

PRIVATIZATION IN THE 13TH CENTURY?
CZECH MEDIEVALIST RESEARCH AND THE INTERPRE-
TATION OF THE PŘEMISLID ERA

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After the purges at the beginning of the so-called “normalization,” Czech research into medieval history experienced an isolation from which it was able to emerge only after 1989. In the years immediately thereafter, and lacking a critical approach to its own role and purpose, it sought to emulate modern West European trends, in reality going on, under the cover of elevated proclamations, to pursue a factographically-structured historiography of persons and institutions, masking its professional deficiencies with purposefully modern catchwords such as the “privatization” having allegedly occurred in the 13th century. This concept was meant to explain how a “Central European-type” state, in which everything belonged to the ruling prince, could develop into the layered political community, structured along property lines, of which multitudinous sources from the high and late Middle Ages bear witness. Today, this attempt at an explanation is defended by Josef Žemlická, who basically only expands on the earlier interpretations of Dušan Třeštík, dating as far back as the 1960s. In contrast to this, the younger generation, which is represented in the present article by Jan Klápště and Libor Jan, refutes the thesis of an alleged “privatization” and above all of a “Central European-type state” and stresses “long duration,” local conditions, according to them, being permeated by innovations from the west of Europe, and Přemislid rule gradually and incrementally altered towards what was current at the time in the Holy Roman Empire and, more generally, throughout Central Europe.