

Who, where and why? Foundation Myths and Dynastic Tradition of the Piasts and the Přemyslides in the Chronicles of Gallus Anonymus and Cosmas of Prague

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Much has been written about each of the medieval chronicles by academics from various fields of studies. If anything should be added, it seems that possibilities lie in a comparative study of the medieval texts. There are several reasons to justify such an approach to the chronicles by Anonymus called Gallus and Cosmas of Prague. Both narratives were written in a similar time period, in neighbouring countries, becoming evidence for the conscious forming of a dynastic vision of the past, as well as milestones in passing from the oral to the written form of collecting, selecting and passing on of tradition. Also similar is the scope of the authors' interests, as well as the literary genre and courtly and chivalric character of their works. Firstly, the founding myths will be deconstructed in a search for three fundamental elements that determine the shape of the community: the main character, the place and the causing force. Secondly, a comparison of both bodies of lore will follow.

Key words: *Gallus Anonymus; Cosmas of Prague; myth; dynastic tradition*

The research presented herein belongs to the discipline of comparative historical studies.¹ I am focusing on the foundation

Motto: Fontenelle de, M. (1728). Digression sur les anciens et les modernes. In *Poesies pastorales; avec Un traité sur la nature de l'églogue; Une digression sur les anciens, et les modernes; et Un recueil de poesies diverses*. La Haye, pp. 154 et seq. 'They say heaven, gifting us with kings, takes care so that at the same time great poets, bards of their deeds, and fine historians come to the world to write the lives of the rulers. It is true that poets and historians are always ready to act, as long as governments so desire.'

Brandwajn, R. (1960). *Wolna myśl francuska XVII wieku*. Warszawa, p. 79.

¹ A call for prudent comparative research, wherever possible and expedient, was made *in. al.* by Jerzy Stelczyk. Cf. Strzelczyk, J. (2008). *Początki Polski w świetle źródeł pisanych*. *Studia nad dawną Polską* 1, p. 55.

myth² which: “is confirmation of a common origin, and presents the collective memory pertaining to the ethnic group. It fills the role of ... tribal life story”.³ I will deconstruct, compare and explain the role of the origin tale in the two chronicles analysed. Of special interest to me are the hero,

² Source basis: Gallus Anonymus (1952). *Anonima tzw. Galla Kronika czyli Dzieje Książąt i władców polskich*. Ed. introduction and commentary by K. Maleczyński. Kraków; Cosmas (1955). *Die Chronik der Böhmen des Cosmas von Prag*. Eds. W. Weinberger, B. Bretholz. Berlin. In this discussion I focus on chapters I to III of book I of Anonymus's chronicle. From Cosmas's chronicle, the source basis is found in chapters I to IX of book 1. I take tales of origin as autonomous parts of the narration, complete feature themes, not needing to be interpreted on the basis of earlier or later parts of the chronicles. References to other parts of the chronicles will, of course, be made where necessary.

³ Wiśniewska, K. (1985). *Mit a tożsamość. Człowiek i światopogląd* 2/265, p. 19. Where 'myth' is discussed, the purpose is not to link the analysed records with the question of truth and falsehood. 'Myth' stands for a particular manner of impact of the narration of origins, one conditioned by societal needs, how the members of the community imagine their past, and the form of transmission. A specific type of myth will be discussed – the dynastic legend, wherein the ideology and symbolism of the paramount rule is explained, as well as its rights and its obligations. Cf. Banasziewicz, J. (1986). *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu: studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi*. Warszawa, pp. 18, 24. Myth – as a specific type of narration – is not to be rationalized. It is a medium of a specific truth (cf. G. Labuda, G. (1988). *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, vol. 2, Poznań, p. 12), meant for the proclamation of it and not examination or argumentation. In the Polish dictionary, a myth is defined as a: 'fantastic tale, tale of the gods, demons, legendary heroes and supernatural events in which such characters took part; it constitutes an attempt at explaining the primordial questions of existence, world and man, life and death, good and evil.' *Mit*, [In] Szymczak, M. (Ed.). (1979). *Słownik języka polskiego*. Warszawa, p. 187. Likewise Władysław Kopaliński: 'a fable of the origin of the world, of gods or heroes of legend; a sacral tale justifying and codifying religious belief connected with cult and ritual.' Kopaliński, W. (1980). *Mit*, [In], *idem, Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, Warszawa. p. 637. Both definitions emphasized the fictitious nature of myth, which is not assumed *a priori* here. Emphasis on the societal significance of myth: 'a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone, esp. embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society.' *Myth*. [In] F. C. Mish (Ed.) (1983). *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, p. 785. In the view of Feliks Grabski, who analysed the relationship between historiography and myth, the similarities come down to: (1) making value judgements of what happened and (2) being guided by a criterion of 'veracity' in it, while differences were to be found in: (1) a different criterion of 'veracity' (in his opinion, historiography 'rules on' the truth of history, whereas myth does not determine the truth but contains and proclaims it); (2) in the way of understanding time (historiography is a field concerning itself with the happenings of a specific time-frame, it is backward-looking, in contrast to myth, which does not serve to search for the truth but is a medium of it and serves to proclaim it, hence it is forward-looking, time-wise). Cf. Grabski, A. F. (1996). *Historiografia-mitotwórstwo-mitoburstwo*. [In] A. Barszczewska-Krupa, A. (ed.), *Historia, mity, interpretacje*. Łódź, pp. 29 *et seq.*

the place and the cause (*causa efficiens*) of events.⁴ The enormous body of literature on both chronicles⁵ – wherein the stream of research on tales of origin is well represented – is home to only a few comparative works.⁶ If the heart and soul of culture is to be found in values believed in and

⁴ The time of action is a secondary issue. Nor is the goal to determine whether or not the recorded events took place or assign dates to them, as there are no sources based on which to do so.

⁵ From the most important modern works concerning themselves with the tale of origin in Anonymus's chronicles two deserve to be mentioned – one by Jacek Banaszekiewicz, J. (1986). (*Podanie o Piaście i Popielu: studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi*. Warszawa; 2nd ed. 2010), the other by Deptuła, Cz. (1990). (*Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego*. Lublin; 2nd ed. 2000). In the former, using methods of cultural anthropology and Georges Dumézil's three-function model, the author traces the wide spectrum of early-mediaeval narrations of Indo-European origin, underscoring the pagan aspect of the Piasts' dynastic tradition. A different view is expressed in the latter of the two, attempting to demonstrate that Anonymus's foundation myth was encapsulated in the Biblical framework with which the author was so familiar. Among literature on the foundation myth contained in Cosmas's chronicle, special mention is due to works by Třeštitik, D. (1966). (*in. al. Kosmas: studie s výběrem z Kosmovy Kroniky*. Praha. 2nd ed. 1972; *Kosmova kronika: studie k počátkům českého dějepiscetví a politického myšlení* (1968). Praha; *Mýty kmene Čechů 7.–10. století: tři studie ke „starým pověstem českým“* (2003). Praha; *Počátky Přemyslovců* (1981). Praha, 2nd ed. 1997). Also significant are, among others: V. Karbusický, V. (1995). *Báje, mýty, dějiny: nejstarší české pověsti v kontextu evropské kultury*. Praha; Sadílek, J. (1997). *Kosmovy staré pověsti ve světle dobových pramenů: antické a biblické motivy*. Praha, 2nd ed. 2001. The circumstances in which the chronicles came to life have found sufficient treatment in literature – though certain issues still remain in contention – hence I feel relieved of the burden of discussing them beyond what is necessary.

⁶ Why is a comparison worthwhile? (I) Background circumstances: (1) it may be presumed that for some time they were being written contemporaneously (though independently and based on different sources; differently: Wojciechowska, M. *Kosmas z Pragi a benedyktyni*. (1959). [In] Horst. A. *et al.* (Eds.) *Opuscula Casimiro Tymieniecki septuagenario dedicate*. Poznań, p. 345–354.); (2) they came to life in neighbouring states; (3) the chronological scope of both chronicles is similar (from the earliest beginnings to the authors' times). (II) The chivalric and courtly nature of both texts. (III) Similarities as to form, even though Cosmas's work is a chronicle, while Anonymous's is referred to as *gesta*. Not all mediaeval sources submit themselves readily to modern classification, which ought not to be given absolute significance. *Cf.* Bláhová, M. (2013). *Klasifikace písemných pramenů období středověku*. [In] A. Jaworska, A., Jop, R. (Eds.), *Nauki pomocnicze historii: teoria, metody badań, dydaktyka*. Warszawa, p. 69. (IV) The significance of both of the source texts as a testimony of transition from an unwritten, oral form of gathering and transmission of knowledge about the past to a new, written form. The histories of the House of Piast and of the House of Přemysl were recorded in conformity with the patterns of the Latin culture, and therefore through language and

passed on from generation to generation, the subject of this discussion is the mentality of mediaeval authors. The chronicles of Anonymus and of Cosmas are milestones on the route toward the gathering, selection and transmission of knowledge about the past. They are traces of the mentality of the people for whom and about whom the chronicles were written. The origin of the community and of the dynasty were key to the creation of a perspective shared by the members of the relevant community, a perspective from which the past was relayed and commented on.⁷ The foundation myth contained answers to questions of

forms of foreign origin. The differences are also significant – especially the authors' origins, the sources they used, the temporal structures of narration – but they cannot rule out a comparison of the two texts. Cf. more extensively: Deptuła, Cz. (2000). *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego*. Lublin, p. 18. The aforementioned work analyses each of Anonymus's and Cosmas's tales of origin but with no emphasis laid on a comparison, while deconstruction of the chroniclers' was conducted from a different research perspective.

⁷ Two significant issues were connected with the writing down of oral tradition. The first is the distinction between the literate and the preliterate society. In each of them knowledge about the past is gathered, deposited and transmitted in a different way. In non-literate societies the medium is the individualized human memory, and transmission is of the nature of direct contact between the transmitter and the recipient (cf. Parks, W. (1991). The textualization of orality in literary criticism. [In] *Vox intexta: orality and textuality in the Middle Ages*. A. N. Doane, C. B. Pasternack (Eds.), Madison, p. 58). It is then that knowledge undergoes profound transformation as liquid matter used according to need (cf. Szacki, J. (1971). *Tradycja. Przegląd problematyki*. Warszawa, p. 108). In literate societies the message was transferred indirectly. It became possible to avoid variability of the message with the passage of time, as once reduced to writing it could last for a long time unchanged in form (cf. Pomian, K. (2006). *Od historii – części pamięci do pamięci – przedmiotu historii*. [In] Idem, *Historia – nauka wobec pamięci*. Lublin, p. 153). Finally, the recipient often had access to a number of records, not infrequently inconsistent with one another, which he had to rely on himself to interpret.

Secondly, the distinction between the institutionalized and the colloquial memory. Societies are divided among privileged groups – shaping their own vision of the past due to having easier access to the achievements of culture and sufficient resources to master and develop culture – and groups deprived of such opportunities to a greater or lesser extent. The elite advantage applies not only to the conditions of gathering, keeping and passing on the knowledge about the collective past but also to opportunities for a clearer articulation of one's own traditions and imposition of restrictions on access to it (cf. Szacki, J. *Tradycja...*, p. 113). This is how elites became custodians of the memory of the entire community, celebrating it in community life through symbols and rituals (cf. Pomian, K. *Od historii...*, pp. 148 *et seq.*). The memory of the elites and the memory of the subjects could differ or even be fundamentally inconsistent with one another. That depended on the degree of alienation of the governing from the governed. On the other hand attempts were made to integrate the

fundamental significance to the placement of the relevant population in humanity's genealogy and specific territory, as well as determinants of the various planes of the recipient's identity and a starting point for future events. The origin tales in both chronicles went beyond the ordinary understanding of the surrounding world. They were dramatic and mysterious events, with supernatural forces taking an active part. A tale of origins is a solid and high pedestal on which a monument was built – in the form of discussion of history – worthy of rulers and their people. Whether Piast and Přemysl existed or not, we have testimony of the Czech and Polish visions of the earliest history, written down in the 1st half of the 12th century.

memory so as to make something to bind and not divide society (*cf.* Halbwachs, M. (1969). *Společné ramy paměti*. Warszawa, p. 422). Also the lower strata of society had their own picture of the past, which gains exposure in later centuries as literacy becomes more commonplace, breaking the elites' monopoly on its use. The fact of reducing the oral tradition to writing is significant in the context of social divisions. It was then that the message was formalized and officialized, hence enabling it to be either critiqued or recognized as the only one consistent with the truth. The role of writing should not be viewed in absolute terms, as writing was not an indispensable condition for the existence of a collective or group identity. Writing is a memory aid, not a memory replacement (*cf.* Riffaterre, M. (1991). *The Mind's Eye: Memory and Textuality*. [In] *The new medievalism*. M. S. Brownlee *et al.* (Ed.), London, p. 44). More frequently, the use of writing elevates and alienates the governing group which uses it, whereby both kinds of memories can become more and more distant from each other. Such an occurrence does not require the use of writing.

Were foundation myths considered to be the most important elements of narration when the chronicles came to life? Or had the community's pedigree already been forgotten by then? Was anything included in the overture of history penned by Anonymus and Cosmas that had a clear message but was already viewed with reserve by contemporaries? The question is difficult to answer. In our quest for not so much the truth as narration itself of the origins, we are forced to satisfy ourselves with what accounts we already have available to us. The chronicle of Anonymus is considered to be the oldest tale of origins recorded in Poland, with a similar role being played in Bohemia by the work of Cosmas. Today, no older narrations about origins are extant either in the Czech Republic or in Poland, nor is anything known about any hypothetical existence and subsequent loss of such. In all probability, the texts under discussion here came into being upon rulers' orders, with their authors addressing their thanks to representatives of elites, both secular and spiritual, while the message of the chronicles was shaped for the benefit of the communication of the governing with the governed and of the dynasty with other courts. It is worth adding that, chronologically, neither narration is the oldest text which makes a mention of the origins of the Czechs and of the Poles. Surviving till the present day is the chronicle of Nestor (*circa* 1050?–1114), recording where the Slavs came from and how they later divided themselves into individual people groups.

Anonymus commenced his narration with an account of the Piasts' extraction.⁸ The fact of Gniezno's inhabitation by an unnamed people⁹ was not explained. The *locus* of the action is known from the beginning. Reigning in Gniezno¹⁰ was a duke (*dux*)¹¹ Popiel, who *more gentilitatis*¹²

⁸ I base my analysis of Anonymus's myth of origin on a fragment of the chronicle, from the introduction of Popiel to his ignominious death, given as all three elements are contained there – the main hero, the *locus* and the *causa efficiens* – sparking action and serving to legitimize the Piasts' rule. Anonymus's core objective was to demonstrate an inseparable connection between the dynasty, ruling by the grace of God, and the community (primeval in comparison to the ruling house) – which is what he did in the analysed passage. Of a different opinion is Cz. Deptuła, whose view is that Anonymus's narration contains two origins: one pagan and the other (or reenacted) Christian. He claims the latter was the more important, as the necessary condition for the qualitative actualization of the community and of the ruling house, without which the divine election of the *Polonorum* would have been impossible. Cf. Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, s. 99, 117, 353. A significant role in the aforementioned concept was played by the presumption that Christian authors describing the pagan extraction of the communities and (or) dynasties doubtless strived to fit history into a Biblical framework and show each and every event as a link in the chain of universal history. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹ Anonymus's foundation myth recounted the Gnieznian origins without intimating the name of the people, although the Letter from the introduction to the chronicle, among others, makes use of the name of Poland (*Poloniam*; Anonim, pp. 3 and 6). The *prooemium* mentions: the feats of the princes of Poland (*res gestas Polonicorum principiorum*; p. 6), the realm of the Poles (*regio Polonorum*, pp. 1 and 6), and the duke of the Poles (*Polonorum dux, duce Poloniensi*; p. 7).

¹⁰ Anonymus stated that Gniezno (*civitate Gneznensi*; cf. Anonim, I, 1, p. 9) meant 'nest' in the local tongue, which (among others) Marian Plezia brought forth as one of the proofs of the chronicler's familiarity with the language of the people whose history he was recording (cf. Plezia, M. (2003). Wstęp. [In] Gallus Anonymus, *Kronika polska*, Roman Grodecki (transl.), Marian Plezia (elab., introd.), Wrocław, p. 11, fn. 2). It is worth citing a modern explanation, according to which *civitate Gneznensi* (Lat. *nidus*) translates as a muddy wetland surrounded by hills. Cf. Adamczyk-Nowak, R. (2007). Stołeczność Gniezna wynikiem przemyślonej polityki Piastów. [In] *Z dziejów średniowiecznej Europy środkowo-wschodniej: zbiór studiów cz. II*. Tyszkiewicz, J. (Ed.). Warszawa, p. 31). Differently and in confirmation of Anonymus's etymology: Rospond, S. (1965). Pochodzenie nazwy Gniezno. [In] *Dzieje Gniezna*. Topolski, J. (Ed.), Warszawa, pp. 70–80. Cf. Banaszkiewicz, J. (1986). Jedność porządku przestrzennego, społecznego i tradycji początków ludu. (Uwagi o urzędzeniu wspólnoty plemiennie-państwowej u Słowian). *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 78, pp. 460 *et seq.* Subsequent significance of Gniezno finds testimony in its unique distinction as the burial site of St Adalbert and the meeting between Boleslaus I and Emperor Otto III. To provide more detail about the origin and role of Gniezno – the author invoked Anonymus's tale of origin as trustworthy in the context of the capital status of that gord. Cf. Łowmiański, H. (1973). *Początki Polski: z dziejów Słowian w I tysiącleciu*, vol. 5. Warszawa, pp. 456–461.

¹¹ Anonim, I, 1, p. 9. Later therein Popiel was referred to as the *princeps urbis*. Cf. Anonim, I, 1, p. 9.

¹² Anonim, I, 1, p. 9.

organized a ritual shearing of the hair¹³ of his two sons. The main hero of the tale – not originally identified – was distinguished with an encounter of two mysterious characters on whom the author focused his attention first and foremost. *Contigit autem ex occulto Dei consilio*¹⁴ that two guests (*hospites*) came to the feat uninvited and were chased off, *cum iniuria*,¹⁵ from the stronghold. It is unknown who the travellers were or where they came from. The inhumanity of the inhabitants' conduct consisted in the failure to grant sanctuary and hospitality. It is only then that the most important character made his appearance but still no name was given. The wanderers made their way to the *suburbium* outside the walls, where – *forte fortuna*¹⁶ – they wound up in the cottage of Duke Popiel's poor ploughman (*aratoris predicti ducis*).¹⁷ The pauper (*pauperculus*), full of compassion for the new arrivals, invited them to his modest home (*domunculam*), little as he had to host them with.¹⁸ On entering the house, the guests greeted the family.¹⁹ The circumstances of inviting the strangers to the cottage were of significance. Piast wanted to celebrate a hair shearing for his son as did Popiel for his juniors.²⁰ Notwithstanding Popiel's intentions, the wanderers' arrival occurred at the most opportune time.²¹

¹³ Due to the scarcity of source material little is known about the origin, significance and course of the shearing of hair, especially in reference to the pre-Christian period. Cf. Gansinieć, R. (1952). *Postrzyżyny słowiańskie. Przegląd Zachodni*, vol. VIII, pp. 353–369.

¹⁴ Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9.

¹⁵ Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9.

¹⁶ Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9.

¹⁷ Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9.

¹⁸ Would the *sacrum* have intervened only once, i.e. when the travellers arrived at the gates of the gord, leaving their appearance in front of the ducal ploughman's cottage as mere coincidence? The nature of the *causa efficiens* in both situations seems to be identical. [...] *in suburbium descendentes, ante domunculam aratoris predicti ducis pro filiis convivium facientis forte fortuna devenerunt*. Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9. Cf. Michałowski, R. (1985). *Restauratio Poloniae w ideologii dynastycznej* Galla Anonima. *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 76, p. 461.

¹⁹ *Bene [...] nos advenisse gaudeatis, et in nostro adventu bonorum copiam, et de sobole honorem et gloriam habeatis*. Anonymus, I, 1, p. 10. Thenceforward it was known that the strangers' arrival would possibly have heralded the advent of something good, something not closely defined. The allochtones were not neutral characters but clearly positive ones, which was later confirmed in the course of the narration. Their speech can be taken as a traditional expression of kindness, used for example by a weary traveller entering under the roof of hospitable unfamiliar people.

²⁰ Anonymus referred to Popiel's hair shearing as a pagan custom (*mos gentilitatis*). An analogous ritual was to be held by Piast; the text refers to the same ritual. On the other hand, Cz. Deptuła claimed that the pagan character applied only to the shearing at the gord but not at the cottage any more. Cf. Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 281.

²¹ It is possible the author felt no necessity to explain a matter held as obvious at the time, though not so much today. In the later verses of the tale Anonymus left the original idea

Subsequently Anonymus introduced the dwellers of the hut: Piast, son of Chościsko, and his wife Rzepka. There was also a son of the hosts, but the chronicler will introduce him later. Once Piast got around to pouring the ale, miraculous events started mounting up.²² Anonymus emphasized the extraordinary status of the arrivals.²³ The outwall hut was filled with joy at the multitude of basic goods, not gold or any other luxuries. At the sight of the unfolding miracles Piast and Rzepka *magni presagii de puero sentiebant*,²⁴ though they dared not inquire of the wanderers. They wondered whether the guests would mind inviting the duke and the duke's *comensales*. The overawed hosts made no such initiative but the quick-witted wanderers advised Piast to choose that course of action and encouraged him to act.²⁵ Anonymus explained the unusualness of Piast hosting Popiel with both the wondrous things that were perspiring and the mentality of the time.²⁶ The feast finale: [...] *hospites illi puerum totonderunt, eique Semouith vocabulum ex presagio futurorum indiderunt*.²⁷ While the first statement made by the wanderers announced nothing specific, the second one contained a prophecy. The name – augurous as it would later show – was given to the boy by his shearers, men with the gift of clairvoyance. The hospitable and grateful Piast entrusted the shearing of his son and the name bestowal²⁸ to the

of Piast, who prior to the unannounced visit was to have invited friends and other folks as poor as he was, without continuation. [...] *aliquid obsonii pro suo tondendo parvulo preparare et quosdam amicorum et pauperum non ad prandium sed ad gentaculum invitare; [...]*. Anonymus, I, 2, p. 10.

²² In referring to phenomena from outside the boundaries of everyday earthly experience I follow the typology proposed by Grzegorz Myśliwski, who distinguished 'miraculous events' as the main category containing both 'miracles' and 'marvels'. Cf. Myśliwski, G. (1989). Zjawiska „cudowne” w piśarstwie średniowiecznym (XII-początek XIII w.). *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 80, p. 461.

²³ *Imperant igitur eum hospites securi cervisiam propinari, quam bene noverant pitissando non deficere sed augeri*. Anonymus, I, 2, p. 11. Cf. Cz. Deptuta, *Galla Anonima mit...*, pp. 271 et seq.

²⁴ Anonymus, I, 2, p. 11.

²⁵ *Quid moramur? Consilio itaque hospitem et exhortatione dominus eorum dux et convivere omnes ipsius ab agricola Pazt invitatur [...]*. Anonymus, I, 2, p. 11.

²⁶ Anonymus set the narration of origins – as he himself defined it – in times distant from his own, when power had not been exercised at a greater distance from those governed. Such an interpretation is reinforced by Anonymus's statement: *Nondum enim ducatus Polonie erat tantus, neque princeps urbis tanto fastu superbie tumescebat, nec tot cuneis clientele stipatus ita magnifice procedebat*. Anonymus, I, 2, p. 11.

²⁷ Anonymus, I, 2, p. 11.

²⁸ The possibility that the key to understanding the Piast dynastic legend lies in the names of the main characters was noticed and brought to the fore among others by

mysterious wanderers. In this way an artificial kinship was formed between the boy and the strangers.²⁹ The act of the unknown heroes seems to be the factual *incipit* of the divine election of Piast and his progeny.

(1) Who, (2) where and (3) why? (*Ad 1*) By the power vested in the wayfarers, for his hospitality Piast was lifted up, his son anointed in a great role and was Popiel humbled.³⁰ Piast's own merits did not lead to having him ordained as the ruler; that honour befell Siemowit, who owed his

Michałowski, R. *Restauratio Poloniae*, p. 462; Łowmiański, H. (1986). *Studia nad dziejami Słowiańszczyzny, Polski i Rusi w wiekach średnich*. Poznań, pp. 236–249. For the shearing to have been done by someone from outside Siemowit's family may have been a necessary element of the ritual. Cf. Gansiniec, R. *Postrzyżyny...*, pp. 362–364.

²⁹ The epilogue recounts the fate of Siemowit – as what happened to his parents is not known – who [...] *viribus et etate crevit, et de die in diem in augmentum proficere probitatis incepit, eotenus quod rex regum et dux ducum eum Polonie ducem concorditer ordinavit*. Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. We learn that it happened by removing Popiel from power: [...] *et de regno Pumpil cum sobole radicitus exstirpavit*. (even though Anonymus ascribed the merit of that to God and not e.g. to a mutinous people). Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. The very word *regnum* here does not mean power over territory but the territory itself. Cf. Wiszewski, P. *Rex in regno suo? Wokół wyobrażeń i propagandy władzy królewskiej Piastów (do 1296 r.)*. [In] *Proměna středověčného Evropy raného a vrcholného středověku: mocenské souvislosti a paralely*. Wihoda, M. et al. (Eds.), Brno 2010, p. 428.

³⁰ What of Popiel's cruel end in Anonymus's account? The exact perpetrators of the chasing off of the wanderers from before Gniezno's gates are unknown; it is only known that they were inhabitants of the gord (*cives*). Popiel's personal involvement does not follow from the narration. It appears that what is at play here is a convention whereby mediaeval authors linked the morality and character of the ruler with the condition of the state – broadly understood – and the hearts and minds of the individual subjects (the lowermost level). If I am correct in my reading of the moralizing theme of the tale, Popiel – as the *princeps urbis* (Anonymus, I, 2) – failed his strict trial. The narration could have been a *memento* for those governing who knew not the day or hour their own trials would come. In benefiting from their privilege the rulers ought not to extol themselves above their subjects, filling a role of service both to the community and to God, by whose ordinance it was their lot to rule. Anonymus emphasized the boons coming from God, who rewarded the humility and the hospitality of the poor, despite being demonstrated by pagans: *Mira dicturus sum, sed quis valet Dei magnalia cogitare, vel quis audeat de divinis beneficiis disputare; qui temporaliter pauperum humilitatem aliquociens exaltat et hospitalitatem etiam gentilium renumerare non recusat*. Anonymus, I, 2, pp. 10 et seq. Cf. Żmudzki, P. (2009). Jakiego „początku” Polski potrzebują badacze? *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, vol. 53, pp. 19–23; Idem (2002). Spór o analizę strukturalną podań i mitów dotyczących „Początku” Polski (na marginesie książek Jacka Banaszkiewicza i Czesława Deptuły). *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 93, pp. 451–471. A clue could perhaps be found in the spelling of Popiel's name, initially as *Popel* (chapt. I), and subsequently *Pumpil* (chapt. III).

election to the virtues of his father. The boy³¹ played no active role at the feast. The hero in the visible world was the poor ploughman, while the true mover and judge of events was God. (*Ad 2*) The matter happened in Gniezno – in the *gord* and in the *suburbium*. No other local name was given, even though mention was made of the site of Popiel's death (an island of unknown location, with a wooden tower on it).³² The uniqueness of Gniezno was emphasized with the etymology – the site of birth, of origin for the dynasty and – perhaps – the community.³³ (*Ad 3*) The primary cause was God's blessing for Piast and his son, manifested with the presence of extraordinary personages at an important family event and their actions. There is no doubt that the Piasts were a house ruling by the grace of God.³⁴ The secondary cause was Siemowit's elevation *concorditer*.³⁵

There are several arguments in favour of the stated interpretation of the Piasts' foundation myth. The first one is the participation of the uncommon guests, combining the fates of Piast and of Popiel in the narration. The status of the new arrivals was defined before Piast invited them into his cottage, when they appeared at Gniezno's gates, where they found themselves by the unknown will of God. Translocation or multiplication – which of these exactly occurred is less important than the outcome, which is of key significance here – of the food and drink was no less important;

³¹ We do not know the name of Piast's son before the shearing by the wanderers. It is licit to presume he had a name.

³² Cf. Łowmiański, H. *Początki...*, vol. 4, pp. 776 *et seq.* The mention of the site of Popiel's death, as being outside Gniezno, in a special location (isle on a lake? or river?) could possibly be of symbolic significance, with a dimension not fully perceptible to a modern researcher. It is possible that the water constituted a mark of boundaries between the community's lands and the lands outside, both in a physical and a magical sense.

³³ In Anonymus's account of the Piasts' origins the site of Gniezno was treated with particular distinction, and its ideological significance exceeded the boundaries of dynastic tradition. Cf. Dalewski, Z. (1991). *Między Gniezmem a Poznaniem. O miejscach władzy w państwie pierwszych Piastów. Kwartalnik Historyczny*, vol. 98, p. 33.

³⁴ Cf. Anonymus, I, 2.

³⁵ Cf. Anonymus, I, 3. The mention of popular support would certainly be of assistance in legitimizing the rule, having a powerful impact on the imagination of the lower strata of society (if those had any way of becoming the chronicler's audience). Siemowit was made duke (*dux*) *concorditer*, i.e. concordially, unanimously, contrary to the translation of Roman Grodecki, who rendered it as 'with popular consent'. Cf. Gallus Anonymus (2003). *Kronika polska*. Grodecki, R. (transl.), Plezia, M. (elab., introd.). Wrocław, p. 14. In the opinion of Jan Banasziewicz, the history of Piast was not an isolated one against the background of dynastic legends of the Middle Ages. He confirmed the existence of acclamation as a relic of 'popular' election, even though it was to be regarded as an additional component, not to be regarded as being of special value. Cf. Baszkiewicz, J. (2009). *Myśl polityczna wieków średnich*. Poznań, p. 101.

with it came a reversal of roles. Popiel and his guests moved to Piast's hut, and the ruler became the guest of his subject, as continuation of the feast at the gord was not possible³⁶ – they did not so much want to as they had to take advantage of Piast's hospitality. The sense of the meeting of the two worlds – that of the lord of the stronghold and that of the dweller of a hut – with the accompanying role reversal³⁷ consisted in how worthy the person capable of feeding the community was of ruling over it.³⁸ The invoked events in the cottage of Piast's provided the key to the understanding of the narration, with the foreboding of the change in ruler. Anonymus emphasized the poverty of the ploughman, even though it is difficult to tell whether it manifested itself in comparison to Popiel's wealth or if Piast was a pauper even in comparison to other inhabitants of the *suburbium*.³⁹

Another reason is found in the significance of Mieszko's baptism preceded by a regaining of sight. To Anonymus it was evident what supernatural power was acting through the wayfarers.⁴⁰ The charism of divine election in the royal house of Piast (*regalis prosapia*; I, 16) was derived back from pagan times.⁴¹ The connection linking the events

³⁶ Cf. Michałowski. R. *Restauratio Poloniae*..., p. 459.

³⁷ Perhaps the lord as a host of his own feast becoming a guest under his own subject's roof was not the only point? Perhaps the point was also that Popiel, usually the 'loaf ward' of Piast's, found himself in the position of a beneficiary of the generosity of another, rather than being the donor as was the established custom? If so, not only would the message of the narration be reinforced by it, distinguishing and exalting Piast, but it would also explain the timing when Piast not so much wanted to as could hold his son's shearing.

³⁸ Cf. Deptuła, Cz. (1975). Problem mitu monarchy – dawcy żywności w Polsce średniowiecznej na przykładzie podania o Piaście. *Zeszyty Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego*, vol. 18, p. 42.

³⁹ What was Piast's social position (*arator predicti ducis, pauperculus, pauper*) relative to Popiel's (*dux, princeps urbis, dominus*)? It remains an open question whether Piast's scheduling of his son's shearing on the same day as Popiel was to hold a similar ritual for his own two sons testifies to the dependency of the ploughman on the lord of the god. The following passage needs to be borne in mind: *Decreverat enim rusticus ille pauper, quando dominus suus dux pro filiis convivium prepararet, nam in alio tempore pre nimia paupertate non posset [...]*. Anonymus, I, 2, p. 10. Doubts appear to arise from the realities of that time, which were evident to the author but are not wholly familiar to a modern audience. Regarding the unfree status of Piast, cf. in al. J. Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie...*, s. 45n; P. Wiszewski, P. (2008). *Domus Bolesłai: w poszukiwaniu tradycji dynastycznej Piastów (do około 1138 roku)*. Wrocław, pp. 175 et seq.

⁴⁰ *Deus, rex regum et dux ducum [...]*. Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. *Contigit autem ex occulto Dei consilio [...]*. Anonymus, I, 1, p. 9.

⁴¹ The place given herein to the pagan elements of the narration is in contradiction of H. Łowmiański's statement that neither Anonymus nor Cosmas showed any interest in pagandom in their chronicles. Cf. Łowmiański, H. (1986). *Religia Słowian i jej upadek: w. VI–XII*, Warszawa, p. 211.

unfolding in Gniezno to God was not negated by the author's subsequent remark,⁴² as finds confirmation in the later chapters of his chronicle. The pagan extraction of the ruling house was included by Anonymus in his chronicle *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.⁴³ The Piasts came into power not thanks to being exalted by the people – although the people's support was noted – but thanks to divine intervention. Piast, though not a Christian, found favour in the eyes of God. Piast's feast is to be perceived as: a foreboding of the baptism (the forces that manifested themselves fully during the reigns of Mieszko and Boleslaus the Brave were already at play); an apt account of events taking course in accordance with the plan of God, albeit unfolding in a pagan reality.⁴⁴ The community and the dynasty were constituted in pre-Christian times.

⁴² *Sed istorum gesta, quorum memoriam oblivio vetustatis abolevit et quos error et ydolatria defedavit, memorare negligamus, et ad ea recitanda, que fidelis recordatio meminit, istos succincte nominando transeamus.* Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. The 'errors of pagandom' may refer both to the tale of Popiel's death itself as well as to the entirety of the narration of origins. Differently: Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 279.

⁴³ It appears that Anonymus's recounting of the origins of the dynasty was limited to Piast's feast and the elevation of Siemowit to the ducal throne. Of a different opinion is Czesław Deptuła, according to whom the transformations occurring in the foundation myth – both Anonymus's and Cosmas's – unfolded in stages. The first stage was to have been the giving of direction by God to the future of the communities, already back in pagan times. The second one was to have been the adoption of Christianity, by virtue of which the actualization of the destinies of the dynasty and of those governed occurred, so that they could fulfil the tasks provided for them in the plans of God. Cf. Deptuła, Cz. (1973). *Średniowieczne mity genezy Polski. Znak*, vol. 25, pp. 1378 *et seq.* Of course, the significance of Mieszko's recovery of sight and his baptism is not to be downplayed. The adoption of Christianity was a momentous change of qualitative nature, though I see it as a continuation – logical and inevitable – of the events in the Gnieznian *suburbium*. The adoption of Christianity resulted neither in the coming of the community into existence nor in the coming of the dynasty into power. I assert that the baptism did not play a decisive role in the appearance of the two most important themes in Anonymus's narration (the governing and the governed), even though it doubtlessly significantly actualized the two groups, paving the path to the heights of their capabilities, which were achieved during the reign of Boleslaus I.

⁴⁴ It may be that it is in that way that Anonymus avoided the charge of not sufficiently emphasizing the divine – in the Christian sense – provenance of the Piast's rule, as well as – and this matter also has to be put in question – a threat of cutting the community from its roots. Especially if the basis for the tale recorded in the chronicle was found in written accounts. On the other hand, it is worth quoting the sentence preceding the introduction of the tale of origins: *Qualiter ergo ducatus honor generationi huic acciderit, subsequens ordo narrationis intimabit.* Anonymus, I, p. 9. This means Anonymus emphasized what important events the tale would tell, not concealing their significance to the entirety of his work.

In Anonymus's chronicle the baptism was important as yet another – as the feast at Piast's was the first – actualization of the community, not its origin.⁴⁵

The third issue is Anonymus's care to demonstrate the rightfulness of the Piasts' rule. Of great significance thereto was the demonstration of the cause of the change of ruler thanks to the contradistinction of the filoxenia of the dwellers of the hut and the absence of such among the dwellers of the gord. The tale of the miraculous circumstances of the shearing in the modest hut of the ploughman whose son took the place of the exiled ruler – *de facto* through a legalized *coup d'état* – heralded more involvement of heaven. It is legible where God – directly or indirectly – intervened in the course of events, especially when lending assistance to the progeny of Piast. The presence and the future in the analysed record were to be judged according to the call to great destinies of a house whose progenitor was a poor farmer but by God's ordinance whose descendants were elevated to the highest dignities. The proper beginning of the community is found in Piast's distinction and the elevation of his son, so that the governing and the governed could begin to fulfil the roles assigned to them by God. It is without significance that neither the community – Gniezno and its inhabitants are already a given – nor the sovereign authority (Popiel governed the community prior to Siemowit; it is not known how he or his ancestors came to rule). With the feast at Piast's and the elevation of Siemowit the community and its leadership were actualized. Rounding off the establishment of the dynasty – but not as a key moment to it – was the adoption of Christianity.

In the foundation myth of the Piasts I pay attention to three facts. (I) The Piasts were a native dynasty. (II) The narration contains the ideological and ethical legitimization of the Piasts' rule.⁴⁶ (III) Piast's feast

⁴⁵ It is worth adding that both chronicles are lacking the closer circumstances of baptism. In Anonymus (*cf.* Anonymus I, 5) by the agency of Dąbrówka – appearing therein as a *mulier suadens* – Mieszko abandoned the errors of pagandom and was baptised (no date was given). In Cosmas information regarding the adoption of the new faith was recounted with extraordinary brevity, as I will discuss below (*cf.* Cosmas, I, 10, p. 14.

⁴⁶ And that was significant in the context of the goals for which the chronicle came into being, especially in the face of the problems Boleslaus III Wrymouth had to contend with, with his legitimacy to rule. His father, Wladislaus Herman, took power after the exile of Boleslaus the Bold, following the latter's conflict with bishop Stanislaus. Later the death of Mieszko Bolesławowic intervened – the son of the exiled king, with Anonymus suspecting poisoning – subsequent to his return to the country from the path of exile on which he had once embarked with his father, as well as Boleslaus Wrymouth's own trouble with his elder brother Zbigniew.

constituted the ideological and not the factual origin of the Piast dynasty. Anonymus showed the dynasty in a favourable light and demonstrated its lawfulness. He wrote of 'natural lords' (*domini naturales*), though without defining that concept.⁴⁷ The Piasts, like the Přemyslides, were predestined to rule *Dei gratia*. The role of the Piasts was emphasized in the geographical *prooemium* preceding the introduction of Gniezno, Popiel and Piast.⁴⁸ The already mentioned three key elements of the narration – the hero, the place and the cause – were characterized with a favourable judgement. The events occurred at the best possible place. The change of ruler was a good change, as the most deserving one ascended. Also good was the nature of the forces intervening in the events. Piast was shown – in a symbolic manner – as one guaranteeing the community's welfare – expressed not through luxuries but through basic goods – taking care of it as a father would of his family.

At the beginning of the dynastic legend in Cosmas – to an unpopulated land (depicted as a *locus amoenus*)⁴⁹ – following the flood and the confusion of tongues⁵⁰ – there arrived a pagan⁵¹ tribe led by Czech (*Boemus*) and a specific location was named where they settled.⁵² The incomers named the Czech land after their elder (*senior*; he was neither their ruler nor their judge, and from subsequent narration it follows that no

⁴⁷ Cf. Adamus, J. (1952). *O monarchii gallowej*. Warszawa, p. 128; Baczkowski, K. (2012). „Panowie przyrodzeni” a elekcyjność tronu w Polsce średniowiecznej. [In] *Idem. Polska i jej sąsiedzi za Jagiellonów*, Kraków, pp. 27 *et seq.*

⁴⁸ Anonymus, in putting the narration in a European context, brought forth Poland's geographical location, its strong sides, its ancient freedom and the virtues of its inhabitants. In the *prooemium* Anonymus contained basic knowledge about the Slavdom (location, neighbours, description of the country), describing it as never fully subjugated by anyone. The thought of ancient freedom, this time in an exclusively Polish context, was later invoked in a commentary on the invasion of King Henry IV in 1109 AD. Cf. Anonymus, III, 15, pp. 141 *et seq.*

⁴⁹ Cf. Cosmas, I, 2.

⁵⁰ In Cosmas, the history of Bohemia is connected with Biblical events, so for some time it unfolded in isolation from the *historiae sacrae*, coming back eventually to be included therein. Cf. Cz. Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 147.

⁵¹ Having settled the uninhabited land, the people [...] *primas posuit sedes, primas fundavit et edes et quos in humeris secum apportarat, humi sisti penates gaudebat*. Cosmas I, 2, p. 7 (mention was also made of its having been the fruit of a thousand sacrifices [*mille votis; idem*]). Teta's subsequent actions are also of significance: *Hec stulto et insipienti populo Oreadas, Driadas, Amadriadas adorare et colere, et omnem supersticiosam sectam ac sacrilegos ritus instituit et docuit [...]*. Cosmas I, 4, p. 10.

⁵² [...] *circa montem Rip inter duos fluvios, scilicet Ogram et Wlitaum [...]*. Cosmas I, 2, p. 7.

sovereign authority had existed up to that time). In the first foreword Czech described the land taken in possession as one destined to the tribe by fate. In the second one he also described it as the fruit of a thousand sacrifices.⁵³ Cosmas showed people benefiting in abundance from the gifts of nature untainted with civilization. It was a picture of a golden age, with no worries, no weapons, no marriages or private property. The original happiness was distorted by disputes occasioned by a lust for possession, through which the community of property evanesced.⁵⁴ From private property and the accompanying greed social stratification took shape. What became necessary was the authority of an extraordinary representative of the people, one adjudicating disputes and restoring peace. Krok (*Crocco*) became just that person, a man of distinguished character and mores. The first judge had no sons, but *genuit tamen tres natus, quibus natura non minores, quam solet viris, sapientie dedit divicias*.⁵⁵

After her father the rule of Bohemia was exercised by the soothsayer (*phitonissa*)⁵⁶ Libuše until such time as two men appeared before her, *qui videbantur populi esse rectores*.⁵⁷ The sequence of events was as follows: an altercation between the men, culminating in a fight (the matter was of the boundary between adjacent fields) and their recourse to Libuše; adjudication of the dispute; the aggressive oration⁵⁸ of the one

⁵³ *Hec est illa, hec est illa terra, quam sepe me vobis promississe memini [...]; Salve, terra fatalis, mille votis quesita nobis [...]*. Cosmas I, 2, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *[...] quicumque in sua tribu vel generatione persona, moribus potior et opibus honoratior habebatur, sine exactore, sine sigillo, spontanea voluntate ad illum confluebant et de dubiis causis ac sibi illatis iniuriis salva libertate disputabant*. Cosmas I, 3, p. 9. In the cited passage Cosmas moved from the golden age to an age of transition, corresponding to the silver and the bronze ages.

⁵⁵ Cosmas I, 3, p. 9. The appearance of Krok in the narration gave closure to the extemporaneous stage of history, as from him the genealogical tree of Bohemia's rulers may be drawn to Cosmas's own time. His daughters were (according to seniority): Kazi (a wizardess), Teta (priestess) and Libuše (*Lubossa*) (judge).

⁵⁶ Cosmas did not refer to Libuše as a *prophetessa* or *vates* but as a *phitonissa*, a word derived from Pytia (a virginal priestess in the temple of Apollo in Delphi). More broadly cf.: Geary, P. J. (2006). *Women at the beginning: origin myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary*. Princeton–Woodstock, pp. 38 *et seq.*

⁵⁷ Cosmas I, 4, p. 11. Each of the three daughters possessed unique talents, from which there arose a role in society to play. The eldest, Kazi, was a herbalist and wizardess. A younger one, Teta, taught the people to worship gods. Finally, the youngest, Libuše, was the most extraordinary one, as she was a soothsayer and distinguished by rectitude, prudence and good mores, hence after her father's decease she was the one to take his place as judge.

⁵⁸ *O iniuria viris haud toleranda! Femina rimosa virilia iudicia mente tractat dolosa. Scimus profecto, quia femina sive stans seu in solio residens parum sapit quanto minus, cum in*

who met with an unfavourable sentence (both on account of the sentence itself and the woman's conduct);⁵⁹ the consent of Libuše, offended by the accusation, for a man to lead the community.⁶⁰ At night, Krok's daughters celebrated arcane rituals to select the future prince. In the morning Libuše, from a high throne (*sublimi solio*), spoke to the coarse men (*ad agrestes viros*), warning them against the institution of a prince whom they desired so much and voluntarily, with no encouragement.⁶¹ With the words of the soothsayer having failed their purpose, she pointed to the right person, in her mind,⁶² explaining his name and prophesying as to

stratis accubat? Re vera tunc magis est ad accessum mariti apta quam dictare militibus iura. Certum est enim longos esse crines omnibus, sed breves sensus mulieribus. Satius est mori quam viris talia pati. Nos solos obprobrium nationibus et gentibus destituit natura, quibus deest rector et virilis censura, et quos premunt feminea iura. Cosmas I, 4, p. 12.

⁵⁹ According to the narration Libuše's trespass was that *[i]lla interim, ut est lasciva mollicies mulierum, quando non habet quem timeat virum, cubito subnixa, ceu puerum enixa, alte in pictis stratis nimis molliter accubabat. Cumque per callem iusticie incedens, personam hominum non respiciens [...].* Cosmas I, 4, p. 12.

⁶⁰ She retorted as follows: *Ita est, inquit, ut ais; femina sum, femina vivo, sed ideo parum vobis sapere videor, quia vos non in virga ferrea iudico; et quoniam sine timore vivitis, merito me despicitis. Nam ubi est timor, ibi honor. Nunc autem necesse est valde, ut habeatis rectorem femina ferociorem. [...] Ite nunc domum, ut quem vos cras eligatis in dominum, ego assumam mihi in maritum.* Cosmas I, 4, p. 12.

⁶¹ *O plebs miseranda nimis, que libera vivere nescit, et quam nemo bonus nisi cum vita amittit, illam vos non inviti libertatem fugitis, et insuete servituti colla sponte submittis. Heu tarde frustra vos penitebit, sicut ranas penituit, cum ydrus, quem sibi fecerant regem, eas necare cepit. Aut si nescitis, que sint iura ducis, temptabo vobis ea verbis dicere paucis. Inprimis facile est ducem ponere, sed difficile est positum deponere; nam qui modo est sub vestra potestate, utrum eum constituatis ducem an non, postquam vero constitutus fuerit, vos et omnia vestra erunt eius in potestate. Huius in conspectu vestra febricitabunt genua, et muta sicco palato adherebit lingua. Ad cuius vocem pre nimio pavore vix respondebitis: 'Ita domine, ita domine,, cum ipse solo suo nutu sine vestro preiudicio hunc dampnabit et hunc obruncabit, istum in carcerem mitti, illum precipiet in patibulo suspendi. Vos ipsos et ex vobis, quos sibi libet, alios servos, alios rusticos, alios tributarios, alios exactores, alios tortores, alios precones, alios cocos seu pistores aut molendinarios faciet. Constituet etiam sibi tribunos, centurions, villicos, cultores vinearum simul et agrorum, messorum segetum, fabros armorum, sutores pellium diversarum et coriorum. Filios vestros et filias in obsequiis suis ponet; de bubus etiam et equis sive equabus seu peccoribus vestris optima queque ad suum placitum tollet. Omnia vestra, que sunt potiora in villis, in campis, in agris, in pratis, in vineis, auferet et in usus suos rediget. Quid multis moror? Aut ad quid hec, quasi vos ut terream, loquor? Si persistitis in incepto et fallitis voto, iam vobis et nomen ducis et locum ubi est indicabo.* Cosmas I, 5, pp. 14 et seq.

⁶² It did not happen as Libuše had declared that she would become the wife of the one selected by the people. She herself indicated the place where the future prince would

the fate of both the man himself and his offspring,⁶³ and he gave her instructions. The emissaries found Přemysl occupying himself with ploughing, who, upon having heard the summons,⁶⁴ stuck his whip⁶⁵ (*corilus*) into the ground and unharnessed his oxen, saying: *Ite illuc, unde venistis!* (which points toward the oxen's affinity with the supernatural sphere).⁶⁶ There followed two miraculous events: the whip stuck in the ground produced three long shoots already covered with leaves and

be found, and his name. For a broader treatment of the issue of this apparent illogicality in narration cf.: Třeščík, D. (2003). *Mýty kmene Čechů 7.–10. století: tři studie ke „starým pověstem českým“*. Praha, pp. 106–110. *Nota bene* no suggestion appears in the narration to the effect of the appointment of the prince having taken the form of a social contract. Still, Libuše insisted that a prince was easier installed than removed (*In primis facile est ducem ponere, sed difficile est positum deponere*. Cosmas, I, 5, p. 14), which theoretically admitted the possibility of deposition(!). On the other hand, such an interpretation finds itself in conflict with God as the *causa efficiens* of the tale of origins – and hence with the divine election of the Czechs. *Nota bene*, after the selection of Přemysl two elements appeared. The first: Libuše ordered that the envoys, on their way to meet Přemysl, should follow her horse, as the latter had made that way many a time previously. The second: Cosmas's recounting of the rumour about Libuše and Přemysl's love affair, which he denied at the same time. Cf. more extensively V. Karbusický (1995). *Báje, mýty, dějiny: nejstarší české pověsti v kontextu evropské kultury*. Praha, pp. 157–162.

⁶³ Libuše explained to the envoys the meaning of the name 'Přemysl'; the use of reported speech seems to be an oversight on the author's part: *Viro nomen est Primizl [...] nam hoc nomen latine sonat premeditans vel superexcogitans. Huius proles postera hac in omni terra in eternum regnabit et ultra*. Cosmas I, 5, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Cosmas appears to treat Přemysl with ambivalence, referring to him as a rustic, but later events constitute evidence that the ploughman was someone much more than that. *Ad quem nuncii accedentes inquirunt: 'Vir fortunate, dux nobis diis generate!'. Et, sicut mos est rusticis, non sufficit semel dixisse [...]*. Cosmas, I, 6, p. 16. *Nota bene*, the envoys' speech emphasized the pagan character of Přemysl's appointment, which – in the light of the envoys' speech – was ordained by the gods (cf. Sadílek, J. *Kosmovy...*, pp. 76 *et seq.*). On the other hand, the cause – and thereby the proper understanding of Přemysl's selection – was God. Cf. Antonín, R. (2010). Panovník ve světě českých legend a kronik 10.–13. století. [In] *Proměna středověčného Evropy raného a vrcholného středověku: mocenské souvislosti a paralely*. Wihoda, M. et al. Brno, pp. 488–490.

⁶⁵ The whip, although it found practical application while ploughing the field, could be associated with a sceptre (like a shepherd's staff, a mace or hook), and hence an item symbolically complementing the crown. Cf. Roux, J. P. (1998). *Král: mity i symbole*. Warszawa, pp. 197–200. The sticking of the whip into the ground followed by shoots springing out of it was another symbolic connection between Přemysl and fertility and fecundity. The whip, inanimate matter, became a plant and animated matter.

⁶⁶ Cosmas I, 6, p. 16.

nuts, while the two oxen disappeared at that instant.⁶⁷ To the envoys the extraordinary nature of the events was obvious.⁶⁸ Přemysl himself, just as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, invited his guests to breakfast, which they had in the field. In the course of the meal two of the three shoots went dry and one remained, which grew taller and wider than the other ones. The envoys, filled with admiration and fear, knew not the meaning of the sign but Přemysl explained it to them.⁶⁹ Neither coronation nor enthronement of Přemysl took place.⁷⁰ The transition from the role of a ploughman to that of a ruler took place when he unharnessed and sent back the oxen, accepting robes from the envoys and mounting Libuše's horse.⁷¹ Libuše went out towards the incomers surrounded by

⁶⁷ [...] *cicius dicto ab oculis evanuerunt*. Cosmas I, 6, p. 16. Libuše instructed the envoys as to the look of the fallow Přemysl was supposed to be ploughing – twelve by twelve paces, situated amid other fields but not belonging to any – and what the oxen pulling his plough were supposed to look like (one girded in white and with a white head, the other white from forehead to croup with white hind legs as well). Cf. Cosmas, I, 5. Lech Leciejewicz, in reference to the motif of the ploughman Přemysl taking as his wife the soothsayer Libuše, pointed toward its link to the ritual of the royal ploughing found among other Indo-European peoples. The purpose of that ritual was to ensure the fecundity of the soil, similarly as the idea of a coupling between the god of the sky and the goddess of the earth. Cf. L. Leciejewicz, L. (2006). *Legandy etnogenetyczne w świecie słowiańskim*. [In] *Idem*, Rębkowski, M., Moździch, S. (Eds.), *Opera selecta: z dziejów kultury średniowiecznej Polski i Europy*, Wrocław, p. 103. Differently: Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 185. Both the animals and the plot of land belong to a different world, decidedly exceeding the boundaries of everyday experience. Přemysl's ploughing appears to be an echo of a ritual of primordial origin, while Přemysl, not yet being prince, appears to be performing an activity worthy of the rightful ruler. Differently, pointing toward biblical sources of the presentation of Přemysl's character: Sadílek, J. *Kosmovy...*, pp. 65–74.

⁶⁸ *Viri autem illi videntes hec talia ita fieri stabant obstupefacti*. Cosmas I, 6, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Přemysl, upon seeing the envoys' surprise, spoke as follows: *Sciatis, ex nostra progenie multos dominos nasci, sed unum semper dominari. Atqui si domna vestra non adeo de hac re festinaret, sed per modicum tempus currentia fata expectaret, ut pro me tam cito non mitteret quot natos heriles natura proferret, tot dominos terra vestra haberet*. Cosmas I, 6, p. 17. The land represented by the envoys was to have, in future, as many lords as the ruling prince has sons, which was the foretelling of intra-dynastic feuds. Ultimately, Přemysl accepted the robes and the steed received from Libuše by the mediation of the envoys and went with them. Cf. Cosmas, I, VII. In the light of his explanation, the Czechs' future depended on the completion (or not) of the ploughing of the mysterious patch of land, which was an activity of great significance. The fault of the failure to complete it was ascribed by Přemysl to Libuše.

⁷⁰ This is even though Libuše, as already mentioned above, had spoken to the gathered men from a high throne. Cf. Cosmas I, 5, p. 14.

⁷¹ Similarly: Antonín, R. *Panovník...*, pp. 534 *et seq.*

attendants (*satelles*). The wedding of Přemysl and Libuše – the pagan character of which Cosmas emphasized by reference to gods from Greek and Roman mythology⁷² – did not mean an end to the foundation myth. As foretold by Libuše a change of constitution took place; ducal authority was instituted and laws were dictated. With one remark: the new rules of coexistence were ordained by Libuše and Přemysl jointly.⁷³ The herald of the new times was the foundation of Prague, called *totius Boemie domnam*,⁷⁴ with a great future awaiting it. Libuše, just as in the case of the search for Přemysl, gave directions as to the location and name of the new site and prophesied as to its future fate, including the birth of the saints Václav and Adalbert.⁷⁵

The final act was the war between the sexes. Děvín was built as the gord of women and Chwrasten as the gord of men, situated nearby. The deep antagonism between the sexes is seen for the first time in the protest directed by one of the men to Libuše. The outbreak of the hostilities ought to be seen in the foundation of Prague, wherein life would take its course according to new rules. Evidently Prague – founded already before the war of the sexes – was uninhabited till the end of the conflict. Following the wedding of the sorcerer ploughman and the soothsaying judgess – apparently the first in the community's history – the dispute acquired a more general societal dimension. Previously women and men lived in

⁷² Cosmas, I, 8.

⁷³ *Hic vir, qui vere ex virtutis merito dicendus est vir, hanc efferam gentem legibus frenavit et indomitum populum imperio domuit et servituti, qua nunc premitur, subiugavit atque omnia iura, quibus hec terra utitur et regitur, solus cum sola Lubossa dictavit.* Cosmas I, 8, p. 18.

⁷⁴ Cosmas I, 9, p. 19.

⁷⁵ *Ad quem cum perveneritis, invenietis hominem in media silva limen domus operantem. Et quia ad humile limen etiam magni domini se inclinant, ex eventu rei urbem, quam edificabitis, vocabitis Pragam. Hac in urbe olim in futurum bine auree ascendent olive, que cacumine suo usque ad septimum penetrabunt celum, et per totum mundum signis et miraculis coruscabunt. Has in hostiis et muneribus colent et adorabunt omnes tribus terre Boemie et nationes relique. Una ex his vocabitur Maior Gloria, altera Exercitus Consolatio.* Cosmas I, 9, p. 19. Similarly as in Gniezno's case, the name of Prague was explained, of which the symbolic significance is connected with the message of Přemysl's clogs. The people had asked Libuše for a prince; she granted the request, while indicating the founding side for the capital gord exceeded the wishes intimated by members of the community. Libuše's influence on the community's fate did not end with her marriage to Přemysl. An interesting interpretation of the appearance of Saints Václav and Adalbert as two golden olives was formulated by J. Sadílek. Cf. Sadílek, J. *Kosmovy...*, pp. 94 *et seq.*

a state of – from a modern point of view – sexual chaos.⁷⁶ The women's unwillingness to submit to men was the cause of intermittent struggle and peace until a cease-fire and a meeting arranged for a three-day feast. Everyone came unarmed, of which men took advantage being stronger by nature, noted by Cosmas; every one of them abducted one woman. Thus the ugly sex subjugated the fair.⁷⁷ The epilogue of the narration of the Czechs' origin is found in the death of Přemysl,⁷⁸ followed by the rule of the couple's seven descendants. Another recorded event is the baptism of Bořivoj, the eighth ruler of the house of Přemysl. Cosmas recorded it under 894 AD, which was the first year date given in the chronicle. Of the baptism he made only a laconic mention.

In the foundation myth emerging from Cosmas's chronicle I would distinguish three acts:⁷⁹ (I) the appearance of people in a land known thenceforward as (Bohemia); (II) the origin of the dynasty and of the capital;

⁷⁶ The picture of the Czechs' ancestors as an uncivilized people was reinforced with a comparison to nomadic tribes. *Et quia ea tempestate virgines huius terre sine iugo pubescentes veluti Amazonas militaria arma affectantes et sibi ductrices facientes pari modo uti tirones militabant, venacionibus per silvas viriliter insistebant, non eas viri, sed ipsemet sibi viros, quos et quando voluerunt, accipiebant et, sicut gens Scitica Plauci siue Picenatici, vir et femina in habitu nullum discrimen habebant.* Cosmas I, 9, pp. 19 et seq.

⁷⁷ Cf. Banaszkiwicz, J. (1997). Wątek „ujarzmienia kobiet” jako składnik tradycji o narodzinach społeczności cywilizowanej. Przekazy „słowiańskie” wcześniejszego średniowiecza. [In] Michałowski, R. (Ed.), *Człowiek w społeczeństwie średniowiecznym*, Warszawa, p. 35. It may be that the war of the sexes marked an ideological continuation of the theme of appointment of a prince. No ruler appeared in that part of the narration. Perhaps Cosmas's intent was to show that just as a community without a prince would sink into chaos and fall apart, so would women remaining independent from men fall victim of their own weakness, starting with promiscuity. Martin Golem argued that the description of the relations of men was in fact an image of the relationship between the governing and the governed, serving to justify both the link between the subjects and the ruler and the dependency of the wife on the husband. Cf. Golema, M. (2006). *Stredoveka literatura a indoeuropske mytologicke dedictvo: pritomnost trojfunkcnej indoeuropskej ideologie v literature, mytologii a folklore stredovekych Slovanov*. Banská Bystrica, pp. 31–100; *idem*, Kosmova a Dalimilova „dívčí válka” ako metafora indoeurópskej vojny funkcie. *Studia mythologica Slavica* 2005, vol. 8, pp. 137–156.

⁷⁸ From similar information about Libuše it seems to follow she departed from the world prior to Přemysl. *Et ex illa tempestate post obitum principis Lubosse sunt mulieres nostrates virorum sub potestate.* Cosmas I, 9, p. 21.

⁷⁹ A detailed deconstruction of Cosmas's narration of origins is offered by V. Karbusický. Cf. Karbusický, V. *Báje...*, pp. 97–105; *Idem*, Die epische Struktur der Sagen in der Chronik des Cosmas von Prag. [In] *Anfänge der historischen Überlieferung in Böhmen: ein Beitrag zum vergleichenden Studium der mittelalterlichen Sängerepen*, Cologne-Vienna 1980, pp. 93–102.

(III) the foretelling of the Czechs' fate. In the first one the land was given a name and populated. The second one marks the creation of the Czech community, with a gradual transition from the golden age, through the dominant role of judges, to ultimately the establishment of the society known to Cosmas. The third was a prophecy fulfilled in the later course of history. Cosmas enriched his narration of the origins of the people, the dynasty and the state⁸⁰ with a number of references to sites that were to be associated with heroes or events.⁸¹ He gave an account of a souvenir of times long past, of Přemysl's wooden clogs kept in the ducal treasury even in Cosmas's own lifetime.⁸² As foretold by Libuše, the duke was to be the terror of the

⁸⁰ Whenever in the context of discussing the tale of origins reference is made to the concept of 'state', it is safer to understand it in the meaning of 'political organization' or 'community'.

⁸¹ The first seats of Čech's companions were to have been founded upon the Říp mountain, between the Ohře and Vltava rivers (I, 2). Linked to Krok was to have been a gord already abandoned and overgrown in Cosmas's time, found in the forest adjoining the village of Zbečno (I, 3; if that site was in fact associated with Krok in Cosmas's time, it is probable that the chronicler recorded a version of the legend that did in fact circulate, cf. Panic, I. (2006). *Krak w polskiej i czeskiej tradycji wczesnośredniowiecznej*. [In] Barciak, A., Iwańczak, W. (Eds.), *Piśmiennictwo Czech i Polski w średniowieczu i we wczesnej epoce nowożytnej*. Katowice 2006, pp. 48–62). Kazi's tall earthen grave was to be found upon the river formerly known as Berounka, and currently as Mža (cf. Cosmas, I, 4, p. 8). Teta was to have erected a gord upon the peak of a steep rock at the river Berounka, named Tetin after her. Also Libuše was to have ordered the construction of a gord nearby the village of Zbečno (and therefore in the vicinity of the gord linked to her father), also named after her. She foretold where her envoys would find Libuše (the village of Stadice), where Prague was to be founded. The arena of the war of the sexes was Děvin i Chwrašten (later Vyšehrad).

⁸² The symbolic significance of the wooden clogs had to be enormous, as (1) they were the sole physical memory of Přemysl; (2) they constituted a symbolic link between times immemorial and modernity; and (3) connected the past and the present with the future as an expression of the wish of the subjects for the rulers to remember their roots. Cf. Cosmas I, 7, p. 17. In the case of Bohemia we would even have to do with, as Andrzej Pleszczyński put it, 'a fetish of origins', the eldest trace of which he found in Cosmas's chronicle. In Anonymus's dynastic legend there are few geographical details bar Gniezno and an unnamed isle on which Popiel parted with life. The Piasts, in opposition to the Přemyslides, did not have a physical souvenir of the dynasty's founder. Cf. Pleszczyński, A. (2001). *Fetyshizm początków" w ideologii władzy czeskiego średniowiecza*. [In] Rosik, S., Wiszewski, P. (Eds.), *Origines mundi, gentium et civitatum*. Wrocław, p. 153; *Idem (2000), Przestrzeń i polityka: studium rezydencji władcy wcześniejszego średniowiecza: przykład czeskiego Wyszehradu*. Lublin, pp. 225 et seq.; Sobiesiak, J. A. *Jak Przemyślidzi zdobyli władzę nad „plemieniem Czechów"*. *Historia i archeologia o powstaniu czeskiego państwa (IX–X w.)*. [In] Banaszkiewicz, J. et al. (Eds.) *Instytucja „wczesnego państwa" w perspektywie wielości i różnorodności kultur*. Poznań 2013, pp. 266 et seq.

Czechs, a merciless tyrant.⁸³ On the other hand, Přemysl proved to be a good-natured pauper, ordering his wooden clogs to be preserved,⁸⁴ for his descendants to remember the plebeian origin of the founder of their house. Another *memento* is found in the origin of Prague. Finally, the advent of the tribe led by Czech to an unpopulated land made the Czechs the fully entitled lords of their lands. Let us add that the most important of the three scenes uncovered by Cosmas was the second, the culmination of which was found in the demand made by men for the people to be led by a man. To the foreground, in lieu of the common ancestor Czech (a blood tie), came the relationship of the subjects to the dynasty (a political relationship arising from the will of the Czechs, their demand to install sovereign authority). The Czechs were not simply a tribe of kinsfolk but a community connected with the ruling house by ties of obedience and fealty⁸⁵. The most important elements of the Bohemian chronicler's narration are: Přemysl and Libuše⁸⁶ (who?); Prague (where?); God⁸⁷ (why?).

⁸³ Cf. more extensively: Bláhová, M. (2014). Počátky státu a osobní svoboda v dílech českých středověkých kronikářů, [In] Barciak, A. (Ed.), *Wolność i jej ograniczenia w kulturze Europy Środkowej*. Katowice–Zabrze 2014, pp. 68–70.

⁸⁴ Inquired by one of the envoys en route to the rendezvous with Libuše as to the purpose of taking his wooden shoes with him, Přemysl replied: *Ad hec, inquit, eos feci et faciam in evum seruari, ut nostri posteri sciant, unde sint orti, et ut semper vivant pavidi et suspecti, neu homines a Deo sibi commissos iniuste opprimant per superbiam, quia facti sumus omnes equales per naturam. Nunc autem et mihi liceat vos vicissim percontari, utrum magis laudabile est de paupertate ad dignitatem provehi an de dignitate in paupertatem redigi? Nimirum respondebitis mihi, melius esse provehi ad gloriam quam redigi ad inopiam. Atqui sunt nonnulli parentela geniti ex nobili, sed post ad turpem inopiam redacti et miseri facti; cum suos parentes gloriosos fuisse et potentes aliis predicant, haud ignorant, quod semetipsos inde plus confundunt et deturpant, cum ipsi per suam hoc amiserunt ignaviam, quod illi habuerunt per industriam. Nam fortuna semper hanc ludit aleam sua rota, ut nunc hos erigat ad summa, nunc illos mergat in infima*. Cosmas I, 7, pp. 17 *et seq.*

⁸⁵ Similarly: Třeštík, D. (2005). Úvod. [In] Hrdina, K. *et al.* (Eds.) *Kosmova kronika česká*. Praha–Litomyšl, pp. 15 *et seq.*; Idem *Kosmovo pojetí přemyslovské pověsti*. *Český lid* 52 (1965), p. 311.

⁸⁶ The inequality in the chronicler's treatment of Libuše and the community led by her is shown to be a mere appearance only. Whose fault was the end of the gold age? The fault lay with human nature; degenerating, in Cosmas's opinion, along with the passage of history. The most important thing in the confrontation between the people – presumably only the male part of it – and Libuše is not whose view prevailed but the right of the matter and acting with good intentions. Despite the installation of a prince, Libuše, after the wedding, remained a foreground character. Ultimately, the soothsayer stopped being referred to as a 'woman' (the last time she is referred to as such is in I, 5, prior to announcing her choice to the people), in favour of 'lady' (*domina*, cf.) I, 6 [five times], 8, 9), and prince (*princeps*; cf. I, 9). Marriage did not lower Libuše's social standing. As

Comparison of narration. Similarities. (I) The hero. In both accounts the motif of the ploughman progenitor repeats itself. Both Piast and Přemysl were freemen, there are no clear indications of a subordinate status. The respective fates of both were the cornerstone for the future ruling house.⁸⁸ Anonymus's and Cosmas's emphasizing of an agricultural extraction of the native dynasties was to bear witness to the rulers'

already mentioned before, Libuše continued to prophesy, and the community did as it was told; Přemysl dictated the laws together with her (as Cosmas wrote: *Hic vir [...] omnia iura [...] solus cum sola Lubossa dictavit*. Cosmas, I, 8, p. 18). Hence she must be listed alongside Přemysl as a main character of the narration – even though hers was to some extent a more important role to play.

⁸⁷ An important issue is the origin of the powers exercised by Krok's daughters, and in particular by Libuše. Her selection of Přemysl and the site on which Prague was to be founded and the name it would be given is one of the most significant elements constituting the civilized community of the Czechs. The soothsayer's merits were not invalidated in the feeling of the Christian chronicler by her pagandom or condemned magical talent, which he referred to as an 'infernal spirit of prophecy' (cf. Cosmas (1968) *Kosmasa Kronika Czechów*. Warszawa 1968, p. 107; *Plura locutura erat, si non fugisset spiritus pestilens et prophetans a plasmate Dei*. Cosmas, I, 9, p. 19). In Anonymus, through *ex occulto Dei consilio* it is known that Piast was exalted by God. Cosmas suggested divine intervention once: *Crocco [...] genui tamen tres natas, quibus natura non minores, quam solet viris, sapientiae dedit divinitas*. Cosmas I, 3, p. 7. In the remaining cases he offered a negative perception of the abilities of the daughters of Krok. The pejorative overtone of the events recorded by Cosmas – and the fact itself resolves the issue – turns out to be a vain appearance only, as their significance to the narration was a fundamental one. The ideological message of both myths concerned momentous qualitative changes in which miraculous events were signs and links connecting the transformations with the *sacrum*, with the latter not being passive but instead actively influencing the course of the events. The prophecies of Libuše came true, and they pertained to the plans of God, wherein Prague was to be adorned with two saints – in the latter case the source of Libuše's inspiration appears to be evident. In the Piast and Přemyslid foundation myths the *sacrum* was presented as the cause of the events and as some sort of measure to guide judgement. Cf. Deptuła, Cz. *Średniowieczne...*, pp. 1375 *et seq.* The cited admitted that the sphere of nature – not identical with the *daemonicum*, if we presume the relevant mediaeval author to have believed in that one and granted any autonomy to it – was capable of having been used by God for the fruition of His plans, with authors in the Middle Ages conceding to it the rank of *historia sacra*, leading to the preservation, in recorded history, of elements of pagan heritage. Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 116.

Miraculous events were a spacious category in the Middle Ages – including all that came from a different dimension – immanent with regard to nature in the understanding of the contemporaries. However, connecting each such extraordinary fact with the relevant religious system was not imperative. Their existence was accepted *a priori* and admitted to voice without narrowing down their origin. Cf. Myśliwski, *Zjawiska „cudowne”...*, pp. 410 *et seq.*

⁸⁸ Societal significance of the dynasty cf. Łowmiański, H. *Studia...*, pp. 263–285.

connection with life-giving forces of a chthonic origin, guaranteeing the survival and progress of the community.⁸⁹ The peasant origin of the ruling houses was judged favourably.⁹⁰

(II) The place.⁹¹ In Anonymus, action took place in Gniezno. In Cosmas, Prague was founded on Libuše's instruction as the herald of new times, and it was in its vicinity that the war of the sexes was laid to rest. Both of the chronicles conceded a leading role to one of the gods. Each – in a practical and an ideological sense – was shown in a different way. The names of Prague and Gniezno were explained. However, the ascension of the Přemyslides was accompanied by the founding of a new capital as one of several important events. In Piast's time Gniezno already existed. It is not known when it was founded, by whom, or in what circumstances. Its ideological primacy, though – expressed through the chronicler-provided etymology – followed not from the foundation myth but from the entirety of the work. Gniezno, in Anonymus, was a nest, and therefore, in a metaphorical sense, a place of distinction, connected with birth and growing up. Both hubs were connected by having been founded in pagan times. At the same time Prague was one of a number of places linked to the dynastic legend, while Gniezno is the sole place name given in Anonymus. The tales of origins took place in countries described as the most fit for inhabitation (*locus amoenus*).

(III) The *causa efficiens*. The authors put emphasis on the "... activity of supernatural forces in the acts of the origin of the ruling house."⁹² The heart and soul of those accounts lay in the collaboration between good deeds and the will of God. Both chronicles placed the origin of the divine election of both the dynasty and the people back in pagan times.⁹³ The

⁸⁹ If pursued consciously, the goal of that measure was to reinforce the popularity of the dynasty. Cf. Kowalenko, W. Książę. [In] *Idem* (ed.), *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich...*, vol. 2, p. 537.

⁹⁰ In the opinion of J. Banaszekiewicz, the crux of the peasant extraction was not poverty or low social standing. He believed the emphasis in the interpretation of the myth to lie in the 'non-agricultural' significance of the plough, the ploughing and the ploughman. The explanation was to be found in striving to present the hero as capable of taking care of the community and providing it with goods necessary for its survival (hero of the 'third function' as categorized by G. Dumézil). Banaszekiewicz, J. *Podanie...*, pp. 46–60.

⁹¹ Cf. Banaszekiewicz, J. *Jedność...*, pp. 447 *et seq.*

⁹² Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 170.

⁹³ A. F. Grabski would add that the divine election of the dynasty and of the people was a concept Christian to the bone. It is true that the origin myths in Anonymus and Cosmas were in later parts of the respective chronicles linked to Christian pictures of authority. Cf. Grabski, A. F. (1961). Związek polskiej tradycji dziejowej z uniwersalną w historiografii polskiej końca XIII wieku. [In] *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego*.

central element was the evolution of sovereign authority (Cosmas)⁹⁴ or the takeover of it (Anonymus).⁹⁵ There is a striking similarity between the methods of conferring legitimacy⁹⁶ on the rule of the rulers and presentation of the relationship between the governing and the governed: God as the source of authority⁹⁷. Of little significance was the fact that Anonymus⁹⁸ and Cosmas⁹⁹ appeared to treat information about pagan times with

Nauki Humanistyczne. Seria I. Łódź, p. 34. On the other hand – as demonstrated by Roux, J. P. in *Król: mity i symbole*, stating numerous examples from various areas and eras of civilization – Christianity was not necessary for the relevant people to place itself in the role of an elect people and consider its rulers to have been anointed by higher powers. Such an interpretation would have underscored the pagan character of either tale of origin.

⁹⁴ Cf. L. Wolverson, L. (2015). *Cosmas of Prague: narrative, classicism, politics*. Washington, pp. 274–289; *Eadem (2001) Hastening toward Prague: power and society in the medieval Czech lands*. Philadelphia, pp. 17–41.

⁹⁵ See a controversial work, in respect of the method used: P. Urbańczyk, P. (2004) „Zamach stanu” w tradycji piastowskiej Anonima Galla. [In] Sołtysiak, A. (Ed.), *Zamach stanu w dawnych społeczeństwach*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 219–226.

⁹⁶ One of the core fields in which historical knowledge was used in the Middle Ages was the practical goals of rulers and courts. Knowledge of the past means *in al.* the genealogy conferring legitimacy on the rule and forming the basis of dynastic claims; the reservoir of knowledge about methods of ruling and solving problems, positive and negative patterns, and finally the basis for discerning current events at home and abroad in the respective sources. Cf. Heck, R. (1978). Problemy świadomości historycznej średniowiecznego społeczeństwa polskiego. [In] Heck, R. (Ed.) *Dawna świadomość historyczna w Polsce, Czechach i Słowacji: prace Polsko-Czechosłowackiej Komisji Historycznej*, Wrocław, p. 60; Třeštlík, D. Historické povědomí českého raného středověku [In] *ibid.*, pp. 5–21; Bláhová, M. Historická paměť v pramenech raně přemyslovských Čech. [In] Klápště, J. *et al.* (Eds.) *Dějiny ve věku nejistot: sborník k příležitosti 70. narozenin Dušana Třeštíka*, Praha 2003, p. 60.

⁹⁷ Wherever ‘powers’ are mentioned in the tales of origins, those are to be attributed to God, which finds basis in the favourable judgement of the outcomes of the activities of either the mysterious wanderers or Libuše. Differently: Cz. Deptuta, *Galla Anonima mit...*, pp. 89, 120, 124, 287. The assertion that the nature of the events was unequivocally determined by their origin merits full agreement. Hence a favourable cause of the events warrants a favourable judgement of their outcomes. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 71. See Pomian, K. *Przeszłość jako przedmiot wiary: historia i filozofia w myśli średniowiecza*. Warszawa 1968, pp. 233–238.

⁹⁸ *Sed istorum gesta, quorum memoriam oblivio vetustatis abolevit et quos error et ydolatria defedavit, memorare negligamus, et ad ea recitanda, que fidelis recordatio meminit, istos succincte nominando transeamus*. Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12.

⁹⁹ *Plura locutura erat, si non fugisset spiritus pestilens et prophetans a plasmate Dei*. Cosmas I, 9, p. 19. Henryk Łowmiański pointed towards an undetermined tradition of pagan *numinosum* – as well as magic – in Cosmas’s chronicle, which from a Christian perspective belonged to the *antisacrum* (citing the abilities of Krok’s daughters as an example). However, taking into account the prophecies that were being fulfilled, he

some disdain. It is shown to be only a vain appearance, without providing a basis to negate the value of the tales of origin or alter their meaning.¹⁰⁰ The *Dei-gratia* ruling Piasts and Přemyslids – with both names being older than the chronicles discussed herein – were the sole legal lords, and inheritance of authority within the dynasty was given sanction. The advancement of Siemowit and of Přemysl was a combination of intervention of supernatural forces and – though to a different degree – the will of the people.¹⁰¹ No mention was made of the Pope or of the Emperor, two factors claiming the right to put monarchs on their thrones

admitted that pagandom met with Christianity in the *Chronica Boemorum*. Cf. Łowmiański, H. *Religia...*, pp. 346 *et seq.* From the foreword to the chronicle addressed to the *parochus* Severus it follows that Cosmas regarded the fruits of his labour from a distance, but – as in other similar cases – this seems to be a matter of convention rather than the author's attempt at depreciation of his own work. *Sive enim vobis soli hec seniles nuge placeant sive displiceant, rogo, ne tercius eas oculus videat.* Cosmas, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ It is not an argument in favour of Anonymus's alleged less than serious outlook on the tale of origin, wherein – in his own view – he drew the distinction between times immemorial and those of which he thought himself to have more reliable information. Anonymus, after the information about Popiel's death by mousebite, declared the tale to transition from point towards [...] *que fidelis recordatio meminit [...]*. Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. Cosmas did not draw an analogous distinction; instead he provided a list of descendants of Přemysl and Libuše, whereafter at I, 10 he recorded the information about the baptism of Bořivoj, repeated at I, 14. Anonymus's cited statement is not to be regarded as a contradistinction between tradition and history in a modern understanding of the terms. Instead, the goal is to give an appearance of the cleric's 'holy anger', intended to give the audience the impression that the author, by necessity, though unwillingly, recorded a pagan legend for future generations. Or was the goal not to express the author's feelings but to follow the convention customary in such cases? Could the record of the narration of the origins in both of the chronicles be the result of societal demand (i.e. a founding legend recorded in a version universally known)? Or pressure from the patrons – being at the same time Anonymus's clients – under whose auspices the chronicle was coming to life? Was there no alternative to such a form of origins as we know from Anonymus's chronicle? If so, then any removal of Piast, Popiel and Siemowit from history would leave a void, making the official version of the past lack basic knowledge about the cause and sense of existence of the community and its rule. Theoretically, a way out of the awkward situation could have been to invent a tale of origins from scratch. On the other hand, that could come into conflict with the picture already held of the origins of the *Polonorum* by the elites of the state at the time, concentrated in Boleslaus Wrymouth's court. The issue of authenticity of the tale of origins recorded by Anonymous is one I would leave open.

¹⁰¹ Přemysl was selected by Libuše upon a clear request from her people; Siemowit was made duke *concorditer*. In the narration of Přemysl's acclamation by the people (*populus*) it is warranted to see a link to the dispute between the *regnum* and the *sacerdotum*, as well as the ideal of popular sovereignty in ancient Rome. Kopal, P. Král versus kníže? Idea panovnické moci v Kosmově kronice. [In] Wihoda, M. *et al.* (Eds.) *Proměna středovýchodní Evropy raného a vrcholného středověku: mocenské souvislosti a paralely*, Brno 2010, pp. 361 *et seq.*

at the time the chronicles were coming to life.¹⁰² Action took place in an international vacuum.¹⁰³ One of the goals of the narration of either chronicler was to determine the position of the dynasties and countries in the ideological and political international order.¹⁰⁴

Both Anonymus and Cosmas achieved their intended goals in telling the tale of the dynasty's origin and listing the elements necessary for the self-determination of the community across all temporal planes: the past, the present, and the future.¹⁰⁵ The linking of the 'mythical' past with the 'historical' past by the chroniclers merits attention. A genealogical continuity was demonstrated in the chronicles between Piast and Mieszko, and between Přemysl and Bořivoj. Both of the narrations played out in pagan times, diametrically distant from and opposed to the mentality of the authors of either chronicle. Idolatrous practices – e.g. the shearing of Siemowit and the magic of the three sisters during the night prior to Přemysl's installation – could have been left out, had it not been for their outcomes, both momentous and favourable.¹⁰⁶ Another element in common were informants in the form of old men.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² On the other hand, the ideologically independent tale of origin constituted an ideological element in relationships with their neighbours, as well as with the empire or the papacy. Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 156.

¹⁰³ Absence of any outside influence or information about the world outside of the community concerned in the origin. With one exception: the man who heard the unfavourable judgment rendered to him by Libuše, cried out – among other things – the following: *Non solos obprobrium nationibus et gentibus destituit natura, quibus deest rector et virilis censura, et quos premunt feminea iura*. Cosmas, I, 4, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ A. F. Grabski called attention to how the tales of origins of Bohemia and Poland differed from the imperial versions of the past, consisting of extensive Trojan and Carolingian myths along with those of Biblical extraction. Another category of myths propagated by older, larger and more culturally advanced political hubs, especially by the Empire, are examples of a future pan-European standard of state mythology, driving out or at least significantly affecting the shape of local historiographies. Cf. Grabski, A. F. *Historiografia...*, pp. 44–48. See Deptuła, Cz. *Galla Anonima mit...*, pp. 139–144.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Deptuła, Cz.: *Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 170; D. Třeščík, D. (1965). Kosmovo pojetí přemyslovské pověsti. *Český lid*, vol. 52, p. 311.

¹⁰⁶ It is impossible to resolve whether, in the opinion of both chroniclers: (a) it is in any way possible to speak about the existence of a power of pagan origin, in some degree autonomous from God, who acted through their mediation when and how He wanted; (b) God acted through powers of pagan origin; (c) the pagans' intentions were consistent with God's plans, hence – by exception – the use of the powers brought the intended outcome to those invoking them. What is certain is the favourable character of the outcomes of the tales of origins. Hence I incline towards the conclusion that those powers would have been of no important significance, a vain concept in pagan minds

Differences. The hero. (I) Cosmas depicted the characters of Přemysl and Libuše with more clarity. The meaning of the name of Přemysl was explained but not of those of Libuše, Piast or Rzepka. (II) Piast was an ordinary mortal being. Přemysl surprised the emissaries with an oration the overtone of which bestowed him with an aura of the extraordinary and of the mysterious. He demonstrated peace and calm in the face of the wonders taking place. Piast was an ordinary farmer, and we know the name of his father. Přemysl is a sorcerer ploughman,¹⁰⁸ whose pedigree was not recorded. Perhaps he had already been celebrating the ritual royal ploughing prior to his enthronement.¹⁰⁹ He was shown while working the field, but the ploughing – in the position of a peasant – was only one of the two sides of his personality. Supernatural powers – clairvoyance and affinity with magical ritual – were his other, proper face. In the case of Piast, his hospitality alongside his poverty was emphasized. His unfree social condition remains only an allegation. The contrast can also be seen in the comparison of the progenitors' wives. Rzepka we know to have been the hostess of the feast in Piast's hut, to have attended her husband's counsels, and nothing more than that. Libuše, a soothsayer and judgess, of good birth, was one of the two most

with no impact on anything whatsoever, had it not been for the sole source of true power, i.e. God. Cz. Deptuła sometimes concedes some autonomy to those powers (*Galla Anonima mit...*, p. 189), and at others seems to deny it, confirming their instrumental use in the fruition of God's plans (*ibid.*, p. 124). The internal inconsistency of the world in Anonymus's chronicle – an earthly world with its own causality at the same time as full dependence on supernatural forces – cf. Łowmiański, H. *Religia...*, pp. 333 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁷ *Narrant etiam seniores antiqui [...]*. Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. In the second foreword to the chronicle, addressed to Master Gervasius, Cosmas mentioned fables of old men as his source of information on the first inhabitants of Bohemian land. *Igitur huius narrationis sumpsit exordium a primis incolis terre Boemorum et perpauca, que didici senum fabulosa relatione, non humane laudis ambitione, sed ne omnino tradantur relata oblivioni, pro posse et nosse pando omnium bonorum dilectioni.* Cosmas, p. 3. Again, it would seem that Cosmas is not taking his informers seriously, while the importance of their testimony – if the knowledge of the origins really came from them – to the chronicler's narration was sufficiently discussed herein.

¹⁰⁸ For archaic topos of the king-ploughman in the context of Přemysl, see *in. al.* Třeštík, D. (1985). *Česká kultura ve 12. století.* [In] Merhautová, A., Třeštík, D. (Eds.), *Ideové proudy v českém umění 12. století.* Praha, pp. 12–14.

¹⁰⁹ Přemysl's relationship with chthonic powers was emphasized by Cosmas in the later part of the chronicle: *[...] Primizl iam plenus dierum, postquam iura instituit legum, quem coluit vivus ut deum, raptus est ad Cereris generum.* Cosmas I, 9, p. 21. The Roman Cerera may be identified with the Greek Demeter, and her son-in-law with the Roman Pluto (Greek Hades).

important – if not the single most important – characters of the tale of origin of the Czech people. The place. (III) No name of the country or of the people inhabiting it is given in Anonymus's chronicle. Czech was eponymous of the country and of the people. It is not known where the founders of Gniezno came from or who they were, nor the travellers led by Czech.¹¹⁰ In Anonymus, the role of Gniezno and Piast were sufficient elements of the foundation myth. However, in spite of certain details it remains – in the sense of ideas – a complete narration. The cause. (IV) In Anonymus, the term *concorditer* may form a basis for allegations that the community was in some way to have consented to Siemowit's ascension. It was, however, used in a way that makes it impossible to judge whether it is supposed to denote popular support (election at a *veche*? acclamation? if anything, then either as a decisive moment or a formality, a traditional custom with no greater significance?) In Cosmas, men demanded that Libuše install a prince. The will of the people – of the male part of it – was the watershed moment of the narration. (V) The principal cause of the installation of sovereign authority in Cosmas was an attempt at restoring peace in the community.¹¹¹ In Anonymus, the sole – but sufficient in the light of the narration – reason for Popiel's downfall was his failure to pass the trial that was the advent – by divine command – of the two wayfarers at Gniezno's gates. Other. (VI) No clear indication, in Anonymus's narration, of the origin of the community that already existed in Popiel's time. Cosmas more broadly described the primordial beginnings wherein the land and people were each given a name. Both of those details are missing from Anonymus's narration. (VII) In Cosmas, there is a theme of the feminine element as an independent one, dominating the male one for some time – the daughters of Krok, the relationship between Libuše and Přemysl, the war of the sexes. The initiative to have Přemysl installed as prince came from the men, not desiring any further rule of Libuše. Also men emerged victorious from the war of the sexes. No such motif appeared in Anonymus. (VIII) The moral aspect of the Piast and the Přemyslid mandate. In Anonymus that is: Piast's generosity toward the incoming travellers representing the sacrum; the active intervention of supernatural powers; the artificial

¹¹⁰ Cf. Kowalewski, K. (1995/1996) Początki legendy o braciach eponimach w czeskiej i polskiej tradycji historiograficznej oraz ich funkcje ideowe. *Pamiętnik Słowiński*, vol. 45–46, p. 144.

¹¹¹ The significance of peace in Cosmas's tale of origins cf. Třeštitk, D. Mír a dobrý rok. Státní ideologie raného přemyslovského státu mezi křesťanstvím a „pohanstvím” [In] *Folia Historica Bohemica* 12 (1988), pp. 33 *et seq.*

kinship between Siemowity and the representatives of extraterrestrial powers; prophecies; the augurous name given to the shorn boy. In Cosmas: the extraordinary virtues of Krok and supernatural powers of his daughters; Libuše's care of the community taking shape around her; God acting through the soothsayer and selecting Přemysl to be prince. While a change of ruler occurred in Anonymus, Cosmas showed a gradual transition from anarchy to civilized society. (IX) No information is given about the deaths of Piast, Rzepka or Libuše. Přemysl's passing is recorded.¹¹² (X) In Cosmas, elders appear (*seniores populi*),¹¹³ as well as leaders (*rectores*).¹¹⁴ There are no analogous characters in Anonymus, as the *seniores antiqui* were simply old men; there was no indication of any representative role in the community.¹¹⁵ (XI) In Cosmas's narration an account of the origin of the monarchy and of the laws is given. Sovereign authority pre-existed the feast at Piast's, and there is no record of the laws of the Gnieznian community.

Final remarks. A trait in common between the two narrations is the exaltation of the main characters, presentation of the most important places to the community, as well as the cause of events. In Anonymus, the origin of the Piasts' rule was favourable. The symbolic sense of Piast's feast served to indicate traits desirable in a ruler – serving at the same time as postulations directed at future dynasts – in order to emphasize the ruler's role as a servant of his community with a simultaneous lack of emphasis on the repressive character of authority. On the contrary in Cosmas, the original state of relationships between human beings was happiness. The image of history in Cosmas was regressive.¹¹⁶ On the one hand the sacrum influenced the imposition of laws, ducal authority and founding of Prague, which pointed toward their positive character. On the

¹¹² Cf. Cosmas, I, 9.

¹¹³ *Inter hec primordia legum quandam die predicta domna phitone concitata presente viro suo Primizl et aliis senioribus populi astantibus sic est vaticinata: [...].* Cosmas I, 9, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ *Ea tempestate inter duos cives, opibus et genere eminentiores et qui videbantur populi esse rectores.* Cosmas I, 4, p. 11.

¹¹⁵ *Narrant etiam seniores antiqui [...].* Anonymus, I, 3, p. 12. H. Łowmiański asserted that the old men's accounts were to have concerned solely the downfall of Popiel. Similarly: Banaszkiewicz, J. *Podanie...*, p. 156; Łowmiański, H. *Początki...*, vol. 5, p. 312. It seems that the word *etiam* may equally mean that the old men narrated the entire tale of origins recorded by Anonymus, therefore including the account of the feast at Piast's.

¹¹⁶ In some other places, such as the commentary on Přemysl's injunction that his clogs be preserved for posterity, Cosmas expressed a somewhat different judgement: *Nam fortuna semper hanc ludit aleam sua rota, ut nunc hos erigat ad summa, nunc illos mergat in infirma. Unde fit, ut dignitas terrena, que errat aliquando ad gloriam, amissa sit ad ignominiam.* Cosmas, I, 7, p. 18.

other hand, ducal authority was instituted upon popular demand, even though the people had been warned against it. The most obvious and appreciable basis for sovereign authority – as opposed to the tale of origins, where Libuše and Přemysl showed no despotic tendencies but accurately foretold the direction in which monarchical government would evolve – was strength. Although onerous or unjust at times, it was depicted as a necessary, though inefficient, remedy to degenerating human nature.