

ROYAL FESTIVALS IN MEDIEVAL BOHEMIA

František Šmahel

In medieval Bohemia, as in neighbouring countries, royal festivals not only represented a public expression of a ruler's majesty but also an exclusive and unforgettable experience for contemporaries. Firstly, the festival strengthened social connections and, secondly, by interrupting the rhythms of everyday life, fulfilled a constant need for spectacle in human existence. The author considers these two aspects of royal festivals and at the same time offers an overview of questions and answers for a broad comparative study. With the exception of the regulations governing the Bohemian coronation ceremony, the *ordines* have not survived, a gap one can bridge with the help of other sources. The close geographic proximity between Bohemia and Germany exercised a strong influence on the entire spectrum of royal festivals in the thirteenth century but later French, Hungarian and Polish stimuli are also evident. Prague and its environs constituted the focal point of most royal festivals, although they were occasionally celebrated in other larger Bohemian and Moravian towns (for example, Jihlava in 1436, Olomouc in 1469 and Kutná Hora in 1471). While the coronation

and funeral ceremonies involved changes in royal incumbency, the other court festivals such as royal progresses, the assembly of the diet, the reception of foreign dignitaries and banquets made the ruler at once visible and present to his subjects. For those readers with no knowledge of the Czech language this article provides a thorough survey of previously unpublished sources and also of the status of current research.