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## THE BURGHERS AS THE CREATION OF THE DEVIL? THE THREE SOCIAL ESTATES AND THE PROBLEM OF THE TOWN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The sociological models created by medieval society include the most universal division into those who pray, engage in war and work. This image of society, often treated by medieval authors as an ideal structure, appears in various regions, and its existence did not end with the decline of the Middle Ages but reached further into modern times.

The heretofore attempts at comprehending and analysing this phenomenon<sup>1</sup> usually refer to the theory proposed by G. Dumézil who declared that activity of Indo-European communities is expressed in the realization of three functions that embrace such domains as power, religion and law, as well as war and the art of war together with the guarantee of economic and genetic survival. Each function in the social organism corresponds to a definite group of people, composed of priests, warriors and farmers<sup>2</sup>. Let us add that the social enroachment of the three functions interested Dumézil to only a slight extent since he sought traces of the triad in the pantheon of deities, myths, legends and epopees of various civilizational circles. If one accepts the usefulness of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. D u b y, *Les trois orders ou l'imaginaire de féodalisme*, Paris 1978; O. G. O e x l e, *Die funktionale Dreiteilung der Gesellschaft bei Adalbero von Laon. Deutungsschemata der sozialen Wirklichkeit im früheren Mittelalter*, "Frühmittelalterliche Studien" 12, 1978, p. 1-54; J. L e G o f f, *Les trois fonctions indo-européennes, l'historien et l'Europe féodale*, "Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations" 34, 1979, p. 1187-1215; O. N i c c o ì, *I sacerdoti, i guerrieri, i contadini. Storia di un'immagine della società*, Torino 1979.

<sup>2</sup> See only fundamental works for the conceptions of the three functions: G. D u m é z i l, *L'idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*, Bruxelles 1958; i d e m, *Mythe et épopée*, vol. I: *L'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens*, Paris 1968; vol. II: *Types épiques indo-européens: un héros, un sorcier, un roi*, Paris 1971; vol. II: *Histoires romaines*, Paris 1973.

the conception formulated by the French scholar as an instrument for further analysis, then one must make the reservation that it is obviously unable to explain the different forms and variants which that social division assumed in various regions, depending on concrete historical and cultural conditions. Already at first glance, it is clear that the three categories of people mentioned above corresponded to earlier stages of the development of medieval society, with a dominating impact of agrarian relations. Reality, however, undergoes changes and in the course of time one of the most characteristic alterations is the progress of urban centres. There takes place an inevitable encounter between the "old" tripartite division and the representatives of the town, the artisans, merchants and other urban professions, accompanied by an expansion of the foundation of the scheme. It would be extremely interesting to examine closer the mechanism of a transition from three to four functions, when the existing configuration of duties and divisions of social roles is enriched by new elements which emerge owing to the division of labour, both on the level of local communities and from an international perspective. This problem, although discussed upon a number of occasions in pertinent literature, has not yet been examined completely<sup>3</sup>. It must be stressed that the construction of a relatively uniform model, even one which limits itself to Europe, is by no means an easy task due to the serious differences between particular regions, both as regards transformations of social structures and the divergent tempo of economic development. The reflections presented in this article will be based primarily on examples taken from late medieval Bohemian source material, but with due consideration to the European context.

<sup>3</sup> E. Benveniste, *Symbolisme social dans les cultes gréco-italiques*, "Revue de l'Histoire de Religions" 1945, p. 5-16; G. Dumézil, *Métiers et classes fonctionnelles chez divers peuples indo-européens*, "Annales. Économies. Sociétés. Civilisations" 13, 1958, p. 716-724; idem, *Apollon sonore et autres essais. Esquisses de mythologie*, Paris 1982, p. 43-50; idem, *La courtisane et les seigneurs colorés et autres essais*, Paris 1983, p. 206. An example of the division of a community in the mythology of the Sudanese Mossi people is given by: R. Bastide, *Les mythologies soudanaises*, in: *Mythologie des montagnes, des forêts et des îles*, vol. II, Paris 1963, p. 240. Recently J. Banaszkiwicz has drawn attention to the possibility of connecting the fourpartite social structure with the comprehension of space as a four-directional entity or one composed of four parts as well as with ethnogenetic myths in: *Jedność porządku przestrzennego, społecznego i tradycji początków ludu (Uwagi o urzędzeniu wspólnoty plemiennie-państwowej u Słowian) (The Unity of the Spatial and Social Order and Traditions of the Beginning of a People (Remarks on the Arrangement of the Tribestate Community Among the Slavs))*, "Przegląd Historyczny" vol. LXXVII, 1986, fol. 3, p. 445-466.

A good point of departure for further deliberations is an acquaintanceship with remarks by G. Dumézil on the appearance of a fourth element alongside the *tripartitio*<sup>4</sup>. The French historian assumed that Indo-European legacy, organised upon the basis of three social groups, which represent three fundamental functions, does not contain a fourth class, homogenous in relation to the three basic one. It is known that in the case of Indo-European civilisation we deal quite early on with relatively advanced technical knowledge in the domain of production. Our information about the role played in the community by people who represented that knowledge is restricted. Observations of several mythologies indicate that this was not a prime role but that in the course of the growing stability of societies, the “technicians” enjoyed increasing importance, and that there appeared the necessity of situating them *vis à vis* the three main functions. Dumézil perceives four variants of solving this problem:

- 1) The addition of “artisans” to three traditional classes as the lowest class. This pattern occurs in the legacy of Zoroaster, e.g. in Persia.
- 2) Groups of „artisans” are regarded as the product of crossing or combining the three traditional classes or the most important one among them — e.g. two classes. This conception is represented above all by Brahminism.
- 3) “Artisans” were incorporated as a subgroup into the third of the classical classes, a solution encountered in Scandinavian countries.
- 4) The function of the “artisans” is, at times, expanded, a procedure which leads to changing or even shattering the system of the three fundamental classes. We deal with this type of evolution in the Celtic countries. Caesar in *De bello gallico* (VI.17,1) wrote that the most important deity for the Galls was Mercury: *hunc omnium inventorem artium ferunt*.

We see, therefore, that the possibilities for classifying new social groups are numerous and that in concrete cases the above presented four varieties do not have to appear in pure form. By simplifying matters, one could say that the “new” people either become part of the traditional tripartite configuration or created a fourth, separate element. Although in reference to the Middle Ages, with which Dumézil dealt only

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<sup>4</sup> G. Dumézil, *Métiers et classes*, p. 717 sqq.

sporadically (although he confirmed the existence of the conceptions of the “three estates” as a continuation of the old structure<sup>5</sup>), one can discern relatively early on the problem which the *tripartitio* encountered in the form of a competing fourpartite scheme, albeit initially representatives of the urban environment were still absent. One can assume, however, that the occurrence of a fourpartite division would, to a certain measure, simplify the extension of the traditional pattern by the introduction of representatives of the crafts, trade and other urban professions, and that the ground had been already prepared for this process.

One of the first images of medieval society seen from the viewpoint of the four elements is to be found in the Irish *Life of St. Patrick*, edited at the end of the ninth century. It mentions the existence of a king, priests, warriors and the rest of the population to which precisely defined functions are not scribed<sup>6</sup>. A closer analysis deprives *Carmen and Rodbertum regem* by Adalberon of Laon (eleventh century), regarded as one of the model examples of the articulated concept of basic functions, of the purity of its internal structure. Claude Carozzi<sup>7</sup> discovered in this work the presence not of three but four social groups: priests, monks, warriors, and slaves, all of whom have clearly defined functions and social roles. How is one to cross from this pattern to the tripartite division which Adalberon considered as an eternal order, and whose roots reach to contemplation of the unchanging heavenly Jerusalem? Carozzi discerned certain internal cracks in the system created by Adalberon, which lead to the appearance of binary subdivisions. The monks are close to the slaves — both have no right to express their own opinions, wear modest apparel, and are situated at the bottom of the social ladder. In turn, the second binary pattern includes warriors and priests, who share, i.a. an impact upon governance. The employment of different criteria makes it possible to reveal other oppositions. From the point of view of bodily and sexual life, the monks are treated jointly with the priests, and the slaves with the warriors. The second of the two pairs, however, manifests basic differences, both as regards their birth and

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 724, note 1; *idem*, *La courtisane*, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> K. Mulchrone, *Bethu Phatraic (The Tripartite Life of Patrick)*, vol. I, Dublin 1939, p. 93; cf. D. Dubuisson, *L'Irlande et la théorie médiévale des trois ordres*, “Revue de l'Histoire des Religions”, 1975, p. 35-63; G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup> C. Carozzi, *Les fondements de la tripartition sociale chez Adalberon de Laon*, “Annales. Économies. Sociétés. Civilisations” 33, 1978 p. 683-702.

physical appearance. The warrior is beautiful while the slave makes no pretences to equal him. Ultimately, Adalberon inaugurated the desired tripartite configuration by linking the monks and priests, and separating the slaves from the warriors. The placing of monks and priests in a single group appears to be artificial, just as the *milites* and *nobilitas* do not create a unity. Reality is construed according to the plan of a square, and Adalberon's tripartite system applied to society seems to be totally insufficient, as Carozzi stressed. The situation would be saved by observing wide criteria: those who pray, those who engage in war and those who toil. A closer contact with details destroys the model which Bishop Adalberon wished to erect. We have paid slightly more attention to this construction since Carozzi's analysis demonstrates excellently the nature of difficulties encountered by medieval authors who tried to enclose the reality of their times within a framework of, frequently, a rigidly interpreted scheme.

Also later on we come across examples of various interpretations of the image of the Christian community. For Bernard of Clairvaux there existed four groups: monks, knights, the clergy and all the others<sup>8</sup>. This model, rather close to the one proposed by Adalberon of Laon, does not specify the social composition of the fourth, last part. In turn, *Ordericus Vitalis* (twelfth century) had no doubts that the entire construction includes four estates: monks, clergymen, knights and peasants<sup>9</sup> and therefore, appears to be rather more detailed than the picture proposed by Bernard of Clairvaux. In Bohemia, which is of particular interest to us, we find an engrossing example of a fourpartite social structure from the times of the Hussite revolution. The form of the Christian community according to Jan Žižka was based on the traditional foundation of the *tripartitio*. It includes priests, next to lords, princes, landowners and divine rulers who constituted the second element, while the third one was composed of farmers, artisans and hired workers. As members of a single body, all the parts of this community were brethren subjected to divine law. This image of society was incomplete since alongside the three basic components there existed a separate estate of "divine warriors" who included representatives of all the three above mentioned groups<sup>10</sup>. By

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<sup>8</sup> G. Duby, *Les trois ordres*, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 280.

<sup>10</sup> V. Chaloupecký, *Selská otázka v husitství. Příspěvek k ideologii doby a revoluce. Sbirka přednášek a rozprav extanse University Komenského v Bratislavě*, vol. 12, Bratislava 1926, p. 55.

comparing the construction proposed by Žižka with the Dumézil scheme, which situated a fourth class next to the three prime ones, we notice an astonishing concurrence with the second variant distinguished by the French scholar. Let us recall that people outside the traditional tripartite configuration constituted a group which was the outcome of combination of the three basic classes. Examples of such a solution are provided by Brahminism or Celtic mythology. In the army of the Irish god Lug, every warrior on the eve of a battle described his professional special skill and all promised that they would try to assure a victory for the just cause<sup>11</sup>. In the Hussite army the situation was analogous — Žižka's "divine warriors" originated from different social milieus and as a consequence, created a separate category of "specialists". Without drawing excessively far-reaching conclusions from this analogy, let us note the concurrence which, on the one hand, confirms considerable permanence and, on the other hand, the spatial dissemination of certain mental structures in Indo-European tradition.

From the point of view of the presence of the town and its inhabitants in the old scheme, during the European Middle Ages one could distinguish four roads along which the "new" people arrived at the *tripartitio* construction. They either joined those who battled or defended, i.e. representatives of secular authorities, or the third class, that is, the labourers. Those two instances are an example of the absorption of the new people by the existing system, but this situation offers other possibilities for assimilation within the framework of the *tripartitio*, since new strata within the old classes can "win" a leading role or remain in the heretofore state of subjection. Another variant is the elimination of the villages from the scheme, and their replacement by the town, with the retention of the two other elements unchanged. This solution is encountered rather sporadically in various sources. The last, fourth possibility involved representatives of towns as the authors of a fourth class, which joins the three fundamental ones. Let us attempt a closer examination of the proposed and outlined eventualities.

The most significant Bohemian authors whose works reveal an interest in the conception of the social *tripartitio*, usually opted for the first two of the above variants. Let us begin our survey with Tomáš of Štítiny (the second half of the fourteenth century), a "classic" of this

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<sup>11</sup> G. Dumézil, *Métiers et classes*, p. 723.

genre in the Bohemian lands. In his *O přirovnání devíti lidských stavů k devíti kůrům andělským* with presents the social *tripartitio* very extensively, he found also a place for the urban environment. It is characteristic that Štitny situated then in the third hierarchy of his system (compose all told of three hierarchies, each divided into nine choirs), i.e. among the lay labourers. This particular hierarchy was composed of tillers, artisans, merchants, stall keepers and tavern keepers<sup>12</sup>.

Among the artisans<sup>13</sup> our author noticed different individuals — good and bad, with the latter resembling the devil. Fashion appears to have been controversial and many of the artisans who cultivated unacceptable tastes, such as the shoemakers who made pretentious shoes with sharply pointed toes, met with the author's reproach. Let us add, that in pre-Hussite Bohemia this particular fashion was very popular, a fact registered by chroniclers<sup>14</sup> whose tone was just as critical as that of Štitny. The general principle to which Tomáš was inclined in his estimation of the artisans is simple: they should perform their work well. Already St. Paul said that each is to do with his hands that what is good. Tomáš also does not spare advice to the merchants<sup>15</sup>, a socio-professional group which in medieval literature is usually the target of severe comments, an issue to which we shall return somewhat later on. Here, the fundamental criterion of work was its profit for the people. If the merchants wish to pursue their profession by disregarding this duty, then they shall resemble devils, a motif similar to the one applied in characterizing the artisans. Štitny recommended that the merchants remain satisfied with a modest profit since only earnings intended for one's own needs are approved by God, while greed has fatal consequences, and leads to gluttony. Tomáš also referred to various "sins" committed by the merchants, obviously a daily occurrence, and criticised cheating with weights and measures, as well as high prices for commodities which did not deserve them. This situation took place

<sup>12</sup> Tomáš ze Štitného, *Knižky o hře šachové a jiné*, ed. F. Šimek, M. Kaňak, Praha 1959, p. 189, sqq.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190 sqq.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Kronika Zbraslavská*, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. IV, ed. J. Emle r, Praha 1884, p. 301; *Kronika Františka Pražského*, *ibidem*, p. 404; *Kronika Beneše Krabice z Weitmile*, *ibidem*, p. 536. See also: W. Iwańczak, *Bohemian Court Culture of the Late Middle Ages*, "Acta Poloniae Historica" 53, 1986, p. 47 sqq.

<sup>15</sup> Tomáš ze Štitného, *Knižky*, p. 192 sqq.

whenever brass was presented as gold, and wine was mixed with water, or when bad quality and used articles were sold as new. Štitny regarded usury as highly condemnable since it signified taking money in return for nothing, a procedure contrary to Christian teachings<sup>16</sup>.

The system proposed by Štitny distinguishes a separate group composed of stall keepers and salesmen<sup>17</sup> who differed from merchants by the fact that they did not personally bring their commodities to town. Just as in the case of the merchants, Tomáš allowed modest profit which could not be excessive. He also warned against all dishonesty, fraud etc.

The placing of artisans, merchants and stall keepers by Štitny in the third hierarchy, composed of the working people signified that those groups did not enjoy high esteem. Usually, they were people connected exclusively with trade, and we do not encounter representatives of typical urban professions such as bakers, lawyers or notaries<sup>18</sup>, who appear in the almost parallelly written *Le lay des douze estats du monde* by Eustache Deschamps. Let us remember that the formation and consolidation of certain professional groups in France and Bohemia followed a different rhythm.

Representatives of the burghers appear to be presented in an interesting manner in the works of John Hus. In comparison with Štitny we see a considerable difference — generally speaking, Hus included the townspeople into the governing classes within the *tripartitio*. In *Vyklad desatera božieho prkázanie (Lecture on the Ten Divine Commandments)* dealing with three types of human obedience, he declared that “secular obedience is based on correct town laws”<sup>19</sup>. Regardless of how precisely it would be feasible to interpret this passage, it testifies to the growing importance of pre-Hussite town milieus, especially Prague in which Hus himself was active<sup>20</sup>. In a synodal sermon given in 1407 he mentioned

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 196 sqq.

<sup>18</sup> E. Deschamps, *Le day des douze estats du monde*, ed. P. Tarbé, Reims 1870.

<sup>19</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi sebrané spisy české*, col. I, ed. K. J. Erben, Praha 1865, p. 91 sqq.

<sup>20</sup> The special role played by Prague was stressed by F. Graus, *Prag als Mitte Böhmens 1346-1421*, in: *Zentralität als Problem der mittelalterlichen Stadtgeschichtsforschung*, ed. E. Meynen, Köln-Wien 1979, p. 22 sqq.; P. Moraw, *Zur Mittelpunktstufung Prags im Zeitalter Karls IV.*, in: *Europa Slavica — Europa Orientalis. Festschrift für Herbert Ludat*, Berlin 1980, p. 445-489; F. Machilek, *Praga caput regni. Zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung Prags im Mittelalter*, in: *Stadt und Landschaft im deutschen Osten und in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. F. B. Kaiser, B. Stasiewski (*Studien zum Deutschtum im Osten 17*), Köln-Wien 1982, p. 67-125; F. Kavka, *K otázce sjednoceni*



secular lords, knights, lesser lords, kings, princes and burghers. All were established by God “to punish evil and reward good”<sup>21</sup>. A similar list of social groups is to be found in *Postilla. Vyloženie svatých čtení nedělních (Postil. A Lecture on Holy Sunday Readings)*. Here, deliberating on the Last Supper, Hus maintained that secular lords owe their power, property and sword to God, and that they included kings, princes, nobles, knights, lesser lords and townspeople<sup>22</sup>. In the last two quotations, the concept of “secular lords” was applied to Hus in a very broad sense. During his times, the gentry revealed increasingly deep divisions and already much separated the lords from the knights or the lesser lords, but formally speaking and from the viewpoint of the binding law, they continued to be part of the same social estate<sup>23</sup>. It is true that the burghers were the last among the secular lords but the very fact that they were added to this group is greatly expressive. Hus used a similar foundation which to an even greater degree nobilitated the townspeople in his *O poznání cesty pravé k spasení (On the Cognition of the Path to Salvation)* in which he mentioned human violations of divine law, a procedure which caused Christ to complain. “This malediction pertains to all these who take lightly the breaking of divine law, and who have a much greater regard for their own commandments and decisions; such is the conduct of the pope, bishops and other prelates and monks, as well as of princes, lords and the townspeople”<sup>24</sup>. An unambiguous estimation of this and previous fragments is not easy, and the inclusion of the burghers to the ruling strata within the *tripartitio* is testimony of an undoubted promotion of the urban environment, although it would be rash to conclude that Hus placed a sign of equality between town residents and secular lords. An additional difficulty in a precise deciphering of his intention is produced by the fact that the estate which follows the clergy is described rather imprecisely, and its framework includes numerous social groups<sup>25</sup>.

pražských měst v letech 1368-1377 a k místu Prahy v Karlově státní koncepci. *Documenta Pragensis* 4, 1984, p. 100-120; J. S p ě v á č e k, *Úloha Prahy v koncepci českého státu Karla IV. Folia Historica Bohemica* 10, 1986, p. 137-171.

<sup>21</sup> V. Ch a l o u p e c k ý, *Selská otázka*, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi*, vol. III, Praha 1866, p. 257.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. V. V a n ě č e k, *Dějiny státu a práva v Československu do roku 1945*, Praha 1964, p. 155 sqq.

<sup>24</sup> *Mistra Jana Husi*, vol. III, Praha 1868, p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> On the placing of burghers in the tripartite social ladder according to Hus see: H. M a c e k, *Jean Hus et son époque*, “Historica” 13, 1966, p. 74 sqq.

Other learned representatives of Hussitism, such as Jakoubek of Štribro and Rokycana, reveal a rather undecided attitude as regards the social classification of the townspeople; they considered the official elite such as the *sculteti* and benchers to be members of the second estate, and appeared to envisage the other town dwellers, merchants and artisans, as members of the general labourers<sup>26</sup>.

Peter Chelčický, an outstanding member of the Reformation-oriented Hussite circles and an author who due to his opinions found himself in a state of almost total isolation both from the right and left wings of the Hussite movement, devoted much attention to the tripartite nature of society. He regarded this feature as a profoundly unjust principle, but regrouped representatives of the towns within the criticised model of the organization of community life. The stand taken by Chelčický, and this is a characteristic feature of this author, is not consistent and seems to succumb to a certain evolution. In his treatise *O trojím lidu (On the Tripartite People)* the urban professions are decidedly located within the third group, i.e. the labourers. The author declared that this was the place of various artisans, traders and stall keepers, all of whom, together with the tillers and hired workers, should care for the sustenance of lords and priests<sup>27</sup>. A similar social classification of professions connected with the town, although more detailed, was offered by Chelčický in another fragment of the same treatise. Here he stated that “this body, divided into three parts, in which two parts are supported by the third, permits the presence of merchants, stall keepers and all other activities with profit in mind, which is obvious greed, and often linked with concealed usury. It also includes various harmful crafts”<sup>28</sup>. A moment later, the author pursued this trend of thought: “If the tripartite body is enclosed in Prague... where a third group, composed of pagans had arrived for the defense of the truth, including numerous warriors, priests, masters and many other people, then this tremendous body will require much food and drink. The people must feed them all, and since there is no source for doing so, people armed with swords rob each other, cheat in trade and in the taverns, and

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<sup>26</sup> Jakoubek ze Štribra, *Výklad na Zjevení sv. Jana*, vol.1, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1932, p. XLIII of the introduction by F. Šimek; F. Šimek, *Učení mistra Jana Rokycany*, Praha 1938, p. 196 sqq.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Chelčický, *Drobné spisy*, ed. E. Petruš, Praha 1966, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p.130.

seek profit so that the people could sustain them all, since in Prague there is a great mass of gluttons, who conduct a war for the sake of divine truth. Other towns are also the site of such injustice, since war is waged everywhere, and the people are burdened with it”<sup>29</sup>.

The image of the town presented by Chelčický is not overly encouraging. At the lowest level in the tripartite structure, the people were compelled to undertake various occupations which were by no means the source of esteem, but which at the given moment appeared to be a necessity. The town people had to feed the higher social strata, which found themselves in Prague, due to special circumstances connected with the war conducted by the Hussites. By attacking the premises of the tripartite division, Chelčický remained on a certain level of generalizations although on many occasions he also introduced examples and descriptions whose source was reality itself; we are dealing with such a case here. The expression “pagans for the defense of truth” refers, according to Rudolf Urbanek, to the arrival of Zygmunt Korybutowicz leading an army composed of Poles and Lithuanians, who were then still considered pagans<sup>30</sup>. An allusion to current political events was cleverly introduced into the theoretical model, and against the background of the unrest described by the author, one can discover one of the basic ideas launched by him, namely, an uncompromising criticism of all aggression and war in particular. Apart from various moral and religious arguments which compel one to condemn it, Chelčický also demonstrated the fatal consequences of war in the form of a profound disorganization of social life<sup>31</sup>.

We mentioned the evolution of the opinions voiced by Chelčický as regards a classification of the townspeople within the tripartite construction. In his earlier works, such as *On the Tripartite People*, the burghers found themselves among the lowest, third group<sup>32</sup>. Later works reveal a slightly different tendency. In Chelčický’s hierarchy, the townspeople were distinctly promoted although the author was not always inclined to subject them to any of the groups from the traditional pattern. In *Postil* and *Sít’i víry (The Net of the Faith)* he often used the counterposition:

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> R. URBANEK, *Věk poděbradský*, Praha 1930, p. 916, note 1.

<sup>31</sup> Such an attitude was exactly the reason for Chelčický’s departure from the radical Hussite wing.

<sup>32</sup> J. MACEK, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí*, vol. I, Praha 1956, p. 99.

“the fat” and “the lean” which has all the merits of a clearcut social categorization, expressed by the contrasting use of those two picturesque concepts. As a rule, the burghers were “fat”, “obese” — descriptions which say more about their social status than their physical appearance. An overweight person, with a big belly, was a synonym of upper strata, such as lords or priests, who were soon accompanied by rich burghers. Rotund, red-cheeked priests gave sermons about fasting not only to the “big bellied” townspeople but also to the fat lords<sup>33</sup>. It seems that terms such as “fat” and “lean” in the consciousness of the period gradually lost their original connotation and gained a new one, which referred to social stratification. When someone addressed a *włodyka*, i.e. a representative of the lower gentry with the words “lean” or “peasant” then the latter, according to Chelčický, would immediately wish to take him to court, in order to defend himself against the suspicion that he originated from peasants and to clear himself from the nickname of “lean” for ever<sup>34</sup>. In *Postil* Chelčický included into the same group or, in terms of the tripartite division, into the second estate “rich burghers and all laymen”, probably meaning secular lords<sup>35</sup>. A larger collection of persons who were part of those secular lords was illustrated in *The Net of the Faith* which included: “The secular lords, emperor, king, prince, standard bearer, margrave, knight, lesser lord, *scultetus*, bencher, mayor and burghers”<sup>36</sup>. In comparison with Jakoubek of Štřibor and Rokycana Chelčický slightly extended the social composition of the secular lords<sup>37</sup>, since apart from the officials — the elite of the burghers — he mentions “burghers”, in other words, probably those representatives of the urban environment who did not hold high ranking offices, but distinguished themselves by their wealth if not birth. We cannot tell if they owed their prestige to other achievements, for instance, the fulfillment of military duties. Even this formula, expanded in comparison with Jakoubek and Rokycana, did not include, as was the author’s intention, all urban strata but only those which were situated higher. A certain altered approach to the issue of the townspeople as a social

<sup>33</sup> *Petra chelčického Postila*, vol. I, ed. E. Smetánka, Praha 1900, p. 197, 242; vol. II, Praha 1903, p. 91, 181, 234.

<sup>34</sup> *Petra Chelčického Sit' v'iry*, ed. E. Smetánka, Praha 1929, p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> *Petra Chelčického Postila*, vol. II, p. 377.

<sup>36</sup> *Petra Chelčického Sit' v'iry*, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. F. Šmahel, *Antiideál města v díle Petra Chelčického. Príspevek k sociální kritice středověkého města*, “Československý Časopis Historický”, 20, 1972, p. 89 sqq.

category which we noticed in Chelčický's later works, did not indicate a changed stand towards the town as a certain entity, an issue which we shall discuss later on. The above mentioned examples of the way in which Bohemian authors situated representatives of towns within the second or third part of the *tripartitio* point to a certain tendency, quite easy to capture. In the case of Štitný the townspeople found themselves among the lowest strata, but already successive authors inclined towards a distinct upward shift in the social ladder. Such an attitude appears to logically correspond with the distinct promotion of towns, especially during the Hussite revolution.

Let us now deal with the third of the previously proposed variants which describe ways in which the urban milieus made their way into the old tripartite scheme. I have in mind the replacing of the village by the town, without affecting the participation of the other two elements. We have at our disposal a rather early example of this phenomenon in France. The scheme appeared in Laon, the town of Bishop Adalberon, an author of great accomplishments for the dissemination of the formula, some hundred years after the bishop's activity. In 1128 a peacetime regulation was issued referring to those who inflict harm upon the clergy, knights and merchants<sup>38</sup>. Representatives of the third function, the farmers, had been therefore replaced by tradesmen. This case, however, was not of extensively significance since the classification was of a restricted territorial range, referred only to the town and omitted the village. More or less at the same time, a similar division was applied by Guibert de Nogent, who supplemented the clergy and knights with burghers, again totally ignoring the village<sup>39</sup>.

We have not come across such a clearcut and pronounced example of the disappearance of the village from the tripartite scheme and its substitution by the town in Bohemia. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to take a closer look at a work from the second half of the fourteenth century *Podkoní a žák (The Equerry and the Student)*<sup>40</sup>. This is a satirical poem whose heroes are a student, a future candidate to a clerical post, and a court servant, both of modest social standing. Throughout the

<sup>38</sup> G. Duby, *Les trois orders*, p. 260.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 271.

<sup>40</sup> Editions: J. Jireček, in: *Věstník Kralovské České Společnosti Nauk* 1877, p. 332-352; *Podkoní a žák*, ed. V. Ertl, Praha 1919; *Staročeské satiry Hradeckého rukopisu a Smilovy školy*, ed. J. Hrabák, Praha 1962, p. 115-129.

entire poem they conduct an earthy and lively dialogue, trying to reveal the merits of their social condition and to ridicule the adversary who can be only pitied. The satire is similar to goliard poetry, one of the most celebrated trends of medieval literature<sup>41</sup>. Society appears there as a triangle, whose lowest peak signifies the peasants, and the two higher ones — the clerics and knights. Even closer affiliation with *The Equerry and the Student* is to be found in the *fabliaux*<sup>42</sup> in which a debate between the knight and the cleric is a frequent theme. Usually, the two rivals compete for the favours of a lady, trying to present their merits in the most conducive light, and to overcome their rival. Here also the village is a frequent element of the discourse. *The Equerry and the Student* is an interesting example of the return of an old West European motif but in a rather changed form<sup>43</sup>. Representatives of the clergy and nobility or knights are replaced by people of much more humble social status. Both, it follows from the poem, lived on the very borderline of poverty, a fact which, however, did not stop them from praising their own estate and pitying the fate of their interlocutor. From the viewpoint of our own reflections we detect here a number of interesting elements. The court servant who holds a low post, nominally represents the gentry or the secular lords, while the poor student personifies the clergy. The urban environment in which the scholar exists is marked very vividly, and the cleric from the debates with a knight has now become part of the town. We are dealing, therefore, with representatives of the nobility and the clergy, albeit in the form of two paupers, the second of whom personifies the urban milieu. The village which in the *fabliaux* or the poems of wandering authors played a certain role in the scheme (usually not very favourable) has not disappeared entirely but is reduced to fulfilling the function of a background. It ceased existing as a fully fledged component in the feedback mechanism which is divided into three parts.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the still useful work by O. Dobiache Rojdesvensky, *Les poésies des goliards*, Paris 1931; K. Langosch, *Vagantendichtung*, Frankfurt 1963.

<sup>42</sup> The origin of the *fabliaux* was connected either with the town environment — J. Bédier, *Les fabliaux. Études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du Moyen Age*, fourth edition, Paris 1925, or with the aristocratic-court circles — P. Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux. Étude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale*, Copenhagen-Paris 1957. In turn, J. Rychnér, *Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux*, Nauchâtel-Genève 1960, believes that the issue is more complicated and that these works should be associated with various social levels and cultural circles.

<sup>43</sup> P.M. Haškovec, "Podkoni a žák" v souvislosti s literaturami západními, "Listy Filologické" 42, 1915, p. 23-50.

The rural landscape appears both in the confessions of the courtier and the student. The latter admits to sometimes visiting the village in order to make supplies of food. The local women present him with eggs, and the student uses the opportunity to steal a chicken or a duck, while the peasant who notices him does not dare to protest fearing the whip<sup>44</sup>. In turn, the lowly courtier boasts of the deep respect demonstrated to him by the peasants who humbly bow and call him “master”<sup>45</sup>. Almost immediately, the student replies that his interlocutor should not elevate himself above the peasant since daily he cleans the stable of manure, with no hope for bettering his lot<sup>46</sup>. Putting aside the comical aspect of the work, we see that the village had fallen in the hierarchy of milieus, and that all important matters took place in the town while in the countryside they involved the gentry and not the peasantry. Indirectly, and without formulating it outright, the town was introduced into the tripartite scheme at the cost of the village.

Speaking about the transformation of the old model under the pressure of new social forces, one must keep in mind that this evolution did not follow a straight line but included numerous turnabouts and an apparent lack of consistency. There were many possibilities for realizing that process — we have already indicated four variants of the inclusion of the town into the tripartite scheme. This is why it appears hazardous to enclose the entire phenomenon into a single universal formula. Jan Baszkiewicz in a work which anticipated the later interests shown by European medieval history in the social tripartite division, declared that the promotion of towns and burghers brought about a disintegration of concepts about tripartite social hierarchy. The burghers could not have been included by force into the working strata, identified with peasants and serfs. The old tripartite scheme, with time, was filled with new contents, and enumerated three parts of society: clergy, nobility and burghers. The formation of those three estates, each with its own collective privileges, guaranteed success to the new tripartite formula in the thirteenth-fourteenth century<sup>47</sup>. It appears, and the numerous quoted examples illustrate this distinctly, that the question was slightly

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<sup>44</sup> *Staročeské satiry*, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 124.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 126.

<sup>47</sup> J. B a s z k i e w i c z, *Myśl polityczna wieków średnich (The Political Thought of the Middle Ages)*, Warszawa 1970, p. 17 sqq.

more complicated and the changes within the social and economic structures were by no means the cause of rapid transformations of images harboured by group consciousness.

This development of the situation is not at all at variance with the directive of connecting both those domains in analysis (a *modus procedendi* commended also by G. Dumézil who wrote that one cannot understand myths if they are detached from the life of the people who created them)<sup>48</sup>, but those connections are usually rather complex and difficult to highlight.

The last remaining variant took place in those cases when the representatives of the town distinguished themselves into a distinct social class which supplemented the three traditional ones. Examples date rather from the Late Middle Ages although we are familiar with relatively early testimony of such a solution of the model of social structure. I have in mind the Old Norwegian encyclopedic treatise *Konungs skuggsjà* (*Speculum regale*) written by an unknown author, probably at the time of the coronation of Hakkon IV in 1247<sup>49</sup>. The author was possibly a clergyman, and apparently a court chaplain. The work which is a dialogue between a son and a learned father, is one of the oldest treatises dealing with the theory of state in Western Christianity. It mentions i.a. regal duties and courtly customs, as well as the divine rights of the king. Much place is devoted to the art of war and these comments are at least partially the aftermath of experiences from the Crusades. Religious and ethical problems are accompanied by questions connected with education. The father advises the son to embark upon learning Latin and French since those two languages are widely used and can be useful for a young person; a knowledge of only one's native tongue is no longer sufficient. Although the work in question reveals the influence of *Disciplina* by Petrus Alfonsus and *Elucidarium* by Honorius Augustodunensis as well as other medieval studies, the best fragments of the treatise are based either on the author's personal experiences or on unknown Scandinavian sources. The unusual intelligence of the author is founded i.a. on an excellent knowledge of geography. The most

<sup>48</sup> G. Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée*, vol. I, p. 10: "...Les mythes ne se laissent pas comprendre si on les coupe de la vie des hommes, qui les racontes".

<sup>49</sup> Edition: *Konungs skuggsjà*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen 1920, ef. G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. II, part 2, Baltimore 1931, p. 594 sqq.; W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1938, p. 56, note 2; p. 166 sqq.; S. Bagge, *The Political Thought of "The King's Mirror"*, Odense 1987.



essential from our point of view is the composition of the work which was divided into four parts, each of which corresponds to one of the four fundamental social estates in Norway in the following order: merchants, the king and his court, the clergy and peasants. None of the extant manuscripts contains the work in its entirety and at best only the two first books have survived.

*Konungs skuggsjá* is an example of a rather exceptional fourpartite division of society; the phenomenon grew in time. The mechanism usually consisted of the appearance of a fourth element composed of merchants or artisans, and in the course of time there also emerged “burghers”, lawyers or other representatives of the town professions. Many of them were introduced into a scheme of social construction by Eustache Deschamps in his earlier cited work, but for the French poet a judge, a banker or a lawyer were only additional details within the old tripartite construction, and did not form a separate social class. In France, the three estates increasingly frequently turned into four, especially from the end of the fifteenth century when trading was added to the three traditional domains<sup>50</sup>. In the German-speaking regions we find an interesting and relatively early example of distinguishing townspeople as a separate social group which accompanied the three former ones (but was placed before the peasants) in *Des Teufels Netz*, a didactic work from 1422, written in the region of the Bodensee<sup>51</sup>. The “fourpartite people” are also encountered in the fifteenth-century Dutch version of the fairytale about Reineke de Vos<sup>52</sup>.

Bohemian writings were dominated by the idea of the *tripartitio* but a closer analysis shows that one can detect certain traces of the transformation of the town population into a separate, fourth group. We deal with such a situation in a Latin students’ poem from the second half of the fourteenth century. Although it contains three old elements, which indubitably formed the foundation of society, a separate verse was devoted by an anonymous author to merchants:

<sup>50</sup> L. Le Goff, *Les trois fonctions*, p. 1203.

<sup>51</sup> *Des Teufels Netz*, ed. K.A. Barack (Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 70), Stuttgart 1863.

<sup>52</sup> G. Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, vol. II: *Die mittelhochdeutsche Literatur*, in: *Handbuch des deutschen Unterrichts and höheren Schulen IV*, part 2, München 1935, p. 352.

*Mercatores videas, quali cum labore,  
vivunt, ut familie presint cum honore;  
undas maris transeunt maximo cum dolore,  
ubi res cum corpore perdunt cum timore*<sup>53</sup>.

This is a rather sad description of the fate of the merchant who is forced to undertake distant sea voyages in order to sustain himself and his family, voyages from which one does not always come home, not to mention the frequent loss of goods. Particularly interesting is the statement that it is impossible to keep a family without work.

A slightly later Bohemian poem, dated by Jiří Daňhelka as originating in the first decade of the fifteenth century<sup>54</sup> — *O pravdě (On Truth)*<sup>55</sup> — recreated a situation basically similar to the one mentioned above. This is yet another farce about all the social estates, a genre much liked in medieval literature<sup>56</sup>. Truth, which is the hero of the work, wanders all over the world, seeking for itself a place where it could settle down permanently. It begins its peregrination with princes and lords, who set their dogs on it. A similar reception awaits among the monks, who get rid of it by saying that it upsets their monastic rule. Truth makes its way to the burghers, but the sight which meets its eyes is no cause for optimism. Here, as elsewhere, the poor weep and suffer oppression inflicted by those who fare better. Truth, therefore, does not spend much time among them, and turns to the peasants where it notices too much animosity which has dominated every possible contact. The degeneration of all social estates was the reason why Truth is unable to discover a place for itself, and, as a result, goes to heaven.

The two above presented poems, Latin and Bohemian, enable us to conduct a brief comparison. In the first case, we are dealing with clearly outlined three basic functions, together with the social groups which are to realize them, and which are supplemented by a fourth area of activity referring to trade; the latter is to be fulfilled by merchants. In *On Truth* the situation is slightly different. Society recalls here a construction in

<sup>53</sup> J. Tříška, *Literární činnost předhusitské university*, Praha 1967, p. 155.

<sup>54</sup> *Husitské písně*, ed. J. Daňhelka, Praha 1952, p. 198 (editor's comments).

<sup>55</sup> Under this title the poem was published by J. Vilík v s k ý in: *Staročeská lyrika*, Praha 1940, p. 106 sqq. while in the collection by J. Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 119 sqq., the title is: *Píseň o pravdě*.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. R. Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, New York 1933 (reprinted New York 1962); J. Man n, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, Cambridge 1973.

the shape of a square, and one of the components are the townspeople. The whole work refers to medieval satire which in a crooked mirror reflects all the faults and ills of the estates. Such a sociological arrangement is *a priori*, and unbased on the principles of a division of functions, since the occupations and duties of particular estates are almost never mentioned.

While seeking the burghers among the pillars which uphold social structure, let us propose yet another example which testifies to the permeation of this fact into group consciousness. When at the end of the fifteenth century King Vladislaus acted as a mediator in an estate controversy, the solution concerned “the estates of lords, knights and townspeople”<sup>57</sup>. Apart from the existing, although unmentioned clergy and peasants, we have proof of the independent role played by the towns which occur as a fully fledged partner, or a competitor of the estate of the ords and knights, in other words, the nobility as a whole.

The birth of the fourth level of the activity of the community, at times described as the fourth function<sup>58</sup>, followed, as we have tried to show, a rather complicated course. The urban professions entered into the *tripartitio* scheme slowly and encountered divergent obstacles. What was the reason? The *tripartitio* which was the golden dream of a society that tried to perceive in it an ideal model of its organization, succumbed to modifications very unwillingly. Certainly, essential importance was ascribed to the general estimation of the urban milieu and professions in the Middle Ages, an evaluation which must have, to a certain degree, determined the possibility of accepting a new element within an old structure. Even a fragmentary survey in medieval literature demonstrates that the townspeople did not enjoy particular sympathy<sup>59</sup>. Let us add that the role of the town in medieval culture constitutes a separate topic, and this is the reason why we take into account only those of its fragments which are directly connected with the main trend of our

<sup>57</sup> *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české i moravské*, ed. F. Pa l a c k y, vol. VI, Praha 1872, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. L e G o f f, *Les trois fonctions, passim*.

<sup>59</sup> See: *Beiträge zum Berufsbewusstsein des mittelalterlichen Menschen*, ed. P. Wilpert, W.P. Eckert, Berlin 1964; J.V. Alter, *Les origines de la satire anti-bourgeoise en France (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 83)*, Genève 1966; F. J. Schmale, *Das Bürgertum in der Literatur des 12. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Vorträge und Forschungen 12*, Lindau-Konstanz 1968; *Gesellschaftliche Sinnangebote mittelalterlicher Literatur*. Mediaevistisches Symposium an der Universität Düsseldorf, ed. G. K a i s e r, München 1980.

reflections. It was difficult to conciliate the strivings of the burghers with the official doctrine of the Church. Professions connected with trade were regarded as *illiciti* but simultaneously they embraced an ever greater domain in social life, and their annexation of the *tripartitio* was by no means a simple task. Naturally, the odium affected also people who devoted themselves to those “unworthy” professions, primarily to the merchants. A merchant who, as a representative of the new milieu, was a candidate for entrance into the *tripartitio* for a long time remained suspect<sup>60</sup>. Every activity connected with trade was usually treated as *usura*. As a consequence, it met with severe criticism. The very circulation of currency or gold was condemned. Medieval literature is familiar with the topos of the cursed quest for gold (*auri sacra fames*)<sup>61</sup>. Money was regarded as a powerful instrument of activity and with its assistance it was possible, according to the concepts launched at the time, to start and to end war<sup>62</sup>. The townspeople whose very foundations of existence were threatened, began to search for allies whom they found usually among representatives of lay authorities. The alliance between the burghers and the monarchy in the Middle Ages was not a rare phenomenon. Due to Church theory and for practical reasons, the clergy retained its animosity towards a rapprochement with burghers, while the nobility was displeased with the growing economic might of towns. Royal authority became as if a natural ally of the burghers, and a two-sided dependence emerged between those two powers. For the monarch, the towns could become a trump card in his struggle waged against the spiritual and secular lords for participation in power and influence in the state. The burghers, on the other hand, often subjugated themselves to the monarch, seeing in this step a guarantee of stability and safety in the state, and thus conditions indispensable for the

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<sup>60</sup> O. Beneke, *Von unehrlichen Leute. Cultur-Historische Studien und Geschichten*, Hamburg 1863; L. Lestocquoy, *Inhonesta mercimonia*, in: *Mélanges Louis Halphen*, Paris 1951, p. 411-416; W. Dankert, *Unehrlliche Leute. Die verfemten Berufe*, Bern 1963; J. Glichrist, *The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Ages*, London-Melbourne-Toronto-New York, 1969; J. Le Goff, *Métiers licites et métiers illicites dans l'Occident médiéval*, in: idem, *Pour un autre Moyen Age*, Paris 1977, p. 91-107.

<sup>61</sup> F. Graus, *Několik poznámek ke středověkému učení o společnosti*, “Československý Časopis Historický” 7, 1959, p. 299.

<sup>62</sup> For instance in the poem *O pěti studnicích* in: *Svatovitský rukopis*, ed. A. Patera, Praha 1886, p. 153; on the criticism of money see also: J. Macek, *Tábor*, vol. I, p. 63 sqq.; F. Graus, *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Cechách v době předhusitské*, vol. II, Praha 1957, p. 112 sqq.

development of trade and town crafts, in other words, for an unhampered trade exchange on a local and international scale. From the thirteenth century, this alliance began taking on an increasingly pronounced shape.

The strengthening of the economic and political position of the towns was slowly accompanied by an altered attitude towards them in the literature of the period. Already in the twelfth century Vittorini embarked upon an attempted reestimation of the *artes mechanicae*, including trade, while Otto of Freising declared that in Italy outstanding experts in “mechanical arts” enjoyed high esteem<sup>63</sup>.

At the end of the century, a *Miserere* by a French monk from the environs of Amiens reveals symptoms of a new approach. After characterizing traditional social roles, the author devoted some space to the new forces in the human community, the traders and jongleurs. The last category was the object of withering criticism, and deprived of all hope, but the merchants who worked for their living were granted a right to exist<sup>64</sup>. A positive opinion was also awarded by the German author, Rudolf von Ems in his thirteenth-century *Der gute Gerhard*<sup>65</sup>, and even Pope Boniface VIII defended the merchants, albeit forced to do so by circumstances<sup>66</sup>. A partial freeing from the odium which was connected with people engaged in trade went hand in hand with an altered attitude towards wealth and money. The only chance for the so-called *Rapularius* (the beginning of the thirteenth century) to lead the life of a knight was the possession of wealth<sup>67</sup>. This motif refers to a whole series of works of the so-called courtly-chivalric literature where the possession of copious goods is a condition for generosity, which, in turn, held an extremely prominent place in chivalric civilization<sup>68</sup>. The thirteenth-century German text entitled *Der Junker und der treue Heinrich* attached great importance to money<sup>69</sup> while the anonymous author of the Old

<sup>63</sup> P. Sternagel, *Die Artes mechanicae im Mittelalter*, Kallmünz, 1966, p. 85 sqq.

<sup>64</sup> *Le Renclus de Moiliens, Miserere*, vol. II, ed. A.G. Van Hamel, Paris 1885, p. 218 sqq.

<sup>65</sup> G. Ehrismann, *Geschichte*, vol. II, p. 26 sqq.

<sup>66</sup> In the bull entitled: *Ineffabilis amoris*, cf. A. Grunzweig, *Les indices internationales de mutations monétaires de Philippe le Bel, “Le Moyen Age”* 59, 1953, p. 120.

<sup>67</sup> K. Langosch, *Waltharius. Roudlieb. Märchenepen, Lateinische Epik des Mittelalters mit deutschen Versen*, Berlin 1956, p. 307 sqq.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. e.g. E. Köhler, *Trobadorlyrik und höfischer Roman*, Berlin 1962, p. 45-87; *idem, Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, Tübingen 1956.

<sup>69</sup> G. Ehrismann, *Geschichte*, vol. II, p. 111.

Bohemian chronicle from the beginning of the fourteenth century, the so-called Dalimil, stated outright that money is decisive for the nobility<sup>70</sup>. This trend which “appreciated” new social categories and professions, became even stronger at the close of the Middle Ages, but, characteristically, it is represented primarily by town literature. Moreover, money was treated with a certain dose of distrust. In various tales or *exempla*, positive forces such as God or saints offer various material gifts, while money is received from the devil or other impure spirits<sup>71</sup>. The town milieu in its discussion with the negative opinion about certain professions and money, also disagreed with the Church glorification of poverty, since such an attitude was contrary to the basic premises of urban activity. The counteraction on the part of the burghers did not eliminate crucial accents contained in the estimation of this particular social stratum. A particularly eloquent example of that criticism, which wished to banish the town from the traditional tripartite scheme, is to be found in a fourteenth-century English sermon. The clergy, knights and the working people were created by God, but the burghers and usurers were the creation of the Devil<sup>72</sup>; the same idea was expressed by a German itinerant poet who gave himself the name of Freidank, and who in the 1220s prepared a compilation of sentences and thoughts concerning the most varied domains<sup>73</sup>. There are not many such openly declaratory testimonies as those two, which defend the old social order, considered to be the only natural one.

<sup>70</sup> *Nejstarší česká rýmovaná kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, ed. B. Havránek, J. Daňhelka, Z. Kristen, Praha 1957, p. 77.

<sup>71</sup> F. Graus, *Několik poznámek*, p. 229.

<sup>72</sup> Ms Harl. 268, f. 29 in the British Museum; c. G. R. Owsst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, Cambridge 1933, p. 554, note 1.

<sup>73</sup> Alongside the gentry, peasants and clergy the fourth, negatively judged group is known as the *Wucherer*. Freidank, *Von dem rechten Weg des Lebens und aller Tugenden, aemptern und Eigenschafften*, ed. S. Brandt, Frankfurt 1567, f. 33<sup>r</sup> sqq., in chapter XXVI: *Von Wucherern*; f. 33<sup>r</sup>:

*Got had dren ding geschaffen  
Den Adel Bawren und den pffaffen.  
Das vierdt sind Wucherer genant  
Die schlinden Burg Stedt Dörffer und  
Was ein Wucherer gewinnen thut Land.  
So wird doch sein Seel Leib und Gut  
Getheilet so er todt geleit.*

and further on f.33<sup>v</sup>:

*Der Teufel der hat seinen mut  
Weder auff leib noch auff das gut.*

The problem of the town in Bohemian pre-Hussite literature is usually presented critically. The only praise is the description by Jihlava<sup>74</sup> while many authors expressed critical comments. Konrad Waldhauser, one of the famous preachers from the second half of the fourteenth century had little good to say about this subject. In his case, the criticism of the town is based on Biblical trends. Konrad recalls the unfavourable reception of Christ in Bethlehem, and wrote: “He suffered great wrong from His townspeople up to His death”<sup>75</sup>. The town appeared as the site of “damnation and anxiety”<sup>76</sup>. An important example of the negative image was the fate of Jerusalem. It was there that the Son of God had many opponents: Herod, Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas as well as other residents. It was correct, Waldhauser continued his argumentation, for Christ to permit Titus and Vespasian to destroy Jerusalem, since it gave no hope for improvement<sup>77</sup>. The preacher was not convinced, however, that this was really the case, since he added: “There remains the question whether the destruction of the town was so great that not a stone remained unturned. After all, it stood for a long time afterwards and has survived up to this very day!”<sup>78</sup>. The pre-Hussite authors who held negative opinions about towns include i.a. Johlin of Vodňany and Father Jan Protiva from Nova Ves<sup>79</sup>. In his critical vision of the town, Jan Hus used the example of the Biblical Babylon. This was a “great city, the gathering of evil people... which was turned into the seat of the devil”<sup>80</sup>. Biblical motifs are accompanied in Hus’ writings by extremely realistic accents. The poor, he claimed, should receive support in money, clothes, food and other gifts from those better situated, that is, the monks, parish priests and burghers. However, Hus complained, this is not happening at all, and the representatives of those three social groups “pull the devilish cart like three horses”<sup>81</sup>. The above cited opinion is an interesting contribution to the general problem of the estimation of money in the Middle Ages,

<sup>74</sup> F. Šmahel, *Antiideál*, p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> *Staročeské zpracování postily studentu svatě University Pražské Konrada Waldhausera*, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1947, p. 40 sqq.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71, 109.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110 sqq.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

<sup>79</sup> F. Šmahel, *Antiideál*, p. 82.

<sup>80</sup> Jan Hus, *Knižky o svatokupectví*, ed. A. Gregor, Praha 1954, p. 87, cf. *The Gospel according to Luke* 11,26, and *The Revelation of John* 18, 1-4.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

which reveals a *sui generis* relativism. Money in itself is not evil, and everything depends on how it is used.

From the 1360s there has survived a whole group of satirical works which by means of an often simple and unsophisticated language, ridicule various phenomena and situations connected with the town. The sharp edge of that irony is directed both against the crafts, the municipal offices and merchants. What is even more important, these works, probably written by burghers, do not contain a critique of the gentry, the prime competitor of the town in various fields, a fact which certain scholars explain by referring to the weakness of the Bohemian burghers who are were still unable to present a caricature of the secular lords<sup>82</sup>.

Milič of Kroměříž, another celebrated pre-Hussite preacher, did not reveal an overly critical stance towards the town, and ascribed a totally different role to Jerusalem than the one proposed by Konrad Waldhauser (suffice it to recall his famous attempt to erect a new Jerusalem in Prague as the embodiment of a certain ideal, a place for all those who find themselves on the path towards salvation). On the site of a former brother Milič founded a hostel for prostitutes who were to live and work in an exemplary fashion. Owing to a controversy with the Franciscans and parish clergy, the new community ceased to exist after almost three years, and was replaced by a Cistercian college<sup>83</sup>.

Tomaš of Štítiny, as has been mentioned earlier, held various reservations towards urban occupations and their representatives, but he was able to declare that a simple merchant can at times love God better than a monk or a priest<sup>84</sup>.

From the very outset of the Hussite revolution we observe a significant growth of the political role played by towns<sup>85</sup>. This process was

<sup>82</sup> *Staročeské satiry*, p. 14 of the introduction by J. Hrabák.

<sup>83</sup> *Regesta imperii*, vol. VIII, ed. J.F. Bö h m e r, A. Huber Innsburck 1877, p. 452; cf. M. Figel, *Historismus Karla IV, myšlenka "Nového Jeruzalema" a poměr k tradici, "Křesťanská revue"* 45, 1978, p. 113-119; J. Spěvácěk, *Karel IV. Život a dílo (1316-1378)*, Praha 1979, p. 526; F. Šmahel, *La revolution hussite, une anomalie historique*, Paris 1985, p. 68.

<sup>84</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky*, p. 127.

<sup>85</sup> The literature on this topic is rather copious but of unequal value. Cf. F.G. Heyman, *The Role of the Towns in the Bohemia of the Later Middle Ages*, "Journal of World History" 2, 1954, p. 326-340; i d e m, *Česká města před husitskou revolucí, v době jejího trvání a jejich etnický vývoj*, "Jihočeský Sborník Historický" (special edition), 40, 1971, p. 45-53; J. Kejř, *Les privilèges de villes de Bohême depuis les origines jusqu'aux*



expressed, of course, in the opinions held at the time. A characteristic stand was taken by the masters of the Prague university. The majority were adherents of the teachings of Wyclif and Hus as well as utraquism but did not support the radical wing of the Hussite movement. An attitude representative for the university lecturers is offered by an anonymous *quaestio* entitled *Utrum quelibet civitas ad sui regenciam requirit prudentiam ordinatam*, written most probably about 1412. The author claims to have been a spokesman of the middle urban strata and an opponent of the patriciate and the poor<sup>86</sup>. Such a stand was characteristic for the university during the Hussite revolution. One could mention by way of example master Jakoubek of Střibro whose ideal Jerusalem, similarly to that of Milič, took on the form of a town<sup>87</sup>.

The growth of the political role of the town and the stimulation of great aspirations among the townspeople during the Hussite period constituted a completely new phenomenon, earlier unknown in Bohemia. We had already ascertained that the university teachers were, as a rule, spokesmen for the middle strata of the burghers, but a certain change in the attitude towards towns was also reflected in the Taborite songs, which in a special fashion linked social and political motifs with religious ones.

In the song entitled *Králi slavny, Kriste dobrý, (O Famous King, Good Christ)* we read (in a loose translation): “O Heavenly Queen/ who gave birth to God/ being His daughter/. Lend us/ Your prayers/, so that we would be celestial townspeople/ in Heaven”<sup>88</sup>.

The use of the expression “celestial townspeople” testifies to considerable changes in mentality, whose acceleration took place

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*guerres hussites (1419)* in: *Les libertés urbaines et rurales du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bruxelles 1668, p. 127-160; *idem*, *Organisation und Verwaltung des königlichen Städtewesens in Böhmen zur Zeit der Luxemburger*, in: *Stadt und Stadtherr im 14. Jahrhundert*, Linz 1972, p. 79-92; *J. Macek*, *Villes et campagnes dans le hussitisme*, in: *Herèses et sociétés dans l'Europe préindustrielle 11<sup>e</sup>-18<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris-La Haye 1968, p. 243-258; *J. Mezník*, *Die Entwicklung des hussitischen Städte vor der hussitischen Revolution*, in: *Folia diplomatica*, I, Brno 1971, p. 227-238; *F. Hoffmann*, *Struktura městského obyvatelstva v českých zemích do počátku 16. století*, in: *Struktura feudální společnosti na území Česko-slovenska a Polska do přelomu 15. a 16. století*, Praha 1984, p. 320-343.

<sup>86</sup> Ms X E 24, ff.345<sup>v</sup>-347<sup>r</sup> in the University Library of Prague; see: *J. Kejř*, *Quodlibetní otázka kodeksu UK X E 24*, “Listy Filologické” 78, 1955, p. 218; “Listy Filologické” 79, 1956, p. 232; *idem*, *Stát, církev a společnost v disputacích na pražské universitě v době Husově a husitské*, *Rozprawy Československé Akademie Věd, Řada společenských věd* 74, no 14, Praha 1964, p. 43 sqq.

<sup>87</sup> *F. Smahel*, *Antiúdeál*, p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> *Husitské písně*, ed. *J. Daňhelka*, p. 26.

precisely during the Hussite times. The recognition of the town population as saintly, i.e. people a large number of whom pursued professions (such as trade) considered by common opinion as negative, constituted a true breakthrough. One must keep in mind, however, the specific atmosphere in which the Hussite songs were written. A revolution dictates laws of its own and shapes such views which cannot be compared to those expressed in peacetime.

The promotion of the towns and examples of their positive estimation cannot lead us to a conclusion about the general acceptance of urban environments in the literature of the period. Many bitter words were addressed to the towns by Rokycana<sup>89</sup>, and they were opposed with particular ferocity by Chelčický. In his extreme, anarchizing arguments he rejected all phenomena and institutions which brought to mind structures at a certain level of organization. Chelčický remained the enemy of all authorities, and ruthlessly dismembered the concept of the social *tripartitio*; apparently, he also did not spare the town. We have already mentioned the social classification of the representatives of the town dwellers within the *tripartitio*, which could be reconstrued upon the base of Chelčický's works, but this was a form of the author's recognition of a disliked reality. His attitude to the town as a place and social environment, on the other hand, was completely unambiguous. Chelčický declared that the unfavourable image of the town had far-reaching roots. By way of proof he cited the thesis that the contamination of the town took place at the very moment of its birth, since it was founded by Cain<sup>90</sup>. This version, taken from the Bible, was developed in the Middle Ages beginning with Joseph Flavius, and its adherents including Wyclif, whose writings were known to Chelčický<sup>91</sup>, Elsewhere, Chelčický proclaimed that the town is the embodiment of Anti-Christ<sup>92</sup>. As František Šmahel has shown convincingly, in the case of Chelčický violence gave rise to violence, a process which led to the fencing in, "enclosing" of the town<sup>93</sup>. In *Postil* we read that phenomena typical for the town include revenge and bloodshed, and its entire

<sup>89</sup> F. Šmahel, *Antiideál*, p. 85.

<sup>90</sup> *Petra Chelčického Sít' v'iry*, p. 286.

<sup>91</sup> St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 41, 438; Johannes Wyclif, *Tractatus de civili dominio*, vol. I, ed. R. La Poole, London 1885, p. 152; vol. II, ed. J. Loserth, London 1900, p. 169, 176 sqq.

<sup>92</sup> *Petra Chelčického Sít' v'iry*, p. 294 sqq.

<sup>93</sup> F. Šmahel, *Antiideál*, p. 77.

existence is based on greed<sup>94</sup>. Another condemnable feature is pride, which reigns in towns and is expressed in the fact that the lower social strata wish to resemble the higher ones at all cost and in various ways<sup>95</sup>. Such a statement may come as a surprise when we recall the Chelčický was a decided opponent of a hierarchized social configuration, based on a theoretical foundation supplied by the *tripartitio*. Nonetheless, we had already drawn attention to the fact that this author was not always consistent, and that he sometimes accented to a greater degree the criticism of the deformations which affected that principle than its purposefulness. The town, which was enclosed and “closed in”, is surrounded by town walls which symbolize the curse hanging over it: “As long as the town walls stand in their place, they (the burghers) will always wage a battle for the defence of their lawlessness. And as long as they struggle, they will be unable to act in accordance with the faith”<sup>96</sup>. Chelčický judged the town extremely harshly, but paradoxically the vocabulary used by him stressed the growth of the town’s importance. Such terms as *městský* are treated as identical with: *královský*, *pohanský* and *světský*<sup>97</sup>. In turn, in a letter addressed to Father Nicholas and Father Martin, he placed a sign of equality between town (*město*) and world (*svět*)<sup>98</sup>. A similar example which reflects the increasingly large role of towns in fifteenth century Bohemia is to be found in the earlier mentioned university quaestio *Utrum...* whose author did not conduct a strict delineation between the state and town community<sup>99</sup>.

The problem of the town and its relation to the traditional *tripartitio* is to a considerable extent connected with the division of labour, as well as its estimation. From the year 1000 up to 1789 the tripartite scheme “fulfilled that task for which, contrary to its initiators, it was established: the promotion of labour as a value”<sup>100</sup>. This general opinion presented by Jacques Le Goff would naturally have to be set right from the point of view of chronology and depending on the regions of Europe to which we would wish to apply it. Among the urban professions one

<sup>94</sup> *Petra Chelčického Postila*, vol I, p. 41; vol. II, p. 70.

<sup>95</sup> *Petra Chelčického St' v'iry*, p. 290.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 293.

<sup>97</sup> F. Šmahel, *Antiideál*, p. 75 sqq.

<sup>98</sup> *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, vol. II, ed. J. Bid o, Brno 1923, p. 269.

<sup>99</sup> J. Kejř, *Stát*, p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> J. Le Goff, *Les trois fonctions*, p. 1204: “...a accompli ce pour quoi, malgré ses initiateurs eux-mêmes, il avait été fait: la promotion du travail comme valeur”.

must differentiate between trade and crafts, since the estimation of those two domains of activity do not coincide. Tomáš of Štítny, as we remember, perceived the good and evil aspects of both fields, dependent to a considerable measure on the people engaged in them. His image of a society divided into strata is basically rather static: everyone should guard his place within the hierarchy, and observe his status as well as his profession, in accordance with the defined functions of various groups. Tomáš remained critical towards attempts at violating this principle, and offered different and appropriate examples. The lords try to enlarge their property contrary to divine regulations. It is well known, Tomáš wrote, that “he who wishes to be called lord, lesser or greater, is ashamed of trade so as not to reveal his greed. It is unfitting for them since they should remain content with the profits which they have from just taxes and other tributes”<sup>101</sup>. Although, as we have indicated, Štítny held a rather level stand, was far from condemning trade in general, and noticed various profits it offered, he reflected a *sui generis* odium accompanying it. He regarded the activity of lords who held high-ranking positions in society but engaged in trade to be shameful. An interesting opinion about the value of the work of artisans was noted down by Hus in his *Knižky o svatokupectví (Books on Simony)*: “The craftsman who has hewn and erected an altar worked more than a bishop, who has merely blessed and anointed it; the craftsman received less for his work, and why then does the bishop, who is like a father, take more than his sons? It is no explanation to say that the bishop’s work is more worthy of esteem than that of the craftsman, carpenter or bricklayer, since it cannot be more valuable only because it is connected with spiritual matters. It is precisely because his work is costly that we have proof that the bishop takes money in return for religious services: otherwise, a great dishonour would befall him had he,

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<sup>101</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky*, p. 170. At this point Štítný referred to the long series of negative opinions expressed by medieval authors — we had already mentioned this fact — concerning trade and merchants. This problem was already considered by the Fathers of the Church — for St. Jerome trade brought to mind deceit and endangered the soul (W.J. Ashley, *An Introduction to English Economic History and Theory*, part 1; *The Middle Ages*, London-New York 1913, p. 128 sqq.), according to St. John Chrysostome a merchant cannot be the beloved of God (J.T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, Cambridge Mass, 1957, p. 38 sqq.) while Thomas Aquinas some nine hundred years later regarded trade as a dirty and shameful occupation (*Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologica*, II, 2, quest. 50, art.3).

being so talented and honourable, worked for peasants in return for a wage”<sup>102</sup>. This intelligent reasoning is worthy of closer attention. We are dealing here with an example of a true promotion of the work performed by artisans as a value. According to Hus, it is no less valuable than the activity pursued by the ecclesiastical elite and it is characteristic that the duties of the clergy are interpreted as categories of labour. Let us recall that in the old tripartite scheme some persons are engaged in battle, and others pray while only the lowest class works in order to sustain the upper two. We can see, therefore, the dimension of the changes which in the course of time affected the traditional triad. The opinion voiced by Hus was by no mean isolated; it suffices to remember the view held by Štítný that “no estate can manage without work”<sup>103</sup>.

The collision of the town and the system of the three elements followed different courses and was determined by numerous circumstances. The assimilation of the new component by the old model experienced various resistance, as we have tried to show. This state of affairs was the outcome of the permanence of the tripartite structure which rejected or “ignored” new phenomena; furthermore, the townspeople competed with other social strata such as the clergy and the nobility, which were uninterested in their promotion. The product of this situation was a whole ensemble of negative features whose roots reached especially Church doctrine, and which the activity of the urban environment encountered. All those factors were the reason why the mechanism of a transition from three to four great functions and social roles was greatly complicated. It appears that there was no single path for the realization of this process.

*(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska-Chojnowska)*

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<sup>102</sup> Jan Hus, *Knižky o svatokupectví*, p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> Tomáš ze Štítného, *Knižky*, p. 197.