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Resumo

A crónica do chamado Dalimil é primeira crónica escrita em língua checa, datando de inícios do século XIV. No contexto da crise de sucessão (interregno de 1306-1310) criada pela morte de Venceslau III, assassinado sem descendência, e pela extinção da dinastia Přemyslide, o objectivo do autor da crónica era estabelecer o papel político da Nobreza checa. Após enfatizar a eleição do Rei pelos nobres, a justificação do tiranicídio tinha de desempenhar um papel central. Perante um Rei que podia ser fraco (Henrique de Carinthie), estrangeiro (João, o Cego), ou muito jovem (Venceslau II no início do seu reinado), a nobreza do reino tinha de garantir a estabilidade do Estado e a “comunidade do reino”, numa dialéctica que os apresentava como se fossem “o corpo místico do rei”. Nesta Crónica, a necessidade do tiranicídio não é apresentada, porém, como uma novidade, mas como um dever fundamental e quase moral da Nobreza, que fora abandonado devido ao exercício autoritário do poder pelo monarca, quando o ducado da Boémia se transformara num reino.

Palavras-chave: Boémia, discurso político, nobreza, tiranicídio, legitimidade

Abstract

The chronicle of the so-called Dalimil is the first chronicle written in the Czech language, dating from the early 14th century. In the context of the succession crisis (interregnum of 1306-1310) entailed by the death of Venceslas III, murdered without descent, and the extinction of the Přemyslide dynasty, its author's plane was to establish the political role of the Czech nobility. Next to the emphasis on the election of the ruler by the Lords, the justification of the tyrannicide had to play a crucial role. In front of a king who could be weak (Henry of Carinthie), foreign (John the Blind) or too young (Venceslas II at the beginning of his reign), the nobility had to embody the durability of the State, the "community of the realm", in a dialectic that connected the Lords in the idea of constituting the "mystic body of king". In this text, the necessity of the application of the tyrannicide is not however presented as a novelty, but as a fundamental and almost moral duty of the nobility, which was abandoned because of

the rise of the authoritarian exercise of the power by the ruler when the duchy of Bohemia became a Kingdom.

Keywords: Bohemia, Political Thought, Nobility, Tyrannicide, Legitimity



The Justification of Tyrannicide in the *Chronicle of Dalimil*. The Czech Nobility as the “Mystical Body” of the Realm.

Éloïse Adde

The Czech nobility enjoyed a very strong position in society at the beginning of the 14th century, thanks to a long tradition of gathering (assemblies)¹ and a first crisis which began after the death of Přemysl Ottokar II (1278)². The young, new King of Bohemia, Wenceslas II (1278-1305)³, was immediately abducted by the regent Otto V of Bavaria (1267-1298). In response, the Bohemian magnates entered the scene, negotiating with Otto about his release and taking responsibility for administering the country in his absence. By the time Wenceslas finally returned to Prague in 1283, the nobility had been able to establish itself both outside (when negotiating with Otto) and inside (within the Czech lands) as the real political representative of the people and the country⁴. Above all, its relationship with the sovereign had been irrevocably transformed. The Czech nobility managed to consolidate its new position because of the succession crisis (the interregnum of 1306-1310) following the death of Wenceslas III, murdered without descent, which entailed the extinction of the Přemyslid dynasty⁵. After the short reign of Rudolf of Habsburg, Henry of Carinthia failed to impose himself as the legitimated

¹ VANÍČEK, Vratislav – “Předpoklady a formování šlechtické ‘obce českého království’ – zemské obce”. *Mediaevalia historica bohemica* 1 (1991), pp. 13-55.

² Přemysl Ottokar II died during the Battle on the Marchfeld against Rudolph I of Habsburg, VANÍČEK, Vratislav – *Velké dějiny země koruny české*. Vol. 3. Praha: Paseka, 2002, pp. 190-196; ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – *Přemysl Otakar II. Kráľ na rozhraní věků*. Praha: Lidové Noviny, 2011, pp. 443-476.

³ Wenceslas II was born in 1271.

⁴ On this crisis and its resolution, VANÍČEK, Vratislav – *Velké dějiny*, pp. 359-386.

⁵ Wenceslas III was King of Hungary between 1301 and 1305, and King of Bohemia and Poland from 1305. His assassin has not been identified, ŠUSTA, Josef – *Dvě knihy českých dějin. Kus středověké historie našeho kraje*. Vol. 1: *Poslední Přemyslovci a jejich dědictví, 1300-1308*. Praha: Nákladem české akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění, 1917, pp. 460-462.

ruler⁶. As a consequence, the barons worked with the main abbots of the country to find a solution⁷. They negotiated with the recently elected King of the Romans, Henry of Luxembourg (1308-1313)⁸, and decided to arrange a marriage for his young son John with the Přemyslid princess Elizabeth⁹ and elect him as King of Bohemia (1310)¹⁰. In exchange, John gave his promise to respect the local customs and liberties (*Inaugural diplomas*)¹¹.

Dating from the early 14th century (1309-1314), the *Chronicle of Dalimil* reflects the political attitudes of this pivotal period¹². Composed in verse by an unknown author¹³, this text is the first chronicle written in the Czech language¹⁴; it compiles information

⁶ ŠUSTA, Josef – *Dvě knihy*, pp. 493-499.

⁷ ŠUSTA, Josef – *Dvě knihy českých dějin. Kus středověké historie našeho kraje. Vol. 2. Počátky Lucemburské (1308-1320)*. Praha: Argo, 2002 (1935), p. 55.

⁸ Albert I of Habsburg was murdered on May 1308 by his nephew Duke John, afterwards called “the Parricide” or “John Parricida”, whom he had deprived of his inheritance, THOMA, Heinz – “Das Jahr 1308 in der europäischen Geschichte. Ereignisse und Tendenzen”. in PAULY, Michel (ed.) – *Europäische Governance im Spätmittelalter. Heinrich VII. von Luxemburg und die großen Dynastien Europas. Actes des 15^e Journées Lotharingiennes*. Luxembourg: Publications du CLUDEM, 2010, pp. 17-44. On the election of Henry of Luxembourg, HOENSCH, Jörg Konrad – *Die Luxemburger. Eine spätmittelalterliche Dynastie gesamteuropäischer Bedeutung (1308-1437)*. Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000, p. 30.

⁹ BENEŠOVSKÁ, Klára – *Královský sňatek: Eliška přemyslova a Jan Lucemburský 1310*. Praha: Gallery, 2010; PAULY, Michel Pauly (ed.) – *Die Erbtöchter, der fremde Fürst und das Land: die Ehe Johanns des Blinden und Elisabeths von Böhmen in vergleichender europäischer Perspektive*. Luxembourg: Publications du CLUDEM, 2013.

¹⁰ ŠUSTA, Josef – *Dvě knihy*, Vol. 2, p. 89.

¹¹ The one from the year 1310 concerned the Kingdom of Bohemia, while the one from 1311 dealt with the margraviate of Moravia, CHALOUPECKÝ, Václav – “Inaugurační diplomy krále Jana z roku 1310 a 1311”. *Český časopis historický* 1/2 (1949), pp. 69-102; ADDE, Éloïse – “Un roi étranger en Bohême. Les modalités de la communication politique entre Jean l’Aveugle et la noblesse, de la publication des Diplômes inauguraux aux accords de Domažlice (1310-1318)”. in ADDE, Éloïse; MARGUE, Michel (eds.) – *Gouverner en territoire étranger, Actes du colloque organisé à l’Université du Luxembourg, 15-16 décembre 2016*, in preparation (2018).

¹² ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique de Dalimil et les débuts de l’historiographie nationale tchèque en langue vulgaire*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016.

¹³ The name of Dalimil entered history by chance. For a long time, the chronicle was simply called *Kronika* [Chronicle] or *Kronika česká* [Chronicle of Bohemia]. But one of the medieval copies of the text, the manuscript of Fürstenberg, bears the inaccurate title of *Kronika Boleslavská* [Chronicle of Boleslav]. And as Václav Hájek of Libočany († 1553) cited between his sources for the writing of his *Chronicle of Bohemia* a certain “Dalimil of Mezeříce, canon of the church of Boleslav”, Tomáš Pešina of Čechorod (1629-1680) deducted from this link between the title of the manuscript and his function in this town, that he was the author of the chronicle. BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila v kontextu středověké historiografie latinského kulturního okruhu a její pramenná hodnota*. Praha: Academia, 1995, p. 283. Everybody knows today that this identification is a mistake. The name is still used for convenience.

¹⁴ Previous texts were also written in old-Czech. The oldest is the liturgical song *Hospodine, pomiluj ny* [Kyrie eleison] which was composed at the end of the 10th or at the beginning of the 11th century, HRABÁK, Josef – *Dějiny české literatury. Vol. 1, Starší česká literatura*. Praha: Československá Akademie Věd: Sekce Jazyka a Literatury, 1959, pp. 56-57, 59, 151. During the 13th century, other texts

from older Czech chronicles written in Latin and combines it with the author's own experiences. While narrating the history of the Czech lands, the author planned to support the political role of the Czech nobility. In addition to emphasising the election of the ruler by the lords, he also went to great lengths to justify tyrannicide¹⁵. When facing kings who could be weak (Henry of Carinthia), foreign (John the Blind) or too young (Wenceslas II at the beginning of his reign), the nobility had to embody the permanence of the state, the “community of the realm”, in a dialectic connecting the lords into constituting the “mystic body of king”, a concept so well brought to light by Ernst Kantorowicz¹⁶.

In this chronicle, the occasional necessity for tyrannicide is not, however, presented as a novelty, but as a fundamental and almost moral duty of the nobility that had earlier been abandoned because of the rise of the ruler's authoritarian exercise of power when the duchy of Bohemia became a kingdom. By presenting tyrannicide falsely as an age-old tradition, the author helped increase the nobility's political range, giving it the right to judge the king's capacity to reign or lack thereof.

1. “Community of the realm”, dualism and contract in the Dalimil's Chronicle

1.1. The “community of the realm” in the Chronicle

The notion of a “community of the realm” (*communitas regni*) is well known by historians specialized in the political movements of 13th-century Europe, specifically in England¹⁷. The notion could encompass the lords of the realm, who were the only

were written in Czech, but these pieces are very short in comparison with the *Alexandreida* (around 1300) or the *Chronicle of Dalimil* (1309-1313) which betokens the beginning of Czech literature.

¹⁵ ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 209-228; ADDE, Éloïse – “Volba krále a tyranovražda – návod k ustavení politické role české šlechty v Dalimilově kronice”. *Mediaevalia Historica Bohemica* 17/1 (2014), pp. 41-88.

¹⁶ KANTOROWICZ, Ernst – *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

¹⁷ For a synthesis on this theme, STRAYER, Joseph – *Medieval Statecraft and Perspectives of History: Essays by Joseph Strayer*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971; BLICKLE, Peter – *Kommunalismus. Skizzen einer gesellschaftlichen Organisationsform*. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000; BARTHÉLEMY, Dominique; GUYOT-BACHY, Isabelle; LACHAUD, Frédérique; MOEGLIN, Jean-Marie (eds.) – *La “communauté du royaume” (Angleterre, Écosse, France, Empire, Scandinavie), de la fin du Xe siècle au début du XIV^e siècle, théories et pratiques, Nancy – 6 novembre / 8 novembre 2014*. Paris, in preparation (2017). For the case of Central Europe, SZÜCS, Jenő – “Sur le concept de

people allowed to deal with the king, as well as all the inhabitants of the English kingdom. We can find the idea of a community or even the words *communitas* or *universitas* in Bohemian charters¹⁸, but *Dalimil's Chronicle* is the first text that clearly defined it as the *zemská obec*¹⁹. As in Latin, the Czech expression emphasises the opposition between a group of individuals and a single individual: the prefix *ob-* (around) is the equivalent of the Latin *cum-* (with) of *communitas*²⁰. Two criteria defined the notion and conferred on it its efficiency: the solidarity between its members and the perennality obtained through their permanent replacement²¹. It is precisely because of their solidarity that the nobility constituted a group and could thus emerge as the incarnation of the “community of the realm”²². Although it was not yet an independent corporate state, the nobility was unified by culture, social practices, political purposes, and a dominant position in society, all aspects that strengthened its cohesion while conspicuously – and radically – distinguishing it from the rest of the population²³.

nation, réflexions sur la théorie politique médiévale”. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 64 (1986), pp. 51-62.

¹⁸ *CODEX DIPLOMATICUS et epistolaris regni Bohemiae*. Vol. 1. Ed. Gustavus Friedrich, Praha: Sumptibus comitorum Regni Bohemiae, 1904-1907, n° 204 (1159), pp. 192-193; n° 208 (1160), pp. 195-196; *CODEX DIPLOMATICUS et epistolaris regni Bohemiae*. Vol. 2. Ed. Gustavus Friedrich, Praha: Sumptibus comitorum Regni Bohemiae, 1912, n° 21 (1201), pp. 17-18; n° 22 (1201), pp. 18-20; n° 58 (1202-07), pp. 51-52; n° 86 (1209), pp. 79-80; n° 172 (1219), pp. 160-161; n° 227 (1222), pp. 210-213; n° 234 (1222), pp. 222-225; *REGESTA nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*. Vol. 2. Ed. Joseph Emler, Praha: Typis Grégerianis, 1882, n° 1238 (1281), pp. 535-536, n° 2141 (1307), p. 923.

¹⁹ UHLÍŘ, Zdeněk – “Pojem zemské obce v tzv. Kronice Dalimilově jako základní prvek její ideologie”. *Folia Historica Bohemica* 9 (1985), pp. 7-32; ADDE, Éloïse, “Communauté du royaume et affirmation de la noblesse dans les pays tchèques (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)”. in BARTHÉLEMY, Dominique; GUYOT-BACHY, Isabelle, LACHAUD, Frédérique; MOEGLIN, Jean-Marie (eds.) – *La “communauté du royaume”*.

²⁰ It is the most common signification of the word in the old-Czech literature according to PEČÍRKOVÁ, Jana (in reality MACEK, Josef), “Sémantická analýza staročeského slova obec”. *Listy filologické* 97 (1974), pp. 89-100, here p. 89.

²¹ THOMAS, Yan – “L’extrême et l’ordinaire, remarques sur le cas médiéval de la communauté disparue”. in HERMITTE, Marie-Angèle, NAPOLI, Paolo Napoli (eds.) – *Les opérations du droit*. Paris: Seuil, 2011, pp. 207-237.

²² VANÍČEK, Vratislav – “Předpoklady”, p. 13.

²³ Everywhere in medieval Europe, the nobility worked to impose its distinction from the rest of the population, MORSEL, Joseph – “L’invention de la noblesse en Haute-Allemagne à la fin du Moyen Âge. Contribution à l’étude de la sociogenèse de la noblesse médiévale”. in PAVIOT, Jacques; VERGER, Jacques (eds.) – *Guerre, pouvoir et noblesse au Moyen Âge. Mélanges en l’honneur de Philippe Contamine*. Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000, pp. 533-545; MORSEL, Joseph – *L’aristocratie médiévale, V^e-XV^e siècle*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2004. In the Czech Lands, the nobility used for itself the budding vernacular literature to formulate its own identity and ideology, ADDE, Éloïse – “Langage et pouvoir dans la Bohême médiévale, les enjeux de la naissance d’une littérature de langue tchèque au XIV^e siècle”. in MAIREY, Aude; MADELINE, Fanny; ABÉLÈS, Solal (eds.) – *Contre-champs. Études offertes à Jean-Philippe Genet par ses élèves*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016, pp. 275-296; ADDE, Éloïse – “Idéologie nobiliaire et espace public dans les pays de la couronne de Bohême au

Dalimil (as he is known) introduced the notion of *community* at the beginning of his narration, when elaborating on the origins of Bohemia. According to him, the legendary figure of Libuše became the judge of the country after her father Krok had died. Although she proved herself as a wise chieftain, the male members of the tribe were displeased about their ruler being a woman, and they demanded that she marry and thus give them a prince. Respectful to the voice of the majority – we could say, to the “community” –, Libuše accepted their request, but not before having warned them:

“The community is the protection of all / and it is better to forget the one who insults it. / If you lose the community, do not expect anything from the castle, / outside the community, you will have to face the most diverse disagreements”²⁴.

The community here includes all men who have the right to speak and deliberate with Libuše. It is placed in an adversarial relationship with the “castle”. The castle symbolizes the authority of the ruler, whereas the community embodies the protection against the arbitrariness and the possible absolutism of the exercise of the power by the sovereign. In contrast to Cosmas of Prague, his principal model²⁵, Dalimil transposed the 14th century motives of the nobility into a legendary past²⁶: in order to solve the problem she faces, she convened the “noblemen” to the “general diet”²⁷. While the nobility did not exist at all, Dalimil presents a “community of the realm” older even

XIV^e siècle”. *Hémecht (revue d’histoire luxembourgeoise)* 4 (2015), pp. 401-419; ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 134-152.

²⁴ Chap. 4, v. 7-10. BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *Staročeská Kronika tak řečeného Dalimila, Vydání textu a veškerého textového materiálu*. Ed. Jiří Daňhelka, Karel Hádek, Bohuslav Havránek, Naděžda Kvítková. Praha: Academia, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 129; translation into French: Éloïse ADDE – *La Chronique*, p. 245.

²⁵ Cosmas of Prague (c. 1045-1125) was a canon in a chapter of Prague. His Latin *Chronicle of Bohemians* is one of the most important sources of the Bohemian historiography and one of the first European chronicles dedicated to a people, COSMAS VON PRAG – *Die Chronik der Böhmen des Kosmas von Prag*. Ed. Berthold Bretholz. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923, book I, chap. 2-3, pp. 7-15.

²⁶ GRAUS, František – “Kněžna Libuše – od postavy báje k národnímu symbol”. *Československý Časopis Historický* 17 (1969), pp. 817-844, here p. 824; GRAUS, František – *Lebendige Vergangenheit: Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter*. Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 1975, p. 98.

²⁷ Chap. 3, v. 28. BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 1, p. 118; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 245.

than the duchy. The noblemen who form the community are instructed to stay close and vigilant. Libuše says:

“You should rather suffer my judgment / than seek to have a strong man as your duke. / The hand of the girl knocks gently, / Whereas the blow given by that of the man is a real ordeal. / You give me debt / the day you will see your Duke sitting down at an iron table”²⁸.

Even if it remains abstract and does not include any institutional set-up, the concept of the community refers obviously to the idea of an united nobility, intended to balance the role of the sovereign. According to Dalimil, being able to maintain a dialogue with the sovereign is the prerequisite for social peace and prosperity. Using this personal interpretation of past events, he shows that the current problems – the crisis of 1306-1310 – had their origin at the time of Přemysl Ottokar I (1192-1193, 1197/1198-1230), when the lords lost interest in taking part in the council of the sovereign and when the sovereign became a King²⁹ and gained, according to Dalimil, much power³⁰. According to Dalimil, the lords and the sovereign were committed to one another in a fundamental contract, which was the base of the dualism.

1.2. The dualism and the idea of a contract

The term “dualism” is not a medieval one, but a historiographical projection to understand Czech medieval political history, more precisely the still informal collaboration of the nobility and the sovereign in governing, before the effective

²⁸ Chap. 4, v. 13-18. BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol 1, p. 129; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 245-246.

²⁹ Two Dukes of Bohemia, Vratislaus II (1085-1092) and Vladislaus II (1158-1172), were already crowned as Kings by the emperors Conrad III (1138-1152) and Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190), but these experiences stayed “personal”, and did not change the status of the Bohemian “state”. In 1198, Přemysl acquired the hereditary title King of Bohemia and the Duchy became a Kingdom. ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – *Počátky Čech královských 1198-1253. Proměna státu a společnosti*. Praha: Lidové Noviny, 2002, pp. 91-92; WIHODA, Martin – “První česká království”. in WIHODA, Martin, MALAŤÁK (eds.) – *Stát, státnost a rituály přemyslovského věku*. Brno: Matice moravská, 2006, pp. 67-99; WIHODA, Martin – *První česká království*. Praha: Lidové Noviny, 2015.

³⁰ In Dalimil’s narration, chapter 75 dedicated to Přemysl Ottokar I marks a caesura between an idealized time of collaboration of the ruler with the nobility and a new era characterized by the lack of dialogue and the arbitrariness of the King, ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 177-178.

establishment of the estates of the realm (*Ständeordnung*) in the 15th century³¹. The participation of the elites in the exercise of power was not a specifically Czech phenomenon. Across Europe, sovereigns had proven increasingly dependent on the elites of their realms, because of several social and political transformations starting in the 13th century³². In Bohemia, the nobility massively imposed itself in this process against the clergy and cities, the absence of Premysl Ottokar II during his many military campaigns, the two crises of 1278-1282 and 1306-1310, and the ethnic partition of the population: the mainly German burghers had no credibility in representing the Czech subjects of Bohemia and thus in exercising any power³³. Being noble and of Czech origin were two essential criteria for being part of the “community of the realm”.

Its member *par excellence* is designated by the term “zeman”, the noble attached to his land – *země*. While Dalimil generally uses the term *pán* to refer to the lords, i.e. the term commonly used for the Latin *dominus*, he uses the word *zeman* 27 times, although it was by no means a common term at the time³⁴. The word is always used in the plural and refers only to Czech noblemen³⁵, reinforcing the idea of the lords thus referred to as

³¹ SEIBT, Ferdinand – “Land und Herrschaft in Böhmen”. *Historische Zeitschrift* 200 (1965), pp. 284-316; MEZNÍK, Jaroslav – “Vývoj a systém stavovské reprezentace v českých zemích v pozdních středověk”. *Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity* 44 (1997), pp. 71-81; VÁLKA, Josef – “Středověké kořeny mocenského dualismu panovníka a obce (Historiografické aspekty diskusí o ‘absolutismu’)”. *Časopis Matice moravské* 123 (2004), pp. 311-335. The Polish historian Stanisław Russocki prefers the term of protoparliamentarism, RUSOCKI, Stanisław – *Protoparlamentaryzm Czech do początku XV wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1973. See also MALÝ, Karel – *Počátky českého sněmovnictví (do konce 14. století)*, Česká národní rada, sněm českého lidu. Praha: Česká národní rada, 1970, pp. 75-91, here pp. 76, 85; ŠMAHEL, František – “Obrysy českého stavovství od konce 14. do počátku 16. Století”. *Český časopis historický* 90 (1992), pp. 161-187.

³² REINHARD, Wolfgang – *Les Élités du pouvoir et la construction de l’État en Europe*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996 (Power Elites and State Building, Oxford, 1996); SCHNEIDMÜLLER, Bernd – “Konsensuale Herrschaft. Ein Essay über Formen und Konzepte politischer Ordnung im Mittelalter”. in HEINIG, Paul-Joachim (ed.) – *Reich, Regionen und Europa in Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Moraw*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000, pp. 53-87.

³³ TOMEK, Václav Vladivoj – *Dějepis města Prahy*. Vol. 1. Praha: Řivnáč, 1892, p. 607; HIGOUNET, Charles – *Les Allemands en Europe centrale et orientale au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Aubier, 1989, pp. 327-328; MEZNÍK, Jaroslav – *Praha před husitskou revolucí*. Praha: Academia, 1990, p. 10; ADDE, Éloïse – “Die deutschsprachige Übersetzung der Dalimil-Chronik. Ein Versuch der politischen Legitimation der städtischen Eliten im Böhmen der Luxemburger?”. in SIEBURG, Heinz Sieburg, STÖRMER-CAYSA, Uta, BENDHEIM, Amelie (eds.) – *Prag in der Zeit der Luxemburger. Literatur, religiöse Ideen und Herrschaftskulturen zwischen Bereicherung und Behauptung, Interkulturalität. Studien zu Sprache, Literatur und Gesellschaft*, in preparation (2017).

³⁴ The word *zeman* began to be used later to designate the *hobereau*. At Dalimil’s time, the nobility was not yet socially differentiated.

³⁵ MACEK, Josef – *Česká středověká šlechta*. Praha: Argo, 1996, p. 29.

a group³⁶. Moreover, the word refers almost exclusively to political action (24 out of 27 occurrences of the word): the election of the duke (chap. 3), the endorsement of a decision of the sovereign (chap. 32), the advice given to the sovereign (chap. 43), etc. *Zemané* is strictly used to present the acting “Community of the realm”, i.e. the *zemská obec* in Czech, which the proximity between the words *zeman* and *zemská* seems to confirm.

Dalimil claimed that the restauration of the contract between the duke and the lords was the key to the prosperity of the kingdom and the return to peace, a contract that should lead to the preservation of the “common good” and the integrity of Bohemia. This contract, though, was also asymmetrical: the prince was the only one to be forced by concrete duties, while the lords – bound in the “community of the realm” – were the righters of wrongs and in charge of its good observation³⁷.

2. Tyrannicide, a necessary tool

2.1. Dalimil’s justification of tyrannicide

According to Dalimil – and the ideology of the nobility –, the Duke-King of Bohemia had to respect two main principles: reject foreign officials at his council and respect the nobility while ruling with it, which is exactly reflected by the content of the *Inaugural diplomas* of 1310-1311. These two duties are omnipresent in Dalimil’s narration. In case of a failure of the ruler, the lords had to intervene. The first step was trying to resolve any conflict through dialogue. But if the duke/king refused to listen and collaborate, the lords were required to employ the most radical of means.

³⁶ BROM, Vlastimil – “Panovnické tituly v Dalimilově kronice, k využití textové lingvistiky pro historickou interpretaci”. in WIHODA, Martin; MALAŤÁK (eds.) – *Stát, státmost a rituály přemyslovského věku*. Brno: Matice moravská, 2006, pp. 217-234, here p. 230.

³⁷ On this asymmetrical relationship, ADDE, Éloïse – “Corriger le roi. La doléance comme source de légitimation de la noblesse de Bohême dans la littérature vernaculaire tchèque au XIV^e siècle”. in BUBENICEK, Michelle (ed.) – *Doléances. Approches comparées de la plainte politique comme voie de régulation dynamique des rapports gouvernants-gouvernés (fin XIII^e-premier XIX^e s.)*, in preparation (2017).

While the issue of tyranny and tyrannicide were a “classic” topic in ancient Greek and Roman political theory³⁸, it became more problematic during the Middle Ages. The execution of the tyrant contradicted the sixth commandment “Thou shalt not kill³⁹” as well as the precept “All power comes from God^{40,41}”. The whole reflexion about tyrannicide is polarised by the contradiction between Christian principles and the heritage of ancient culture, as reflected by John of Salisbury’s (1115-1180) many changes of mind (*Policraticus*)⁴². Even Thomas Aquinas was not able to follow a direct line of argument and ultimately failed to propose a real and well-founded justification for resistance against a tyrant⁴³.

Dalimil, however, cultivated a genuine culture of royal deposition and tyrannicide. From the beginning of his history of Bohemia, dukes and kings are constantly in the spotlight, while the author does not hesitate to invent precedents in order to give lessons either to the ruler in place, Jean the Blind (1310-1346), or to invite the lords to act if they would not be satisfied with him. In medieval logic, old age was the best source of authority and rooting a practice as long ago as possible the best justification⁴⁴.

³⁸ The Ancient Philosophers commonly defended the idea that the tyrant should be executed: DEMOSTHENES – *Περὶ τῶν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον Συνθηκῶν*. Ed. Samuel Henry Butcher, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903, 17, 1-30; ARISTOTELES – *Éthique à Nicomaque*. Ed. Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Alfredo Gomez-Müller, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2012 (1992), VIII, 10, pp. 341-344; ARISTOTELES – *La politique*. Ed. Jean Aubonnet. Vol. 2, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973, V, 10-11, pp. 73-91; CICERO – *Les devoirs. Book 1*. Ed. Maurice Testard, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974, 26, p. 116; CICERO – *Les devoirs. Books 2 ans 3*. Ed. Maurice Testard, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984, 2:7:23-26, pp. 24-26, 3:4:19, pp. 79-80, 3:6:32, p. 86.

³⁹ Exodus, 20, 13; Deuteronomy, 5, 17.

⁴⁰ Romans, 13, 1.

⁴¹ The Bible also contains many contradictions on this issue. Judith is considered as a heroin as she murdered the tyrant Holofernes; the Acts of the Apostles justify the idea of a revolt when human power goes against the Law of God, Acts, 19, 27, 29, COTTRET, Monique – *Tuer le tyran? Le tyrannicide dans l'Europe moderne*. Paris: Fayard, 2009, p. 16; ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 210-212.

⁴² Salisbury says that the tyrant is both “the image of depravity” and that it is “glorious to kill him” (VIII, 17, 19, 20), but that the injustice of the tyrant has a providential function (IV, 12) and that the most important is to obey the “head” [i.e. the ruler] in order to preserve the social order (VI, 25), JOHN OF SALISBURY – *Policraticus sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum*. Ed. Cary J. Nederman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 191, 200-208, 63, 137.

⁴³ VEYSSET, Philippe – *Situation de la politique dans la pensée de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris: Le Cèdre, 1984; MOLNÁR, Péter – “La légitimité de la résistance. Deux solutions chez saint Thomas d'Aquin”. *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 46 (1999), pp. 115-137; on both John of Salisbury and Thomas Aquinas, ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 212-219.

⁴⁴ SANSTERRE, Jean-Marie (ed.) – *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales, actes du colloque organisé par l'Institut historique belge de Rome, l'École française de Rome, l'Université libre de Bruxelles et l'Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille III en collaboration avec l'Academia Belgica à Rome les 2, 3 et 4 mai 2002*. Bruxelles-Rome: Belgisch Historisch Instituut, École Française de Rome, 2004.

Bad rulers and their punishment by the lords

Sovereign	Sanction	Motivation	Facts
Bořivoj II chap. 63	Banished by the lords	Friendly with Germans	Personal conflict with his brother Vladislav
Vladislav II chap. 67	Flees the Czech lords	Friendly with Germans	Abdicated in favour of Frederick
Frederick I chap. 69	Deposed by the Czech lords	Friendly with Germans	Deposed by the emperor
Conrad II chap. 69	Murdered on the decision of the lords	Friendly with Germans	Died during the siege of Neapoli
Stanimír chap. 69	Murdered on the decision of the lords	Friendly with Germans	Invented character
Přemysl Ottokar I chap. 73	Flees the Czech lords	Disrespect of the Czech lords	Deposed by the emperor

Dalimil relates several cases of banishment, deposition or escape, all of which are invented. In addition, we can read about two – equally invented – cases of tyrannicide⁴⁵. In chapter 69, Conrad II Otto (1189-1191) is demonized as an incompetent supporter of Germans, and is executed for this reason. In reality, he was actually favourable to the nobility. He published the *Iura Conradi*, a set of privileges that consolidated the position of the lords (freemen guaranteed against the abuses of the duke or the provincial courts under his *zhupans*, extension of the right of inheritance to brothers of deceased lords, confiscation of property only after a long legal procedure conforming to local custom)⁴⁶. And he was not executed as a tyrant, but died instead of the plague at the siege of Neapoli in September 1191 during the Italian campaign of Emperor Henry III – 1190-1197⁴⁷. According to Dalimil, a certain Stanimir⁴⁸, an invented character,

⁴⁵ ADDE, Éloïse – “Volba”, pp. 68-72; ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, pp. 219-223.

⁴⁶ HORÁK, Petr – “K statutům Konráda Oty”. *Časopis matice moravské* 80 (1961), pp. 267-280; MALÝ, Karel; SIVÁK, Florian – *Dějiny státu a práva v českých zemích a na Slovensku do roku 1918*. Praha: H&H, 1992, p. 50; BAKALA, Jaroslav – “K výkladu prvního ustanovení Statut Konráda Oty”. in: *Český stát na přelomu 12. a 13. Století*. Opava: Slezská univerzita - Filozoficko-přírodovědecká fakulta, Ústav historie a muzeologie, 1993, pp. 9-15; ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – *Čechy v době knížecí 1034-1198*. Praha: Lidové Noviny, 1997, pp. 358-363; VANÍČEK, Vratislav – *Velké dějiny země koruny české*. Vol. 2, Praha-Lyomyšl: Paseka, 2000, pp. 156-162.

⁴⁷ BLÁHOVÁ, Marie; FROLÍK Jan; PROFANTOVÁ Naďa – *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*. Vol. 1. Prague-Litomyšl: Paseka, 1999, p. 666.

⁴⁸ Historians think that Dalimil uses here the fictive character of Strojmir who occurs in the Christian's Legend, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *Staročesk*, p. 371; TŘEŠTÍK, Dušan – “Bořivoj a Svatopluk. Vznik českého státu a velká Morava”. in: POULÍK, Josef; CHROPOVSKÝ Bohuslav (eds.) – *Velká Morava a počátky československé státnosti*. Praha: Academia, 1985, pp. 273-301, here p. 283.

succeeded him. But as well as Conrad, he supported the Germans (chapter 69 v 81), which again brought a sanction from the lords and his death at their hands.

Dalimil goes further. In a passage of his chronicle, he legitimizes the right and the use of tyrannicide. Killing a tyrant is even presented as a duty. Chapter 68 is dedicated to Duke Soběslav II (1173-1178), called the “friend of the Czech people”, even though he did not trust the Czech lords, relied on the Church and lower classes⁴⁹ and eventually published a privilege (1174) which regulated the position of foreigners living in Prague, and whose most important beneficiary was the German community⁵⁰. According to Dalimil’s fabricated narration, the duke had to send his two sons, Frederick and Conrad, to the court of the emperor. The latter planned to make them forget their language and customs by their immersion in a fully German environment. His plan was to put the Kingdom of Bohemia eventually under his authority. Because of the superior position of the emperor, Soběslav could not refuse, but expressed his concern at the moment of their departure to the German lands:

“If I learn from a bird / that you are leaving it up to the Germans, / I will put you in a leather bag / and throw it into the Vltava river with you both inside! / Because it would be easier for me to lament you two, / than to see the shame assail my nation and leave it for dead”⁵¹.

He also appealed to the lords to be careful and to react in case of non-respect of their duties by his sons when they rule in the future:

“I am grateful for your loyalty / because you have demonstrated it very often. / I ask you to be as faithful to my children / as they will stay loyal to theirs. / If they do not demonstrate any love to theirs, / do not respect them anymore! / Do not be their faithful / and take instead a ploughman for your

⁴⁹ For these reasons, he was called “the Duke of the peasants”, *kníže sedláků* in Czech, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie; FROLÍK Jan; PROFANTOVÁ Nad’a – *Velké*, p. 641.

⁵⁰ KEJŘ, Jiří – “K privilegii knížete Soběslava II. pro pražské Němce”. *Právně historické studie* 14 (1969), pp. 241-258; BLÁHOVÁ, Marie; FROLÍK Jan; PROFANTOVÁ Nad’a – *Velké*, p. 643.

⁵¹ Chap. 68, v. 163-168, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, pp. 182-183; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 346.

duke! / A simple ploughman always makes a better duke⁵² / While a German can never be faithful to the Czechs”⁵³.

Whereas the beginning of the first citation can be understood as simply expressing the anger of a father towards his own children, the strongly nationalist tone and the recalling of a prince’s duties in its second part represent a political statement. With the duke facing potential difficulties, he beseeches the lords to ensure the integrity of the Czech state.

The message is all the stronger given that Soběslav abided by the authority of the barons and could be recognized by them as a tyrant. Willing to make a sacrifice like Abraham, he obviously favours the common good over his personal interests. Tyrannicide was thus legitimate.

2.2. From the “community of the realm” to the “mystical body”

The lords had to watch over the actions of the duke and intervene, possibly even execute him, if he did not accomplish his duties (such as rejecting foreigners, collaborating with the lords of the country). The lords’ action was given legitimacy by their association as a community, the “community of the realm”, and the postulate that this “community of the realm” acted for the common good.

Aristotle postulated that “any community was made for some good”⁵⁴. The “community” was eternal through the perpetual succession of its members (*communitas non moritur*) and thus embodied stability. In the hierarchy of the medieval values, the collegial structure of the community provided a permanent consensus, very much in

⁵² The author refers here to Přemysl the Ploughman, the legendary husband of Libuše, and ancestor of the Přemyslid dynasty.

⁵³ Chap. 68, v. 171-180, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, p. 183; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 346.

⁵⁴ ARISTOTELES, *Politique*, I, 1, 1252a 1-5. SÈRE, Bénédicte – “Aristote et le bien commun au moyen âge: une histoire, une historiographie”. *Revue française d’histoire des idées politiques* 32 (2010), pp. 277-291.

contrast with a mortal individual, inconstant in action and motivated by his own interest⁵⁵.

Through the “community of the realm”, the Czech nobility was – according to Dalimil – able to assure the continuity of the state. Justifying the nobility’s right to execute the duke or king when acting as a tyrant is entirely coherent with this view. At the same time, Dalimil attributes to the lords the right to elect their sovereign. The privilege given by the King of the Romans Philipp of Swabia (1198-1208) in 1198 and known through the confirmation of Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1212-1250), the Golden Bull of Sicily (1212), confirmed the right of the lords to elect the duke, later king, of Bohemia⁵⁶. Whereas the hereditary principle had undoubtedly been imposed a long time ago⁵⁷, so that the Přemyslid dynasty was the appointed family of the throne of Bohemia, the new sovereign had to be acclaimed by the “assembly of the Czechs”, in reality the great lords. As long as the Přemyslid dynasty would rule, such an exigence was in fact a formality⁵⁸. At Dalimil’s time, this privilege took a new signification and the author wanted to support the idea that the lords could elect the candidate of their choice without considering the international prestige of his family⁵⁹.

Dalimil tells us how the Czech lords received this right from the emperor Henry IV (1050-1106) in return for having helped him during his expedition against Stephen III of Hungary (1161-1173): “Then the emperor granted liberty to Bohemia, / and instituted

⁵⁵ KERN, Fritz – *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht im früheren Mittelalter, zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Monarchie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1954 (1915), pp. 128, 169; MALECZEK, Werner – “Abstimmungsarten. Wie kommt man zu einem Wahlergebnis?”. in SCHNEIDER, Reinhard; ZIMMERMAN, Harald (eds.) – *Wahlen und wählen im Mittelalter*. Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1990, pp. 79-134, here pp. 80-81.

⁵⁶ WIHODA, Martin – *Zlatá bula sicilská. Podivuhodný příběh ve vrstvách paměti*. Praha: Argo, 2005; WIHODA, Martin – “Der dornige Weg zur Goldenen Bulle von 1212 für Markgraf Vladislav Heinrich von Mähren”. in HRUZA, Karel; HEROLD, Paul (eds.) – *Wege zur Urkunde. Wege der Urkunde. Wege der Forschung. Beiträge zur europäischen Diplomatie des Mittelalters*. Köln: Böhlau, 2005, pp. 65-79; ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – “Mocran et Mocran. Třetí basilejská listina Fridricha II. v kontextu Zlaté buly sicilské”. *Český časopis historický* 104/4 (2006), pp. 733-782; ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – “Österreich und Böhmen 1156-1212: Versuch eines historischen Vergleichs des Privilegium minus und der Goldenen Bulle von Sizilien, *Historica*”. *Historical Sciences in the Czech Republic* 13 (2008), pp. 47-74.

⁵⁷ In 1054, the duke Břetislav introduced the agnatic seniority. In 1216, it was replaced by the principle of primogeniture set up by Přemysl Ottokar I.

⁵⁸ ŽEMLIČKA, Josef – *Počátky*, p. 132.

⁵⁹ This idea triumphed much later with the election of Georges of Poděbrady in 1458.

the free election”⁶⁰, and does not allude to the circumstances of elevation of the events of 1198. As with the right to commit tyrannicide, Dalimil presents a false succession of elections, thereby creating a tradition of elected rulers and inviting the lords to use it in the future. In chapter 54, he reports that the country had to return to Břetislav after the death of Vratislav II in 1092. But the lords disagreed, because he had revolted against his father and thus risked sowing trouble among the new generation, and elected Conrad of Moravia⁶¹. In reality, the accession of Conrad I corresponded well to the plan foreseen by Vratislav before his death⁶²! In chapter 58, Dalimil explains how the lords invalidated the nomination of Otto of Moravia as Duke by Emperor Henri V⁶³ and elected Vladislav not because he was a better candidate, but to consolidate their right of election⁶⁴. In reality, the conflict between supporters of Otto and Vladislav had nothing to do with the empire: Otto was elected by Moravian lords, without the Bohemian lords and the bishop of Prague who, on the other hand, imposed their candidate, Vladislav, as the legitimate one⁶⁵.

The supposed venerable age of the practice creates a tradition and is thus an indisputable source of authority and legitimation. In Chapter 65, the author even praises the benefits of the election:

“When the succession to the throne is natural, / if you kill the duke, his mother is not able to provide a new one. / But when the duke is chosen by election, / his death causes little damage. / Some people request the duke’s death, / especially those who have some hope for themselves. / Let them

⁶⁰ Chap. 53, v. 16-17, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, p. 7; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 316.

⁶¹ Chap. 54, v. 2-8, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, p. 20; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 318.

⁶² COSMAS VON PRAG – *Die Chronik*, book II, chap. 46, p. 153.

⁶³ Chap. 58, v. 28-29, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, p. 73; translation into French, ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p.326.

⁶⁴ Chap. 58, v. 30-45, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, p. 74; translation into French, ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 326.

⁶⁵ NOVOTNÝ, Václav – *České dějiny*. Vol. 1/2. *Od Břetislava I. do Přemysla I.* Praha: Jan Laichter, 1913, pp. 470-473.

know that when the duke was elected, / it is not possible to not get rid of him”⁶⁶.

When elected, the sovereign is the expression of the constant will of the lords, of the “community of the realm”, which constantly tends towards the common good and peace. While the sovereign is the “real body” of the state because he is natural, mortal, subject to infirmities, to the defects of infancy and old age, the nobility is supposed to epitomise its “mystical body”, both immortal and universal, as the “community of the realm”. Facing the instability induced by the dynastic succession, especially in the time of crisis that follows Venceslas III’s murder, Dalimil intends to give the greatest power to the nobility and deliberately ignores the problems which could also be produced by the election, as shown by the repeated cases of simultaneous elections of two competing kings in the Empire⁶⁷.

According to Dalimil, the non-respect of this initial contract between the nobility and the sovereign, who is only the *primus inter pares*⁶⁸, is the direct cause of the many crises that occurred from the beginning of the 13th century. This was a time of change, when Bohemia became a kingdom and the duke a king who demanded ever more power for himself at the cost of general prosperity and the common good.

Conclusion

The reflection on the duality of the person of the ruler led to many interpretations and practices. The superposition and identification of the two bodies in the same person (the king) strengthened his sacralisation, while the differentiation of the two bodies allowed

⁶⁶ Chap. 65, v. 31-38, BLÁHOVÁ, Marie – *STAROČESKÁ KRONIKA*, Vol. 2, pp. 150-151; translation into French: ADDE, Éloïse – *La Chronique*, p. 339.

⁶⁷ MORAW, Peter – *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung. Das Reich im späten Mittelalter 1250 bis 1490*. Berlin: Propyläen, 1985, pp. 157-158; RAPP, Francis – *Le Saint-Empire romain germanique*. Paris: Seuil, 2003 (2000), p. 186.

⁶⁸ Susan Reynolds has shown that this expression is not attested for the Middle Ages. The King was a sacred character in the eyes of his contemporaries and basically above the lords and the people, REYNOLDS, Susan – *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 (1984), pp. XLVII, 259. It is nevertheless useful to synthesize the political and state ambitions of a certain nobiliary current. We therefore continue to use it as an “ideal-type”, bearing in mind that it was neither a reflection of an observed reality nor a formula then in use.

the limiting of his importance and the recognition of any corporation or group as the “mystical body” in the face of a mortal ruler who should be only the *primus inter pares*. In the early 14th century, the Czech nobility managed to take advantage of a favourable political situation. A first crisis after the death of Přemysl Ottokar II and the weakness of royal authority, already undermined in the late 13th century but seriously diminished during the reign of Henry of Carinthia, produced a set of occasions for the nobility to present itself as the guarantor of the integrity of the state. Its dominant position can be illustrated by its decisive role in the negotiation with the new King of the Romans, Henry VII, and the election of Henry’s son, John, in 1310 as the new King of Bohemia.

Dalimil’s Chronicle is representative of that evolution. Its author aimed to define clearly the political role of the nobility, projecting an ideal government where the two bodies, the king and the community of the realm, work together. The two parts are committed to each other by contract, albeit an asymmetrical one, where the nobility had to judge the king’s rule and possessed the last word. Two tools helped the nobility to command respect: the duty to kill a tyrant and the prerogative to elect a new king.

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