

KINGSHIP AND NOBILITY: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN 13TH-CENTURY MEDIEVAL SOCIETY IN THE PŘEMYSLID REALM*

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This study examines the dynamic interplay between kingship and nobility in 13th-century Central Europe, focusing on the Czech Lands under the Přemyslid dynasty. Employing Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, the study analyses how economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital shaped the evolving relationship between monarchs and the secular elite. Through case studies of Přemysl Otakar I, Wenceslas I, and Přemysl Otakar II, the research demonstrates that social cohesion and the stability of medieval society was dependent on a delicate balance and the negotiation of power between these two groups. Disruption of noble capital—whether economic or political—undermined social cohesion and led to conflict, while genuine cooperation fostered stability and enabled social transformation. The findings here highlight that the rise of the noble estate and the formation of collective identity were both products of and guarantors of this negotiated equilibrium

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Introduction: Medieval Nobility in the Central European Context

The thirteenth century has long been regarded by modern historiography concerned with developments in Central Europe as a period of accelerated transformation. During this time, the Czech Lands under the Přemyslids, the Piast duchies of Silesia and Poland, and the Árpáadian Kingdom of Hungary advanced qualitatively, approaching the level of the high medieval monarchies of the Western European cultural sphere. This transformation, the origins of which can be traced to the European Medieval Climate Optimum—broadly spanning from the mid-tenth to the mid-thirteenth century—profoundly affected all spheres of contemporary life.

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Continuous demographic growth stimulated widespread colonisation, which not only enhanced plant and animal production within the extensive medieval agrarian economy, but also reshaped the landscape and altered patterns of settlement.¹ Colonisation extended into previously uninhabited regions, transforming dense forested areas and pushing habitation up to higher altitudes. Alongside this so-called *rural colonisation*, the early thirteenth century witnessed a wave of medieval urbanisation across Bohemia and Moravia, accompanied by the expansion of artisanal production and trade. This trend further encouraged the development of mining for ore and precious metals, which in turn demanded increasingly sophisticated processing techniques. All these processes culminated in a shift towards a monetary economy that penetrated the daily lives of all strata of medieval society.²

These changes were intrinsically linked to shifts in the economic and social structures of the period. Earlier scholarship approached the description of early and high medieval social developments in the Central European monarchies—Bohemia and Moravia, Poland, and Hungary—through the lens of the so-called “Central European model of the early medieval state.” By generalising certain shared developmental traits, the approach assumed a homogeneous trajectory of social evolution within this geographical space. However, research over the past several decades has demonstrated that the development of social structures in the Czech Lands, Poland, and Hungary cannot be subsumed under a single functional model.³ If we narrow our focus to only Bohemia and Moravia, one key question of social and economic development concerns the emergence of the secular elite in the form of the high medieval landed nobility. It was precisely in the thirteenth century—and according to scholars employing the aforementioned

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- 1 MANN. Global Signatures and Dynamical Origins of the Little Ice Age and Medieval Climate Anomaly In *Science*, 2009, vol. 326, no. 5957, pp. 1256-1260.
 - 2 For the medieval transformation, see: ŽEMLIČKA. *Počátky Čech královských 1198–1253. Proměna státu a společnosti*. Praha 2002, pp. 195-432; VANÍČEK. *Středověká modernizace jako koncept strukturální proměny pro středověčnou Evropu*. In GRABARCZYK and NOWAK, eds. *Dynamika przemian społecznych i religijnych w średniowieczu*. Warszawa 2008, pp. 11-37; KLÁPŠTĚ. *The Czech Lands in Medieval Transformation*. Leiden 2011; ANTONÍN. *České země za posledních Přemyslovců I (1192–1253)*. Praha 2012, pp. 232–357; ŽEMLIČKA. *Království v pohybu*. Praha 2014
 - 3 For a basic overview of the Central European state model, see: LÜBKE. *Strukturen früher slawischer Staaten*. In POHL and WIESER, eds. *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 16. Wien 2009, pp. 171-179; for a historiographical reflection on the emergence of this concept, see: ANTONÍN. *Model středověkého typu středověkého státu jako interpretační problém české a polské medievisťky*. In *Historia Slavorum Occidentis – Czasopismo historyczne/Časopis historický*, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 65-76; KALHOUS. *Model státu středověkého typu: Koncept na pomezí tradice a inovace*. In *Forum Historiae*, 2014, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 159-173.

“Central European model,” only the thirteenth century—that this elite assumed a decisive position alongside the monarch within the power structures of the Czech Lands.⁴

Debate on the development of the nobility within Czech historiography has been remarkably extensive and far from controversy-free. It is not the intention here to provide a comprehensive summary of this complex discourse, however, in general terms, two fundamental perspectives have emerged. Proponents of the first, grounded in the validity of the “Central European model of the early medieval state,” envisage the formation of the secular elite as a process of alienation of property and power that from the tenth century had belonged exclusively to the ruler. At the heart of this paradigm lies the notion of dominant princely power as the essential building block of the social hierarchy taking shape in tenth-century Bohemia, in tandem with the process of Christianisation. This is reflected in the metaphorical designation of the Přemyslid “state” as *knížecí vesnice*. According to this interpretation, the original tribal Slavic society—characterised by communal land ownership (*občina*)—was subjugated by the emerging princely authority through the use of its warrior retinue, which eliminated—often physically—tribal chieftains wielding local power. Simultaneously, a new system of social control and administration was established, centred on economic regulation (particularly trade in luxury goods and metals) and military-administrative oversight, exercised through a network of fortified settlements (*hradiště*) strategically built across the territory. These fortresses fulfilled military, administrative, economic, and religious functions with the prince placing members of his retinue at the head of the military-administrative system. In this way, a group distinct from the “ordinary” population emerged; an elite whose social and material status was entirely dependent on the will of the prince.

Within such an interpretive framework, members of this group are described as beneficiaries who formed the core of the princely administrative apparatus. Although a gradual process of nobilisation of the stratum is recognised during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, within the terms of the Central European model, it is not considered a nobility class in the true sense of the word. The nobility, as defined by this paradigm, is characterised above all by the hereditary possession of landed property and as such, only appears in Bohemia and Moravia—indeed, in Central Europe more broadly—as a distinct social class during the societal transformations of the thirteenth century.

4 Cf. ŽEMLIČKA. Odboj krále Přemysla v letech 1248–1249 a jeho sociální zázemí. In *Československý časopis historický* (henceforth as ČsČH), 1985, vol. 33, pp. 564–586; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 166–176; ŽEMLIČKA. České 13. století: “privatizace” státu. In *Český časopis historický* (henceforth as ČČH), 2003, vol. 101, no. 3, pp. 509–541.

In contrast, advocates of the second perspective have argued for a vision of continuous development in the political and economic standing of elite lineages. According to this interpretation, members of these leading families participated in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the Czech Lands alongside the monarch from the early medieval period onwards. Critics of the “Central European model” have pointed to a small but significant body of evidence attesting to landholding by the nobility before 1200, as well as to the prominent political role of Bohemian and Moravian leaders documented in chronicles, particularly in the context of princely succession, which could not proceed without the consent—or indeed the election—of Bohemians.⁵

When assessing the development of the Bohemian nobility between the early and high Middle Ages from the vantage point of several years after the culmination of an intense historiographical debate on the subject, and simultaneously grounding such an assessment in the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice and drawing upon his concepts of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, it becomes necessary to acknowledge that both of the aforementioned approaches possess a certain degree of validity. Viewed through the lens of Bourdieu’s categories, the question of the emergence of the secular elite in the tenth to twelfth centuries is closely tied to the issue of the actual substance of all forms of its capital.⁶

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- 5 In addition to the works cited above in notes 4 and 5 regarding the model and the origins of the debate on its validity, cf. TŘEŠTÍK and ŽEMLIČKA. O modelech vývoje přemyslovského státu. In ČČH, 2007, vol. 105, pp. 122-163; JAN. Skrytý půvab “středoevropského modelu”. In ČČH, 2007, vol. 105, pp. 783-862; ŽEMLIČKA. Kasteláni, vilikové a benefícia v netransformované transformaci. In ČČH, 2008, vol. 106, pp. 109-136. For a summarising overview of the Central European model of the early medieval state and the debate on its validity, including more recent literature, see: KALHOUS. *Bohemi. Prozesse der Identitätsbildung in Frühpřemyslidischen Ländern (bis 1200)*. Wien 2018, pp. 18-20. On the origins of the Czech and Moravian nobility in relation to the same debate, cf. JAN. K počátkům české šlechty. Družina, beneficium, pozemkové vlastnictví. In NODL and WIHODA, eds. *Šlechta, moc a reprezentace ve středověku*, Colloquia mediaevalia Pragensia 9, Praha 2007, pp. 45-62; WIHODA. Kníže a Jeho věrní. Kosmas o světě předáků a urozených. In NODL and WIHODA, *Šlechta*, pp. 11-29; VANÍČEK, Sociální mentalita české šlechty: urozenost, rytířství, reprezentace. Obecné souvislosti, pojetí družiny, “modernizační” trend. In NODL and WIHODA, *Šlechta*, pp. 141-188; ŽEMLIČKA. O “svobodné soukromosti” pozemkového vlastnictví. K rozsahu a kvalitě velmožské pozemkové držby v přemyslovských Čechách. In ČČH, 2009, vol. 10, pp. 269-308; JAN. Hereditates a soudy statut Konráda Oty. In JAN and JANIŠ et al. *Ad iustitiam et bonum commune. Proměny zemského práva v českých zemích ve středověku a raném novověku*. Brno 2010, pp. 10-22; JAN. Nástin vzniku a vývoje české a moravské šlechty (s důrazem na její počátky). In *Časopis Matice moravské*, 2019, vol. 138, pp. 241-260.
- 6 For the theoretical framework of capital, see: BOURDIEU. Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital. In KRECKEL, ed. *Soziale Ungleichheiten*. Göttingen 1983, pp. 183-198; BOURDIEU. The Forms of Capital. In RICHARDSON, ed. *Handbook of Theo-*

In brief, proponents of the “Central European model” argue that all four forms of capital held by the early medieval elites of the Czech Lands were a function of their relationship with the monarch. In this framework, the economic capital of leading figures was based on property granted by the prince or “earned” as members of the princely administrative apparatus. Cultural capital was institutionalised in their competence to hold offices and serve militarily for the ruler, and objectified in luxury items and weapons received from him. The social capital of Bohemian leaders to a circle of individuals loyal to the monarch or the princely retinue itself was derived from their belongings. Finally, symbolic capital arose from a synthesis of the foregoing, granting its holders exclusive status based on prestige and power. From the late twelfth century, however, these elites began exploiting this power to advance their own economic, proprietary, and political interests, and to secure such assets for their lineages through inheritance. This ultimately led to the collapse of the old “princely” administrative system and a transformation of social structures in the thirteenth century.⁷

Critics of the “Central European model” do not deny the monarch’s significant role within the social system of the early medieval Czech Lands, and do acknowledge that part of the elite’s “capital” derived from their relationship with him. However, proponents of this alternative interpretation add a portion of their own—de facto hereditary—property to the elites’ economic capital. This addition also extends to the cultural capital of Bohemian leaders, which in this view, includes a measure of real political power, such as the ability to elect a prince or bishop, prevent the ruler from undertaking military campaigns, and so forth, an element practically impossible without some economic independence. Regarding social capital, these critics likewise concede the importance of “closeness” to the prince but also stress the collective identity of the Bohemians, documented by the early twelfth century and linked to the idea of Bohemians as the family of Saint Wenceslas, the eternal ruler. From this perspective, a leader’s or family’s social capital depended not only on ties to the prince, but also on membership in this exclusive group.⁸ As for symbolic capital, the views of the two approaches

ry and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York 1986, pp. 241-258; summarised in BOURDIEU. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford 1998, pp. 3-9.

7 In addition to the works cited above in footnotes 5 and 6, this perspective is also anchored in TŘEŠTÍK. *Proměny české společnosti ve 13. století*. In *Folia Historica Bohemica*, 1979, Vol. 1, pp. 131-154; ŽEMLIČKA. *Čechy v době knížecí (1034–1198)*. Praha 1996, pp. 147-217, 283-297, 358-363; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 33-39, 335-391; SOMMER; TŘEŠTÍK and ŽEMLIČKA, eds. *Přemyslovci. Budování českého státu*. Praha 2009, pp. 163-291.

8 Cf. GRAUS. *Lebendige Vergangenheit. Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter*. Köln; Wien 1975, pp. 159-182. Even proponents of the Central European model acknowledge the formation of a Czech community in the 12th century and the nobility’s role in princely elections, yet paradoxically do not incorporate this into their conclusions

largely converge, with one fundamental distinction: critics of the model reject the notion of an abrupt transformation of social structures culminating in the emergence of the high medieval landed nobility in the thirteenth century. Instead, they interpret this period as the conclusion of an evolutionary process that had unfolded throughout the Přemyslid era in the Czech Lands.⁹

Whatever the precise nature of the formation of the secular elite in the tenth to twelfth centuries, there can be no doubt about the existence of a nobility and its place within the social structure of the Czech Lands by the late thirteenth century. On this point, both historiographical perspectives converge, concluding that the Czech and Moravian nobility of the later thirteenth century—seen through Bourdieu's Theory of Practice—can be characterised as a group holding comparable economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. The economic capital of the high medieval nobility rested on hereditary landholding, combined with revenue and stipends from a range of administrative functions and obligations. From the final third of the century, these obligations increasingly assumed feudal forms.

The cultural capital of the nobility was then rooted in a shared value system and ethos of high medieval knighthood, encompassing not only martial skills, but also leisure practices and engagement with literary and material art. It was further objectified through culturally valorised artefacts of chivalric culture such as weapons, armour, and warhorses, and the stone castles of the powerful, which were strategically built on hilltops and mountain peaks after the mid-thirteenth century. Even in the thirteenth century, cultural capital was reinforced by one's competence to hold land and court offices, combined with his proximity to the royal court and the ruler himself. The social capital of a high medieval noble in Bohemia and Moravia derived from his membership in an exclusive group of noble Bohemians with a distinct collective identity—a continuity of the familia sancti Wenceslai of the twelfth century—further strengthened by the thirteenth-century institutions of land law (*zemské právo*) and the land court (*zemský soud*), under whose jurisdiction these nobles fell.¹⁰

about social structure; see: ŽEMLIČKA. „Omnes Bohemi“. Od svatováclavské čeledi ke středověké šlechtě. In *Mediaevalia Historica Bohemica* (henceforth as MHB), 1993, Vol. 3, pp. 111-133; ŽEMLIČKA, *Čechy*, pp. 328-346; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, p. 39.

9 In addition to the works cited above in note 6, see also: JAN. *Václav II. a struktury panovnické moci*. Brno 2006, pp. 163-253; ANTONÍN, *České země*, pp. 68-117.

10 Cf. the works cited above in notes 5, 6, and 8-10; for a summary see: VANÍČEK. *Velké dějiny země koruny české, vol. III, 1250–1310*. Praha; Litomyšl 2002, pp. 231-314, 338-343; ŽEMLIČKA. *Konec Přemyslovců. Skladba a fungování jejich pozdní monarchie*. Praha 2020, pp. 124-136, 228-270. On the role of the provincial court in relation to the collective identity of the Czechs, cf. JANIŠ. The Provincial Court of Justice and the Basis of Identity or the Bohemian and Moravian Nobility. In ANTONÍN MALANÍKOVÁ and ANTONÍN et al. *Col-*

This was closely connected to the identity of a linguistic community shaped within the framework of land law (*zemské právo*), since the language of the land court (*zemský soud*) was Czech. In the thirteenth century, we do not yet encounter a fully closed exclusive group at the level of the higher nobility as a social estate; nonetheless, the boundaries that had to be crossed for an individual and his lineage to become members of this community were clearly emerging. One of the key criteria in this process was dynastic tradition—that is, noble lineage—which played a more decisive role than a family's current economic standing.

Formed on the basis of several sources of collective identity outlined above, this community of Bohemians, found explicit expression in the crisis years following the death of Přemysl Otakar II (1278–1283), when the so-called *zemská obec* (land commune) took shape. This was a group of nobles and high-ranking ecclesiastical dignitaries who assumed responsibility for the fate of the land during the absence of royal power. For Moravia, a comparable process can be documented for the period following the extinction of the Přemyslid dynasty (1306–1310).¹¹

At the same time, when discussing the linguistic dimension of the collective identity of the Czech nobility in the thirteenth century, it is crucial to consider another significant factor shaping the collective consciousness of the Bohemians: an “antagonism towards the foreign,” personified during this period mainly by German-speaking wealthy urban elites. Their establishment in the Czech Lands was connected to the broader processes of transformation, which as noted earlier, included extensive colonisation involving numerous settlers and specialists in founding villages and towns, most from German-speaking regions and to a lesser extent, from Romance-speaking areas (sources mention especially Flemish and Italian groups).

The legal customs these newcomers brought were applied in establishing new settlements and over time, adopted in regulating legal relationships within traditional areas, owing to their economic efficiency. With the rise of medieval towns, a new social group of urban elites emerged. Thanks to their accumulated wealth, they gradually became a political force within the kingdom. For the ethnically Czech nobility, these urban elites represented rivals for power. In

lective identity in the context of medieval studies. Ostrava 2016, pp. 61–79.

11 On the emergence of the *zemská obec* (provincial community), see GRAUS. *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter*. Sigmaringen 1980, pp. 89–91; TŘEŠTÍK, *Proměny*, pp. 151–152; VANÍČEK. *Předpoklady a formování šlechtické „obce českého království“* (zemské obce). In MHB, 1991, vol. 1, pp. 13–55; VANÍČEK, *Sociální mentalita*, pp. 170–171; ANTONÍN. *Formování moravské zemské obce a souboj o český trůn v letech 1306–1310*. In *Historik na Moravě*. Brno 2009, pp. 221–235; ŽEMLIČKA, *Konec*, pp. 124–136.

the late thirteenth century, their distinct ethnicity, language, and legal traditions became sources of numerous conflicts with the nobility.¹²

Přemysl Otakar I: On the Path to Stability

The historical development of the Czech Lands in the thirteenth century offers numerous examples of crisis moments. Regardless of whether the cause lay in external or internal factors, the resolution fundamentally depended on the prevailing quality of the relationship between the monarch and the nobility—particularly on the mutual preservation and recognition of the social capital of all actors involved. From the very beginning of the century, the cooperative rule of King Přemysl Otakar I and his brother, Margrave Vladislav Henry of Moravia, faced recurrent challenges. These stemmed from repeated contests of the legitimacy of their power by other living Přemyslids, intertwined with a broader conflict between the Hohenstaufen and Welf factions within the Empire from 1197 to 1215.

In brief, the main opponent of Přemysl and Vladislav, Přemysl's son from his first marriage, Vratislav, whose legitimacy the king denied after his divorce from Adléta of Meissen, employed a political strategy characteristic of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He sought to assert his claim to rule in Bohemia through the support of the emperor or King of the Romans. In the struggle between Otto IV and Frederick II, Vratislav and his relatives from the Meissen Wettin dynasty sided with Otto in 1208. As a reward, the emperor granted him the Kingdom of Bohemia in the spring of 1212 and secured his promise of assistance in conquering the land. Přemysl Otakar I was reportedly declared deposed.¹³

Our knowledge of the events that unfolded at the imperial court between March and May 1212 derives from a combination of information contained

12 An example of such conflict is the capture of Czech lords by the burghers of Kutná Hora in 1309; see PUMPROVÁ and JAN et al., eds. *Chronica Aulae Regie. Die Königsaler Chronik*. In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (henceforth as MGH SS), 2022, vol. 40, Wiesbaden 2022, pp. 184-186; MUSÍLEK. *Zajetí českého panstva patriciátem v sedleckém klášteře a v Praze roku 1309. Příspěvek k vývoji pražského a kutnohorského patriciátu na přelomu 13. a 14. století*. In *Sedlec: historie, architektura a umělecká tvorba sedleckého klášteře ve středoevropském kontextu kolem roku 1300 a 1700*. Praha 2009, pp. 139-163; for a summary see NODL. *Nationalismus und Nationalbewusstsein zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts und Karls Bemühungen um ein konfliktfreies Bild des Zusammenlebens von Tschechen und Deutschen in Böhmen*. In ALBRECHT, ed. *Chronicon Aulae regiae – Die Königsaler Chronik. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*. Frankfurt 2013, pp. 201-218; ŽEMLIČKA, *Konec*, pp. 63-87.

13 See FRIEDRICH, ed. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris regni Bohemiae* (henceforth as CDB) II. Praha 1912, pp. 89-92, no. 94, 95; for an overall summary see: NOVOTNÝ. *České dějiny I/3, Čechy královské za Přemysla I. a Václava I. (1197–1253)*. Praha 1928, pp. 217-325; VANÍČEK. *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české, vol. II., 1197–1250*. Praha; Litomyšl 2000, pp. 95-126; ŽEMLIČKA. *Počátky*, pp. 91-111; ANTONÍN, *České země*, pp. 184-232.

in a handful of charters and a brief reference in the so-called *Chronica regia Coloniensis* (Royal Chronicle of Cologne). According to this account, Vratislav received the Czech Lands as a fief from Otto IV by means of the investiture with six banners and in the presence of the lords and several nobles of the land (“*presentibus supanis et pluris nobilibus terrae*”).

Historiography has linked this report to information found in the annalistic records composed at the Prague chapter, collectively referred to as the *Second Continuation of Cosmas's Chronicle*. According to the source, Přemysl Otakar I had entered into a dispute the previous year with his chamberlain, Černín. Some historians have therefore concluded that Vratislav's activities at the imperial court provoked unrest among the ranks of the Bohemian leaders, turmoil that had the potential to significantly influence the course of developments in the Czech Lands.¹⁴

The sources do not support such an extensive interpretation. There is no evidence to suggest a broader conflict between the leading Bohemians (with Černín at their head) and the monarch. According to the Prague annalist, the nobility sided with the king in his dispute with Černín. The chronicler records that Černín was expelled from the land by the king and all the leading Bohemians (“*ab eodem rege et omnibus primoribus expulsus est de terra*”). It remains an open question whether Černín sought out Vratislav in the Empire after his exile or attended the imperial diet in Nuremberg at Pentecost (13 May) 1212. This sequence of events is certainly tempting as a hypothesis, yet given the testimony of the sources, it must remain speculative and unproven.

The only firm statement evident in the sources is the simple fact that Černín was forced to leave the country in 1212. This likely resulted from a judgment passed against him, a decision which, as noted in the introduction, had come from a replacement of the earlier princely *colloquia* with the land court (*zemský soud*) by the second half of the twelfth century. This institution had become a forum where the Bohemian nobility exercised power, with their participation and engagement in the decision-making process at the land court objectifying one aspect of their cultural capital. The fact that the sources show no attempts by Přemysl Otakar I to restrict the nobility's role in deliberations on the kingdom's future subsequently contributed to the relative stability of the power system in the Czech Lands. This stability, in turn, formed the basis for the social, economic,

14 WAITZ, ed. *Chronica regia Coloniensis* (Annales maximi Colonienses). In *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi* (henceforth as MGH SS rer. Germ.), vol. 18. Hannoverae 1880, pp. 233-232; EMLER, ed. *Letopisy české 1198-1278*. In *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum* (henceforth as FRB), vol. 2, Praha 1874, p. 285; most recently in ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 102-103; for an innovative perspective on these events, see: WIHODA. *Zlatá bula sicilská. Podivuhodný příběh ve vrstvách paměti*. Praha 2005, pp. 143-148.

and cultural development of the realm within the broader process of medieval transformation. The preservation of the nobility's cultural capital in 1211–1212 reinforced social cohesion and consequently, the stability of the country as a whole.¹⁵

The effort to achieve a consensus between the monarch and the nobility during the reign of Přemysl Otakar I is evident from several further examples. One such case is the election of Přemysl's successor and eldest son from his second marriage to Constance of Hungary, the future King Wenceslas I, in 1216. This step, likely negotiated as early as spring 1215 with the King of the Romans, Frederick, through an embassy led by Prague Dean Arnold, was probably carried out at a large assembly of the Bohemians, the convening of which is confirmed by a charter issued on 8 June 1216.

Přemysl acted precisely in accordance with the provisions of the Golden Bull of Sicily, which explicitly defined succession in the Czech Lands as requiring election by the Bohemian leaders followed the Roman monarch's confirmation. Indeed, Frederick confirmed both the election and the legitimacy of Wenceslas's succession on 26 June of the same year, upon receiving the embassy sent by the Czech king.

The text of the Golden Bull of Sicily and the procedure that followed in the election of Wenceslas I in 1216 clearly demonstrates that Přemysl, Vladislav Henry, and their political collaborators were fully aware of the necessity of preserving one of the essential components of the cultural capital of the Czech nobility—namely, their competence to participate in deciding on the person of the future monarch. This right had belonged to the Bohemian leaders throughout the entire princely period, with the earliest evidence traceable to the hagiographical legends of Saint Wenceslas from the tenth century. On each occasion when this right was in some way undermined, it led to political crises that ultimately disrupted the stability of the kingdom.¹⁶

It is likely that at Přemysl Otakar I's royal court, the memory of his father's failure remained vivid. In 1172, King Vladislav II attempted to bypass the Bohemian leaders in the matter of succession by designating his eldest son, Frederick, as his heir. The ensuing political crisis, provoked by repeated expressions of resistance from “overlooked” Přemyslid relatives and supported

15 In addition to the works cited in note 14, see also: WIHODA. *Vladislaus Henry: the formation of Moravian identity*. Leiden; Boston 2015, pp. 80–100.

16 FRIEDRICH, ed. CDB II. Praha 1912, pp. 113–114, no. 125; pp. 117–118, no. 127; see also: WIHODA. *Die Sizilischen Goldenen Bullen von 1212. Kaiser Friedrichs II. Privilegien für die Přemysliden im Erinnerungsdiskurs*. Wien; Köln; Weimar 2012, pp. 217–227; on the continuity of royal elections in Bohemia see: ANTONÍN. *Panovník ve světě českých legend a kronik 10.–13. století*. In WIHODA and REITINGER, et al. *Proměna středověké Evropy raného a vrcholného středověku. Mocenské souvislosti a paralely*. Brno 2010, pp. 496–513.

by groups within both the Bohemian and Moravian nobility, was not resolved until the night of 6–7 December 1197, with an agreement between Přemysl Otakar I and Vladislav Henry to divide power over the Czech Lands.¹⁷ The preservation of the right to participate in deciding on the future ruler, an inseparable component of the cultural capital of the Czech nobility, was one of the crucial cohesive measures that underpinned the social stability of Přemysl's *regnum*.

This social cohesion manifested itself only a few months later, when the kingdom faced the threat of an internal crisis arising from a dispute between the monarch and Bishop Andrew of Prague. Andrew demanded a reform of the ecclesiastical organisation within his diocese, coupled with a comprehensive transformation of the Church's position in society in the spirit of the resolutions of the Fourth Lateran Council, in which he had participated. Given the complexity of this issue and its recent treatment in scholarly literature, the dispute itself will not be discussed here.¹⁸ The developments between 1216 and 1222 are of particular interest in the context of relations between the monarch and nobility because of the remarkable loyalty displayed by the Czech nobility towards the king. This loyalty did not waver, even when the papal curia intervened, notably Pope Honorius III, who sought to resolve the conflict both through correspondence with both the monarch and the nobility, and by sending legates to the Czech Lands. From the pope's letters it is clear that Honorius III recognised that enforcing the rights of the Church and its dependants required not only sustained pressure on the king, but also the coercion of the *magnates of Bohemia* to comply. The Bohemian suppani likewise appear as active players in this drama in the charters of the Archbishop of Mainz, who addressed the issue of the interdict that Andrew had declared over his diocese.¹⁹

At the beginning of 1219, when a meeting was held in Kladruba between papally appointed ecclesiastical representatives and the Czech king to prepare a draft agreement aimed at resolving the protracted conflict, Přemysl arrived accompanied by a significant number of Czech abbots and, above all, nobles. Six Bohemian lords were subsequently tasked with ensuring that the bishop received proper redress should damages to his property be proven.

Alongside Přemysl's seal, the charter informing the pope of the concluded agreement bore a seal identified as *sigillum communi regni Bohemie, videlicet sancti Wenczelai*, a stamp which was used by the Bohemian lords in public affairs according to Přemysl's own explanation in the text. Numerous other examples of cooperation between the monarch and the nobility acting as a unified group in

17 ŽEMLIČKA, *Čechy*, pp. 264–265, 313–328, 367–377.

18 Summary including references to earlier literature in ANTONÍN et al. *Čtvrtý lateránský koncil a české země ve 3. a 14. století*. Praha 2020, pp. 42–59.

19 FRIEDRICH, ed. CDB II. Praha 1912, pp. 130–133, no. 140–142; pp. 137–140, no. 148–149.

dealings with the pope and other ecclesiastical dignitaries could be cited. Indeed, even the so-called “Great Privilege of the Czech Church,” which symbolically brought the conflict to a close, was issued, in Přemysl’s own words, *de consilio suppanorum nostrorum*.²⁰

Despite the precarious situation into which the Czech monarch was drawn through his dispute with the Bishop of Prague—a situation that, given the direct involvement of the theocratically inclined papal curia, had significant potential to weaken Přemysl’s position both domestically and within the broader Central European context—the situation in the Czech Lands remained surprisingly unchanged. This stability endured even in the face of the interdict declared by Andrew over his diocese.

Several factors undoubtedly contributed to this stability. Chief among them was, of course, the fact that the majority of domestic ecclesiastical institutions sided with the Czech king. Yet of equal, if not greater, importance was the high degree of social cohesion among the secular elites—namely, the monarch and the nobility. In the course of the conflict, the Bohemian lords appear alongside the king as active participants. It is legitimate to observe that in adopting this stance, the nobility were also defending their own proprietary interests in ecclesiastical foundations, which in the early thirteenth century, constituted—through the right of patronage—one element of the economic portfolio of the secular elites, and thus of their economic capital.²¹

This in turn demonstrates that Přemysl fully respected the cultural capital of the Czech nobility, expressed in their competence to represent, alongside the monarch, the interests of the kingdom. Sources produced at the time of the conflict also reveal the institutionalisation of the social capital of the nobility. In these records, the nobility appears as a community acting under the common seal of the Kingdom of Bohemia, linking their social capital with the collectively shared identity of the household of Saint Wenceslas, with his name and image becoming a means of visualising the symbolic capital of this community.

20 For these charters see: FRIEDRICH, ed. CDB II. Praha 1912, pp. 160-161, no. 172; pp. 168-170, no. 183; pp. 193-195, no. 209; pp. 200-205, no. 216, 217; pp. 210-214, no. 227. See also: NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, pp. 514-517; ŽEMLIČKA. Spor Přemysla Otakara I. s pražským biskupem Ondřejem. In ČsČH, 1981, vol. 29, pp. 704-730; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 126-129; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny II*, pp. 142-144; JANIŠ. *Zemské soudnictví na Moravě ve vrcholném středověku*. Brno 2013, pp. 161-163; ANTONÍN et al., *Čtvrtý lateránský*, pp. 48-50, including older literature.

21 On the relationship between the nobility and secular power towards ecclesiastical institutions, see: VANĚČEK. *Základy právního postavení klášterů a klášterního velkostatku ve starém českém státě (12.–15. stol.)*. 1. Zakladatelská práva; 2. Pozemková vrchnost – Imunita hospodářská; 3. Imunita soudní. Praha 1933, 1937, 1939; ANTONÍN et al., *Čtvrtý lateránský*, pp. 118-140, including older literature on the topic.

It should also be noted that this shared identity was connected with the process of defining rights, since by this time the land court had very likely already become primarily a forum of the nobility. It can be said that as early as the first decades of the thirteenth century, we saw the beginnings of a community which would develop into the *Země* by the century's final decades, not merely as a geographical unit, but as a socio-political community of the Czech nobility. Přemysl Otakar I's respect for the economic, cultural, and social capital of the nobility was the key to the social cohesion and stability of his reign.

The So-Called "Revolt of Prince Přemysl"

It is highly probable that Otakar's successor, Wenceslas I (king 1230–1253), maintained the same approach toward the nobility in the first half of his reign as his father had. Nevertheless, his time was marked by a deep crisis of royal authority, particularly in the late 1240s, with an intensity that recalls the collapses experienced by Přemyslid princes during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Although modern Czech historiography has come to refer to the turbulent years of 1247/8–1249 as the "Revolt of Prince Přemysl against King Wenceslas I," there is broad consensus—despite divergences in the interpretation of specific events—that the uprising against the king was not initiated by his son Přemysl (the future Přemysl Otakar II), but rather was driven primarily by a faction of discontented nobles who rallied around the young prince. In the same breath, most authors attribute excessive ambition to him and an eagerness to seize power. In addition, the background to the rebellion is often positioned within the broader European political context in which Wenceslas and his loyal nobles are presented as supporters of papal policy (the Guelf faction), while the young Přemysl and his adherents are characterised as aligned with the Ghibelline cause.²²

Most historians consider the act that took place in Prague, in the building of the cathedral chapter on 31 July 1248, a decisive turning point in the course of events in the Czech Lands to be. On that day, "the nobles and elders of the land" proclaimed Přemysl their duke and king and swore him loyalty ("nobiles terrae Bohemiae et natu maiores filium eiusdem regis Wenzeslai nomine Premisl sibi in ducem vel regem acceperunt, et sibi fidelitatem in clauastro Pragencia

22 Cf. NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, pp. 784–817; ŽEMLIČKA, *Odboj kralevice*; HOENSCH, *Přemysl Otakar II. von Böhmen. Der Goldene König*. Graz; Wien; Köln 1989, pp. 32–37; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny II*, pp. 371–387; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 166–176, here pp. 672–673, footnote no. 31 for a summary of older bibliography; JAN. Domáci šlechtická opozice a přemyslovští králové 13. věku. In NODL and WIHODA. *Rituál smíření. Konflikt a jeho řešení ve středověku*. Brno 2008, pp. 85–100, esp. pp. 87–94; WIHODA. Přemyslova moravská léta. Mezi královskou korunou a babenberským dědictvím. In JAN and KACETL et al. *Pocta králi. K 730. výročí smrti českého krále, rakouského vévody a moravského markraběte Přemysla Otakara II*. Brno; Znojmo 2010, pp. 47–53; ANTONÍN, *České země*, pp. 383–389.

ecclesiae iuraverunt”).²³ As this occurred without the knowledge of Wenceslas I, it manifested in an open rebellion by a faction of the nobility against the existing order. According to later sources (Neplach’s Chronicle), the rebels sent an embassy to the king, who was residing at his favourite hunting castle, Klingenberg (Zvíkov), headed by Bishop Nicholas of Prague and Provost Tobias of Bechyně, to inform him of the events described above. Wenceslas allegedly reacted with a fit of rage and had both men arrested. However, it is likely that the bishop’s arrest by Wenceslas took place somewhat later, in the spring of 1249, during the ongoing conflict.²⁴

As a thorough detail of the course of the conflict lies beyond the scope of this study, only a very brief summary follows. In the summer of 1248, Wenceslas feigned acceptance of the situation, residing outside Prague at his castle in northern Bohemia and gradually securing the support of prominent and long-loyal Bohemian nobles from such lineages as the Ronovci, Hrabšici, Markvartici, and others against the rebel nobility led by Přemysl.²⁵ Tensions heightened on 13 September 1248 upon the death of Wenceslas’s wife and Přemysl’s mother, Kunigunde of Hohenstaufen. Father and son apparently met at her funeral. Shortly thereafter, however, hostilities resumed and Přemysl’s forces marched into northern Bohemia. There, in mid-November, they were defeated by the elder king’s steadfast supporters, Bores of Rýzmburk and Havel of Lemberk.²⁶ By December of that year, we also find Bishop Bruno of Schaumburg of Olomouc counted among Wenceslas’s allies.

At the beginning of 1249, Wenceslas, who had by then secured the backing of Pope Innocent IV,²⁷ began regaining lost ground in northern and central Bohemia, accompanied by a large retinue of notable nobles from Bohemia, Meissen, Saxony, and Austria. In early summer 1249, he reached reconciliation with the Bishop of Prague and restored the so-called “Great Privilege” to the Czech Church, originally granted by his father.²⁸

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that these acts did not mark the definitive end of the king’s political manoeuvring. This came only at the end of September 1249. At that time, according to the so-called Chronicle of

23 EMLER, ed. Příběhy krále Václava I. In FRB, Vol. 2, Praha 1874, pp. 305-308; cf. ANTONÍN, Panovník ve světě, pp. 536-537.

24 EMLER, ed. Johannis Neplachonis, abbatis Opatovicensis, Chronicon. In FRB, Vol. 3 III, Prague 1882, p. 437; cf. NOVOTNÝ, České dějiny I/3, pp. 808-810.

25 ŽEMLIČKA, Počátky, p. 171; JAN, Domáci šlechtická opozice, pp. 88-89.

26 EMLER, ed., Letopisy české, p. 286.

27 ŠEBÁNEK and DUŠKOVÁ, eds. CDB, Vol. 4/1, pp. 266-268, no. 162 a 163.

28 See: ŠEBÁNEK and DUŠKOVÁ, eds. CDB, Vol. 4/1, pp. 259-261, no. 158; pp. 273-274, no. 168. For a summary and detailed analysis of the situation, see: NOVOTNÝ, České dějiny I/3, pp. 795-803; JAN, Domáci šlechtická opozice, pp. 89-90.

Dalimil, Přemysl was lured by the King to Týřov Castle accompanied only by a small retinue where he was dramatically seized and held in captivity. It was only there that a final reconciliation between father and son took place, and by mid-November at the latest, Přemysl is recorded once again in Moravia bearing the title of margrave.²⁹

Thus, in the mid-thirteenth century, the Kingdom of Bohemia underwent a severe test of elite cohesion, the failure of which could have plunged the country into a deep social crisis. Returning to the issue of the relationship between king and nobility and its reflection on social reality, we must once again ask why the revolt occurred at all. In recent decades, modern scholarship has gradually moved away from the traditional view that the cause of the rebellion lay in Wenceslas's inactivity as ruler after 1245, which allegedly forced the ambitious young Přemysl—or, alternatively, the Czech nobility—to rise up against the king.

It now appears more likely that around this time, Wenceslas altered the mechanisms of governance. Unlike his father, who had sought a broader consensus with the nobility as a “community under the seal of the Kingdom of Bohemia” (as we saw during his dispute with Bishop Andrew), Wenceslas withdrew with his court from the usual centres of power to the seclusion of castles close to him personally. Here, he surrounded himself with a narrow circle of lords, representatives of prominent noble lineages, who also held key court offices.

The immediate royal entourage, an important component of both cultural and social capital, thus came to be dominated by a group of influential nobles, including the royal marshal Bores of Rýzmburk, cupbearer Jaroš of Slivno, and seneschal Hrz. Alongside them, Havel of Lemberk and the Ronovci Častolov and Smil are consistently recorded in the King's circle in 1247 and the following two years.³⁰

With this shift of governance style, a significant portion of the Czech and Moravian nobility was deprived of key elements of its cultural and social capital—namely, the competence to participate in determining the political direction of the kingdom, the allocation of offices, and the sense of belonging to the monarch's immediate circle and the court itself. Similarly, this group of

29 ŠEBÁNEK and DUŠKOVÁ, eds. CDB, Vol. 4/1. pp. 285-286, no. 174; EMLER, ed. *Letopisy české*, p. 287; DAŇHELKA; HÁDEK; HAVRÁNEK and KVÍTKOVÁ, eds. *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila II*. Praha 1988, pp. 346-360; cf. BÁRTA. *Smíření otce se synem. Uzavření sporu krále Václava I. s markrabětem Přemyslem roku 1249*. In NODL and WIHODA. *Rituál smíření. Konflikt a jeho řešení ve středověku*. Brno 2008, pp. 101-108; JAN, *Domáci šlechtická opozice*, pp. 93-94.

30 SOVADINA. *Dvůr Václava I*. In *Sborník archivních prací*, 1995, vol. 45, no. 1 pp. 3-40; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, p. 168; ANTONÍN, *České země*, p. 384.

nobles may have feared potential threats to their economic security. It is more than likely that this very segment of the nobility took the initiative, turned against the king, and in 1248, rallied around his only surviving heir.

As Libor Jan has observed previously, several of the nobles who participated in the rebellion against the king can be identified through the witness list on a charter issued by Přemysl Otakar II in 1249 for the Teutonic Order. This includes Bavor of Strakonice, Vítek, son of Jindřich of Hradec, Prague burgrave Bořuta of Ředhošť, Konrád of Klingenberg, Ondřej of Všechnomy and his brother Slávek, as well as the Moravian lords Milíč, Slavibor, and Idík of the Four Arrows coat of arms (the lords of Švábenice), and the judge Ctibor, whom the so-called Dalimil Chronicle would later elevate to the status of an icon of the rebellion. By their election of Prince Přemysl on 31 July 1248, these Czech and Moravian nobles were in effect asserting their right to participate in the governance of the kingdom, a right that formed one of the cornerstones of their cultural capital and was enshrined in the Golden Bull of Sicily and subsequently in the Golden Bull of Ulm.³¹

In the period that followed, a civil war continued to rage in Bohemia, yet Wenceslas did not achieve victory on the battlefield but rather in the diplomatic arena. First and foremost, he reconciled with the leaders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and subsequently with the majority of the nobility. This he accomplished through the grand ceremonial acts described above in which he himself appeared bearing the insignia of royal authority. At the same time, he ensured that the nobility participated appropriately in this ritualised renewal of his power, participation that must be understood as the restoration of the cultural capital of the Czech nobility, which in turn reinforced the social order in the kingdom. The internal crisis was thus averted.

In the Maelstrom of Betrayal: The Inglorious End of the Illustrious King Přemysl Otakar II

The independent reign of Přemysl Otakar II has been—and undoubtedly will continue to be—the subject of deeply ambivalent assessments, particularly concerning his relationship with the nobility. The difficulty lies in the perspective from which most scholarship has approached the study of his personality and rule. From the outset, this inaccurate view is shaped by the tragic narrative of the king's fall and demise.

This is not merely the product of modern historiography and the political ideologies of the nineteenth century and beyond, which have reinterpreted the

31 Charter – see ŠEBÁNEK and DUŠKOVÁ, eds. CDB, Vol. 4/1. pp. 288-290, no. 176; cf. JAN, *Domácí šlechtická opozice*, pp. 90-91.

story of King Otakar and his deeds to suit the needs of contemporary propaganda. Rather, the perspective of a tragic end to the reign of the “gold and iron king” is already present in the works of medieval authors, writing both in the immediate aftermath of Přemysl’s death and later throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³²

A key element in the narrative of Otakar’s tragic downfall is the account of a revolt by part of the Czech nobility, personified by the South Bohemian Vítkovci—or more specifically, by one of their members, Závaš of Falkenstein³³—and in addition, the supposed treacherous betrayal of Czech Lord Milota of Dědice during the Battle on the Moravian Field, where the king met his death. We may set aside the fact that at least Milota’s story stands outside the bounds of historical reality for now.³⁴

A rebellion also marked the final phase of Přemysl’s rule in the Alpine lands in 1276. Otakar’s complicated relationship with the secular elite thus stands as one of the most striking examples of noble rebellion against the monarch in the history of the Czech kingdom. Given the frequency with which scholars have sought to explain the reasons for the king’s betrayal, a brief summary of the issue is all that is necessary in this space. There is general agreement among historians that the roots of resistance to the king emerged from a transformation of his relationship with the nobility. This shift in policy can be observed from the

32 Cf. SEIBT. Die böhmische Nachbarschaft in der österreichischen Historiographie des 13. und 14. Jhs. In *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 1965, vol. 14, pp. 1-26; GRAUS. Přemysl Otakar II. – sein Ruhm und sein Nachleben. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte politischer Propaganda und Chronistik. In *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 1971, vol. 79, pp. 57-110; KUSTERNIG. *Erzählende Quellen des Mittelalters. Die Problematik mittelalterlicher Historiographie am Beispiel der Schlacht bei Dürnkrut und Jedenspeigen 1278*. Wien; Köln 1982; BLÁHOVÁ. Obraz Přemysla Otakara II. v českém středověkém dějepisectví. In BLÁHOVÁ and HLAVÁČEK. *Česko-rakouské vztahy ve 13. století. Sborník příspěvků ze symposia konaného 26.–27. 9. 1996 ve Znojmě*. Praha 1998, pp. 145-162; KOFRÁNKOVÁ. *Zlatý král a chudý hrabě. Přemysl Otakar II. a Rudolf Habsburský v historické tradici*. Praha 2012.

33 On the issue of the Vítkovci and Závaš of Falkenstein, only more recent literature is cited, see: VANÍČEK. Vzestup rodu Vítkovců v letech 1169–1278. In ČČH, 1981, vol. 29, pp. 89-110; VANÍČEK. Závaš z Falkensteinu a česká šlechta. In *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici, Historia XXIV, Nauki humanistyczno-społeczne*, 1990, vol. 204, pp. 185-205; VANÍČEK. Rodová politika Vítkovců a strukturální proměny jihočeského regionu v soustátí krále Přemysla II. Otakara. In BLÁHOVÁ and HLAVÁČEK, *Česko-rakouské vztahy ve 13. století*, pp. 77-94; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 171-186; JAN. Proces se Závašem a proměny královské vlády v letech 1289–1290. In ČČH 2005, vol. 123, pp. 1-40. ŽEMLIČKA. *Přemysl Otakar II. Král na rozhraní věků*. Praha 2011, pp. 352-389, 428-438, here citing older literature.

34 Cf. JAN. Zvěst o věrné službě a mýtu o zradě Miloty z Dědic. In JAN and KACETL et al. *Pocta králů. K 730. výročí smrti českého krále, rakouského vévody a moravského markraběte Přemysla Otakara II.* Brno; Znojmo 2010, pp. 93-103.

second half of the 1260s at the latest, gradually unfolding across all territories under Přemysl's control.³⁵

Přemysl and the Austrian Ministeriality

A review of surviving sources allows us to concur, in broad terms, with the conclusions of earlier historiography. Let us first turn to the territories controlled by Přemysl in the Alpine region. The development of relations between the monarch and the nobility here was far from homogeneous. Přemysl's acquisition of Upper and Lower Austria between 1250 and 1254 owed much to the support of influential local ministerial and patrician families. This was likely the reason why at the beginning of his rule in the duchy of Austria, he refrained from introducing the office of *landeshauptmann* (provincial governor), as he would later do in Styria and subsequently in Carinthia and Carniola.³⁶ The early years of Otakar's rule in the Alpine region coincided with a period in which the Austrian nobility was beginning to take shape as a collectively acting social group and as such, a natural counterweight to princely power. In these *ministeriales Austriae*, Přemysl found a political partner he could not afford to ignore, not least because between 1249 and 1254, his own authority in the region depended to a significant degree on the direct support of roughly a dozen noble families.

In the absence of a strong central authority—from 1246—these families had begun asserting hereditary rights to princely estates, which they had acquired during this period of instability. From 1254 onwards, when Přemysl initiated efforts to gradually reclaim princely property, the situation created a latent source of conflict in relations between the monarch and the nobility.³⁷

In this context, the *landfrieden* proclamation in 1254—also referred to as the *Pax Austriaca*—should be understood as a document formalising the division of power between the prince and leading Austrian noble families. On the one hand,

35 Alongside the works cited in notes 36 and 37, see also the still relevant conclusions in RY-NEŠOVÁ. Proč povstali Vítkovci proti králi Přemyslu Otakarovi II. In *Sborník prací k 60. narozeninám J. B. Nováka*. Praha 1932, pp. 45-60; ŠUSTA. *České dějiny II/1 Soumrak Přemyslovců a jejich dědictví*. Praha 1935, pp. 201-240. For the Alpine region, a collection of studies, see: WELTIN and KUSTERNIG, eds. *Ottokar-Forschungen*. Wien 1978/1979.

36 Cf. NOVOTNÝ. *České dějiny I/4. Rozmach české moci za Přemysla Otakara II. (1253–1271)*. Praha 1937, pp. 405-412; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 33-58; 77-88; ŽEMLIČKA, *Počátky*, pp. 185-194; ANTONÍN. Přemysl Otakar II. a získání zemí Babenberského dědictví. In JAN and KACETL et al. *Pocet králi*, pp. 55-72; see also: ZEHETMAYER, Das sogenannte „österreichische Interregnum“: Von den Babenbergern zu den Habsburgern. In KERSKEN and TEBRUCK, eds. *Interregna im mittelalterlichen Europa. Konkurrierende Kräfte in politischen Zwischenräumen*. Tagungen zur Ostmitteleuropaforschung 38. Marburg 2020, pp. 45-73.

37 Cf. WELTIN. Landesherr und Landherren. Zur Herrschaft Ottokars II. in Österreich. In WELTIN and KUSTERNIG, eds. *Ottokar-Forschungen*. Wien 1978/1979, pp. 176-177.

the *landfrieden* contains provisions prohibiting the construction of new castles by those nobles who did not possess sufficient estates in the surrounding area and ordering the demolition of all castles, including fortified churches, that had been erected without the ruler's permission.

At the same time, the *landfrieden* established a territorial council of twelve men designated as *consiliarii per Austriam*, whose remit included co-decision-making on matters concerning movements within princely property. Přemysl staffed this council with representatives of those families who had been staunch supporters. Alongside this, the *Pax Austriaca* also created four provincial judges, *iudices provinciales per Austriam*, whose jurisdiction extended across the entire duchy of Austria.³⁸ Although the Annals of the Heiligenkreuz Monastery report that later in the same year Přemysl punished those nobles who had defied his will, it is clear that this exercise of princely power did not amount to a systematic enforcement of the restoration of princely property.³⁹ In other words, at the beginning of his rule in the duchy of Austria, Otakar recognised the majority of the property changes that had occurred during the preceding years of instability. In effect, he not only respected the cultural and social capital of the Austrian ministerial class by acknowledging their role in the governance of the land, but also preserved their economic capital for the most part. This approach contributed to overall social stability in the newly acquired territory.

This state of affairs persisted in the duchy of Austria for approximately a decade (until 1265), when the sources begin to reveal the first signs of difficulties in Přemysl's rule over the lands of the Babenberg inheritance. These issues were related to a shift in his understanding of the relationship between princely power and the nobility. A significant turning point can be seen in the imprisonment and subsequent execution of Otto of Maissau, who had previously served as one of the provincial judges and was a supporter of Přemysl.⁴⁰ From the early 1260s, Otakar ceased appointing new members to the council of twelve, whose original

38 For *Pax Austriaca* see: WEILAND, ed. *Constitutes et acta publica imperatorum et regum*. In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Constitutiones*, Vol. 2. Hanoverae, 1906, pp. 604-608, no. 440; cf. ROHR, Přemysl Otakar II. – osnovatel cesty pro Habsburky? In BLÁHOVÁ and HLAVÁČEK, *Česko-rakouské vztahy*, p. 26; WELTIN, *Landesherr und Landherren*, pp. 178-183, 204; HOENSCH, *Přemysl Otakar*, pp. 52-53; ANTONÍN, Přemysl Otakar II. a zisk, pp. 64-66.

39 WATTENBACH, ed. *Continuatio Sancrucensis secunda*. In MGH SS, Vol. 9. Hannoverae 1851, p. 643; NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/4*, p. 406.

40 For the circumstances of his imprisonment and execution, see: WATTENBACH, ed. *Continuatio Sancrucensis sekunda*, p. 646; WATTENBACH, ed. *Continuatio Praedicatorum Vindobonensium*. In MGH SS, Vol. 9. p. 724; SEEMÜLLER, ed. *Ottokars österreichische Reimchronik*. In MGH Deutsche Chroniken V/1. Hannoverae 1890, pp. 414-415, vers. 31613-31724; cf. NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/4*, pp. 141-142; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 104-105; HOENSCH, *Přemysl Otakar*, p. 142.

members gradually died off during the latter half of the 1250s and the first half of the 1260s, often in the course of Přemysl's not-always-successful military campaigns. Thus, from the perspective of the Austrian elites, even the famous and victorious Battle of Kressenbrunn—celebrated in Czech history—did not represent an occasion for great rejoicing.

Even before the battle itself, Konrad and Otto of Hardegg, Katold the Orphan (Sirotek), Kraft of Burgschleinitz, Heinrich of Mistelbach, and Marquard of Wiener Neudorf fell victim to an ambush and were slaughtered along with 400 men. In the battle proper, Ludwig of Netting, Hermann of Kranichberg, and Heinrich of Hausegg also lost their lives. Several years earlier, in 1257, Heinrich Schenk of Hassbach had likely died near Mühlendorf, along with numerous unnamed Austrian participants in Přemysl's campaign against the Wittelsbachs. Similarly, Siegfried Wehinger met his end along with fourteen noblemen and three hundred armed retainers on the return journey from Přemysl's expedition against the Hungarian king in 1270.⁴¹

In parallel to the weakening influence of the council of twelve, Přemysl sought to regain control over the revenues from chamber estates, which had previously been subject to the co-decision of the *consiliarii per Austriam*. A fundamental disruption of the order established by the *landfrieden* of 1254 came with the leasing of fiscal offices responsible for administering princely property to wealthy patricians. By the late 1260s, the sources mention figures such as Konrad of Tulln, Gozzo of Krems, and Paltram of Vienna—men of sufficient means to rent, for limited periods, substantial assemblies of estates from the king. It is hardly surprising that these individuals sought to extract as much profit as possible from their leases. This brought them into conflict with the castellans of princely castles, however, who then attempted to monitor and restrict their activities.⁴²

In the second half of the 1260s, the entirety of the princely property in Upper Austria was leased to Konrad of Tulln, a development that coincided with the

41 See: FUCHS, ed. *Monumenta necrologica Clastroneoburgensia*. In MGH. *Necrologia Germanie*. Vol. 5. Berolini 1913, pp. 40, 43, 53; EMLER, ed. *Příběhy krále Přemysla Otakara II*. In FRB, Vol. 2, Praha 1874, pp. 312-314; JAFFÉ, ed. *Hermani Altahensis annales*. In MGH SS, Vol. 17, Hannoverae 1861, p. 399; WATTENBACH, ed. *Annales s. Rudberti Salisburgenses*. In MGH SS, Vol. 9. Hannoverae 1851, p. 794; EMLER, ed. *Letopisy české*, p. 295; WATTENBACH, ed. *Continuatio Vindobonensis*. In MGH SS, Vol. 9. Hannoverae 1851, p. 703; WATTENBACH, ed. *Continuatio Zwetlensis III*. In MGH SS, Vol. 9. Hannoverae 1851, p. 657; cf. WELTIN, *Landesherr und Landherren*, pp. 187-197; for the Battle of Kressenbrunn see also: ROHÁČ, II. *česko-uhorská vojna o babenberské dedičstvo 1260 a bitka pri Kressenbrune*. In *Vojenská história*, 2016, 2, 20, pp. 23-44.

42 See: REDLICH, ed. *Eine Wiener Briefsammlung zur Geschichte des Deutschen Reiches und der österreichischen Länder in der zwei Hälfte des XIII. Jahrhunderts*. Mittheilungen aus dem vaticanischen Archive. Vol. 2. Wien 1894, pp. 70-71, no 62; cf. WELTIN, *Landesherr und Landherren*, pp. 205-206.

definitive “disappearance” of the *consilarii per Austriam* from the sources, where they are no longer mentioned after 1270. The trend towards diminishing the influence of the Austrian nobility on governance can also be traced by following the declining role of the provincial judges. By the turn of 1271, the situation culminated in a complete transformation of the system of governance in the duchy. Přemysl delegated authority to a smaller circle of “reliable men,” entirely bypassing the framework of the *landfrieden* of 1254. One of these was undoubtedly Otto of Hasslau, who from 1270 appears (alone) as *iudex provincialis per Austriam*, Otto of Perchtoldsdorf was another, appearing as *camerarius regis Bohemiae per Austriam*. Alongside them, Přemysl relied on major lessees of princely property from the aforementioned Konrad of Tulln, Paltram of Vienna, and Gozzo of Krems.⁴³

After the election of Rudolf of Habsburg as Roman king in 1273, as Austrian nobles began to defect to the Habsburg camp, Přemysl established the office of *landeshauptmann* (provincial governor) in Upper Austria, appointing the Czech nobleman Purkart of Klingenberg (of the Janovice family) to the post. In the same year, according to the *Chronicle of Colmar*, he stationed Czech garrisons in Austrian towns and supplied them generously with provisions. Tensions also arose in Přemysl’s relations with Konrad of Tulln and Gozzo of Krems, whose lease was not renewed by Otakar from 1274 onwards. Between 1275 and 1277, Gozzo and some of his relatives were imprisoned by the Bohemian king.⁴⁴

From 1274 onwards, the only remaining lessee of princely estates was the Viennese patrician Paltram vor der Freithof with his nephew, the Austrian provincial scribe Jan. Vienna became the last stronghold of Otakar’s rule and as such, in 1275 it served as the seat of the newly established office of Austrian *landeshauptmann* (provincial governor), held by Heinrich of Kuenring (*capitaneus Austrie*). At the beginning of 1275, Austria saw a rebellion against the Bohemian king and his representatives, led by Wernhard of Wolkersdorf and Oldřich of Viehofen, which Přemysl was still able to suppress militarily. However, when Rudolf I entered Austria in 1276 at the head of an imperial host, it became clear that Přemysl’s position in the duchy had been severely weakened. Among the last supporters of Otakar’s rule in Austria were the lords of Hassbach and Heinrich of Kuenring, while the remainder of the ministeriales shifted their allegiance to the Roman king.⁴⁵

43 WELTIN, *Landesherr und Landherren*, pp. 208-211.

44 JAFFÉ, ed. *Chronicon Colmariense*. In MGH SS, Vol. 17, Hannoverae 1861, p. 247; REDLICH, ed. *Eine Wiener Briefsammlung*, p. 98, no. 89, cf. ANTONÍN, Přemysl Otakar II. a zisk, p. 67.

45 REDLICH, ed. *Eine Wiener Briefsammlung*, p. 46, no. 42, 43; cf. WELTIN, *Landesherr und Landherren*, pp. 213-215; CSEDENS. König Ottokar II. Premysl und die Stadt Wien. In WELTIN and KUSTERNIG, eds. *Ottokar-Forschungen*. Wien 1978/1979, pp. 142-158; see also: ZUPKA, Forms of communication of the political elites in medieval Central Europe (Hun-

Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and the Windic March

Přemysl Otakar adopted a markedly different approach to the administration of Styria, which he had acquired in 1260. From the outset, he governed the duchy through a *landeshauptmann* (provincial governor), pursuing a far more intensive reclamation policy than in Austria. After a brief tenure by Heinrich of Liechtenstein, the office passed to Czech nobleman and Přemysl's loyal collaborator, Vok of Rožmberk, marshal of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Even during his governorship, Vok faced considerable difficulties reclaiming princely castles from local nobles. From the start, Otakar's administration met opposition from segments of the Styrian aristocracy. They were provoked not only by efforts to consolidate the princely domain, but also—and perhaps more importantly—by the very nature of the new governance. Under this system, the *landeshauptmann* controlled not only military garrisons, but also the administration of justice. As governor, Vok himself pronounced judgments based on evidence, documents, and testimonies, a practice conflicting with earlier Styrian privileges established in the so-called *Georgenberg Handfeste*. Simply put, the Styrian nobility—or at least part of it—resisted Přemysl's system, seeing it as a threat not only to their economic, but also their cultural capital.⁴⁶

This situation did not change after Vok of Rožmberk's death in 1262, when the office of *landeshauptmann* passed to Bruno, Bishop of Olomouc, who from August that year appears in the sources as *capitaneus Stirie*. Bruno sought to ease noble opposition by reconvening the provincial court (fragmentary evidence suggests the office of Styrian provincial judge was occasionally filled during his absences) and reintroducing district judges, while also pursuing a conciliatory policy towards Styrian towns. Yet the nobility remained dissatisfied. A key source of discontent was the comprehensive register of princely property, commissioned in 1266 from Helwig of Thuringia. This precise delineation of ducal claims sparked disputes with local nobles, which escalated after 1268 into castle seizures and imprisonments.

In April 1269, Otto of Hasslau appears as *capitaneus Stirie* alongside Bruno as *capitaneus seu rector*, suggesting that Otto acted as his deputy. Economic oversight fell to the provincial scribe (*scriba*) Ulrich. After Bruno's departure

gary, Austria and the Czech Lands, 1250–1350). In *Historický časopis*, 2018, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 385–408.

46 See SPREITZHOFFER. *Georgenberger Hanfeste. Entstehung und Folgen der ersten Verfassungsurkunde der Steiermark*. Graz; Wien; Köln 1986. Here also the edition of the charter and further literature on the topic; cf. PFERSCHY. Ottokar II. Přemysl, Ungarn und die Steiermark. In WELTIN and KUSTERNIG, eds. *Ottokar-Forschungen*. Wien 1978/1979, pp. 73–91; HOENSCH, *Přemysl Otakar*, pp. 38–48, 109–120, 154–173; ANTONÍN. Hejtmanský úřad v politice posledních Přemyslovců. In BOBKOVÁ; ČAPSKÝ and KORBELÁŘOVÁ et al. *Hejtmanská správa ve vedlejších zemích Koruny české*. Opava 2009, pp. 28–42.

in 1270, Purkart of Klingenberg (Janovice) became *capitaneus Stirie*. Přemysl's appointment of his marshal reflected weakened positions in Styria, worsened by war with Stephen V of Hungary. At this time, Konrad of Tulln, as *scriba et provisor*, oversaw administration. Following Rudolf I's accession, Styria, like Austria, saw noble participation in governance end after 1275 when Milota of Dědice became landeshauptmann and the provincial court ceased to function. This accelerated defections to the Habsburg camp. Unlike in Austria, there was no resistance to Rudolf's arrival. Přemysl effectively lost Styria before formally surrendering it in 1276 as an imperial fief at Kamberk. His efforts to erode the economic and cultural capital of the Styrian nobility critically destabilised cohesion between ruler and elite, destroying the legitimacy of his power.⁴⁷

Otakar's relationship with the elites of the other Alpine territories—Carinthia, Carniola, and the Windic March—followed a similarly complex trajectory. He sought to bring these lands under his control gradually after 1269. Given the episodic nature of Přemysl Otakar's actual rule there, a brief summary is sufficient here. He never secured full support from the local nobility, especially in Carinthia, where Philip of Spanheim maintained a strong position, refusing to relinquish his claims and even recognised by some nobles as rightful lord and duke. Unlike Austria and Styria, Otakar also never received formal investiture from the Roman king for these territories. From the outset, his administration faced resistance from significant segments of the local aristocracy, provoked by institutional reforms, including the introduction of the landeshauptmann as in Styria.

If we trust the *Rhymed Chronicle* of Ottokar of Styria—one of the few sources for this period—Conrad, provost of Brno, failed in his mission to secure noble support in Carinthia around 1269/70. Likewise, appointing Moravian noble Albrecht of Vranov as governor reportedly collapsed under aristocratic opposition, though these accounts may involve narrative embellishments. The first verifiable governor was Ulrich of Heunburg (1270), a local noble and former confidant of Otakar's ally Ulrich III, whose widow, Agnes, he married. His appointment likely reflected a compromise with aristocratic interests.

Ulrich was soon replaced by Oldřich of Drnholec, Přemysl's loyal collaborator, who governed until 1273. His jurisdiction extended over Carinthia, Carniola,

47 For the appointment to the office of Landeshauptmann see the charters in PFERSCHY, ed. *Urkundenbuch des Herzogthums Steiermark*. Vol. 4. Wien 1975, p. 9, no. 12; p. 43, no. 67; p. 48, no. 76; p. 75, no. 119, p. 122, no. 196, p. 196, no. 332; p. 223, no. 390, p. 250, no. 417; p. 254, no. 426; p. 327, no. 546, pp. 328-329, no. 548, for the event on the island of Kamberk see: EMLER, ed. *Příběhy krále Přemysla Otakara II*. See also ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, pp. 422-424; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 159-170; for the end of Otakar's rule in Styria see: PFERSCHY, *Ottokar II. Přemysl*, pp. 89-91.

the Windic March, and temporarily Friuli. After his death in battle against the Hungarians, Ulrich of Taufers, a Tyrolean noble connected to leading Carinthian families, succeeded him. His appointment reflected local pressure against non-native officials and his rivalry with Count Meinhard II of Tyrol-Gorizia. Přemysl's strategy continued with Heinrich of Pfannberg's appointment in 1275, but Heinrich soon defected to Rudolf I of Habsburg.⁴⁸

It can be concluded that Otakar's rule in Carinthia, and later in Carniola and the Windic March, was—like in Styria, and perhaps even more so—consistently challenged by the local nobility, who opposed governance through the office of *landeshauptmann*. Although Přemysl attempted conciliatory measures, he failed to secure full legitimacy for his power or lasting loyalty from key members of the local elite. From the outset, they defended their economic and cultural capital against the king's centralisation ambitions.

The Betrayal of the Bohemian Nobility

The relationship between King Přemysl Otakar II and the nobility of the Bohemian lands has been the subject of numerous focused studies as well as broader synthetic analyses. Scholars have centred their arguments around two key points provided by the sources. First are the narratives of fourteenth-century chroniclers, particularly the so-called Dalimil and Neplach, which describe a shift in the king's attitude towards the native nobility. These accounts portray Přemysl's actions in a distinctly negative light, depicting the confiscation of noble property, the favouring of foreigners—especially Germans—at the expense of Bohemians, cases of exile, and even general threats of death as retribution for treachery. The second key point involves tracing changes in the appointment of high offices and the frequency with which particular Bohemian lords appear in the king's circle, as reconstructed from diplomatic sources mainly.⁴⁹

Summarising the findings of existing research, it is clear that in the Bohemian lands too, the conflict and subsequent rebellion by part of the nobility arose from a combination of economic and political factors. Although Václav Novotný has

48 SEEMÜLLER, ed. *Ottokars österreichische Reimchronik*, p. 135, vers. 10.205ff; p.140, vers. 10.650ff.; cf. ORGIS. Der Kampf König Ottokars II. von Böhmen um das Herzogtum Kärnten. In WELTIN and KUSTERNIG, eds. *Ottokar-Forschungen*. Wien 1978/1979, pp. 92-141, especially see: pp. 121-141.

49 See: DAŇHELKA; HÁDEK; HAVRÁNEK and KVÍTKOVÁ, eds. *Staročeská kronika II*, pp. 404-405; EMLER, ed. *Johannis Neplachonis, abbas Opatovicensis, Chronicon*. In FRB, Vol. 3, Praha 1882, pp. 476-477; cf. NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/4*, pp. 413-422, here older literature is also cited; RYNEŠOVÁ, *Proč povstali Vítkovci*; ŠUSTA, *České dějiny II/1*, pp. 205-284; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 171-196; ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, pp. 428-450.

already demonstrated that the specific instances of property confiscation reported by chroniclers do not reflect the realities of the 1260s and 1270s, it remains highly likely that clashes between the economic interests of noble families and the crown played a critical role.

Between 1248, when a faction of dissatisfied nobles rallied behind Přemysl during their revolt against King Wenceslas I, and 1265, when the imprisonment of Otto of Maissau, Beneš of Cvilín, and Milota of Dědice signalled a shift in Přemysl's style of rule, the transformation process gave rise to extensive landed domains, which then became the foundation of the economic capital of noble families. Beyond the often-cited Vítkovci, such domains can be documented among sprawling lineages like the Ronovci, Hrabšiči, Markvartici, the lords of Šternberk, the Bavors of Strakonice, and many others. On Moravia's side, they include the lords of Zbraslav (later of Obrany and Kunštát), Tasov, Švábenice, Medlov (later Pernštejn), Holštejn, Boskovice, Sovinec, and others. This list is by no means exhaustive.⁵⁰

According to the—completely accurate—conclusions of Marcin R. Pauk, the uppermost social elite of the late 13th century in the Bohemian lands comprised of approximately 40–50 noble families. The possession of allodial estates, typically established through noble-supported colonisation and endowed with full lordship rights, formed the essential foundation of their economic capital and social standing. Yet their symbolic capital was equally shaped by other aspects of cultural and social capital. Members of these families were most likely to hold court and provincial offices, which brought prestige and additional revenues. They also had access to other sources of income, including shares in precious metal mining, control of trade routes, and oversight of commerce and monetary circulation in non-royal towns. The status of these elites was reinforced by owning fortified residences—private castles—and often by serving as burgraves of princely castles. Leading Bohemian and Moravian lords maintained armed retinues and networks of vassals drawn from a stratum that later formed the lower nobility. The cultural capital of these elites was further enhanced by the founding and patronage of monastic houses serving as family memoria and burial places, and by cultivating Western European courtly culture (particularly in its Middle High German form), which distinguished them from other strata of medieval society.⁵¹

50 Cf. NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, pp. 427–461; ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, pp. 277–285.

51 Cf. PAUK. Der böhmische Adel im 13. Jahrhundert: zwischen Herrschaftsbildung und Gemeinschaftsgefühl. In HLAVÁČEK and PATCHOVSKÝ. *Böhmen und seine Nachbarn in der Přemyslidenzeit*. Ostfildern, 2011, pp. 247–287, calculation here on p. 285.

To illustrate how representatives of the upper echelons of the Bohemian nobility were perceived by their contemporaries, the description of participants in the armed incursion into Austria in 1246, recorded by the Viennese burgher, Jans Enikel (c. 1230/49–1290), could be cited. At the head of this military retinue rode Ulrich of Sponheim, a close relative of Přemysl Otakar II and current holder of Břeclavsko, accompanied by 200 well-armed knights on caparisoned horses. He was followed by the Bohemian lord, Vok of Rožmberk, his horse bearing a richly decorated surcoat emblazoned with a rose, and 100 mounted warriors equipped in French-style armour. The chronicler also mentions Smil of Lichtenburk with 50 knights and Havel of Lemberk with 20 mounted men on fine horses. Other named participants include Smil of Bílkov, Beneš of Benešov, and Milota of Dědice. Through such detailed enumeration of knightly entourages, the chronicler highlights their financial resources and prestigious status, though it must be remembered that figures described in medieval sources should always be treated with caution.⁵²

During the 1250s and likely into the mid-1260s, a consensus prevailed between the king and the nobility, rooted in a mutual respect for the symbolic capital of all actors. Přemysl relied on members of this most powerful social stratum, particularly in his expansionist ventures into the Alpine lands where, as we have seen, certain Bohemian nobles secured positions as landeshauptleute. At home, he rewarded loyal supporters with estates, rights, and appointments to burgraviat offices in royal castles, which formed the backbone of the revamped administrative structure in the Bohemian lands.⁵³

By the mid-1260s, however, the situation began to change. As in Austria and Styria, the king sought to consolidate crown estates and more clearly define princely rights. His initiatives in founding towns, castles, and monasteries increasingly clashed with the territorial ambitions of the nobility. This raised a fundamental question: to whom did the land truly belong, and on what legal grounds could it be controlled? The most notable example comes from southern Bohemia, where Přemysl's foundations of Vodňany and Budějovice, as well as Písek (a town with a castle), and the castles of Myšenec, Protivín, Hluboká, and likely Újezdec, Vitějovice, and Vimperk—built at the king's behest by the Janovic family as burgraves—along with the monastery of Zlatá Koruna, encroached upon and disrupted the territorial domains and colonisation efforts of the Vítkovci. Yet such developments were by no means confined to southern Bohemia.⁵⁴

52 STRAUCH, ed. Jansen Einikels Werke. Weltchronik, Fürstenbuch. In MGH, Deutsche Chroniken. Vol. 3. Hannover; Leipzig, pp. 657-662; v.3027-3199.

53 JAN, *Václav II. a struktury*, pp. 241-253.

54 Apart from the works cited in note 53, cf. LAVIČKA; ČAPEK; FRÖHLICH; HAVLICE;

The king's role as a founder, so often emphasised in chronicles associated with his name, was evident across all parts of the kingdom. It can be demonstrated that in pursuing these initiatives, Přemysl resorted to confiscating property at times, or acquiring it through compensation or exchanges based on the royal right of so-called compulsory purchase (*nucená směna*).⁵⁵ Alongside his own founding activities, Přemysl Otakar's efforts to regain control over appointments to castellanies at royal castles threatened not only the economic, but also the cultural capital of the Czech nobility to a certain extent. As Václav Novotný has emphasised, the king's actions in this regard should not be viewed as acts of violence or oppression against the nobility. Rather, within the context of a changing property and administrative structure—again, a manifestation of the broader transformation—the king sought to secure as much control as possible over both the so-called *chamber properties*—his direct revenues administered under the chamberlain—and the administrative system of the realm, in which castellans of royal castles played a key role. It was precisely the removal of noble families from castellany offices that formed part of the “grievances” later recorded by chroniclers such as Dalimil and Neplach.⁵⁶

In his assessment of the impact of Otakar's actions, Josef Žemlička is aligned with the prevailing conclusion that the decisive factor in the unrest between Přemysl and the nobility—culminating in the revolt of 1276—was the effect of the king's policies on the economic and proprietary conditions of noble domains, that is, on the very foundations of the nobles' economic capital. This aspect is undeniable, of course. Yet it is equally important to acknowledge the earlier conclusions of Václav Novotný, who argued that the conflict between Přemysl and the nobility did not lie primarily in disputes over landownership, but rather in struggles over real political and administrative power and influence on the shaping of the kingdom's internal and external direction. The nobles affected by the wave castellanies reclamation were not merely deprived of the economic benefits tied to holding such offices. More significantly, a vital component of their cultural and symbolic capital which was derived from the possession of these key political-administrative positions was lost.⁵⁷

This shift did not concern castellanies alone, but also the appointment to court offices and positions within the king's close circle. It was in this sphere,

KRAJÍČ and REITINGER. *Královská založení na jihu Čech za vlády posledních Přemyslovců*. České Budějovice 2016.

55 Cf. ŽEMLIČKA, Josef. „Právo nucené směny“ při zakládání středověkých měst. In ČČH, 1998, vol. 96, no. 3, pp. 502-531; ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, pp. 355-364.

56 Cf. NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, pp. 414-421; on the development of the royal chamber cf. JAN. Václav II. a struktury, pp. 59-78.

57 ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, pp. 388-389; NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, p. 422.

during the 1260s and 1270s, that a change occurred which likely contributed significantly to the dissatisfaction of certain members of the aforementioned 40–50 highest-ranking noble families. The process was gradual up to 1276 and thus not a sudden transformation provoked by conflict with a broader group of lords. Nevertheless, those closest to the monarch—particularly offices at the court of Queen Kunhuta (after 1260)—were progressively filled by nobles who did not belong to the great dynasties that held extensive landed domains in the newly colonised foothill regions, but rather by men owning medium or smaller estates not far from Prague and belonging to the same generation as the king.

As Libor Jan has demonstrated through careful analysis of the sources, this “new” generation of Přemysl’s confidants can largely be identified with the “mysterious” ten “burgraves or castellans” whom, according to chronicler Francis of Prague (writing in the 1340s), Přemysl is said to have appointed at Prague Castle, each commanding thirty armed men assigned to its protection. The chronicler names Gregory of Dražice (correctly Řehník of Litovice, under-chamberlain from 1262 and in 1276 chamberlain to Queen Kunhuta), Mstidruh of Chlum (1265–1269 chamberlain to Queen Kunhuta, from 1276 burgrave of Prague), Oneš of Onšov (1261–1276 royal Seneschal), Oldřich of Křisoudov, Domaslav of Škvorec (from 1262, cupbearer to Queen Kunhuta, after 1276, high chamberlain), Rudolf of Zbraslavice, Rapota of Borčovice, Zdislav of Průhonice (1255–1277 royal marshal), his brother Oldřich, and Ondřej of Všechnomy (1253–1260 Seneschal, 1260–1276 high chamberlain). Additional names of nobles holding offices could be added here, particularly those who entered office after the major reshuffle post-1276. Instead, please refer to the detailed analysis by Libor Jan.⁵⁸

In summary, members of the highest-ranking noble families gradually ceased to hold court offices at Přemysl’s court during the 1260s. Combined with the king’s policy of reclaiming castellanies and previously pledged or granted estates, this development significantly undermined the cultural and social capital of a portion of the Bohemian nobility. Whether the monarch also attempted to intervene authoritatively in the formulation of land law, another domain traditionally controlled by the nobility, must remain an open question. A few brief references in later narrative sources would suggest as much. While the author of the Chronicle of Zbraslav—despite his overall positive assessment of

58 See ZACHOVÁ, ed. *Chronicon Francisci Pragensis*. In *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum, Series nova*, Vol. 1, Praha 1997, p. 10; cf. JAN. Deset „purkrabích“ na dvoře Přemysla Otakara II. In DVOŘÁČKOVÁ-MALÁ and ZELENKA. *Dvory a rezidence ve středověku. II, Skladba a kultura dvorské společnosti*. Praha 2008, pp. 81–90. On the disappearance of the high nobility from offices, see also: ŽEMLIČKA, *Přemysl Otakar II.*, p. 379.

Otakar, largely conforming to the idealised ruler stereotype—mentions that the king codified laws, even younger annalistic entries attributed to Beneš Minorita under the year 1272 report that Přemysl Otakar II with his “faithful men” attempted to regulate or codify the local law, presumably the land law, basing it on Magdeburg law and laws from other lands.⁵⁹

Even though this assertion of the late fourteenth-century annals, highly compilatory in nature, cannot be unequivocally verified, it nonetheless contributes to the impression left behind by Přemysl’s rule. In other words, whether or not the king actually attempted to codify the laws, his governance left such a mark on the historical memory that later chroniclers attributed this activity to him. A royal attempt at codifying customary law, otherwise shaped by the sessions of the land court (*zemský soud*), an institution that by the thirteenth century had already become central to the formation of the Bohemian nobility’s collective identity, would represent a substantial interference in the essence of the cultural, social, and especially symbolic capital of the high medieval Bohemian nobility.

Whatever the case, Přemysl’s encroachment upon the competencies of a significant portion of the Bohemian nobility was serious enough to generate dissatisfaction and resentment, and for a minority of noble families, it even resulted in open revolt against the monarch. Although the rebellion did not involve the entire nobility as a whole, its consequences were profound. This stemmed from an escalation of tensions between the king and part of the nobility, reflected in contemporary sources by the Vítkovci family (notably Závěš and beyond the Vítkovci by Boreš of Rýzmburk, which disturbed the balance between the economic, cultural, and social capital of the king and the nobility. In view of the broader European political context of the 1270s—particularly the election of the capable Rudolf I of Habsburg as Roman king and to the position of the Papal Curia—this conflict between ruler and nobility plunged the kingdom into a crisis that threatened the stability of the social order itself. This trend was further intensified by Přemysl’s sudden death and the resulting absence of a central government in Bohemia, followed by a period of anarchy that ended only when the Noble Community of the Land (*šlechtická zemská obec*) was established, whereby the nobility assumed responsibility for further developments. This goes beyond the focus of the present study, however, it must be emphasised that the revolt of 1276 did not represent a general uprising of the Bohemian nobility as a whole, rather it was a partial conflict, concentrated

59 NOVOTNÝ, *České dějiny I/3*, pp. 276–278. PUMPROVÁ and JAN et al., eds. *Chronica Aulae Regie*, p. 14; cf. JANIŠ. Nalézání práva a zemské soudnictví v českých zemích. In JAN and JANIŠ et al. *Ad iustitiam et bonum commune. Proměny zemského práva v českých zemích ve středověku a rané novověku*. Brno 2010, pp. 23–46.

above all on the Vítkovci and a few other magnates such as Boreš of Rýzmburk, whose interests were directly endangered by the king's policies.⁶⁰

Even though Přemysl Otakar II's performance as a ruler was undoubtedly admirable, the observations presented above highlight the fundamental instability of his rule, both in the territories of the Babenberg inheritance and in the traditional Czech lands. In the Alpine territories, the causes of Přemysl's downfall should be sought, in his attempts at the gradual centralisation of power on one hand, particularly his effort to concentrate judicial, executive, economic, and military authority in the hands of direct princely representatives thereby weakening the traditional symbolic capital of Austrian, Styrian, or Carinthian noble families, who thus lost their privileged status above society. A similar process of undermining symbolic capital is also evident among some sections of the nobility in the traditional Czech lands. Though not encompassing society as a whole, the resulting conflict grew severe enough to threaten the stability and continuity of Přemyslid rule itself.

Conclusion

Summarising the considerations outlined above regarding the relationship between Bohemian monarchs and the nobility in the thirteenth century, it can be stated that the inherently conflictual alliance of these two key social groups was essential for maintaining coherence and stability in medieval society. While traditional historical narratives often highlighted either royal dominance or noble autonomy, contemporary approaches emphasise the interconnectedness, dynamism, and fluidity of this relationship, resulting not only in a degree of stability but also shaping the character and pace of social transformation. Neither absolute monarchical dominance nor complete noble autonomy secured medieval societal stability; instead it was their tension, balance, and necessary cooperation that proved decisive. Symbolic capital—prestige and power—was critical to both sides, and any unilateral disruption of this capital risked destabilising the social order. When the monarch undermined any form of noble capital—economic (e.g., through property seizures), cultural (limiting participation in governance), or social (exclusion from court circles, marginalisation in land offices)—it threatened social cohesion and frequently led to open conflict. Such conflicts were not inherently destructive in the thirteenth century, however. Ideally, they resulted in a redefinition of competences and restoration of equilibrium.

These hypotheses have been substantiated through several case studies examining conflict and cooperation during the reigns of three Přemyslid rulers:

60 On developments after 1278, see: JAN. *Vznik zemského soudu a správa středověké Moravy*. Brno 2000, pp. 209-269; VANÍČEK, *Velké dějiny III.*, pp. 359-386.

Přemysl Otakar I, Wenceslas I, and Přemysl Otakar II. Under Přemysl Otakar I, a relative balance existed between king and nobility. The monarch respected noble cultural capital (e.g., the right to elect the successor, participation in the land court), while the nobility guaranteed stability and continuity of royal power. This mutual support was crucial in resolving crises, notably the dispute with Bishop Ondřej, where noble loyalty contributed significantly to national stability.

The situation was altered fundamentally under Wenceslas I, especially in the second half of his reign. His preference for a narrow circle of loyalists and marginalisation of the broader noble class provoked the noble rebellion of 1248–1249, known as the “uprising of Prince Přemysl.” Here, nobles deprived of their cultural and social capital instrumentalised young Přemysl Otakar II. The resulting crisis was resolved through a ritual reconciliation not only between father and son, but also between the elder king and the nobility.

The tragic downfall of Přemysl Otakar II is frequently interpreted as stemming from a disrupted equilibrium. Initially reliant upon noble support, Přemysl conferred properties, offices, and prestigious roles, especially during expansion into Alpine territories. However, from the mid-1260s, his governance changed; he centralised authority, reduced the political influence of major landed nobility, replacing them with a select group of loyalists, reclaimed noble-held properties, and favoured “new men”—urban elites and foreigners. These actions eroded noble loyalty, ultimately leading to open opposition and significantly contributing to his downfall.

Conflicts between the monarch and nobility consistently encompassed economic and political dimensions. By the late thirteenth century, the nobility firmly controlled extensive alodial estates, acquired through colonisation, appropriation, or the transformation of formerly beneficiary holdings. Leading noble families (e.g., Vítkovci, Ronovci, Hrabšici, Markvartici, Lords of Šternberk, and Bavorové of Strakonice) dominated substantial regions, possessed castles, managed mining operations, controlled trade routes, and held significant administrative influence in towns. This economic base provided not only financial security, but also political influence through court and land offices, governance participation, client networks, and military power. Noble cultural capital was enriched by courtly culture, monastic foundations, and familial memory sites.

Long-term tension and balancing efforts led to the nobility’s gradual emergence as an estate-based group, enjoying economic, cultural, and political autonomy. The process culminated in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries with the formation of the Noble Community of the Land—a political institution through which the nobility and high clergy, along with the monarch (or in his absence), determined the kingdom’s fate. Collective noble identity

developed through common language, law (land court), family traditions, and opposition to “foreigners,” particularly German-speaking urban elites.

The monarch-nobility relationship remained essential for legitimacy, stability, and cohesion. However, the nobility ceased to be merely the executor of royal authority. Přemysl Otakar II, his predecessors, and successors continually faced the challenge of balancing centralisation—necessary for effective governance and expansion—and respect for noble autonomy—essential for elite loyalty and stability. Significant disruptions of this equilibrium inevitably caused conflicts, undermining societal cohesion. Přemysl Otakar II exemplifies how centralisation efforts that challenge noble economic, cultural, and social capital could result in alienation, lost loyalty, and ultimately, the monarchy’s collapse. Thus, the experiences of the thirteenth century profoundly influenced subsequent developments in Bohemian and Central European society, laying the foundations for an estate-based system, defining noble rights and duties, developing territorial institutions, and establishing a balance between the monarch and elites critical for state stability and prosperity in the later medieval and early modern periods.

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