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“OMNIS POTESTAS A DEO EST”
THE SACRED ASPECTS OF THE LEGITIMACY
OF THE RULER IN THE NARRATIVE SOURCES
FROM HIGH MEDIEVAL BOHEMIA

Introduction

Contemplations on the essence of sovereign power in medieval Europe and its importance for Western culture and society led to the conclusion that rulers of the medieval West belonged – such as with the rulers in non-Christian civilizational circles – to both the world of people and the world of gods. This thesis, which has been systematically verified since the second half of the 19th century within historical as well as cultural and social anthropological research, presents the opinion that the sovereign, in which humanity was blended with a level of supernatural power (*persona mixta*), represented a bridge between the world of people and the world of gods or God (in religious groups recognizing monotheism); or kings were entirely identified with gods.¹

Medieval Christian teachings on sovereign power advanced this conception, which was detailed by Franz-Reiner Erkens, who defined the legitimization means of the medieval rulers' power through their three basic features: (1) instalment of the ruler by God, (2) the role of the sovereign as the representative of God on earth, and (3) the responsibility of the ruler for the development of the secular world, which

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¹ On the connection of the divine principle with the person of kings in ancient religious thought, cf. the classic work by Frazer, James George: *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. The 1922 edition is available online at: www.sacredtexts.com/pag/frazer (last accessed 01.06.2016). – Nachtigall, Horst: *Das sakrale Königtum bei Naturvölkern und Entstehung früher Hochkulturen*. In: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 8 (1958) 34-44. – Roux, Jean-Paul: *Le roi. Mythes et symboles*. Paris 1995, 83-118, 243-282. – Dux, Günter: *Die Genese der Sakralität von Herrschaft. Zur Struktur religiösen Weltverständnisses*. In: Erkens, Franz-Reiner (ed.): *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum. Ideelle und religiöse Grundlagen*. Berlin, New York 2005 (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Alterkunde 49) 9-21. – See also Gundlach, Rolf/Weber, Hermann (eds.): *Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers. Vom ägyptischen Pharaon zum neuzeitlichen Diktator*. Stuttgart 1992 (Schriften der Mainzer Philosophischen Fakultätsgesellschaft 13). – Erkens, Franz-Reiner (ed.): *Die Sakralität von Herrschaft. Herrschaftslegitimierung im Wechsel der Zeiten und Räume. Fünfzehn interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu einem weltweiten und epochenübergreifenden Phänomen*. Berlin 2002. – On the supernatural power of the rulers in the ancient Near Eastern region, cf. Frankfort, Henry: *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Region as the Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago, London 1978, 2nd ed. – The issue of the comparison of the Germanic kingdoms before 1000 is presented also by Klaniczay, Gábor: *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*. Cambridge 2002, 19-78, see also the further relevant literature there.

was comparable to the responsibility of the priest for the believers. Sovereigns attained such a position of power when their reign achieved legitimacy, which was based on its sacral dimension. At the same time, this sacral dimension was subject to the moral-ethical imperative of God's commandments.²

The relationship between the sovereign and the spiritual principle, which ultimately governed the operation of the world, was captured in different ways in medieval sources. Some individual authors allowed different aspects of sovereign power to come to the fore, revealing its origin by the grace of God. This development, taking place between the stages of the early to the late medieval period, was first analysed by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, who traced the transformation of a sovereign's characteristics and his power in relation to the introduction of jurisprudence in the 13th century as well as with the ideas of a transpersonal state principle, i.e. the crown (*corona*), in the 14th century.³ It can generally be said that the mentioned metamorphosis occurs in close connection with the changes of the medieval person's subjective world. Over the course of this widely defined period, which naturally develops, the interpretive scheme for understanding the sacral dimension of the royal rank, which was true both for the early and the high or late middle ages, can still be found in medieval literature. On the level of general contemplations, we can speak of the unchanging principles developing in connection with the sovereign ideal, based on the implementation of the values of peace, order (reflected in the hierarchy of the world), justice (as well as the law connected with it), and clemency.⁴ In the sub-

² Cf. *Erkens*, Franz-Reiner: Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Investiturstreit. Stuttgart 2006, 29-31. – *Erkens*: Sakralkönigtum und sakrales Königtum. Anmerkungen und Hinweise. In: *Erkens*: Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum 1-8 (cf. fn. 1). – See also *Kern*, Fritz: Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht. Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Monarchie. Darmstadt 1954, 2nd ed. – On the sacral dimension of sovereign power, cf. *Engen*, John van: Sacred Sanctions for Lordship. In: *Bisson*, Thomas N. (ed.): Cultures of Power. Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe. Philadelphia/PA 1995, 203-230. – For a summary view, see *Bloch*, Marc: Feudal society. London 1961, 375-393. – In general, on sovereign power in the European cultural area, see also *Duggan*, Anne J. (ed.): Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe. London 1993 (King's College London Medieval Studies 10). – *Jussen*, Bernhard (ed.): Die Macht des Königs. Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit. München 2005, 407-465, drawing a synopsis of the literature on the topic.

³ *Kantorowicz*, Ernst Hartwig: The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology. Princeton/NJ 1957. – On the issue of "corona regni", cf. *Hellmann*, Manfred (ed.): Corona regni. Studien über die Krone als Symbol des Staates im späteren Mittelalter. Darmstadt 1961 (Wege der Forschung 3). There from a general view, particularly *Hartung*, Fritz: Die Krone als Symbol der monarchischen Herrschaft im ausgehenden Mittelalter. In: *Ibidem* 1-69. – For the Czech lands, see *Prochno*, Joachim: Terra Bohemiae, Regnum Bohemiae, Corona Bohemiae. In: *Ibidem* 198-224.

⁴ Cf. *Ewig*, Eugen: Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter. In: *Mayer*, Theodor (ed.): Das Königtum. Seine geistlichen und rechtlichen Grundlagen. Lindau, Konstanz 1956 (Vorträge und Forschungen 3) 7-73. – *Kershaw*, Paul J.E.: Peaceful Kings. Peace, Power and the Early Medieval Political Imagination. Oxford 2011, 64-68. – For a summarizing view on this issue, see *Antonín*, Robert: Ideální panovník českého středověku. Kulturně-historická skica z dějin středověkého myšlení [The Ideal Ruler of the Czech Middle Ages. Cultural-historical Sketch from the History of Medieval Thinking]. Praha 2013, 11-39.

sequent paragraphs, I will endeavour to introduce to which extent the presented theoretical starting points agree with the testimony of the high medieval sources of Czech provenance.

The St Wenceslas Legends

The attempt to answer the questions when and which form the theoretical reflection of the divine origin of sovereign power began to spread in the Czech lands leads us inevitably to the legends of the first Czech saints – St Wenceslas (907 (?)-935) and St Ludmila (b. 860 (?)-921).⁵ Any hagiographic collection created with a close tie to the imperial milieu and the authors of the individual legends – at least those in Latin – fell within the narrative field of the defined hagiographic topoi of the monastic ideal of Christian perfection. The lives of the saints are valuable evidence, however, not only of the spread of Christianity in Czech geographical latitudes. Mutual comparison of their testimony also allows one to at least roughly grasp, in connection with the Christianization process, the closely related attempt to create a legitimizing link between the power of the Přemyslid dukes of the 10th century and the newly established supernatural sphere – i. e. the Christian God. If we focus on the earliest corpus of St Wenceslas' Latin legends – *Crescente fide*, *Gumpold's Legend*, *Legend by Lawrence of Amalfi*, and *Kristian's Legend* – it is possible to summarize, generally speaking, that the link between Wenceslas and God's will, God's grace, or God as such forms one of the basic structures for all of the narratives. This is understandable considering the genre of the work, which is meant primarily to introduce the fates of the first Wenceslas as a martyr. After all, it was proved a few years ago that the basic literary model of the earliest St Wenceslas Latin hagiography was based, other than the biblical citations, on the life of St Emmeram, written down in the 8th century by Bishop Arbeo of Freising.⁶ The description of Wenceslas' acts, however, surpass the framework of hagiographic cliché in many aspects. The fate of the duke of Bohemia is portrayed here using a new hagiographic type – king-saint – whose

⁵ *Ludvíkovský*, Jaroslav: Latinské legendy českého středověku [The Latin Legends of the Czech Middle Ages]. In: Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, řada 22-23 (1973/1974) E 18/19, 267-287. – *Králík*, Oldřich: Kosmova kronika a předchozí tradice [The Chronicle of Cosmas and the Previous Tradition]. Praha 1976. – *Třeštík*, Dušan: Počátky Přemyslovců. Vstup Čechů do dějin (530-935) [The Beginnings of the Přemyslids. The Entrance of the Bohemians into History (530-935)]. Praha 1997, 117-260, there see also the exhaustive list of the literature on the topic up to 1990. – Of the later works, cf. *Kalhous*, David: Anatomy of a Duchy. The Political and Ecclesiastical Structures of Early Přemyslid Bohemia. Leiden, Boston 2012.

⁶ *Förster*, Josef (ed.): Arbeo z Freisingu: Život a umučení svatého Jimrama, mučedníka [Arbeo of Freising: The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Emmeram]. Praha 2007. – Cf. *Třeštík*: Počátky Přemyslovců 156 (cf. fn. 5). – *Kalivoda*, Jan: Nejstarší svatováclavská hagiografie v evropském literárním kontextu přelomu tisíciletí [The Oldest Hagiography of Saint Wenceslas in the European Literary Context at the Turn of the Millennium]. In: *Kubín*, Petr (ed.): Svatý Václav. Na památku 1100. výročí narození knížete Václava Svatého [Saint Wenceslas. In Commemoration of the 1100th Anniversary of the Birth of the Duke-Saint Wenceslas]. Praha 2010, 51-64.

genesis was connected with the expression of the holy nature of sovereign authority in the 10th century.⁷

If we remain with the issue of the origin and legitimization of the power of the Bohemian dukes, it is necessary to emphasize that the actual development of St Wenceslas' legend writings in the Czech lands, being tied to the ecclesiastical circle, validates the endeavour to claim the connection of the Přemyslid dukes with the world of the new Christian God. This connection was formed by the holy duke himself, who, according to the legend writers, was the real architect of the Christianization of Bohemian society – and not the first baptized rulers. This function of the legends demonstrates the emerging ability of early medieval society, at the turning point between pagan and Christian ethical-normative systems, to accept and perhaps even comprehend the cultural code that had been developed in areas of the Germanic-Roman world over the past several centuries. This ability is already manifested by the necessary creation of a text on the saint as such. The St Wenceslas legends were created primarily on imperial literary traditions, which the new Christian elite – emerging in relation to the establishment of the bishopric of Prague in 973 as well as the acceptance of Christian culture (in the broadest sense of the word) by the duke and the circle of his closest followers – digested as its own tradition. At the same time, it is necessary to call attention to the close relationship between this acceptance and the need for the “birth” of their own martyr, who, by his sacrifice, made Christians of the pagan Bohemians. *Crescente fide*, *Gumpold's Legend*, and the *Legend by Lawrence of Amalfi* can be labelled as texts that aimed directly at this target.

Crescente fide and Gumpold's Legend

The first two named legends are marked by an absence of efforts to explicitly discover the origin of Wenceslas' (or Přemyslid) secular, i. e. ducal, power in relation to the sacral sphere. Despite the numerous features and conduct of St Wenceslas, which in terms of content are identical to the characteristics of the sovereign ideal in the Carolingian princely mirrors,⁸ Wenceslas is not, according to these hagiographic texts, a duke by the will of God but a saint by the will of God. According to Gumpold's conception, which was created in close connection to the court of Otto II, the rule of the Bohemian duke comes directly from the hand of King Otto (correctly, it should be Henry's), which hence acts as the mediator between the sacral sphere and the Bohemian duke. When Bishop Gumpold occasionally uses phrases that characterize Wenceslas as being literally filled with God's mercy and will, it is always in the context of acts he performs as the holy martyr and not the secular ruler.

⁷ Cf. *Klaniczay*: Holy Rulers 62-113 (cf. fn. 1). – *Nelson*, Janet L.: Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe. London 1986, 69-74. – *Huntington*, Joanna: Sainthood as a Model of Royal Authority: The “Royal Touch” and Other Miracles in the Early Vitae of Edward the Confessor. In: *Bolton*, Breda/ *Meek*, Christine (eds.): Aspects of Power and Authority in the Middle Ages. Turnhout 2007 (International Medieval Research 14) 327-343.

⁸ On the topic of the Carolingian princely mirrors, cf. *Anton*, Hans Hubert: Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit. Bonn 1968 (Bonner historische Forschungen 32).

For the “imperial” conception of the legend, making the connection between Wenceslas’ secular power and God for the purpose of legitimization is entirely unknown. To put it simply, Wenceslas had his own personal holiness from God, not the sanctified office of the ruler; nevertheless, in his own description of the conduct of the duke, Gumpold uses the label of a devout and just duke.⁹

It is similar in *Crescente fide*. Here, Wenceslas is simply elected according to the old customs dominant among the Bohemians. God does not figure in his election; we do not find a parallel here between the election and God’s will (which we will discuss in relation to the further historical development) because God up to then did not perceive Wenceslas as “His” representative. According to the legend, Wenceslas’ predecessors had already adopted Christianity and built churches to please their new God, whose veneration they tried to spread among the Bohemians.¹⁰ Nevertheless, their power had pagan origins. The essential characteristic of St Wenceslas in *Crescente fide* lies in his zeal, the literal filling with God, through which he realizes his acts. Again, like with *Gumpold’s Legend*, the holiness is described here as manifesting itself in his conduct – not holiness – connected with his ducal office. From this perspective, the primacy of the Bavarian editing of the legend seems to me to be the central idea proposed by Jan Kalivoda, i. e. the opinion that the initial impulse to write down the life of St Wenceslas came from Bavarian priests, who lost their position in Bohemia with Wenceslas’ death and then created the legend based on Arbeo’s model in Regensburg. That explains the absence of unity concerning Wenceslas, his martyrdom, and the further fate of the Bohemians. Despite that, in *Crescente fide* Wenceslas plays a fundamental role in the sanctification of the sovereign power of Bohemian kings because he brings to the Czechs through his exemplary life – de-

⁹ Zachová, Jana (ed.): Passio sancti Venceslai martyris. In: Zachová, Jana (ed.): Legendy Wolfenbüttelského rukopisu [The Legends of the Manuscript of Wolfenbüttel]. Praha 2010, 75-90, here 78-79: “Patre interim, ut iam dictum est, universae carnis viam ingresso, iuvenis ipse senum exempla actibus declarans, sub regis serenissimi Ottonis fulgente potentia, favorabili populorum assensu in paterni ducatus successionem, se nimium refutante delectus, et in cipalis sedem dignitatis est elevatus.” – Concerning later works on Gumpold’s Legend, cf. Merhautová, Anežka: Gumpoldova legenda [Gumpold’s Legend]. In: *Ibidem* 19-32.

¹⁰ The first churches – Our Lady and St Peter – were built according to the Czech and Bavarian versions of the legend by Spytihněv I. He was also the first baptized duke according to the Bavarian redaction, whereas the Czech redaction states the first to be baptized was Bořivoj. See Ludvíkovský, Jaroslav: Nově zjištěný rukopis legendy Crescente fide a jeho význam pro datování Kristiána [The Newly Discovered Manuscript of the Legend Crescente fide and its Importance for the Dating of Kristian]. In: *Listy Filologické* 81 (1958) 58-63, here Crescente fide (Czech redaction) 58: “In diebus illis crescente fide Christiana dei nutu sponte dux Boemiorum nomine Boriwoi una cum exercitu neonon et omni populo suo sordes idolorum abiciens baptisatus est. Eiusque filius Zpitigneu in urbe Praga condidit ecclesiam sancte Dei genitricis Marie et aliam quoque in honore sancti Petri, apostolorum principis. In quibus Dei gratia largiente plurima operantur beneficia.” – Cf. Emler, Josef (ed.): Crescente fide (Barovska redakce/Bavarian redaction). In: *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum 1: Vitae sanctorum et aliorum quorundam pietate insignium*. Pragae 1873, 183-190, (hereafter FRB) here 183: “Crescente fide Christiana in illis diebus dei nutu et ammonitione sponte dux Poemorum nomine Zputigneus una cum exercitu nec non et omni populo suo sordes idolorum abiciens baptizatus est. Isque moenibus condidit ecclesiam s. dei genitricis Marie, et aliam quoque in honorem s. Petri principis apostolorum.”

scribed in the understandings of the sovereign ideal known in the Germanic-Roman world then – God’s grace, which was originally only his. In this way, the reflection on the extension of this faith is the Czech version of *Crescente fide*.¹¹

Legend by Lawrence of Amalfi

An entirely different position to the Bohemian milieu is taken in the text by Lawrence of Amalfi, which, created within the Western Christian tradition, did not say anything at all about the real world of thought in the Czech lands of the second half of the 10th century. Not even Lawrence knew anything about that world besides the report on the duke-saint, which states that Wenceslas’ father achieves royal power and for his deserved constancy in the faith he is granted from heaven victory and triumph over countless foes. For all of this, Wenceslas is thankful to the Creator, which, according to Lawrence, elects the popular Wenceslas, thereby being considered a sign from Christ the Lord. The saint, whose acts are later described in congruence with the classic monastic scheme, like his father became king – not a prince – and is even compared to Solomon by Lawrence.¹² Despite the emphasis on Wenceslas as a martyr, who dies for the glory of Christ, we encounter for the very first time through the legend by Lawrence the characteristics of the Bohemian rulers’ power in relation to God. It can be said with a bit of hyperbole that St Wenceslas figures in Lawrence’s text as the *vicarius Christi*, which corresponds to the period conception of sovereign power in the West European cultural circle. However, it is important to say at this juncture that so far it does not testify to anything on the spread of the perspectives concerned in Bohemia itself.

First Old-Slavonic Legend on St Wenceslas

The source that could, under the assumption of the correctness of the dating of its creation by Václav Konzal, be labelled as the first indirect trace of the reflection on the connection of sovereign power with the power of the Christian God in the Czech lands thus remains the *First Old-Slavonic Legend on St Wenceslas* (dated by Konzal to the 930s).¹³ Unlike the Czech redaction of the *Crescente fide*, this shows changes in the thought milieu, which we can, in my opinion, call, according to the model by Kantorowicz, “Christocentric”.¹⁴ Furthermore, it is not only important

¹¹ On the relation between Gumpold and the Bavarian and Czech redactions of the *Crescente fide*, cf. *Ludvíkovský*: Nově zjištěný rukopis (cf. fn. 10). – *Třeštík*: Počátky Přemyslovců 155-175 (cf. fn. 5). – *Kalivoda*: Nejstarší svatováclavská hagiografie (cf. fn. 6).

¹² *Králík*, Oldřich: Laurentius Montecassinský, Utrpení svatého Václava [Laurentius of Monte Cassino, The Martyrdom of St Wenceslas]. In: *Králík*, Ondřej: Nejstarší legendy přemyslovských Čech [The Oldest Legends of Přemyslid Bohemia]. Praha 1969, 88-101.

¹³ *Konzal*, Václav: První slovanská legenda Václavská a její “Sitz im Leben” [The First Slavonic Legend of Wenceslas and its “Sitz im Leben”]. In: *Studia Mediaevalia Pragensia* 1 (1988) 113-127.

¹⁴ For the “Christocentric” thought in medieval world, cf. *Kantorowicz*: The King’s Two Bodies 42-61 (cf. fn. 3). – *Erkens*: Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter 155 (cf. fn. 2). – Cf. also *Keller*, Hagen: Ottonische Königsherrschaft. Organisation und Legitimation königlicher

that Wenceslas is compared to Christ in several places in all three of the known redactions of the legend. One of the crucial moments described is the first haircut of St Wenceslas. During the event, according to the *Vostokov* and *Novljan* redactions, his father invites a bishop called Notář (Notar or Notary) and his priests, who during the ceremony taking place in the Church of Our Lady calls the boy, places him on the corner of the step in front of the altar, and blesses him with the words: Lord Jesus Christ, bless this boy as you have blessed all of your just.¹⁵

This act can be understood “only” in relation to Wenceslas’ later martyrdom. However, the third of the redactions (the chronology of the version is still an open question), the *Minej* redaction, brings a completely different and, from our perspective, interesting interpretation of this event because it does not speak of the blessing by Jesus Christ in connection with the first haircut but with the young Wenceslas taking his father’s throne:

Also the rogue grew up. And when his father duke Vratislav (888-921) had to seat the boy on his throne – he himself was old, he awaited his death – Vratislav called for the princes who were then in his land and the bishops and all of the clergy of the church. Then, the good and orthodox bishop and notar(ij), with all of the clergy, chanted the holy liturgy in the church of the Most Holy Mother of God and always Our Lady, raised the rogue, placed [him] on the stair in front of the altar. And blessed him with these words: “Lord God Jesus Christ bless the rogue as you have blessed all of the just: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and [as] you have crowned the orthodox emperor, upright apostles, Constantine and Helen.¹⁶

From this conception, the “Christocentric” tradition is also expressed, although in a contrary fashion than what was cultivated at the courts of the Ottonians and Saliens – the Orthodox tradition. An earlier critical analysis of the *Minej* redaction showed numerous cases of complementation and surmises of the text of the legend. It remains a question how Wenceslas’ blessing at his accession to the throne is exactly connected with the later adjustments of the text (although in this context “later” can also mean during the 10th century). Moreover, it is not clear when the adjustments took place and whether they could be reflected in some way in the development of thought in Bohemia in the 10th century.

Macht. Darmstadt 2002. – *Weinfurter*, Stefan: Idee und Funktion des „Sakralkönigtums“ bei den ottonischen und salischen Herrschern (10. und 11. Jahrhundert). In: *Gundlach/Weber*: Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers 99-128 (cf. fn. 1). – On the direct role of Jesus Christ, see *Roux*: Le roi 223-242, 259-262 (cf. fn. 1).

¹⁵ For the *Novljan* redaction, see *Vajs*, Josef (ed.): Charvátsko-hlaholská redakce původní legendy o sv. Václavu [Croatian-Glagolitic Redaction of the Original Legend of St Wenceslas]. In: *Vajs*, Josef (ed.): Sborník staroslovanských literárních památek o sv. Václavu a sv. Ludmile [Anthology of the Old Church Slavonic Literary Testimonials on St Wenceslas and St Ludmila]. Praha 1929, 36-37. – For the *Vostokov* redaction, see *Serebrjanskij*, N. J. (ed.): Ruské redakce původní staroslověnské legendy o sv. Václavu: A. jihoruská, B. severoruská. Úvod a Text [The Russian Redactions of the Original Legend of St Wenceslas: A. South Russian, B. North Russian. Introduction and Text]. In: *Ibidem* 9-28, here 14.

¹⁶ For the text of the mentioned redaction, see *Serebrjanskij*: Ruské redakce 20-21 (cf. fn. 15).

Kristian's Legend

The first explicit connection of the sovereign power of St Wenceslas, or the Přemyslids, with God's mercy is thus not made until *Kristian's Legend*. At this point, I leave aside all of the arguments brought so far, which, in the opinion of most historians, were placed in the 10th century, and according to others in the 12th to 14th centuries.¹⁷ I focus on the legend purely with what can be said of Kristian's perception of the bases of sovereign power. Here, we find ourselves, compared to the other hagiographic treatments, in a completely different world. Kristian's narrative field is wider, more varied, and more elaborate. Alternating between legend writer and historiographer, Kristian describes the world of the first Přemyslids within a discourse that far surpasses the hagiographic scheme. In his conception, we encounter for the first time in the Bohemian milieu an explicit definition of how the meaning of the connection between the sovereign's power and the sacral sphere was perceived. It takes place within Methodius' answer to the question of the as yet pagan duke of the Bohemians, Bořivoj (852/855-888/890), on what good the offered baptism will bring him:

[Y]ou will become the lord of your lords and your enemies will be subjected to your power and your offspring will grow everyday like a great river into which the streams of various brooks pour [...] only be ready with all your heart to believe in the Almighty Lord God, his only begotten son, our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of the Comforter.¹⁸

It is similar with Duke Bořivoj, who, as the first of his signs of gratitude for the Lord, takes power with honour again in Bohemia. This was not in an endeavour to support Bořivoj's conversion as it was with his sons in *Crescente fide*; accordingly, he had a church built to the glory of the Virgin Mary.¹⁹

Next in *Kristian's Legend*, St Wenceslas is the first Přemyslid to be elected sovereign directly by Christ's choice (*anunte Christo olim electus dux beatus Wenceslaus*). At the same time, his sovereign acts are not only governed by the principles of Christian morality but directly by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God's will also becomes the mover of Wenceslas' secular rule, just as God inspires the wisdom of the bishop of Regensburg, who, according to Kristian, is to decide at Wenceslas' request

¹⁷ For a summary of the discussion on the authenticity of Kristian, cf. *Kalhous*, David: *Legenda Christiani and Modern Historiography*. Leiden 2015 (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages 450-1450, vol. 34).

¹⁸ *Ludvíkovský*, Jaroslav (ed.): *Legenda Christiani. Vita et passio sancti Venceslai et sancte Ludmille ave eis*. Praha 1978, 19-21: “Si, inquit presul Metudius, abrenunciaveris ydolis et inhabitantibus in eis demonibus, dominus dominorum tuorum efficieris, cunctique hostes tui subicientur dicioni tue et progenies tua cottidie augmentabitur velut fluvius maximus, in quo diversorum confluent fluenta rivulorum. Et si, inquit Borivoi, res se ita habet, que mora est baptizandi? Nulla, inquit pontifex, tantum paratus esto ex integro corde credere in Deum patrem omnipotentem eiusque unigenitum, dominum nostrum Iesum Christum et in Spiritum paraclitum, illuminatorem omnium fidelium, non tantum mundialis causa substancie, verum eciam capessende salutis tue anime pro aquirenda perhennitatis gloriosa palma atque percipienda societate sanctorum ineffabili leticia.”

¹⁹ *Ibidem* 24: „Quoniam isdem princeps Morauiie degens omnipotenti deo votum voverat, vilicet, quo si eum dominus ad propria cum honore reduceret, basilicam in honorem beate dei genitricis et perpetue virginis Marie edificaret, reuersus sine mora votum suum implere studuit in ipsa ciuitate Pragensi.”

on the method of depositing the relics of St Ludmila.²⁰ The reader of *Kristian's Legend* thus enters a literary milieu, which in many ways corresponds to the world of the Ottonian and Salien emperors. This is owing to the cultural context of their majestic depiction, in short, with the mentality in which the emperor as *vicarius Christi* ruled, guided by the Holy Spirit, the worldly community until the last arrival of Christ. Kristian knows this conception of imperial power. Wenceslas' imperial adversary, King Henry according to the legend writer, puts on the crown "by the grace of Christ". In his conception, even St Wenceslas enters various forms of relation to Christ, although never directly as *vicarius* but rather as *miles* or *cultor Christi* (knight and servant).²¹ Kristian then turns to the most significant proof of the connection of Wenceslas the duke (not saint) with God at the very end of his discussion, where he describes the combat of St Wenceslas and the duke of Kouřim. The sign of the cross on Wenceslas' forehead, which through its appearance impels his adversary to lay down his weapons, is the symbol of the just reign of the Přemyslid, a rule guided in accordance with God's will.²² With the emphasis on the role of Christ, Kristian is an author of the literary tradition of the "Christocentric" world during the 10th to 11th century, a tradition that was interrupted by the battle over the investiture.²³

Interrelated are the final conclusions of Anežka Merhautová on the clarification of the illuminations in the *Wolfenbüttel Manuscript*, in which Gumpold's version of the St Wenceslas' legend was preserved. As she summarizes, however, the basis for the illuminations themselves was the text by Kristian: the preceding analysis of the ideal of sovereign power in the St Wenceslas hagiography situates the repeated question of the significance of Christ placing the crown on the saint's head in one of these illuminations. Dušan Třeštík and Anežka Merhautová, who summarized and critically assessed the earlier discussions on this topic, drew the conclusion that it is the martyr's crown. Merhautová retains this thesis also in the above-cited new evaluation of the illumination.²⁴ Nevertheless, considering Kristian served as the foundation for

²⁰ *Ibidem* 42-43, 47-49.

²¹ *Ibidem* 55, 60, 65. – On the concept of power with the Ottonians and Salians in the intentions of the Christocentric idea, cf. *Kantorowicz: The King's Two Bodies* 42-61 (cf. fn. 3). – *Weimfurter*, Stefan: Idee und Funktion des „Sakralkönigtums“ bei den ottonischen und salischen Herrschern (10. und 11. Jahrhundert). In: *Gundlach/Weber: Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers* 99-128 (cf. fn. 1). – *Körntgen*, Ludger: Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade. Zu Kontext und Funktion sakraler Vorstellungen in Historiographie und Bildzeugnissen der ottonisch-frühsalischen Zeit. Berlin 2001 (Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 2). – *Keller*, Hagen: Ottonische Königsherrschaft. Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht. Darmstadt 2002.

²² *Ludvíkovský: Legenda Christiani* 102-103 (cf. fn. 18): „Dum procedunt duces congregi volentes, Kurimensi celestis Deus celestes reserat visiones, sanctum videlicet Wenceslaum ymaginem crucis sancte in fronte nitentem portare. Hec ut vidit, longe abiectis armis, ad pedes ruit, protestabaturque nullum posse tum vincere, dum Deus vellet in tali signo iuvamen ferre. Hunc talia narrantem in pacis oscula dux sanctus sublevat atque ipsum civitatemque sue dicioni pacifice firmat, donans illi civitatem regere, quamdiu viveret ipse. Vere crucem viderat, quia Christum imitabatur, feliciusque pervenit ad regnum, ubi Christus regnat cum Patre et Spiritu sancto in secula seculorum, amen“.

²³ *Erkens: Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter* 190-200 (cf. fn. 2).

²⁴ *Merhautová, Anežka/Třeštík, Dušan: Ideové proudy v českém umění 12. století* [Ideo-

the illuminator of *Gumpold's Legend*, it is not in my opinion possible to rule out that the depiction of Wenceslas' coronation in the *Wolfenbüttel Manuscript* reacts to the passage cited above, in which Wenceslas became the sovereign due to the instigation by Christ. The crown – seen simultaneously as the cross, which is connected with the meaning of a martyr – symbolizes according to this interpretation the *synkrisis* of both Wenceslas' characteristics – duke-saint – which corresponds to the significance of this type of sainthood, as described by the historian Gábor Klaniczay.²⁵

Chronicle of the Bohemians

It is necessary to highlight that Kristian remains a unique author within the Czech narrative sources owing to his conception of sovereign power being based on *rex vicarius Christi*, which relates to the next legend. Cosmas – although we can, along with Dušan Třeštík, label him as a person of the 11th century considering his life fates – treats the sovereign ideology in his chronicle in the understandings of the conception of *rex imago dei*.²⁶ The specific role of Christ's vicar fell into the period of the Investiture Controversy (1075-1122), during which Cosmas lived and at its end produced his *Chronicle of the Bohemians*, in the conceptions promoted by the ecclesiastical representatives. The theme of the origin of sovereign power can be seen in Cosmas' *Chronicle*, which already in the first passages of his conception of the Přemyslid legend legitimizes the reign of the Přemyslid dynasty in the Czech lands.²⁷ The dean of Prague unified the form of the passed-down myth as well as complemented it with Christian aspects. The roots of the story, whose plot, characters, and context are well known in the Bohemian milieu, went deep into the shared basis of Indo-European mythology. The connection between the myth of the occupation of Přemysl the Ploughman and the original Indo-European myth of the first ploughing was already noted in the Czech historiographical account by Třeštík, who, however, also refuses the presence of a sacral origin of sovereign power in early European mythology as a whole. The same author points out the magical abilities of the “first mythical ploughmen”, which strengthened the role of the connection of a king-magician in the Indo-European civilization circle. It is possible to agree with Třeštík that kings were never gods in archaic Europe and themselves did not become a subject of cult. Notwithstanding, we can find the intersection of secular power with sacral power on the level of ceremonial practice, where, as emphasized by Třeštík

logical Tendencies in Bohemian Art of the 12th Century]. Praha 1985, 82-84. – *Merhautová*: Gumpoldova legenda 28-29 (cf. fn. 9). – For a critical review of illumination, see Černý, Pavol: Evangelistář zábrdovický a Svatovítská apokalypsa [Evangelary of Zábřdovice and the Apocalypse of St Vitus]. Praha 2004, 176-177.

²⁵ *Klaniczay*: Holy Rulers (cf. fn. 1). – *Royt*, Jan: Ikonografie sv. Václava ve středověku [The Iconography of St Wenceslas in the Middle Ages]. In: *Kubín* (ed.): Svatý Václav 301-327 (cf. fn. 6).

²⁶ *Třeštík*, Dušan: Kosmova kronika. Studie k počátkům českého politického myšlení [The Chronicle of Cosmas. A Study on the Beginnings of Czech Political Thought]. Praha 1968, 43-49.

²⁷ On the topic of Cosmas' reflection of power, see *Wihoda*, Martin: První česká království [The First Kingdoms of Bohemia]. Praha 2015, 17-169.

himself, these kings fulfilled the role of being the main sacrificers of their tribes and answered for the public cult to ensure a good year and peace. In this way, they held the roles of mediators between heaven and earth. Both roles were allowed precisely because of the sacral dimension of their office.²⁸

The Přemyslid myth is a story that captures one of the classic forms of the establishment of rule over the people, specifically the calling of the mythical ploughman – Přemysl. This is the common version: At times, when summoning a sovereign was obstructed, Bohemians lived without a ruler and were governed only by the verdicts of their elected judge named Krok. After Krok's death, the role of the judge of the Bohemians is taken up by his youngest daughter, the soothsayer Libuše. On the basis of one of her decisions, one of the members of the tribe is upset that men are judged by a woman, which subsequently agitates the Bohemians in demanding the establishment of a duke. Although Libuše warns the men of the burden that would befall them after establishing a firm ducal rule, her warning goes unheeded. After repeated requests, the soothsayer sends messengers led by her horse to seek out in the village Stadice a ploughman named Přemysl, whom she names as the chosen ruler of the Bohemians.²⁹

The passages of Cosmas' *Chronicle* describing Libuše's prophesy express predominantly the chronicler's view of the indivisibility of ducal power, which all Bohemians were to be subject to without distinction. The passages are additionally understood as a defence of firm sovereign reign, which is the only one capable of ensuring the passage of justice and peace in the land.³⁰ Cosmas' perception of the role of the ruler, placed in the mouth of the seer Libuše, does not deviate in any way from the biblical tradition. Through the speech of the soothsayer, Cosmas includes in his *Chronicle of the Bohemians* a paraphrasing of the Old Testament speech of Samuel to the Israelites, who came to request a king that would judge them. Libuše and Samuel prophesize that the people will be completely subjugated to royal power in terms of property and personal freedom and rights to life as such. Notwithstanding, the Israeli people, and following after them Cosmas' Bohemians, choose the path of subjugation. The basic building block of the vindicating power of the Přemyslid dukes and kings was thus laid.³¹

²⁸ Třeštík dealt in detail with the Přemyslid myth in connection with Indo-European mythology in: *Třeštík, Dušan: Mýty kmene Čechů (7.-10. století). Tři studie ke "Starým pověstem českým" [Tribal Myths of the Czechs (7th-10th Centuries). Three Studies on the "Old Czech Legends"]*. Praha 2003, 99-167. – On the issue of the deification of the king, cf. *Roux: Le roi* 83-118 (cf. fn. 1). – On the king as priest and magician, see *Ibidem* 132-137. – In medieval thought, the symbolic figure of Jesus Christ, combining human and divine natures in himself, was connected to the idea of the syncretism of the sacred and the profane principle in the king's person, on that cf. *Kantorowicz: The King's Two Bodies* 42-86 (cf. fn. 3). – *Roux: Le roi* 223-242 (cf. fn. 1).

²⁹ *Bretholz, Bertold* (ed.): *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*. Berlin 1923 (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum MGH SRG NS 2) 14-15.

³⁰ *Třeštík: Kosmova kronika* 166-183 (cf. fn. 26).

³¹ The first Book of Samuel 7,10-18. – Cf. *Graus, František: Kirchliche und heidnische (magische) Komponenten der Stellung der Přemysliden. Přemysliden sage und St. Wenzelsideologie*. In: *Graus, František / Ludat, Herbert* (eds.): *Siedlung und Verfassung Böhmens in der*

In any case, it is possible to label the form by which Přemysl is called through the prophecy, leading the steps of Libuše's horse unerringly to the village of Stadice, as pagan. The prophesy itself creates a connection with Christian reality, digested by the chronicler and connected with the sacral content of the old Indo-European myth, because it unveils the distinctive sacral dimension of the sovereign – the duke is revealed by Libuše's prophesy (the Indo-European sacral model), which is not possible in Cosmas' world without the direct intervention of God's will (the Christian sacral model). However, both of the models mentioned point to one thing: the archaic and the medieval man is a religious man.³² Hence, nothing hinders them being merged into one story. Only later it comes to several shifts in Cosmas' interpretation of myth. Firstly, Cosmas immediately in the introduction labels the conviction of some unnamed people as a rumour that Libuše's horse knew the path because it had carried its mistress in the past to see Přemysl. The chronicler does not explain his rejection of this myth; nevertheless, his rejection is all the more resolute for that. In that way, he opens up a space for the fate that leads the steps of the stallion, a fate that is already in God's hand in Cosmas' Christian world. When the messengers appear in front of Přemysl, they say to him: *Vir fortunate, dux nobis diis generate!* This speech contains the connection of Přemysl with the ecclesiastical world principle – of gods who (metaphorically speaking) fathered him – and fortune, or better put, fate.³³ The essential turn from the pagan basis to the Christian interpretation of the origin of sovereign power in Cosmas' version happens at the moment when Přemysl is asked by Libuše's messengers why he wants to keep his bast shoes. Přemysl answers in the following way:

I have and will have them kept for the ages, so that our offspring know where they came from and so people always live in fear and uncertainty so the people themselves entrusted by God did not unjustly tyrannize from pride.³⁴

Cosmas' pagan ruler and mythical ploughman perceives his calling to the ducal office as an expression of God's will. It is God who put the nation into Přemysl's hands and the hands of his successors.

Considering this context, there are other important aspects of the Přemyslid connection to the world of supernatural powers. It is the ploughman's exceptional abilities that the messengers are witness to before his transformation into a duke.

Frühzeit. Wiesbaden 1967, 150-156. – See also *Nodl, Martin: Pozdně středověká transformace Kosmova mýtu o počátcích práv a zákonů kmene Čechů. Kronikáři dvorského okruhu, Maiestas Carolina, Ondřej z Dubé a Viktorin Kornel ze Všehrd* [The Late Medieval Transformation of Cosmas' Myth on the Beginnings of Rights and Laws of the Bohemian Tribe. The Chroniclers of the Court's Circle, Maiestas Carolina, Andrew of Dubá and Viktorin Kornel of Všehrdy]. In: *Nodl, Martin/Wiboda, Martin: Šlechta, moc a reprezentace ve středověku* [Nobility, Power and Representation in the Middle Ages]. Praha 2007 (Colloquia mediaevalia Pragensia 9) 189-207, here 189-191.

³² Cf. *Eliade, Mircea: Das Heilige und das Profane*. Frankfurt am Main 1984.

³³ *Bretholz: Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* 16 (cf. fn. 29).

³⁴ *Ibidem* 17: „Ad hec, inquit, eos feci et feciam in evum servari, ut nostri posterii sciant, unde sit orti, et ut semper vivant pavidi et suspecti eu homines a Deo sibi commissos iniuste opprimant per superbiam.“

Přemysl literally performs magic. He has the oxen with which he was ploughing disappear and sticks a spike (*stimulus*) into the ground, which he used to drive the ox, from which three hazelnut shoots germinate instantly. Based on the fact that two of them dry up and the one prospers and further strengthens, Přemysl prophesies the future of his dynasty, from which, according to Cosmas' version, always only one successor will rule despite the numerous offspring. Přemysl is capable of all of this because he is empowered by God's will. In Cosmas' Přemyslid legend, we thus encounter in the person of the sovereign the elements of the relationship between the sacral and the profane, which I tried to illustrate in the initial analysis.³⁵

The base of the power of the pagan duke Přemysl in Cosmas' *Chronicle* corresponds to the overall conception of the author, who believes all power in the world comes from God (*omnis potestas a Deo est*), as he mentions repeatedly, for instance, in the case of the vain attempt of Vratislas II (1033(?)-1092) to install his chaplain Lance as the new bishop in 1067.³⁶ The same is put in the mouth of the dying Boleslas II (932(?)-999) in his speech to his homonymous son, who because God enthrones him as duke (*ducem te, inquit Deus, constitui*) the father exhorts his son to a God-fearing life and not haughtily governing while always having a mind about the legacy of the descendants. The birth itself of Boleslas II from such a wicked father, like the fratricide of Boleslas II in Cosmas' version, was proof of the strange grace of God and His inscrutable judgements. A similar occurrence happens thanks to God's inspiration and governance (*immo sic iam disponente Dei*), impelling the young Soběslas (later Duke Soběslas I, 1090(?)-1140) to return to Bohemia from Saxon exile in 1125 and later assume rule; shortly before the chronicler's death, Cosmas places in his person the hope of a renewed rise of the duchy. Cosmas further projects the mentioned interpretation of the origin of sovereign power into the royal dignity of Vratislas II, who was crowned by God (*Deo coronato*); as stated, however, the royal rank that the dukes held was not very pleasing for chroniclers, who were not of royal rank.³⁷ It is therefore not surprising when Duke Břetislav II, one of the most popular of Cosmas' heroes, in 1100 wills on his death bier only a hunting horn and a spear to his son because it is not his place to leave what is in God's hands (*Date, inquit, filio meo lituum meum et iaculum, cetera non est meum sibi dare, que Deus posuit in sua potestate*).³⁸

³⁵ *Bretholz*: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* 16-17 (cf. fn. 29). – On the connection between magician and king from an anthropological perspective, cf. the already cited work by *Frazer*: *The Golden Bough* 83-90 (cf. fn. 1). – *Roux*: *Le roi* 22-23 (cf. fn. 1). – On the miraculous powers of the Christian kings, see *Bloch*, Marc: *Les rois thaumaturges. Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre*. Paris 1993. – *Ehlers*, Joachim: *Der wundertätige König in der monarchischen Theorie des Früh- und Hochmittelalters*. Berlin 2000.

³⁶ *Bretholz*: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* 115 (cf. fn. 29). – The idea is dependent on the New Testament text of the letter of St Paul to the Romans, see the Vulgate, Rom 13,1: "Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit non est enim potestas nisi a Deo quae autem sunt a Deo ordinatae sunt."

³⁷ For Cosmas' criticism of Vratislas and his rule, see *Antonín*: *Ideální panovník 176-177*, 241-242 (cf. fn. 4). – *Wiboda*: *První česká království 17-29* (cf. fn. 27).

³⁸ *Bretholz*: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* 58, 233, 141 (cf. fn. 29).

The Canon of Vyšehrad and the Monk of Sázava

A similar perception of the origin of sovereign power can be found in the Bohemian chronicles of the 12th and 13th centuries, in which we uncover two strong motifs arising from the conviction that the power of specific rulers comes from God. The first is the frequently mentioned origin of the power of the Přemyslids by the grace of God or God Himself; the second is the role of holy mediators, whose acts confirm God’s will, and in this way legitimize the reign of the actual duke. One example for the combination of both is the description in the version of the first continuers of Cosmas, the anonymous chroniclers of the Canon of Vyšehrad and the Monk of Sázava, of the circumstances of the battle at Chlumec, which was fought in 1126 by the imperial army of Lothar III and the army of the Bohemian duke Soběslav I.³⁹ The image provided by the first chronicler is as follows: Just before the battle, the participants see an eagle flying above the battlefield calling to the Saxons (i.e. the Germans), apparently in a portent of their deaths (naturally God has suggested to the eagle to make this portent); in addition, there is the sound of a bell heard. Subsequently, while the battle is beginning, a chaplain named Vít, holding the spear of St Wenceslas (surrounded by a hundred Bohemian leaders, provosts, and chaplains), sees the saint sitting in white clothes on a white horse above his spear; the others, however, do not see it and so instead of fighting raise their arms to heaven in supplication in order to also see this miracle and call out *Kyrie eleison*. At that moment, God has mercy and through the holy messenger Wenceslas (their protector) gains victory for the Bohemians.⁴⁰

At this point, we leave aside the motif of St Wenceslas and focus on the role of Duke Soběslav, who was ruling at the time. He had the lion’s share of the victory because, as described in the canon’s postscript, he sends his chaplain before the battle to the village of Vrbčany to find the banner of St Adalbert, which he attaches to the spear of St Wenceslas, above which the protector of the Bohemians subsequently appears. Soběslav’s premonition, imagined as Wenceslas’ intervention personified as the extended hand of God, of a victory over the Saxons is announced by the eagle – the bird symbolizing the Přemyslid dynasty. As stated in the canon, this victory is not so much as won but rather “sung” by the hymn *Kyrie eleison*, hence a song, which comes to be sung in the elections and enthronements of the Bohemian dukes. All of this makes the battle at Chlumec a clear act that confirms the correctness of the decision of the Bohemian nobility when it elected Soběslav to the ducal throne. For the medieval man, the victorious battle, which at the time fulfilled the function of God’s court, was confirmation of the correct, proper course of things *par excellence*. From the perspective of the origin of the power of the Bohemian duke, God,

³⁹ For the new interpretation of the authorship of the Canon of Vyšehrad, see *Reitinger, Lukáš*: Psal tzv. Kanovník vyšehradský opravdu na Vyšehradě? První Kosmův pokračovatel v kontextu dějepisectví přemyslovského věku [Did the so-called Canon of Vyšehrad Actually Write at Vyšehrad? The First Successor of Cosmas in the Context of Historiography of the Přemyslid Era]. In: *Český časopis historický (ČČH)* 113 (2015) 635-668.

⁴⁰ *Emler, Josef* (ed.): *Canonici Wissegradensis continuatio Cosmae*. In: *Emler: FRB 2: Cosmae chronicon Boemorum cum continuatoribus*. Pragae 1874, 204.

from whom all the secular rulers had power, expressed himself through direct intervention.⁴¹

In the *Chronicle* of the Monk of Sázava, the military conflict at Chlumec is perceived as decisive, a foundational victorious battle enhanced by the grace of God. It is reflected primarily in the initial consideration of the chronicler: the ascension of Soběslas is connected with great joy because the beginning of the good duke's reign is accompanied, as was clear, by God's grace. This is manifested, as described in another text, in another event, just like the famous victory at Chlumec: before placing himself and his country into God's hand, instead of leaving for the battle Soběslas first goes to church and prays to obtain God's protection. After the victorious battle, Soběslas appears before the defeated Lothar and he informs him that his victory was a manifestation of God's judgement – God has given clear evidence. The text expresses the chronicler's conceptions of justice, building on the idea of sovereign grace, which Soběslas enjoys. The ruler could not have wished for a more solid base for his power. Even the defeated Lothar, who understands his defeat as a consequence of God's will, is aware of this.⁴²

The *Annals of Hradiště-Opatovice* – another chronicle created within the Přemyslid regnum in the second half of the 12th century, according to which the Bohemian duke wins over Lothar with God's help – speaks similarly of Soběslas' victory at Chlumec. The same source states that the help of the Creator and his protection is also decisive in 1118 for the return to power of one of Soběslas' predecessors, Duke Bořivoj II (1064(?)-1124), who was banished from the land earlier after a dispute with the nobility and other members of the Přemyslid dynasty.⁴³ In a similar way, God's protection and grace accompanies Vladislav II (1100(?)-1174), king of Bohemia – as described in the *Second Continuation of Cosmas' Chronicle* (created at the end of the 13th century) – at the battlefield before Milan in 1157, the siege where he participates in the army of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, or at a battle with Béla IV (1206-1270), king of Hungary, in 1260 against King Přemysl Otakar II (1233(?)-1278), who won with clear help from God.⁴⁴

⁴¹ On the historical context, see Žemlička, Josef: Čechy v době knížecí [Bohemia during the Time of the Dukes]. Praha 1997, 221-223. – Vaníček, Vratislav: Soběslav I. Přemyslovci v kontextu evropských dějin v letech 1092-1140 [Soběslav I. The Přemyslids in the Context of European History in the Years 1092-1140]. Praha, Litomyšl 2007, 185-196. – Wihoda, Martin: Morava v době knížecí 906-1197 [Moravia during the Time of the Dukes 906-1197]. Praha 2010, 167-169. – Wihoda: První česká království 40-41 (cf. fn. 27). – On the issue of St Wenceslas' spear, cf. Nový, Rostislav: Symboly české státnosti v 10.-12. století [Symbols of Czech Statehood in the 10th-12th Centuries]. In: Folia Historica Bohemica 12 (1988) 47-63.

⁴² Emler, Josef (ed.): Monachi Sazawiensis continuatio Cosmae. In: FRB 2: Cosmae chronicon Boemorum 254-257 (cf. fn. 40).

⁴³ Emler (ed.): Annales Gradicensis-Opatovicenses. In: FRB 2: Cosmae chronicon Boemorum 393 (cf. fn. 40).

⁴⁴ Emler (ed.): Annalium Pragensium (3. Výpisky z Vincentia, Gerlacha a jiných starších letopisců českých) [Excerpts of Vincentius, Gerlach and Other Ancient Bohemian Annalists]. In: FRB 2: Cosmae chronicon Boemorum 276 (cf. fn. 40). – Emler (ed.): Annalium Pragensium (4. Letopisy české 1197-1278 [Bohemian Annals 1197-1278]). In: *Ibidem* 297.

Furthermore, the Supreme Power did not abandon the lawful Bohemian ruler off the battlefield. If we return to the sources of the 12th century, specifically to the *Annals of the Canon of Vyšehrad*, we discover that only by the grace of God did Duke Soběslas uncover a plot to kill the duke, which stretched through the members of the nobility to the bishop of Prague and Břetislav, another Přemyslid. As a consequence, Soběslas convokes the Bohemians and emphatically reminds them that he acquired rule over them primarily from God’s hand.⁴⁵ The author of the annals understood the power of the Bohemian dukes as being given by God, which is evidenced as well by his interpretation of the situation in which Emperor Lothar is to arbitrate a dispute in 1135 between Soběslas and Bolesław III (1085-1138), duke of Poland. The Canon of Vyšehrad then puts in the mouth of Soběslas a confident speech that declares that his Polish rival Bolesław was not honoured by God, considered perhaps only as having become the emperor’s “catchpole”.⁴⁶ If we return to the chronicler of Sázava, we discover that he is completely clear on the Godly origin of sovereign power in Bohemia – for instance, after the death of Spytihněv II (1031-1061), duke of Bohemia, Vratislav II was given reign in the duchy owing to his testament through the intervention of Divine Providence.⁴⁷ It is thus not surprising that in his work from the end of the 12th century, another of the Bohemian chroniclers, Vincentius, tries to express disagreement with the election of Konrád (d. after 1061), a Přemyslid. Oriented against the chronicler’s main hero and later Duke Vladislav II, Vincentius makes it clear that the actions of those who elected Konrád were in conflict with God’s original plan.⁴⁸

The author of the *Second Continuation of Cosmas*, in the part of the annals called “Stories of King Přemysl Otakar II”, very clearly explains the relationship between the divine and sovereign power of the Přemyslids. The story takes place in parallel with the description of the (likely) imaginary offer of imperial dignity, which was to have been made by the imperial princes to Přemysl in 1271. Considering our examined theme, what the writer of the annals considers and places in the mouths of the royal councillors is interesting since they urge Přemysl to refuse the offer. In “their” opinion, the Bohemian ruler does not need to elevate his royal dignity to an imperial status because there would not be anyone on earth who could equal his power. “Oh, King entirely unconquerable and most magnificent!” exclaims the annalist, “Of the people, who could match your power in the lands! God reigns in the heavens, you rule in the lands by His permission the dukes and princes of the

⁴⁵ Emler: *Canonici Wissegradensis continuatio Cosmae* 209 (cf. fn. 40). – On that, cf. *Žemlička: Čechy v době knížecí* 225 (cf. fn. 41). – *Pleszczyński, Andrzej: Vyšehrad. Rezydence českých panovníků. Studie o rezidenci panovníka raného středověku na příkladu pražského Vyšehradu [Vyšehrad. The Residence of Bohemian Rulers in the Early Middle Ages with the Example of Vyšehrad in Prague]*. Praha 2002, 68-71.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Dalewski, Zbigniew: Lictor imperatoris. Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I. von Böhmen und Bolesław III. von Polen auf dem Hoftag in Merseburg im Jahre 1135*. In: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (ZfO)* 50 (2001) 317-336.

⁴⁷ Emler: *Monachi Sazawiensis continuatio Cosmae* 247 (cf. fn. 42).

⁴⁸ Emler (ed.): *Vincentii canonici Pragensis Annales*. In: *FRB 2: Cosmae chronicon Boemorum* 410 (cf. fn. 40).

land, and there is no one who could resist your will".⁴⁹ Přemysl's power is already definitive from the perspective of the Prague annalist. Only God, from whose hand Otakar holds his reign, is above the king.

It is evident from the examples above that the concept of the origin of the sovereign's power in the mental horizon of the intellectuals who were active in Bohemia in the 12th and 13th centuries generally overlapped with the concept predominating at that time in the medieval West. Already by that time, the awareness of the divine basis of the power of the sovereign had penetrated the devotional formulae, including even the sovereign's deeds. Considering the minimal number of charters, the attempt to precisely define the point when the Bohemian ruler begins to appear as the *Dei gratiae dux*, or *rex*, is doomed to fail. Continuous use of this devotional formula in the sovereign's deeds hence falls during the time of the royal reign of Vladislav II as King Vladislav I, who in 1158-1173 appears as the *dei gratia (secundus) rex Boemorum*.⁵⁰ Although it could seem that its use becomes common from the beginning of the 13th century, thus from the time when the Přemyslids acquired a permanent royal title, it is not possible to look for a connection only between the interpretation of the divine origin of power and royal anointment. That would be too simplistic. Vratislav II is already listed as *gratia dei dux Bohemorum* in a document from 1078, hence before his royal coronation (1085). Duke Soběslav I then similarly used the formula *dei gratia Boemorum monarcha* in 1130. After all, even Vladislav II used the title *dei gratia Bohemorum dux* for a time before his royal reign. This devotional formula was subsequently used by the Bohemian and Moravian dukes after Vladislav's abdication.⁵¹ The regular and immediate stereotypical use of the devotional formula in the sovereign deeds of the last Přemyslids thus rather demonstrates an overall increase of the content of the deed productions. Bohemian society thus slowly loses its predominantly oral character, earlier interrupted only by the activities of the monastic scriptoria, and becomes a society of the written word. If we return to the original contemplation, the increasing source material of the 13th century confirms the idea of the divine origin of sovereign power, which we found in the chronicles a hundred years earlier. It can be summarized that at the turn of the 13th century at the latest the world of Central European intellectuals did not differ from the world of the thinkers connected with the Western European milieu in the considerations of the origin of a sovereign's power over the people.

Old-Bohemian Chronicle and Alexandreis

Such interpretation remained fully valid in the ideal world of Bohemian men of letters also in the 14th century. The author of *Old-Bohemian Chronicle*, Dalimil, confirms this with the description of the humiliation of Bořivoj, duke of Bohemia, at Svatoopluk's court. The sovereign of Great Moravia, who forces the Bohemian duke

⁴⁹ Emler (ed.): *Annalium Pragensium* 6. (Příběhy krále Přemysla Otakara II. [Tales of King Přemysl Otakar II]). In: *Ibidem* 326.

⁵⁰ For instance Friedrich, Gustav (ed.): *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris regni Bohemiae* (CDB) 1. Pragae 1904-1907, 192, nr. 204, 194, nr. 208 and others.

⁵¹ *Ibidem* 86, nr. 80, 112, nr. 111, 162, nr. 137, 238, nr. 270, 243, nr. 278 and others.

to sit on the floor away from the table at the feast, comments on his decision, according to Dalimil, with the words:

Sit with the dogs, that is right for you, / not a duke but an unwise cow, / that you do not care for your creator, / for a god you have a long-eared owl.⁵²

Although here it is material adopted from earlier chronicles and the St Wenceslas hagiography, which for the most part follows a critique of Bořivoj’s paganism, the author of the *Old-Bohemian Chronicle* here implicitly expresses the idea that a sovereign’s power comes from God – Bořivoj does not act like a duke because he ignores the one who made him a sovereign, i.e. God.

We find a similar indirect definition of the origin of a sovereign’s power in another literary monument in Czech from the beginning of the 14th century – *Alexandreis*. It is God to whom Darius, king of Persia – Alexander the Great’s main opponent – turns to when a premonition of betrayal and death comes, and asks for his transgressions for which the Lord now repays him with numerous hardships. Additionally, the Persian sovereign in his speech characterizes God as the architect of all of the world’s events; it is for that reason as well that he turns to him in his hardest times and seeks to see his failure as a mistake that he made in the eyes of God since nothing happens without God’s will. The author of the text (or the creator of its models) makes in this place one of the many updates to the motif of Alexander. His Darius is a medieval person, a medieval king, who despite his power is not relieved of responsibility for his acts before the Supreme Power – God punishing him as a transgressor with a loss of honour.⁵³

Zbraslav Chronicle

The apparently most extensive source, which provides countless examples of the origin of a sovereign’s power, is the *Chronica Aulae regiae* – the *Zbraslav Chronicle*. The position of the chroniclers of Zbraslav on the ideal of a sovereign’s power arises from an Augustinian-Thomistic conception of rule as a service to God, a service that is focused on the maintenance of peace (*pax*) and order (*ordo*) in coexistence among peoples. They additionally place great emphasis on royal clemency (*clementia*) as one of the stabilization elements of medieval society. Both Ota and Peter, to whom today we attribute the final redaction of the chronicle’s text, stress in their work more than the previous authors from the Czech milieu the three-in-one nature of God. The sovereign’s government – service – is, according to them, determined both by God the Father and the Son of God, i.e. Christ, who along with the Holy Spirit merge the concept of the Cistercians into the single creator of the world and

⁵² *Daňhelka, Jiří/Hádek, Karel/Havránek, Bohuslav/Kvítková, Naděžda* (eds.): *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila 1* [The Old-Czech Chronicle of the so-called Dalimil 1]. Praha 1988, 308.

⁵³ *Vážný, Václav* (ed.): *Alexandreida [Alexandreis]*. Praha 1963, 135: “Mocný Hospodine, / jehož chtienie nic nemine, / ani kto móż lap co moci, / k němuž tvé nenie pomoci! / čím se, Bože, sě dopustil, / žejsě na mě těžce přepustil / tak rozličných pohub ztráty, / ž’sem člověk všie čští otjatý, / ni jmám miesta mezi mými, / jěž sem vzplodil dary svými.”

mankind's generations.⁵⁴ Based on this principle, in the *Zbraslav Chronicle* the origin of a sovereign's power is derived from God (the Father) and Christ; however, this phenomenon is not a shift towards the "Christocentrism" of the 10th-11th centuries, in which *rex* figured as the *vicarius Christi*.

One of the most direct expressions of the origin of a sovereign's power is used in the *Zbraslav Chronicle*, which describes the royal coronation of Wenceslas II (1271-1305, crowned 2 June 1297), or, that is to say, the steps that preceded it. Before the ceremony itself, Wenceslas addresses Pope Boniface VIII to receive his blessing for the planned act. This step, considering that the existing practice did not have an analogy in the Bohemian milieu, is explained in the *Zbraslav Chronicle* as the wise piety of the young king preparing his coronation because he (the king) knows that all power comes from God since He (God) "is the king of kings, lord ruling and king of the earthly kings, and according to the testimony of King Solomon every king and the royal heart is in the hand of God".⁵⁵ Implicitly, a similar idea is alluded to in the text countless times. The "aristocracy of the kingdom took counsel with the kindness of God" in 1283 on the necessity of the young king's return from his internment in Brandenburg; elsewhere, after a period of turmoil in the land the establishment of the king is welcomed as a "gift from God". In general, the return of the king is connected with "Divine governance of the world". Even the success of Wenceslas II in a conflict with domestic opposition at the end of the 1280s, peaking with the captivity and subsequent execution of Závíš of Falkenštejn (1290), must be connected with God's mercy according to the creators of the chronicle. Peter of Zittau, who apparently has to be considered as the creator of the verses placed in the earlier text by Ota, here, in the mouth of Rudolph I of Habsburg, turning to Wenceslas, speaks clearly:

Until now, dear young man, you have been subject to strangers, / who wanted to destroy you, but now truly / you have escaped them, already the grace of Christ has / made you king.

Peter's plea addressed to God in the second chapter of the third book rests on the same ideological basis. The old chronicler, placing hope in the young margrave and heir to the throne, Charles (IV, 1316-1378), asks the Creator in connection with the arrival of the young man's wife Blanche of Valois again in the form of Leonine hexameter:

Oh God, eternal king and Christ supreme, / Now, look on them and act towards them as a father. / Be their protector, leader, guardian and guider / In order that through your guidance they also stood in their dignity, / In order to bring the land peace and advantages.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Emler*, Josef (ed.): FRB 4: Chronicon aulae regiae. Pragae 1884, 40: „Humane saluti in hoc divina dignanter providit clemencia, ut dum ex innata pronitate in pessatum sadimus, per confessionis remedium contricione previa ad statum innocencie subito redeamus, se occasione sceleris genus humanum in eternum pereat, quod orbis conditor ad similitudinem sua sapienter condidit et nichilo minus Dei filius nostre moratitatis assumpta substancia de morte perpetua clementer redemit.“

⁵⁵ *Ibidem* 74: „Sciens autem regis coronandi sapiens devocio, quod omnis potestas est a Deo, quia ipse est rex regum, dominus dominancium et princeps regum terre, et Salamone rege testante, quod in manu Dei sit rex quilibet et cor regis.“

⁵⁶ *Ibidem* 20, 72, 320. – The speech of Rudolf I, see *ibidem* 36: „Hactenus, o iuvenis, subiec-

The arrival of Charles’ father, John of Bohemia (1296-1346), in Prague in 1310, which Peter celebrates in the first book of his chronicle, is connected with the Cistercian of Zbraslav through the expression of God’s mercy and, furthermore, the enthronement of John is a judgement by God in his opinion. At this juncture, it should be mentioned that the Cistercians were in the ranks of the opposition to the elected King Henry of Bohemia (Carinthia, d. 1335) and their chronicle in this regard must be further understood as a work serving the self-representation of the Cistercians and their credit in supporting the Luxemburg dynasty in Bohemia.⁵⁷ He writes in connection with John’s ascension:

How could we not consider it as clear evidence of the mercy of God that God so suddenly caused through the young King John [...], a success of so great a measure? [...] Many also said on that day: “The fair appearance of this king determines his actual name and announces that the Lord wanted to please His people,” [...] Hence, peace occurred, because God, the originator and lover of order, decided to do thus through this king.⁵⁸

The divine origin of the power of the young Luxemburg in his new land thus concurrently takes on a concrete dimension in the chronicler’s description – John is, in his conception, a king peace-maker enthroned by God for ensuring the general peace and order.

Charles’ Autobiography and Moralities

The abbot of Zbraslav – one of the eminent chroniclers and thinkers active in the Bohemian milieu in the first half of the 14th century, not only in the monastic community but also at a specific time in the circle of the sovereign’s court – has an opinion on the origin of a sovereign’s power that overlaps in many ways the convictions of the authors from the circle around Charles IV, as well as Charles himself. This phenomenon can be observed in many examples from Charles’ autobiography, coronation order, and “his” *Moralities*, as well as in the princely mirror attributed to Charles:

I was happy and would have been even happier, my venerable father and feared lord, for [...] the heavenly king predestine for me to be your successor in the kingdom and Roman Empire,

tus erat alienis, / Qui te destruere voluerunt, sed modo vere / Hos evasisti, iam iam te gracia Christi / Constituit regem [...].“ – For the plea for reign of Charles and Blanche, cf. 320: „O Deus, eterne rex, et tu Christe superne / Nunc super hos cerne, facias ipsisque paterne. / Horum protector, dux, custos, estoque rector, / Ut te rectore pariter sic stent in honore, / Quod pacem terre possint et commoda ferre [...].“

⁵⁷ *Ibidem* 142-157. – Cf. *Pumprová*, Anna: Das Bild Heinrichs VII. in der Chronica Aulae regiae Peters von Zittau. In: *Pauly*, Michel/*Uhrmacher*, Martin/*Pettiau*, Hérold (eds.): Europäische Governance im Spätmittelalter. Heinrich VII. von Luxemburg und die großen Dynastien Europas/Gouvernance européenne au bas moyen âge. Henri VII de Luxembourg et l’Europe des grandes dynasties. Luxembourg 2010 (Publications de la Section historique de l’Institut grand-ducal 124, Publications du CLUDEM 27) 181-200.

⁵⁸ *Emler*: Chronicon Aulae regiae 175 (cf. fn. 54): „Qualiter non putemus divine miseracionis evidens argumentum, quod per regem Johannem adolescentulum, quartum decimum etatis sue habentem annum, in regno eciam novellum tante tranquillitatis tam subito fecit Deus commodum? [...]. Dixerunt eciam plurimi illo die: ‚Species decoris regis huius exigit, propriumque nomen eius indicit, quod Dominus consolari populum suum velit‘ [...]. Pax igitur fit, quia Deus, auctor pacis et amator, sic facere per regem hunc disposuit.“

if sometimes my happiness were not spoiled by some fear arising from the careful consideration, because when I measure in advance the anxious worries with the acceptance of the imperial crown, [...] with the weak neck of my youth.

Thus, with a description by the anonymous author of the governing fears of the so-called Charles' princely mirror, attributed to Emperor Charles IV, allegedly the young son Wenceslas opens a letter to his father. The letter further continues with a plea for council of how to deal with a difficult situation in which he has found himself as the heir to the royal and imperial crowns. The author here describes the young man of having an obsessive feeling about his own insufficiency, confusion, and fear of moral weakness. The fictional letter is an example of a deliberate youth demonstrating a characteristic that mostly decorates the acts of mature men: humility. The one who got the startled prince into the difficult situation was none other than the heavenly king – God – who established through his favour Wenceslas as Charles' heir and successor. Furthermore, God is the one in whose spiritual assistance the prince believes because he hopes that he who “elevated him to such and so high a dignity will gift [his] weak youth the solid strength and lead him to moral maturity”.⁵⁹

In the first place, the text of Charles' mirror gives practical advice on how to rule. Besides, the conception of the origin of sovereign power emerges, based on early Christian teachings, summarized in the work by St Augustine. The author, writing in the second half of the 14th century in circles close to Charles' court, adopts the traditional position, which relies throughout the Middle Ages on the sacral dimension of royal reign. It is reflected as well in Charles' answer. If the young man asking is to guide the kingdom happily, it is essential to “honour and love the supreme king, God, embracing the world and land and guiding everything upon which every kingdom and every empire depends”.⁶⁰

The anonymous author here builds on the ideal traditions of St Augustine, which are close to Charles' own, traditions that are found already in the questions connected with the origin of sovereign power accepted by Thomas Aquinas; he thus extended their lifespan by several centuries. Thomas shows his position on this problem *inter alia* in the contemplation of the tendency of rulers to tyranny. This is to be prevented with a sovereign established by God's will. St Thomas helps here with an excerpt from the First Book of Kings, which states that the Lord has sought a man after his own heart and whom the Lord has commanded to be prince over his people.⁶¹ Charles IV and the men of letters working at his court knew the ideas of

⁵⁹ *Ludvíkovský*, Jaroslav: Anonymní zrcadlo knížecí přičítané Karlu IV. [The Anonymous Mirror for Princes attributed to Charles IV]. In: *Studie o rukopisech 14* (1975) 125-147, here 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem* 129. – Cf. *Kalista*, Zdeněk: Karel IV. a jeho duchovní tvář [Charles IV and His Spiritual Nature]. Praha 2007, 13-130. – *Šmabel*, František: Státní teologie Karla IV., “národní” doktrína Francie a počátky konciliarismu [The State Theology of Charles IV, “National” Doctrine of France and the Beginnings of Conciliarism]. In: *Herold*, Vilém/*Müller*, Ivan/*Havlíček*, Aleš (eds.): *Dějiny politického myšlení II/2. Politické myšlení pozdního středověku a reformace* [History of Political Thought II/2. Political Thought of the Late Middle Ages and the Reformation]. Praha 2011, 121-125.

⁶¹ *Mathis*, Joseph (ed.): *Divi Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici De regimine principum ad*

both mentioned philosophers. Charles' direct fascination with Augustine is apparent not just from the work that is only attributed to the emperor but primarily his own works. For instance, in his *Moralities* he adapts entire passages from Augustine's treatise *De vera et falsa poenitentia*. In the role of the narrator, he mentions Zedekiah as the third obligation of the general populace to be obedient to the king because he is the one whom God established instead of Himself over the land and gave him reign over the people.⁶² This motif is closely related inter alia to Charles' inward piety. In addition to the *Moralities*, he emphasizes this in his autobiography as one of the basic principles of a good reign.⁶³ The inescapable consequence of Charles' interpretation of the origin of power from God lifts the king above the level of positive law. In *Maiestas Carolina*, this position of the ruler is explicitly expressed not only in his inability to be deposed but also in the impossibility to judge his acts with terrestrial justice. The king is responsible here only to God, who established his rule.⁶⁴

In Charles' conception, tradition is reflected in the staged ritual conduct of the sovereign in important ceremonial acts, during which the earthly order of the world is realized. One of them and the most important ceremony is the royal coronation, which Charles defines normatively within his coronation order. From the perspective of the origin of sovereign power, the coronation must be understood, connected with the anointing of the king, as the transitional ritual. The crowned king enters a new life, acquires his second eternal body, and with this process of anointment his power is extended by a strong sacral aspect. The source, and hence also the guarantor, of the validity of the coronation as a generally binding act for creating the social order is God Himself. The actual sequence of the coronation is actually a constant dialogue of its actors – the archbishop of Prague, bishops, the sovereign, etc. – with God, who within this dialogue is called with prayer to lift up, protect, support, etc. the newly crowned king.

regem cypri et De regimine judaeorum ad ducissam Brabantiae. Politica opuscula duo. Torino 1986, 7: „Primum autem est necessarium ut talis conditionis homo ab illis, ad quos hoc spectat officium, promoveatur in regem, quod non sit probabile in tyrannidem declinare. Unde Samuel, Dei providentiam erga institutionem regis commendans ait I. Reg. (13, 14): Quaesivit sibi Dominus virum secundum cor suum.“

⁶² On the "Moralities" by Charles IV, cf. *Wotke*, Karl: *Moralites Caroli quarti imperatoris*. In: *Zeitschrift des Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 1 (1897) H. 4, 41-76, there also the edition of the source on pp. 59-76. – To the mentioned example, cf. *ibidem* 59: „[...] tertia est oboedire geri, quem deus loco et vice sui ordinat super terram dans ei potestatem in populo [...].“

⁶³ For example, cf. *Emler*, Joseph (ed.): *FRB 3: Vita Caroli IV. Pragae 1882, 336-337*. – To this aspect of Charles' ideology, cf. *Vidmanová*, Anežka: *Karel IV. a latinská literatura v Čechách [Charles IV and the Latin Literature in Bohemia]*. In: *Karolus Quartus. Praha 1984, 291-302*, here 296. – *Šmahel*: *Státní theologie Karla IV. 131-134* (cf. fn. 60). – For a summary of the place of *Vita Caroli* in literary sources of 14th century see *Nodl*, Martin: *Vita Caroli*. In: *Šmahel*, František/*Bobková*, Lenka (eds.): *Lucemburkové. Česká koruna uprostřed Evropy [The House of Luxemburg. Bohemian Crown in the Middle of Europe]*. Praha 2012, 240-242.

⁶⁴ *Hergemöller*, Bernd-Ulrich (ed. and transl.): *Maiestas Carolina. Der Kodifikationsentwurf Karls IV. für das Königreich Böhmen von 1355*. München 1995, 124-128.

A component of the coronation liturgy is a constant emphasis on the origin of sovereign power (and all things generally) by the grace of God. The full list of these statements would require several pages. In them, God is characterized as the one who raises the future crowned ruler to royal majesty over the people, as well as the one who is to spread His grace over the new king and enter through his person the earthly world (part of the prayers within the morning procession). Furthermore, God is the one who entrusts the crowned king with the kingdom (part of the *scrutinium*) and who administers all of the kingdom from the ages and is the emperor of angels and of men, king of kings, and lord of lords (part of the consecration prayers). The direct tie between God and the new king is created within the coronation rite of the subsequent anointment of the ruler's head, chest, shoulders, and arms with holy oil, during which the archbishop delivers a prayer in which he asks Christ, who is with God the Father and is one with the Holy Spirit, for his holiest anointment to reach even inside and penetrate the king's heart.⁶⁵

Francis of Prague and Beneš Krabice of Weitmíle

Like the emperor or Peter of Zittau, other chroniclers of the Luxemburg period also saw the origin of a sovereign's power in a similar fashion. It is exhibited, for instance, in the chronicle by Francis of Prague, which comments upon the imperial election of Charles IV and his coronation as the king of the Romans and afterwards also the king of Bohemia because:

God, the creator and lover of peace, [who] negotiated the highest peace for the victorious church, [...], stimulating the pope and imperial electors to elect the peace-loving king as the King of the Romans. [...] So on the year of our Lord 1346 on the 26th day of the month of November [...] his excellency King Charles, Margrave of Moravia, was elected and crowned.⁶⁶

Similarly, then:

God Almighty [...], the administrator and ruler of all, but Himself not supported or guided by anyone, [...] made and established the excellent and superb King Charles, heir to the Kingdom of Bohemia, King of the Romans and Bohemia, commendably cares through this famous person not only for the kingdom but all of the church.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See *Ordo ad coronandum regem Boemorum*. In: *Kuthan, Jiří/Šmied, Miroslav* (eds.): *Korunovační řád českých králů* [The Ordo of Crowning of Bohemian Kings]. Praha 2009, 220-225, 230-231, 236-237 and in a number of other places. – On that, see *Cibulka, Josef*: *Český korunovační řád a jeho původ* [The Bohemian Ordo of Crowning and its Origin]. Praha 1934. – *Žurek, Václav*: *Korunovační řád Karla IV. jako ritualizovaný panovnícký program* [The Ordo of Crowning of Charles IV as a Ritualized Programme of Rule]. In: *Časopis Národního muzea – řada historická* 176 (2007) no. 3/4, 105-143. – *Nodl, Martin*: *Karel IV. a rituály moci: Ordo ad coronandum regis a Maiestas Carolina* [Charles IV and Rites of Power: Ordo ad coronandum regis and Maiestas Carolina]. In: *Nodl, Martin/ Pleszczyński, Andrzej* (eds.): *Moc a její symbolika ve středověku* [Power and its Symbolism in the Middle Ages]. Praha 2011 (Colloquia mediaevalia Pragensia 13) 93-102.

⁶⁶ *Zachová, Jana* (ed.): *FRB 1: Chronicon Francisci Pragensis*. Praha 1998, 191: „Deus auctor pacis [...], inspirando domino pape et electoribus imperii, ut princeps pacificus in regem Romanorum eligeretur [...]. Anno igitur Domini MCCCXLVI, die CCVI mensis Novembris, [...] electus fuit et coronatus illustris princeps dominus Karulus, marchio Moravie [...]“

⁶⁷ *Ibidem* 200: „Dominus Deus omnipotens, [...] rector et gubernator existens universorum,

It is certainly not surprising that both cited passages are part of the second redaction of Francis' chronicle devoted explicitly to Charles. The emphasis on the divine origin of the power of the young king plays an important role predominantly within his imperial kingdom, where Charles clashes with Louis the Bavarian, the ruler who is still recognized in parts of the empire. In this regard, Beneš Krabice of Weitmíle goes even further, explicitly connecting Louis' death to God's will. The chronicler, trying for a new suitable writing of Bohemian history, labels Charles' adversary in this context as God's enemy and Louis' unexpected rapid death (apparently injured by a stroke, after which he broke his neck falling from his horse) served in his conception of Luxemburg propaganda to support Charles' legitimacy. This is advanced in Beneš's chronicle owing to the natural humility of the newly elected king, who, in his words, draws attention to his unworthiness and is reluctant to agree to his election; nevertheless, he does not dare to contradict God's governance of events, manifested in the election itself. With regard to the interest of the state (*respublicam*), he accepts his election under the condition that the pope agrees to it. The chronicler literally says that Charles wants “to reach such a peak dignity not through the side entrance or haughty arrogance, as his predecessors had, but through the main entrance, hence through the deputy of Jesus Christ”. Since the times of the Investiture Controversy, this deputy had been the pope.⁶⁸

Books about the Game of Chess and Others and New Council

Tomáš of Štítýný saw the origin of a sovereign's power similarly as the chroniclers of Charles' time had. His ideas on this topic are reflected mainly in his adaptation of the *Books about the Game of Chess and Others*. It is not overly important that Štítýný connects the period of the reign of Charles IV with a period of blossoming and abundance, when the land was led by a wise king on the path of order and peace. Rather, the crucial idea here is pious rule, which we find with Peter of Zittau, who declares that the king should have God in his heart, mouth, and last but not least in his acts. We will deal with piety as one of the virtues of the Christian ruler. Here, Tomáš requires of the ruler that his sovereign power comes from God and that he is the representative of the Supreme Power (bailiff) on earth.⁶⁹

A similar opinion connects Tomáš of Štítýný with Smil Flaška of Pardubice, the creator of the so-called *New Council* – a metaphorical treatise addressed to Wenceslas IV (1361-1419). In the treatise, the author expresses his opinions concerning a sovereign's power and the state of society through a debate on which animal should

a nullo quoque adiutus nec directus ne est cunctis in rebus, [...], providit et ordinavit illustrem et egregium principem dominum Karulum, heredem regni Boemie, in regem Romanorum et Boemorum, non solum hiis regnis sed et universe sancte ecclesie in hac laudabili persona laudabiliter providendo.“

⁶⁸ Emler, Josef (ed.): FRB 4: Chronica ecclesiae Pragensis Benessii Krabice de Weitmíle. Praga 1884, 513, 515.

⁶⁹ ze *Štítýného*, Tomáš: Knížky o hře šachové a jiné [Books about the Game of Chess and Others]. Ed. by František Šimek. Praha 1959, 368.

be associated with the king, which in the end is considered to be the Lion. In the allegorical debate, three animals remark on the king's conduct, as Tomáš of Štítný did on the chess figure of the king, and the requirement to be fearful of God, which is closely related with the conviction on the origin of a sovereign's power in God. According to the Eagle, the king's fear of God directly mirrors the divine origin of his power over the people; at the same time, it is also the guarantee of a long, good reign and subsequent afterlife of the king. The Leopard requires that the king, who has obtained his power from God, be a model of the pious life through his conduct, thereby leading the people to the gates of the heavenly kingdom. The Parrot also advises that the king must devote all of his things to God on his journey for personal redemption.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The observation of the explicit testimony of the chroniclers and other authors on the origin of a sovereign's power leave no doubt that the person of the Bohemian Middle Ages was completely clear about the origin of the power of the dukes and kings who ruled over his life. Even the Parrot's advice to the king of the animals thus explicitly expresses what was more or less existent in all of the mentioned examples. The parrot stresses the requirement of royal fear of God, which it presents along with a just rule as the personal path of a sovereign to redemption. The medieval ruler had great power in his reign over the people as a consequence of the sacral essence. Owing to this sacral dimension of his office, he was woven into a network of moral-ethical maxims, which include the fear of God as one of the few imperatives through which the acts of the king were at least partially governed in the culture of the Christian West.

The interrelation between the person of the sovereign and the religious principle guiding the operation of the world thus necessarily created around real rulers the aura of sacrality. Even before accepting royal consecration, their government had a sacral dimension. The emphasis on the divine origin of a sovereign's power hence was twofold. From the perspective of the sovereign, it served as a means of legitimizing his reign; from the perspective of society, it placed high ethical demands on the sovereign. In other words, the power of the medieval king was connected with a cultural regulation of the given Christian moral-ethical complex. The sovereign's reign was fully legitimate if his conduct was entirely within these norms. This fact created, on the one hand, the basic pillar of a sovereign's legitimacy. On the other hand, it bound the dukes and kings to the moral system, which if denied would undermine their own charismatic power that was derived from divine grace. The applicability of this fact, which could serve within medieval culture as a kind of emergency brake against a sovereign's despotism, increased proportionally with the progressing and mainly deepening Christianization of society. As I tried to demonstrate with the above-mentioned examples from Czech sources, we can observe this phenomenon placed in the mental world of the medieval authors active in the Bohemian lands between the 10th and the 14th centuries. Regarding these analyses, we

⁷⁰ *Daňhelka, Jiří* (ed.): *Nová rada* [New Council]. Praha 1950, 20–21, 28, 51, 63.

can observe the mentality of the Czech man of letters and of the Czech nobility as well, which both are directly connected to the world of imagination prevailing in the medieval West.