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## BOHEMIAN COURT CULTURE OF THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

A semantic analysis of the word “dvorný”<sup>1</sup> well enables us to place the idea of the court within the context of cultural life as a whole in the Bohemian lands. In the period which concerns us, the word takes on several meanings. Firstly it applies to the attachment of people and phenomena to a given court.<sup>2</sup> The second meaning of the word appears in the mid 14th century and describes characteristics which are strange, exceptional, unusual.<sup>3</sup> One also encounters the word “dvorný” as meaning “politely, nicely, beautifully” — the meaning our contemporary intuition suggests.<sup>4</sup> And finally a fourth meaning, which from our point of view is probably the most valuable. Thus as early as the 14th century a critical, negative evaluation of the notion under analysis began to penetrate into the social consciousness, and this attitude was to develop fully in the 15th

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Nedvědová a kol., *Dvorný a zduřilý*, “Naše řeč”, vol. LXII, 1979, No. 4, pp. 190—199; W. Schrader, *Studien über das Wort „höfisch“ in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung*, Diss. Bonn—Würzburg 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, eds. B. Havránek, J. Daňhelka, Praha 1957. p. 30. No elements of moral or aesthetic evaluation are to be found in this text which simply concerns typical court phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> *Das alttschechische Tristan — Epos*, ed. U. Bamborschke, vol. II, Wiesbaden 1968, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> In the introduction to Dalimil's *Chronicle* the author praises those of his contemporaries who act “dvorně” (*Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika* [...], p. 17). Here the value assessment elicits unequivocally positive features from the word “dvorně”.

century. As early as the Bible Dráždanská, from the second half of the 14th century, the author, in a cautionary characterization for young widows, writes that to speak “dvorně” is not seemly, not fitting.<sup>5</sup>

The negative evaluation of matters relating to the court, which is to say of the behaviour patterns and morals prevailing there, and which evaluation we can deduce from the semantic context in which the words “dvorný, dvorně” appear, is surprising in the context of the structure of the designation in Western languages and for example in Polish. In all these languages the equivalents of our word signify beautiful, elegant characteristics distinguished to their advantage. With regard to court culture in the Kingdom of Bohemia, we observe a certain specific quality, a distinctness, both in comparison with the countries of the West and with her close neighbours. How can we explain this? No doubt the unique spiritual atmosphere prevailing in the Bohemian lands in the pre-Hussite and Hussite periods is not without significance here. The ideas of reform within the Church and of rebuilding human mentality on the model of the purity and simplicity of the apostolic age gained more and more importance within the Kingdom of Bohemia from the second half of the 14th century on. Representatives of the reform movement associated the new trends emanating from both secular and ecclesiastical courts with the corruption and contamination of civilization. Thence came the impulse, it seems, which gave shape to the semantic structure of the word “dvorný” in Old Czech, a unique structure in the context of the other European languages, and following on from this — to a specific evaluation of court culture marked by critical accents.<sup>6</sup>

Historical semantics has already uncovered certain general attitudes and evaluations of contemporaries relating to the pattern of life and conduct promoted by the court, and to the system of values it created. Research to date has not devoted too much attention to the question of the court as a centre of culture, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Staročeská Bible Dráždanská a Olomoucká*, ed. V. Kyas, Praha 1981, p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. Nedvědová a kol., *Dvorný...*, pp. 197 ff.

such being the case a good number of works from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries still possess considerable value today.<sup>7</sup> Our knowledge of court life in the state of Bohemia in the Middle Ages is only fragmentary, and an accurate reconstruction of it will certainly require a good deal more detailed research yet. Important for our purposes is the role played by the court as a point for the shaping of a specific etiquette, of a given type of behaviour, of certain communication codes rather élitist in scope, and intelligible only within a more or less closed community.

There can be no doubt that the centre around which this culture was built was the castle.<sup>8</sup> From as early as the 10th century the castle in Prague was the seat of the ruler and the court,<sup>9</sup> which is to say officials, servants and so on. However, scholars acknowledge the culture-generating role of the ruler's court only from the 13th century on, whilst in the period prior to this such role is meant to have been fulfilled solely by ecclesiastical centres, which is to say monasteries and capitular churches.<sup>10</sup> This increase in the cultural role of the ruler's court is connected with the inflow into the Bohemian lands, through the mediation of German creative output, of secular custom and court/romance literature.

We observe an interesting evolution in the area of the development of the material "infrastructure". The foundation of court culture was the castle, and by using examples of this type of building we can, with great accuracy, make a thorough study of the mechanism of duplication and imitation of certain cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vols. I—III, Praha 1855—1875; A. Sedláček, *Hrady, zámky a tvrze království Českého*, vols. I—XV, Praha 1882—1925.

<sup>8</sup> A. Sedláček, *Hrady...*; H. W. Engel, *Burgen und Schlösser in Böhmen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1961; A. Hejna, *České tvrze*, Praha 1961; D. Menclova, *České hrady*, vols. I—II, 2nd ed., Praha 1976.

<sup>9</sup> I. Borkovský, *Der altböhmisches Přemysliden — Fürstensitz Praha, seine Anfänge und seine Entwicklung*, "Historica", vol. III, 1961, pp. 57—72; *Handbuch der Geschichte der Böhmisches Länder*, hrsg. von K. Bosl, vol. I, Stuttgart 1967, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Fiala, *Předhusitské Čechy 1310—1419*, Praha 1978, p. 273.

models arising at the highest levels of the social hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> From records and archeological excavations, it emerges that during the initial period of existence of the state of Bohemia, the castle at Prague had practically no rivals. It is only at the turn of the 13th century that the first castles of the magnate class begin to appear,<sup>12</sup> and even up to the mid 13th century it is only exceptionally that we learn of the building of other castles of the feudal lords, except for the seat of the Bishop of Prague. With the second half of the 13th century comes distinct advancement for castles of the nobility, which now endeavour to equal the splendour of the royal seat.<sup>13</sup> It is precisely this period which can be characterized as the point when the nobleman's castle became a symbol of the nobility's community, which was growing more and more consolidated and was gaining for itself an ever stronger political position within the state. In Menclová's opinion, right up until the extinction of the Premysl dynasty the dominant role in the Bohemian lands was still played by the royal castles, and it was only during the reign of John of Luxemburg that the seats of the Bohemian nobles began to gain a certain ascendancy as political and cultural centres, and also as buildings.<sup>14</sup> A particular acceleration in the building of castles in the Kingdom of Bohemia came about in the 1330s. The new "secular style" drew its inspiration chiefly from southern French models.

The building activity initiated by the ruler was taken up by the magnates, and in time also came to embrace the circles of the lesser nobility. We perceive this phenomenon at the end of Charles IV's reign, and especially under Wenceslaus IV. The residential tower, which appeared in architecture during the first half of the 14th century, began to constitute the foundation of the

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<sup>11</sup> G. Duby, *La vulgarisation des modèles culturels dans la société féodale*, in: *Niveaux de culture et groupes sociaux. Actes du colloque réuni du 7 au 9 mai 1966 à l'Ecole normale supérieure*, Paris—La Haye 1971, pp. 33—40. Cf. *ibidem*, discussion, pp. 41—50.

<sup>12</sup> T. Durdik, *Nástin vývoje českých hradů 12.—13. století*, "Archaeologia Historica", vol. III, Brno 1978, pp. 41—52.

<sup>13</sup> T. Durdik, *Vývoj hradů 13. století v Čechách*, "Folia Historica Bohemica" vol. I, 1979, p. 185.

<sup>14</sup> D. Menclová, *České hrady...*, vol. I, p. 295.

average nobleman or Bohemian "zeman" 's seat, but in many cases the buildings became very grand. Some of these noble country seats began to compare with the architecture of the castles of the upper nobility in their sumptuousness, and it is not at all surprising that in the sources, instead of their more usual name of "munitio", or the Czech "tvrz", we also find the term "castrum", or "stronghold", "castle"<sup>15</sup> (the word "zámek" appears in Old Czech only after the beginning of the 15th century).

Apart from architectonic development, the complement of people staying at court also expanded. The first Luxemburg rulers in Bohemia organized their court there on the French model.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the King's court, in the state of Bohemia there also existed the court of the Queen, a separate body with a hierarchy of posts representing a miniature version of her spouse's court.<sup>17</sup> Evidence of the fact that this structural pattern found wide acceptance can be seen in the attempts of the greater nobility, as early as the 13th century, to create separate courts with their own official structure. In the first decades of the 14th century the first marshal and district hetman Henry of Lipa set up such sumptuous court at Brno in Moravia, where he acted almost like an independent ruler. On the strength of royal delegation for example, he would convoke at Brno local assemblies of the nobility and judicial gatherings, which basically belonged to the powers of the monarch.<sup>18</sup>

So that the courts of the greater nobility took over a certain model which originated within the King's court, but at the same time in this manner attempted to demonstrate their indepen-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. II, p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> H. Patze, *Die Hofgesellschaft Kaiser Karls IV. und König Wenzels in Prag*, "Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte", vol. CXIV, 1978, Göttingen, p. 753.

<sup>17</sup> V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis...*, vol. I, p. 348; O. Peterka, *Rechtsgeschichte der böhmischen Länder*, vol. I: *Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechtes und die Rechtsquellen in vorhussitischer Zeit*, Reichenberg 1923, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Z. Fiala, *Předhusitské Čechy...*, pp. 18 ff.; S. Russocki, *Proto-parlamentaryzm Czech do początku XV wieku [Protoparliamentarism in Bohemia up to the Beginning of the 15th Century]*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 69 f.

dence and high standing. Among other things festivities and court ceremonies provided an opportunity for this. If we cannot say a great deal about the life of the courts of particular noble families on the basis of existing source documents, we do possess certain data enabling us to make cautious generalizations about the formidable southern-Bohemian Rožmberk family, which represented the most powerful branch of the Vitkovec clan.<sup>19</sup> In the 14th century this family conducted a policy largely of self-dependence, and attempted to maintain a fairly significant degree of independence in relation to the king. A glaring example of this attitude was a rebellion by the Rožmberks in 1356 and their appeal against their ruler Charles IV (already Emperor at that time) to the princes of the Reich.<sup>20</sup> Information has been preserved concerning the fact that at the seat of the Rožmberks, Český Krumlov, around 1360 great pilgrimages were held under the patronage of the family each year on Corpus Christi day, together with processions. The pilgrims were shown numerous relics which the Rožmberks had managed to accumulate.<sup>21</sup> What we are

<sup>19</sup> Concerning the Vitkovec clan see — from the source editions — *Urbář zboží rožmberského z roku 1379*, ed. J. Truhlář = *Pojednání Královské České Společnosti Nauk VI*, 10, Praha 1880; *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Krummaw in Böhmen*, eds. V. Schmidt, A. Picha, Bd. I: 1253—1419 = *Städte und Urkundenbücher aus Böhmen*, V, Praha 1908; and from separate studies — M. Pangerl, *Die Witigonen, ihre ersten Sitze und ihre älteste Genealogie*, "Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte", vol. LI, 1873, pp. 501—576; T. Wagner, F. Mareš, *O původů Vitkovců*, "Český časopis Historický", vol. XXV, 1919, pp. 213—235; H. Zatschek, *Die Witigonen und die Besiedlung Südböhmens*, "Deutsches Archiv für Landes- und Volksforschung", vol. I, Leipzig 1937, pp. 110—130; V. Vaníček, *Vzestup rodu Vitkovců v letech 1169—1269*, "Folia Historica Bohemica", vol. I, 1979, pp. 93—108.

<sup>20</sup> The rebellion was subdued, and after three weeks an understanding was reached. The Rožmberks pledged their loyalty and allegiance to the Emperor, as well as assistance against all Charles IV's enemies. This is mentioned in two documents published on 21 June, 1356 — *Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae VI*, 2, ed. B. Mendl, Praha 1929, Nos. 370—371 (hereafter RBM).

<sup>21</sup> F. Tadra, *Ukazování svatých ostatků v Českém Krumlově v XIV věku, dle rukopisu 14. století*, "Časopis Českého Musea" (hereafter ČČM), vol. LIV, 1880, pp. 432 ff.; *idem*, *Ukazování svatých ostatků v Českém Krumlově ve XIV věku*, ČČM, vol. LXXIII, 1899, pp. 173 ff.

dealing with here is an imitation of the pilgrimages introduced in Prague by Charles IV, imitation of Prague court culture and art, but also with the aforementioned trend towards self-dependence and at the same time a kind of rivalry in relation to the Emperor's court. It was no accident, too, that above the portals of their family castles the Rožmberks placed their crest (a rose),<sup>22</sup> which is to say their emblem of dignity and courtly virtues, and also of high birth. A growth of interest in heraldry, a growth in court ceremonies and festivities — these are phenomena characteristic and typical of the 14th century. These court festivals attracted ever increasing numbers of participants. The court of Charles IV for example can be reckoned to have numbered around 300 people.<sup>23</sup>

One of the forms of court activity requiring considerable physical fitness was hunting. At the end of the Middle Ages one notices quite considerable interest in hunting. Thomas Štítný says that the knighthood ought to adhere to the advice of the Church and not over-indulge in such pastimes as hunting.<sup>24</sup> He holds such over-indulgence in hunting to be bad for the knighthood, first because of the dangers that are associated with this occupation, and beyond that, on account of the unnecessary waste of energy, which might prove more useful elsewhere. It is characteristic that the author places hunting alongside "kratochvili", which is how he terms tournaments here, so that he evidently sees certain parallels between the two phenomena.

During Charles IV's stay in France in 1377-78, on receiving Emperor Charles V he presented him — as we learn from *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*<sup>25</sup> — with two beautiful hunting hounds on ornamental leashes and with silk collars. It seems that the Emperor was immensely delighted with the present. So that although we do not know a great deal about Charles IV's

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<sup>22</sup> D. Menclová, *České hrady...*, vol. II, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Patze, *Die Hofgesellschaft...*, *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky o hře šachové a jiné*, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1956, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup> I have used a Czech translation of a section of this chronicle collection relating to Charles IV's visit to France in 1377-78; *Cesta císaře Karla IV do Francie*, Praha 1937, p. 84.

hunting activities, he could not have been indifferent to such recreation, and neither surely could the Emperor's court have been. It is a generally known fact that shooting was one of the chief passions of Wenceslaus IV, who spent a good deal of his time in shooting lodges hidden in the dense forests. Also providing evidence of the quite considerable popularity of hunting amongst the lords under Wenceslaus IV is a letter preserved amongst a collection of papers from the turn of the 15th century, in which Wilhelm of Carpenštejn invites Lord Bernard of Biberštejn for hunting (indeed it was a good opportunity — an inspection of the forests showed a handsome amount of game).<sup>26</sup>

What was the nature of these hunts, to what extent did they represent a sophisticated court pastime? It is difficult to answer with complete certainty. However, there are certain indications that the type of hunting pursued in the Kingdom of Bohemia by the privileged classes tended precisely in this direction.

As we know, one of the typical schemas of medieval literature was the participation of the main character in a chase for big game.<sup>27</sup> In this way he confirmed his prowess and exceptional strength. Hunting amongst the aristocracy was understood as one of the activities appropriate to a particular social position, in addition to which danger was one of its features, often involving the attacking of a wild animal single-handed. The development which came about at the end of the Middle Ages rested in a gradual conventionalization, the creating of certain rules and regulations, and the displaying of luxurious attire in the chase.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of the 14th century Dalimil wrote in his chronicle<sup>29</sup> that the lords were unstinting in their devotion to the

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<sup>26</sup> *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation*, vol. V, Berlin 1926, p. 36: "*Quia multa ferarum genera in montibus silvarum nostrarum hinc inde lustrantium existere de venatoribus nostris audivimus, vos igitur fautorem nostrum, in gaudio semper quo fruimur, attentius rogitamus [...]*".

<sup>27</sup> L. Szczerbicka-Słęk, *W kręgu Klio i Kalliope. Staropolska epika historyczna [In the Realms of Clio and Calliope. Old-Polish Historical Epic]*, Wrocław 1973, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> J. Heers, *Fêtes, jeux et joutes dans les sociétés d'occident à la fin du Moyen Age*, Montreal—Paris 1971, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika...*, p. 134.



chase and hunted the game with hounds. This went on at the cost of loss of good reputation, since hunting and conversation about the chase filled up very nearly all their spare time, whilst other important occupations were pushed into the background. Dalimil's account relates to the reign of Premysl I, but it might be an equally good projection of matters as they stood closer to his own times. We know from elsewhere that a considerable increase in hunting came about during Wenceslaus I's reign, which is to say at a time when a wave of courtly culture arrived in the Bohemian lands from Germany, and it may be that these two phenomena have certain points in common. Wenceslaus I loved hunting and we also know the names of several of his hunt masters.<sup>30</sup> In his description Dalimil complains of the excessive drive to go hunting which proliferated amongst the nobility. He does this with characteristic exaggeration and aversion for all things new. Such over-zealousness evidently departed from previous hunting tradition, and hunting etiquette of necessity became more complicated, although Dalimil does not mention this directly. The author's argumentation in his criticism of the excessive passion for hunting overlaps with Štítný's reasoning, since a few lines later Dalimil states that it leads to excessive exploitation of one's strength, which is later reflected to disadvantage in the fighting ability of the gentry in time of war.

Although we do not possess for the area under scrutiny such hunting manuals as have survived in England or France, setting out the exact progress and ritual of hunting,<sup>31</sup> yet traces of far-reaching conventionalization in the chase are also present in the Bohemian literature. We find a very interesting passage serving as confirmation of this statement in the *Tkadleček*,<sup>32</sup> a work which comes from the beginning of the 15th century. In its literary transformation the chase becomes an allegory of love. This motif is well known in medieval literature, whilst the

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<sup>30</sup> V. Novotný, *České dějiny*, vol. I, pt. 3, Praha 1928, pp. 860 f.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. Heers, *Fêtes, jeux, et joutes...*, p. 34.

<sup>32</sup> *Tkadleček. Hádka milence s Neštěstím*, ed F. Šimek, Praha 1974, pp. 65 f.

origins of the metaphor go back as far as ancient Greece.<sup>33</sup> In these allegories the deer very often appears in the role of the game being pursued, and deer-hunting was regarded in the Middle Ages as a form of noble sport.<sup>34</sup> In the linguistically rich and, from a literary point of view, interesting description included in the *Tkadleček* we also encounter deer. Deer-hunting serves as a model for the love chases which knights pursue in the princely courts, the object of their interest being the noble maidens. These hunters employ manifold means to ensnare their "game", to win her "čest". Here we have cunning and cruelty, and also smooth words, a very diverse repertoire of devices, in a word all the complicated accessories of court love, which we shall discuss in more detail somewhat later.

The above considerations entitle us to state that at the end of the Middle Ages the chase in the Bohemian lands was subject to fundamental change: it became an exclusive form of courtly culture, assumed the nature of a conventionalized entertainment, a phenomenon which was fully intelligible only for those of noble birth, and in the process was available as a means of underlining social differences.

A similar element of court culture at the end of the Middle Ages is the dance.<sup>35</sup> Certainly throughout the entire period of interest to us different types and kinds of dance coexisted, from folk and popular dances right through to the more refined ones.

Opportunities for the demonstration of dances were provided by the various court ceremonies. On the occasion of the coronation of Wenceslaus II in Prague in 1297, the chronicler was to write: "*Non est platea, que non sit plena corea*".<sup>36</sup> The so-called *Klementinské Zlomky*, a 14th-century work which has only survived in isolated fragments, and which presents the peripeteias of a lovesick knight, contains a characteristic passage. After the holding of a tournament at the King's court, the dancing begins.

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<sup>33</sup> M. Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love. The Chase in Medieval Literature*, Ithaca and London 1974, pp. 89 ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> See Č. Zibrť, *Jak se kdy v Čechách tancovalo*, Praha 1895.

<sup>36</sup> *The Zbraslav Chronicle*, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum* (hereafter FRB) IV, Praha 1884, p. 75.

And it is precisely then that our hero catches a glimpse of his lady, who distinguishes herself with her dancing talent. He runs up to her and they swirl round for a moment in unison.<sup>37</sup> So that we have an example of a court dance in which the courtier knight has every chance to display his reverence to his chosen lady and attempt to win her glances. Also testifying to the existence of court dance practised in closed cultural groups is a reference in the *Kronika Pulkavy*, from the second half of the 14th century, whence we learn that "the princes and knights led the dances according to their custom"<sup>38</sup> (this is how the Old-Czech translation sounds, some years younger than the original Latin, where we read: "*cum[...] principes et milites[...]more suo coram imperatore de pallacio prospectante coreas facerent[...]*").<sup>39</sup> It is difficult to tell if the author has in mind the customary holding of dances by the princes and knights or some particular manner they had of dancing, peculiar to those precise circles and distinct from the dances of other social groups. But there can be no doubt as to the statement that precisely such a custom existed at the courts.

The abundance of references goes to show that at the end of the Middle Ages the court dance was a fairly popular entertainment.<sup>40</sup> However, we should like to draw attention to a certain characteristic feature. Thus, time and again the authors place the dance alongside the tournament, and indicate that they were held during the same court festivities, so that in a way they were similar to each other. This emerges for instance from the works of John Huss. He relates how people indulge in songs, poetry, music, tournaments and dances.<sup>41</sup> Dance, music and tournaments — these are phenomena which occur together and which, needless to say, through their immorality came under heavy fire from Huss' criticism. Elsewhere the author writes

<sup>37</sup> *Klementinské zlomků sborníku epických básní světských XIV věku*, ed. J. Truhlář, ČČM, vol. LXVII, 1893, pp. 329—341, here p. 338.

<sup>38</sup> *Kronika Pulkavova*, FRB, vol. V, Praha 1893, p. 265.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Č. Zibrt, *Jak se kdy v Čechách...*, pp. 39 ff.

<sup>41</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi sebrané spisy české*, ed. K. J. Erben, vol. I, Praha 1865, p. 127.

that people participate “*in coreis et torneamentis*”,<sup>42</sup> whilst in yet another place he mentions “*torneamenta, hasteludia, gloriosae et famosae choreae ludentium iuvenum et puellarum[...]* Quare cessarunt iam minui artificiossimi reges et milites strenuissimi, et multa similia, quae ipsi carnales amaverunt?”<sup>43</sup> In *Nová rada*, a minor work from the end of the 14th century, a horse advises the lion king to organize frequent dances linked with tournaments.<sup>44</sup> In *Bruncvik*, a romance tale from the second half of the 14th century, we read in turn that the eponymous hero, the Bohemian Prince Bruncvik, “caught sight of many knights on horses, from which some were fighting, whilst others were dancing and rejoicing.”<sup>45</sup> And in *Tandariáš*, which was a 14th-century Old-Czech edition of a German work, the author writes that dances were held at the court which were honoured by the presence of King Arthur.<sup>46</sup>

The suggestion that there was a close link between court dance and tournaments in the imaginations of medieval authors is confirmed by the creator of the famous *Ackermann aus Böhmen*, written in Bohemia in German at the turn of the 15th century. A ploughman conducting an argument with Death says that the Romans already “*haben es selbes getan und haben das ire kinder geleret, das sie liebe in eren haben solten, turnieren, stechen, tanzen[...]*”.<sup>47</sup> As emerges from this and the above-cited examples, we already have here, surely, regular phraseological combinations in the trilingual output which arose in the Kingdom

<sup>42</sup> *Magistri Johannis Hus Postilla adumbrata*, in: *Magistri Johannis Hus Opera Omnia*, vol. XIII, ed. B. Ryba, Pragae 1975, p. 242.

<sup>43</sup> *Johannis Hus et Hieronymi Pragensis Historia et Monumenta*. Norimbergae 1555, pp. 427 f. Quoted after Č. Zibrť, *Jak se kdy v Čechách...*, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> *Smil Flaška z Pardubic, Nová rada*, ed. J. Daňhelka, Praha 1950, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted after Č. Zibrť, *Jak se kdy v Čechách...*, p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> *Tandariáš a Floribella*, in: *Sborník hraběte Baworowského*, ed. J. L. oriš = *Sbírka pramenů ku poznání literárního života v Čechách, na Moravě a v Slezsku*, Skupina I, Řada I, č. 6, Praha 1903, p. 304.

<sup>47</sup> *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation*, vol. III, pt. 1, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, eds. A. Bernt, K. Burdach, Berlin 1917, p. 52.

of Bohemia. The homogeneous nature of the phenomena therefore finds confirmation in the matter of language. After all it is not only in the external form of the dance and the tournament that the authors perceive similarities. Moral appraisal of participation in these entertainments is undoubtedly of more importance here. Tomáš Štítný comments on this question in detail. He maintains<sup>48</sup> that both the tournament and the dance let loose in people nothing but undesirable reactions, amongst which conceit and debauchery predominate. Elsewhere the same author emphasizes the open attitude of the Bohemians to novelty in this area, reinforced in addition by their own inventiveness, since one can see amongst them "the devising of new jumps for various dances".<sup>49</sup>

So that court dance appears to us as an otiose element within the compass of the court. But without overestimating its significance, let us say that this fragment of life, criticized by the preachers and moralists, is another factor — like other festivities and ceremonies — serving to integrate a specific community.

Of the other court entertainments mention should be made here of games. In the Bohemian sources we encounter the games of dice, chess and draughts.<sup>50</sup> Dice were a big success,<sup>51</sup> being accepted not only in the circles of the well-born, but also becoming a popular pastime in the towns and countryside, and for that matter coming up against numerous church<sup>52</sup> and secular<sup>53</sup> bans directed against gambling, and especially dice games. It is thus difficult to regard dicing as an exclusive privilege of the upper echelons of society, but none the less it was the courts of

<sup>48</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky...*, p. 184.

<sup>49</sup> *Tomáše ze Štítného Knižky šestery o obecných věcech křesťanských*, ed. K. J. Erben, Praha 1852, p. 242.

<sup>50</sup> The only outline of these matters to date relating to the Bohemian lands is to be found in a work by Č. Zibrť, *Z her a zábav staročeských*, Velek Meziříčí 1889.

<sup>51</sup> Č. Zibrť, *Z her a zábav...*, pp. 38 ff.

<sup>52</sup> *Několik statutů a nařízení arcibiskupů pražských Arnošta a Jana I (1355—1377)*, ed. F. Menčík = *Pojednání Královské České Společnosti Nauk VI*, 11, Praha 1882, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> *Maiestas Carolina*, in: *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české i moravské* 3, Praha 1844, pp. 112—115.

the Bohemian lords which were very likely the source of its wide dissemination. Dalimil attempts to convince us<sup>54</sup> of the foreign origin of this game, which the lords are meant to have been the first to set about launching in the Bohemian lands. In his view dice represented one of the elements of courtly fashion and custom which was adopted in the Bohemian lands from foreigners (here he means the Germans) during the latter times of the Premysl dynasty. For we learn that dice together with the tournament constituted a portion of these "evil customs".

But if dice games were popular in various social circles and groups, then chess seems to have been associated more with court society.<sup>55</sup> This is indicated in the following remark by Huss: "The lords exert their influence to bring about the filling of clergy posts by such people as will keep them company, hunt with them or play chess with them".<sup>56</sup> Alongside the chase, chess is included here in the canon of accomplishments of the lords and knights living at the castle.<sup>57</sup> As we know, in the Middle Ages chess represented one of the seven noble courtly accomplishments: "*Probitates vero hae sunt: equitare, natare, sagittare, cestibus certare, aucupare, scacis ludere, versificari.*"<sup>58</sup> Medieval games, symbolic and magical, are a reflection of the professional occupations of society. Chess here appears as a transposition of knightly activity. The game of chess became a real "battle", a "knights' tournament" held within a castle chamber.<sup>59</sup> Surely the lords mentioned in Huss, playing chess in their castles with each other or with their clergymen, must have felt something like the participants in a knights' tournament played out on the 64 squares of the chess-board?

<sup>54</sup> *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika...*, p. 163.

<sup>55</sup> See Č. Zibrť, *Dějiny hry šachové v Čechách od dob nejstarších až po náš věk. Studie kulturně — historická*, Praha 1888.

<sup>56</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi sebrané...*, vol. I, p. 447.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. P. Jonin, *La partie d'échecs dans l'épopée médiévale*, in: *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du moyen âge et de la renaissance offerts à J. Frappier*, vol. I, Genève 1970, pp. 483—497.

<sup>58</sup> *Petri Alfonsi, Disciplina clericalis*, ed. V. Schmidt, Berlin 1827, p. 44. The text comes from the 11th century.

<sup>59</sup> J. Le Goff, *La Civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, Paris 1967, p. 444.

The 13th-century moralistic didactic treatise on chess by the Dominican Jakub de Cessolis,<sup>60</sup> which was well known in the Middle Ages, was adapted in Czech by Tomáš ze Štítného, who gave it the title *Knižky o hře šachové*. This successful adaptation, which assigns different social positions to the various chess figures,<sup>61</sup> also contains many valuable concrete details and observations from the author concerning conditions in Bohemia. Knighthood, or in relation to social relations at the end of the 14th century, the lesser nobility, is symbolized by the horse in chess, called a "rytíř".<sup>62</sup> There can be no doubt about the association evoked here with the knight's service on horseback.

A regular list of court occupations pursued as part of the convention of amusement is cited by Huss, as he writes of people who on festive occasions engage in tournaments, dice games, chess, courtship and dancing.<sup>63</sup> Apart from the pastimes already discussed, we have here additionally, "frejovanie", which is to say courtship, whilst somewhat earlier the same author mentions — in tones of criticism — drunkenness and gluttony. Let us turn our attention then to criticism of behaviour at meal-times. This is a sign of new times, and we observe here the phenomenon of concentrating more and more interest on table manners.<sup>64</sup> Štítný devotes some attention to this matter.<sup>65</sup> He

<sup>60</sup> Jakub de Cessolis' work, *De moribus hominum et de officiis nobilium super ludo scaccorum*, ed. F. Vetter, in: *Das Schachzabelbuch Kunrats von Ammenhausen. Nebst den Schachbüchern des Jakob von Cessole und des Jakob Mennel*, Bibliothek älterer Schriftwerke der deutschen Schweiz, Frauenfeld 1892. Cf. Th. Kaeppli, *Pour la biographie de Jacques de Cessole*, "Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum", vol. XXX, 1960, pp. 149—162.

<sup>61</sup> For a parallel look at social structures and the game of chess see, A. Vidmanová, *Die mittelalterliche Gesellschaft im Lichte des Schachspiels*, "Miscellanea mediaevalia, Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität zu Köln", Bd 12/1 = *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*. Köln 1979, pp. 323—335.

<sup>62</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky...*, pp. 382 ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi sebrané...*, vol. I, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> On this subject cf. e.g. A. Schultz, *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger*, vol. I, Leipzig 1880, pp. 429 ff.

<sup>65</sup> *Tomy ze Štítného Knihy naučení křesťanského*, ed. A. J. Vřátko, Praha 1873, p. 135.

complains in his deliberations of the greed of the company and their voracity, recommends eating without haste, but also perceives another interesting symptom. Eating is now no longer a simple activity for appeasing one's hunger, but becomes a topic of conversation and contemplation, and even of detailed discussions.

The growing abundance and variety of courses went hand in hand with the increasing formalization of court codes for behaviour at the table. Etiquette was endowed with more and more precise rules and regulations. An expansive list of them is preserved in a rhymed work of the 15th century.<sup>66</sup> Among other things the author recommends the company to feast in an equable humour. Gossip and rumour should be avoided. Of the more concrete directions: salt should be taken only with a knife, not with the fingers, a knife should not be brought to one's mouth, and one should not wipe one's nose with the table-cloth.<sup>67</sup> Many of these pieces of advice sound extremely modern and even today they could frequently find application no doubt. In a further section of the work the author unfolds before us a model of the court career of a banquet waiter, writing that he has to possess a fairly wide knowledge to carry out his duties properly. He should not forget salt, knives and spoons, whilst clean plates, table-cloth and towel are essential. There should never be a shortage of bread, or beer.<sup>68</sup> The observance of cleanliness, solicitude for the guests, a cheerful, equable disposition — these were all prerequisites for setting one on the way to "great honour". By now much had changed with regard to dependences at the court. The former modest service knight, who at one time could only hope to improve his position through valiant and steadfast military service with his seigneur, now had other opportunities as well. The expansion of the court of the ruler and the courts of the nobility, the ever-increasing complexity of their network of offices, and the changing func-

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<sup>66</sup> Č. Zibrť, *Poctive mravy a společenské řády při jídle a pití po rozumu starých Čechův*, Praha 1890, pp. 9 f.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9—10.



tions which were turning the courts into ever-stronger centres of culture, now created for the former warriors opportunities for a different type of court career, where a number of them found their right place, if only as that waiter at the table.

*Nová rada* stresses a slightly different aspect. In the role of adviser to the king, the leopard comes forward with such proposals as the following:<sup>69</sup> the king and his court should feast in a large commodious hall, and after the feast he should carry on a courteous and polite conversation, in other words conduct himself "in courtly fashion". Even more important is the leopard's remark that a strict order of social rank is obligatory at banquets, and that the guests should be seated at the table in accordance with such rank. The representatives of particular social classes sit down in turn, since their belonging to one or another group establishes and determines the "čest" to which each of them is entitled. Politeness in behaviour at the table, or in overall manner, is a moral imperative for those of good birth, and at the same time a token of social status.<sup>70</sup> In the *Tkadleček* we read that during the expedition to recover the golden fleece, Medea's father, in accordance with court custom, showed Jason the great respect due to guests.<sup>71</sup>

At times the stiffening and formalization of court etiquette leads to certain magnifications and exaggerations. When Misfortune in the *Tkadleček* says that "through their manoeuvring some people earn more for themselves at the courts of princes than others who are well born or wise",<sup>72</sup> are we not by chance talking here about the embryonic "courtier" stereotype, a figure as artificial as he is pretentious, and who in subsequent European literature found himself the subject of so many grotesque interpretations?<sup>73</sup> One also thinks of an interpretational trail regard-

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<sup>69</sup> *Smil Flaška...*, pp. 31 f.

<sup>70</sup> See A. Borst, *Das Rittertum im Hochmittelalter. Idee und Wirklichkeit*, Saeculum X, 1959, p. 230; cf. also N. Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, Bern 1969, pp. 65 ff.

<sup>71</sup> *Tkadleček...*, p. 125.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 179.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. H. Melzer, *Trivialisierungstendenzen im Volksbuch*, Hildesheim 1972.

ing this quotation which goes back to Bohemian realities during the reign of Wenceslaus IV. Perhaps the author, employing model structures, was thinking of the “milce”, the King’s favourites, people of low birth who, owing to Wenceslaus’ support, gained for themselves a leading position at the ruler’s court and were a thorn in the side of the “old” aristocracy, who felt that their monopoly on distinctions and privileges was seriously threatened.<sup>74</sup>

The current in European culture, reflected in the 12th-century poetry of the troubadours, and which gave expression to the softening and refining of court manners, and also to their gradual formalization (the notion “cortesia”, as well as those of “mesura” and “proeza”, close to the former with regard to content<sup>75</sup>), not forgetting, too, the emphasis on the moral quality of the individual, where politeness of behaviour and appropriate manners begin to replace military prowess, at the same time becoming a badge of social position, — this current can be discerned — something which emerges from the above arguments — in the Kingdom of Bohemia at the end of the Middle Ages. Amongst the complex web of causes which stimulated this phenomenon, we might point to a rise in the overall level of Bohemian society. Education embraced more and more numerous social groups, and the network of schools at the lower levels was growing;<sup>76</sup> an essential role here was no doubt play-

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu křižovnického*, eds. F. Šimek, M. Kaňák, Praha 1959, p. 38.

<sup>75</sup> J. Wettstein, *“Mesura”, l'idéal des troubadours, son essence et ses aspects*, Zürich 1945. We might quote here the precise view of E. Köhler, *Trobadorlyrik und höfischer Roman*, Berlin 1962, p. 165: “Die mesura ist das Gesetz der höfischen Verhaltensweise, deren Inhalt die proeza und deren Ergebnis die cortesia ist”. *Ibidem*, p. 163: “[...] entspricht die cortesia der proeza, nur mit dem Akzent auf der Hinwendung zur Frau”, and p. 167: “Die mesura wurde Inbegriff der Vorbildgesittung einer Elite”.

<sup>76</sup> F. Šmahel, *Piśmienność warstw ludowych w Czechach w XIV i XV wieku [Literacy Amongst the Working Classes in Bohemia in the 14th and 15th Centuries]*, in: *Kultura elitarna a kultura masowa w Polsce późnego średniowiecza*, ed. B. Geremek, Wrocław 1978, pp. 189—205; E. Wiśniowski, *Uwagi o liczebności wiejskiego szkolnictwa parafialnego w Polsce i w Czechach u schyłku średniowiecza [Some Remarks on the Amount of Country Parish Education in Poland and Bohemia towards the Close of the Middle Ages]*, *ibidem*, pp. 207—209.

ed by the founding of Prague University in 1348, and also the educating of Bohemians and Moravians in foreign colleges, especially Italian ones, whence they brought back a knowledge of the new forms and customs. The rising level of education had various implications, among other things influencing changes in social mentality, and introducing fundamental modifications in the hitherto prevailing traditional system of values. For in the song *Carmen de utilitate studiorum*,<sup>77</sup> from the turn of the 15th century, we read the lines:

*Disce, fili(i) literas et vires earum  
quia sine litera valet homo parum.  
Litera te faciet genere preclarum.*

Not very much earlier such lines would have been absolutely inconceivable. The anonymous author of this song emphasizes the importance of education and learning, which is not in itself surprising perhaps, but the phrase used to stress the ennobling power of education — in a society in which the qualifications of birth are the general rule, and where, too, the accumulation of substantial wealth is seen as a means of advancement — is symptomatic of the fairly profound transformations taking place in Bohemian culture during this period.

The specific nature of the court environment was affirmed not only by the codes of behaviour operating within it, but also by certain external, material features. Court fashion<sup>78</sup> is precisely one such phenomenon, though the direction of our deliberations disposes us towards a closer look chiefly at its non-material aspects, we are interested in the various significances of which dress was the carrier and transmitter. The new fashion

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<sup>77</sup> Manuscript of the University Library in Prague, III G 21, fol. 64r, 11. 11—13.

<sup>78</sup> Of the more recent works concerning the Middle Ages, see M. von Boehn, *Die Mode. Menschen und Moden im Mittelalter vom Untergang der alten Welt bis zur Renaissance*, München 1925; M. G. Houston, *Mediaeval Costume in England and France in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries*, London 1939; P. Saisset, *Histoire du costume, science vivante*, Tours 1959; E. Thiel, *Geschichte des Kostüms*, Berlin 1973. In relation to the Czech lands see Č. Zibrť, *Dějiny kroje v zemích českých od dob nejstarších až po války husitské*, vol. I, pts. 1—3, Praha 1891—1892; Z. Drobňá, J. Durdík, E. Wagner, *Kroje, zbroj a zbraně*, Praha 1956.

in clothes invaded the Kingdom of Bohemia on a wide front in the 14th century. The variety and richness of attire sweeping practically the whole of Europe could not but affect our area too.<sup>79</sup>

One of the hallmarks of the new fashion was the multiplicity of colours. The first symptoms of this probably appeared as early as the end of the 13th century. In the first half of the 14th century Peter of Zittau wrote that the young Wenceslaus II, on returning to his homeland from Brandenburg, was dressed as follows: "*Vestis enim plana contexta simplice lana, nunquam partita variove colore polita vestivit puerum.*"<sup>80</sup> If a distinguishing feature of this dress is its uniform colour, this indicates that at that time multicoloured robes prevailed at court. The invasion of colour<sup>81</sup> is confirmed not only by written sources — iconography also provides numerous examples. For example, in the illustrated *Legend of St. George* (first half of 14th century) at the castle at Jindřichův Hradec, the men and women painted there are wearing clothes with criss-cross streaks and stripes of colour.<sup>82</sup> Again, in Wenceslaus IV's Bible we find the figure of the King plaited into a monogram of the letter "W", and dressed in a pair of breeches, each leg of which bears a different colour.<sup>83</sup>

We are in a position to reconstruct this new fashion fairly accurately on the basis of descriptions by 14th-century chroniclers — Peter of Zittau,<sup>84</sup> Francis of Prague,<sup>85</sup> Beneš of Weit-

<sup>79</sup> Z. Fiala, *Předhusitské Čechy...*, pp. 273 ff.; J. Spěvák, *Karel IV. Život a dílo (1316—1378)*, Praha 1979, pp. 410 f.

<sup>80</sup> *The Zbraslav Chronicle...*, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup> On the symbolism of colours, F. Portal, *Des couleurs symboliques dans l'antiquité, le moyen âge et les temps modernes*, Paris 1837; W. Wackernagel, *Die Farben- und Blumensprache des Mittelalters*, in: *idem, Kleinere Schriften*, vol. I, Leipzig 1872, pp. 143—240; M. Rzepińska, *Historia koloru w dziejach malarstwa europejskiego [Colour in the History of European Painting]*, vol. I, Kraków 1970, pp. 108 ff. Czech material in Č. Zibrt, *Listy z českých dějin kulturních*, Praha 1891, pp. 49 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Č. Zibrt, *Dějiny kroje...*, p. 207 and plates 108, 109, 110.

<sup>83</sup> D. Menclová, *České hrady*, vol. II, p. 121, illus. 172.

<sup>84</sup> *The Zbraslav Chronicle...*, pp. 300 ff.

<sup>85</sup> *The Chronicle of Francis of Prague*, FRB IV, p. 404.

mile<sup>86</sup> — and of works of art. It is characterized by short, close-fitting garments, padded shoulders, gathering and padding of the front portion of upper attire, pointed boots, whilst one also comes across loose flared sleeves, curled hair in men, and also ribbons in the hair, long hoods with hanging ends, or small bells worn in belts.<sup>87</sup> The court of the ruler seems to have been the centre from which these novelties radiated forth. An interesting note preserved in the Vatican archives points to this fact. From this we learn that during a visit to Arles by Charles IV and his court in 1365, the attire of the Emperor's courtiers was thought by the Pope to be unsuitable, chiefly because it was too short.<sup>88</sup>

The blessings of the new fashion reigned supreme not only at court, attempts were also made to introduce them into military dealings. The effects of this were various. Beneš of Weitmile describes a Bohemian campaign into Saxony, where the knights were dressed in these tight garments and pointed boots. At one point in the battle it became necessary to fight on foot, and their inconvenient equipment greatly hampered the movements of the Bohemian warriors, so that they suffered a severe defeat.<sup>89</sup>

In humanistic research nowadays attention is focussed on the

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<sup>86</sup> *The Chronicle of Beneš of Weitmile*, FRB IV, p. 536: "*Hiis temporibus more symearum, que quidquid ab hominibus fieri conspiciunt, facere et imitari conantur, usurpaverunt sibi pravam et dampnosam aliarum terrarum consuetudinem, et in habitu vestimentorum recesserunt a vestigiis suorum predecessorum [...]*", and further there is a detailed description of these innovations in fashion.

<sup>87</sup> J. von Falke, *Geschichte des Geschmacks im Mittelalter und andere Studien aus dem Gebiete von Kunst und Kultur*, Berlin 1892, pp. 116 ff.; Č. Zibrť, *Dějiny kroje...*, pp. 200 ff.; E. Thiel, *Geschichte des Kostüms...*, pp. 191 ff.

<sup>88</sup> J. Nováček, *Cisaře Karla IV pobyt při dvoře papežském v Avinioně r. 1365*, ČCM, vol. LXIV, 1890, p. 169, n. 78, among other things robes should be "*adminus usque ad genu*". J. Krása (*Rukopisy Václava IV*, Praha 1971, p. 128) rightly states that fashionableness is one of the constants of international court art.

<sup>89</sup> *The Chronicle of Beneš of Weitmile*, p. 536: "*[...] et propter strictas vestes et rostratos calceos Boemi devicti sunt ab inimicis [...]*".

sociological and semiotic functions of fashion and dress.<sup>90</sup> Tomáš Štítný leads us into the middle of this problem area.<sup>91</sup> In a text sparkling with a wealth of information, one is struck by the attitude of the author, defending a traditional hierarchized social structure, which is meant to be reinforced by suitable attire for each class. Peasant men and women should not attempt to compare with the lesser gentry in any sphere, including dress. Similarly, it is not fitting for the lesser gentry to compare with the lords, or for the latter to compare with the princes. In addition to this, ostentation and novelty in clothes favours a supercilious attitude towards others within one's own social group, and this is accompanied by haughtiness, envy and profligacy.

But Štítný's conservative outlook is unable to conceal the rivalry between the classes in the sphere of dress.<sup>92</sup> This phenomenon is confirmed by a preacher from the turn of the 15th century, Johlin z Vodňan, who relates that the King and certain dignitaries are entitled to wear a special gown in consequence of their particular position, whilst the burghers and their wives, even though they possess plenty of money, are not supposed to adorn themselves in the same way.<sup>93</sup>

Dress served to define social status particularly on special occasions, such as ceremonies,<sup>94</sup> feast-days,<sup>95</sup> and tournaments, where the ruler or a great lord appeared in the company of his attendants. Documents indicate that attendants or the king's bodyguard were dressed in the same robes "*iuxta formam et qualitatem*" as early as the reign of Wenceslaus I (1249),<sup>96</sup> which

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<sup>90</sup> F. Piponnier, *Costume et vie sociale. La cour d'Anjou XIV<sup>e</sup>—XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1970; H. Platelle, *Le problème du scandale: les nouvelles modes masculines aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, "Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire", vol. LIII, 1975, pp. 1071—1096.

<sup>91</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky...*, pp. 181 f.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. S. Harksen, *Women in the Middle Ages*, Leipzig 1975, pp. 21 ff.

<sup>93</sup> R. Řičan, *Johlin z Vodňan. křížovník kláštera zderazského*, "Věstník Královské České Společnosti Nauk", vol. I, 1929, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. F. Piponnier, *Costume...*, pp. 76 ff.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. J. Heers, *Fêtes...*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> RBM I, ed. K. J. Erben, Praha 1855, No. 989; cf. F. Piponnier, *Costume...*, pp. 243 ff.

is to say at a time when courtly custom was beginning to gain popularity. We possess similar information from the period of Ottocar II's reign, too.<sup>97</sup> Since these were times of growing interest in heraldry (the first crests on the seals of lords appeared at the beginning of the 13th century), one can assume that the attire of these attendants contained the heraldic colours<sup>98</sup> of the ruler, indeed this was the tendency in the Middle Ages, for the court crest to be repeated in the garments of bodyguard and servants. This is directly indicated by a reference by the 13th-century chronicler Jarloch to the fact that the Prague bishop Tobiaš of Bechyně dressed his courtiers in identical clothes marked by the bishop's family crest ("*videlicet sagitta cicumflexa in auribus signo progenitorum suorum insignito*").<sup>99</sup> As we can see then, heraldry, as a sign of the new courtly customs, also embraced the circles of the feudal clergy.

In an ordeal, a duel between two families, which, according to Dalimil's account,<sup>100</sup> is meant to have taken place in 1315, the families involved in the dispute appeared in clothes of different colour, one in red, the other in green. We can assume that these were the heraldic colours of the families. In turn, in the beautiful illustrated volume from the first half of the 14th century, the Velislav Bible, among other things we come across an illustration in which Abraham,<sup>101</sup> appearing as commander, and his bodyguard carry the same heraldic shields with a transverse band. So that heraldic crests and heraldic colours on clothes appear as distinguishing marks clearly setting apart a given social group, as represented by the attendants of the ruler, or the feudal lord, consisting of servants, squires and service knights.

In the environment which interests us we thus discern both of the chief two functions of dress, which is to say the socio-

<sup>97</sup> RBM II, ed. J. Emler, Praha 1882, No. 990.

<sup>98</sup> On heraldic colours see the treatise by Araldo di Sicilia, herald of King Alfonso V of Aragon, from the mid 15th century, *Le blason des couleurs en armes, livrées et devises*, ed. H. Cocheris, Paris 1859.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted after Č. Zibrť, *Dějiny kroje...*, p. 205.

<sup>100</sup> *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika...*, p. 170.

<sup>101</sup> *Velislav Biblia Picta*, vol. II, ed. K. Stejskal, Praha 1970.

logical and the semiotic. To a significant degree 14th-century court dress represents the upshot of western-European importation, a dominant feature of which was an exaggerated pretentiousness, which sometimes — as we have seen — hampered the knighthood in the execution of its fundamental duty of waging war. Style and colours denoted affiliation to given social classes, they were regarded as a unique distinguishing mark. At the same time we can speak of the role of dress as a stabilizer in fixed social relations, since each class, peasant, knights', or burghers', was required to be content with that to which it was entitled, without imitating the dress of other groups. These recommendations of the medieval authors point simultaneously to another problem worth making a note of, for dress, notwithstanding the fact that its task was to stabilize social structures, also became an arena for competition between particular levels of the social fabric, especially through the dissemination of new styles in fashion.

Amongst the court codes and sign systems which took shape at the courts and were often intelligible only for that rather hermetically sealed environment, a special place is held by the question of relations with women, usually defined by the term "courtly love".<sup>102</sup>

If up to the present day the lyric poetry of the Provençal troubadours is something which has not been deciphered definitively — despite being the subject of hundreds of works,<sup>103</sup> and especially regarding its cultural roots and "sociology" — then the reception of "courtly love" within the Bohemian lands also gives rise to a number of questions and doubts. For the pheno-

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<sup>102</sup> Works serving as a good introduction to this rather difficult subject matter are C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition*, London 1953, the essay on "court love", pp. 1—43, and Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World* (trans. from the French), New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London 1974.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. e.g. A. Jeanroy, *La poésie lyrique des troubadours*, vols. I—III, Paris 1934; R. A. Fridman, *Ljubovnaja lirika trubadurov i eë istolkovanie*, „Učonye Zapiski Rjazanskogo Gospedinstituta", vol. XXXIV, 1966, pp. 87—418; L. T. Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love*, London—New York—Melbourne 1975.



menology of this problem area is even more difficult to research in the case of Bohemia, since here we are dealing with the taking-over of certain outside models and motifs, and not with original creative output. We find that courtly love is present in the area under study not only in literature, but also in the fine arts. However, the chief area of expansion for such motifs within the compass of Bohemian culture is Old-Czech lyrical love poetry. Difficulties begin to arise as soon as we attempt to establish the chronology of the latter. Jan Vilikovský, the eminent expert on Bohemian medieval literature, places it in the second half of the 14th century and the first two decades of the 15th century.<sup>104</sup> Why does it arise then exactly, at a relatively late period? Vilikovský does not provide an answer to this question. However, it is difficult to accept the suggestion of V. Černý, that output of this kind could have existed as early as the 13th century, but has not survived.<sup>105</sup>

In these lyrics we find motifs known from the poetry of the troubadours, and also from that of the German minnesingers. So that we encounter a subtle inversion of the relationship linking the vassal knight with his seigneur, whilst the role of the feudal lord in this transformation is played by a beloved lady.<sup>106</sup> In the poem *Předobře rozumím*, the poet addresses his beloved in the following manner: since my master (beloved) does not care for his faithful servant (the poet), willy-nilly I shall give up my service and find myself another master.<sup>107</sup> The inversion of feudal relations is thus entirely obvious.

The author of the work *Milostný list* appeals to his beloved "master": as long as I have breath in my body I shall be your faithful servant, since you are the master of my heart.<sup>108</sup> In accordance with the theoretical foundations of the troubadour ly-

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<sup>104</sup> *Staročeská lyrika*, ed. J. Vilikovský, Praha 1940, p. 5 of introduction.

<sup>105</sup> V. Černý, *Staročeská milostná lyrika*, Praha 1948, pp. 90 ff.

<sup>106</sup> E. Wechsler, *Frauendienst und Vassalität*, "Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur", vol. XXIV, 1902, pp. 159—190.

<sup>107</sup> *Staročeská lyrika...*, ed. J. Vilikovský, p. 45.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41.

rics, predominant here are images of unhappy love,<sup>109</sup> which renders this amatory service difficult to bear. This is precisely what the author of the poem *Ach srdečko* maintains.<sup>110</sup> The work *Poznalt'jsem sličné stvoření*<sup>111</sup> expresses the hope of receiving the ideal reward for faithful service.

This motif of the faithful vassal's amatory service with his lady/master, which appears, as we can see, many times, may seem a little surprising in the Bohemian context. Considering the fact that the feudal system only achieved moderate success in this country, the influence of actually existing social relations on the terminology involved was rather small. No doubt we are dealing with the adoption and exploitation of outside literary motifs. This feeling is confirmed by the fact that in the very small number of surviving Latin love poems from this period amatory service does not make an appearance. Vilikovský explains this circumstance in terms of a difference in audience range. Latin lyrics were chiefly aimed at the male listener.<sup>112</sup>

However, it would seem that this borrowed motif of amatory service in Bohemian literature also points to certain tracks in the direction of social reality. It appears not only in love lyrics, but also in *Rada otce synovi* (around 1400),<sup>113</sup> and in the *Tkadleček*. In the latter we read that, irrespective of social background, every suitor is worthy of his chosen maiden or lady as long as he serves her worthily and faithfully.<sup>114</sup> In interpreting this idea it might be sufficient merely to point to the fact that we have here the old topos linking a man's worth with his virtues, and not merely with noble birth, in other words a dis-

<sup>109</sup> D. de Rougemont, *Love...*, p. 75: "This poetry magnified unhappy love".

<sup>110</sup> *Staročeská lyrika...*, ed. J. Vilikovský, p. 27.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>112</sup> J. Vilikovský, *Písemnictví českého středověku*, Praha 1948, p. 170; idem, *Latinská poesie žakovská v Čechách*, "Sborník Filosofické Fakulty University Komenského", vol. VIII, Bratislava 1932, pp. 69 ff.

<sup>113</sup> *Rada otce synovi*, ed. A. Patera, ČČM, vol. LXVI, 1892, pp. 393–415, *passim*.

<sup>114</sup> *Tkadleček...*, p. 65.

position full of virtue can earn one greater respect in the eyes of others than the mere fact alone that one possesses "blue" blood in one's veins.<sup>115</sup> However, we might attempt to take things a step further with the supposition that we are dealing here with a reflection of certain social tensions within the nobility (the lords and the knighthood), or along the nobility/burgher line. In this context courtly love may have served as a means of equalizing such differences and relieving tensions,<sup>116</sup> as an ideal commonly held at the various levels of the social hierarchy, since financial and material inequality between particular groups within the nobility was more than apparent. Increasing differences and divergencies between the greater nobility (the lords) and the lesser nobility (the knights) were united and mollified in the courtly ideal, where love occupied an important position. The more needy minor nobility (the knighthood) were regarded as being particularly well qualified to take part in courtly love, as carriers of moral purity and other virtues, whilst the lords were personified by wealth, meanness and immorality. In turn the argument for equality "ve čti" must also have seemed attractive to the city patrician of not so noble birth.

Old-Czech love lyrics also abound in other literary trends and devices known in western-European poetry. We thus find love treated as an illness,<sup>117</sup> its anonymity and secrecy,<sup>118</sup> the poet was not allowed to betray the name of his beloved (after all, the chosen ones were usually married women), whilst apart from the two basic heroes, that is the lady and her lover, a prom-

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<sup>115</sup> H. Schmitz, *Blutsadel und Geistesadel in der hochhöfischen-dichtung = Bonner Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie*, 11, Würzburg — Aumühle 1941.

<sup>116</sup> See E. Köhler, *Trobadorlyrik*, pp. 89 ff. and pp. 115 ff.; *idem*, *L'aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois* (trans. from the German), Paris 1974, pp. 160 ff.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. in *Račtež poslúchati*, in: *Staročeská lyrika...*, ed. J. Vilík, p. 50.

<sup>118</sup> There are no names of the beloved women in Old-Czech lyric poetry. V. Černý, *Staročeská milostná lyrika...*, p. 51; similarly in *Tkadleček...*, p. 120.

inent position is also held by a rival (the Provençal lauzengier),<sup>119</sup> who attempts to thwart the lovers' plans.

Recognition of these motifs in no way bridges the gap separating the extremely diverse opinions of the scholars so far dealing with this poetry. In seeking its sources, Jan Vilikovský has spoken in favour of the influence of Latin literature, and thus of forms, dictamins and epistles, and also of the poetry of goliards and of students of various foreign colleges, such influence being supplemented by the works of the German minnesingers.<sup>120</sup> Vilikovský regards the courts of the lords as the chief location for cultivating such poetry. However, a comparison of the vocabulary of the love lyrics with the minor composition *Rada otce synovi*, from the same period, serves to convince us that they were also intended for an audience of nobles, for the latter work was undoubtedly aimed at the circles of the knighthood nobility. The presence of poetry and of a specific amatory ritual at the courts is confirmed by contemporary authors. Štítný relates how wooing and courtship are commonplaces at court, and how things have come to such a pass that these are practised and talked about without the slightest restraint.<sup>121</sup> An Austrian preacher during the reign of Charles IV, Konrad Waldhauser, expresses himself in similar tones: the wooers roam around for whole days and nights with little chains fastened round their necks, which shows that they are connected with the Devil.<sup>122</sup> In the moralizing of the preachers, then, we once again find those methods for publicly demonstrating their feelings already known to us. As a certain type of behaviour and display, courtly love takes its origins from literary sources, whilst appropriate references in the works of Tomáš Štítný con-

<sup>119</sup> In Old-Czech lyric poetry the world "klewetnik" (scandalmonger) most often corresponds to "lauzengier", e.g. in the poem *Milý jasný dni*, in: *Staročeská lyrika...*, ed. J. Vilikovský, p. 59. Cf. E. Köhler, *Les troubadours et la jalousie*, in; *Mélanges... offerts à Jean Frappier...*, vol. I, p. 553.

<sup>120</sup> J. Vilikovský, *Pisemnictví...*, pp. 168 ff.

<sup>121</sup> *Tómy ze Štítného, Knihy naučení...*, p. 7.

<sup>122</sup> *Staročeské zpracování Postily studentů svatě University Pražské Konráda Waldhausera*, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1947. p. 72.

vince us of the fact that love poetry was recited, or rather sung at the courts of the nobility in the second half of the 14th century.<sup>123</sup>

In turn, we find in the *Klementinské zlomky*, only preserved in fragments, an account of a certain knight who left his home to devote himself to service at court, and this service absorbs him so much — love occupying a not inconsiderable place in it — that he cannot even get enough sleep.<sup>124</sup>

Traces of the courtly cult of woman can also be found in the fine arts. From this point of view the manuscripts of Wenceslaus IV represent an extremely valuable relic. One manuscript worthy of attention amongst these beautifully illuminated works is that of the romance tale *Willehalm*.<sup>125</sup> This can scarcely have been selected by chance. After all the execution of such a rich work required tremendous application. So the choice of this work points to the fact that interest in the courtly idea did exist at the court of Wenceslaus IV. This interest, too, often took on institutionalized forms. These tendencies resulted in the arising of new knightly orders and associations in the late Middle Ages.<sup>126</sup> Needless to say, one should distinguish between these and the traditional knightly orders, which developed from the crusade movement and suffered an entirely different fate, and which also set themselves different aims (the Knights of St. John or the Knights Templars). This phenomenon of the founding of new knightly federations, which appeared in a number of European countries, also left certain traces on Bohemian soil, though in this case we are dependent to a large extent on con-

<sup>123</sup> Tomáše ze Štítného *Knížky sestery*, p. 112; Tómy ze Štítného, *Knihy naučení*, p. 24.

<sup>124</sup> *Klementinské zlomky*..., *passim*.

<sup>125</sup> A tale written by Wolfram von Eschenbach during the years 1215—1230 — Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Willehalm*, ed. K. L a c h m a n n, 5. Ausg. Berlin 1891, pp. 421—640.

<sup>126</sup> Th. Hirsch, *Über den Ursprung der Preussischen Artushöfe*. "Zeitschrift für Preussische Geschichte und Landeskunde", vol. I, 1864, pp. 3—32; B. Heydenreich, *Ritterorden und Rittergesellschaften. Ihre Entwicklung vom späten Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit. Ein Beitrag zur Phaleristik*, Phil. Diss, Würzburg 1960; J. Huizinga, *Herbst des Mittelalters*, Stuttgart 1953, pp. 84 ff.

jecture and indirect inference — on account of the lack of support offered by source material which is both slim and ambiguous.

The first such track is a reference in the Zbraslav Chronicle to the fact that in 1319 some young knights requested John of Luxemburg to organize a knights' tournament in Prague on the model of King Arthur's Round Table.<sup>127</sup> Whether or not some knightly association or order grew up out of this we cannot say, the sources provide no information on this point. From elsewhere we do know that such occasional gatherings of the nobility — as for a tournament — later took over certain forms of institutional associations and undertook activity of a political nature (in England for instance).<sup>128</sup>

It is also assumed that such federations of the knighthood nobility represented the source of the heraldic galleries painted in various castles. M. Kolář for example suggests the existence at Jindřichův Hradec of some sort of Order of St. George<sup>129</sup> (a heraldic gallery and also an illustrated *Legend of St. George* cover the walls of one of the halls in this castle). This is conjecture, but resorting once again to comparisons — we know that in Hungary towards the end of the first half of the 14th century Charles Robert founded a knightly order dedicated to the same saint, supplied with a specific programme and imposing on its members knightly standards of conduct.<sup>130</sup> A similar association probably existed in Vienna at the chapel of St. George of the Augustinian church.<sup>131</sup>

Charles IV, for whom the courtly idea never lost its radiance, organized such orders at the German castles (at Nürnberg for

<sup>127</sup> *The Zbraslav Chronicle*, p. 252; cf. also J. Šusta, *Král cizinec*, Praha 1939, p. 285.

<sup>128</sup> U. Peters, *Frauendienst. Untersuchungen zu Ulrich von Lichtenstein und zum Wirklichkeitsgehalt der Minnedichtung*, Phil. Diss., Berlin 1971, pp. 223 ff.; P. Czerwiński, *Die Schlacht und Turnierdarstellungen in den deutschen höfischen Romanen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1975, p. 95.

<sup>129</sup> M. Kolář, *Českomoravská heraldika*, vol. I, Praha 1902, p. 292.

<sup>130</sup> A. Ruttkay, *Umenie kované v zbraniach*, Bratislava 1978, p. 46.

<sup>131</sup> M. Kolář, *Českomoravská heraldika*, vol. I, p. 292.

instance <sup>132</sup>), which came to life when the Emperor visited them. V. Dvořáková considers <sup>133</sup> that Karlštejn might also have been a centre for such secret knightly body-guards, which contributed to court life an element of allegorical austostylization.

The subtle, small-scale court culture which arose during Wenceslaus IV's reign was conducive to the formation of this kind of association. Thus in 1382 the Brotherhood of the Hoop and the Hammer was founded. <sup>134</sup> Amongst the first 40 members, who hung their seals on the founding document of 1 April of that year, we find 27 representatives of the nobility, including such of Wenceslaus IV's leading courtiers as Jan Cúch of Zásada and Markwart of Pořešín, 8 high church dignitaries, and also wealthy Prague burghers. Wenceslaus IV was entered as the first member, as special patron of the brotherhood. As can be seen from this it was — in every sense of the word — an exclusive association, though with a preponderance, so it would seem, of humanistic and religious elements (the former gradually penetrating into the Bohemian lands) rather than knightly elements.

The suppositions of scholars (J. Schlosser, F. M. Bartoš, and J. Krása <sup>135</sup>) concerning the existence of some kind of Order of the Bath at the court of Wenceslaus IV are only supported by circumstantial evidence. On the one hand the argumentation rests on the verifiable interest in courtly ideas prevalent there (the production of manuscripts of romance tales), on the other — on the decoding of symbols contained in the margins of the King's manuscripts. One of the more frequent figures appearing here is that of a bath attendant. In turn the knighthood included

<sup>132</sup> A. Schultz, *Deutsches Leben im XIV und XV Jahrhundert*, Wien—Prag—Leipzig 1892, p. 541.

<sup>133</sup> V. Dvořáková, *Dvorská legenda doby Karla IV z hlediska vzájemných vztahů literatury a malířství*, in: *Strahovská knihovna. Sborník Památníku národního písemnictví*, vol. IX, Praha 1974, p. 30.

<sup>134</sup> V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis...*, vol. II, p. 223; M. Kolář, *Českomoravská heraldika...*, vol. I, pp. 292 f.

<sup>135</sup> J. Schlosser, *Die Bilderhandschriften Königs Wenzel I*, "Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses", vol. XIV, 1893, pp. 214 ff.; F. M. Bartoš, *Čechy v době Husově 1378—1415*, Praha 1947, pp. 490 ff.; J. Krása, *Rukopisy...*, p. 89 ff.

the rite of the bath in the ceremony of initiation, as an act of purification on the eve before knightng took place.

A militaristic knightly spirit also pervaded the English Order of the Bath, whose members formed the King's body-guard. Here the rite of the bath had a long history, and was mentioned as early as the 12th century, in connection with the knightng of Geoffrey Plantagenet.<sup>136</sup> An Order of the Bath at the court of Wenceslaus IV would find justification in the knightly amatory symbols found in the King's manuscripts, and Bartoš even suggests a date for its proclamation — 1383, when the King organized some splendid carnival festivities in Prague.<sup>137</sup> But according to Krása<sup>138</sup> the ideology of this order, deriving from knightly traditions, had far more profound aims. The idea was for an overall spiritual and moral regeneration, which may have been an expression of hope that Wenceslaus IV, as emperor, would repair the damaged Roman Church and the fallen empire.

We are now inevitably faced with the question of the purpose of creating these late-medieval élite associations readily availing themselves of knightly garb. E. Panofsky<sup>139</sup> probably comes close to the truth when he asserts that these orders arising in the second half of the 14th century gathered together people from the highest social strata under the banner of ideas which were meant to maintain the influence and weight of such circles through their exclusiveness, and eccentricity in fashion and custom, as a form of protection from the thrust of younger dynamic social forces. Hence the creation of courtly codes and conventions meant to be intelligible only for a rather élite body.

Changes in the system of fighting, in time eliminating the role of heavy-armed horse knights, a growth in the importance of the burghers, the ever more seldom participation of the aristocracy in direct combat, brought about a situation where, feel-

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<sup>136</sup> J. Perkins, *The Most Honourable Order of the Bath*. London 1920; *Statutes of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath*, London 1948.

<sup>137</sup> F. M. Bartoš, *Čechy...*, pp. 492 f.

<sup>138</sup> J. Krása, *Rukopisy...*, p. 91.

<sup>139</sup> E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origin and Characters I*, Cambridge Mass. 1953, p. 68. Cf. also J. Heers, *Fêtes...* pp. 36 ff.



ing themselves to be under threat, these social strata went over to self-defence. The courts became the centre of such activities, the page on the parquet flooring replacing the armour-bearer, to use Arno Borst's graphic juxtaposition,<sup>140</sup> a change which also describes altered operational methods. The knightly idea gradually ceased to be a social reality, and became instead an ethical, but also political argument. This is how we should interpret the promotion of romance tales by Wenceslaus IV's court, the arisal of knightly orders, or the ideology of such works as *Nová rada* or *Rada otce synovi*, which, by propagating the traditional knightly ideals, represented the political interests of the higher social spheres defending their privileged position.

We might also subject our attention to the emergence of two parallel processes. For on the one hand we observe the arisal at the monarch's court of certain cultural models, which are then repeated at smaller court seats, and subsequently by other social groups. Whilst on the other hand we are dealing with a tendency towards élitism and exclusivity. So that two apparently mutually exclusive trends join to form a dialectical nexus.

In conclusion let us attempt to arrange our observations in order. Amongst the new constituent elements of court culture towards the close of the Middle Ages, we encounter courtliness, refined manners, a fully gallant and deferential attitude towards women, and the formation of élitist knightly and court associations and orders, which were meant to affirm the exclusive social position of court circles, but which at the same time set themselves the task of protecting the weakened privileges of the aristocracy.

Another group of elements consists of phenomena such as festivities and ceremonies of various kinds, which, whilst they also appear in the earlier Middle Ages, towards the end of the latter — and this we have tried to highlight — their functions altered (e.g. the dance, and the chase), they became to a larger degree a conventionalized entertainment, losing in time a significant portion of their useful applications. The court, a unique

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<sup>140</sup> A. Borst, *Das Rittertum...*, p. 230.

melting-pot where various influences and competing values intermingled, created its own system of rules, where secular and religious factors merged with each other. One should remember, however, that notwithstanding a certain degree of openness, the Bohemian court environment shut itself off and withdrew from other social groups, exposing itself in the process to antipathy and criticism.

*(Translated by Phillip G. Smith)*