

# Memoria et Damnatio Memoriae in the Middle Ages

## Summary

The creation of collective memory, just like its layering with a new memory on top of the old one definitely is not peculiar only to modern society. All of the components with which modern historical and sociological literature works were born in their initial form already in the Middle Ages. Construing the collective memory as well as its displacement, the creation of places of commemoration as well as its disappearance or being layered over certainly are not a privilege of the modern period as is judged by a dismissive look at the past. Like the 20<sup>th</sup> century that we could on a higher plane call the century of memory, also the Middle Ages put great stress on memory. Medieval society was deeply anchored in the past. The past flowed into the present and in many regards formed the images of the future. A significant role in the construction of what will come is played precisely by the places of commemoration, but memory in the Middle Ages was just as precarious and fluid as it is today. It was subject to changes; many times strongly influenced by a “social order”. Places of commemoration were created as quickly as others disappeared.

Since memory, its creation and its destruction were one of the basic elements of the collective identity of medieval communities, whether state, national, or professionally and socially defined, we have endeavoured to investigate in this collective monograph the collective memory as one of the means of ideological competition between the most diverse social entities in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in the milieu of the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Poland.

Andrzej Pleszczyński in the chapter *Meanders of Memory of the Christianization of Poland in 966* using the example of the acceptance of Christianity in Poland in 966 examines the forms of the creation of the collective memory and considers the possibilities of a deeper revelation of the mechanisms of the social functioning of history that cannot be captured by traditional history. In that, he places the emphasis on the role of historical memory in political and ideological disputes.

Lukáš Reitinger in the study *King Vratislaus in the Memory of the Pegau Monastery* examines the reflection of Přemyslid memory in the Saxon monastery of Pegau, founded in 1091 by Wiprecht von Groitzsch and his wife Judita (Judith), daughter of King of Bohemia Vratislaus II, in the pages of the cloister annals (*Annales Pegavienses*).

The detailed reports on the situation in Bohemia and in the Přemyslid dynasty testify that the unknown Benedictine had knowledgeable informers available. They included the second abbot of Pegau Windolf, who guided the congregation for fifty years and could provide not only memories of the members of the founder's family but also the Přemyslids themselves, chiefly Dukes Bořivoj II and Soběslav I, who used precisely the hospitality of Wiprecht von Groitzsch's castle in close proximity to the Pegau monastery abundantly at the times of their banishment. Special attention is devoted to the passages of the annals that describe how Vratislaus was raised by the royal blessing (*regalis benedictio*) in Würzburg before the Roman campaign of King of the Romans Henry IV. The context and period meaning clearly connect the term "*regalis benedictio*" with an ecclesiastical coronation and anointment. The otherwise very trustworthy annals fail in the case of the time and place of Vratislaus' royal ascension, which casts a shadow of doubt also on the other reports of the Bohemian sovereign, which without this deficiency could seem to be plausible. Based on the (more or less) credible description of the events and also the confused chronology, it seems that the unknown monk first wrote down the undated acts of the founder and then later this *Gesta Wigberti* was added by the author himself or another member of the Pegau congregation according to other chronicles and annals in an imprecise chronological order.

Zbigniew Dalewski in his study *Memory and Forgetting: The Piast Dynasty in the Chronicle of Gallus Anonymus* tries to reveal why a whole series of people from the ruling family, whose existence is proved for us in other sources, was forgotten in this most important early medieval Polish chronicle. It does not seem that it would be that for the reason of an unpreserved memory of them, because commemoration of the ancestors and members of the ruling dynasty according to him underwent various modifications. Therefore, the family tree of the Piasts, as constructed by Gallus Anonymus, reflects a manipulation with memory, led by the effort to portray the succession in the filial line and thus defend the vision of the dynastic society at the time in which the chronicler wrote his work.

Stanisław Rosik in the chapter *Who Poured Oil on the Flame - Bernard the Spaniard or Boleslaus Wrymouth?* Examines the genesis of memory on the missions of Bishop of Bamberg Otto to western Pomerania in 1124–1125, or in 1128. The author comes to the discovery that the basic components of memory of this mission, whose impulse was Boleslaus Wrymouth, were laid by the chronicler Ekkehard of Aura. Under the influence of his text, Otto's pre-canonization cult then developed at the Benedictine monastery in Michelsberg, where three biographical texts were created soon after Otto's death in 1139: the anonymous *Vita Prieflingensis* and works by two local monks, Ebon and Herbord. In them, precisely the initiative to Christianize Pomerania played an important role, which *Vita Prieflingensis* still attributed to the not-very-well-known Bishop Bernard the Spaniard, while later texts raised the role of the Polish sovereign, in which according to Rosik the different relation of the hagiographers to the Poles is reflected as well as their different ideas on the form of the monastic reforms of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Robert Antonín also started from an analysis of chronicler's text in the study *Chronicon Aulae regiae - An unsuccessful attempt to establish an official memory of the last Přemyslid*. He presents the Zbraslav Chronicle here as a means serving the Zbraslav Cistercians for the preservation of an official, written, fixed memory of the king-founder, but this effort ended unsuccessfully at the time of the reign of Charles IV. The collective memory of the Bohemian nobility at that time was dominated by the con-

ception of Bohemian history presented in the Old Czech Chronicle of the So-Called Dalimil, whose narration of the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century became the reverse shared tradition updating the nodal points of the collective memory of the members of the land community. The so-formed “memory as culture” reached also the official dynastic memory, whose bearers amended it with the testimony of deed documents. In this way, there was a complete departure at the court of Charles IV with the tradition that Peter of Zittau had tried to preserve in his work. The Zbraslav Chronicle as a work, which today is the basis of the consideration of modern historiography on the historical development of Central Europe at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, had been forgotten in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The only bearers of the collective memory of Wenceslas II and his “royal place” – Zbraslav Monastery thus became the Cistercians themselves, which is proved also by the creation of the Jihlava Manuscript, presenting a comprehensive treatment of the whole material created at the very end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The impetus for this act was issued in the monastery in Sedlec.

Memories of the beginnings of Poland in the Late Middle Ages is dealt with in the study by Piotr Węcowski *Initial Remarks on the Beginnings of Poland in Late Mediaeval Historical Memory*. In it, the author indicates that this memory came not only from chronicle descriptions but also from hagiographic, preaching and liturgical texts, from catalogues and lists of the sovereigns and ecclesiastical dignitaries. All of this proves that the earliest history of Poland was very often not only read and written about but also spoken about, mainly in the milieu of the ecclesiastical and university elites, but also in the world of the highest aristocracy. Through liturgical texts and sermons, however, information on the beginnings of Poland penetrated even to the lower social positions, the lay classes of the population of the Kingdom of Poland. Yet the historical awareness itself was very superficial, or directly chaotic. The memory relied on specific events and people. Based on the testimony preserved for us in the case of trials between the Order of the Teutonic Knights and the Kingdom of Poland, it is shown that these “points of memory” were understood by people in contexts and they created a broader narrative from them that had nothing in common with historical reality.

We are introduced to the urban milieu by the study by edí nás privádí studie Juraj Šedivý *In Eternal Memory... Commemorative Culture (traditio memoriae) in the Urban Milieu of Medieval Prešpurk / Bratislava*. According to its author, memoria were influenced in this most important Hungarian town by the contemporary development of written culture in the Danube milieu, which he studied in three time horizons. Until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, oral culture clearly dominated; at the time until the end of the first third of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the first echoes of family memories appear in the noble milieu, captured through noble testaments. In the subsequent period, the culture of commemoration then fully developed in the burgher milieu, both through names and symbols and material objects, but chiefly in liturgical practice. People tried to achieve good memories – *bona memoria* – mainly through establishing their testaments and in the later period also through tombstones. In medieval Prešpurk, places of memory were chiefly sacral areas of local churches and monasteries, but singularly they also appear in secular public space in the form of inscriptions on houses and family coats-of-arms.

We are then introduced into the milieu of the Bohemian and Polish aristocracy by the studies by Robert Šimůnek *Bořita of Martinice (†1478) – Bearer of the Order of the Golden Fleece? Tradition and Story-Telling in the Historical Memory of Bořita of Martinice 1500–1650* and Božena Czwojdrak *Memory or Story-Telling? On the Possible Common*

*Origin of Some Chivalric Families in the Late Middle Ages.* Robert Šimůnek examines the genesis of the Martinice family tradition from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the beginnings of this tradition, there was the almost “inconspicuous” but goal-oriented career of Bořita of Martinice (†1478). The beginnings of the construction of Smečno as the family residence and necropolis are connected with his name, by which Bořita became the central figure of the family memory. They were formed in several also “inconspicuous” but thoroughly executive steps. The first was the adoption of Bořita’s first name as the family name (in the generation of his offspring). Round 1500, the connection between the name (later last name) Bořita and the family of the Martinices was already inseparable that it was possible without worries to move to the construction of a family memory in the form of the (fictional) genealogical ties to the bearer of this name in the Přemyslid period. From the modest beginning in the form of the ancestor of Bořita – a castellan of Litoměřice from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century – a tradition grew of the famous ancestors of the Luxembourg period, when Bořita as necessary connects to the names of real and fictitious people. With the advancement of time, the family tradition was fixated on the printed works of indisputable authority: mainly Hájek’s chronicle and Paprocki’s *Diadochus*. The Martinice family tradition is an example of one of the strategies of the legitimacy of social rise on the level of family traditions – namely the strategy of seemingly “modest” and “sober”, which was not connected to distant annals or fictitious heroism of the ancestors but sufficed with purposeful deformations of the source mentions on people real to a greater extent. Also Božena Czwojdrak points to similar questions, which through several probes showed that the formation of genealogical memory among the Polish aristocratic families was very distant from historical reality in the Late Middle Ages. Blood ties with a renowned person and significance of ancestors were equally important. Similarly, families that had not entered so-called political elites before the Late Middle Ages and gained prominence and positions then were eager to show their noble and ancient origin as well. There was a tendency among some Polish noble families to seek ancestors that would link them with other powerful and influential families. Such ambition was especially strong among “new ones” in 16th century, where it appeared much easier to prove “relations” with some families that had already died out. In most of cases, it was enough to purchase the property of a given family, together with its archive, to attach its members to group of noble ancestors. It resulted later with rapid growth of genealogy of extinct families (new branches) and the rise of a new tradition about common ancestors.