronunciation *j* (*yet, yellow*)*.*

4. 1801 – 1810: *CY/CÝ>CI/CJ, SY/SÝ>SI/SJ, ZY/ZÝ>ZI/ZJ*

In addition to all the above-mentioned differences from modern Czech, the spelling of this period is characterized by the exclusive use of *y, ý* (to the exclusion of *i, j*) following the letters *c, s, z* (*cyzý, sýla* as opposed to the post-1810 *cizj, sjla* and the modern *cizí, síla*). The change was largely irregular. In Czech words *cy* and *cý* were replaced completely by *ci, cj*, in borrowings the spelling has been mostly preserved. In *sy, sý, zy, zý*, the decision for or against the replacement with *si, sj, zi, zj* was based on the etymology (in word roots) or morphology (in endings).

COMMENTS:

Naturally, in the above extensive – and more or less regular – changes, older spellings are often used in prints, with diminishing frequency, for several years after the introduction of each change (in handwritten texts this could be even decades), but the spill-overs are relatively small.

Aside from the above changes, the general variability of Czech spelling is the more extensive the older the texts are. Irregular variant spellings can be found mostly but not exclusively in borrowings, sometimes in one and the same document, but within the 19th century the variation is not too extensive.