

Michał Machalski

**CONCEPTS OF LOYALTY IN THE EARLIEST CENTRAL  
EUROPEAN CHRONICLES**

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization  
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

June 2020

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(Poland)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
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of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique,  
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Michał Machalski**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 4 June 2020

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# Abstract

The thesis focuses on the concepts of loyalty presented in the earliest Central European chronicles, written at the beginning of the twelfth century: *Gesta principum Polonorum* by Gallus Anonymus, *Chronica Boemorum* by Cosmas of Prague, and the Hungarian *Primeval Chronicle* which survived as a part of the fourteenth-century century compilation called *The Illuminated Chronicle*. The analysis of those works, closely connected to the ruling elites of recently Christianized Central European polities, attempts to address the question of how their authors understood and used the concept of loyalty, one of the fundamental ideas underlying medieval society.

The thesis offers a comparative analysis of the way in which authors of the earliest Central European chronicles characterized the content of loyalty as a norm present at the center of multiple societal bonds. As such it finds its methodological underpinnings in the *Spielregeln*, unwritten but widely known rules governing society, a concept developed by Gerd Althoff. The analysis is divided into parts corresponding to the different social bonds in which loyalty played an important role and which are depicted in the earliest Central European chronicles: the relationship between God and the faithful, kinsmen, and allies, and between the ruler and his subjects.

The analysis shows common ideological underpinnings of the concepts of loyalty used in Central European narrative sources. Despite differences in the overall structures and messages of the three works, they present a vision of loyalty as primarily a reciprocal bond, even in the asymmetrical relationships between believers and the divine or subjects and rulers. This highlights the ideological message of consensual lordship, which coexists in those narratives next to the strong ideas about divine origins of dynastic authority. This presents important common traits in the political and cultural development of Central Europe as a historical region.

# Acknowledgements

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This thesis would not be possible without my supervisors, Balázs Nagy and Katalin Szende. I owe them the greatest debt not only for academic guidance but also for their kindness, care, and support during the hard and uncertain times we faced this year.

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# Introduction

The following thesis focuses on the concepts of loyalty presented in the earliest Central European chronicles. The process of establishing and stabilizing the three dynastical polities of the region, marked by Christianization of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary by the end of the first millennium, led to the adoption of the cultural institutions and practices of Latin *Christianitas*. Chief among them was history writing, initially in the annalistic form, which was succeeded by the early 12th century by the earliest Central European chronicles: *Gesta principum Polonorum* of Gallus Anonymus, composed around 1112–1117,<sup>1</sup> *Chronica Boemorum* of Cosmas of Prague composed around 1119–1125,<sup>2</sup> and the oldest historiographic tradition of Hungarian royal court which survived only as a part of the fourteenth-century compilation known as the *Illuminated Chronicle*, but was probably penned either at the court of king Coloman ca. 1110 or a few decades earlier.<sup>3</sup>

More than being simply written at the same time, these chronicles shared, despite little literary influence on each other,<sup>4</sup> many features and themes. As demonstrated by Norbert

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<sup>1</sup> Marian Plezia, *Kronika Galla na tle historiografii XII wieku* [The Gallus's Chronicle in the context of the twelfth century Historiographical Writing] (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1947), 136.

<sup>2</sup> This datation is well established in the older historiography, see: Dušan Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika; studie k počátkům českého dějepisectví a politického myšlení* [Cosmas' Chronicle. A Study on the Origins of the Czech Historiography and Political Thought] (Prague: Academia, 1968), 50–53; Ongoing discussion surrounding the possible dating of the first book of the chronicles for 1110, was caused by the arguments of Rostislav Nový: Rostislav Nový, “Dvoji redakce Kosmovy Kroniky Čechů” [Two redactions of Cosmas's Chronicle of the Czechs], *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Philosophica et historica* 2 Studia Historica 21 (1981): 104–19.

<sup>3</sup> As convincingly proven by Dániel Bagi, some version of the Primeval Chronicle had to exist at least c. 1110, since its fragment was used by Gallus Anonymus. However, given the Primeval Chronicle is just a hypothetical text which forms the basis of the fourteenth-century compilation of the royal historiographical tradition known as the *Illuminated Chronicle*, its exact dating is subject to debate. While the Coloman-times dating remains one of the more popular hypothesis, along with the voices claiming that it was composed at the courts of King Ladislav (1077–1085) or during the reign of king Solomon (1063–1074). I explore this debate and the consequences it has for my own investigation in the later parts of this introduction. For now, I send the reader to the overview of this problem in: Ryszard Grzesik and János Bak, “The Text of the *Illuminated Chronicle*,” in *Studies on the Illuminated Chronicle*, ed. János Bak and László Veszprémy (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 7–9.

<sup>4</sup> It is widely accepted in the historiography that Gallus knew contemporary edition of royal Hungarian historiographical work, see: Dániel Bagi, *Królowie węgierscy w Kronice Galla Anonima* [Hungarian Kings in the Gallus Anonymus' Chronicle] (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2008); On the possible interrelationship between texts of Gallus Anonymus and Cosmas of Prague, see: Edward Skibiński, “Udowodnić Czechom” [To prove to the Czechs], *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, no. 2(3) (2012): 152–63.

Kersken, the earliest Central European chronicles can be placed within the large genre called “national histories”, since all of them aspire to tell—through the lens of the deeds of the members of the ruling dynasty—the “national” history of Poles, Bohemians and Hungarians.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the genera, earliest works of Central European historiography shared also turbulent circumstances in which they were written. At the outset of the twelfth century Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary were riddled by the rarely seizing internal strife. Just before Gallus started his work on his *Gesta* at the court of Boleslaw III Wrymouth, the Polish prince had violently resolved a long-standing dispute with his older step-brother Zbigniew, causing a significant political uproar.<sup>6</sup> Bohemia at the time of Cosmas was a stage for constant infighting between different Přemyslid s, who’s malice and avarice was one of the main subjects of Czech’s chronicler work.<sup>7</sup> In Hungary, plagued in the previous century by the conflict between two branches of the Árpáds descended from King Andrew I and his brother Béla I, the 1100s brought another bloody confrontation between King Coloman and his younger brother Álmos.<sup>8</sup>

The competing members of the ruling families were not the only actors participating in the violent struggles over power in the Central European polities of the early twelfth century.

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<sup>5</sup> Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der “nationes”*: *Nationalgeschichte Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995); See also: Norbert Kersken, “Die Anfänge nationaler Geschichtsschreibung im Hochmittelalter: Widukind von Corvey, Gallus Anonymus, Cosmas von Prag, *Gesta Hungarorum*,” in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, ed. Alfried Wiczorek and Hans-Martin Hinz (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2000), 863–67.

<sup>6</sup> Creation of the Gallus’ chronicle is often linked directly with the Bolesław III Wrymouth court’s need to present appropriate vision of recent events in order to relief political tensions caused by Zbigniew’s torture and death. For this position see already: Jan Adamus, *O monarchii Gallowej* [On Gallus’s monarchy] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie, 1952); Zbigniew Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics: Writing the History of a Dynastic Conflict in Medieval Poland* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 5–12.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague: Narrative, Classicism, Politics* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 27–30.

<sup>8</sup> For the legitimization of the victorious sides of these conflicts as one of the main issues concerning the authors of the earliest Royal Hungarian historiographical tradition see: Grzesik and Bak, “The Text of the Illuminated Chronicle,” 7–12; Dániel Bagi, “The Dynastic Conflicts of the Eleventh Century in the Illuminated Chronicle,” in *Studies on the Illuminated Chronicle*, ed. János Bak and László Veszprémy (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 141; For the political context of the Coloman’s reigns, see: Márta Font, *Koloman the Learned, King of Hungary*, trans. Mónika Miklán (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 2001), 17–24.

Powerful magnates, *comites*, and other officials were important characters in the chronicles of Gallus Anonymous, Cosmas of Prague and the writers at the Hungarian royal court. This increasing prominence of the non-dynastic elites, visible in the more contemporary parts of the chroniclers' narratives may have indicated that the creation of earliest Central European narrative sources coincided not only with the time of political upheaval, but also with a larger socio-political transformation.<sup>9</sup> Considering those turbulent circumstances, I argue that depictions of loyalty, fidelity, obedience, or lack thereof played an important role in the political and ideological message of the earliest Central European chronicles.

## ***1 Studying medieval loyalty – definitions and historiography***

What exactly is loyalty? The problem with precisely answering this question, as pointed out by Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten, lies in the fact that loyalty presents itself in the pre-modern sources in multiple semantical settings, like trust, fidelity, obedience and love.<sup>10</sup> This problem can be traced to the language of the sources, with words like *fides* and *fidelitas* used in a variety of semantic contexts throughout the Middle Ages. The exhaustive survey by Olga Weijers singles out the most common meanings: more general trust and faith for *fides*, with *fidelitas* signifying fidelity, loyalty and reliability in a narrower, more technical context.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This was the argument made by Thomas Bisson, who argued that events depicted by Gallus were a part of larger European “feudal revolution”, see: Thomas N. Bisson, “On Not Eating Polish Bread in Vain: Resonance and Conjuncture in the ‘Deeds of the Princes of Poland (1109-1113),’” *Viator* 29 (1998): 275–89; This idea, while not completely accepted, found some validation in Polish historiography, see: Grzegorz Myśliwski, “Feudalizm — „rewolucja feudalna” — kryzysy władzy w Polsce XI-początku XII w: Punkt widzenia mediewistyki anglojęzycznej” [Feudalism - the ‘feudal revolution’ - the crisis of power in the eleventh -twelfth century Poland: The point of view of anglophone medieval studies], *Przegląd Historyczny* 93, no. 1 (2002): 73–102.

<sup>10</sup> Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten, “Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Introductory Remarks on a Cross-Social Value,” in *Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social*, ed. Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), xii.

<sup>11</sup> Olga Weijers, “Some Notes on ‘Fides’ and Related Words in Medieval Latin,” *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 40 (1977): 77–102; On the concept of Fides in the antiquity see classical overview in: Pierre Boyancé, “Les Romains, peuple de la fides,” *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 23, no. 4 (1964): 419–35; More recently in: Remus Valsan, “Fides, Bona Fides, and Bonus Vir: Relations of Trust and Confidence in Roman Antiquity,” *Journal of Law, Religion and State* 5, no. 1 (2017): 48–85.

This leads to another problem present in the historiography of the topic, also connected to the semantic inconsistency and ambiguity. Just as there is no singular meaning of *fides*, the meaning attributed to terms like trust or loyalty differs among the scholars. Conflicting lexical preferences of individual historians and the frequently ignored inequivalence of terminology used in different languages of academical debate mean that it is often hard to understand what exactly the term means for particular medievalist and how their conclusions relate to other academic works.<sup>12</sup>

For the purpose of the following thesis, I propose a definition of loyalty as a relationship that mediates commitment to other people. Such a broad definition allows me to differentiate between two types of loyalty: unilateral loyalty, which requires one-sided obedience, and reciprocal loyalty, in which both sides are expected to carry out certain obligations.

The study of thus understood loyalty has undergone a significant transformation, thanks to two crucial paradigm shifts. The first one was brought by Czech medievalist František Graus. Beginning with his 1959 article, Graus presented a systematic critique of the concept of *germanische Treue* (Germanic loyalty) which had dominated discussions about early medieval loyalty in older historiography. Coined by the nineteenth-century scholars of *Verfassungsgeschichte*, “Germanic loyalty” was understood to be a freely entered and mutually binding relationship, which nevertheless required unconditional commitment to one’s welfare,<sup>13</sup> and was argued to be a constant part of the social and legal make-up of German society from Germanic tribes described by Tacitus to the modern times, grounding the institution of vassalage and feudal relationships in ancient Germanic—rather than Roman—

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<sup>12</sup> This problem already underscored by Steven Vanderputten in: Steven Vanderputten, “Communities of Practice and Emotional Aspects of Loyalty in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Monasticism,” in *Loyalty in the Middle Ages : Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social*, ed. Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 279–80.

<sup>13</sup> For example see Wolfgang Fritze’s definition: “Die germanische Treue kann als zweiseitiges Schuldverhältnis bestimmt werden, das den wechselseitigen Anspruch der Treugenossen auf den uneingeschränkten und allseitigen Einsatz der ganzen Person des Einen zum Heile des Anderen begründet.”, in: Wolfgang Hermann Fritze, “Die Fränkische Schwurfreundschaft Der Merowingerzeit,” *Zeitschrift Der Savigny-Stiftung Für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung* 71 (1954): 85.

tradition. Graus focused his arguments around the issue of the universal “Germanic” character of loyalty, pointing out that in comparison to the chivalric epics and poetry of the High Middle Ages, early medieval Frankish, Anglo-Saxon and other “Germanic” sources do not place too much emphasis on loyalty. Leaving aside the literary devices, the main way in which those societies seemed to ensure loyalty was by more pragmatic measures, such as the generous remuneration of followers and hostage-taking.<sup>14</sup>

More importantly for the present thesis, Graus outlined his own idea about the development of the concept of loyalty in the early Middle Ages. According to the Czech medievalist, *fides* present in Carolingian capitularies and chronicles was primarily derived from the Christian discourse of loyalty, which from Merovingian times was consciously adopted by rulers looking for new sources of legitimization.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Graus did not argue against the importance of the concept of loyalty in the early Middle Ages, but pointed out that its content was not uniform and was subject to change. He also noted the distinction in the discourse of loyalty between the unilateral notion of obedience – particularly to God, and the reciprocal notion of fidelity based on the rule of *do ut des*. However, he argued that the lines between the two were not clear-cut.<sup>16</sup> There was no continuity between the *fides* of warriors from Tacitus’s *Germania* and the *fides* of Carolingian capitularies. Fidelity - the legally binding mutual obligation of *fides* was in Graus’s eyes a new creation, formulated under the decisive influence of the Church in the Carolingian times by the burgeoning feudal society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> František Graus, “Über die sogenannte germanische Treue,” in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze (1959-1989)*, ed. František Graus et al. (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2002), 136–46.

<sup>15</sup> Graus, 155–67.

<sup>16</sup> Graus, 176–77.

<sup>17</sup> František Graus, “Herrschaft und Treue: Betrachtungen zur Lehre von der germanischen Kontinuität,” *Historica* 12 (1966): 8 ff.; For a representative treatment of the fidelity as a specific to feudo-vassalic relations from Graus’s contemporaries see: François-Louis Ganshof, *Feudalism* (New York: Harperc, 1964).

The second breakthrough came with the late twentieth-century debate over feudalism,<sup>18</sup> which reached its high point with the publication of Susan Reynolds's *Fiefs and Vassals*. This British historian fundamentally critiqued the "tyrannous construct" of the medieval society as based on vassalage, pointing out the artificial nature of this category of relationship and noting that it was only the development of twelfth-century jurisprudence that led to the gradual uniformization of the complicated web of early medieval social relations.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a number of studies published since *Fiefs and Vassals* underscored that Graus's concept of feudal loyalty with its legal, normative character only applies to a more literate society of the High Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in order to study the concept of loyalty in medieval society in less literate eras and regions, I will turn away from explicit norm systems and turn toward the unwritten but widely-known rules governing society. These *Spielregeln*, as conceived of by Gerd Althoff, are not explicit orders and regulations, but rather non-normative patterns of behaviors and beliefs shared by society.<sup>21</sup> In tracing those patterns, a new vision of early medieval society emerges, one composed of multiple overlapping temporal communities held together by personal bonds and common ideals.<sup>22</sup> Among those intertwined bonds were not only lordship,

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<sup>18</sup> A good overview offered in: Stephen D. White, "A Crisis of Fidelity in c.1000?," in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, ed. Izabel Anlfonso Anton, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona Monge (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 27–49.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 17–34, 475–78.

<sup>20</sup> For the links between the increasing use of writing and the creation of narrowly understood fidelitas as a legal term of jurisprudence in High Middle Ages see: Chris Wickham, *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); White, "A Crisis of Fidelity in c.1000?"; Stefan Weinfurter, "Lehnswesen, Treueid und Vertrauen. Grundlagen der neuen Ordnung im hohen Mittelalter," in *Das Lehnswesen im Hochmittelalter: Forschungskonstrukte - Quellenbefunde - Deutungsrelevanz*, ed. Jürgen Dendorfer and Roman Deutinger (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2010), 443–62; Carsten Fischer, "Lehnrechtliche fidelitas im Spiegel der 'Libri Feudorum,'" *Das Mittelalter* 20, no. 2 (2015): 279–293.

<sup>21</sup> Gerd Althoff, "Einleitung," in *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014), 13 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Fredric Cheyette, "Some Reflections on Violence, Reconciliation and the 'feudal Revolution'," in *Conflict in Medieval Europe: Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture*, ed. Warren C. Brown and Piotr Górecki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 259.



but also kinship and friendship.<sup>23</sup> Due to this shift, *amicitia*, previously seen mostly as an emotional relationship, was proven to be an integral part in securing alliances.<sup>24</sup> As convincingly argued by Klaus van Eickels, all three of those mutual bonds were based, at their core, on the “negative loyalty” – prohibition to attack, injure or harm kinsmen, friends, lords, and subjects.<sup>25</sup>

The shift of the focus toward the unwritten rules and norms of behavior brought more attention toward gestures and rituals through which bonds of personal relationships were created and reinforced.<sup>26</sup> Particularly important were the rituals of oath-giving, since they allowed parties to summon God as a witness and guarantor of the obligations, linking a new personal bond with the Christian divine order. Because of this religious aspect, often reinforced by oath-taking at the church altar or the use of relics, breaking an oath—perjury—was considered a sin.<sup>27</sup> While oath-taking created or reinforced the relationship of loyalty, the ritual of *deditio* served as a way to restore a broken bond. This ritual took the form of subsequent acts of prostration, confession of sins, begging for pardon on the one side and acts of

<sup>23</sup> Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Verena Epp, *Amicitia: zur Geschichte personaler, sozialer, politischer und geistlicher Beziehungen im frühen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1999); Verena Epp, “Rituale frühmittelalterlicher ‘amicitia,’” *Vorträge und Forschungen* 51 (2001): 11–24; Klaus Oschema, “Sacred or Profane? Reflections on Love and Friendship in the Middle Ages,” in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800*, ed. Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, n.d.), 43–65, accessed May 2, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Klaus van Eickels, “Traditionierte Konzepte in neuen Ordnungen. Personale Bindungen im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert,” *Vorträge und Forschungen* 64 (2006): 101; Klaus van Eickels, “Verwandtschaft, Freundschaft Und Vasallität: Der Wandel von Konzepten Personaler Bindung Im 12. Jahrhundert,” in *Das Lehnswesen Im Hochmittelalter. Forschungskonstrukte - Quellenbefunde - Deutungsrelevanz*, ed. Jürgen Dendorfer and Roman Deutinger (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2010), 407; Eickels deliberately borrows term “negative loyalty” from the previous literature on feudo-vassalic relationships, see: Ganshof, *Feudalism*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> The last two decades had brought a boom in studies connected to the rituals and non-verbal forms of communication. To the most important once belong: Geoffrey Granter Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013); The main critical assessment of this approach in: Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> For general remarks on types of oaths and perjury see: Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 138–39; For more detail see for example: Lothar Kolmer, *Promissorische Eide im Mittelalter*, vol. 12, *Regensburger historische Forschungen* (Kallmünz: Michael Lassleben, 1989), 63–75.

forgiveness and reconciliation on the other, often symbolized by the exchange of the kiss of peace.<sup>28</sup>

The problem of loyalty in the context of the earliest Central European chronicles, despite their copious analyses in Polish, Czech, and Hungarian historiographies, is the subject of relatively few studies. Given the significance of František Graus's research of medieval concepts of loyalty, it is unsurprising that the largest interest in the depictions of loyalty contained in the earliest national chronicle can be found in Czech historiography. Most importantly, Dušan Třeštík, Graus's student, pointed out in his seminal *Kosmova kronika; studie k počátkům českého dějepisectví a politického myšlení* that Cosmas's message about relations between Bohemian rulers and their subjects centered around the "ideology of fidelity."<sup>29</sup> Pointing out the importance of the reciprocal bond between Přemyslids and Bohemians, based on the rule of *do ut des*, Třeštík framed his argument in the "feudo-vassalic" paradigm of fidelity as an ideological institution specific to feudalism.<sup>30</sup> While Třeštík's ideas formed a starting point for inquiries into the ideological message of *Chronica Boemorum*,<sup>31</sup> the question of loyalty in Cosmas's work was only recently revisited as the sole focus of a study by Jakub Razim. While positioning himself within the current trend of understanding loyalty as a broad term existing in different semantic settings, he consciously limits his article to the

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<sup>28</sup> For main studies on *deditio* see: Gerd Althoff, "Das Privileg der *deditio*. Formen gütlicher Konfliktbeendigung in der mittelalterlichen Adelsgesellschaft," in *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014), 99–125; Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*; For the Kiss of Peace and its later symbolical transformations, see: Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 160–65.

<sup>30</sup> Třeštík, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Among the articles that devote loyalty to the ruler in the ideological message of Cosmas of Prague's work in particular, see: Marie Bláhová, "Stát a vláda státu v pojetí kronikáře Kosmy" [State and state power in the opinion of chronicler Cosmas], *Średniowiecze polskie i powszechne* 2 (2002): 115–37; Petr Kopal, "Král versus kníže?: Idea panovnické moci v Kosmově kronice" [King versus prince?: The idea of sovereign power in the Cosmas's chronicle], in *Proměna středověké Evropy raného a vrcholného středověku*, ed. Lukáš Reitingger and Martin Wihoda (Brno: Matice Moravská, 2010), 359–71.

study of *fides* and *fidelitas* within the context of reciprocal bond between ruler and his subjects.<sup>32</sup>

A similar narrowing of the concept of loyalty to the bond between Hungarian monarchs and their subjects can be seen in an equally recent study by Angelika Herucová and Pavol Hudáček. Even though the oldest historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court is not the sole focus of their article, it is the most relevant study devoted to the loyalty that touches on the subject of its representation in the earliest parts of *Illuminated Chronicle*.<sup>33</sup>

The subject of loyalty in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, or even simply the fidelity of the subjects, was never discussed in Polish historiography comparably to the aforementioned examples. This is not to say that Polish historians were not interested in Gallus's depiction of loyalty, but that those inquiries were usually limited and not at the forefront of their study.<sup>34</sup>

While only a few studies focused explicitly on loyalty in the earliest Central European chronicles, the methodological shift toward unraveling the unwritten rules of conduct and the ritual language used to create and reinforce found enthusiastic reception in the Central European historiography. Extensive studies on the acts of symbolic communication on the pages of *Chronica Boemorum*, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, and the *Illuminated Chronicle* were presented by Petr Kopal, Zbigniew Dalewski, and Dušan Zupka.<sup>35</sup> Their work provides

<sup>32</sup> Jakub Razim, "Věrnost v Kosmově kronice" [Fidelity in the Chronicle of the Czechs by Cosmas of Prague], *Forum Historiae* 13, no. 2 (2019): 20–21.

<sup>33</sup> Angelika Herucová and Pavol Hudáček, "Verní a neverní kráľovi" [Loyal and Disloyal to the King], *Forum Historiae* 13, no. 2 (2019): 1–17.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, short exploration of reciprocal bond between Piasts and their subjects can be found in: Zbigniew Dalewski, "Władca i możni w Kronice Galla Anonima" [Ruler and nobles in the Gallus's Anonymous chronicle], in *Šlechta, moc a reprezentace ve středověku*, ed. Nodl Martin and Martin Wihoda (Prague: Filosofia, 2007), 37–42; The good example of incidental nature of previous research on loyalty in the earliest Polish chronicle is Marian Plezia's exploration of meaning of *traditor* in the *Gesta*, that serves to discuss the passage concerning the death of St. Stanislaus, see: Marian Plezia, *Dookola sprawy św. Stanisława: Studium źródłowe* [Concerning the affair of St. Stanislaus: Study of sources] (Bydgoszcz: Homini, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Petr Kopal, "Státnost a rituály v Kosmove kronice" [Statehood and rituals in Cosmas chronicle], in *Stát, státnost a rituály premyšlovského věku problémy, názory, otázky*, ed. Martin Wihoda (Brno: Matice Moravská, 2006), 155–95; Petr Kopal, "Smíření Cechu se svatým Vojtěchem: Struktura jednoho obrazu v Kosmove kronice" [The Reconciliation of the Czechs with St Vojtech: The structure of one scene in Kosmas' Chronicle], in *Ritual smíření. Konflikt a jeho reseni ve středověku*, ed. Martin Nodl and Martin Wihoda (Brno: Matice Moravská, 2008), 45–55; Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*; Dušan Zupka, *Ritual and Symbolic Communication in Medieval Hungary Under the Árpád Dynasty (1000-1301)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

me with a good point of departure for the analysis of loyalty as a common feature that underlies the most important relationships of medieval society.

## ***2 Research Questions***

In this thesis I will analyze the concept of loyalty in the earliest Bohemian, Polish and, Hungarian chronicles. In doing so, I will expand on the previous Central European scholarship on the topic by exploring the role of loyalty not only in the relationship between ruler and his subjects, but—following the recent trends in the study of medieval society—also in the relationships between kinsmen and allies. Approaching loyalty as the underlying common basis of the bonds of kinship, friendship, and service I am able to both explore the concept of loyalty depicted in the Central European chronicles more thoroughly and to observe how different loyalties are characterized and ranked to the relation to each other. Similarities and differences will be noted not only between the role of loyalty in different personal relationships. I will be also drawing attention to the distinctive elements and commonalities in the characterization of loyalty in the earliest Bohemian, Polish, and Hungarian chronicles.

My main research questions are: How did the authors of the earliest Central European chronicles understand the concept of loyalty? What was the content of loyalty within the different bonds of impersonal and personal relationships? How did they use the discourse of loyalty in conveying broader ideological messages of their works? Finally, I will ask what the similarities and differences between the depictions of loyalty in the earliest Bohemian, Polish, and Hungarian chronicles were, and how do they reflect on the social and cultural development of the region.

### 3 Sources

My thesis is, at its core, a comparative study of the earliest Central European chronicles - *Chronica Boemorum* of Cosmas of Prague, *Gesta principum Polonorum* of Gallus Anonymus and those fragments of the fourteenth-century compilation known as the *Illuminated Chronicle* which can be argued to belong to the early twelfth-century historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court. As I highlighted in the opening paragraphs, these first works of local historiography shared not only the age and circumstances of their creation, but also many themes, belonging to the broad genera of “national histories.” Nevertheless, there are also important differences between those works. Some of those distinctive features inform my observations about differences and similarities of the analyzed narratives in a broader context. While I do not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the past literature on the earliest Central European chronicles, in the following section I will outline the information I deem most relevant.<sup>36</sup>

The life and education of a medieval author can certainly contribute to his personal views on loyalty, which in turn find expression in his work. Cosmas of Prague left in his chronicle multiple biographical remarks. We know that he was Czech and, after studying in Liège for some time after 1074, he returned to Prague where he was a canon and the dean of the cathedral church until his death in 1125.<sup>37</sup> The literary aspects of his chronicle are certainly proof of his extensive education. He knew the *Chronicon* of Regino of Prüm, which informed his knowledge of the earliest Bohemian history and stylistic choices made in *Chronica*

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<sup>36</sup> First chronicles of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary have naturally played an important role in the national historiographies of these countries from the beginning of the academic study of history, and as such, they have extensive historiographies. For newest bibliographies of the research on those chronicles, see: Wojciech Mrozowicz, “Anonim zw. Gallem i jego kronika: Materiały do bibliografii” [Anonymous so-called Gallus and his chronicle: Bibliographical materials], in *Nobis operique favete: Studia nad Gallem Anonimem*, ed. Andrzej Dąbrówka, Edward Skibiński, and Witold Wojtowicz (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2017), 469–96; Kopal, “Król versus książę?,” 368–71; For the studies on *Illuminated Chronicle*, see overviews of past literature offered in: János Bak and László Veszprémy, eds., *Studies on the Illuminated Chronicle* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 4–10; Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 33–49.

*Boemorum*. Furthermore, he drew extensively on his knowledge of the Bible and several classical authors like Virgil, Ovid, Sallust, and Statius, interspersing his text with quotes, paraphrases, and textual allusions.<sup>38</sup>

The anonymous author of the first Polish chronicle, traditionally referred to as Gallus, also belonged to this circle. Unlike Cosmas, we do not know much about his life beside the fact that he was a foreigner, probably a monk, who arrived in Bolesław III Wrymouth's court shortly before starting his work on *Gesta principum Polonorum*.<sup>39</sup> In another contrast to the Czech chronicler, Gallus's erudition does not manifest itself as much in paraphrases or citations from other works, although he certainly had a good grasp on works of Sallust and the Bible.<sup>40</sup> Instead, it can be found in the high style of the elegant rhythmic prose of his writing.<sup>41</sup> Despite those differences, we can firmly place both Gallus and Cosmas among the intellectual elites of the early twelfth century, which suggests a shared system of ideas, references, and values.

<sup>38</sup> On Cosmas's craft as a historian and writer see: Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 36–80; Libor Švanda, "K recepci antiky v Kosmove kronice" [Toward the reception of antiquity in the Cosmas's chronicle], *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 14 (2009): 331–40; Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 96–152.

<sup>39</sup> In the still ongoing discussion about the Gallus's country of origin, Polish historiography pointed out to three main directions. Marian Plezia, the author of influential monography on the *Gesta*, was a strong proponent of hypothesis that linked the anonymous chronicler with the St. Gilles monastery in Provence, from where he is thought to have come to Poland through the kingdom of Hungary, see: Plezia, *Kronika Galla*; The most serious counterargument against this theory, formulated initially by Danuta Borawska and recently revived by Tomasz Jasiński, considers Venice or its Dalmatian sphere of influence as a place of intellectual formation of Gallus, see: Danuta Borawska, "Gallus Anonim czy Italus Anonim" [Gallus Anonymous or Italus Anonymous], *Przegląd Historyczny* 56 (1965): 111–19; Tomasz Jasiński, *O pochodzeniu Galla Anonima* [On the origins of Gallus Anonymous] (Cracow: Avalon, 2008); finally some argued for Germany as the place of Gallus's origin, see: Johannes Fried, "Kam der Gallus Anonymus aus Bamberg?," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 65 (2009): 497–545; For extensive summary of the debate, see: Dorota Gacka, "Przegląd koncepcji dotyczących pochodzenia Galla Anonima: Od Kromera do badaczy współczesnych" [Review of the concepts on Gallus Anonymous origins: From Kromer to Contemporary Researchers], in *Nobis operique favete: Studia nad Gallem Anonimem*, ed. Andrzej Dąbrówka, Edward Skibiński, and Witold Wojtowicz (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2017), 23–57.

<sup>40</sup> Allusions to other authors of antiquity like Ovid, Horace and Virgil can also be spotted in his work. However, the loose style in which Gallus alludes to them does not inspire confidence in his knowledge and deliberate use of those works in the text of *Gesta*. See: Katarzyna Chmielewska, "Hektor i Mojżesz: Reminiscencje świata antycznego w Kronice polskiej Anonima tzw. Galla" [Hector and Moses: Reminiscences of the ancient world in Polish Chronicle of the Anonymous the so-called Gallus], in *Nobis operique favete: Studia nad Gallem Anonimem*, ed. Andrzej Dąbrówka, Edward Skibiński, and Witold Wojtowicz (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2017), 193–210.

<sup>41</sup> This aspect of *Gesta principum Polonorum* is discussed in length in: Tomasz Jasiński, "Die Poetik in der Chronik des Gallus Anonymus," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 43 (2009): 373–91.

While contemporary politics motivated the writings of both Gallus and Cosmas, their chronicles comment on those events in a very different way. Gallus's chronicle, although not devoid of other themes, is primarily devoted to legitimizing the dynastic power of the ruling Piast family and propagating the glory of its members. This was reflected in the form of his work which focuses on *gesta* - selected deeds of the Polish rulers. This strategy allows Gallus to present the greatest martial exploits of the Piasts, demonstrating the glory of Duke Bolesław III Wrymouth and his predecessors.<sup>42</sup> Much of the chronicle is devoted to presenting the reigning Polish Duke as a ruler full of military virtues who lives up to the vision of the ideal rulership exemplified in Gallus's chronicle by his great ancestor, Bolesław I the Brave.<sup>43</sup>

However, in shaping his narrative to fit this goal, Gallus could not ignore the expectations of his local readers, who had to be able to recognize familiar events and traditions in the narrative. We know that as an outsider he relied on informants who served as intermediaries between him and local tradition. From among the number of helpers named by Gallus, mostly hailing from the Polish episcopate, Marian Plezia argued for the very prominent role of chancellor Michael from the Awdańcy kindred, calling him the co-author of the *Gesta*.<sup>44</sup> However, the interpretation of the chronicler's words that Plezia based this assumption on had recently been questioned, and Michael's involvement in the creation of the *Gesta principum Polonorum* seemed to lay mainly in some kind of supervision.<sup>45</sup> Taking that into account I

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<sup>42</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "A New Chosen People? Gallus Anonymus's Narrative about Poland and Its Rulers," in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 148–49; Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, 62–76.

<sup>43</sup> Marian Plezia, "Wstęp" [Introduction], in *Kronika polska*, by Anonim tzw. Gall (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1982), xxviii; More on the role of Bolesław I the Great in the chronicle in: Jacek Banaszkiewicz, "Gall jako historyk poważny, czyli dlaczego dzieje i Bolesława Chrobrego, i Bolesława Krzywoustego są prawdziwe i niegroteskowe" [Anonymus Gallus as a serious historian, or why his descriptions of the reigns of Bolesław Chrobry and Bolesław Krzywousty are plausible and not grotesque], *Przegląd Historyczny* 99 (2008): 399–410.

<sup>44</sup> Plezia, *Kronika Galla*, 183.

<sup>45</sup> Przemysław Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai: Values and Social Identity in Dynastic Traditions of Medieval Poland (c.966-1138)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 144–46; For the contrary opinion, see: Edward Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy: narracyjna koncepcja Anonima tzw. Galla i jej podstawy* [Transformations of power: The narrative concept of the Anonymus, so-called Gallus, and its basis] (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2009), 37–38.

think that our knowledge of Gallus as a person is not substantial enough to indicate where, amidst so many actors intervening during the writing process, his personal vision lies. Thus, while in the following thesis I refer to the depictions of different concepts as belonging to Gallus, I want to stress that vision of the world depicted on the pages of the earliest Polish chronicle does not belong to one author but is a result of a compromise between the voices of the Polish clergy, secular elites, older tradition, and Gallus—a foreign writer—himself.

On the other hand, we do not know anything about similar outside influences on the work of Cosmas. The dean of the cathedral church of Prague did not write his chronicle on the behest of any patrons, and while writing on the distant past he also had to resolve to older oral tradition, he exercised full authorial control over his text. The main concern of Cosmas, as already pointed out in the past historiography, lies not only in the actions of the ruling Přemyslid dynasty or the history of Prague's diocese, but most importantly in the history of the people of Bohemia—or at least their elites—as a political unity.<sup>46</sup>

Dušan Třeštík interpreted Cosmas's presentation of Bohemian history as one to legitimize the Přemyslid dynasty, while at the same time presenting the qualities of an ideal ruler through negative and positive examples.<sup>47</sup> Early twelfth-century conflicts between members of the Přemyslid dynasty were reflected in Cosmas's criticism of contemporary politics. However, Lisa Wolverton's assessment that the Czech chronicler was critical of dynastic power, in general, did not resonate with other scholars.<sup>48</sup> Czech historians, in turn, suggest that the many positive and negative depictions of Přemyslid rulers the *Chronica Boemorum*, in many cases were a result of Cosmas's political preferences. As, for example, pointed out by Martin Wihoda and Lukáš Reitinger, this was the case with his depiction of

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<sup>46</sup> János Bak, "Christian Identity in the Chronicle of the Czechs by Cosmas of Prague," in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 172–74.

<sup>47</sup> Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 155–83.

<sup>48</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 81–119; For criticisms, see review articles, like: Jan Klápště, "Lisa Wolverton, Cosmas of Prague: Narrative, Classicism, Politics," *Speculum* 91, no. 2 (2016): 573–74.



King Vratislav II, whose reach of royal power was opposed by traditional Bohemian elites with whom Cosmas sided.<sup>49</sup>

None of that information is available for the study of the oldest historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court. The narrative text that recalls episodes of the oldest history of Hungary up to the end of the eleventh century, usually referred to as the *Primeval Chronicle* or *Ur-Gesta*, has survived only as a part of the fourteenth-century historiographical compilation known as the *Illuminated Chronicle*. With a few exceptions, hardly anything is known about the authors and the dates of the creation of the separate layers of the historiographical tradition that constitute the text compiled in its present form. The distinction between the separate fragments of the compilation is made even harder by the fact that the surviving text was repeatedly interpolated and rewritten.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, it is certain that some version of the official historiographical tradition existed at the Árpáadian court at the beginning of the twelfth century. This argument stems from the comparison with Poland and Bohemia, and is further corroborated by Gallus's obvious borrowing from passages on the mourning of King Stephen, now preserved in the *Illuminated Chronicle*.<sup>51</sup> Even with a *terminus ante quem*, thus established, the date of the creation of the *Primeval Chronicle* is still subject of debate, with some arguing that it was written during the reign of King Coloman the Learned (1096-1116), while others positing that the earliest version was composed during the reign of the dynastic branch of King Andrew I (1046-60), that is, either at his or his son King Solomon's (1063-74) court.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Wihoda, "Kosmas a Vratislav" [Cosmas and Vratislav], in *Querite primum regnum Dei: sborník příspěvků k počtě Jany Nechutové*, ed. Helena Krmíčková et al. (Matice Moravská, 2006), 367–81; Lukáš Reitinger, *Vratislav: první král Čechu* [Vratislav: the first king of Czechs] (Prague: Argo, 2017), 53–105.

<sup>50</sup> Overview of the different layers of the text in: Grzesik and Bak, "The Text of the Illuminated Chronicle," 5–23.

<sup>51</sup> Grzesik and Bak, 7–8; Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "nationes,"* 670–72; On the similarities between the texts of fragments of Illuminated Chronicle and *Gesta principum Polonorum* see: Bagi, *Królowie węgierscy w Kronice Galla Anonima*.

<sup>52</sup> Grzesik and Bak, "The Text of the Illuminated Chronicle," 8.

In such a continuously re-written historiographical tradition as the Hungarian one it is impossible to tell when the annalistic notes and old oral tradition were transformed into a historical narrative. Therefore, in selecting the Hungarian source for my further inquiry, I will focus on those parts of the *Illuminated Chronicle* that can be argued to be contemporary with the earliest Bohemian and Polish chronicles. This means those parts of the narrative that were either newly created at the court of King Coloman the Learned, or which preserved (and if so - probably transforming) older tradition. As pointed out by Dániel Bagi, while it is possible that some previous version of the chronicle existed, it is Coloman's version that forms a core of the narrative surrounding Hungarian history from the death of Saint Stephen to the exploits of Saint Ladislas.<sup>53</sup>

That being said, these parts were open to interpolations and changes in the later process of compiling the surviving text, so I will analyze this text with caution, evaluating whether they can indeed be parts of the intellectual *milieu* of the early twelfth century. Whenever I write about the *Illuminated Chronicle*, I refer to the text of the fourteenth-century historiographical compilation. I reserve the designation *Primeval Chronicle* to the version of the historiographic tradition contemporary with the earliest Bohemian and Polish chronicles.

## 4 Methodology

Since the thesis focuses on the literary representations of ideas, I will be, broadly speaking, using the approaches used by the historians who consider medieval historiography not only as the transmitters of historical facts, but also as the reflection of ideas, opinions, and *mentalité* of their authors and readers. At the core of this methodology lay assumptions formulated by Helmut Beumann about the role of topological and anecdotal narratives in the

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<sup>53</sup> Bagi, "The Dynastic Conflicts," 143–44.

ideological message of the work.<sup>54</sup> Following the recent shifts in the study of loyalty in the Middle Ages, I will combine these approaches with the framework established by Gerd Althoff. This will allow me to study the symbolic communication in order to understand how the social bonds it created and reinforced were depicted in the narrative sources.<sup>55</sup>

In order to assess and compare the contents of loyalty, understood here as the obligations arising from the in reciprocal and unilateral relationships, I will focus my analysis on the parts of narratives that depict how those bonds were created, when they were exercised and when were they broken. While the chronicles contain some straightforward formulations of what was expected, most of the information about the authors' vision of loyalty will have to come from the analysis of longer narratives, which—either through language or structure—convey the authors' judgment on the presented actions and behavior.

## 5 Structure

The structure of the thesis is informed by the division of my analysis into separate parts, each one devoted to a different type of relationship in which commitment is mediated by either unilateral or reciprocal loyalty. In the first chapter of my thesis, addressing the impact of Christian discourse on the development of the concept of loyalty, I analyze its role in the relationship between God, the saints and the believers.

The second chapter examines the sacralized bonds of loyalty by interrogating how obedience and fidelity were defined in the depictions of founding moments of Central European political communities—stories of the origins of dynastic power in Bohemia and Poland. The

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<sup>54</sup> Helmut Beumann, *Widukind von Korfve. Untersuchungen Zur Geschichtsschreibung Und Ideengeschichte Des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1950); Helmut Beumann, "Die Historiographie Des Mittelalters Als Quelle Für Die Ideengeschichte Des Königtums," *Historische Zeitschrift* 180 (1955): 449–88.

<sup>55</sup> In general: Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014); and other works cited above; For use of his framework see already cited: Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*.

problem of finding a comparable story in the earliest Hungarian historiographical tradition is also explored.

The third chapter is devoted to the role of loyalty in personal bonds within the kinship group. Given the important role that dynastic conflicts played in shaping the earliest Central European chronicles, this chapter analyzes the role of loyalty in the narratives about the most important conflicts depicted in the chronicles, particularly the concepts of filial obedience and brotherly love.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the role of loyalty in the relationships between Central European rulers and their equals. It examines the way in which trust between allies was established and mutual obligations were defined, as well as the consequences of breaking these bonds.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the role of loyalty in the relationship between rulers and their subjects. In this part of my thesis I re-evaluate the results of the second chapter by examining the loyalty between ruling members of the dynasty and members of the Bohemian, Polish and Hungarian political elites. This final chapter is followed by my overall conclusions and an appendix of genealogical tables of the relevant members of the ruling Central European dynasties.

# Chapter 1: Faithful to God and his Servants

In this chapter I will explore how the relationship between God and the believers is portrayed in the earliest Central European chronicles. As I noted in the introduction, the concepts of *fides* and *fidelitas*, so crucial for medieval loyalty, were strongly shaped by their use in the theological context. Even though the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, the *Chronica Boemorum*, and the Hungarian *Primeval Chronicle* focused mainly on deeds of kings and princes, the stories they told were integrated into the larger framework of Christian historical thinking. Thus Gallus, Cosmas, and the authors of the oldest Hungarian historiographical tradition point out throughout their works God's involvement in the history of Central European people and their rulers. As I will show below, divine intervention shows up quite often in these chronicles, either in the description of events or as their explanation. Thus, while earthly politics is the main subject of the earliest Polish, Czech, and Hungarian chronicles, God features in them prominently. Moreover, due to the "national" character of these chronicles, their authors were also interested in presenting the lives of local, often dynastic saints—servants of God, through whom his support for Bohemians, Poles, Hungarians, or their ruling dynasties revealed itself. What do the divine interventions tell us about God's relationship with his faithful? How was the obedience toward God and his servants rewarded, how was disobedience punished?

The nature of the relationship between God and his Central European believers is never clearly defined, but rather only sporadically revealed through their authors' choices shaping the narrative or portrayal. The importance of obedience to and veneration of God by his servants for the proper functioning of the realm is, for example, communicated through royal and ducal piety featured in the visions of the ideal ruler in all three earliest Central European chronicles. Piety underlies the characterization of Cosmas's two favorite rulers: Boleslav II and

Břetislav I. It also figures heavily in Gallus's depiction of Bolesław I the Brave—whose idealized rule is presented as the “golden era” of the Piast monarchy, and—unsurprisingly—in the characterization of Saint Stephen. In a show of both devotion and largesse, all three of those rulers were noted to be generous in founding new churches and making donations to already existing ones. Cosmas wrote that Boleslav II was an “exceptional builder of God's churches,” who founded the bishopric of Prague and twenty other foundations.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, his Polish namesake, Bolesław the Great, “worshipped God with the greatest piety and promoted the holy Church and honored her with kingly gifts.”<sup>57</sup> The depiction of the life of Saint Stephen presented on the pages of the *Illuminated Chronicle* contains detailed descriptions of the riches that the first Hungarian king and his wife donated to the Church of the Virgin Mary in Székesfehérvár, and a priory in Óbuda, although the latter may have been an interpolation by Master Ákos.<sup>58</sup> This pious generosity is accompanied by the reverence of the clergymen. In the speech given to his son on his deathbed Boleslav II advises him to frequently visit the churches, worship God, and honor the priests.<sup>59</sup> Bolesław the Great certainly did so, since “he held his bishops and chaplains in such veneration that he would never presume to remain seated when they were standing, and he always addressed them as ‘My lords’.”<sup>60</sup>

Nowhere is this virtue of spiritual obedience (*virtus obediencie spiritualis*) made clearer than in Bolesław's treatment of Saint Adalbert. One of the very first things Gallus chooses to recount about the reign of the first Polish king is that when “the bishop of Prague came to him on his long wanderings after suffering many indignities through his rebellious Czech people, Bolesław received him with great veneration and paid faithful attention to his instructions and

<sup>56</sup> 1.22 in Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, trans. Lisa Wolvertson, (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press 2009), 71. [Henceforth: *The Chronicle of the Czechs*].

<sup>57</sup> 1.9 in *Gesta principum Polonorum: The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, transl. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 49. [Henceforth: *GpP*].

<sup>58</sup> 66-67 in *The Illuminated Chronicle: Chronica de gestis Hungarorum e codice picto saec. xiv.*, trans. János Bak and László Veszprémy (Budapest: Central European University Press 2018), 117-123. [Henceforth: *Illuminated Chronicle*].

<sup>59</sup> 1.33 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 85.

<sup>60</sup> 1.9 in *GpP*, 49.

his sermons.”<sup>61</sup> The juxtaposition of the treatment of Adalbert by his countrymen and by Bolesław makes the future exaltation of the Polish king and his triumph over subdued Czechs more resonant.<sup>62</sup> Pointing out the parallels between the narrative structures of the visit of the two unexpected divine guests at Piast’s humble household and the ousted bishop of Prague’s meeting with Bolesław the Great, Edward Skibiński suggests that it was Bolesław’s conduct toward the soon-to-be martyr that granted him elevation to the royal crown.<sup>63</sup>

Presenting such a vision of the relationship between Boleslav II and Saint Adalbert was not possible for Cosmas, given the fact that it was during his reign when the unruly behavior of Prague’s congregation made its bishop abandon his post. Nevertheless, given the way past events unfolded, Cosmas made sure to construct his narrative as to present the Bohemian duke as favorably as he could. The Přemyslid ruler does not have anything to do with Saint Adalbert leaving Prague due to the “faithlessness and wickedness of the people, the incestuous bond and especially the illicit dissolution of impermanent marriages, the disobedience and negligence of the clergy, and the arrogant and intolerable power of the *comites*.”<sup>64</sup> As for the massacre of Adalbert’s brothers in Libice, it happened at a time when, conveniently, Boleslav “was not in his own power but in that of the *comites*,” and it were those *comites* who “perpetrated a very bad and evil crime.” Instead, the Bohemian duke asks the archbishop of Mainz to convince Adalbert to return, which he sees as preferable to anointing a new bishop in his place.<sup>65</sup> Boleslav II’s behavior towards Saint Adalbert is clearly juxtaposed with that of his father, Boleslav the Cruel, who murdered Saint Wenceslaus and is, therefore, likened by Cosmas to tyrants from the Christian tradition.<sup>66</sup> Here another interesting choice is made by the chronicler, who excuses himself from narrating the details of the fratricide by referring the reader to the

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<sup>61</sup> 1.6 in *GpP*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> 1.6 in *GpP*, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 72–74.

<sup>64</sup> 1.29 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 79.

<sup>65</sup> 1.30 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 81.

<sup>66</sup> 1.19 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 68.

existing hagiography. While Lisa Wolverton argued that this omission allowed Cosmas to avoid portraying a saintly figure like Wenceslaus as involved in holding an earthly office,<sup>67</sup> I would like to point out that it can be also seen as a convenient excuse to minimize the need to address Boleslav's rivalry with his brother, painting it as a serious crime, but one that is ultimately just one of many misdeeds of this villainous character.

If the depictions of the great Polish, Czech, and Hungarian rulers by Gallus, Cosmas, and the authors of the *Primeval Chronicle* were intended to serve as models for ideal rulers to which all holders of sovereign authority should aspire, then the Piasts, Přemyslids and Árpáds were expected to act toward God and his servants with reverence and obedience. Did God respond to this behavior? Was—in the view of the earliest Central European chroniclers—the relationship between him and his faithful purely unilateral, or was the devotion of Central European rulers recognized and rewarded? To answer these questions, I will turn toward those passages of the analyzed chronicles in which God gets directly involved in the history of Central European *nationes*.

The idea of God's involvement in the history of Bohemians, Poles or Hungarians, is most often reflected in the descriptions of military successes of their rulers. In the aforementioned speech given by the dying Boleslav II, he contributes his achievements in greatly expanding the boundaries of the realm to God's grace.<sup>68</sup> In the thirteenth-century *Gesta Hungarorum* of King Béla's Anonymous Notary the still un-Christianized Hungarians can count on divine support, which seems to also be the case for the Magyars arriving in Pannonia in the *Illuminated Chronicle*. Árpád's forces win the decisive battle against Duke Svatopluk after shouting *Deus, Deus, Deus*—which reportedly was a battle-cry still used in the days of the chronicler.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 102–9.

<sup>68</sup> 1.33 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 86–87.

<sup>69</sup> 28 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 68.



Support in the battles was indeed the most direct way in which God aided the Přemyslids, Piasts, and Árpáds. Victories in all three chronicles are often seen as the results of the divine will, more decisive than strategy or military valor. When returning to Poland Casimir is faced with the overwhelming force of the pagan Pomeranians, he rouses his troops to victory with the rhymed oratory: *Multitudo non facit victoriam / Sed cui Deus dedit suam gratiam*.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, when Bolesław III fights against the Cuman raid he wins “For God, protector of Christians and avenger of His vigil, roused the courage of a few of the faithful to the destruction of a vast number of pagans, and triumphed as they fell upon them in the glory of the Lord’s day and in might of His arm.”<sup>71</sup>

The fact that Gallus believed this victory to be the revelation of divine military aid as the forewarning of the future valiant deeds of “what great exploits he was going to perform through him [Bolesław – Gallus’s patron] in the future,”<sup>72</sup> illustrates that divine support in a battle was part of a legitimization discourse.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, even the enemies of Bolesław III—German forces of invading emperor Henry V—recognize that God is helping the Polish duke and praise him in a song.<sup>74</sup> Victory in battle can be seen also as a divine judgment in an internal conflict—when Władysław Herman confronts his disobedient son Zbigniew in the Battle of Kruszwica, the “righteous Judge” enables the old duke to massacre the rebel forces without too many casualties on his side.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> 1.21 in *GpP*, 86.

<sup>71</sup> 2.19 in *GpP*, 155.

<sup>72</sup> *in plaucis Deus revelavit, quanta per eum operari debeat in future*, Ibidem.

<sup>73</sup> As already pointed out in: János Bak, “Legitimization of Rulership in Three Narratives from Twelfth-Century Central Europe,” in *Studying Medieval Rulers and Their Subjects*, by János Bak, vol. 8 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 52–53.

<sup>74</sup> 3.11 in *GpP*, 241–42.

<sup>75</sup> *Zbigneus vero convocata multitudo paganorum, habensque VII acies Crusuiciensium, exiens de castro cum patre dimicavit, sed iustus iudex inter patrem et filium iudicavit. Ibi namque bellum plus quam civile factum fuit, ubi filius adversus patrem et frater contra fratrem arma nefanda tulit. Ibi spero, miser Zbigneus paterna malediccione, quod futurum erat, promeruit; ibi vero Deus omnipotens Wladislauo duci misericordiam tantam fecit, quod innumerabilem de hostibus multitudinem interfecit et de suis sibi paucissimos mors ademit*, 2.5 in *GpP*, 128.

Sometimes, the divine support in battle is brought by a particular saint. In the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, St Adalbert, in the form of a warrior on a white horse, prevents the night attack of Pomeranian pagans on an unnamed Polish castle.<sup>76</sup> Cosmas of Prague, in turn, presents a story in which the brief occupation of Prague by the Polish forces in 1002 is brought to an end “because of the wondrous permission of God and the intervention of Saint Wenceslaus,” who makes a follower of Bohemian Duke Oldřich scare the Poles into a frenzied flight single-handedly.<sup>77</sup> Cosmas credits both St Adalbert and Saint Wenceslaus with another miracle—this time preventing the bloodshed in the dispute between king Vratislav II and his son Břetislav. The two saints free people from Prague’s prison, claiming that this merciful act is a proof of God’s grace and mercy which extends to all of Czechs. With this revelation declared, Vratislav’s brother, Conrad, “arranged for peace between the king and his son”<sup>78</sup> Both of these interventions can be seen as part of the wider phenomenon of warrior-saints protecting the community with which they are connected against military intruders.<sup>79</sup>

All of the examples above present divine involvement in the history and politics of Central European polities as a result of God’s plan or judgment. God is presented as full of mercy and grace, which is the main cause of his support. His support in battle does not seem to stem from the reciprocal relationship between him and Central European kings and dukes. God aids faithful Přemyslid, Piast, and Árpád rulers, but they are in no position to demand anything from God—they can only hope that their pious behavior will be rewarded. As for God’s judgment, while he is obviously always seen as righteous, he is not always predictable. Cosmas of Prague points out the mysterious nature of God’s judgment when pondering how

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<sup>76</sup> 2.6 in *GpP*, 130.

<sup>77</sup> Cosmas mistakenly enters this episode under 1004, 1.36 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 91.

<sup>78</sup> 2.47 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 176–77.

<sup>79</sup> On the phenomenon in general, with events in Prague mentioned as the example see František Graus, “Der Heilige Als Schlachtenhelfer: Zur Nationalisierung Einer Wundererzählung in Der Mittelalterlichen Chronistik,” in *FS Helmut Beumann*, 1977, 330–48; Similarity of the miracle described by Gallus were pointed out by Przemysław Wiszewski in Przemysław Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai: Values and Social Identity in Dynastic Traditions of Medieval Poland (c.966-1138)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 264–65.

Boleslav I the Cruel, murderer of Saint Wenceslaus, could have been a father to the virtuous Boleslaw II.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, there are a few examples of divine intervention in battles that depict rulers as actively seeking God's help beforehand. On the pages of the *Illuminated Chronicle*, God unsurprisingly intervenes to help young Saint Stephen defeat after a long and hard struggle, Duke Koppány of Somogy, who tried to kill Stephen and take over his throne.<sup>81</sup> Unlike the previous cases, divine support here is not granted simply by the sole virtue of St. Stephen being God's favorite. The young ruler consciously seeks God's help, swearing that he will make Koppány's subjects donate one-tenth of their children, fruits, and flocks to St. Martin's monastery—a vow that he fulfills after his triumph. The choice of the endowed institution is not random since it was through this Pannonian-born saint that Stephen secured the divine intervention.<sup>82</sup> A similar scene can be found in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*. At the very beginning of the third book of the chronicle, Gallus writes about one of the Pomeranian campaigns of Bolesław III. When the pagan forces try to relieve the Polish siege of Nakło on day of St. Lawrence, Bolesław assures his men that “Today, with God's favor and the intercession of St. Lawrence, may the idolatry of the Pomeranians and their martial pride be crushed by your swords.”<sup>83</sup> Christian forces won decisively, and from the rhymed prologue to the whole book we learn that a new *edificium*—probably a church—was founded to honor the saint for bringing this victory.<sup>84</sup> While the events are not related as directly as in the case of St. Stephen, it seems justifiable to assume that the *edificium* mentioned by Gallus served the

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<sup>80</sup> *His son of the same name, but with good mores and a pious way of life altogether different from his father's, succeeded him as duke. O the miraculous mercy of God! O how incomprehensible are his judgments!*, 1.21 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 71; It is a clear reference to Rom 11:33: *O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae, et scientiae Dei: quam incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia ejus, et investigabiles viae ejus!*

<sup>81</sup> 64 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 110-13.

<sup>82</sup> [...] *per interventum beatissimi Martini confessoris divine misericordia imploravit auxilium*, Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> *Hodie, Deo favente, sanctoque Laurencio deprecante, Pomoranorum ydolatria ac militaris superbia vestris ensibus conteretur*, 3.1 in *GpP*, 224-25.

<sup>84</sup> *In hiis ergo collaudemus Deum et Laurencium / Die cuius sacrosancto factum est hoc prelium / Inde sibi fiat ibi dignum edificium*, 3 Epilogus in *GpP*, 218.

same purpose as the tithe given to St. Martin's monastery: gratifying saints for their intercession in providing God's help. Perhaps the best example for imploring for a saint's favor in this way can be found in another part of the earliest Polish chronicle. The childless duke Władysław and his wife Judith are advised by the bishop of Poznań to make an endowment to the French monastery of St. Giles, and it is with the help of the monks' prayers to St. Giles that Bolesław III was born.

These examples show that, besides divine support as a part of God's unilateral judgment, the faithful can also cultivate their relationship with the saints based on reciprocity. In this respect the cult of saints is different than the veneration of God. In pleading for the saints' intercession and giving generous donations to them afterward, King Stephen and Dukes Władysław and Bolesław acted on a principle *do ut des*. The social relation of mutual reciprocity, even if unbalanced, extended also to the relationship between believers and saints.

The similarity between the donations to miracle-working saints and mutual gift-giving that underlaid the social order of medieval faithful was pointed out by Aron Gurevich.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the resemblance between the relationship between saints and believers and lord and his subjects does not end there, at least in the case of *Chronica Boemorum*. In looking for the way in which the relationship between believers and the divine reflects on that between earthly authority and its subjects, the particular narrative about Duke Břetislav's campaign in Poland requires special attention.

In the episode, Duke Břetislav decides to invade Poland in order to avenge the "injuries Duke Mieszko had once inflicted on the Czechs."<sup>86</sup> The depiction of the successful campaign culminates in the capture of the archbishopric of Gniezno, where Bolesław the Great had deposed the body of the martyred Saint Adalbert. Ignoring all other booty, the Czechs hastily

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<sup>85</sup> Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 40, 57–58.

<sup>86</sup> Cosmas systematically mistakes Bolesław I with his father, Mieszko I.

focused on recovering the body of the bishop, whom they so unfairly treated in the past. By doing so they ignored the warnings of their bishop, Severus, who proposed that the exhumation of the saint should be preceded by three days of penance:

Therefore, first fast for three days, do penance for your sins, renounce all the abominations which God abhors in you, and promise with all your heart that you will not commit them any more. I hope in the mercy of God and our patron, Saint Adalbert, that we will not be deprived of the hope of our petition if we persist in the assiduous saying of prayers and in the devotion of faith.<sup>87</sup>

Just like the bishop predicted, those who rushed hastily to take the holy body and did not care about the profanity of their actions were struck by divine punishment and stupefied, “having neither voice nor sense nor sight for a space of almost three hours, until they again regained their original faculties by God’s grace.” After that the Bohemians, abiding Severus’s instructions, fasted for three days, praying and asking for forgiveness. On the third day the bishop had a vision of Saint Adalbert, who said that God will grant to Břetislav and his *comites* what they ask for if they “do not repeat the evil deeds which you [i.e. Břetislav and his *comites*] renounced at the baptismal font.”<sup>88</sup>

Importantly, Cosmas describes the actions of the Bohemian duke and his *comites* as follows:

Entering the Church of St. Mary, they lay prostrate on the ground before the tomb of Saint Adalbert, pouring out a single prayer together for a long time. Then the duke rose and, standing in the pulpit, broke the silence with his voice: “Do you want to correct your transgressions and recover from depraved works?” Having also risen, they cried out to him with tears: “We are prepared to correct whatever sin we or our fathers committed against the holy one of God and to cease altogether from depraved works.” Then Duke Břetislav, extending his hand over the holy tomb, spoke thus to the crowd of people: “Brothers, extend your right hands similarly to God and heed my words, which I want you to confirm by swearing on your baptism.”<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> 2.3 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs* 114; 2.3 *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz and Wilhelm Weinberger, MGH SS rer. Germ, Nova Series 2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), 14. [Henceforth: *Chronica Boemorum*], 85: *Quapropter prius triduo ieiunate, de peccatis vestris penitentiam agite et ab omnibus abominationibus, quas ipse abhominatus est in vobis, abrenuntiate et ex toto corde, quod eas ultra non faciatis, promittite. Spero enim in misericordia Dei et nostri patroni sancti Adalberti, quod non privabimur spe petitionis nostre, si persistimus fidei in devotione et precum assidua oratione.*

<sup>88</sup> 2.4 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 114.

<sup>89</sup> 2.4 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 115; 2.4 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 85-86: *Hoc mane cum presul innotesceret duci et eius comitibus, mox exhilarati intrantes ecclesiam sancte Marie et ante sepulchrum sancti Adalberti humi prostrati, diu fusa communi oratione surgit dux et stans in ambone hac rupit silentia voce: Vultis prevaricationes vestras emendare et a pravis operibus resipiscere? At illi obortis clamant cum lacrimis:*

What ensued was the establishment of the new laws, in line with Christian mores—strict enforcement of monogamy, specific punishments of homicides, ban on taverns, and so on. Laws proclaimed by the duke and affirmed by Bishop Severus, who added a threat of *anathema* to the legal sanctions against those who would not comply, were supposed to correct the very behavior of Czechs that caused the disgusted Saint Adalbert to abandon them in the first place. It was only after laying down these laws that the miraculously preserved body of the martyr was extracted from the tomb, with a celebratory mass being held afterwards and the clergy singing *Te Deum laudamus* and *Kyrie Eleison*. During the ceremony Duke Břetislav prayed to Saint Adalbert for mercy and permission to bring his body back to the fatherland. Cosmas ends his description of the translation of the bishop's body back to Prague by comparing it to the great biblical miracles.<sup>90</sup>

Břetislav's campaign in Poland, which starts as a quest to avenge the indignities suffered by the hands of Piast rulers after the death of Boleslav II, becomes an opportunity for the Bohemians to reconcile with Saint Adalbert and return his blessed body home. This act—clearly of significant ideological importance for Cosmas—is staged in a way that follows the rituals of begging for the forgiveness of both God and their earthly overlord, bringing to mind both public penance and *deditio*—a strategy of conflict resolution through a ritualized act of submission.<sup>91</sup> Both of these acts consisted of prostration, confession of one's sins, begging for forgiveness and receiving pardon—elements which are present in the depiction of events at Gniezno. In front of the altar, the Czechs reconcile with Saint Adalbert, submitting themselves into the reciprocal patron-client-like relationship. The saint's patronage and aid were

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*Emendare parati sumus, quicquid in sanctum Dei patres nostri vel nos prevaricati sumus, et a pravo opere omnino cessare. Tunc dux extendens manum suam super sacram tumbam sic orsus est ad populi turbam: Extendite, fratres, simul vestras ad Dominum dexteras et ad meos attendite sermones, quos volo ut vestre fidei sacramento confirmetis.*

<sup>90</sup> 2.4 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 115-19.

<sup>91</sup> On *deditio*, see: Althoff, "Das Privileg der *deditio*"; This similarity was already pointed out by Petr Kopal in: Kopal, "Smíření Čechu se svatým Vojtěchem."

exchanged for the fidelity of Bohemians. The exact expectations toward the faithful Czechs are listed in the laws dictated by Duke Břetislav, and the adherence to them is secured by the oath. Thus, the covenant with Saint Adalbert is built on surprisingly well-defined obligations, which focus on correcting the un-Christian behavior of the past.

To conclude, the relationship between God and his faithful is characterized as one in which adherence and religious devotion can be recognized and rewarded, but which can hardly be called reciprocal. Nevertheless, the idea of social relations based on mutual reciprocity, in which one can reliably plead for the favor of other resonated in the relationship between Poles, Bohemians, Hungarians and saints, particularly those that had a special connection with Central European people. This speaks strongly about the prevalence of the idea that social relations should be primarily governed by the *do ut des* rule.

## Chapter 2: “In his presence your knees will tremble” – Obedience and Origins of Dynastic Power

In the following chapter I will outline the way the authority of the Přemyslids, Piasts, and Árpáds was legitimized in the dynastic origin stories presented on the pages of the earliest Central European chronicles. What do those narratives tell their audience about loyalty and obedience?

The legendary times when the ancestors’ heroic deeds took place—often coupled with divine intervention—served an essential function in medieval historiography. The origins of the dynasties and the communities Přemyslids, Piasts, and Árpáds ruled over were important because they served as the source of rights, privileges and obligations inherited by future generations, as well as a point of comparison and reference for their achievements. As explained by Norbert Kersken, the historians from new polities of Central Europe wanted to prove the strong position of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary in Latin *Christianitas* by establishing the ancient provenance of these communities and their sovereign status.<sup>92</sup> The depictions of the first rulers—be they dukes or kings—were supposed to present an ideal representation of their office, and establish the set of norms that govern the relationship between rulers and their subjects.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, taking into account the popularity of the belief that rulers’ virtues and capabilities for governance can be inherited, the origins of the dynasty played a paramount role in its legitimization. As such, they are an appropriate starting point for my investigation of the idealized vision of the loyalty in the earliest Central European chronicles.

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<sup>92</sup> Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der “nationes,”* 822–57; Alheydis Plassmann, *Origogentis, Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006).

<sup>93</sup> Björn Weiler, “Tales of First Kings and the Culture of Kingship in the West, ca. 1050-ca. 1200,” *Viator* 46 (2015): 101–3.



First, I will briefly establish a possible referential framework in which Gallus, Cosmas, and author of *Primeval Chronicle* might have placed their depictions of the birth of ducal or royal authority in Central Europe. The source of many concepts about the origins and the nature of sovereign power in the Middle Ages can be found in the Bible, both in the establishment of the royal power by the Israelites in the Old Testament and in the New Testament's image of Christ the King. The interpretation of these images, found in the works of St. Augustine, Gregory the Great and other Church Fathers, established the long-standing notion of the earthly ruler as God's representative on earth, *vicarius* or *minister Dei*, designated by God to serve him. The idea of God as the ultimate source of earthly authority found its expression in a formula that became widespread in the barbarian kingdoms of the early Middle Ages, whose kings highlighted that they held their office by God's favor as *rex dei gratia*.<sup>94</sup> The power of the ruler was thus linked with the duty of care for his subjects' salvation and to provide peace, order, and justice. The *rex iustus* as the provider of those three components remained relatively unchanged throughout the Middle Ages. The same cannot be said about the ideas about the ruler's person. Developing further Carolingian ideas, the new rulers of former Eastern Francia turned toward a more "Christocentric" image of rulership – *imago Christi*. Ottonian and Salian emperors were perceived as representatives of Christ, the Sovereign of the Sovereigns, the only true king-priest who rules the whole world.<sup>95</sup> This idea of the sacerdotal kingship, so crucial for the imperial ideology, fell victim to the Investiture Controversy, although the sovereign remained the earthly mediator of God's grace and justice, his personification – *imago Dei*.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> The literature of this subject is immense. For general overview, see: Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450* (London: Routledge, 1996), 16–25; Good overview also in: Robert Antonín, *The Ideal Ruler in Medieval Bohemia*, trans. Sean Mark Miller (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1–40.

<sup>95</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 42–86.

<sup>96</sup> Hans Hubert Anton, "Einleitung," in *Fürstenspiegel des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*, ed. Hans Hubert Anton, *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 45 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 3–12.

This was paired with the idea of *idoneitas*—the secular rulers' suitability to hold an office, dependent on his personal virtues.<sup>97</sup>

The narratives about the origins of the ruling dynasties—the Přemyslids, Piasts, and Árpáds included—were often seen as part of pre-Christian traditions, and as such illustrating an older vision of divine legitimization. Indeed, the religious legitimization of secular power seems to be a phenomenon that appears in many different cultures throughout the world. The broad stream of older German historiography argued that the fabulous deeds of mythical ancestors were the proof of magical charisma of the dynasty—*Königsheil*—that allowed the pagan rulers to secure good harvests and victories in battle.<sup>98</sup> Some argued that these are manifestations of Indo-European tri-partite godly functions reconstructed by Georges Dumézil.<sup>99</sup> This approach found particularly enthusiastic reception among those scholars who seek pre-Christian tradition in the mythical episodes of the works of Gallus Anonymous and Cosmas of Prague.<sup>100</sup>

It is, however, one thing to argue that dynastic legends contained some elements of pagan legitimization of rulership, and a completely different issue to argue that these old traditions shaped the meaning of the earliest parts of *Gesta principum Polonorum* or *Chronica*

<sup>97</sup> Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450*, 88.

<sup>98</sup> For the classical study on sacral kingship in the pre-Christian era see: James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1890); For the contemporary overview of the topic, as well as debate over connection between pagan and Christian sacral kingship see: Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Eva Pálmai, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19–43; Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Sakralkönigtum und sakrales Königtum. Anmerkungen und Hinweise," in *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum. Ideelle und religiöse Grundlagen*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 1–8; For the discussion about the *Königsheil* in German historiography see: Walther Kienast, "Germanische Treue Und „Königsheil“,“ *Historische Zeitschrift* 227, no. 1 (1978): 265–324.

<sup>99</sup> For bibliography of works based inspired by Dumézil's theory, see: Jaan Puhvel, ed., *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans: Studies in Indo-European Comparative Mythology* (University of California Press, 1970), 246–68.

<sup>100</sup> Jacek Banaszkiewicz, "Königliche Karrieren von Hirten, Gärtnern und Pflügern: Zu einem mittelalterlichen Erzählschema vom Erwerb der Königsherrschaft [Die Sagen von Johannes Agnus, Pfemysl, Ina, Wamba und Dagobert]," *Saeculum* 33, no. 3–4 (1982): 265–286; Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu: Studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi* [The story of Piast and Popiel: Comparative Study on Early Medieval Dynastic Traditions] (Warsaw: PWN, 1986); Martin Golema, *Stredoveká literatúra a indoeurópske mytologické dedičstvo: prítomnosť trojfunkčnej indoeurópskej ideológie v literatúre, mytológii a folklóre stredovekých Slovanov* [Medieval literature and the Indo-European mythological heritage: presence of the three-functional Indo-European ideology in the literature, mythology and folklore of medieval Slavs] (Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2006).

*Boemorum*. I explained in the introduction Cosmas of Prague and, to a lesser degree Gallus Anonymous exercised literary freedom when it came to shaping older traditions into the unitary ideological message of their work. As the following analysis of the Přemyslid and Piast legends will show, these aspects of older tradition—potentially referencing some pagan vision of sovereign power—were significantly reshaped to fit into a quintessentially Christian framework.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.1 *Chronica Boemorum*

Out of all three chronicles, the most extensive description of the origins of dynastic power can be found on the first pages of the *Chronica Boemorum*. Cosmas of Prague presented the legend of Přemysl the Ploughman in a way that aimed not only to explain the beginnings of the ruling family, but the broader origins of the sovereign power and social order.

The chronicler presents the story as follows. In the biblical fashion, the ancient Bohemians lived without a ruler, governed by an elected judge. This role was taken up, after the sonless death of old judge Krok, by the youngest of his three daughters Libuše, a soothsayer. The woman's rule was resented by one of the tribesmen, who agitated others to call for ducal rule. This prompted a response from Libuše, who warned the Bohemians of the implications of accepting this kind of power over them.<sup>102</sup> The *populus* insisted, so the soothsayer sent the group of them to follow her horse which would guide them to the village of Stadice. There they

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<sup>101</sup> On the Christianisation of Cosmas's version of the dynastic legend see: František Graus, "Kirchliche und Heidnische (Magische) Komponenten der Stellung der Premysliden: Premysliden sage und St. Wenzelsideologie," in *Siedlung und Verfassung Böhmens in der Frühzeit*, by František Graus and Herbert Ludat (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), 150–56; In Polish historiography some, like Roman Michałowski, argued for a "weak" Christianisation on the basis of the tale about Piast the Wheelmaker, but most agree on strong "saturation" with Christian meaning by the time of Gallus. See: Roman Michałowski, "Restauratio Poloniae w Ideologii Dynastycznej Galla Anonima" [Restauratio Poloniae in the dynastic ideology of Gallus Anonymous], *Przegląd Historyczny* 76, no. 3 (1985): 461; Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popiele*, 140; Czesław Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski: Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego* [Gallus Anonymous's myth of the origins of Poland: A study in historiosophy and hermeneutics of symbols of medieval historiography] (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo Wschodniej, 2000).

<sup>102</sup> 1.5 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 43–45.

were to find a plowman named Přemysl, who would be their duke. When Přemysl, whom the messengers found exactly like Libuše foretold, plowing the field, learned that he was elected a duke, he performed a miraculous deed making his oxen disappear, and he turns his rod into hazelnut tree by fixing it to the ground. Three branches spur out of the rod magically but only one survives, which according to Přemysl is a sign about the future of the dynasty, addressing the astonished messengers with words “You should know that from our progeny many lords will be born, but one will always dominate.”<sup>103</sup>

At a glance, the story of Libuše and Přemysl seems to be an odd choice for the canon from Prague. The first Bohemian duke is called to power by the prophecy of a soothsayer, previously likened to sorceress Circe.<sup>104</sup> However, closer inspection brings out the ways in which Cosmas indicates that it was by God’s will that Přemysl was made a sovereign. It is not by chance of mere fate that it is Libuše’s horse that guides the messengers to the plowman. While they hail Přemysl as *vir fortunate, dux nobis diis generate*,<sup>105</sup> the newly established duke sees himself as the ruler made by God rather than by gods or fate, explaining that he will keep his peasant shoes, “so that our descendants will know whence they sprang, and so that they will always live trembling and distrustful, and will not unjustly, out of arrogance, oppress the men committed to them by God, because we are all made equals by nature.”<sup>106</sup> Cosmas also frames the story in a Christian context by drawing parallels between dynastic myth and biblical history through the use of the paraphrase—as is the case with Libuše’s speech, or reference—like the three branches springing from the rod.<sup>107</sup>

The idea that God is the source of the ducal power of the Přemyslid dynasty is clearly communicated throughout the rest of the chronicle, too. As Boleslav II explains on his deathbed

<sup>103</sup> 1.8 in, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 48.

<sup>104</sup> 1.4 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 43; For the way in which Libuše fits the depictions of sorceress in other myths of origins, see: Banaszkiwicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu*, 40–66.

<sup>105</sup> 1.6 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 17.

<sup>106</sup> 1.7 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 47.

<sup>107</sup> 1 Sam. 7:10-18; Gn 40:10.

to his son, it is God who makes him the duke, so he ought to be humble, worship God, and respect the Church.<sup>108</sup> When Vratislav II becomes the first Bohemian king, he is crowned by God (*Deo coronato*).<sup>109</sup> Earlier, when the very same Vratislav, unsuccessfully tries to make his chaplain Lanzo the bishop of Prague, Cosmas comments that he was not able to do so because all power is from God.<sup>110</sup>

What is the extent of this divinely sanctioned power wielded by Přemyslids? From Libuše's speech we learn that it was almost absolute:

First, it is easy to appoint a duke, but difficult to depose one appointed. For he who is now under your power, whether you established him duke or not, when later he is established, you and everything yours will be in his power. In his presence your knees will tremble and your mute tongue stick to the roof of your dry mouth. Because of great fright you will hardly respond to his voice, 'yes, lord, yes, lord,' when by his command alone and without your forejudgment he will damn this one and slaughter that one, order these sent to prison and those hung from the gallows. He will make you yourselves and from your midst, as he pleases, some slaves, some peasants, some taxpayers, some tax collectors, some executioners, some heralds, some cooks or bakers or millers. He will establish for himself tribunes, centurions, bailiffs, cultivators of vineyards and fields, reapers of grain, makers of arms, sewers of various hides and skins. He will force your sons and daughters into obedience to him. From even your oxen and horses and mares and cattle he will take, at his pleasure, whichever are best. Everything yours, what is better in villages and in plains, in fields and meadows and vineyards, he will take away and reduce to his own use.<sup>111</sup>

The ducal rule, once established, extends over all subjects and their livelihoods. Even though they will appoint their ruler, Bohemians will not have any way of curtailing his power. As argued by Dušan Třeštík, the resemblance of Libuše's speech to that of Samuel in the First book of Kings, places the Cosmas's depiction of the origins of the secular power in an exegetic tradition which might have been known to the Czech author through the polemical theological discourse surrounding the Investiture Controversy.<sup>112</sup> By doing so, Cosmas refashions the biblical tale about Israelites establishing the royal office against God's wishes into the pro-

<sup>108</sup> 1.33 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 85.

<sup>109</sup> 2.38 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 141.

<sup>110</sup> 2.22 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 141; Cosmas makes a reference to Rom 13:1.

<sup>111</sup> 1.5 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 44.

<sup>112</sup> Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 176–79.

dynastic story of the Bohemians' voluntary submission to the rule of Přemysl and his descendants. This act transforms them from a tribe into a political community, connected with the Přemyslids by ties of obedience and fealty.<sup>113</sup> The loyalty to the dynasty goes deeper than the ducal office. When St Adalbert, tired of the infidelity of his flock, wanted to abandon his bishopric in Prague, he proposed to give it up to Strachkvas, claiming that the common folk will have to be more obedient to him, as he is a Přemyslid – and as such he hails from *domini terrae*.<sup>114</sup>

The mythical plowman clearly saw his new position as one of obligation, rather than that of abuse. Přemysl used the absolute power to establish the norms and laws, which transformed Bohemians into a civilized community. This granted the figure of Přemysl even more importance, since the adherence to old laws, as pointed out by Třeštík, was a significant part of Cosmas's political ideology, serving as the basis of differentiation between a good ruler and a tyrant.<sup>115</sup> Among the rules created by the plowman, the most important one had to be the one to which Přemysl only alluded while explaining the meaning of three oak-branches— instituting the supreme rule of the oldest member of the dynasty, the senior. As Cosmas explains later on in his chronicle, this was the best way to ensure the unity of the country and prevent internal strife.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Třeštík, 166–83; Martin Wihoda, “Kníže a jeho verní. Kosmas o svete předáku a urozených” [The duke and his faithful. Cosmas on the world of rulers and nobles], in *Šlechta, moc a reprezentace ve středověku*, ed. Nodl Martin and Martin Wihoda (Prague: Filosofia, 2007), 11–29; The question of whether Cosmas deemed the creation of ducal rule a positive or negative development does not need to be answered here. Even if Lisa Wolverton is right in her claim that the author of *Chronica Boemorum* subscribed to the pessimistic theory of power, the relationship of subjects' submission to their duke stems from the nature of his office, see: Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 82–91.

<sup>114</sup> *Et bene est, inquit, quod tu frater nosceris esse ducis et huius terre ex dominis originem ducis; te plebs ista mavult dominari et tibi magis obedire quam mihi*, 1.29 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 52.

<sup>115</sup> Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 162–63; This would make the Přemysl part of tradition of legendary rulers-lawgivers, see: Bartosz Klusek, “The Law as an Element Organizing and Identifying a Community in the Narratives of the Origins of the Kingdoms of Britain, (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*),” in *Imagined Communities: Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe*, ed. Andrzej Pleszczyński et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 127–43.

<sup>116</sup> 2.13 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 102; Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 182; Antonín, *The Ideal Ruler*, 94.

## 2.2 *Gesta principum Polonorum*

The miraculous events, which single out the progenitor of the dynasty as a person of extraordinary qualities and make him and his descendants fit to rule, are plentiful in the legendary history of the Piast dynasty presented by Gallus. The eponymous Piast is a wheelmaker living with his wife Rzepicha and his son in the suburb of Gniezno, ruled by Duke Popiel. Coincidentally, both Piast's and Popiel's sons reached the age of ritual maturity—when the boy's hair was cut for the first time—at the same time. Even though the duke prepared a great banquet for many noble guests, he turned away two uninvited strangers—sent there by God—who found a warm welcome at the much humbler celebration thrown by Piast in the suburbs. For this—Gallus informs us—the plowman is rewarded by God, who “exalts the poor and humble in this world and does not disdain to reward even pagans for their hospitality,” multiplying the food and making drinks served by Piast ever plenty. Thus, the humble plowman was able to invite the whole community to his feast, including Popiel and his important guests. Piast's son, whose great future was foretold by these miracles, Siemowit, grew in strength and excellence (*probitas*) day by day, to be finally made by God the duke of Poland and get rid of Popiel. The precise phrasing of the *Gesta*—*rex regum et dux ducum eum Polonie ducem concorditer ordinavit*—reassures the reader that it was God who made Piast's family the rulers of Poland.<sup>117</sup>

It also proves that in Gallus's opinion there was little difference, at least as far as divine investiture was concerned, between royal and ducal power. He modifies slightly the early medieval image of Christ as the King of Kings and Sovereign of all Sovereigns, by adding the

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<sup>117</sup> 1.3 in *GpP*, 22.

title of Duke of Dukes (*dux ducum*). This allows all Piasts, regardless of whether they called themselves dukes or kings, to participate in Christ's heavenly dignity.<sup>118</sup>

As I suggested before, the story about the origin of the ruling dynasty contains some parts of the older narrative, but Gallus proceeded to firmly place it within the Christian tradition. Even so, he proceeded then to parallel the story of Piast with more overtly Christian tale about Duke Mieszko, whose baptism further strengthened the covenant between God and the Piasts.<sup>119</sup> The future first Christian ruler of Poland was, according to Gallus, born blind. Just like Siemowit was blessed by two strangers sent to the Piast cottage during his son's hair-cutting, Mieszko miraculously regained his eyesight during the feast celebrating his seventh birthday. This was interpreted by Gallus as the foretelling of Mieszko's future conversion, for God first restored to Mieszko his corporeal vision and then gave him spiritual sight, so that "he might pass from visible things to the understanding of invisible one."<sup>120</sup> The miracle of the restored eyesight not only proved the divine favor for the Piasts but also allowed the Poles to be exalted among the neighboring nations.<sup>121</sup>

The story about Piast the Wheelmaker and young blind Mieszko establish the Piasts as God's chosen rulers. They serve an important role in his plan, for they are to lead the Poles into the fight against the surrounding pagans and false believers, defending and expanding the Christian world. This, as Zbigniew Dalewski explains, meant that the relationship between God, the Poles, and their dukes was intertwined. God's support for the Piasts meant that under

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<sup>118</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "Vivat Princeps in Eternum!" Sacrality of Ducal Power in Poland in the Earlier Middle Ages," in *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh and János Bak, CEU Mediaevalia (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 226.

<sup>119</sup> Czesław Deptuła claims in his analysis of Gallus's chronicle that it was Mieszko's baptism that was seen as the "proper," second beginning of Poland, see: Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski*.

<sup>120</sup> 1.4 in *GpP*, 24.

<sup>121</sup> 1.4 in *GpP*, 26: *Poloniam sic antea fuisse quasi cecam indicabant, sed de cetero per Meschonem illuminandam et exaltandam super naciones contiguas prophetabant*.



their auspices Poles were to prosper, participating as subjects in some of their ruler's divine favor.<sup>122</sup>

This direct link between the fate of the country and its ruling dynasty formed a fundament of ducal claim to power, with the general obligation of loyalty to Piasts stemming directly from it. Gallus goes as far as explicitly stating so in his account of the fall of the first Polish monarchy. When Queen Mother Richeza and the adolescent Duke Casimir were exiled by some traitors and villains (*traditores, maliciosi*), a series of disasters shook Poland which was thus abandoned by the Piasts. Disloyal subjects had to face not only the invasion of foreign rulers who tried to carve up the land, but even more dire threat of complete social reversal:

For serfs rose against their masters, and freedmen against nobles, seizing power for themselves, reducing some in turn to servitude, killing others, and raping their wives and appropriating their offices in most wicked fashion. Furthermore – and I can barely say it without tears in my voice – they turned aside from the Catholic faith and rose up against their bishops and the priests of God.<sup>123</sup>

The picture of complete desolation, and wild animals roaming the ruins of churches in Gniezno and Poznań, ends with the warning: “But let this suffice on the subject of Poland's ruin, and may it serve in correction of those who failed to keep faith with their natural masters (*domini naturales*)”.<sup>124</sup> The moral is clear—those who turned their back to the Piasts, the *domini naturales* of Poland—turned their back to God and were punished for it. Only when Casimir returns to Poland, ignoring the pleas of his mother who urged him not to return to “gentem perfidiam et nondum bene christianam”, he is able to repel the enemies and restore the state with God's aid.<sup>125</sup> The Piasts are chosen by God to rule Poland, and both the earthly and the eternal life of their subjects are determined by their loyalty to their *domini naturales*.

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<sup>122</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "A New Chosen People? Gallus Anonymus's Narrative about Poland and Its Rulers," in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 160–65.

<sup>123</sup> 1.19 in *GpP*, 79; For narrative analysis of “pagan revolt” see: Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 85–96.

<sup>124</sup> *Haec autem dixisse de Poloniae destructione sufficiat, et eis qui dominis naturalibus fidem non servaverunt ad correctionem proficiat* 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

<sup>125</sup> 1.19–21 in *GpP*, 80–86.

## 2.3 Primeval Chronicle

As outlined in the first chapter of the present thesis, the content of the oldest Hungarian historiographical tradition is highly debated. This is particularly the case when it comes to the mythical and pagan past. The *Illuminated Chronicle*, the fourteenth-century compilation of royal historiographic tradition, indeed contains a great deal of material on the distant past, starting its account of Hungarian history with the biblical times and sons of Noah, it follows the exploits of Attila and his Huns—called Hungarians. Then, it recalls the birth of Álmos preceded by the prophetic dream of his mother, the second entry of the Hungarians into Pannonia starting with the conquest of Transylvania, where seven captains of the armies (*exercitus*) are elected. Under the leadership of the greatest of them, Árpád, the Hungarians defeated duke Svatopluk, whom they had tricked into selling them his Danubian lands earlier. Thus, God restored Pannonia to the Hungarians.<sup>126</sup>

The ancient deeds of Attila and his Huns is a later, post-twelfth-century invention, since Hun ancestry became the part of the Hungarian *origo gentis* only with the work of Simon of Kéza, composed around 1282.<sup>127</sup> In glaring similarity to his *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum*, Attila's reign over the Huns in the *Illuminated Chronicle* is brought by election and legitimized by the will of the whole *communitas*.<sup>128129</sup> Equally problematic is the part which depicts the Árpadian dynastic legend about the birth of Álmos. Similarities between versions in the early thirteenth-century *Gesta Hungarorum* by the Anonymous Notary of King Béla and the *Illuminated Chronicle* caused a debate over the source of the tradition used by the authors of the latter. Leaving aside whether some story linking the Árpadian dynasty to the totemic Turul

<sup>126</sup> 3 – 28 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 7-73.

<sup>127</sup> Jenő Szűcs, "Theoretical Elements in Master Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hungarorum* (1282-1285 A. D.)," in *Simonis de Keza Gesta Hungarorum: The Deeds of the Hungarians*, ed. László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), lxxxv–xcviii.

<sup>128</sup> 10 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 31-35; Szűcs, lxxvi–ic; Bak, "Legitimization of Rulership," 56.

<sup>129</sup> 10 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 31-35; J. Szűcs, "Theoretical Elements", lxxvi – ic; János Bak, "Legitimization of Rulership in Three Narratives from Twelfth-Century Central Europe," in János Bak, *Studying Medieval Rulers and their Subjects* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 56.

bird existed in such form in early medieval Hungary, György Györffy convincingly proves that the similarities do not necessarily stem from using an older, common source. Instead, it was a result of interpolation made by Master Ákos, the author of the late thirteenth-century work that served as the base for the *Illuminated Chronicle*. Ákos may have known the *Gesta Hungarorum* of the Anonymous Notary and used it as the source for the dynastic legend.<sup>130</sup> This observation meant that, as with many other parts of the *Primeval Chronicle*, its depiction of the Árpadian dynastic legend became a subject of guesswork. Some historians such as Elemér Mályusz, Gyula Kristó and László Veszprémy, went as far as suggesting that the author of the first Hungarian chronicle did not dwell on or simply ignored the Magyar pagan past, focusing instead on the establishment of the Christian kingdom by Saint Stephen.<sup>131</sup>

In the light of these problems with establishing which—if any at all—fragments of the earliest parts of the *Illuminated Chronicle* were part of early twelfth-century historiographic tradition, analysing the surviving dynastic legend would be futile here. The disparate, fragmented nature of the *Primeval Chronicle* means that even knowing the ideological content of the story about the origins of Árpadian dynasty would not necessarily translate into a better understanding of other parts of its narrative. How the earliest author of the Hungarian *Primeval Chronicle* imagined the ideal ruler, can be best observed either in the depiction of St Stephen,

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<sup>130</sup> Györffy György, *Krónikáink és a magyar őstörténet* [Our chronicles and Hungarian prehistory] (Budapest: Néptudományi Intézet, 1948).

<sup>131</sup> Elemér Mályusz, *A Thuróczy-krónika és forrásai* [The Thuróczy Chronicle and its sources] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), 27–35; Gyula Kristó, *A történeti irodalom Magyarországon a kezdetektől 1241-ig* [Historical literature in Hungary from the beginning to 1241] (Budapest: Argumentum, 1994), 41–42; László Veszprémy, “‘More Paganismo’: Reflections on Pagan and Christian Past in the *Gesta Hungarorum* of the Hungarian Anonymous Notary,” in *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery*, ed. Ildar Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 183; For an overview of the discussion about the pagan prehistory in the *Primeval Chronicle* see: Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der “nationes,”* 652–54, 670–74; Lesław Spychała, *Studia nad legendą dynastyczną Arpadów. Między pulpitem średniowiecznego skryby a “warsztatem” współczesnego badacza* [Studies on the legend of the Árpád Dynasty. Between the pulpit of a medieval scribe and the “workshop”; of a modern scholar] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2011), 21–33.

both in his hagiography and the Illuminated Chronicle itself, as Márta Font proposes, or in the depiction of St Ladislav in his part of the narrative as suggested by Kornél Szovák.<sup>132</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

To conclude, the two twelfth-century representations of the dynastic legends found in Central European chronicles share a similar vision of the origin and nature of sovereign power. Both Přemysl and Piast are men of humble origin elected by God to lead their people. Their election and subsequent status of the Přemyslid and Piast dynasties as *domini naturales* of Bohemia and Poland serves as the basis of their authority. Obedience, formulated in an impersonal way toward all members of the dynasty, is expected of all the Czechs and Poles. However, the presentation of Přemysl as *rex iustus*, responsible for bringing justice and order through establishment of laws, as well as Gallus's mention of Siemowit's *probitas* indicates that the subjects' duty of being loyal may have depended on the ruler's ability to live up to the standard of a Christian sovereign.

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<sup>132</sup> Márta Font, "Dynastic Traditions and the Legitimation of Power: Additions to the History of the Central European Dynasties," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 49, no. 4 (2015): 411–12; Kornél Szovák, "The Image of the Ideal King in Twelfth-Century Hungary (Remarks on the Legend of St Ladislav and the Illuminated Chronicle)," in *Studies on the Illuminated Chronicle*, ed. János Bak and László Veszprémy (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 241–64.

## Chapter 3: Troublesome brothers and reliable kin – loyalty within the family

In the following chapter, I will explore the discourse of loyalty within the family relationship. As pointed out by Gerd Althoff, “of all the ties that bound a person in the middle ages, the most important was, without doubt, the bond to the family of kindred”.<sup>133</sup> The “family” and relationships within this social group have been the subject of many studies in past historiography, and as such the term, with its multitudes of past uses, needs some clarification. For Althoff, it was clear that the political effectiveness of the kin-group was not reliant on the “nuclear family” alone, but would extend to its kindred or clan.<sup>134</sup> The idea of the large horizontally organized early medieval kin group—a clan (*Sippe*) founded on cognatic relations—was formulated by Karl Schmid, who argued that this form of kinship underwent transformation around the turn of the millennium, becoming aristocratic houses organized along vertical lines of patrilineal descent.<sup>135</sup> However, as pointed out by Constance Bouchard, the lines between close family, kinsmen, and outsiders were always individually formulated constructs.<sup>136</sup> As such, the medieval kin-group should be defined by the individual’s consciousness of belonging to such a group. Given the fact that all three of the analyzed chronicles focus on the deeds of members of particular dynasties—progenitors of the ducal or royal lines—I will treat those as extended families of kindred.

In this part of my thesis, I will analyze how ideal relations of loyalty within the closest, “nuclear” family members were depicted – particularly filial obedience and relationship between brothers. First, I will briefly establish how the perfect relationship between close

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<sup>133</sup> Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 23.

<sup>134</sup> Althoff, 24–27.

<sup>135</sup> Karl Schmid, “The Structure of the Nobility in the Earlier Middle Ages,” in *The Medieval Nobility. Studies on the Ruling Classes*, 1978, 37–59.

<sup>136</sup> Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

family should look in all three chronicles. While those basic assumptions—as I hope to demonstrate—were based on shared cultural preconceptions, the second part of this chapter will focus on the way dynastic conflict was portrayed in the earliest Central European chronicles. While feuding members of the family are obviously far from being good sons or brothers, the way those conflicts were framed by Gallus, Cosmas, and the first Hungarian chroniclers is revealing about the way they imagined proper inter-dynastic relations. Thus, I will examine in more detail three narratives about conflicts between the members of the Piast, Přemyslid, and Árpád dynasties. Finally, I will tackle the relationship between loyalty and familial ancestry presented on pages of the earliest Central European chronicles.

### ***3.1 The Ideal of Family Relations***

Similarly to the constructed nature of the kinship group, the significance prescribed to parental or sibling relations cannot be seen as constant throughout human history. For this reason, I will dedicate the following few paragraphs to sketching out the expectations of the most intimate familial bonds that the readers of the earliest Central European chronicles may have shared.

Just as it was the case with the legitimation of the sovereign authority, the concepts about how the ideal familial relationship should look that carried the most universal appeal in the society of early and high middle ages can trace its roots back to the Bible and the writings of the Church fathers. With the relationship between father and son having such a profound place in the theological discourse, it seems hardly surprising that family came under ideological scrutiny in Christian society in Late Antiquity. Familial relationships, following older Roman and Jewish traditions of hierarchical patriarchal households, were to reflect the “natural” social order. While everyone was ultimately a subject to God, the earthly hierarchy was founded on the primacy of the household’s *dominus* – husband of a wife and father of a child. The idealized

Christian father, the physical creator of the family, is responsible for its material conditions and should both be affectionate toward his children as well as discipline them.<sup>137</sup> This reverence and filial obedience retained their importance after the transformation of the society of the Latin West into one based on the warrior aristocracy, despite the value new societies placed on the youthful vitality required to pursue a martial lifestyle. While these contradictory ideas certainly fueled generational conflicts—ever more present in the written sources—the supreme authority of a father over his sons became even more present in the medieval vision of ideal family relations.<sup>138</sup> As illustrated by a piece of advice given by the Frankish noblewoman Dhuoda to her son in her ninth century *Liber Manualis*, the duty to obey the father was the most important one, coming before the service to the king or a liege.<sup>139</sup>

Given how prevalent this concept of the father as a dominant, but affectionate authority was, we have every reason to assume that the Bohemian, Polish, and Hungarian aristocracy shared a similar vision of the ideal father-son relationship. A quick glimpse at the earliest Central European chronicles seems to validate this assumption. In the already mentioned part of Cosmas's chronicle in which, through the mouth of the dying Boleslav II, the author gives advice to Bohemian rulers, among the pillars of proper life he lists adhering to God's precepts and father's commands.<sup>140</sup> However, most of the instances in which father-son relationships are described in the chronicle are off-hand comments. Filial love toward parents served as a shorthand for the ideal relationship between two unequal parties – and so, the important part of Bolesław the Great's depiction as an ideal ruler is that "love for his people abounded within him, as in the father towards his sons."<sup>141</sup> On the pages of all three chronicles we can find

<sup>137</sup> Lin Foxhall and John Salmon, *Thinking Men: Masculinity and Its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1998), 161–68.

<sup>138</sup> Christoph Dette, "Kinder und Jugendliche in der Adelsgesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 76, no. 1 (1994): 1–34.

<sup>139</sup> 3.2 in Dhuoda, *Handbook for Her Warrior Son = Liber Manualis*, trans. Marcelle Thiébaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 83.

<sup>140</sup> *Hec precepta Dei in corde tuo scribe et hec mandata patris tui non omitte*, 1.33 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 58.

<sup>141</sup> 1.16 in *GpP*, 67.

instances in which characters are portrayed as venerating or obeying someone as if he were their father; just for example, after St Stephen compelled his uncle to convert he “treated him with honor, as if he were his father.”<sup>142</sup> In the oration made by Jaromír during the election of his younger brother Břetislav, he implored the young duke surrounded by the noblemen to “worship these men like fathers, love them like brothers, and keep their counsel in all your dealings”.<sup>143</sup>

Despite what this last quote might suggest, brotherly relations were not universally considered to be stronger because of the bond between siblings. After all, the competition over inheritance, in which some sons had to be favored over others, easily led to disputes and rivalries between brothers. The inevitability of such conflict, as argued by some modern historians,<sup>144</sup> was also expressed in Cosmas of Prague’s chronicle in a speech delivered at the end of the aforementioned Břetislav’s reign. The Bohemian duke prophesized future conflicts stemming from inter-dynastic fighting with the following words:

From the creation of the world and the beginning of the Roman Empire until today, affection among brothers has been rare, as clear examples bear witness to us: Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, and my ancestors Boleslav and Saint Wenceslaus. If you look at what two brothers have done, what will five do? So much more capable and more powerful do I consider them, that I predict much worse with a prophetic mind. Alas, the minds of fathers are always terrified about the uncertain fates of their sons.<sup>145</sup>

As we can see, despite his previous comment about brotherly love, Cosmas placed in Břetislav’s speech the inevitable—in his own hindsight—conflicts between brothers, finding support in classical and biblical examples. With both of those seemingly contradictory ideas present in the same chronicle, the notion of the universal vision of the brotherly bond must be taken with a grain of salt. It is possible that, as Christoph Dette argued, brotherly love—unlike

<sup>142</sup> 2.66 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 119.

<sup>143</sup> 1.42 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 107.

<sup>144</sup> Georges Duby, “Youth in Aristocratic Society: Northwestern France in the Twelfth Century,” in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 117–18.

<sup>145</sup> 2.13 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 130.



the love of a parent—was not considered to be a “natural” part of sibling relationships, but rather something that had to be pursued and nurtured.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, one can argue that the frequent use of figurative fraternity—be it in the monastic context, or referring to strong relations outside of the kin-group—speaks to the special role the sibling bond played, if not in medieval reality then at least in the medieval imagination.

Despite the often-contradictory nature of cultural expectations shaping the closest family bonds, at least the expectation of filial obedience seems to have some universality to it. The question of relations between siblings seems to be more contested, with notions of brotherly love and Cain-and-Abel-like inherent conflict both present in the medieval imagination.

### ***3.2 Dynastic conflicts***

While these generalizations are helpful in understanding how the readership of the earliest Central European Chronicles might have expected ideal family relationships to look, it is important to remember that the author of each chronicle was pursuing his own ideological agenda. The following part of the chapter will focus then on the role loyalty played in the portrayal of dynastic relationships in each of the sources. As I have dealt with off-hand comments in the subchapter above, this time I will focus on three longer narratives about conflicts within the ruling dynasty: the story of Władysław Herman’s conflict with his sons, Zbigniew and Bolesław, which after his death transformed into a struggle between two brothers; the conflict between the Bohemian king Vraislav, his brother Konrad, and his son Břetislav; and the prolonged fight between two lines of the Árpád dynasty—one deriving from king Béla I, the other from his brother Andrew I. I believe that inspecting how the chroniclers recounted these events, together with the meaning they assigned to actions of each of the

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<sup>146</sup> Dette, “Kinder und Jugendliche,” 31–34.

participants, will provide a deeper insight into the way ideal loyalty between family members was expected to look.

However, before I proceed, there is one issue that I believe should be touched upon that concerns all three of the selected narratives—the ambiguous way in which rights of succession were determined in young Central European polities. While this subject has a rich scholarly history within respective national historiographies, the recently favored comparative approach has shown considerable similarity in the way rules of succession were established throughout the region. At the time when Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary entered the spotlight of historical sources around the turn of the first millennium, their political elites seemed to subscribe to the belief that the sovereign power of the Přemyslids, Piasts, and Árpáds was equally divided between the members of the ruling family. The notion of the communal nature of monarchical power was subsequently challenged by more ambitious early eleventh-century local monarchs, who attempted to establish narrower, hierarchical dynastic structures. Boleslav II in Bohemia, Bolesław the Great in Poland, and Saint Stephen in Hungary, pursuing the example of post-Carolingian dynasties, attempted to limit the number of the members of the dynasty entitled to sovereign power. Nevertheless, none of the successors designated by those rulers managed to stay on the throne, and the old system of power-sharing between many members of the ruling house was kept in place.<sup>147</sup> This rule could have been further institutionalized with the introduction of *senioratus*, or primacy of the oldest member of the dynasty, which is observable for example in Břetislav's instructions on the division of power among his sons.<sup>148</sup> The joint

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<sup>147</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "Patterns of Dynastic Identity in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 107 (2013): 5–44; Zbigniew Dalewski, "Family Business: Dynastic Power in Central Europe in the Earlier Middle Ages," *Viator* 46, no. 1 (2015): 43–59; More in-detail version of Dalewski's arguments can be found in: Zbigniew Dalewski, *Modele władzy dynastycznej: w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej we wcześniejszym średniowieczu* [Models of dynastic rulership: in Central-Eastern Europe in the early middle ages] (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2014); See also Font, "Dynastic Traditions and the Legitimation of Power," 114–15.

<sup>148</sup> As I mentioned in the previous chapter this rule was already signaled by Přemysl the Ploughman, see 1.6 in The Chronicle of the Czechs, 47; On the seniorate in the Přemyslid Bohemia, with the summary of older literature, see: Jakub Razim, "Der Fürst Břetislav und die Anfänge des Seniorats in Böhmen," *Journal on European History of Law* 3, no. 2 (2012): 149–58; The comparable provisions of succession were made by Bolesław III Wrymouth on his deathbed in 1138. Out of the numerous works of Polish historiography of the topic

exercise of power in Central European polities by many members of the dynasty was often accompanied by the practice of dividing the realm. The territorial separation of power was most clearly defined in Přemyslid Moravia, but as the examples below will show, the Piasts also divided the most important centers of the country among themselves. The geographical contours of the territorial division in the case of the Árpáds were less formalized.<sup>149</sup>

Bearing in mind those general rules about the division of sovereign and territorial authority between the members of the dynasty, I will proceed with the analysis of conflicts within the ruling families of Central European polities.

### 3.2.1 *Gesta principum Polonorum*

The History of the Piast dynasty as presented by Gallus is in its earlier years devoid of family conflict. Indeed, Gallus does not mention any of the brothers of the first Polish rulers known to us from other sources. The first pair of male siblings he mentions are Bolesław II the Bold and Władysław Herman—rulers only one generation removed from his audience. Nevertheless, their relationship is never well-characterized. Thus, the relationship between Władysław and his two sons—the illegitimate elder Zbigniew and the younger Bolesław III—present the only well-developed depictions of disobedience toward one's father and competition between brothers. The conflict between those three members of the dynasty is the main focus of a significant part of the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, which is not surprising,

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see classical study: Gerard Labuda, “Testament Bolesława Krzywoustego” [The Testament of Bolesław the Wrymouth], in *Opuscula Casimiro Tymieniecki septuagenario dedicata*, ed. Gerard Labuda and Antoni Horst (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1959), 171–94; The new points of view and summaries of older historiography can be found in: Stanisław Rosik, *Bolesław Krzywousty* [Bolesław the Wrymouth] (Wrocław: Chronicon, 2013), 272–90; and the debated recent monograph: Jacek Osiński, *Statut Bolesława Krzywoustego* [Statute of Bolesław the Wrymouth] (Cracow: Avalon, 2014); In case of Hungary some argued that seniorate could have been an oldest tradition of succession of power in the Árpád dynasty, see: György Györffy, *Święty Stefan I: Król Węgier i jego dzieło* [Saint Stephen I: King of Hungary and his work], trans. Tomasz Kapturkiewicz (Warsaw: Rytm, 2003), 138 ff.; in the face of lack of sources comparable to those from Bohemia or Poland, this question remained a subject of an open debate. For its summary see: Dániel Bagi, *Divisio regni: Országmegosztás, trónviszály és dinasztikus történetírás az Árpádok, Piastok és Přemyslidák birodalmában a 11. és korai 12. században*. [Divisio regni: Land division, throne disputes and dynastic historiography in the realms of Árpáds, Piasts and Přemyslids in eleventh and early twelfth century] (Pécs: Kronosz, 2017), 259–63.

<sup>149</sup> Methodical overview of this practice in comparative perspective in: Bagi, *Divisio regni*, 96–166.

given the already described circumstances in which Gallus created his work. This inter-dynastic struggle can be roughly divided into three stages.

The first stage concentrates on Władysław and Zbigniew, beginning with the introduction of the duke's 'natural' son—Zbigniew the bastard. Gallus makes a point of repeating twice Zbigniew's out-of-wedlock birth and lack of claim to the throne, mentioning that his mother was a concubine<sup>150</sup> and comparing the two sons of Władysław to the biblical characters of Ishmael and Isaac.<sup>151</sup> As an illegitimate son, Zbigniew is sent away for his education to a monastery in Germany. This is when Gallus introduces his readers to a second character, who plays a very important role in this part of *Gesta*—the palatine Sieciech. While I will devote the next subchapter to idealized depictions of the relationship between court officials and Central European rulers, Sieciech's involvement in the internal conflicts of the Piast dynasty makes it necessary to include him in this subchapter as well. It was ultimately Sieciech's actions that set up the events that led to Zbigniew's return to Poland. Sieciech is described as a man of many virtues, but also as possessing avarice and an enormous lust for power, holding no regard for nobles and regularly expelling his opponents or selling them into slavery. Many of those who fled from or were banished by the power-hungry palatine began to gather in Bohemia, as advised by the Bohemian duke Břetislav.<sup>152</sup> With Bohemian help, they paid for the retrieval of Zbigniew from the monastery where he studied.

The subsequent course of events clearly indicates that we are dealing here with quite a complicated political game, as the author, who evidently wanted to omit some aspects of it, also reports. The main thrust of the narrative can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>150</sup> *Igitur Zbigneus a Wladislauo duce de concubina progenitus, in Cracouiensi civitate adultus iam etate litteris datus fuit, eumque noverca sua in Saxoniam docendum monasterio monialium transmandavit.* 2.4 in *GpP*, 122

<sup>151</sup> 2.3 in *GpP*, 122.

<sup>152</sup> 2.4 in *GpP*, 122-24.

The exiled Poles, having freed Zbigniew, send a letter to Magnus, *comes* of Wrocław, in which they try to convince him that by welcoming Zbigniew back in the country he would be able to break the yoke of Sieciech's tyranny. The language used here is important—Magnus is not asked to participate in attacking any party, but cast as the protector of the weak and unjustly oppressed—that is, the juvenile son of Władysław and the nobles persecuted by the power-hungry palatine. The *comes* of Wrocław decides, after seeking the advice of the people of Wrocław, to welcome Zbigniew and his companions.<sup>153</sup> This not only saddens Władysław, but also frightens Sieciech and the queen. The ruler sends a messenger to the people of Wrocław “demanding to know what they were about in harboring Zbigniew as well as the exiles without his father's orders: did they intend to be rebels, or to obey him?”<sup>154</sup> The people of Wrocław promised the Piast ruler, that:

they had not surrendered their country to the Czechs or to foreign nations but had received the lord the duke's son and the fugitives with him, and that they would obey faithfully their lord the duke and his legitimate son Bolesław in all matters and circumstances, but they would oppose Sieciech and his evil deeds by all means possible.<sup>155</sup>

Despite these assurances, Władysław and Sieciech reacted violently, deciding to intervene by force and soliciting help from Ladislas of Hungary and Břetislav of Bohemia. However, the military action ended in failure, with Ladislas almost turning against Sieciech in order to bring him in bondage back to Hungary. The palatine managed to escape, taking with him the little Bolesław, who is never again mentioned in this part of the narrative. Thus, Władysław was forced to make peace, because “men had no desire to fight against their own

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<sup>153</sup> *Hoc audito Magnus diu imprimis hesitavit, sed communicato consilio maioribus et laudato, verbis eorum eum recipiens acquievit, Ibidem.*

<sup>154</sup> *Igitur legatum Magno Wratislauensisque magnatibus regionis transmiserunt sciscitantes, quid hoc esset, quod Zbigneum cum fugitivis sine patris imperio recepissent, si rebelles existere, vel obedire sibi vellent, 2.4 in GpP, 126-27.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ad hec Wratislavienses unanimiter responderunt, non se patriam Bohemicis vel alienis nacionibus tradidisse, sed dominum ducis filium suosque fugitivos recepisse, seseque velle domino duci legitimoque filio suo Boleslauuo in omnibus et per omnia fideliter obedire, sed Setheo suisque malis operibus modis omnibus contraire, Ibidem.*

people”, with the only known result being a public recognition of Zbigniew as Władysław’s son.<sup>156</sup>

As we can see, the exact circumstances of the first return of Zbigniew to Poland are unclear. In my opinion, the older of Władysław’s sons, despite being at the center of Gallus’s narrative, plays a surprisingly passive role in the unfolding events. It was the Polish exiles in Bohemia – with Břetislav’s encouragement – who broke Zbigniew out of the monastery and orchestrated his entry to Wrocław. It was the townsfolk that got to defend their actions and air their grievances against Sieciech in front of the duke’s messengers. Taking this passivity into account, it is hard to agree with Zbigniew Dalewski, who saw in Gallus’s description of the prince’s return allusions to *adventus regis* - a ceremonial entry of a ruler, a political gesture which is an expression of authority.<sup>157</sup> The long hesitation of Magnus (*Hoc audito Magnus diu imprimis hesitavit*), and the townsfolk’s reassurance to the messengers of the duke that they aim to remain loyal to Władysław as their lord seems to clearly indicate the opposite.<sup>158</sup> The young prince, being a tool in the hands of exiles, does not seem to be able to make any kind of similar political gestures on his own. The conflict within the royal family seems to be playing—at least in this part of the narrative—a secondary role.

For this reason, it does not seem that it was the actions of his son that saddened Władysław. The change of mood of the old duke can be explained—as pointed out by Przemysław Wiszewski—by his concerns that the inhabitants of Wrocław acted without his orders.<sup>159</sup> Thus, up to this point in the narrative neither Zbigniew nor Władysław can be characterized as acting as a particularly bad son or parent.

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<sup>156</sup> 2.4 in *GpP*, 127.

<sup>157</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 22–28.

<sup>158</sup> For similar critique of interpretation suggested by Dalewski, see: Jarosław Nikodem, “Nieskruszony syn marnotrawny: Gall Anonim o dwóch powrotach Zbigniewa do Polski” [Unrepentent prodigial son: Gall Anonymous on Zbigniew’s two returns to Poland], *Studia Periegetica* 4 (2010): 67.

<sup>159</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Bolesłai*, 261.

This, however, is not the case in the second part of the story about the return of the bastard prince to Poland. The peace between Władysław and Zbigniew was short-lived. Sieciech, who returned to stage from his hideout in Greater Poland, bribed the most important figures from Wrocław, and with Władysław's army approaching the city one more time, Zbigniew had to flee, unable to find support in the local elites or the populace.<sup>160</sup> His father followed him in pursuit to Kruszwica, where the decisive battle took place. As I already mentioned in the previous subchapter, God's judgment played a decisive role in this stage of the conflict between the old duke and his son:

Zbigniew, however, got together a force of pagans, and with seven units raised from Kruszwica he marched out from the fortress and took the field against his father. But the righteous Judge decided between father and son. For this was a "more than civil war," with son in arms against father and brother against brother in a cursed contest. There, I trust, the wretched Zbigniew earned by his father's curse what was later to happen. And there indeed Almighty God showed such mercy to Duke Władysław that he slew countless numbers of the enemy while among his own forces very few were snatched from him by death.<sup>161</sup>

Gallus writes that Zbigniew, having fled with the last of his followers to the Kruszwica castle, "could only contemplate whether his life or some limb would be forfeit."<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, when asked – by unspecified petitioners – not to kill or maim his son, Władysław showed understanding for his *youthful stupidity* (*iuventutis stulticiam*) and simply imprisoned him. Zbigniew did not have to serve this sentence for long, because after further supplications of the bishops and princes at the consecration of the cathedral (*basilica*) in Gniezno Władysław's oldest son "recovered the good graces he had lost."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> 2.4 in *GpP*, 125-128.

<sup>161</sup> *Zbigneus vero convocata multitudo paganorum, habensque VII acies Crusuiciensium, exiens de castro cum patre dimicavit, sed iustus iudex inter patrem et filium iudicavit. Ibi namque bellum plus quam civile factum fuit, ubi filius adversus patrem et frater contra fratrem arma nefanda tulit. Ibi spero, miser Zbigneus paterna maledicçãoe, quod futurum erat, promeruit; ibi vero Deus omnipotens Wladislauo duci misericordiam tantam fecit, quod innumerabilem de hostibus multitudinem interfecit et de suis sibi paucissimos mors ademit, 2.5 in *GpP*, 129.*

<sup>162</sup> 2.5 in *GpP*, 129.

<sup>163</sup> 2.5 in *GpP*, 131.

What exactly changed between the brief reconciliation of the members of the dynasty and their confrontation at Kruszwica? Again, Gallus does not provide us with a clear answer. While it is again Sieciech's scheming that moves the narrative forward, Zbigniew decides to flee Wrocław because of his father's approaching army – the palatine and the duke are clearly acting together. Gallus, however, never states that outright, most probably in order to avoid portraying Władysław as a party responsible for renewing the conflict. Readers do not learn why old duke decided to march for Wrocław for the second time, but the characterization of the further stages of the conflict clearly explains the ultimate result of the battle at Kruszwica. Zbigniew allied himself with pagans in order to fight against his own father – for this offense the highest judge -- God -- ruled against him, bringing victory to Władysław. Przemysław Wiszewski argued that a further indicator of Zbigniew's guilt can be found in the way Gallus expands on Lucan's reference – the chronicler calls the conflict worst than a civil war because it caused the son to turn against the father and brother against brother – a sequencing which would point toward Zbigniew as the aggressor.<sup>164</sup> This rhetorical device also presents, in the most straight-forward way possible, Gallus's stance on the conflict between close family members – sons lifting weapons against their fathers or brothers against brothers can make an already regretful civil war even more calamitous.

Despite the fact that Gallus clearly assigns the blame to Zbigniew, the young prince does not pay a high price for his behavior. Wiszewski argues that the easiness with which Władysław pardons his son suggests that the chronicler did not want to put the entire blame on the rebellious son.<sup>165</sup> The father's decision does not have to mean that Zbigniew's misdeeds were something to be treated lightly. After all, we learn that the defeated Piast was scared that he will be punished by death or mutilation for what he had done. Jarosław Nikodem points out

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<sup>164</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 263.

<sup>165</sup> Wiszewski, 264.



at the repeated pressure of an unspecified political group that interceded on Zbigniew's behalf as the main reason for his light treatment.<sup>166</sup> The pleas of men of the realm certainly helped the young rebel to avoid harsh punishment and even to quickly set him free, but I would argue that the main reason for Władysław's benevolence toward the rebel was that he attributed the misdeeds of his recently recognized son to "youthful stupidity". While Nikodem completely rejects this idea, I think that there is no reason to do so. Granted, Władysław Herman is not characterized throughout the chronicle – as it will soon become apparent – as an ideal father.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, it does not seem to me too far-fetched to argue that in the part of the chronicle in which the old duke is clearly portrayed as a person of higher moral standing – as just proved by God's judgment – he would forgive the transgressions of his own son. One should not discard the argument about "youthful stupidity" easily, given Gallus's own leniency in the portrayal of the young characters. The tendency to portray adolescent youth from an aristocratic background as adventurous but rash, often violent and disrespectful group living on the fringes of civilized society, often unbound by its rules, was common in medieval literature.<sup>168</sup> On the pages of *Gesta principum Polonorum* this vagabond lifestyle of aristocratic *juvenes* was sympathetically portrayed in a series of extraordinary martial deeds of adolescent Bolesław III. At this stage of his life even the idealized patron of Bolesław was allowed to disobey his father, often marching against the enemies of the realm without Władysław's wishes.<sup>169</sup> Suffice to say, the old duke did not hold his legitimate son to any responsibility for those youthful actions. Thus, it seems like the right amount of clemency toward *juvenes* was to be expected of a father.

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<sup>166</sup> Nikodem, "Nieskruszony syn marnotrawny," 68.

<sup>167</sup> Jarosław Nikodem, "Parens tanti pueri: Władysław Herman w Gallowej wizji dziejów dynastii" [Parens tanti pueri: Władysław Herman in Gallus's vision of dynastic history], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 117, no. 1 (2010): 5–22.

<sup>168</sup> Paweł Żmudzki, *Władca i Wojownicy: Narracje o Wodzach, Drużynie i Wojnach w Najdawniejszej Historiografii Polski i Rusi* [Ruler and Warriors. Narrations about Leaders, Hosts and Wars in the Oldest Historiography of Poland and Rus] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2009), 89; Duby, "Youth in Aristocratic Society: Northwestern France in the Twelfth Century," 114–15.

<sup>169</sup> *Et quamvis sit puerorum nobilium in canibus et in volucris delectari, plus tamen solebat Boleslauus adhuc puerulus in militia gratulari. Nondum enim equum ascendere vel descendere suis viribus prevalebat et iam invito patre vel aliquoties nesciente, super hostes in expeditionem dux militia precedebat*, 2.9 in *GpP*, 134.

The forgiveness showed by Władysław to his officially recognized son does not seem abnormal, but rather appears to be something expected in the father-son relationship.

Zbigniew Dalewski argues that Gallus's account of defeated Zbigniew finally regaining his father's favor forms a series of constitutive elements of *deditio*.<sup>170</sup> That may be true – after all Zbigniew clearly is a humbled rebel who through his imprisonment regains Władysław's favor. Whatever specific form the reconciliation of the two Piasts took is a subject to interpretation, since chronicler spared us detailed descriptions.

With Zbigniew recognized as the duke's son and pardoned for his misdeeds, Władysław, due to his old age divided the realm between himself, Zbigniew, and young Bolesław.

The second phase of the inter-dynastic conflict was also fueled by the machinations of palatine Sieciech, who “was weaving plots against the boys and using all manner of wiles to turn the father's feelings from love of his sons.”<sup>171</sup> Though Gallus had no doubts that it was the legitimate prince Bolesław who was seen by Sieciech as the more dire threat, both of Władysław's sons joined their forces against the power-hungry palatine:

The brothers, however, had bound themselves together by oath. They agreed upon a sign, so that if Sieciech attempted to plot against either of them, the other would come to his aid with all his forces and suffer no delay or truce.<sup>172</sup>

This alliance is put to a test when duke Władysław ordered Bolesław to prepare a defense against the Bohemian raid, by joining his small forces with an army made up by Sieciech's appointees. The young Piast prince “in good faith obeyed his father's orders”, but his companions, suspecting Sieciech of scheming, pointed out to Bolesław that:

You have reason to fear danger. Your father has ordered you to proceed to a lonely place, and to summon Sieciech's friends and henchmen there to your aid. But these people have designs on your life. We know, we are certain that

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<sup>170</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 78–79.

<sup>171</sup> 2.16 in *GpP*, 141.

<sup>172</sup> *Ipsi vero fratres iureiurando se coniunxerant et inter se signum fecerant, quod si Zetheus eorum alteri machinaretur insidias, alter alteri subvenire cum totis viribus suis nullius more pateretur inducias*, 2.16 in *GpP*, 142–43.

Sieciech will stop at nothing to eliminate your whole family and you in particular as the heir to the kingdom, and to seize the whole of Poland and keep it in his hands alone. What is more, comes Wojsław, in whose charge we are entrusted, is related to Sieciech and would undoubtedly have come with us had he not discovered that there was some intrigue afoot against us.<sup>173</sup>

These arguments convinced and shook Bolesław, as Gallus puts it: “these words struck very deep fear into young Bolesław, tears flowed and his body ran with sweat.”<sup>174</sup> He returned as fast as he could to Wrocław, and at the meeting convened there, the crying Bolesław told the townsmen and elders about the plot, who in turn “wept out of affection for the boy” and cursed Sieciech. Zbigniew, for whom Bolesław sent as soon as possible, hastily arrived in Wrocław and delivered another speech. Since it focused on the notion of the relationship between subjects and members of the dynasty, I will analyze it in more detail in the later chapter. In analyzing the dynastic relationships it suffices to say that Zbigniew portrayed the palatine as the main perpetrator of the conspiracy against the young Piasts, saying of duke Władysław that he was old and “less able to see to his own needs and ours or to the needs of our country.”<sup>175</sup> In response, the citizens of Wrocław, pledging their loyalty to both brothers and their father, implored Zbigniew and Bolesław to go to Władysław’s court to seek justice – but pay the due respect to their father in doing so.<sup>176</sup> Comes Wojsław, the very one who was supposed to be Bolesław’s guardian during the campaign against the Czechs, also arrived at Wrocław, but on account of his kinship with Sieciech and supposed involvement in the palatine’s plot he was not allowed to enter the town. Despite his willingness to reconcile with

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<sup>173</sup> *Non es, inquiunt, sine causa periculi, quod pater tuus te precepit ad locum solitudinis ambulare et insidiantes vite tue Zethei familiares et amicos illuc in auxilium advocare. Scimus enim et certi sumus, quia Zetheus totam tuam progeniem teque maxime nititur, ut heredem regni, modis omnibus abolere, solusque totam sub manu sua captam Poloniam retinere. Insuper etiam Woyslauus comes, cui commissi sumus, qui propinquus est Zetheo, nobiscum procul dubio advenisset, ni machinamentum aliquod nobis fieri cognovisset, 2.16 in GpP, 142-43.*

<sup>174</sup> *Hiis dictis puer Bolezlauus vehementissime metuebat, totusque sudore et lacrimis manantibus affluebat. Ibidem.*

<sup>175</sup> 2.16 in GpP, 147.

<sup>176</sup> *So have no lack of faith in us. Gather a force, take arms, hasten to your father’s court, and there – with all due respect for your father – get satisfaction for the injury you have suffered., Ibidem.*

the young dukes, Wojśław's offers of *satisfactio* were rejected by Zbigniew and Bolesław, who instead gathered their army and marched to confront their father at a place called Żarnowiec:

Duke Władysław and his sons camping separately. Protracted wrangling through envoys from both sides followed, but in the end, with the counsel of the magnates and the threats of the young men, the boys managed to force the old man to dismiss Sieciech. They say the father even took an oath never again to recall him to his former position of honor.<sup>177</sup>

In turn, Władysław's sons proceeded to his camp "humbly, unarmed and in peace, and not as lords but as his knights or servants offered their obedience with bowed necks and meek hearts."<sup>178</sup> With both of Piast armies now joining together to pursue Sieciech, it seemed like the end of the palatine is near. Nevertheless, Władysław slipped out of the camp during the night and joined the Sieciech's side – a decision nobles supporting the young princes called one "of a madman to forsake his sons and all the nobles as well as the army." Thus, the second military campaign took place, concluded with another set of negotiations between father and his sons – this time mediated by archbishop Martin: "This time, too, they say, Duke Władysław affirmed on oath that he would never more retain Sieciech. Then Bolesław restored to his father the cities he had occupied, but the father did not observe the agreement made with the sons." Gallus does not offer any conclusion simply claiming that finally princes pressured their father into expelling Sieciech, and even though he later returned to Poland, he never regained his authority.<sup>179</sup>

Here again, Gallus tries to portray the conflict between the members of the ruling family as essentially revolving not around the relationship between father and his sons, but around the machinations of Władysław's bad advisor Sieciech. In the opinion of the chronicler, the only

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<sup>177</sup> *Igitur dux Wladislauus eiusque filii in loco, qui dicitur Sarnouecz, seiunctis filiis a patre, cum exercitibus conseruerunt, ibique diucius inter se legacionibus altercantes, vix tandem consiliis procerum minisque iuuenum Zetheum dimittere senem pueri coegerunt. Aiunt etiam patrem ibi filiis iurasse, numquam se deinceps eum ad honorem pristinum revocare*, 2.16 in GpP, 146-47.

<sup>178</sup> *ad patrem fratres humiliter inermes et pacifici perrexerunt, eique non ut domini, sed ut milites vel servi suum obsequium pronis mentibus et cervicibus obtulerunt*, Ibidem, 148-49.

<sup>179</sup> 2.16 in GpP, 150-51.

machinations of the ambitious palatine could have turned the loving father against his sons. These words of course reinforce the notion of fatherly love as a guarantee of “negative loyalty” – obligation not to act against one’s children. The decision of the old duke to side with Sieciech against his sons, abandoning his nobles was seen as madness. Interestingly enough, this violation of the parental bond coincides—if the information about Sieciech’s goals presented by the concerned Bolesław’s companions is to be trusted—with a larger plot to destroy the Piast dynasty as a whole. With the authority of the *domini naturales* derived directly from God, the palatine’s plot—similarly to Władysław’s decision to choose his advisor over sons—can be seen as a transgression against the divine order.

No wonder then that when the extent of Sieciech’s conspiracy became clear to Bolesław, he reacted very emotionally. Breaking the bonds of loyalty between father and son was then something deeply upsetting for Gallus’s favorite character. The terrified young prince was joined in his weeping by the citizens of Wrocław, moved by his injustice and angry at the palatine. I would like to point out that this outburst of emotions could not have been caused by the revelation about the palatine’s scheming alone. After all, both Piast princes already suspected that their father’s advisor may be up to no good when they decided to band together against him. It seems to me that it was rather a scope of Sieciech’s conspiracy and – perhaps most importantly – Władysław’s tacit consent, if not direct involvement, that caused the young prince to break down in tears. After all Bolesław, so eager to faithfully obey his father commands, just learned that fulfilling this filial duty would put in danger him, his dynasty, and—what follows—entire Poland.<sup>180</sup>

Despite the emotional distress exhibited by Bolesław when the rule of familial solidarity was at stake, one has to notice that it does not seem like the expectations in the relationship between the prince and his father or brother were clearly defined. Zbigniew and

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<sup>180</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 274.

Bolesław's mutual aid in their conflict against scheming Sieciech may have had its source in the brotherly solidarity, but it was reinforced by the sworn oath. This might be seen as a sign that the bond between the Piast siblings was conceived of as something performative, acknowledged only when acted upon. However, the oath-taking between close family members as an additional layer of reassurance was not that uncommon. After all, the oath is also repeatedly given (and broken) by Władysław to his sons as the way of concluding the dispute and restoring peace within the family.

In addition to the oath-taking, the mending of the relations between the father and his sons required a ritual act of reconciliation. The citizens of Wrocław convinced the young princes that they would ensure their success directly confronting Władysław, but they should pay special attention to do so with a proper amount of reverence. Bolesław and Zbigniew follow their advice, and even though during the negotiations they were able to force Władysław to dismiss Sieciech, they have made a show of ritual reconciliation with their father, by approaching him to offer their service with "humble spirit and bowed heads." Through this *deditio* their brothers manifested their obedience to Władysław, who did get to save his face. The princes made an effort to abide by the rules that governed the relationship between sons and their parents even in the situation in which their father clearly had not done so, allowing his advisor to plot against his children.<sup>181</sup> While it was not that apparent in Gallus's description of the events after the battle of Kruszwica, we can clearly see now that the ritual act of submission, along with its conciliatory meaning, served as a reassurance of one's loyalty. This is why Wojsław, accused of betrayal, offered the young princes *satisfactio* – ritual submission, to prove his innocence and loyalty.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 80; Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 275.

<sup>182</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 81.

I will return to Sieciech's kinsmen in more detail in the latter part of this chapter. For now, I will focus on concluding this part of the analysis of how Gallus's depiction of the conflict between Władysław and his sons informs us about the author's vision of ideal family relations. Just as with the events surrounding Zbigniew's first return to Poland, the chronicler makes a considerable effort to portray the conflict between the younger members of the Piast dynasty and their aristocratic supporters and duke Władysław by focusing on his "bad advisor" – palatine Sieciech. Nevertheless, this time young Bolesław also entered the frame, and it is through the actions of *Gesta*'s main protagonist that we can learn about the expectations toward the ideal son in son-father relationship. Readers learn that this bond is very strong, not only through the emotional reactions of the betrayed Bolesław, but also through the certain naivety of his actions – he is the last one to realize that following his father's orders would lead him into a trap, he and Zbigniew allow for the continuous breaking of the agreed terms by Władysław. This behavior can be explained by Gallus's will to present Bolesław as someone who, as a "natural master" of Poland abides by other natural hierarchies – the familial hierarchy with father as absolute authority included. Despite Władysław's shortcomings in performing this role, the younger of his sons still treats him with obedience and reverence as if he were his nurturing father. This is made clear by the first ritual reconciliation between the old duke and the Piast princes. As for the relationship between the brothers – they are reliable sources of support for each other, though this does not seem to stem simply from the underlying fraternity, but rather from clearly defined promises of mutual support in face of threat posed by Sieciech.

More information on Gallus's vision of idealized brotherly bond can be found in the third and final act of conflict within the Piast family – the struggle for power between Zbigniew and Bolesław after the death of their father. Right after Władysław died, "a bitter quarrel nearly broke out between the two brothers about the division of the treasury and the kingdom", and

only thanks to archbishop Martin's mediation "they kept the instructions their father had given in life while he lay dead before them."<sup>183</sup>

From this time onwards, Zbigniew began plotting against his brother. Instead of attending Bolesław's wedding, he conspired with the Pomeranians and Bohemians, imploring the latter to use the distraction caused by the celebration to raid Silesia. Gallus points out, that it was not the Czech invasion that hurt Bolesław the most, but "the violation of brotherly ties." The younger of Piast princes used familial rhetoric in his pleas to Zbigniew, in which he urged him "out of brotherly affection" to refrain from dealings and pacts with the Pomeranians and Bohemians – "foes of their father's legacy." Nevertheless, the older brother was able to smooth-talk his way out of the consequences of his repeated wrongdoings.

This behavior continued even after the meeting between the two brothers, in which they swore not to enter into any agreements with outside forces on their own, and that they will always support each other "against enemies and in all matters of need." However, while Bolesław was "anxious to keep faith", Zbigniew immediately broke his oath by not coming with his army to the rallying point and discouraging Bolesław's arriving forces.<sup>184</sup> Zbigniew's multiple perjuries did not escape his contemporaries, with "all the wise men of Poland" seeing through Zbigniew's deceptions. Interestingly, when they convened to discuss the behavior of the older Piast ruler they pointed out a bad council as the main reason for Zbigniew's actions.<sup>185</sup> Bolesław also grew impatient, and when in 1106 the boarder-tower in Koźle burned down,

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<sup>183</sup> *Advenientes autem ambo fratres, adhuc insepulto patre magnum inter se pene de divisione thesaurorum et regni discidium habuerunt, sed divina gratia inspirante et archiepiscopo sene fideli mediante, preceptum viventis in presencia mortui tenuerunt*, 2.21 in GpP, 156-57.

<sup>184</sup> 2.32 in GpP, 174-175.

<sup>185</sup> *For we know and are certain that Zbigniew on many occasions gave his oath about this to Boleslaw in our presence, which means he has perjured himself not once or thrice but many times. For he has not kept his friendship with his brother's friends, nor enmity with his enemies, on the contrary he has proved to be the friend of his brother's enemies and the enemy of his friends. It was not enough to him [Zbigniew] merely to break his word and his promise, and to fail to give the help he had sworn to, but if he discovered his brother's plans to march against his enemies, he would incite other foes to enter Poland from the other side and so force him to abandon his plans. He listened to quite childish and harmful counsel, offending the whole country for the hatred of a few, and leaving their father's inheritance open to be trampled by the foe*, 2.35 in GpP, 183-85.



reportedly set on fire by some internal traitor rather than Bohemians, he did send those words to his brother:

My brother, although you are older than me and have benefited equally from the division of the kingdom, you leave me, the younger, to endure all the travail alone, and do not involve yourself in the battles or the decisions of the kingdom. So, you should either assume the whole care and responsibility for the realm, inasmuch as you wish to be the greater; or if you cannot help me, the legitimate though younger one, bearing the land's burdens and enduring all the travail, then at least do me no harm. If you take over this task and remain in true brotherhood, wherever you summon me for common counsel or the good of the realm you will have in me a ready helper. Or should you prefer to live a quiet life rather than taking on such a task, entrust the whole thing to me and so, God willing, you will be safe.<sup>186</sup>

By the times those words were delivered, Zbigniew called upon his forces and allies – Pomeranians and Bohemians – to wage war against his younger brother. Bolesław learned about this plan and managed to secure temporary peace with Czechs and Zbigniew, now faced with overwhelming odds decided to flee rather than to confront his brother in the battle.<sup>187</sup> The long chase ended with the submission of Zbigniew, mediated by the Ruthenian ally of Bolesław duke Iaroslav and bishop Baldwin of Cracow. In addition to proffering satisfaction to Bolesław, Zbigniew had to recognize his new unequal status and give an oath that he “would never oppose his brother, but would obey him in all matters.” Only then Bolesław allowed by him “to retain Mazovia, but as a knight not as lord.”<sup>188</sup> These promises were again broken on the first occasion – Zbigniew not only did not destroy the castle his brother ordered him to, but also did not send a single unit to help his brother in another of his Pomeranian campaigns.<sup>189</sup> Bolesław had no choice, but to banish his unruly sibling. This pen-ultimate chapter in the dynastic

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<sup>186</sup> 2.36 in *GpP*, 185-87.

<sup>187</sup> 2.37 in *GpP*, 187-189.

<sup>188</sup> 2.68 in *GpP*, 191.

<sup>189</sup> *It was winter when the Poles gathered again to invade Pomerania, for they could more easily seize the strongholds once the marshes had frozen. Then again Bolesław discovered Zbigniew's treachery when it was revealed openly that he had broken his oath in all matters he had sworn to. He did not promptly pull down the castle that Gallus had built, nor did he gather even a single unit when bidden to help his brother, 2.69 in GpP, 191.*

struggle was closed by Gallus with the comment: “Thus was brought to end the lordship of Zbigniew’s evil counselors, and the whole realm of Poland was united under Bolesław’s lordship.”<sup>190</sup>

Gallus did not elaborate precisely on what Zbigniew was doing during his exile, though he shows up alongside the Bohemians in one of their Silesian raids and as a convenient, albeit ultimately abandoned excuse used by emperor Henry IV to invade Bolesław’s land.<sup>191</sup> When Zbigniew returned onto the pages of the chronicle for the dramatic finale of inter-dynastic conflict, he humbly pled to his brother to restore to him some of his paternal inheritance. Immediately upon receiving his envoy, Bolesław forgave his brother’s betrayals, perjuries, agreeing to Zbigniew’s return under conditions that:

If the humility of his mind was in keeping with the words of his envoys, and if he would regard himself as a knight and not as lord, nor make display of any pride or lordship in future, out of brotherly love he would give him certain castles; and if he could see in him true humility and true love, he would always advance him daily and every day, but if he concealed in his heart that ancient divisive pride, then open discord would be better than bringing back new sedition to Poland again.<sup>192</sup>

The exile did not change Zbigniew’s behavior, who again – under the influence of bad advisors:

behaved not like a man whom long exile had punished and toils and hardship had worn out, but indeed like a lord with a sword carried before him, and a band of musicians playing drums and cythars ahead. He indicated that he would not be coming to serve but to rule, he made as if he would not be a knight at his brother’s command but his brother’s lord and master.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Sicque dominium Zbigneui malis consiliariis est finitum, totumque regnum Polonie sub Boleslao domino cunctum*, 2.41 in *GpP*, 194-95.

<sup>191</sup> 2.50 in *GpP*, 209; 3.2 in *GpP*, 226-28.

<sup>192</sup> *videlicet si verbis sue legacionis mens humilis concordaret et si se pro milite non pro domino reputaret, nec ullam superbiam deinceps, nec ullum dominium ostentaret, fraternal karitate quedam castella sibi daret. Et si veram humilitatem in eo veramque karitatem prospiceret, semper eum in melius die cottidie promoveret; sin vero contumaciam illam antiquam in corde discordema occultaret, melius esset aperta discordia, quam iterum novam seditionem in Poloniam reportaret*, 3.25 in *GpP*, 270.

<sup>193</sup> *At Zbigneus stultorum consiliis acquiescens promisse subiectionis et humilitatis minime recordatus, ad Boleslauum non humiliter sed arroganter est ingressus, nec sicut homo longo tam exilio castigatus, tantisque laboribus et miseriis fatigatus, ymmo sicut dominus cum ense precedente, cum symphonia musicorum tympanis et cytharis modulantium precinente, non se servitutum sed regnaturum designabat, non se sub fratre militaturum, sed super fratrem imperaturum pretendebat*, Ibidem.

Only this ostentatious display of ambitions - which the older brother was supposed to have abandoned - led Bolesław to lend his ears to rumors about a plot against his life prepared by Zbigniew and to step up against him. This led him to some inexcusable—even by his court historian—sin (*peccatum*), described later also as wrongdoing (*facinus*), for which he had to undertake severe penance. For reasons that seem quite obvious, Gallus avoids describing the details of Bolesław’s “lamentable crime”, but mentions that the most important part of the elaborate penance the duke “offered satisfaction to his brother by lordly authority, and once pardon was given, he was reconciled.”<sup>194</sup>

Zbigniew Dalewski quite convincingly argued that the vague ‘wrongdoing’ of Bolesław that caused such an uproar was, at its core, the insidious breaking of the oath the main hero of the *Gesta* had sworn to his brother. While Gallus tries to depict Bolesław’s agreement for Zbigniew’s second return to Poland as motivated by generosity, he indirectly implies that the arrangement between the two brothers allowed Zbigniew to claim some part of his father’s inheritance. This would make his *adventus regis* less of a ritually communicated challenge toward Bolesław, which would certainly place Bolesław’s violent reaction in a different light. In conjecture with Cosmas’s short comment that the Polish ruler blinded his older step-brother after he deceitfully summoned him under the oath of fidelity.<sup>195</sup> According to Dalewski, it was the perjury, which as I explained in the introduction was seen as a violation of the sanctity of the given word, that was the sin Bolesław had to repent for.<sup>196</sup> While this interpretation hinges on the details which are absent in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, I think that it tells us a great deal about Gallus’s concept of ideal loyalty. The author’s decision not to specify that Bolesław was guilty of perjury speaks volumes about the importance of keeping one’s word.

<sup>194</sup> *Insuper ipse missas cottidie pro peccatis, pro defunctis celebrari, psalteriaque cantari faciebat et in pascendis et vestiendis pauperibus magne caritatis solatium impendebat. Et quod maius hiis omnibus et precipuum in penitentia reputatur, auctoritate dominica fratri suo satisfaciens, concessa venia concordatur*, 3.25 in *GpP*, 276-77.

<sup>195</sup> 3.35 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 222-23.

<sup>196</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 146-64.

In conclusion, the bonds between the members of the dynasty play an important role in the earliest Polish chronicle. When depicting the tumultuous relationships between duke Władysław, Zbigniew, and Bolesław, Gallus makes a consistent effort to shift as much blame for struggles between them as possible to outsiders – meddling palatine Sieciech or Zbigniew’s bad advisors. The expectations about the ideal father-son relationship that Gallus seems to subscribe to are in line with the general cultural milieu – the authority of the father should be unanimously obeyed. This is true even after his death—hence Bolesław’s appeal to his father’s legacy—or if he, as Władysław’s example shows, fails in protecting and aiding his children. The familial rhetoric used by Bolesław in the final stage of the conflict with Zbigniew suggests that Gallus also believed in the rule of brotherly solidarity. Nevertheless, those strong familial bonds were rarely depicted as a sole source of either side’s obligations – the political aid, consensus, or “negative loyalty” and other promises were secured by the exchange of oaths. Both the number of the oaths sworn throughout the narrative and the significance prescribed to the perjury speaks to the significance of this method of securing one’s loyalty in the world depicted by Gallus.

### 3.2.2 *Chronica Boemorum*

While the *Gesta principum Polonorum* focuses on the prolonged rivalry between two sons of Władysław Herman, the pages of *Chronica Boemorum* are filled with multiple stories about the conflict within the ruling family. The members of Přemyslid dynasty quite often had multiple sons, so intra-generational conflict between competing siblings was quite common. The death of Břetislav I marked the last time when the ducal power of the Přemyslid duke was questioned by one of the other dynasty members.

Cosmas certainly had a significant interest in depicting those conflicts. According to Lisa Wolverton, the issue of brotherly solidarity—or rather the lack of it—was one of the main concerns of Czech chronicler. The prevalence of this kind of strife, often leading to the

abominable sin of fratricide, was supposed to be one of the arguments behind his pessimistic view on the nature of earthly politics.<sup>197</sup> As I alluded to in the introduction, Wolverton's interpretation of Cosmas's work seeks its meaning in broader explorations of the political theory rather than a single specific agenda, while the Czech historiography explained Cosmas's extensive focus on the dynastic conflict by pointing out his interest in the problems of succession, legitimacy, and involvement in contemporary politics.<sup>198</sup>

While the themes of familial relationship can be found throughout Cosmas's chronicle, I would like to take a closer look at the escalation of the family conflict that took place during the reign of the second of the Břetislav's five sons, Vratislav. While considerably shorter than the narrative about the discord between Piasts analyzed above, it likewise focuses on the entangled filial and fraternal bonds, as well as relations of the members of the dynasty with their closest advisors.

Vratislav II, even before he ascended to the Prague's throne became the main victim of the struggle for power between the sons of Břetislav. The oldest of his brothers, Spityhnev II, had driven Vratislav out of his Moravian holding into hiding in Hungary.<sup>199</sup> While Vratislav was ultimately recognized to be more dangerous in exile and was reinstated by his older brother, it happened only after his first wife died in the house arrest of one of the Bohemian duke's close followers.<sup>200</sup> Despite suffering from those abuses, when Vratislav became a ruler of Bohemia he continued Spityhnev's approach to the members of the dynasty. Rather than treating his siblings with love expected in fraternal bonds, he would try to prevent any other Přemyslids from gaining too much power. This pragmatic approach, together with the use of the family bonds in the political rhetoric, can be seen clearly in the crisis surrounding the appointment of the new bishop of Prague.

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<sup>197</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 202–6, 213–14.

<sup>198</sup> See footnote no. 52 above.

<sup>199</sup> 2.15 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 132–33.

<sup>200</sup> 2.16 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 134.

Upon Spityhnev's death in 1061, his brother Jaromír returned from his studies abroad counting on receiving some part of his father's inheritance. Old duke Břetislav wanted Jaromír to pursue a clerical career and become the bishop of Prague. Vratislav, realizing that his younger brother wants to become a lay lord—and as such will probably want to have some share in the Přemyslids' power over Bohemia—had the unwilling Jaromír tonsured, reminding him beforehand that the church career was what their father had chosen for him. The younger Přemyslid was so opposed to that plan that he fled the country, finding recluse in Poland.<sup>201</sup> He was not to stay there for long. After the old bishop Severus died, Jaromír's brothers Conrad and Otto recalled him to Bohemia, where he “again took a clerical habit and tonsure.” In response Vratislav, “fearing that his brother might conspire against him with the aforesaid brothers if he should become bishop”, decided that his court chaplain Lanzo should become the new bishop of Prague. Cosmas makes the reasons behind the Bohemian ruler's choice very clear – it was because Lanzo “always remained faithful to the duke.”<sup>202</sup> Thus, when Conrad and Otto arrived with Jaromir and “submissively on his [Jaromir's] behalf asked Duke Vratislav to remember their brotherhood, remember their father's arrangement, and remember the oaths by which their father bound the faith of the *comites* to elect Jaromír as their bishop after Severus's death”, Vratislav decided that the episcopal election should be held with the participation of Bohemian secular and ecclesiastical elite.<sup>203</sup> While the eldest of the Přemyslids hoped that the thus gathered elders and *comites* will support his candidate, the gathered Bohemians turned against him. After Vratislav publicly praised Lanzo for his fidelity stating that by elevating him to this office he would set an example for future generations on “how

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<sup>201</sup> 2.18 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 137.

<sup>202</sup> 2.22 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 140.

<sup>203</sup> 2.22 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 141.

much they ought to be faithful to their lords”,<sup>204</sup> the opinion of the gathered Bohemian elites was voiced by *comes* Kojata, who said to younger Přemyslid Otto:

Why do you stand there? Are you like an ass hearing the sound of a lyre? Why do you not help your brother? Do you not see that your brother, the son of a duke, is being repudiated for a stranger and an alien, who came to this land without leg wraps and is now being raised to the throne? And if the duke violates the oath to his father, far be it from us that the ghosts of our parents should render an account before God for this oath and bear the suffering. We acknowledge and will strive as much as possible toward what your father Břetislav constrained us and our fathers to uphold by an oath of faith: that your brother Jaromír is to be bishop after the death of Bishop Severus.<sup>205</sup>

Smil, castellan of Žatec, confirmed those words of Kojata, publicly taking hands with three younger brothers and proclaiming: “Let us go and see whether the tricks and false equity of one man prevails, or whether justice and the wondrous equity of three brothers excels. Comparable age, one will, and the same power links them and the greater abundance of warriors helps them.”<sup>206</sup> With these words the election was broken, with the supporters of two sides of the conflict preparing for a violent confrontation. Seeing the numerical advantage of his brothers, Vratislav decided to concede to their demands, although as he explained in his message to the younger Přemyslids, he did so not “on account of the boasting tongue of Kojata, son of Všebor, nor Smil, son of Božen”, but because of the remembrance of “our father’s legacy and his oaths and demands of brotherly love.”<sup>207</sup>

Both sides of the conflict as described by Cosmas are actively using the rhetoric of family bonds. The wishes of dead Bořivoj are initially cited by Vratislav, only to be turned against him and used in the argumentation against Lanzo during the election. Interestingly, the

<sup>204</sup> *ut per hoc discant posterī, quantum dominis suis debeant fideles fieri*, 2.23 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 115.

<sup>205</sup> 2.23 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 143; *Quid stas? An onos luras Quare non adiuvas fratrem tuum? An non vides, quia frater tuus, filius ducis, repudiatur et proselitus atque advena, qui in hanc terram sine femoralibus venit, in solium sublimatur? Atque si dux violat patris sui sacramentum, absit a nobis, ut manes nostrorum parentum apud Deum pro hoc sacramento reddant rationem aut supplicium luant. Scimus enim et ad hoc nitimur, ut possumus, quod genitor vester Bracizlaus nos et patres nostros sub fidei sacramento constrinxit, quo post obitum Severi episcopi frater vester Iaromir presul sit*, 2.23 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 115-16.

<sup>206</sup> 2.24 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 143.

<sup>207</sup> 2.24 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 143-44.

duke's attempt at enticing the gathered nobles by presenting Lanzo's nomination as a reward for his service did not work in that instance. It seems that the appeal to the rule of *do ut des* underlying Vratislav's relationship with his followers did not resonate well with the gathered crowd. It might have been simply that nobles and church hierarchs at the gathering thought that this kind of reward—a bishopric—was not for the duke to give. Kojata, however, seems to be concerned not with the question of investiture, but rather with the duke's perjury, pointing out that Vratislav's actions directly break the promise that he made to his dying father, the one Přemyslid and members of the Bohemian elites sworn an oath to uphold.

It seems then that the reaction of the gathered crowds signaled to the reader that the obedience to a dead father's wishes overrides the lord's responsibility to reward the loyal service of his followers. However, one has to question whether abiding by Břetislav's dying wishes was really the chief motivation behind the stance taken by Kojata and Smil – after all, the reader does not learn about this kind of reaction when Jaromír initially decided to abandon the priestly vocation. It rather seems like the notion of familial obligations and solidarity, while employed frequently by all sides of the conflict, serves them only as a convenient excuse to pursue their own political goals. The popularity of this language of kinship speaks to the prevalence of the filial obedience and fraternity as ideals in the society depicted by Cosmas. It does not mean, however, that any of those high ideals were to be acted upon by the main actors of the narrative.

Thus, the feud continued. With Vratislav obtaining a royal title from the hands of Emperor Henry IV in 1085<sup>208</sup> his three younger brothers acted together trying to balance his power. This bond was seen as multigenerational – thus after the death of Otto, Conrad assumed the role of the main defender of his son's claims to the Moravian inheritance left by their father.

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<sup>208</sup> Cosmas notes it under 1086, see: 2.37 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 160-63; For the role this episode plays in the Cosmas's chronicle see: Reitingner, *Vratislav*, 89–105.



Vratislav's decision to give Olomouc to his son Boleslav rather than to the children of Otto sparked another open conflict between Přemyslids. Despite Boleslav's premature death, Vratislav was bent on expelling Conrad, who "was alone after the death of his brothers, wholly deprived of fraternal help", from Moravia.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, when the king's armies besieged his brother in Brno, events took an unexpected turn, due to the behavior of another Přemyslid – Vratislav's son Břetislav II.

For Cosmas's reader Břetislav II is not a new character. Introduced in the earlier chapters in which the Czech author described Vratislav's campaign in Sorabia, prince Břetislav decided to send off most of his troops with the loot, while he and his close followers rested from the heatwave by the river. This small episode, while setting the scene for the events at Brno, allows Cosmas to characterize the Přemyslid prince. Vratislav's son is portrayed, not unlike Bolesław III in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, as a young and bold member of the "youth".<sup>210</sup> First, the Czech chronicler highlights the theme of tension between bold *juvenes* and reasonable adults by having Břetislav II, who decided to take a swim, dismiss the warnings of older *comes* Alexios with words that "it is natural for old men always to tremble at the motion of the air and, in spite of its proximity to them, to fear fate more than young men do." In a twist of dramatic irony, the Bohemian forces were ambushed by Saxons, and many of the noble companions of the Přemyslid prince were killed, while he narrowly avoided losing his hand.<sup>211</sup>

When years later, during setting up a siege camp at Brno, prince Břetislav was reminded of these events, his strong reaction resulted in a direct confrontation between him and Vratislav:

<sup>209</sup> 2.43 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 171.

<sup>210</sup> As Martin Nodl rightly points out, the deliberate framing of Břetislav's behaviour as one of the aristocratic youth is even more apparent given the fact that Vratislav's son was at least 25 years old by this point, see: Martin Nodl, "Zaniklý svět rukavic. Kosmas, Gall Anonym a knížecí gesta" [The Lost World of Gloves: Cosmas, Gallus Anonymous and the Ducal Gestures], in *Středověká Evropa v pohybu. K počtě Jana Klápště.*, ed. Ivana Boháčová and Petr Sommer (Prague: Archeologický ústav AV ČR, 2014), 398.

<sup>211</sup> 2.39 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 164-66.

While they were designating the places where each comes would fix his tents, the bailiff Zderad, like the crafty man he was, obliquely giving a sign to the king with his eyes, pointed out the youth Břetislav among the satraps standing before his father. Then he uttered a call to disorder: “Since indeed your son, O Lord King, plays and swims freely in the river in summer, if it pleases your majesty, let him put his tents, with his followers, on this side of the burg near the river.”<sup>212</sup>

Břetislav, deeply offended by Zderad’s words, returned to his followers to plan his revenge. After the dark, he summoned his men to counsel him on how to pay back the bailiff. The prince also sent a message to Conrad, asking him for advice. Knowing that Zderad was Vratislav’s close advisor, Conrad saw the opportunity to drive a wedge between father and son, and implored Břetislav with the following words: “If you know who you are, do not be afraid to quench the fire scorching me no less than you. It is not praiseworthy to disregard it.”<sup>213</sup> Since this advice was in line with the counsel of Břetislav’s men, the Přemyslid prince sends by dawn to the bailiff, luring unsuspecting Zderad into the trap. When the bailiff met with the young prince, Břetislav listed his grievances and saying “the faith I promised you: behold, I renounce it”, threw his glove at Zderad. On this previously agreed sign, the youthful followers of Břetislav surrounded the bailiff and massacred him.

As Martin Nodl convincingly explained, the glove-throwing gesture of young Přemyslid does not have to be understood narrowly as a symbolic gesture of identifying Zderad as his enemy. Glove—if given—symbolized in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the guarantee of the recipient’s safety and protection. The example of such use can be found in *Gesta principum Polonorum*, where Bolesław III sends one of his gloves as a guarantee of safety during the negotiations of surrender with the Pomeranian defenders of Wieleń.<sup>214</sup> Nodl argues that after the night of scheming Břetislav sent the glove to Zderad, convincing the bailiff that

<sup>212</sup> 2.43 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 171.

<sup>213</sup> 2.43 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 172.

<sup>214</sup> *Ad extremum tamen Pomorani continuis laboribus et vigiliis fatigati, se non posse tantis resistere viribus meditati, de primo fastu superbie descendentes, sese castellumque, recepta Boleszlai ciroteca pro pignore, reddiderunt*, 2.48 in *GpP*, 204-6.

he does not hold any grudge. When he met with young Přemyslid he must have handed him this symbol of good faith, which allowed the prince to dramatically go back on his promise.<sup>215</sup> This interpretation explains Břetislav's words, but also implies that he never intended to keep his word given to Zderad.

Nevertheless, Cosmas does not mention any negative consequences of this premeditated perjury. When *comes* Držimír, the only companion of Zderad, escaped and managed to inform the king about the slaughter, Vratislav "grieved and wept", but everyone else secretly commended the actions of the young prince. Moreover, when Břetislav moved his camp further from his father he was followed by the better part of Bohemian forces.

The further escalation of the conflict was prevented by the intervention of Wirpirk, Conrad's wife. This prudent woman, unbeknownst to her husband entered Vratislav's camp and was brought in front of the king, where she pled:

"Hardly worthy to be called your sister-in-law, pious king, I do not come now brazenly but as a suppliant at your knees." And she fell on her face and adored the king. Commanded to rise, she stood and said: "You will find no reason, my lord king, for war in these parts. You bring back no victory from this battle. You commit a war worse than civil. If you see us and our goods as booty for your warriors, you turn your spears against yourself since you despoil with bloody rapine your own brother, to whom you ought to be a guardian. He who attacks his own people goes against God. [...] "However, if you sharpen your thunderbolts only against your brother's throat, let it not be that you are considered another Cain. Without violating your favor, he preferred to wander than to incriminate you with fratricide. Greece lay open to your brother, Dalmatia lay open. Accept instead the things he sent you, not as your brother but as if your servant." And she produced tongs and a bundle of twigs from her cloak. "If a brother sinned against his brother, correct him. This land, which is yours, you should instead entrust to him."<sup>216</sup>

Seeing that these words deeply moved Vratislav and his followers, Wirpirk also asked for clemency for Břetislav, reminding everyone gathered that "for a son's great sin a little bit of a father's punishment is sufficient." The king, while still very much afraid that his brother

<sup>215</sup> Nodl, "Zaniklý svět rukavic," 399–402.

<sup>216</sup> 2.45 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 174.

and son will conspire together, asked Wirpirk to bring them to his camp “for the holy kiss and in a bond of peace.” The mediation of Conrad’s wife was successful, although Vratislav, while giving the kiss of peace to two rebellious Přemyslids, ominously warned Břetislav: “My son, if you do well, it will be better for no one than you yourself; but if you do not do well, your sin will be lurking at the door.”<sup>217</sup>

Břetislav II also understood, that his father “made peace with him not from his heart but out of necessity”, and rather than remaining at Brno he withdrew with his forces to Hradec, where they remained waiting for the retaliation of the offended king. Vratislav, who by then seemingly wanted nothing more than to “revenge his anger upon his son and his followers, managed to turn his recent enemy Conrad into an ally by confirming by the oath of all the *comites*” that he would obtain the throne of Bohemia after Vratislav’s death. When Břetislav heard about this unlikely alliance of his father and uncle, he marched his troops in the direction of Vratislav’s forces, ready to confront his father on the battlefield. Here again, the violent confrontation between family members was avoided thanks to the miraculous intervention of Saints Adalbert and Wenceslaus which I described in more detail in Chapter 1. The heavenly appeal to stop this “worse than civil war” resulted in peace between father and son arranged by Conrad. Thus, the Přemyslids avoided, as Cosmas describes, “the worst crime since the founding of Prague would have been committed.”<sup>218</sup> Despite this seemingly miraculous resolution, Břetislav decided to leave Bohemia and went to Hungary, “where King Ladislav, acknowledging Břetislav as his relative, received him favorably.”<sup>219</sup> He returned only after Vratislav’s and Conrad’s death.

In depicting the events that followed the siege of Brno, Cosmas focuses on emotions. Emotions are responsible for both inciting incidents that lead to the later stand-off - Vratislav’s

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<sup>217</sup> Ibidem, 175.

<sup>218</sup> 2.47 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 176-77.

<sup>219</sup> 2.48 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 177.

fear of Conrad's actions that lead him to take preventive action against his younger brother and the deep offense that Břetislav takes from the singular insult. The idea that the conflict which could have culminated, as Cosmas puts it, in "the worst crime since the founding of Prague" and which required the intervention of the Bohemian saints—something that happened previously only during the Polish occupation of Prague—was caused merely by impulsive actions of the Přemyslid ruler and his son was dismissed by modern historians. While I agree that the underlying reasons for this conflict can be found in the underwritten—yet still present—conflict between established members of Vratislav's ruling elite and the younger generation of nobles which grew impatient with the king's long reign,<sup>220</sup> in fact, Cosmas wants his reader to focus on the story of family drama.

It was then the constant threat of murdering one's kin, cited directly by Wirpirk, that should be seen as the atrocity that only through miraculous intervention was not brought by this conflict. Through the speech delivered by Conrad's wife Cosmas points out Vratislav's failures to live up to the ideal of family relations.<sup>221</sup> Repeating Břetislav I's prophetic words Wirpirk warns Vratislav against repeating the actions of Cain. She claims Conrad's innocence but points out that he would—presumably out of brotherly compassion—choose exile rather than force his brother to commit a sin of fratricide. Finally, Wirpirk reminds Vratislav that as a father he should show clemency to his son. The emotional impact of this speech on the king's entourage makes the reader assume that in Cosmas's world the vision of family bonds painted by Conrad's wife was shared by the Bohemian society. Even cunning Vratislav uses the same rhetoric, warning his son with the words Abel spoke to Cain.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Lisa Wolverton, *Hastening toward Prague: Power and Society in the Medieval Czech Lands*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 203; Barbara Krzemińska, "Břetislav II: Pokus o charakteristiku osobnosti panovníka" [Břetislav II: Attempt at a ruler's characterization], *Československý časopis historický* 35 (1987): 730–31; On the similar note, although ultimately pointing out toward the conflict between supporters of the new idea of kingship and those who wanted to see the ducal power in terms of the old arrangement between Bohemians and Přemysl the Ploughman: Wihoda, "Kosmas a Vratislav," 377.

<sup>221</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 142–44.

<sup>222</sup> Genesis 4:7

The rhetoric of family bonds used by both sides of the presented conflict, just like the use of ritual communication, did not help in resolving the conflict. After all, why would Břetislav believe in the symbolical power of the kiss of peace—frequently used in the diplomatic language of medieval rituals to end feuds and conflicts<sup>223</sup>—if he himself used similar gesture to lure his opponent into the trap? This disparity between the ideal vision of loyal and loving members of the family and the harsh reality of dynastic strife will become even more apparent in Cosmas’s depiction of contemporary politics.

Břetislav’s unchallenged reign lasted only three years. When he was assassinated under unclear circumstances—on which Cosmas does not want to elaborate—after eight years of reign, the vicious infighting between his three younger brothers and numerous cousins started again. The constant strife between the members of the dynasty takes up most of the third book of Cosmas’s chronicle. Presenting those narratives in detail would take a lot of space, while the unfolding events are seldom depicted in such detail as it was the case with Vratislav’s confrontation with his brother and son. It suffices then to second Lisa Wolverton when she points out that Cosmas, referring to all Přemyslids from the same generation as “brothers”, juxtaposes the brutal infighting between the members of the family with an idealized notion of brotherhood and fraternal solidarity it would entail.<sup>224</sup> While characters from the pages of the final book of *Chronica Boemorum* often appeal to brotherly love, their actions follow the example of fratricidal struggles recalled as a warning by dying Břetislav I. A great example of such dichotomy can be found in the—already briefly mentioned—part of the chronicle in which the bloody end to the struggle between Piast princes Zbigniew and Bolesław III is cited. This part of the narrative of Cosmas’s chronicle revolves around duke Vladislav and his Moravian cousin Otto.

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<sup>223</sup> Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace*.

<sup>224</sup> Wolverton, *Hastening toward Prague*, 101; Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 208.

In May of 1110 Vladislav, who recently secured his position as the Duke of Bohemia, met with his cousin Otto II the Black in Tynec nad Labem. Just a year earlier, after the death of duke Svatopluk, Otto—the younger brother of the deceased—was the main contestant to the throne of Prague, so the meeting took place in a tense atmosphere. As described by Cosmas of Prague who claims to be an eyewitness of these events, the Přemyslids, “debated various matters all day, and by having given and received oaths between them, they were reconciled.”<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, just a few months later Vladislav seized the unexpected Otto. The Bohemian duke imprisoned him in the Křivoklát castle, but refuted those who advised him to dispose of his opponent by blinding him with the words: “I do not want in any way to be compared to the Polish Duke Bolesław, who summoned his brother Zbigniew with evil intentions, under an oath of loyalty, and deprived him of his eyes on the third day.”<sup>226</sup>

It is clear that Vladislav compares favorably to the Piast ruler. Cosmas goes even further in his explanations for the Přemyslid’s behavior – the imprisoned Otto does not blame his cousin, but claims that it was the work of evil men at the duke’s court, Vacek and judge Prostěj.<sup>227</sup> At the same time, it is clear to the reader that Vladislav lured Otto under false pretense, perjured himself and, while sparing his eyes, kept him in prison for three years – hardly an example of a proper bond of kinship.

Tellingly, when the conflict between the two Polish princes shows up in the chronicle of Cosmas for the first time, Cosmas informs us that Zbigniew allied with the Bohemian duke Bořivoj, to whom he promised financial reward. Hearing that Zbigniew’s rival Bolesław III appealed to his affinity to Přemyslid, pointing out that he is his *nearer kinsman [than Zbigniew] through Bořivoj’s sister Judith*. More importantly, however, he outbid his step-brother by

<sup>225</sup> 3.34 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 222.

<sup>226</sup> 3.35 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 222-23.

<sup>227</sup> *Friends with lying tongues are like bees: honey flows from their mouths, but the tail on the other end stings. Believe me to have been deceived by such a trick. Yet it is necessary to bear the blows of changeable fortune. My brother did not do these things to me. The evil man Vacek wanted it thus; this was done by Prostěj, the judge*, 3.35 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 222-23.

offering *ten sacks filled with a thousand marks*. Cosmas ends the story lamenting on the corrupt nature of contemporary politics: *O Money, queen of all evil, friend of deceit, enemy and foe of faithfulness, you hinder justice and subvert proper judgment!*<sup>228</sup> This brief story perfectly exemplifies the way kinship bonds were evoked by the characters found on the pages of *Chronica Boemorum*.

In summary, the bonds of kinship play a peculiar role in the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague. They are frequently evoked by multiple characters, who seem to share a common vision of ideal family relations – fatherly love toward children and solidarity within kin-group. At the same time, these values seem to be evoked mostly on the level of rhetoric in oratory, but seldom in practice – something that the first Czech chronicler makes an effort to emphasize. Choosing to contrast ideals of familial bonds and brutal political reality to criticize contemporary Přemyslid rulers, Cosmas consequently depicts the familial bonds as something that exists as a natural, independent source of obligations. The kinship alone should, in the Cosmas’s ideal world, secure aid, or at least “negative loyalty” of other members of the family.

### 3.2.3 Primeval Chronicle

Out of sketchy outlines of the layers of older traditions and compiled editions which create the *Illuminated Chronicle*, the text created at the court of Coloman the Learned or his son Stephen II is one of the most clearly identifiable parts constituting the fourteenth-century compilation. The main focus of this part of the story is given to the dynastic struggle between king Solomon and his son Andrew against the other side of the family – Solomon’s younger brother Béla and his sons Géza and Ladislav. Since Béla was Coloman’s grandfather, one would expect that the presented narrative is generally skewed in favor of this branch of the Árpád dynasty. However, due to the complicated history of the text, the ideological message

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<sup>228</sup> 3.16 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 199-200.



contained in the description of eleventh-century events is—as the cited parts will illustrate—not so simple. The history of Coloman’s own struggle against his brother Álmos certainly found its resonance in the way how dynastic conflicts of the past were portrayed, especially given the fact that after the death of Stephen II the Hungarian throne passed to Béla II, Álmos’ son blinded by Coloman.<sup>229</sup> Thus, the eleventh-century events became a point of contention between two traditions of legitimizing’s ruler’s power – through “arguments of legitimacy” – royal descent and coronation, or through appeals to *idoneitas* – personal suitability to rule.<sup>230</sup>

Andrew and Béla were the sons of Vazul, Saint Stephen’s brother-in-law, who was blinded by the first Hungarian king after 1031. The younger members of Árpadian sideline initially lived in exile in Poland, from where Andrew and the third brother, Levente went to the Rus’, eventually returning to their fatherland around 1046. With Hungary desolated by pagan uprisings and German interventions, Vazul’s sons were easily able to end the brief second reign of Peter Orseolo.<sup>231</sup> With Andrew anointed a new king of Hungary and following the death of Levente,<sup>232</sup> we learn that the oldest son of Vazul, after defeating all of his neighbors in military campaigns, sent a message to his brother Béla in Poland “with great love (*cum magna dilectione*)” saying:

Once we shared poverty and labor together, and now I ask you, most beloved brother, that you come to me without tarrying, so that we may be companions in joy and share in the good things of the kingdom, rejoicing in each other’s presence. For I have neither heir nor brother except you. You shall be my heir, and you shall succeed me in the kingdom.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Bagi, “The Dynastic Conflicts,” 141.

<sup>230</sup> This distinction between two visions of legitimization present in different layers of Illuminated Chronicle was introduced in: Gerics József, *Legkorábbi gesta-szerkesztéseink keletkezésrendjének problémái*. [The problems of the earliest editions of our gesta] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961); For later developments see: Kristó Gyula, “Legitimitás és idoneitás: adalékok Árpád-kori eszméletörténetünkhöz” [Legitimacy and suitability: contribution to our intellectual history in the age of Árpáds], *Századok* 108 (1974): 585–621.

<sup>231</sup> 81 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 152-53.

<sup>232</sup> 86 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 162-63; Levente died soon after 1046 so he did not play any part in the succession struggle between two other Vazul’s sons.

<sup>233</sup> Nos, qui quondam penurie participes fuimus et laborum, rogo te, dilectissime frater, ut ad me non tardes venire, quatenus consortes simus gaudiorum et bonis regni corporali presential guadentes communicemus. Neque enim heredem habeo, nec getmanum preter te. Tu sis michi heres, tu in reg[i] num succedas, 88 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 164-65.

Thus, Béla returned to Hungary. On his arrival Andrew “rejoiced with a great joy, because he was supported by his brother’s strength (*gavisus est gaudio magno valde, quia fraterno fulcitus est robore*).” The chronicle notes, that the two brothers divided the realm into three parts, with two in the hands of king and the third in the duke’s, which was to become “the seed of discord and wars between the dukes and kings of Hungary.”<sup>234</sup>

The division of the realm described in this chapter of the *Illuminated Chronicle* and the nature of Béla’s *ducatus* are the subject of a long debate in Hungarian historiography. György Györffy saw it as a military border zone, while for Gyula Kristó it was comprised of the peripheries of the kingdom that served as a refuge for the anti-feudal elements of Hungarian society.<sup>235</sup> The most recent voice in the debate – one I find myself agreeing with – comes from Dániel Bagi, who sees in the similar patterns of dividing the realm – and sovereign authority – between the members of the dynasty as an imperfect tool of preventing and resolving dynastic disputes in all Central European polities.<sup>236</sup> Since such division was based on an agreement between family members, it hinged on their personal relationships. Indeed, the depiction of the episode focuses on the emotions of brotherly love displayed by king Andrew, who appeals to Béla on the basis of their strong bonds forged in the hardships of exile. Particularly telling is the use of the word *dilectio*, synonymous with *caritas* and often used to denote the Christian ideal of friendship – pure love for God redirected towards a fellow human.<sup>237</sup> It seems that this affinity was reciprocated by the younger prince and the consensual power-sharing between

<sup>234</sup> 88 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 167.

<sup>235</sup> Györffy György, “A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig, a törzstől az orszáig I” [From the Hungarian clan to the county, from tribe to country I], *Századok* 92 (1958): 12–87; Kristó Gyula, *A XI. századi hercegség története Magyarországon* [History of the eleventh-century duchy in Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974).

<sup>236</sup> Bagi, *Divisio regni*, 164–66.

<sup>237</sup> Epp, *Amicitia*, 37–42; Oschema, “Sacred or Profane?,” 58.

brothers lasted for some time, since for a while they “lived in a great tranquility of peace.”<sup>238</sup>

Together they fought against the intrusions of Henry III in 1051 and 1052.

However, this changed with the deteriorating health of King Andrew. As we learn from the chronicle:

Because carnal love and ties of blood are wont to prove a hindrance to truthfulness, in king Andrew love for his son overcame justice, so that he broke the treaty of his promise, which kings ought not do; in the twelfth year of his reign, subdued by old age, he caused his son Solomon, who was still a child of five years, to be anointed and crowned king over all Hungary.<sup>239</sup>

Andrew himself tried to justify this breach of his brother’s trust by stating that Solomon’s elevation was necessary because otherwise, Emperor Henry III would not marry off his daughter to the young prince, which was one of the negotiated guarantees of peace between Hungarians and Germans.

The *Illuminated Chronicle* contains two traditions about Béla’s immediate reaction to this betrayal. According to the first one, when during the coronation “*Omnipotens det tibi*” was sung and the duke was told by the interpreter “that the infant Solomon had been made lord over him, he very much resented it.”<sup>240</sup> However, as the reader is informed at the very beginning of the next chapter, “others say that Solomon was anointed king with the consent of Duke Béla and his sons Géza and Ladislas as well as of all the great men of the realm, and that only later did sewers of strife arouse hatred between them.”<sup>241</sup>

This of course spanned a discussion over which of these chapters contains the more authentic vision of Solomon’s coronation, and whether they were written at the same time or

<sup>238</sup> 88 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 167.

<sup>239</sup> *Quia vero carnalis amor et consanguineitatis affectio solent impedire veritatem, vicit amor filialis in Andrea rege iustitiam et rupto federe sue promissionis, quod in regibus esse non deberet, filium suum Salomonem adhuc puerulum infantulum adhuc quinque annorum super totam Hungariam anno imperii sui duodecimo confectus senio in regem fecit inungi et coronary*, 91 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 175

<sup>240</sup> 91 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 175.

<sup>241</sup> 92 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 175.

belonged to two different redactions of the *Illuminated Chronicle*.<sup>242</sup> While there is still no broad consensus, I am convinced by the argumentation of those that see Béla's consent and participation in Solomon's coronation as a tradition closer to the actual historical circumstances.<sup>243</sup> However, taking the tradition about Béla's resentment as a later addition by the chronicler writing on behalf of one of the members of his line does not mean that we ought to ignore it. On the contrary, the reaction attributed to king Andrew's brother helps the reader to understand what exactly was the *iusticia* that was overcome by *amor filialis*. As pointed out by Dániel Bagi, *iusticia* here does not have to mean justice, but can as easily be understood as an individual right, often sealed by an oath – in this case a right stemming from the promise made by Andrew to his returning brother in chapter 88. Bagi further argues that by suggesting that Andrew broke the oath-sealed promise given to Béla, the chronicler was trying to turn the reader's attention away from the oath of loyalty that Béla and his sons would—as contemporary Salian analogies show—have had to swear to the adolescent king Solomon.<sup>244</sup> Without deciding on whether or not this was the case, it is clear that chapter 91 of the *Illuminated Chronicle* presents a clear value judgment about King Andrew's decision. The love for one's son, however strong it may be, should not overcome the previously given promises – particularly those that might have been secured by oath. The amicable bond between brothers, which allowed them to share power through the institution of *ducatus* turned into resentment.

The tension between the Árpád brothers was, similarly to the one between Bolesław III and Zbigniew in *Gesta principum Polonorum*, further facilitated by some malicious *whisperers* (*susurratores*) convinced King Andrew that Solomon could not reign unless Béla was killed. while *from the other side it was impressed upon Duke Béla* that he had now the opportunity to

<sup>242</sup> Summary of this topic can be found in: József Laszlovszky, "Angolszász koronázási ordo Magyarországon" [Anglo-saxon ordo coronandi in Hungary], in *Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a középkorban I*, ed. Attila Bárány, József Laszlovszky, and Zsuzsanna Papp (Máriabesnyő: Attraktor, 2008), 96–99.

<sup>243</sup> Szovák, "The Image of Ideal King," 150.

<sup>244</sup> Bagi, *Divisio regni*, 236–41.

challenge adolescent Solomon and his ailing father, gaining the crown for himself. This led to one of the best-known episodes of the *Illuminated Chronicle*. Andrew, bedridden by illness, summoned Béla to a meeting in Várkony, because he “realized that without the duke’s consent his son could not rule after his decease.” Thus the king, as he explained to his faithful followers, wanted to “make trial of the duke”, by having him to decide between royal title or dukedom, symbolized by crown and sword put forward by the immobilized king. If Béla was to *choose in friendship and peace to have a duchy*, he would have it. If he were to choose the crown, he was to be seized by the king’s followers and beheaded. However, the duke was warned about this ambush. Thus during the meeting, even though Andrew acknowledged that *in justice* the crown belonged to Béla, the younger brother chose the sword. Seeing this, Andrew bowed down at his brother’s feet—a gesture particularly pronounced given his higher rank, age, and illness—because the king “thought that he [Béla] had given the crown to his son in the same simplicity of spirit as Levente had given it to him.”<sup>245</sup>

The symbolic use of the sword in this episode brings up not only, like the older literature suggested, the military function of the office of *ducatus*,<sup>246</sup> but also the ritual of submission. The gift of a weapon—particularly of a sword—often accompanied a ritual of entry into a hierarchical relationship of reciprocal fidelity, be it filiation, godparenthood, or vassalage.<sup>247</sup> Thus, the ritual staged by Solomon at Várkony can be seen as an attempt to reframe his relationship with his younger brother - from the one of shared power to the one of Béla’s subordination. If that was to be the case, it is probable that the description of the ritual would not be edited out by writers at Coloman’s court. After all, Béla was coerced into choosing submission, which was something deeply immoral in the eyes of contemporaries.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>245</sup> 92 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 176-79.

<sup>246</sup> Györffy, “A magyar nemzetségtől a vármegyéig,” 52–53.

<sup>247</sup> Régine Le Jan, “Frankish Giving of Arms and Rituals of Power: Continuity and Change in the Carolingian Period,” in *Rituals of Power. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, by Janet L. Nelson and Frans Theuvs (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 281–309.

<sup>248</sup> Szovák, “The Image of Ideal King,” 151–52; Bagi, *Divisio regni*, 217–22.

The description of the next phase of the conflict clearly underlines the way in which familial ties were mustered during similar conflicts. Béla went with his family to Poland, seeking the aid of his father-in-law Casimir the Restorer, who *helped him faithfully and to good effect* (*auxiliatus est ei fideliter et efficaciter*). In turn, Andrew sent Salomon to his father-in-law, the emperor, and was able to obtain German and Czech reinforcements. With both sides of the conflict aided by the forces of their foreign allies, Andrew's and Béla's armies met in battle in 1060, just a year after meeting in Várkony. Both sides fought bravely, but *Duke Béla with God's help gained the victory*. Andrew died in captivity shortly thereafter.<sup>249</sup>

Even though in the moment of the battle most of the Hungarians joined the winning side, the victorious Béla found it hard to legitimize his reign in the eyes of his subjects. New ruler's attempt at reconciling with his people through appealing before a general assembly—an important element of the narrative which I will elaborate on in the next chapter—ended in failure, resulting in a pagan uprising. Béla's problems—and his reign—were cut short by his death in 1063 from injuries he suffered when his throne at his Dömös estate collapsed onto him.<sup>250</sup> While some historians had interpreted this freak accident as part of the older tradition, critical of Béla's line, in which the usurper meets a fitting divine punishment, neither the *Illuminated Chronicle* nor other contemporary sources describe Béla's death as a sign or omen.<sup>251</sup>

Thus, in 1063 Solomon returned to Hungary with the aid of his brother-in-law, Henry IV. While through *adventus regis* in Fehérvár he was clearly recognized by the “clergy and the people of whole Hungary” gathered there as their ruler,<sup>252</sup> his reinstatement to the royal office required also reconciliation with Béla's oldest son, Géza. The Hungarian prince initially fled

<sup>249</sup> 93 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 179-81.

<sup>250</sup> 96, in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 185.

<sup>251</sup> The interpretation of this event as the critique of illegitimate rule in: Kristó, “Legitimitás és idoneitás,” 598; Arguments against such interpretation in: Bagi, *Divisio regni*, 239.

<sup>252</sup> 97 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 186-87.

with his younger brothers to Poland but returned to challenge Solomon's claim as soon as the German allies of the reinstated king left Hungary. Fearing a military confrontation, Solomon fortified himself in Moson castle. At this stage, the mediation between the two Árpáds was undertaken by "bishops and other religious men." Bishop Desiderius, through "gentle admonitions and sweet pleadings" convinced Géza to agree to the restoration of Solomon while keeping his father's duchy to himself. With the terms of consensus negotiated, the public reconciliation between cousins took place on the feast day of SS. Fabian and Sebastian, when Solomon and Géza "made peace at Győr, with each other before the Hungarian people." The reconciled Árpáds feasted together at Pécs, where on Easter Day:

King Solomon received his crown from the hands of Duke Géza [...]. All the assembled Hungarians, seeing that there was peace and mutual love between the king and the duke, praised God, the lover of peace, and there was exceeding great joy among the people.<sup>253</sup>

The rituals were successful, though they did not disperse mutual suspicions immediately. Hence when a fire seized the palace and the nearby constructions, the king and the duke were both "terrified by the suspicion of foul play", and calmed down only after the exchange of assurances that "there had not been on either side any evil intention of treachery."<sup>254</sup> Thus, while the author of the entry in the *Illuminated Chronicle* interprets this event as an "omen of future discord",<sup>255</sup> Solomon and Béla's sons remained faithful to their agreement.

The conflict between the two branches of Árpád dynasty flared up again in 1071, as the aftermath of events of the joint military campaign to capture Belgrade. After a long siege, the Byzantine garrison of the city surrendered to the forces of King Salomon, Duke Géza and his younger brother Ladislav. To be more exact, the Greek Duke Niketas, "accompanied by a great

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<sup>253</sup> 97 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 189.

<sup>254</sup> 98 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 189

<sup>255</sup> *Ibidem*.

multitude of people, gave himself into the power of Duke Géza”, who was known for his piety and as such seen as more compassionate. A much lesser group surrendered themselves to Solomon, who was seen as a *tough man* over-reliant on *vile counsels of ispán Vid*.<sup>256</sup> This angered the king, who decided to compensate for the smaller number of prisoners by dividing the booties of the war unequally, which greatly annoyed the duke. Solomon was even more insulted by the fact that Byzantine Emperor offered Géza to “strengthen the bonds of peace and friendship” but did not approach him—the Hungarian monarch—with the same offer. This was the last straw for King Solomon, “who was more and more consumed with the fires of envy.” The burning emotions were, interestingly, further stirred by the aforementioned *ispán Vid*, who repeatedly urged Solomon to get rid of the duke, and whose “poisonous words filled the king with hate and rancor.”

Béla’s sons saw through the monarch’s “pretended friendship (*simulate amicitia*).” Called to join Salomon in another campaign, they consulted with each other and decided that only Géza will join the king’s forces – so if any harm is done to him, Ladislav can avenge his brother. When the hostilities between the Árpáds escalated further, becoming known to the public, the military standoff between the king and the dukes was resolved by another public reconciliation. After exchanging many envoys (*nunciis frequenter missis*), Solomon and Géza met at Esztergom, where:

each attended only by eight men from among the bishops and great men who accompanied them – as had been agreed between them – they sailed to an island near the city in order to hold talk. After much mutual accusing and excusing, a treaty of peace was at last established, and Géza returned to his duchy.<sup>257</sup>

As observed by Dušan Zupka, the second reconciliation between members of the Árpád dynasty differed significantly from the one which led to Solomon’s reinstatement to the throne.

<sup>256</sup> 109 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 207.

<sup>257</sup> 112 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 210-11.



The deliberate staging of the place in which parties met—perfectly neutral ground on a small island—meant that both Árpáds were of equal standing, while a selected group of limited witnesses mitigated risks of clashes between the ruler’s followers.<sup>258</sup> Most importantly, rather than feasting together after exchanging promises of peace, king and duke returned to their seats of power having exchanged hostages from high-ranking officials.<sup>259</sup>

This reconciliation was as short-lived as the first one, once again brought to the end by Solomon lending his ear to the advice of the malicious *ispán* Vid.<sup>260</sup> Their plan was foiled because it was overheard by the abbot William, who was “faithful to the duke because he was the son of the founder of his church” and managed to warn Géza, despite the lies and machinations of the traitors at the duke’s court.<sup>261</sup> Nevertheless, the duke was not able to prevent the betrayal at the battle of Kemej in early 1074, when lords Petrud and Bikás with their forces defected to Solomon’s side. Géza lost the battle but was able to escape and join the army gathered by Ladislav and his Přemyslid brother-in-law, Otto I of Moravia.<sup>262</sup>

When the victorious king learned about that, he was advised by Vid to continue his campaign and crush the newly gathered army. Ernyei, another nobleman at Solomon’s court, wept hearing this proposition, and when asked by the suspicious Solomon on whether he was loyal to the duke’s cause, he replied: “By no means, sire; but I would not that you should fight with your brothers nor that in the slaughter of the warriors son should kill father, or father son.”<sup>263</sup> He also leveraged his criticism of Vid, stating that “it is proper that we should die for the king, but it was better if we used sounder counsel.”<sup>264</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Zupka, *Ritual and Symbolic Communication*, 81.

<sup>259</sup> 113 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 210-11.

<sup>260</sup> 114 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 212-13.

<sup>261</sup> Ibidem; 116 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214-15.

<sup>262</sup> 117 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214-17.

<sup>263</sup> 119 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 221.

<sup>264</sup> Ibidem.

Ernyei's comment brings to our mind the similar description of palatine Sieciech and Zbigniew's bad advisors in *Gesta principum Polonorum*, the ultimate perpetrators of the war of "son against a father and brother against brother". Despite his critical voice, the king once again decided to follow Vid's suggestions. This time, however, he was defeated at the battle of Mogyoród. The result of the fight was in large part determined by God's favor to the blessed Ladislav, who commanded the forces allied to the duke. The Hungarian pious prince loved his brother so much that he had his standard changed for that of Géza, ready to bear the first brunt of the battle in order to protect his brother.<sup>265</sup> While Solomon was able to escape, finding refuge in the castles of Moson and Pozsony *ispán* Vid died in the battle. Having found his body, Ladislav, commented on the fatal ducal ambitions but ordered it to be properly buried. However, the soldiers of the victorious army cruelly mutilated Vid's corpse, recognizing him as the main instigator of this abhorrent internal conflict.<sup>266</sup>

The final act of the fight between Solomon and Géza resulted in an unlikely gesture of the victorious prince, who despite having himself crowned king was not able to find recognition of the Pope and his subjects. Thus, at Christmas mass in 1076, the "king, prostrated himself with tears before archbishops and other clergy and prelates. He said that he had sinned because he had possessed himself of the kingdom of a lawfully crowned king; and he promised that he would restore the kingdom to Solomon with a firm peace between them."<sup>267</sup> After public oath-swearing and private exchange of promises and hostages, Géza resolved to the ritual of penance, thus exhausting the repertoire of the most popular methods of reconciliation.<sup>268</sup>

At the same time his confession does not touch on the familial aspect of the conflict – the fact that the mistreated Solomon was his cousin does not seem to matter as much as the fact that he was a lawfully anointed monarch. Géza – and the author of this part of the *Illuminated*

<sup>265</sup> 121 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 224-25.

<sup>266</sup> 122 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 228-29.

<sup>267</sup> 130 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 242-43.

<sup>268</sup> Zupka, *Ritual and Symbolic Communication*, 84-85.

*Chronicle* – is concerned with questions of legitimacy, not a proper vision of kinship. Béla's oldest son did not reconcile with Solomon - while both sides were exchanging messengers concerning the particular details of restauration, Géza unexpectedly succumbed to illness and died. Hungarians chose Ladislav to be their next king, despite his own unwillingness. His reluctance was caused not only by the pious notion of God as the ultimate dispenser of all earthly authority,<sup>269</sup> but also by his own recognition that he had no legitimate right against Solomon.<sup>270</sup> Thus Ladislav, “driven by piety and especially by justice (*victus tamen pietate et maxime iustitia conpellente*)” made peace with Solomon and covered the expenses of the old king's court. In return, Solomon started plotting against Ladislav's life. The pious ruler had to imprison his conspiring kinsman, though not “out of fear, but because of the blood relationship between him and Solomon.” Nevertheless, Ladislav prayed that Solomon “might be converted to the law of God”, suffering even greater pain than his prisoner.<sup>271</sup> While Solomon was released from prison around 1083 on the occasion of the canonization of Saints Stephen and Emeric, the story of the further conflict between the old king and the blessed prince does not climax, but rather fades away. After his Cuman allies were defeated by Ladislav, Solomon abandons his companions, his previous life, and chose the life of a wandering pilgrim – at least according to *Illuminated Chronicle*.<sup>272</sup>

In summary, the vision of the perfect relations within the family in the Coloman-era redaction of the *Illuminated Chronicle* was heavily influenced by the primary aim of the text – legitimizing the rule of Béla's line of Árpád dynasty. As such, the significance prescribed to

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<sup>269</sup> On this as a source of unwillingness of Ladislav to wear royal insignia see: Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 173; Dániel Bagi, “Herrscherporträts in Der Ungarischen Hagiographie,” in *Macht Und Spiegel Der Macht. Herrschaft in Europa*, ed. Norbert Kersken and Grischa Vercamer, Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen Und Studien 27 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 412.

<sup>270</sup> 131, 133 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 245, 247.

<sup>271</sup> 133 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 249.

<sup>272</sup> 136 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 252-253; On the last years of Solomon's life as a part of tradition which saw him venerated as example of holy man, see Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 148-49.

the familial bonds does not seem to be that consistent. On the one hand, the proper relationship built on *amicitia* between members of the dynasty—who treat each other as partners—is portrayed as a fundament of internal peace. On the other hand, unlike in the works of Gallus or Cosmas, here it is the excess of parental love that, portrayed negatively, that leads to the dynastic conflict. Of course, it is because of the underlying attempts at projecting the legitimization of Béla's line that brotherly *amicitia* is expected to take precedence over fatherly love. That being said, the strong bond between the brothers underlines—although it is never directly commented on—the relationship between Géza and Ladislav, whose mutual support allows them to triumph over king Solomon. Finally, Solomon's actions against his cousins are slightly alleviated, just like in the case of other Central European chronicles, by the bad counsel of *ispán* Vid.

### ***3.3 The worthless sons of evil fathers – family lineage in the discourse of loyalty***

Up to this point, I focused my analysis of the role loyalty played in the visions of ideal familial relationships on the members of the ruling families. Of course, this is partially due to the nature of the investigated chronicles, which are focused on deeds of the members of the ruling dynasties and which often present other internal actors as individuals or anonymized masses. Still, occasionally some other kin-groups will be mentioned. More often than not, the belonging of someone to the particular family or clan would be acknowledged because of the perceived impact this would have on their loyalty (or lack thereof). In this short subchapter, I would like to highlight some of those instances.

Out of the authors of the earliest Central European chronicles, Cosmas is by far the most invested in the lineages of the members of the political elite of Bohemia. It is not surprising then that it is in his work that we find the most straightforward example of describing

certain characters to the kin groups as a whole, rather than individuals that belonged to them. In the important speech given by Jaromír at his younger brother Břetislav's enthronement, he speaks to the crowd gathered for this occasion, and after exhorting magnates from clans Muncia and Tepca in front of new ruler he says:

And those who are the Vršovici, the worthless sons of evil fathers, the domestic foes of our lineage, familiar enemies, avoid and turn away from their company like a muddy wheel, because they were never faithful to us. Behold, they first bound and variously mocked me, their innocent prince, and afterward they arranged, by the lies and deceitful counsels innate to them, that a brother deprive a brother—me—of these very eyes. Keep always in your memory, my son, the proclamations of Saint Adalbert—that, on account of their cruel deeds, they would bring ruin upon themselves three times—which he confirmed with his holy mouth and for which he excommunicated them in church. Those things which, by the will of God, have now been done twice, the fates are still anxious to have happen a third time.<sup>273</sup>

Indeed, all of the crimes which Jaromír lists are described in the previous part of the chronicle. While Cosmas abstains for naming them on that occasion, the excommunication by St Adalbert can lead us to believe that it were the Vršovici that, at the time of Boleslav's II illness, seized the opportunity to murder St Adalbert's family.<sup>274</sup> The Vršovici—*inimici familiars*—and their leader Kohan, having learned about Boleslav's III defeat in Poland, decided to abuse Jaromír whom they were to take care of. Even though the Přemyslid managed to escape with the help of his servant Dvora, the malicious family managed to convince his brother Oldřich to blind him.<sup>275</sup> It is not surprising then that Jaromír shuns them in public speech – a favor returned by deeply angered Kohan, on whose command the Přemyslid was assassinated.<sup>276</sup>

While we do not learn what happened afterward, the Vršovici return to the pages of Cosmas's chronicle in the last book, playing an equally malicious role. Thus duke Břetislav II

<sup>273</sup> 1.42 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 107.

<sup>274</sup> This is strengthened by Cosmas using the very same term from the Jaromír's speech – *worse sons of evil fathers*, see: 1.29 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 80.

<sup>275</sup> 1.34 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 89; 1.36 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 92.

<sup>276</sup> 1.42 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 107-08.

disposes of a member of Vršovici Mutina from his council, confiscating his property. While we do not know what exact deeds so deeply offended the duke, he banishes not only Mutina but also his kinsmen Božej, because “He [Břetislav] had always considered the Vršovici kin (*natio*) hateful, because he knew them to be very proud and deceitful”.<sup>277</sup> True to this description, the exiles were rumored to be behind the assassination of duke Břetislav II in 1100.<sup>278</sup> When in September of 1108 the Poles, allied with exiled Bořivoj, attacked Bohemia, they were repelled by the garrison forces commanded by Mutina, who returned to Bohemia after the death of Břetislav II, and *comes* Vacek. The latter reported to Duke Svatopluk, that Mutina was secretly in league with the attackers. The angered Svatopluk, rather than punishing just the head of the kin group “bound himself with an oath to ominous promises: that by the sword he would put out that whole generation like a lamp.”<sup>279</sup> Thus, he summoned all the magnates to a meeting at Vráclav castle, and delivered a speech very similar to that of Jaromír, which begun with the words: “O hateful clan and offspring odious to the gods! O vile sons of the Vršovici, familiar enemies of our stock (*genus*)”. He later continued by listing their misdeeds, committed through “pride inborn”. Finally, he gave a sign for those present there to kill Mutina.<sup>280</sup> This begun the massacre of the whole family, which Cosmas describes without sparing gruesome details and – surprisingly, given his previous antipathy – underlining the Vršovici’s victimhood.<sup>281</sup> Thus, when some lone members of the persecuted clan killed Svatopluk in revenge, Cosmas does not call him pejoratively, noting instead his boldness.<sup>282</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the prominent place that the Vršovici play in the *Chronica Boemorum* was noted by medievalists analyzing this source, who came up with different explanations of the role they play in Cosmas’s wider story. In Peter Kopal’s opinion the Vršovici, the *inimici*

<sup>277</sup> 3.4 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 187.

<sup>278</sup> 3.13 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 196.

<sup>279</sup> 3.22 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 208-09.

<sup>280</sup> 3.23 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 210-11.

<sup>281</sup> 3.24 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 211-13.

<sup>282</sup> 3.27 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 215.

*familiares* were supposed to serve as the foil to the Přemyslid dynasty, whose sacralization in the first book of the chronicle is contrasted with the demonization of the Vršovici, allowing to present the internal conflict in eschatological terms. He acknowledges the sympathetic portrayal of the murdered members of the clan, arguing that it might have been stemming partially from the chronicler's dislike of tyrannical Svatopluk, partially from his fondness of the motive of poetic *fortuna* – which prepared for the murderous kin a well-befitting end.<sup>283</sup> For Lisa Wolverton the Vršovici are chosen by Cosmas as representatives of a wider social group of Bohemian elites—*inimici familiars*—whose cruel behavior fuels internal conflicts, threatening the justice and stability of the realm.<sup>284</sup> Whatever the larger role of this particular group of kinsmen was in the broader message of the chronicle, there is no denying that the Vršovici *natio* is recognized as historically and collectively evil group, at least in the speeches of the members of Přemyslid dynasty. The appeal to the misdeeds and treasons committed by the past members of the family when questioning the commitment of its present members tells us that Cosmas believed that loyalty of the whole kin-group could be determined by past and present actions of its representatives.

Gallus does not share Cosmas's interest in the lineages of the members of the political elite surrounding the Piast dynasty. It is then even more telling that the only instance in which he chooses to underline ties of the kinship of someone who does not belong to the ruling dynasty is with *comes* Wojśław, a kinsman of the malicious palatine Sieciech.<sup>285</sup> As I described in the previous subchapter, Wojśław was entrusted with being a guardian for the young

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<sup>283</sup> Petr Kopál, “Kosmovi dáblové: Vvršovsko-přemyslovský antagonismus ve světle biblických a legendárních citátů, motivů a symbolů” [The Devils of Cosmas. The antagonism between the Vršovici and the Přemyslids in the light of biblical and legendary quotations, motifs and symbols], *Mediaevalia historica Bohemica* 8 (2001): 7–40.

<sup>284</sup> Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 182–96.

<sup>285</sup> Gallus does not specify the exact relationship between Sieciech and Wojśław, using broad terms *propinquus* and *consanguinitas*, see: 2.16 in *GpP*, 142; Janusz Bieniak in his classical work on prosopography of Piast Poland suggested that Wojśław was Sieciech's sororal nephew or cousin, see: Janusz Bieniak, “Polska elita polityczna XII wieku: Część II: Wróżda i zgoda” [Polish political elite of the 12th century: Part II: Feud and consensus], in *Spółeczeństwo Polski Średniowiecznej* 3, ed. Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński, 1985, 19–25.

Bolesław III once the adolescent prince began to share the power with duke Władysław and his brother Zbigniew. It was during this period when -- due to the constant plotting of Sieciech -- Wojśław's loyalty to Bolesław was questioned by the Piast's companions. The fact that the *comes* did not join them on the planned campaign against Bohemians caused them to suspect that Wojśław knew of some intrigue plotted by his kinsmen, and that is why he decided not to come.<sup>286</sup> As I described in the subchapter above, *comes* initially did not understand why he was accused of malicious intentions toward Duke Władysław's sons, repeatedly trying to mend the relationship by offering *satisfactio*. While the fact that Zbigniew and Bolesław III did not answer those pleas—at least *tunc temporis*—suggests that the young princes found the allegations levered against Wojśław on the basis of bonds of kinship probable, Gallus never acknowledges them as true. On the contrary, the chronicler seems to be overall sympathetic towards the *comes*, praising his valiant sacrifice in the description of one of the prior episodes, when he became seriously wounded in the battle of one of the young Bolesław's campaigns.<sup>287</sup> Thus, the author of the *Gesta principum Polonorum* did not believe that Wojśław's bond of kinship with Sieciech impacted his loyalty, but his description of the events clearly points out that such claim would not be seen as outlandish by his contemporaries.

Unfortunately, when it comes to illustrating the connection between lineage and loyalty, the compilatory nature of the *Illuminated Chronicle* once again makes our ability to analyze its earliest content somewhat limited. If we disregard the lists of the seven leaders of the Hungarians and the noble *generationes* of foreign origin, which are clearly later interpolations,<sup>288</sup> there is no mention of large laudable kin-groups in the earliest chapters of the *Illuminated Chronicle*. The same applies when looking for kin-groups and lineages which are portrayed as detestable. The earliest history of the Kingdom of Hungary is—as it is the case

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<sup>286</sup> 2.16 in *GpP*, 142-43.

<sup>287</sup> 2.14 in *GpP*, 140-41.

<sup>288</sup> 28-52 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 66-93.



with *Gesta principum Polonorum*—focused on achievements and struggles of the members of the ruling dynasty, with noblemen playing only secondary role. Thus, the only fragment of the *Primeval Chronicle* that mentions some kind of familial connection between two actors is the description of the machinations of St Stephen’s wife, Queen Gisella. In an episode fragment that describes the putting out of the eyes of Vazul, the father of Andrew, Levente, and Béla, reader learns that this mutilation was orchestrated by Gisella, who planned on getting more power by putting on the throne her brother Peter Orselo. In her conspiracy she was aided by the *evil man* Buda and his son Sebus.<sup>289</sup> This whole story and especially the kinship of the Queen with Peter Orselo, is a later interpolation from the time of Solomon or Coloman, which was to reconcile the cult of St. Stephen with the cruel fate of Vazul.<sup>290</sup> Similarly, the relationship between Buda and Sebus – originally unrelated characters taken from the *Annales Altahenses maiores*, the main source of information for this part of the chronicle - seems to be of no significance.<sup>291</sup>

Thus there is little we can say about the connection between the idea of loyalty or disloyalty inherent for certain kin-groups in the *Primeval Chronicle*. This conclusion, together with just a brief mention in *Gesta principum Polonorum*, underscores the comparative significance of consistent depiction of the Vršovici as inherently evil in the *Chronica Boemorum*.

### 3.4 Conclusions

To conclude, loyalty played an important role in the depictions of family relationships in the earliest Central European chronicles. Following the ideals of the proper familial relations

<sup>289</sup> 69 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 126-27; On later fate of those two, killed by Samuel Aba’s people after King Peter’s flight from Hungary, see: 72 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 134-35.

<sup>290</sup> János Bak, “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary,” in *Studying Medieval Rulers and Their Subjects*, by János Bak, vol. X (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 223–33.

<sup>291</sup> *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. Wilhelm Giselbrecht and Edmund von Oefle, MGH SS rer. Germ 4 (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 25, 28.

common to the Christianized culture of medieval Latin writings, the authors of the analyzed sources shared the basic assumptions about the filial obedience toward the father and mutual brotherly love.

With that being said, a closer look at the episodes depicting the internal struggles between the dynasty members reveals more nuanced strategies of the chroniclers employing discourse of loyalty when describing family relations. The notions of filial obedience and fatherly or brotherly love were used to reinforce the authors' claims about the legitimacy of one side of the dynastic struggle, while painting their opponents in a bad color. This is most clearly visible in the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, where the unmistakably positive hero of the narrative - Bolesław III – is depicted as clearly following the expectations of ideal behavior towards other members of the family. He is obedient to his father (even to his own detriment, as his followers warn him) and willing to forgive both old Duke Władysław and his brother Zbigniew. The latter is, on the other hand, portrayed as the prodigal son and bad brother who aligns himself with Bolesław's enemies. Such a characterization aims of course at focusing the reader's attention on numerous past infidelities of Zbigniew instead on the most recent *peccatum* of Bolesław III, who almost certainly himself resorted to perjury in order to violently conclude the long-standing rivalry. The *Chronica Boemorum*, written by an author who was more distanced from the court of the ruler than Gallus, presents a more "realistic" take on loyalty and obedience within the dynasty. Although Cosmas of Prague seems to subscribe to the same vision of the ideal familial relationship as the author of the earliest Polish chronicle, his general criticism of the contemporary generation of Přemyslids reflects in the way he presents the discourse surrounding familial loyalty. The often-used appeals to ideal love and friendship between the brothers – fundamental for the well-being of the realm - are undercut by the way Bohemian elites behave. The narrative about the fight between two branches of the Árpád dynasty chronicled at the court of Coloman the Learned, unlike the two other sources,

contained an apparent hierarchization of bonds within the family. King Andrew's love of his son is not seen as a sufficient ground to break the promise he made to his brother – a reversal of family hierarchy that was necessary for the chroniclers in Coloman's time to make in order to legitimize Béla's claim to power.

While the authors of the three earliest Central European chronicles pursued their own ideological agendas in writing the stories about dynastic conflicts, they all seemed to agree about the importance of the bond of brotherly love between the members of the sacralized dynasties. This bond, although frequently reinforced by additional rituals, gestures and oaths, seemed to be organically formed between the members of the ruling families and essential to the peace and prosperity of the Central European polities. Conflict within the dynasties was seen as detrimental to Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary as a whole. With the fate of “natural masters” so closely intertwined with the fate of entire polities, it is hardly surprising that all three chronicles shifted some of the blame for familial strife onto the malicious influence of bad advisors. Palatine Sieciech, comes Zderad and *ispán* Vid performed a similar function, antagonizing members of the ruling families against each other in order to achieve personal gains. These actions of certain members of the elites surrounding the ruling dynasties of Central Europe gain even more significance if we take into account the fact that authors of the analyzed chronicles seemed to believe that loyalty or disloyalty of individuals can be extrapolated onto the members of their kin-group. I will further analyze examples of the subjects' violation of fidelity toward their “natural masters” in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 4: Friends, allies and other rulers – loyalty between equals

Having analyzed the role and characterization of loyalty in the familial relationships, I will now move on to examine the role loyalty played in the depiction of relations between members of the Piast, Přemyslid and Árpád dynasties and their equals – mostly other rulers. This category is harder to define than kin-group – indeed, as we will see, many of the foreign allies shared ties of kinship with ruling dynasties of Central European polities. However, even unrelated parties often cooperated with each other, entering bonds of friendship – not unlike the one between related Piast and Árpád princes described in the previous chapter – to achieve common political goals.

According to Gerd Althoff, the existence of particular political ends to which such an alliance between *amici* was established meant that the co-operative bonds between them were more volatile than those between family members or a lord and his followers. On the other hand, the co-operative aspect of such relationships was reflected in the reciprocal nature of symmetrical obligations of both parties. In addition, when analyzing relations between members of Central European dynasties and other rulers, one cannot forget about the peace-making. While acts of reconciliation ending the conflict between equals did not automatically create bonds of friendship or mutual aid, they certainly carried with themselves a joint obligation to ensure peace. As such, they created the relationship of “negative loyalty” – a mutual promise of restraint from any adversary action. Both friendship alliances and peace agreements were often thoroughly negotiated and manifested by ritual displays.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 65–77.

## 4.1 Establishing trust between rulers

In the following subchapter I will briefly examine ways in which – according to the authors of the earliest Central European chronicles – rulers established trust between each other, and how specific were the agreements they entered. Before I begin to analyze the sources, I would like to underscore the problem of the language used in co-operative bonds. The terminology here can be misleading – after all, the term *amicitia* can be used to signify relationships with vastly different dynamics of power. Just as the discourse of friendship served to create an illusion of equal status between the Árpadian brothers Andrew and Béla, so could it be used between the overlord and submitted party.<sup>293</sup> The example of such a case can be found in the *Chronica Boemorum*, when Emperor Henry IV addresses King Vratislav II as his “faithful friend”,<sup>294</sup> even though Cosmas was well aware of the Přemyslids’ status as subordinates of the Holy Roman Emperors.<sup>295</sup> On the one hand, this can be interpreted as the sign of Henry’s recognition of Vratislav’s loyalty – something that even Cosmas, critical of the Bohemian monarch, had to acknowledge. On the other hand, given the chronicler’s negative opinion on the Emperor, highlighting those close ties can serve as further criticism of Vratislav. In other cases, the ambiguity of the term *amicitia* does not allow us to precisely determine the nature of the relationship between the two rulers.<sup>296</sup> In addition to these ambiguities, some relations which may have begun as *amicitia* between two equal partners changed with the shifting balance of power over a long period of time.

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<sup>293</sup> See footnote no. 240 above.

<sup>294</sup> 2.49 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 178.

<sup>295</sup> This relationship he traced back to the times of Charlemagne, see: 2.8 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 123.

<sup>296</sup> This is for example the case with friendship between Otto III and Bolesław the Great expressed during the Gniezno summit, see: Andrzej Pleszczyński, “‘Amicitia’ a sprawa polska. Uwagi o stosunku Piastów do Cesarstwa w X i na początku XI wieku” [“Amicitia” and the Polish case. Comments on the relationship between Piasts and the Empire in the 10th and early 11th century], in *Ad fontes. O naturze źródła historycznego*, ed. Stanisław Rosik and Przemysław Wiszewski, (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis No 2675, Historia 170), 2004, 49–58.

It is one of such relationships that I would like to explore now, by returning to that part of the *Illuminated Chronicle* which depicts the internal struggle for power after the death of King Stephen. In the previous chapter I described how Árpadian princes Andrew and Levente ended the rule of King Peter Orselo. However, this was not the first time Peter had lost his throne. Depicted very unsympathetically by the author of the *Primeval Chronicle*, Peter was described as a cruel ruler who treated preferentially his foreign followers as opposed to the Hungarian elite.<sup>297</sup> When the latter united against him and deposed him in favor of *ispán* Aba, King Stephen's brother-in-law, Peter escaped to – as we learn later – seek the help of German ruler Henry III.<sup>298</sup> When Aba learned about that “Peter had been kindly received (*benigne susceptum*) by Henry”, he sent a messenger inquiring whether things have to escalate, or whether peace can be achieved. In reply Henry III declared himself an enemy of Aba, saying: “Because he who has injured my friends shall see what I am able to do.”<sup>299</sup> In response Aba's army plundered the borderland and Carinthia, but when a large army of Henry III approached the kingdom of Hungary seeking retribution, he was approached by Hungarian envoys. Even though they promised him to agree to whichever terms he would dictate except restoring throne to Peter, the German ruler refused, “since he had bound himself to Peter by a promise to restore the kingdom to him”. Ultimately, after the Hungarians sent presents and “pledged their faith” (*data quoque fide*), Henry decided to end his campaign in order to deal with the threat brought by attacks of duke of Lorraine.<sup>300</sup> The next year was spent on diplomatic back and-forward, during which Aba tried to bring an end to the conflict by offering gifts and promising to release the German captives. However, the newly formed Hungarian opposition to Aba's rule brought to the Emperor's attention that “[Aba] counted oath-breaking as nothing” and suggesting that

<sup>297</sup> 71 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 130-33.

<sup>298</sup> 72-73 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 134-37.

<sup>299</sup> *Quia meos iniuriis lacessivit, quid vel quantum possum, ipse sentient.*, 73 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 136-37.

<sup>300</sup> *Obligatus enim erat Petro promissione, quod ei regnum restueret*, 74 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 138.

this is also the case with the Hungarian king's pledges made to Henry III – since Aba thus far failed to deliver captured prisoners and remuneration he promised.<sup>301</sup> While I will return to the accusations leveled against Aba in more detail in Chapter 5, it is important here to note that those indictments stirred the German monarch, who found such behavior not befitting a lord. Henry III invaded Hungary, this time with the support of some of the Hungarian nobles, won a decisive battle at Ménfő in 1044, and with Aba dying shortly after the battle, Henry reinstated Peter Orselo to the throne.

However, the returning king was required to recognize the supremacy of his German friend in a series of symbolic gestures. Those found its culmination in the ceremony that took place in Székesfehérvár at Pentecost of 1045, a full year of after Peter's return, which saw Peter handing over the Kingdom of Hungary to Henry III – presumably only to receive it back from him alongside “many and the most magnificent gifts.”<sup>302</sup> This ritual, which resembles acts of condemnation in which vassals surrender their allodial property to their lords only to receive it back as a fief, clearly establishes that the German and Hungarian rulers were not on equal footing.<sup>303</sup> Sometime during Peter's time in exile, his relationship with Henry III shifted – or simply became more defined. King Peter went from an ally to whom Henry promised aid to a vassal of a German ruler, perhaps looking for the relationship with more clearly defined mutual obligations. Despite the promises made, Henry might have been entertaining the thought of reconciling with Aba before he learned about his perjurious character. It is uncertain whether

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<sup>301</sup> 76 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 142-43.

<sup>302</sup> *Sequenti vero anno reversus est cesar in Hungariam, cui Petrus rex in ipsa sancta sollempnitate regnum Hungarie cum deaurata lancea tradidit coram Hungaris simul et Teutonicis. Multis etiam insuper et magnificis muneribus cesar honorificatus a rege ac propria rediit cum gloria*, 78 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 146-49; The golden lance used in this ritual had caused a lot of discussion. For Jozsef Deér it was the part of royal insignia, see: Josef Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns* (Graz: Böhlau, 1966); According to Janos Bak the lance used on that occasion was a different one than the one used as a part of royal insignia: János Bak, “Holy Lance, Holy Crown, Holy Dexter: Sanctity of Insignia in Medieval East Central Europe,” in *Studying Medieval Rulers and Their Subjects*, by János Bak, vol. 8 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 58; In opinion of Dušan Zupka the lance used here was a symbol of Henry's victory in the battle of Ménfő, see: Zupka, *Ritual and Symbolic Communication*, 90–91.

<sup>303</sup> Jacques Le Goff, “The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage,” in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 237–89.

Henry performed his obligations toward his *protegee* better once Peter paid him *homagium*. The duty to avenge injuries suffered by his vassal was cited by the German ruler as a *casus belli* against his successors Andrew and Béla. The depiction of this conflict found in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, which conflates few stages of military confrontation known from more reliable sources,<sup>304</sup> ends with the Emperor suing for perpetual peace. In return for his safe retreat to Germany he promised to never “offend the kin of the Hungarians by word, deed or counsel”, and if he would have done so he would “incur the wrath of almighty God.”<sup>305</sup> In addition, a German princess was to be betrothed to Andrew’s young son Solomon. The German ruler had “confirmed by personal oath that he would faithfully perform all those things which he had said.”<sup>306</sup> Accepting those terms King Andrew sent the gift of animals and wine, which were presumably used to throw a grand feast, though the sources does not allow us to guess whether the Germans celebrated alone or with the Hungarians.

The depictions of the process of peacemaking as—similarly to forging the alliance—the combination of negotiations, ritual oath-swearing and gift giving, illustrated *in extenso* in the *Illuminated Chronicle* presented above can be also found in other Central European chronicles. Just for an example, in the third book of the *Chronica Boemorum* Bolesław III of Poland successfully interceded with Duke Vladislav, despite mutual enmity, on behalf of his exiled brother Soběslav. The reconciliation between the Přemyslids signaled the end of

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<sup>304</sup> For the reconstruction of the stages of the conflict see: Zupka, *Ritual and Symbolic Communication*, 91–93; For an outline of the complicated textual history of this fragment of the chronicle, with the information on German sources used by the author see: József Gerics, “Zu den Quellen der gesellschaftlichen Ideologie in Ungarn nach dem Tod des heiligen Stephan,” *Acta antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 (1989): 431–63.

<sup>305</sup> 90 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 170-73; The similarity of this formulation to *sanctio* of medieval charters is not a coincidence. Hungarian historiography unanimously states that among the annalistic notes that formed the basis for royal Hungarian historiographical tradition might have been some excerpts from diplomatic sources. While probably not a literal copy of the peace treaty, this *sanctio* was not a later interpolation, but originated in the eleventh century. For a deeper discussion of the topic, with parallels drawn between formulation from *Illuminated Chronicle* and other diplomas issued by Henry III, see: József Gerics, “A Krónikakutatás És Az Oklevéltan Határán” [On the the Border of Chronicle Study and Diplomats], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 74 (1974): 281–95.

<sup>306</sup> *Hec autem omnia fideliter servaturum iusiurandi religione interposita confirmabat.* 90 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 172.



hostilities between Vladislav and the Poles, Soběslav's allies. In July of 1115 a meeting was staged between Duke Vladislav, accompanied by his brothers Otto, recently rehabilitated Soběslav, and Bolesław III on the banks of border river of Nysa. Gathered parties "having given and received oaths from each other, they confirmed their bond of peace" and departed "laden with gifts mutually given to one another."<sup>307</sup>

Similar meetings did not always have such an uneventful character, and treason was always to be feared. Gallus, when describing Bolesław's III attempts at forging an alliance with King Coloman of Hungary, writes that "the king of the Hungarians hesitated to come to the meeting, fearing treachery. For Álmos, duke of the Hungarians, was at the time an exile from Hungary and was enjoying the hospitality of Duke Bolesław". Only after a prolonged exchange of envoys Coloman and Bolesław were finally able to vow "perpetual friendship and brotherhood (*perpetuis fraternitatibus et amiciciis*)".<sup>308</sup> His Bohemian namesake Boleslav III was not so lucky. As Cosmas narrates, the duke's meeting with Mieszko, the deceitful ruler of Poland turned out to be a trap. After the supposed reconciliation, when "with peace between them, faith having been given and strengthened by an oath" Boleslav III Přemyslid was invited to join Mieszko in a feast, during which the Polish ruler broke faith and law and hospitality capturing his guest and blinding him.<sup>309</sup> Even the meetings with supposed allies could quickly turn sour, as was the case when the above mentioned Duke Vladislav was asked by the Hungarian nobles after the death of King Coloman to "renew and confirm with the new king, named Stephen, their ancient peace and friendship." Willing to do so and having already "pledged that he would do those things which pertained to peace", Vladislav arrived at the meeting place on the field of Lučsko where Hungarians "strayed from the duke's peaceful

<sup>307</sup> 3.41 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 230; Ibidem in *Chronica Boemorum*, 214: *Iulio dux Wladizlaus et fratres eius Otto et Zobezlau iuxta fluentia amnis Nizam cum duce Poloniorum Boleslau indictum conveniunt ad placitum atque inter se datis et acceptis sacramentis confirmant federa pacis. Altera autem die immensis muneribus mutuatim ad invicem oblatis hylares ad proprios remeant lares.*

<sup>308</sup> 2.29 in *GpP*, 172-73.

<sup>309</sup> 1.34 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 87-89.

words and sent replies more to stir up strife than to bring the kiss of peace.” Instead of intended confirmation of ancient *amicitia*, the meeting unexpectedly turned into a battle.<sup>310</sup> This shows that the oath-swearing that was meant to solidify pacts of friendship or peace were - as all rituals - interactive in nature, which made co-operative bonds between rulers even more fragile.<sup>311</sup>

As the examples above illustrate, the primary emphasis of the authors of the earliest Central European chronicles when depicting the relationships between two equal partners was on the rituals like mutual oath-swearing which aimed at establishing trust. The descriptions of the meticulous staging of those rituals suggest to me that entering pacts in this way was proceeded by much deliberation. It is probable that an important part of the said process was – through the so often highlighted exchanges of multiple envoys - defining the precise scope of mutual obligations. It is also probable, that in some instances rulers purposefully sought the ambiguity offered by loosely defined *amicitia*. The details of the terms of described pacts and alliance were seldom mentioned in the cited examples, but we cannot be sure whether it is because of the deliberate contextual character of co-operative bonds, or simply a matter of the chronicler’s lack of interest.

## 4.2 *Betraying loyalty*

What were the consequences of not honoring such an agreement or not respecting the ritual communication between two equal partners? In the example from Cosmas of Prague about Mieszko’s violation of faith and laws of hospitality, there are none. The disinterest of the chronicler in showing what are the consequences of this kind of wicked behavior can be explained by the role of this episode in the wider narrative. Mieszko is in this example an

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<sup>310</sup> 3.42 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 130-32.

<sup>311</sup> Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale*, 26–28.

outside threat that is meant as a background for the true, internal faithless antagonist – the Vršovici, who use this opportunity to abuse the trust of the mutilated duke.

This is not to say that the *Chronica Boemorum* did not contain stories in which abusing the trust of a friend or other sovereign ruler had dire consequences. The suggestion that betraying one's allies can lead to falling from grace can be seen in the larger narrative about the fate of Bořivoj II, the successor of good Duke Bretislav II. I have already mentioned some details of this story in the previous chapter, but to grasp the moralizing message that Cosmas contains in the description of Bořivoj II's reign I will briefly recall the most important moments here. The *Chronica Boemorum* informs us about the alliance between Duke Bořivoj II and the Polish prince Zbigniew, which the latter entered looking for help in his fight with Bolesław III Wrymouth. However, Bořivoj was convinced by his corrupt counselors Hrabíše and Protiven to accept the bribe offered by Bolesław III and to “renounce the faith promised to Zbigniew” (*fidem promissam abnuere*). The ill-gotten money became a source of conflict between the duke and his cousin Svatopluk, who was angered by not receiving his share of it.<sup>312</sup>

It was only then fitting, that Svatopluk's revenge on perjurious Bořivoj involved deception. In 1107 the agent of Svatopluk arrived at the duke's court and, confirming his false stories with oaths, managed to convince Bořivoj by his lies about the conspiracy against him that Svatopluk planned with members of the duke's inner circle. The deceived Bořivoj, having lost confidence in his friends and counselors “heedlessly cut the strong branches on which he himself sat and leaned, and on which hung his honor, and thus fell from his lofty height. For he had often wanted to seize his faithful friends, Božej and Mutina, and punish them as enemies of the *res publica*.” The accused nobles, alarmed to the duke's plans, convinced Bořivoj's younger brother Vladislav to “renounce his faith, fraternity and friendship to Bořivoj.” Thus in

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<sup>312</sup> 3.16 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 199-200.

1107, facing the joint forces of Vladislav, Svatopluk, and his own *comites*, Duke Bořivoj, “mild as a sheep, was deprived of the realm.”<sup>313</sup>

A similar story about the deposition of the ruler as a far consequence of his disregards toward allies and friends can be seen in Gallus’s narrative about King Bolesław II. The monarch’s conflict with bishop Stanislaus is framed by the chronicler as a feud between two equally powerful “anointed men” – a perspective stemming from Gallus’s Gregorian beliefs, not shared by other Central European authors.<sup>314</sup>

In a short and enigmatic paragraph Gallus refers to actions of both the king and the bishop as *peccatum*, but refuses to defend one side or another, stating that he mentions Stanislaus’ death only to explain why Bolesław ended up in exile in Hungary.<sup>315</sup> While he calls the dismembered bishop a *traditor*, this does not really help with understanding the nature of his act. As Marian Plezia proved in his extensive philological analysis, terms *traditio* and *traditor* were used in medieval sources in many contexts, but shared the general notion of a direction aimed against somebody or something.<sup>316</sup> This makes any attempt to reconstruct what exactly led the Polish king to inflict such a severe punishment on his subject futile. Plezia himself remarks, that the term *traditor* used by Gallus in reference to Stanislaus informs us only that, according to the chronicler, the bishop did not abide by the duty of fidelity which he owed to the Piast king on account of the role of the dynasty as *domini naturales* of Poland.<sup>317</sup>

While the bishop’s *peccatum* does not seem to be of particular interest for Gallus, the fate of Bolesław II seems to tell us something new about the notion of fidelity depicted in the

<sup>313</sup> 3.19 in The Chronicle of the Czechs, 203-05; Razim, “Věrnost v Kosmově kronice,” 32–33.

<sup>314</sup> Krzysztof Skwirczyński, *Recepcja Idei Gregoriańskich w Polsce* [Reception of the Georgian Ideas in Poland], 2nd ed. (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2016).

<sup>315</sup> *Qualiter autem rex Boleslauus de Polonia sit eiectus longum existit enarrare, sed hoc dicere licet, quia non debuit christus in christum peccatum quodlibet corporaliter vindicare. Illud enim multum sibi nocuit, cum peccato peccatum adhibuit, cum pro traditione pontificem truncacioni membrorum adhibuit. Neque enim traditorem episcopum excusamus, neque regem vindicantem sic se turpiter commendamus, sed hoc in medio deseramus et ut in Vngaria receptus fuerit disseramus*, 1.27 in *GpP*, 96.

<sup>316</sup> Plezia, *Dookoła sprawy św. Stanisława*, 87.

<sup>317</sup> Plezia, 92.

*Gesta*. After all, the whole episode is related to the reader to explain why the king ended up fleeing to Hungary. Gallus does not deny the ruler the right to punish Stanislaus, but he believes that the punishment used by the king was not appropriate – as he explains, due to the lack of moderation, Bolesław *multum sibi nocuit*. According to Gallus, this type of behavior marked with exaggeration and pride, was to be characteristic of Bolesław throughout his reign. An episode of the Chronicle describing a dispute between the bishop and the king can therefore be seen as the part of a broader narrative about the fall of the ruler caused by these very traits.<sup>318</sup> Two stories setting the framework for this narrative are the accounts of Bolesław's meetings with Duke Iziaslav of Kiev and King Ladislas of Hungary. During these meetings the Polish king not only insults both rulers, but also breaks the previously agreed arrangements. According to Edward Skibiński, it was this infidelity to his own promises that lead Bolesław, like many other rulers in the Indo-European narrative tradition, to his downfall.<sup>319</sup>

The first of those fatal encounters takes place when, just like his great predecessor, Bolesław I the Breave, the young Piast ruler invades Ruthenia. After capturing Kiev, Bolesław II sets up Iziaslav as the Grand Prince, and is asked by him to perform *osculum pacis* in order to publicly end the conflict between the two countries. The kiss of peace, as I already mentioned, was frequently used in the diplomatic language of medieval rituals, where it symbolized the consensual conclusion of conflicts.<sup>320</sup> Thus, there is nothing strange in the proposition of the new Ruthenian ruler. Nevertheless, Bolesław, decided to mock his ally, turning the staged ritual into a farse. First, he demanded to be paid heavily, only to perform a ritual in a disrespecting fashion. He entered the city gate on his horse, kissing the standing

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<sup>318</sup> Edward Skibiński, “Biskup i monarcha” [Bishop and monarch], in *Docendo discimus: studia historyczne ofiarowane Profesorowi Zbigniewowi Wielgoszowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Zbigniew Wielgosz, Krzysztof Kaczmarek, and Jarosław Nikodem (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2000), 99–109; For other historians accepting Skibiński’s thesis, see: Skwierczyński, *Recepcja Idei...*, 140; Wiszewski, *Domus Bolesłai*, 234–35.

<sup>319</sup> Skibiński, “Biskup i monarcha,” 106.

<sup>320</sup> Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace*, 85–73.

Iziaslav from his saddle, tugging at the Ruthenian's beard in laughter.<sup>321</sup> This gesture had in medieval times a complex meaning, yet it was always linked with certain degradation of the one whose beard is being tugged.<sup>322</sup> Performing the ritual in this particular way Bolesław not only showed his disrespect toward the new ruler of Kiev, whom he saw as some kind of his client or at least inferior lord, but also his disrespect toward ritual norms and tradition.<sup>323</sup> By doing so he broke not only the established norm, but also his promise to Isiaslav. After all, in exchange for a huge amount of gold paid to the Piast, the Ruthenian ruler received not promised kiss of peace, but rather the one of ridicule.

The meeting of Bolesław II with king Ladislas of Hungary had a similar course despite taking place in quite different circumstances. The Piast ruler, even though he had to flee the country, could count on a warm welcome from the Hungarian monarch. Unlike Iziaslav, Ladislas had nothing against emphasizing the significant role of Bolesław in his rising to the Hungarian throne. He himself decided to accept the exile in a way reserved for relations between unequal parties, assuming the role of the weaker one.<sup>324</sup> Nevertheless, it still played out like the one in the previously discussed scene. The prideful Bolesław one more time did not descend from his horse to kiss a welcoming party, although the fact that Ladislas greeted him not in the saddle but on his own feet, was dictated only by the kindness of the Hungarian king. This time the offended ruler was not in a position that forced him to endure this kind of humiliation, so he decided not to take part in the ritual manipulated by Bolesław. Ladislas, however, did not feel resentment towards the exiled Piast for too long, since soon afterward a

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<sup>321</sup> 1.23 in *GpP*, 88-90.

<sup>322</sup> Przemysław Mrozowski, "Gest Władcy w Ikonografii Polskiego Średniowiecza" [The Ruler's Gesture in the Iconography of the Polish Middle Ages], in *Imagines Potestatis. Rytuły, Symbole i Konteksty Fabularne Władzy Zwierzchniej. Polska X - XV w.*, ed. Jacek Banaszkiewicz (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1994), 67.

<sup>323</sup> Wojciech Fałkowski, "Dwuznaczność przekazu rytualnego. Średniowieczne formy komunikowania społecznego" [The ambiguity of ritual message. Medieval forms of social communication], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 63, no. 2 (2006): 21.

<sup>324</sup> 1.28 in *GpP*, 98.

meeting took place again, this time in a convivial and fraternal atmosphere.<sup>325</sup> The insult was more outrageous for Ladislav's subjects, whose resentment toward Bolesław, according to Gallus, supposedly led to the death of the exiled monarch.<sup>326</sup> The Piast ruler once again did not respect the rules of the ritual.<sup>327</sup> Although in this case the chronicler does not inform us of any promise broken by Bolesław, his behavior towards Ladislav could have been perceived as contrary to the rule of fidelity, which should characterize his interactions with Ladislav as his *amicus*.

I agree with Skibiński in seeing this part of the *Gesta* as the narrative about Bolesław's fall, with a framework provided by the two ritualized encounters between Polish and foreign rulers. Those meetings are not only a display of mockery, but also of some kind of infidelity, expressed by the violation of accepted rules and arrangements.<sup>328</sup> The way Bolesław II treated the neighboring monarchs and the bishop seems particularly striking juxtaposed with the way his namesake predecessor, Bolesław the Great, treated the *sacrum* of royal and church offices.<sup>329</sup> The story of the fall of Bolesław II indicates that the Piast monarchs are bound by the reciprocal loyalty, at least towards their equals, and that breaking promises threatens with serious consequences even for sovereign rulers.

This conclusion finds additional confirmation in Gallus's depiction of the fate of Bohemian duke Svatopluk. Characterized as a brave, but insidious man,<sup>330</sup> this Přemyslid

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<sup>325</sup> *Nam cum regnum alienum fugitivus introiret, cumque nullus rusticorum fugitivo obediret, obviam ire Bolezlauo Wladislauus ut vir humilis properabat, eumque propinquantem eminus equo descendens ob reverentiam expectabat. At contra Bolezlauus humilitatem regis mansueti non respexit, sed in pestifere fastum superbie cor erexit. Hunc, inquit, alumpnum in Polonia educavi, hunc regem in Vngaria collocavi. Non decet eum me ut equalem venerari, sed equo sedentem ut quemlibet de principibus osculari. Quod intendens Wladislauus aliquantulum egre tulit et ab itinere declinavit, ei tamen servitium per totam terram fieri satis magnifice commendavit. Postea vero concorditer et amicabiliter inter se sicut fratres convenerunt, Vngari tamen illud altius et profundius in corde notaverunt, ibidem.*

<sup>326</sup> *Unde magnam sibi Ungarorum invidiam cumulavit, indeque cicius extrema dies eum, ut aiunt, occupavit, 1.28 in GpP, 100.*

<sup>327</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 32–34.

<sup>328</sup> Skibiński, "Biskup i monarcha," 106.

<sup>329</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 227–28.

<sup>330</sup> *genere quidem nobilis, natura ferox, militia strenuus, sed modice fidei et ingenio versutus, 3.16 in GpP, 248–49.*

gained the throne of Prague with the help of Bolesław III. However, he did not keep his oath given to the Polish ruler that once in power “he would always be a faithful friend and remain in one shield with him, and he would either return to Bolesław the castles on the borders of the country or pull them down altogether.”<sup>331</sup> Moreover, the Bohemian ruler not only joined the forces with Emperor Henry V against his Polish friend, but it was his words that actually persuaded the Emperor to attack Bolesław III.<sup>332</sup> Gallus immediately points out that the Bohemian duke met a well-deserved fate – he was unexpectedly killed by one of his common-folk soldiers, and his followers did not even try to avenge him.<sup>333</sup> The perjuries and tyrannous rule of Svatopluk dissolved the natural bond between the ruler and his subjects.<sup>334</sup>

Disloyalty, according to Gallus, clearly breeds disloyalty. At the same time, there seems to be a small, but in my opinion meaningful difference between the chronicler’s opinion on Bolesław II’s and Svatopluk’s fate. The latter finds quiet approval of his peers, who do not avenge the death of their duke – which would seem to suggest that Gallus approves of the subjects’ disloyalty to their oath-breaking rulers. Nevertheless, I would argue that the expulsion of Bolesław II on account of his perjuries does not meet with Gallus’s expressive approval. On the contrary, he seems to disagree with that move, as one can see in his description of the circumstances around the death of Bolesław’s son Mieszko. This young man, who “surpassed all Hungarians and Poles with noble customs and beauty” was killed, most probably by the perpetrators of his father’s exile. As Gallus states, the young prince died because some feared that he would take a revenge for the sins done to his father – which Gerard Labuda identifies

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<sup>331</sup> *semper fidus eius amicus unumque scutum utriusque persisteret, castra de confinio regni vel Boleslauo redderet, vel omnino destruere* Ibidem.

<sup>332</sup> See: 3.15 in GpP, 246-47.

<sup>333</sup> *Sed ducatum adeptus nec fidem tenuit iurata violando, nec Deum timuit homicidia perpetrando. Unde Deus ad exemplum aliorum sibi dignam pro factis reconvensationem exhibuit, cum securus inermis, in mula residens in medio suorum ab uno vili milite venabulo perforatus occubuit, nec ullus suorum ad eum vindicandum manus adhibuit*, 3.16 in GpP, 248-50

<sup>334</sup> Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 180–81; Żmudzki, *Władca i Wojownicy...*, 69.



with the exile of Bolesław.<sup>335</sup> The assessment of the king's exile contained in this way by the chronicler does not paint people responsible for it in the best light - they are so malicious and evil, that they do not hesitate to kill the virtuous young man, who was apparently seen as somebody who could have justly held some grievances. This would imply that the actions taken against King Bolesław II were still seen as an example of infidelity, even if the ruler himself was known to break his promises. The cause of this difference in value judgment may lay in the privileged position of the Piast dynasty. The disloyalty to the Polish *domini naturales* was for Gallus harder to justify than the murder of a tyrannous Přemyslid by the hand of his own follower. These last episodes make it meaningful to continue this line of inquiry in the next chapter, which is dedicated to loyalty in the relationship between rulers and their subjects.

For now, let me summarize the findings about loyalty to one's friends, allies, and other foreign rulers. While the Central European chronicles depict many instances in which Piasts, Přemyslids, or Árpáds entered into treaties and alliances with other rulers, their authors share the focus on ritual communication rather than the nature of the obligations created by such pacts. Nevertheless, the careful staging of the rituals in which oaths and promises were exchanged suggests that precisely defining the mutually accepted terms was possible – although in some cases rulers might have been more keen on offering ambiguous friendship.

Another aspect that seems to be shared by the authors of all three Central European chronicles is their judgment of those rulers who broke oaths and promises given to an equal party. Cosmas, Gallus, and the court chroniclers of the Hungarian kings believed that breaking promises and guarantees given to the other party is a sign of moral failure, although they did not always elaborate on the consequences of such behavior. Out of the analyzed chronicles, *Gesta principum Polonorum* contains the most elaborate tradition about the rulers being

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<sup>335</sup> 1.29 in *GpP*, 102; Gerard Labuda, *Święty Stanisław biskup krakowski, patron Polski: śladami zabójstwa, męczeństwa, kanonizacji* [St. Stanislaus the bishop of Cracow, patron saint of Poland: signs of murder, martyrdom, canonization] (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2000), 75–76.

punished for their disregard for pacts and promises. Although not all of the perjurious rulers depicted in *Chronica Boemorum* are punished for their deeds, the story of Bořivoj II's fall bears resemblance to the tale about Bolesław II portrayed by Gallus. The story of Aba presented in the Illuminated Chronicle also links the disloyalty of subjects with the ruler's perjury, albeit the connection is not made as clearly as in the Polish or Czech sources. The full understanding of this narrative requires closer inspection of his subjects' claim about Aba's disregard for oath-taking. I will examine this and other, similar examples in the next chapter which will be devoted to the relationship between Central European rulers and their subjects.

## Chapter 5: Loyalty between rulers and subjects

The following chapter is dedicated to the role of loyalty in the relationship between Central European rulers and their subjects. As the previous parts of the thesis have shown, the support (or lack of it) of loyal followers played a crucial role in the rulership of Přemyslid, Piast, and Arpad dynasties. While, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, the bonds of fidelity binding the Central European communities to the ruling dynasties stemmed largely from their positions as God's elected "natural masters" of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary, the exact character of thus required loyalty was not clearly defined. Moreover, the earliest Central European chroniclers acknowledged, as the examples from the previous parts of the thesis show, the social stratification of the societies ruled by Přemyslids, Piast and, Árpáds, with local elites actively participating in the exercise of dynastic power and broader masses of the warriors and people doing so only passively.<sup>336</sup> The proximity to the ruler that his *comites* and advisors enjoyed meant that more often than other subjects they came into the focus of chroniclers writing dynasty-centered works. Did it also translate itself into more defined bonds of loyalty than that expected of other subjects? In this chapter I will try to analyze the relationship between rulers and all of their subjects closely answering the questions about its unilateral or mutual nature, accompanying responsibilities and consequences of breaking it.

### 5.1 Consensual lordship

In the second chapter of this thesis I pointed out the twofold consequences that the vision of the sacralized sovereign authority of Central European dynasties brought to the

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<sup>336</sup> On this distinction see: Dalewski, "Władca i możni w Kronice Galla Anonima" [Ruler and nobles in the Gallus's Anonymous chronicle]; Karol Modzelewski, "Comites Principes, Nobiles. Struktura Klasy Panujacej w Świecie Terminologii Anonima Galla" [The Structure of the Ruling Class in Gallus Anonymus Terminology] in *Cultus et Cognition. Studia z Dziejów Średniowiecznej Kultury*, ed. Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński (Warsaw: PWN, 1976), 403–12; Wihoda, "Kniže a jeho verní."

depiction of the idealized loyalty in the earliest chronicles of the region. On the one hand, it seemed to create an expectation of loyalty, formulated in an impersonal way toward all members of the dynasty. On the other, it meant that Přemyslids, Piasts and Árpáds had to follow certain standards of conduct, befitting a Christian sovereign. However, besides the examples set up in depictions of legendary or idealized ancestors, the first Central European chroniclers seldom made direct statements about the proper way in which rulers should behave towards their subjects, preferring to pass short moral judgments.

This makes the Jaromír's speech from the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague ever more important. In the oft-cited passage – to parts of which I alluded already in the previous chapters – immiserated and blind Jaromír, having learned about the death of his brother Duke Oldřich (the very one who blinded him), arrived in Prague. He did so not to become a ruler himself, but to enthrone his nephew Břetislav I. In a speech given during the ceremony, Jaromír' instructed both the new ruler and his subjects:

And again Jaromír spoke to the people: "Approach from the Muncia clan! Approach from the Tepca clan!" and he called by name those who were more powerful in arms, better in faith, stronger in war, and more prominent in wealth. And sensing them to be present, he said: "Since my fates have not permitted me to be your duke, I designate this man as duke for you and praise him. You should obey him as befits a duke and show him the fidelity owed to your prince. I warn you, son, and again and again repeat the warning: worship these men like fathers, love them like brothers, and keep their counsel in all your dealings. To them you commit burghs and the people to be ruled; through them the realm of Bohemia stands, has stood, and will stand forever."<sup>337</sup>

This speech about the proper relationship between rulers and their subjects clearly points toward loyalty as a backbone of Bohemian polity, as already noted by Dušan Třeštík. The Czech medievalist also further elaborated on the distinction between *obedientia* owed to the *dux* and *fidelitas* owed to the *princeps*, suggesting that Cosmas may be differentiating here

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<sup>337</sup> 1.41 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 107.

between two roles performed by the Přemyslids: war-time army leaders and peaceful rulers.<sup>338</sup> Jakub Razim cautiously argues that the distinction between *obedientia* and *fidelitas* might have lay in absolute, unilateral loyalty between warriors and commanding *dux* and contextual loyalty of peacetime, based on the *do ut des* principle.<sup>339</sup> Nevertheless, both of them – just like other historians – agree that Cosmas focuses more on the second vision of mutual loyalty between Přemyslids and Bohemian elites.<sup>340</sup> The rule of *do ut des* very much shapes Jaromír's speech, who spells out that while elites should be loyal to Bretislav, he should treat them with familial love, listen to their counsel and rely on their assistance in governing his state. War-time excluded, Jaromír called for the consensual model of rulership, in which Přemyslid duke would cooperate with the elite representatives of the political community of Bohemia, who would participate in his sovereign authority.<sup>341</sup>

The idea of a monarch consulting the most important of his decisions with the members of the secular and ecclesiastical elite was a common concept in the medieval ideal of rulership. The obtainment of *consensus fidelium* before the ruler's actions became, according to Carolingian documents, an important rule of early medieval politics.<sup>342</sup> Far from serving as a mere window-dressing, the rulers who ignored obtaining *consensus* of the ruling elites and disregarded the counsel of advisors risked being accused of tyranny.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> According to this historian, the differentiation here might have been inspired by Isidore of Seville's *Ethymologiae* Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 161; Peter Kopal points out that this binary was also reflected in the Indo-European differentiation between aspects of kingship represented by Mitra-Varuna Kopal, "Král versus kníže?," 365–66.

<sup>339</sup> Razim, "Věrnost v Kosmově kronice," 28.

<sup>340</sup> Razim, 28; Kopal, "Král versus kníže?," 367.

<sup>341</sup> Bláhová, "Stát a vláda státu," 131–36; Wihoda, "Kníže a jeho verní," 20–29; For vision of such "consensual rulership" in High Middle Ages see: Bernd Schneidmüller, "Konsensuale Herrschaft. Ein Essay über Formen und Konzepte politischer Ordnung im Mittelalter," in *Reich, Regionen und Europa in Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Moraw*, ed. Paul-Joachim Heinig et al. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), 53–87.

<sup>342</sup> Jürgen Hannig, *Consensus fidelium: Frühfeudale Interpretation des Verhältnisses von Königtum und Adel am Beispiel des Frankenreiches* (Stuttgart: Hisserman, 1982).

<sup>343</sup> Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 103–6; Gerd Althoff, "Colloquium familiäre - colloquium se ere tum - colloquium publicum Beratung im politischen Leben des früheren Mittelalters," in *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014), 157–85.

The active role of elites in the internal politics of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary was already seen in the narratives about dynastic conflicts that I presented in the previous chapter. Many of the decisions described there were made after securing the support of the subjects – as was the case with Zbigniew’s and Bolesław’s III rebellion against Sieciech. Many also were influenced by good or bad advisors – be it anonymous or named: palatine Sieciech in Poland, Zderad, judge Prostěj and Vacek in Bohemia, the malicious *ispán* Vid and his noble counterpart Ernyei – just to name few examples of characters already presented in the thesis. I would like to argue then, that in all three of those polities the loyalty between the ruler and his subjects was primarily rewarded by the participation of the most powerful of the subjects in the exercise of the sovereign authority of the dynasty.

Proximity to the rulers had further advantages. Just like members of the family or friends feasted with dukes and kings in order to highlight the close bond between them, so did the members of the elite.<sup>344</sup> While the *Primeval Chronicle* does not mention this explicitly, readers can assume that during the feasts like the one attended by King Solomon and Duke Géza in Chapter 97 of the *Illuminated Chronicle* they were joined by their entourage.<sup>345</sup> Cosmas of Prague several times notes feasts Přemyslid rulers thrown for their *comites* and *vice versa*.<sup>346</sup> The feasts of Bolesław I the Brave, had far the most prominent place in informing an ideal vision of ruler-subjects relationship as depicted by Gallus. The first Polish king, who “loved his dukes, *comites*, and princes as if they were his brothers or his sons”<sup>347</sup> had, as Gallus notes, twelve friends and counselors with whom he would regularly dine. While the chronicler spends a considerable amount of time describing the lavishly set tables, the redistribution of

<sup>344</sup> For the importance of feasts in the Middle Ages in the social context see: Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 152–59; Jacek Banaszkiewicz, “Trzy Razy Uczta” [Three Times a Feast], in *Spółeczeństwo Polski Średniowiecznej*, ed. Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński, vol. 5 (Warsaw: DiG, 1992), 95–97.

<sup>345</sup> 97 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 188–89.

<sup>346</sup> Just for an example from the work of Cosmas see: 3.1 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 183; 2.19 *ibidem*, 138;

<sup>347</sup> *Duces vero suosque comites ac principes acsi fratres vel filios diligebat*, 1.13 in *GpP*, 58–59.

wealth, food, and drinks was not the main draw to those banquets - the participation itself was the main reward for *fideles*.<sup>348</sup> After all, Gallus mentions that a person who for some reason became excluded from the common feasts and banished from the presence of the king, even just temporarily, "he would feel as though he was dying rather than alive, and not free but cast into a dungeon until he was readmitted to the king's grace and presence."<sup>349</sup> The feasts created a great opportunity to reassert one's loyalty and dedication. When returning from the campaign in Rus Bolesław I the Brave and his closest followers becomes surrounded by a larger Ruthenian force, he remains confident in his victory, having trust in boast and promises made by his soldiers during feasts and division of the booty.<sup>350</sup> The fighters respond, that they place triumph over any kind of loot,<sup>351</sup> thus reasserting the opinion that material rewards were secondary to the followers of the Piast monarch. Granted, among virtues of idealized Bolesław was generosity toward his subjects. However, the main reward for his followers' loyalty laid in the participation in authority and glory of the great king.

Offices and shares in the sovereign authority of the dynast as a reward for the loyal service can be also found in the *Chronica Boemorum*. This is pretty directly stated in Vratislav II's already mentioned decision to make his faithful court chaplain Lanzo a new bishop of Prague, rewarding him for exemplary loyalty.<sup>352</sup> While one could see in this – given Cosmas's negative opinion on the first Czech king – the corrupt vision of politics, which resulted in the rejection of the candidate presented by Vratislav by the gathered elders and *comites*, I think

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<sup>348</sup> For Marian Dygo, the depiction of Bolesław's feast build on the Christological vision of the first Polish king - the main reward for faithful service would therefore be the admission to a sacred eucharistic community. See: Marian Dygo, "Uczty Bolesława Chrobrego" [Feasts of Bolesław Chrobry], *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 112, no. 3 (2005): 41–54.

<sup>349</sup> 1.12 in *GpP*, 59.

<sup>350</sup> *Sed de Dei misericordia vestraque probitate comperta confido, quod si viriliter in certamine resistatis, si more solito fortiter invadatis, si iactancias et promissiones in predis dividendis et in conviviis meis habitas ad memoriam reducatitis, hodie victores finem laboris continui facietis et insuper famam perpetuam ac triumphalem victoriam acquiratis. Sin vero victi, quod non credo, fueritis, cum sitis domini, servi Ruthenorum et vos et filii vestri eritis et insuper penas pro illatis iniuriis turpissime rependetis*, 1.7 in *GpP*, 44-46.

<sup>351</sup> *Hec et hiis similia rege Bolezlao proloquente, omnes sui milites hastas suas unanimiter protulerunt seque cum triumpho mallequam cum preda domum turpiter intrare responderunt*, Ibidem.

<sup>352</sup> 2.23 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 115.

that the criticism levered against Lanzo was not directed at the general method of recognizing and rewarding ones' loyalty. In Chapter 3 I pointed toward a broader context of dynastic conflict in which this nomination took place. Cosmas seems to agree with the idea of rewarding loyal and trustful subjects with positions of power. When few decades later Břetislav II, whom Cosmas depicted much more favorably than his father, decided to fill the very same position with his chaplain Hermann. His decision was influenced by the wise advice of Wiprecht, his bother-in-law, who recommended Herman, listing among his many qualities the most important ones, saying that he was "constant in the king's service, faithful in the matters entrusted to him, a trustworthy executor of embassies to be carried out."<sup>353</sup>

While the *Primeval Chronicle* does not contain a comparably strong ideological statement on the ideal relationship between ruler and most influential of his subjects, there is small clue within the text that suggest similar attitude. In the part of the narrative I described in Chapter 3, King Solomon's and *ispan* Vid's scheme against the Duke Géza is foiled because abbot William overheard their conversation. We learn that abbot decided to warn the duke and was faithful to him "because he [Géza] was the son of the founder of his [William's] church."<sup>354</sup> Thus abbot's allegiance, virtuous in chronicler's view, was built on the obligation toward the family of monastery's founder and patron.<sup>355</sup> While this does not have to signalize in itself that *Primeval Chronicle* also contained a strong idea of consensual lordship, it definitely underlines role of ruler's generosity in securing fidelity of his subjects.

We can conclude that in the *Chronica Boemorum* and *Gesta principum Polonorum* we position of Přemyslids and Piasts as "natural masters" did not exclude the idea of consensual lordship – one in which their subjects would participate to some extent in their sovereign authority. Moreover, bonds between Bohemian and Polish rulers and local elites seem to be

<sup>353</sup> 3.7 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 189.

<sup>354</sup> Ibidem; 116 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214-15.

<sup>355</sup> Herucová and Hudáček, "Verní a neverní kráľovi," 15.



based on mutual loyalty guided by the *do ut des* principle. Cosmas states it directly, while Gallus seems to be only gesturing at it. Rulers were supposed to respect magnates and dignitaries, consult them and listen to their advice, while expecting their help in exercising authority. The participation in the exercise of sovereign authority of the dynasty was in itself the main reward for their subjects' loyalty, with material remuneration being – at least for the authors of the chronicles – a benefit of secondary importance.

## 5.2 *Unfaithful rulers and their servants*

Thus, for further exploration of what bond of loyalty between ruler and his subjects entailed and what were its boundaries we need to turn toward the smaller narratives within the earliest Central European chronicles, in which their authors present their audience with model characters of loyal and disloyal rulers and their servants.

### 5.2.1 *Bad rulers*

I will begin with analyzing the depictions of those rulers who disregarded the bond of loyalty between them and their subjects.

King Vratislav II certainly belonged to this category. Some of his actions directly contradict the vision of good rulership from Jaromír's speech. Cosmas recalls how Vratislav enacted his revenge on *comes* Mstiš, who once was responsible for detaining the Přemyslid's wife when young Vratislav fled to Hungary fearing his brother Spityhnev II.<sup>356</sup> The *comes*, hoping that his current ruler does not hold the grudge, invited Vratislav to a feast on an occasion of the dedication of the new church Mstiš had built in his burg. Breaking with the traditionally convivial atmosphere of the public meal, Vratislav let Mstiš know that the castellany of the burg is withdrawn from his and given to Kojata, who was at that time Vratislav's closest

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<sup>356</sup> As I described in Chapter 3.

follower . Mstiš notes that the Přemyslid is "the duke and the lord" and as such he can "do with his burg what he pleases", but it is clear both for him and the reader that such act is not in line with the proper conduct of the sovereign, and can escalate to even more violent transgression. Thus Mstiš flees that very night fearing that he will end up losing not only his position, but also his eyes or limbs – an assumption that Cosmas finds, damningly for Vratislav II, completely valid.<sup>357</sup>

While this action can be, at least to some degree excused on behalf of the Bohemian ruler's understandable resentment toward a person tasked by Spityhnev II to hold his wife prisoner, the next example does not give Vratislav any excuse. When describing Vratislav II's campaign in Sorabia in 1088, Cosmas includes a small but illustrative episode about the king's treatment of one of the Bohemian nobles, Beneda. Beneda, having for some reason offended the king in the past and lived in exile in Poland, wanted to return to the Přemyslid's favor. Looking for someone to intercede on his behalf with the Bohemian king, he turns toward bishop of Meissen, Benno. Thus, when Vratislav entered Sorabia with his army, he learned that Benno was in the vicinity and sent for him with the message that "he might come to him under a pledge of faith (*sub fidei pacto*)."

This was just a deception, and when Beneda met with the king, Vratislav took him aside, attempted to deprive him of his richly encrusted sword, and when the audacious Beneda resisted, he deprived him of his life. Moreover the king, "as if he could revenge himself against the dead man", had ordered for Beneda's body to be dragged behind a horse.<sup>358</sup> The memory of the king's atrocious disrespect of the pledge of faith given to the Bohemian noble can be seen in the later *Continuation of the Chronicle of Cosmas by the monk of Sázava*, whose author, drawing from the eleventh-century obituary, called Beneda a

<sup>357</sup> 2.19 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 138-39.

<sup>358</sup> 2.40 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 166-68.

just man who died a martyr's death.<sup>359</sup> I think that Cosmas, while not using such an explicit language, would certainly agree that Vratislav's casual disregard for his own word was comparable to the faithlessness of the pagan tyrants he listed in his chronicle.<sup>360</sup>

One can see the link between this disregard to the bond of loyalty between Vratislav and his subjects and the king's troubles with his brother Conrad and his son Bretislav II. The ease with which large part of the army – and even those gathered in the ruler's tent – sided with the young prince after he killed Zderad in 1091 might have been influenced by a general resentment toward the monarch, who seemed to listen only to a narrow group of bad advisors. The general disbelief toward pledges and promises of Vratislav was best voiced by the closest supporters of his son, who despite the miraculous reconciliation between the Přemyslid s chose to leave the country, not believing in the monarch's change of heart. Cosmas further contrasts prince Bořivoj II with his father by having the young prince voluntarily join his closest supporters, who were "prepared to serve no one other than you as their lord" in their self-willed exile.<sup>361</sup>

Nevertheless, Vratislav's rule does not collapse completely due to his history of breaking the bonds between him and Bohemian magnates. The lack of more dire consequences might have resulted from the fact that this part of Cosmas's narrative touched on the very recent past, leaving the first Czech historian little place for creative license. Thus, he had to limit himself to simply presenting his negative judgment of the actions of the first Bohemian king, only gesturing at their destructive effects on the bonds of loyalty.

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<sup>359</sup> *Sicque iustis vir velut Dei martyr miles Beneda obiit V. Id, Iulii [...]*, see critical apparatus of 2.40 in *Chronica Bohemorum*, 145; More on the obituary of Beneda as an ideological counterpoint to Vratislav's reign in: Reitingner, *Vratislav*, 62–64.

<sup>360</sup> For Cosmas's use of comparison to pagan rulers, like Nero and Herod, to describe tyrannical behavior, see: Wolverson, *Cosmas of Prague*, 102–9; Antonín, *The Ideal Ruler*, 146.

<sup>361</sup> Cosmas writes: *Seeing this—and because just as a warrior without arms lacks his office, so too a duke without warriors has only the title of a duke—Břetislav preferred to seek his bread with them abroad than to have peace with his father at home and be alone without a warrior*, 2.48 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 177.

Probably the most direct connection between a ruler breaking the pledges and oaths he gave to the elites of the realm and the dissolvment of the bonds of loyalty was described in the story of the rise and fall of King Aba preserved on the pages of the *Illuminated Chronicle*. While it had an inter-dynastic aspect that I touched on in the previous chapter, the bond between Aba and the Hungarians was of crucial importance for the author of this part of the historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court.

The rise of Aba was an effect of the deposition of King Peter Orselo by the Hungarian nobles. While Peter was appointed as a successor by St Stephen himself, in the text of the chronicle his designation was an effect of the machinations of the evil Queen Gisela and her partner in crime named Buda.<sup>362</sup> Having obtained his throne in such a way, Peter – a foreigner, “cast aside all goodness of royal serenity and raged with Teutonic fury, despising the nobles of Hungary [...]”<sup>363</sup> He distributed all of the offices and strongholds to the Germans and Italians with whom he surrounded himself, and who – just like the king himself – frequently violated Hungarian women. When magnates of Hungary “by common counsel ” asked Peter to stop those of his men who committed such actions, he pridefully ignored them, responding that he will, as long as he lives, entrust all of the offices to the foreigners, for “This name Hungary comes from servitude, and they themselves shall be servants.”<sup>364</sup> Thus, Peter completely defied the bond of loyalty - by disrespecting the Hungarian magnates, not listening to their counsel and by refusing to let them participate in the exercise of sovereign power, filling the offices with outsiders. No wonder then, that:

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<sup>362</sup> For the reasons of such change, see footnote no. 293.

<sup>363</sup> *omnem regie serenitatis benignitatem abiecit et Teutonico furore seviens nobiles Hungarie aspernabatur*, 79 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 130-31.

<sup>364</sup> *Videntes igitur principes Ungarie mala gentis sue, que contra Deum eis inferebantur, communicato consilio rogaverunt regem, ut preciperet suis a tam detestabili opere desistere. Rex autem faustu superbie inflatus pestiferum preconcepti veneni fetorem in propatulum effudit, dicens: Si aliquamdiu sanus fuero, omnes iudices, tam clarissimos et spectabiles quam pedaneos, centuriones ac villicos<sup>366</sup> omnesque principes et potestates in regno Hungarie Teutonicos constituam, et terram eius hospitibus implebo et eam universaliter in potestatem Teutonicorum redigam. Et dicebat: Hoc nomen Hungaria derivatum est ab angaria, et ipsi debent angariari. Hec itaque fuerunt fomenta discordie inter Petrum regem et Hungaros*, 71 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 130-31.

in the third year of Peter's reign the magnates of the Hungarians and the nobles leagued themselves together on the advice of the bishops against King Peter, and considered anxiously whether they could find in the kingdom anyone of royal birth who would be fit to govern the kingdom and to free them from Peter's tyranny. Since they could find no such person in the kingdom, they chose from among themselves a certain ispán named Aba, the brother-in-law of king St. Stephen, and they appointed him to be king over them.<sup>365</sup>

With Peter defeated in the battle and Buda "promoter of all evil, by whose counsel Peter had afflicted Hungary" killed, Aba became a ruler and immediately revoked all of the enactments and exactions established by Peter and so hated by the Hungarians.<sup>366</sup> It seems that for this Aba initially enjoyed good relationship with his subjects, which helped him defend his position against the German military interventions on behest of the exiled Peter. With time however, misled by the sense of security he

became insolent and began to rage cruelly against the Hungarians. For he held that all things should be in common between lords and servants; and also regarded that breaking an oath is a nothingness. Despising the nobles of the kingdom, he consorted with peasants and commoners.<sup>367</sup>

In other words, Aba's insolence meant the rejection of the commonly accepted rules of politics. It is worth taking note, that for the author of those words disregard for oaths is on pair with the disregard for the social hierarchy – and as such, God's order. As for the violence, here the chronicler refers to the events that were yet to come. The disregard for the norms of the politics angered the Hungarian magnates, who conspired against the king. Having learned about this Aba captured the conspirators and had them executed without a trial, which further hurt his cause, and under the pretext of holding a council he gathered fifty noblemen and had

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<sup>365</sup> *Anno igitur regni Petri tertio principes Hungarorum et milites consilio episcoporum convenerunt adversus Petrum regem et sollicite querebant, si aliquem de regali progenie in regno tunc invenire possent, qui ad gubernandum regnum esset ydoneus et eos a tyrannide Petri liberaret. Cumque neminem talem in regno invenire potuissent, elegerunt de semetipsis quendam comitem nomine Abam, sororium sancti regis Stephani et eum super se regem constituerunt, 72 in Illuminated Chronicle, 135-36.*

<sup>366</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>367</sup> *Ex hinc itaque rex Aba securitate accepta factus est insolens et cepit crudeliter sevir in Ungaros. Arbitrabatur enim, ut omnia communia essent dominis cum servis, sed et iusiurandum violasse pro nichilo reputabat. Nobiles enim regni contempnens, habens semper cum rusticis et ignobilibus commune, 75 in Illuminated Chronicle, 140-141.*

them killed. By this point intervened St. Gerard, bishop of Cenad, who “with the authority of his office sternly rebuked the king and foretold that great peril threatened him.”<sup>368</sup>

The saint’s prophecy came into fruition. As I described in the previous chapter, unsatisfied with Aba’s reigns, a *coniuratio* of Hungarian nobles approached Henry III, cautioning him against trusting such a perjurious neighbor. Angered by the ignoble behavior of the Hungarian ruler Henry, together with his *protegee* Peter, once again gathered forces against Aba. This time the decisive battle of Ménfő is won by the Germans and the supporters of the exiled King Peter, because during the fight some of the fighters of Aba “in their abiding friendship towards King Peter, cast their banners to the ground and fled”. Even though the chronicler notes also that the German tradition cited divine intervention as the source of victory, which could have contributed to the Papal anathema cast on the Hungarians for dishonoring King Peter, it seems rather fitting for a ruler who held oaths in disregard to be betrayed by his own troops. The fate of defeated King Aba, who was after fleeing the field of defeat “cruelly killed by some Hungarians to whom during his reign he had done some evil”,<sup>369</sup> definitely reads as a cautionary tale for future rulers on consequences of not being faithful toward one’s own subjects.

With that being said, the *Illuminated Chronicle* does seem to contain remnants of the differing traditions about the rise and fall of King Aba, whose portrayal as a tyrant was not shared by all works of Hungarian historiography. As believably argued by József Gerics, it is possible that this narrative contains the elements of an alternative take on the egalitarian (or anti-magnate) positions of Aba, which would align attempts at curtailing noble’s power with ideology promoted by the eleventh-century Hungarian church. This is because, unlike the *Illuminated Chronicle* seems to suggest, church elites supported Aba well until his final

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<sup>368</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>369</sup> 76 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 142-47.

battle.<sup>370</sup> The trace of Aba's alternative depiction, one of a supporter of the church and the common folk worthy of veneration can be thus found in the short description of his dead body, which as the author of this part of the *Illuminated Chronicle* acknowledges, did not decay and had its wounds healed.<sup>371</sup> However, I think that the ease with which the author of the surviving edition of the royal Hungarian historiographic tradition was able to construct the narrative of Aba as a perjurious king that meets his deserved end speaks to the strength of the idea of loyalty between ruler and his subjects as a reciprocal bond that can be easily broken if one of the sides does not fulfill their mutual obligations.

### 5.2.2 *Bad servants*

The role close advisors and high officials played in shaping the politics of the ruling dynasties, as observed in the previous chapter, speaks to the importance of the highest-ranking subjects in the internal politics of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. Be it palatine Sieciech in Poland, *ispán* Vid in Hungary, Zderad, Vacek and judge Prostěj in Bohemia, or simply anonymous bad advisors and whisperers, the members of the ruling elite were often seen as people who saw the seeds of dynastic discord. As cunning and malicious as they may have been, most of them were not depicted as disloyal *per se* – that is if the chroniclers bothered with characterizing them further than simply bad or malicious. Their main moral failing seemed to stem not from faithfulness but from lust for power, which led them to perpetuate internal conflicts.

Those members of the elite who were involved in dynastic bids for power, nevertheless, faced the consequences of their deeds if the person they supported was defeated. The fate of the supporters of Bořivoj, who in 1109 (amidst a dynastic conflict that divided Přemyslid s

<sup>370</sup> Gerics, „Zu den Quellen der gesellschaftlichen Ideologie“, 443 ff.

<sup>371</sup> *Cuius quidem corpus est sepultum in ecclesia, que fuerat prope ipsam villam. Post aliquos autem annos, cum esset effosum de sepulchro, sudarium et ipsius vestimenta invenerunt incorrupta et loca vulnerum resanata*, Ibidem.

after the death of Bretislav II) briefly seized Prague from the hands of Duke Vladislav, is an example of this. After Vladislav's victory he ordered that out of the supporters Bořivoj "some were deprived of sight and property, others despoiled only of essential goods." However, the most humiliating punishment was reserved for Přivítan, a "senior in the burg of Prague." Before being expelled from Bohemia, he underwent a public display of degradation. He was dragged by his beard three times around the market with a large dog tied to his back, while a herald proclaimed "This is the sort of honor the man will bear who breaks his oath given to Duke Vladislav."<sup>372</sup>

With that being said, only few advisors were accused of questioning the sacralized relationship between them and the anointed sovereigns from the Přemyslid, Piast, and Arpad dynasties. Even then these kinds of accusation, levered against the advisors in order to explain the agenda behind their scheming, are usually brought up indirectly.

This is for example the case with palatine Sieciech from the *Gesta principum Polonorum*. Although he is from the onset described as overambitious and power-hungry, the serious accusations against Sieciech are formulated only after Duke Władysław decided to share his power with his sons, Zbigniew and Bolesław III. At the beginning of the episode I already described in the previous chapter which sees young Piast princes joining their forces against Sieciech and their father, Bolesław's men told him that "Sieciech will stop at nothing to eliminate your whole family and you in particular as the heir to the kingdom, and to seize the whole of Poland and keep it in his hands alone". This accusation was further expanded upon in the oratory speech made by Zbigniew pleading for help to the people of Wrocław, in which he described the palatine's actions as "plots that are directed against our lives by persons whose aim it is utterly to abolish the succession of our kindred and by turning order upside

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<sup>372</sup> 3.31 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 221.



down to distort the inheritance of natural lords.”<sup>373</sup> Gallus never fully embraces this claim, always having it presented from the mouth of some other speaker.

Similarly indirect is the accusation leveled against *ispán* Vid in the *Illuminated Chronicle*. While Solomon’s close advisor frequently incites the king against Geza and Ladislav, it is only after his death in the battle of Mogyoród we learn from the comment of the blessed prince that Vid might have had some very concrete ambitions that would directly put him at odds with the junior branch of the Árpád dynasty: “But I wonder that you, not being of ducal blood, should have wanted a duchy, and that you should have desired a crown when you were not of a [proper] lineage.”<sup>374</sup>

Out of the examples that I already explored in the previous parts of my thesis it is the Vršovici - or more precisely their earliest leader Kohan, that comes closest to openly questioning the very nature of the bond between them and their “natural masters”. He was at the hunting palace of adolescent prince Jaromír, when he learned about Boleslav III’s – Jaromír’s father – defeat in Poland. This leads Kohan to ponder: “Who is he [Jaromír], a little man worth less than seaweed, who ought to be greater than us and called lord? Is not a better man to be found among us, who might be more worthy to rule?”. Thus, they decided to abuse Jaromír, who was forced to withstand humiliation until his servant Dovora managed to gather forces to rescue the Přemyslid.<sup>375</sup> For this act Kohan did not suffer immediate repercussions, although the Vršovici were designated as the *inimici familiares* of Bohemians. Only in a multigenerational perspective they can be said to have paid the repercussions of their disloyalty – with the massacre of their kindred by Duke Svatopluk - but this long timespan makes the

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<sup>373</sup> *Sed notum constat exteris nationibus et propinquis vos multa perpressos pro insidiis vite nostre machinantibus ab hiis, qui successionem nostri generis nituntur penitus abolere, dominorumque naturalium hereditatem ordine prepostero distorquere*, 2.16 in *GpP*, 141-44.

<sup>374</sup> *Sed miror, quia de genere ducum non fuisti, cur ducatum volebas, nec de propagine, quare coronam optabas*, 122 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 228-229.

<sup>375</sup> 1.34 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 89.

connection between Kohan's aggression against his "natural master" and the fate of whole family blurry.<sup>376</sup>

Thus, in looking for more explicit stories about the consequences of the subjects' disloyalty I would like to turn toward previously unexplored parts of the narrative that more clearly describe the named members of the Central European elite turning against their masters.

The first example comes from the first book of the *Chronica Boemorum*. Shortly after the establishment of the Přemyslid rule Cosmas describes the legendary war Bohemians, led by Přemysl's progeny Neklan, fought against the neighboring Lučané. In an episode echoing the Trojan war, the Bohemians win the decisive battle thanks in large part to the heroic sacrifice of brave warrior Tiro, who led them to battle disguised as unwilling to fight Duke Neklan.<sup>377</sup> After the Lučans were massacred, the son the duke of the Lučané Vlastislav, was spared by the victorious Přemyslid, who as Cosmas remarks, despite being a pagan behaved compassionately like a good Catholic. He gave the young boy under the tutelage of a Sorabian man named During, old Neklan's tutor, who was described as the worst and most wicked of men, crueler than a beast.<sup>378</sup> This choice was advised by the *comites*, who argued that it would be best to control the young Vlastislav's son, so "the scattered people would not fly to the master's son", and that the subjugated Lučané will not conspire with the foreigner. They did predict however that During, "the second Judas", will plan a deceitful murder of his young *protegee*. Cosmas describes this treacherous act with gruesome detail, highlighting the prince's innocence and the heartlessness of his Sorabian tutor, who "cut off the head of his little lord as

<sup>376</sup> This is something that I described in the chapter 3.

<sup>377</sup> 1.12 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 47-49.

<sup>378</sup> *Quem dux ut vidit, quamvis paganus, tamen ut catholicus bonus misericordia super eum motus et atule eius et forme pepercit et novam urbem in plano loco construens nomine Dragus super ripam fluvii Ogře iuxta pagum Postoloprith, ubi nunc cernitur sancte Marie cenobium, tradidit eam et puerum pedagogo, cui antea pater suus eum commiserat, nomine Duringo, qui fuit de Zribia genere, excedens hominem scelere, vir pessimo peior et omni belua crudelior*; 1.13 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 29; There is some ambiguity as to what *suus* refers in this sentence, but it makes most sense for it to refer to the duke. This makes most grammatical, but also narrative sense – Neklan gives this important task to his trusted old mentor.

if he were a piglet.”<sup>379</sup> Then, “hoping that immense rewards would follow such a deed, During brought the grisly gift” to the Duke Neklan and his *comites*, where he explained that killing the young prince was necessary – since he would certainly want to avenge Vlastislav’s death. Having that in mind, he argued, even if they would judge his deed a crime he should be rewarded for it – since by doing what is necessary he absolved the Bohemians from the criminal act they would have to commit sooner or later. However, Duke Neklan was far from sharing this point of view, and responded to During:

“Take your gift out of our sight, criminal. Your crimes are beyond measure and will neither find favor nor be found worthy of defense. Neither a fitting sentence nor a comparable punishment for this disgraceful act can be thought up. Do you think that I could not have done what you did, if I had wanted to? It was licit for me to kill my enemy, but not for you to kill your lord. The sin you committed is greater than can even be called a sin. Certainly, whoever kills you or condemns you to be killed, incurs not a single sin but a double sin because it is both a sin for you to be killed and a sin that you killed your lord; and for both sins, he will carry a triple sin. Truly, if you hoped for some payment from us for this crime so immense, know that this is given to you as your great reward: you may choose the death you prefer from among three. Either throw yourself from a high rock, hang yourself by your own hands in some tree, or end your wicked life by your own sword.”<sup>380</sup>

Fittingly for a second Judas, During chooses to hang himself from a tree which – as Cosmas notes, bears his name to this day.

The described episode of the chronicle, together with the whole war with Lučané probably has its roots in the older oral tradition.<sup>381</sup> Nevertheless, Cosmas certainly had made it his own, through the extensive use of references to the Bible and Lucans’ *Pharsalia*,<sup>382</sup> framing

<sup>379</sup> 1.13, in the *Chronicle of the Czechs*, 61.

<sup>380</sup> 1.13 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 62.

<sup>381</sup> Dušan Třeštík, *Mýty kmene Čechů (7.-10. století): Tři studie ke 'starým pověstem českým'* [Myths of the Czech Tribe (seventh-tenth century): Three Studies on 'Old Czech Legends'] (Prague: Lidové Noviny, 2003), 172; And so Edward Skibiński points out the important royal-doppelgänger function that both warrior Tyro and During perform in the relation to Duke Neklan, typical for oral traditions. See: Edward Skibiński, “Średniowieczny kronikarz wobec tradycji oralnej: Walka Luczan z Czechami w ‘Kronice Czechów’ Kosmasa z Pragi” [Medieval Chronicler and the oral tradition: Fight among the Luczans and Czechs in ‘Chronica Boemorum’ by Cosmas of Prague], *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, no. 1 (2012): 85–93.

<sup>382</sup> In depth analysis of how the references to those works are used by Cosmas in the story about During can be found in: Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 62–68.

it as a cautionary tale with straightforward moral - it is never permissible for a subject to raise his hand onto his master. Doing so was not simply against earthly laws, but also a sin (*peccatum*).<sup>383</sup> It is worth pointing out that in this example the sacralization of the relationship between During and the young prince of Lučané does not have anything to do with any kind of divine mandate akin to one given to Přemysl, Vlatislav's son was not by any means "dominus naturalis" of his foreign guardian. The story told by Cosmas to the Přemyslid's subjects does seem to posit that bonds of lordship are protected by this sacred sanction, giving the condemnation of killing one's lord--even one from the rivaling dynasty--a universal meaning. There is also one other aspect of the characterization of During that seems to be especially important to the chronicler – his motivation. The wicked Sorabian clearly commits his heinous crime in the hope of being rewarded by Duke Neklan. Thus, the story of "second Judas" who killed an innocent boy counting on pieces of silver of his own can be seen as Cosmas's critique of the relationship between rulers and their subjects based solely on remuneration rather than deeper Christian morals.

A brief example of "second Judases" being punished for their deeds can be also found in the royal Hungarian historiographical tradition. From the description of the conflict between King Salomon and Duke Géza in the *Illuminated Chronicle* we learn that when in 1074 the two Árpádians gathered their forces preparing to resolve dynastic dispute on the battlefield near Kemej:

The duke's retainers or rather betrayers secretly sent messengers to the king to say that if the king would confirm them in their dignities and received them in his grace, they would desert the duke in battle and come over to the king. The king gave them upon oath the desired assurance, and then, feeling himself secure, crossed over the frozen Tisza to attack the duke.<sup>384</sup>

<sup>383</sup> These conclusions already in: Graus, "Über die sogenannte germanische Treue," 152; Repeated in: Razim, "Věrnost v Kosmově kronice," 33–34.

<sup>384</sup> Principes autem ducis ymo traditores, miserunt clamculo nuncios ad regem dicentes, quod si rex eos in dignitatibus suis teneret et in gratiam susciperet, ipsi in bello relicto duce ad regem confluerent. Rex autem certificavit eos super hoc prestito iuramento et securus tunc transivit Tysciam glaciata super ducem, 117 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214-216.

Just as they promised, lords Petrud and Bikás with their followers abandoned Geza during the battle, switching sides to join King Salomon. Even though this meant that the valiantly fighting Duke had to, in the face of the overwhelming enemy forces, withdrew from the field of battle, the traitors did not escape divine judgment:

As the traitor Judas gave a sign, so the fleeing traitors, as they had arranged with the king, raised their shields as a sign that the king's soldiers should not attack them. But the king's men did not know about this sign of betrayal, and seeing the duke's detachments in flight, they pursued them to their destruction, so that very few of those traitors escaped death; and would that not one of those had escaped who foully betrayed their lord and benefactor.<sup>385</sup>

The comparison with Judas further strengthen rather direct moral judgement given by the chroniclers. While due to the complicated nature of the Hungarian historiographical tradition there is no guarantee that both narratives were written by the same author, I think that this story can be contrasted with the earlier episode found in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, the desertion of part of King Aba's army during the battle of Ménfő. Since Aba's faithless reigns dissolved the bonds of loyalty between him and his followers, and as such battlefield betrayal is not treated by the author as something surprising - in stark contrast to the condemned battlefield betrayal of Duke Geza, good lord and benefactor of his followers.

Miećław, the anti-hero of the last example I would like to explore – this time from the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, shares certain similarities with During, but his story is certainly more convoluted than the examples above. This is not surprising, given the chaotic context of the restoration of Piast rule by Casimir the Restorer in which it takes place.

In order to properly present the role Miećław plays in the oldest Polish chronicle, I have to briefly return to the already mentioned in Chapter 2 depiction of the fall of the first Piast

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<sup>385</sup> Traditores autem fugientes levabant clipeos suos in signum, quod regi dederant, quemadmodum Iudas traditor, qui dederat signum ne milites regis eos persequerentur. Exercitus autem regis ignarus proditoris signi et videntes agmina ducis fugere, Ibidem.

monarchy. As I hinted, after the death of Mieszko II, who was no longer characterized by the same extraordinary virtues as his father Bolesław I the Brave, the bond of fidelity between the Piasts and their subjects became fragile. Thus, we learn that Queen Mother Richeza, who ruled in the name of her adolescent son Casimir, was driven out from the country by “traitors (*traditores*) who bore her ill will”. The same traitors rose up against Casimir when he grew up, fearing that he will seek revenge for what they have done to his mother.<sup>386</sup> Gallus does not speak in more detail about the motivations of the traitors, but he makes sure that his readers have no doubt that the members of the ruling family are not to blame for their exile – the young age of Casimir seem to absolve him for any responsibility for his fate, while Richeza’s regency is characterized positively despite her gender.<sup>387</sup> The historically tumultuous reign of Mieszko II is completely brushed over by the chronicler, with the only possible reminder of the crisis of the Piast state that begun in 1030’s being the reluctantly recalled information about the possible castration of the Polish ruler.<sup>388</sup>

The events that followed the exile of the young prince - foreign invasions, slaves’ revolt, and general destruction – are presented as the clear consequence of the absence of the Piast dynasty, so closely related to the prosperity of Poland.<sup>389</sup> Gallus ends his vivid depiction of the ruined country with a cautionary moral: “But let this suffice on the subject of Poland’s ruin, and may it serve in correction of those who failed to keep faith with their natural masters (*domini naturales*)”.<sup>390</sup> The chronicler emphasizes that it was the lack of loyalty that led to the desolation of the country at that time. The use of *coniunctivus praesentis* implies that those

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<sup>386</sup> 1.18 in *GpP*, 75.

<sup>387</sup> Gallus writes that Richeza *pro modo femineo regnum honorifice gubernaret*, Ibidem.

<sup>388</sup> *Dicitur etiam a Bohemicis in colloquio per traditionem captus et genitalia, ne gignere posset, corrigiis astrictus, quia rex Boleslauus, pater eius, similem eis iniuriam fecerat, quoniam eorum ducem suumque avunculum excecaverat*, 1.17 in *GpP*, 74; Edward Skibiński sees the tradition about the Mieszko’s castration as trace of the old explanation for dynasty’s inability to continue to exercise power, and thus to maintain the ties of fidelity linking it to its subjects, see: Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 83.

<sup>389</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 220.

<sup>390</sup> *Haec autem dixisse de Poloniae destructione sufficiat, et eis qui dominis naturalibus fidem non servaverunt ad correctionem proficiat* 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

who *dominis naturalibus fidem non servaverunt* are among the audience of Gallus's story, which thus serves as a cautionary tale.<sup>391</sup> At the same time, it also serves as a categorization of rebels who allowed for the exile of Casimir. The connection between the destruction of Poland and the lack of fidelity is further indicated by the words of the young prince's mother, who tried to dissuade her son from returning to his homeland: "His mother tried to dissuade him: the people were not yet fully Christian and not to be trusted, and rather than returning there he should stay and possess his maternal inheritance in peace."<sup>392</sup> The suggestive description of all the dramatic events that took place in Poland during the absence of *domini naturales* – the Piast rulers – serves both as a warning to the contemporary readers and follow-up on the fate of *traditores* responsible for the collapse of Boleslaw Chrobry's state. Some of those who exiled Rycheza and Casimir, as the members of ruling elites, found death from the hands of the rising slaves, while others may found themselves in the lucky group of those Poles who "fled over the river Vistula into Mazovia."<sup>393</sup>

I doubt that Mieclaw, the main opponent of Casimir in the second part of this narrative, was among these *traditores*. Even though he played an important function as cupbearer in Mieszko's court, and thus belonged to the very elite of the Piast monarchy, it seems that if he had played a role in the expulsion of the ruling dynasty Gallus would have mentioned him by name earlier.<sup>394</sup> It is only after the depiction of the initial successes of the returning Casimir, who fended off the foreign invaders, that we are introduced to Mieclaw, who after the death of Mieszko "had the presumption to become the leader and standard-bearer of the Mazovian

<sup>391</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 219–21.

<sup>392</sup> *Quem cum mater dehortaretur, ne ad gentem perfidam et nondum bene christianam rediret, sed hereditatem maternam pacifice possideret*, 1.19 in GpP, 80.

<sup>393</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>394</sup> Janusz Bieniak, *Państwo Mieclawa: studium analityczne* [Mieclaw's State: Analytical Study] (Warsaw: PWN, 1963), 74.

people.”<sup>395</sup> As the leader of the Mazovians, he not only refused to submit to Casimir, but even began to resist him militarily. The Piast prince, who did not consider the rouge cupbearer as anyone more than a rebellious servant, attacked Miecław’s forces and despite his numerical disadvantage won over the rebels fighting for an unjust cause.<sup>396</sup>

The main crime of Miecław doesn’t lie then in his participation in the expulsion of the Piast prince. Janusz Bieniak’s suggestion that it was Miecław’s ambition to press his own claim to former domain of Piasts also seems too farfetched.<sup>397</sup> Words *quod sibi non cedebat per ius aliquod vel naturam* seem to me to refer to the title of *princeps* of Mazovians, rather than some further ambitions.<sup>398</sup> It seems therefore that the most important thing in the story of Miecław is his refusal to submit to his returning *dominus naturalis*.<sup>399</sup> It was the servant's reluctance to recognize Casimir as his overlord that prompted the young prince to action. The way in which the leader of Mazovians resisted his natural lord was probably also important – by military and insidious means, guided by disastrous pride and ambition. The negative picture of Miecław is complemented by the fact that it was the pagan Pomeranians that hurried to aid him in the battle.<sup>400</sup>

The greatest crime of the self-proclaimed ruler of Mazovia was the fact that he did not recognize the leading role of Casimir or more broadly, of the Piast dynasty. But why should the trusted man Mieszko II, in the face of the death of the old monarch and the collapse of his

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<sup>395</sup> 1.20 in *GpP*, 82.

<sup>396</sup> *Unde Meczslaus in audacia suae militiae confisus, immo ambitione perniciosae cupiditatis excecatus, nisus est obtinere per praesumptionis audaciam, quod sibi non cedebat per ius aliquod vel naturam. Inde etiam in tantum superbiae fastum conscenderat, quod obedire Kazimiro rennuebat, insuper etiam ei armis et insidiis resistebat. At Kazimirus indignans servum patris ac suum Mazoviam violenter obtinere, sibique grave dampnum existimans et periculum, ni se vindicet, imminere, collecta pauca quidem numero manu bellatorum, sed assueta bellis, armis congressus, Meczslawo perempto, victoriam et pacem totamque patriam triumphaliter est adeptus, Ibidem.*

<sup>397</sup> Bieniak, *Państwo Miecława*, 82–86.

<sup>398</sup> Similarly Władysław Dziewulski, “Sprawa Miecława (Masława): W Związku z Pracą Janusza Bieniaka, ‘Państwo Miecława. Studium Analityczne, Warszawa 1963’” [The Case of Mieczysław (Masław): In Response to the Work of Janusz Bieniak, ‘Miecław’s State; Analytical Study, Warszawa 1963’], *Przegląd Historyczny* 56, no. 3 (1965): 470.

<sup>399</sup> Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 94.

<sup>400</sup> 1.21 in *GpP*, 84-86.



state, consider the returning prince from exile as his ruler? According to Gallus the answer is simple - because the Piasts are the “natural master” of Poland. The Polish common folk seem to recognize him as such immediately, since straightaway after the young prince crosses the border the citizens of the unnamed castle open the gates for him.<sup>401</sup> The devotion of the common-folk is further highlighted by the heroism of some “a soldier from the rank and file (*de gregariis militibus*)“, who saves Casimir’s life during the battle with Miecław.<sup>402</sup> With the expulsion of foreign invaders, Casimir gained the right to recognize all Poles as his subjects, from whom he had the right to expect loyalty.<sup>403</sup> Even if he had not dealt with the Piasts before, Miecław should have recognized the divine claim of the dynasty.

Despite the fact that these two details do not appear directly after each other, it seems that both the description of the fall of Poland and the clash between Casimir and Miecław are to serve mainly to emphasize the need to remain faithful to the natural lords - the Piast dynasty. The first describes the consequences of not remaining faithful, the second emphasizes the unbreakable nature of the bonds of loyalty between the Poles and the dynasty.

In summary, the ideal vision of loyalty between the rulers and their subjects contained also the obligation to abstain from acting against each other, similarly to other bonds of “negative loyalty”. Violation of this rule, either by the neglect of the given oaths or by physical violence were punished, often by the higher, divine power – the very same which, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, was shown as the ultimate support of just rulership.

### 5.3 Conclusions

This brings me to broader conclusions. The analysis of the role of loyalty between rulers and their subjects in the earliest Central European chronicles shows that the dominant vision

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<sup>401</sup> 1.19 in GpP, 80.

<sup>402</sup> 1.20 in GpP, 83-84.

<sup>403</sup> Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 222.

shared to some degree by the authors of all three works was that of mutual commitments based on the *do ut des* rule. The content of the bond of loyalty was defined by both positive and negative obligations. To the first one belonged the expectation of reliable counsel and assistance on the part of the ruler, whereas his subjects could count on their participation in the sovereign authority of the ruler and material rewards. The extent to which positive obligations are to be fulfilled was not defined in absolute terms, thus being open for interpretation for both the ruler and his subjects.

On the other hand, the negative obligations were clearly delimited. Both the ruler and his subjects were forbidden to harm each other in any way. The infidelity toward the lord was universally recognized in all three of the chronicles as grave moral failing, with those who did so likened by Cosmas and the *Illuminated Chronicle* to Judas. Stories of unfaithful subjects from Hungarian historiographic tradition and the *Gesta principum Polonorum* end with those who betrayed their lords meeting divine justice, brought by their own schemes. Such an interpretation can be also offered on the ultimate fate of the Vršovici family, although as I explained in Chapter 3, Cosmas seems to pity the innocents who have to pay a price for the sins of their ancestors.

Rulers who crossed the limits of “negative loyalty” by perjury or hurting their subjects were seen as tyrannous. The story of King Vratislav II depicted by Cosmas and Kings Peter and Aba from the *Illuminated Chronicle* illustrate how such behavior can lead to the dissolution of the bonds of loyalty. In the case of the Hungarian monarchs it even leads to their depositions, which are portrayed by the chronicler with silent approval. The fact that neither of them belonged to the bloodline of the Árpáadian dynasty may have strengthened this sentiment. The lack of a comparable narrative from the *Gesta principum Polonorum*, despite notable information about opposition to the reigns of Bolesław II and Władysław I (or at least his

palatine Sieciech) speaks volumes about the extent of pro-dynastic emphasis of Gallus's ideology.

# Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to examine the concept of loyalty—broadly defined as a relationship that mediates commitment to other people—in the earliest Central European chronicles. In doing so, my intention was to observe the differences and similarities between loyalties underlying personal bonds that held medieval society together, as well as commonalities and distinctive elements between their depictions in the first works of history writing from Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. The analyzed narratives were written in the early twelfth century, but they described both contemporary politics and the events that took place in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, in the formative period of the respective polities.

In the introduction of my thesis, I formulated questions about the commonalities between the role of loyalty in the personal bonds depicted in the earliest Central European chronicles. These questions concerned both the different types of ties of loyalty in the individual chronicles, as well as the comparison between the chronicles. My analysis has discovered broad similarities in the way how loyalty is characterized in all three of the earliest Central European chronicles.

For one, in all three chronicles the dominant vision of loyalty is one of reciprocal, though not always symmetrical loyalty. Even the relationship with the God and the saints was seen as regulated by the rule of reciprocal *do ut des*. Both Přemyslid and Piast traditions about the origins of dynastic power known from the twelfth-century chronicles draw a direct line between the election of the founders of these dynasties as God's representatives and position their descendants as the "natural masters" of Bohemia and Poland. Respectively. However, they also contain traces of a different approach to the legitimization of rule: one that links the subjects' loyalty to the ruler's own ability to live up to the standard of a Christian sovereign. Thus, strong ideas about the divine origins of dynastic authority coexisted in chronicles of

Cosmas of Prague and Gallus (no comparable text survived in the Hungarian tradition) with the ideological message of consensual lordship, present also in the oldest historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court. The same reciprocal nature is visible in the relationships within the kin-group and between members of the ruling families and other rulers and people of the same standing in the social hierarchy portrayed by the chroniclers.

Another aspect shared in all three of the analyzed chronicles lies in the way they define the content of those dominant, reciprocal bonds. Just as it was argued in the context of twelfth-century Western Europe by Klaus van Eickels, relationships of kinship, friendship and lordship presented on the pages of the *Chronica Boemorum*, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, and *Primeval Chronicle* are primarily characterized by negative obligations, in which both sides are to abstain for attacking, injuring or harming each other in any way. In contrast, the positive obligations are not defined as clearly – although from the described long processes of negotiations between the rulers the reader can deduce that at least in the relationships between equals duties of each part had been subject to careful negotiation. The positive obligations stemming from familial bonds and lordship were only vaguely defined by amicability, support, and counsel.

In looking for a source of that discrepancy between the level to which positive and negative obligations were defined, one can turn toward the concept of the contextual nature of the *Spielregeln*, which, as Althoff explained, were not regulations, but rather non-normative patterns of behavior. The societies described in the earliest Central European chronicles did not follow explicit norms, but rather acted on *Spielregeln* embedded in broader social practice and activated in particular situations. Thus, each appeal to the loyalty of a subject or the *amicitia* of a brother or an ally was an opportunity to contextualize the positive content of loyalty. Traces of this process of deliberative defining of loyalty can be observed in the narratives I outlined in Chapter 3: the response of the people of Wrocław when their loyalty

was questioned by Duke Władysław and a similar answer of *ispán* Ernyei suspected of double loyalty by King Solomon.

Another aspect shared by the earliest Central European chronicles in their portrayal of personal bonds is that most of the bonds between the members of the ruling families as well as rulers and their subjects, although frequently reinforced by additional rituals, gestures and oaths, seemed to be formed organically. It is most visible in those parts of the narratives which depict the return of young members of the ruling dynasty who had not held power before their exile but are still recognized as deserving loyalty – like Casimir in Poland or Vazul's sons in Hungary. The explanation for the chroniclers' decision to depict those bonds as organic can be found in the importance authors of the earliest Bohemian, Polish and Hungarian chronicles placed on those relationships. After all, the most organic of bonds – the bonds of kinship, especially those between blood-relatives, were portrayed by the chroniclers as demanding the strongest loyalty. Conflicts between members of the same dynasty were seen as disastrous for Central European polities, being a subject of the lamentation of Cosmas, Gallus, and the Hungarian authors.

This leads me to another question I asked in the introduction – how did the authors of the earliest Central European chronicles use the discourse of loyalty to underline the ideological messages contained in their works?

Since, as I argued above, loyalty in all three of the chronicles was broadly defined in the same terms, a closer look at how the chroniclers used loyalty to achieve their literary goals highlighted the contrast between the visions of politics they depict. Against the background of the earliest Polish and Hungarian chronicles created in close connection with the dynastic court, Cosmas of Prague's chronicle stands out as more willing to criticize contemporary politics. Cosmas criticism focuses on unmasking how appeals to loyalty were often just an empty words, undercut by actions of the Přemyslids and the Bohemian elites. Nevertheless, in highlighting

the differences between what is and what ought to be, Cosmas subscribed to the same vision of loyalty as the authors of *Gesta principum Polonorum* and the *Primeval Chronicle*.

Thus, in all three chronicles, bad rulers were portrayed as encroaching on the bonds of loyalty, either by breaching its negative obligations with their tyrannous deeds (King Peter Orselo, Duke Boleslav I, King Vratislav II) or abusing trust in reciprocal relationships through perjuries (King Aba). Perjuries were also part of the negative characterization of those members of the dynasties that were seen by the chroniclers as the main instigators of dynastic conflicts – like Zbigniew or King Solomon. However, the depictions of these direct adversaries of the patrons of Gallus and the writers at Coloman's court, as well as the quarreling sons of Duke Břetislav II were further nuanced by the figures of bad advisors—anonymous and named—that guided their decisions. This shifting of blame, while focusing on the few bad apples (like in case of *ispán* Vid) can be to some extent explained by the chroniclers' need not to antagonize those parts of the elites whose allegiances may have laid on the other parties of dynastic conflicts.

Authors of all three analyzed works agree in their negative moral judgment of those who break the bonds of loyalty. The Polish and Hungarian tradition, both created in close connection with the respective dynastic courts, depict those who betray good rulers (young Casimir and his mother, Duke Geza on the battlefield at Kemej) as punished by the higher force – be it God or *fortuna*. At the same time, stories of King Bolesław II and Duke Svatopluk from Gallus's *Gesta*, King Vratislav II from *Chronica Boemorum*, and King Aba from the *Primeval Chronicle* all shared a narrative structure that told a story of valiant rulers who abused trust and loyalty—either of their allies or subjects—which results in the dissolution of the bonds of loyalty between them and their subjects. Here again, comparing the chronicles amplifies the telling difference in the detail of one of the stories – Gallus's omission of the possible revolt

of the elites against Bolesław II, which would fit into the narrative outline sketched in the stories from Bohemian and Hungarian tradition.

Those and other narratives underline that for the authors of medieval chronicles different bonds did not exist in the vacuum, and loyalty or disloyalty to a family member or an ally reflected on the strength of other bonds of loyalty. This strengthens the vision of loyalty as a broad, cross-social relationship that mediates all commitments to other people.

With all that being said, in a thesis focused on the loyalty underlying different types of personal bonds, some aspects of its depiction in Central European chronicles, otherwise worth examining, had to be relegated to the margins. Such was the role of loyalty or the lack of thereof in the depiction of those who were deliberately portrayed as outside of the social bonds of the communities described in the chronicles - “the others”. Just as Gallus accuses Czechs and pagan Pomeranians, so does Cosmas with Poles and Hungarians, while the *Illuminated Chronicle* highlights Peter Orseolo’s foreign allegiances.

Nevertheless, the present thesis illustrates well that, despite small differences resulting from distinct ideological goals, the earliest Central European Chronicles presented similar visions of loyalty. The shared perspective of their authors, well-educated members of the intellectual elites of Latin *Christianitas*, speaks to the commonality of cultural development between medieval Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. Given the strong influence of the ducal and royal courts in the creation of *Gesta principum Polonorum* and the *Primeval Chronicle*, as well as Cosmas’s position within the ecclesiastical elites of Bohemia, the vision of loyalty presented in them can be seen as an ideal belonging not only to the chroniclers, but also to the respective centers of dynastic power.

The concepts of loyalty depicted in the earliest Central European narrative sources and the norms of social behavior they were creating do not differ significantly from concepts of loyalty and *Spielregeln* applied in other parts of Latin Europe. The shared Christian religion



and involvement of the Central European rulers in the politics of their Western neighbors resulted in importation of the common set of values shaping reciprocal and unilateral social relationships. The authors of the first Central European chronicles, members of the intellectual elites of Latin *Christianitas*, not only depicted this integration process, but by virtue of facilitating internal communication through history writing, they actively participated in its unfolding.

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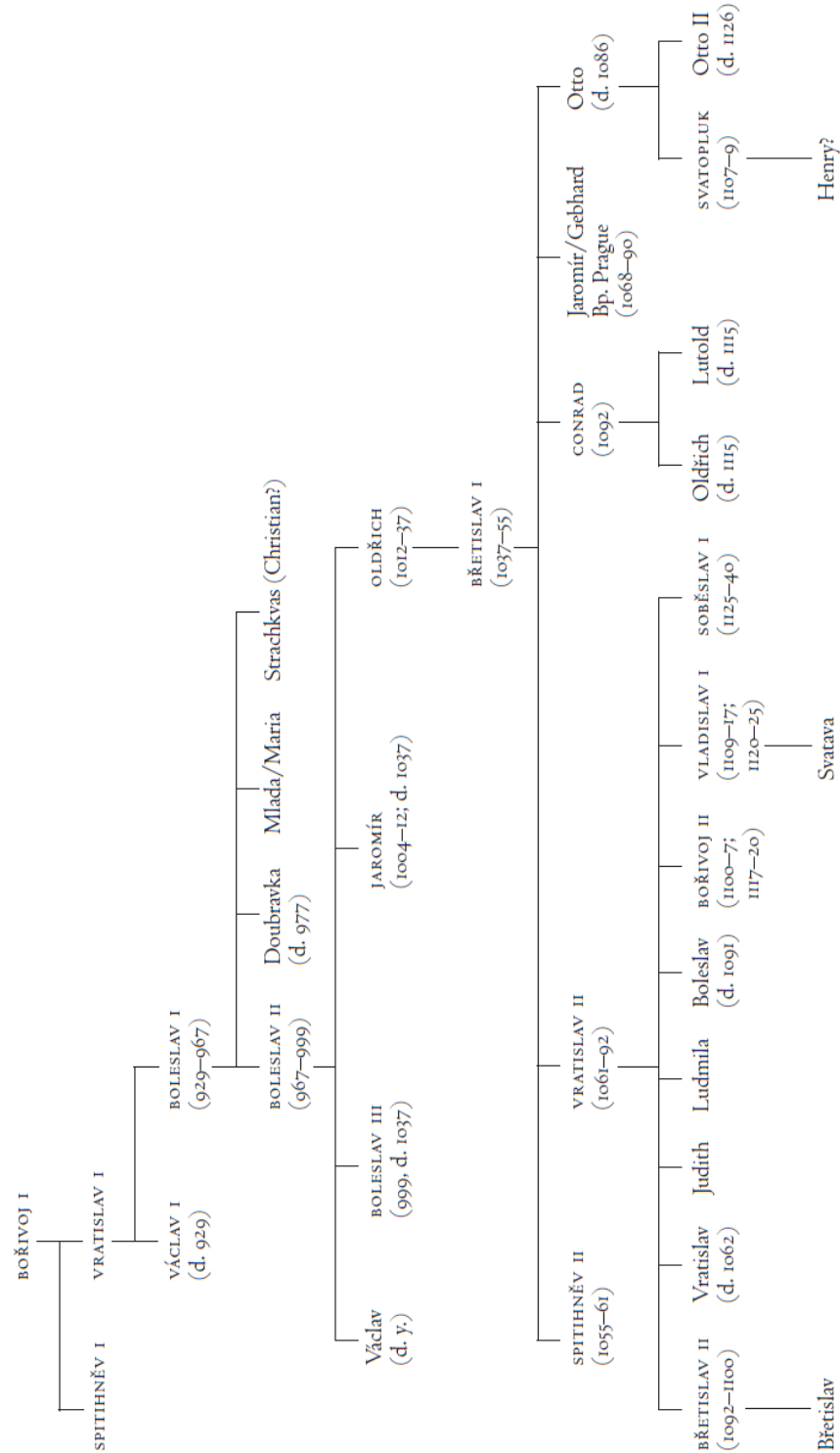
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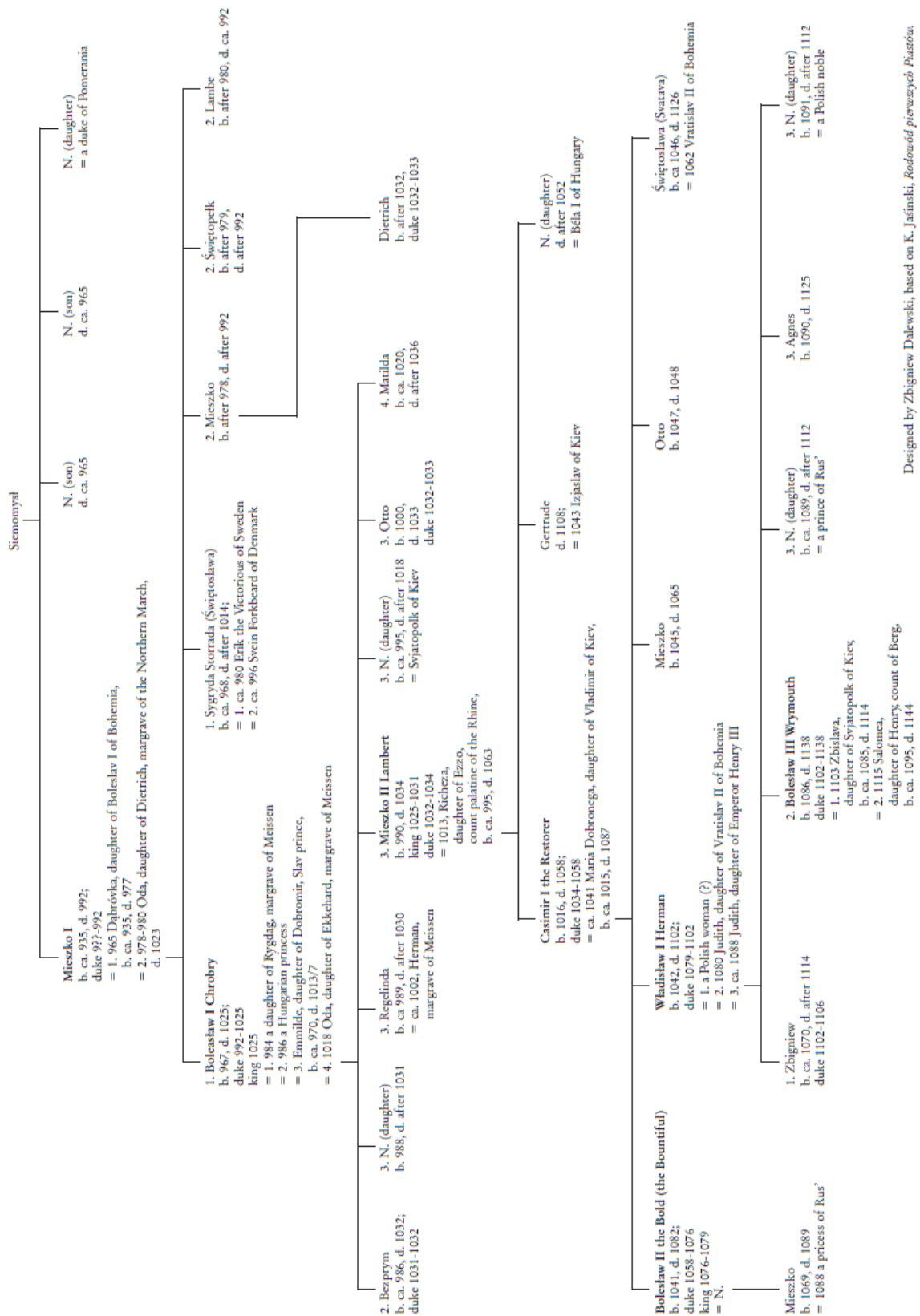
# Appendices

1 Přemyslid genealogy in accordance with the Chronicle of the Czechs, from: Cosmas of Prague, The Chronicle of the Czechs, translation, introduction and notes by Lisa Wolverton, (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press 2009), xvi.



Note: CAPITALS indicate dukes of Bohemia, with reign dates in parentheses.

2 *Genealogy of early Piasts, from: Gesta principum Polonorum / The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles, translation and commentary by Paul W. Knoll, Frank Schaer, preface by Thomas N. Bisson (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2003), Rear end*



Designed by Zbigniew Dalewski, based on K. Jasinski, *Rodzód pierwszych Piastów*

3 Genealogy of early Árpáds, from: *The Illuminated Chronicle / Chronica de gestis Hungarorum e codice picto saec. xiv.*, translated and edited by János Bak and László Veszprémy, preface by Norbert Kersken (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 431

