

MEDIEVAL TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Thomas F. X. Noble
University of Notre Dame

EDITORIAL BOARD

Paul Dutton
Simon Fraser University

Geoffrey Koziol
University of California, Berkeley

Carol Lansing
University of California at Santa Barbara

Barbara H. Rosenwein
Loyola University of Chicago

Cosmas of Prague

THE CHRONICLE
OF THE CZECHS

*Translated with an introduction and notes
by Lisa Wolverson*

*The Catholic University of America Press
Washington, D.C.*

INTRODUCTION

Sometime before 1120 an elderly Czech cleric sat down to write a Latin history of his land and people. Frustrated by the civil conflicts that had dominated the previous two decades, he decided to give his contemporaries an account of their past that might inspire them to better conduct in the future. He knew this would not make him popular: “men in present times,” he comments, “do nothing good themselves and so refuse to believe the good deeds they hear of others.”¹ But however difficult it might be to describe the deeds of men yet living, he found that the past beyond recent memory could be impossible to recover at all. Still, Cosmas (c. 1045–1125), dean of the cathedral church in Prague, was committed to reporting the truth, so far as he was able. A man of literary erudition, considerable rhetorical skill, and a knack for storytelling, he was equally keen to demonstrate those gifts to a younger generation of local intellectuals. The work he wrote, which he himself called a *Chronica Boemorum*, or *Chronicle of the Czechs*, is pretentious and political, uneven and inspiring, capacious and markedly focused. It seeks to define the Czechs as a nation through history, compel them to think about their political culture, and urge reform, justice, and responsibility. One outcome: Cosmas would become the first Slavic historian of a Slavic people.²

1. 349.

2. The anonymous *Deeds of the Polish Princes*, written at almost the exact same time as the *Chronicle of the Czechs*, was composed by a foreign monk (probably from St-Giles in Provence) at the court of Duke Bolesław III. *Gesta principum polonorum/Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, trans. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

The chronicle begins with the origins of the Czechs in a mythic age and concludes with the author's own death in October 1125. It is divided into three books of nearly equal length that together present a chronological history of the Czech Lands (Bohemia and Moravia) over more than 250 years. Cosmas mainly reports the deeds of their rulers, dukes of Bohemia drawn from a single dynasty, the Přemyslids, originating in pre-Christian times. A parallel theme explores the history of the bishopric of Prague—Cosmas's own institutional home. Although chiefly interested in political events and concerned almost exclusively with Bohemian and Moravian, rather than broader European, developments, Cosmas nevertheless includes a wide array of historical information and anecdotes. Scholars and students will find rich material here on almost every subject: saints, religious practice, Christianization, ecclesiastical institutions, miracles; social and gender relations; geography and fable; money, urban development, and political administration; battles won and lost; relations with neighboring rulers; the status of Jews and other minorities; and much more.

The Chronicle of the Czechs is also notable for its style, combining an almost arcane classicism with immediately accessible mininarratives, erudite citations with naturalistic scenes and characters, proverbial sayings both folksy and learned. Thoughtful and self-conscious about the historian's task, Cosmas was an adept Latinist, well versed in rhetoric and sophisticated literary techniques. The product of one of the best schools of his day, Liège, he exemplifies the education and literary style associated with late eleventh-century cathedral schools.³ Cosmas interweaves biblical and Roman authorities to create a text that nevertheless stands as a genuine original, a refraction of his own distinctive voice. He treats historical sources—whether oral tales, hagiographic texts, earlier chronicles, or other lists and documents preserved at the cathedral in Prague—as the

3. For a useful introduction to the intellectual life of the eleventh-century cathedral schools (though it omits discussion of Cosmas or of historiography), see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

raw material for his own rendering of the past. Unlike many other medieval historians, Cosmas was no mere compiler, whether of literary quotations or historical data. As a consequence, *The Chronicle of the Czechs* is a lively, immensely readable story, one filled with word-play, irony, and layered meanings.

This engaging history stands as virtually the *only* source for early Bohemia, making it the foundation for subsequent Czech history, medieval or modern.⁴ All historical scholarship on eleventh- and twelfth-century Czech Lands rests heavily, if not exclusively, on the words of Cosmas. His shadow looms as large in the Czech historical tradition as Bede's does in the English.⁵ His influence on Czech literary culture has also been profound and lasting: the pre-Christian myths in particular form a ubiquitous substratum of national (and nationalist) art in every medium, from opera, to murals, to "folk tales" for adults and children.⁶ Whatever his original intentions, Cosmas's history would indisputably shape the consciousness of his nation for more than seven centuries. For all

4. From the first mid-twelfth-century continuations (see n. 30 below), to its fourteenth-century recasting as a vernacular poem by "Dalimil," through the birth of modern Czech history by František Palacký, through the standard turn-of-the-century survey by Václav Novotný, to my own recent work. See *Staročeská kronika tak říčeného Dalimila*, ed. Jiří Daňhelka, Karel Hádek, Bohuslav Havránek, and Naděžda Kvitová, 3 vols. (Prague: Academia, 1988); Franz Palacky, *Geschichte von Böhmen: Grösstentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften*, vol. 1 (Prague: In Commission bei Kronberger und Růwnac, 1836); Václav Novotný, *České dějiny*, vol. 1, parts 1–2 (Prague: J. Laichter, 1912–13); Lisa Wolverson, *Hastening Toward Prague: Power and Society in the Medieval Czech Lands* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

5. The only book-length studies of the chronicle are both by Dušan Třeštík: *Kosmas* (Prague: Svobodné slovo, 1966), and *Kosmova Kronika: Studie k počátkům českého dějepisectví a politického myšlení* (Prague: Academia, 1968).

6. On the transformation of Libuše through the ages, for instance, see František Graus, "Kněžna Libuše—od podstavy báje k národnímu symbolu," *Československý časopis historický* 17 (1969): 817–44. For this reason, the legends are by far the most studied aspect of Cosmas's chronicle. The scholarly literature, in both Czech and Polish, is too large to summarize here. See the most recent book by Dušan Třeštík, *Mýty kmene česků* (Prague: Lidové Noviny, 2003), for a full bibliography. In the English-language scholarship, Patrick Geary treats them briefly in *Women at the Beginning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 34–42.

these reasons, *The Chronicle of the Czechs* occupies an incomparable place in the medieval history of central Europe.

The Chronicle of the Czechs

The *Chronica Boemorum* is a Latin text by a Christian cleric. Cosmas was thoroughly educated—steeped, even—in Latin: in the liturgical recitation of the Latin Bible and in the study of Latin grammar and the canonical “school-texts” of Roman antiquity. In this he was little different from contemporary authors elsewhere in Catholic Europe, all endeavoring to read, write, and work in a language other than their native tongue. Cosmas’s Latin varies considerably in difficulty and in tone: occasionally laconic, more often verbose, dramatic if rarely pompous, sometimes sarcastic, ironic, or amusing. He draws heavily on his ancient favorites and the Bible in a way that stops just short of being mannered; instead, he makes their words resonate as his own. His work exhibits a unique style, a strong authorial voice, and not a few idiosyncrasies.

Book 1 is thoroughly preoccupied with origins: of the Czech people’s connection to their land; of ducal rule and of the Přemyslid dynasty; of their capital at Prague; of Christianity in Bohemia, its martyrs and institutions; of good governance and bad; of foreign and domestic enmities. For Cosmas this is the distant past, murky and uncertain, an age of legend, hagiography, and half-documented history. Book 1 ends with the enthronement of Duke Břetislav I in 1037, a decade before Cosmas himself was born. There was much he simply did not, or could not, know: thus many years are left blank, and some of what he reports is garbled and confused by comparison with other non-Bohemian sources available to historians today.⁷ Still, in Book 1, not only the legends at its outset but many of the scenes, speeches, and set pieces in its second half

7. Especially for the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, by comparison with Thietmar of Merseburg. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

are masterpieces of historical—and rhetorical—writing. The period beyond living memory, the age of tales, was a malleable one, and Cosmas availed himself of that flexibility to shape historical memory to the ends of his own narrative. Book 1 sets the tone for the *Chronicle of the Czechs* as a whole, establishing a style, key themes, and a clear narrative trajectory for all that follows.

Book 2 opens with a hero of almost mythic proportions, Duke Břetislav I. But its chief subject is conflict and cooperation: between the church and the ruler, and between brothers. The main events include Břetislav’s successful invasion of southern Poland, the promulgation of laws promoting Christian mores, and the transfer of Saint Adalbert’s relics from Gniezno to Prague; a dramatic fight with Emperor Henry III over the spoils from this raid; Břetislav’s establishment of a rule of succession and the enthronement of his eldest son, Spitihněv, portrayed as a great patron of the see of Prague; the accession, after Spitihněv’s early death, of his brother Vratislav and the life-long rivalry between him and his other brothers, Conrad, Otto, and Jaromír; Jaromír’s appointment as bishop of Prague, Vratislav’s establishment of a rival see at Olomouc, and the resulting conflict, pursued not only in Bohemia but also in Rome and the empire; the elevation of Duke Vratislav to the rank of king in 1086; and his subsequent struggles with his last living brother, Conrad, and his eldest son, Břetislav II. The dangers of divisiveness and the primacy of the see of Prague are the dominant themes of Book 2. Beginning with the accession of Duke Břetislav I in 1037 and ending with the death of the last of his sons in 1092, this period overlaps with the period of Cosmas’s youth, his parents’ and grandparents’ generation. Near the end, he becomes a witness to and participant in the history he unfolds.

The last book treats events contemporary with Cosmas’s mature adulthood in the first quarter of the twelfth century. It begins, like Book 2, with the uncontested succession to the throne in 1092 of an exemplary, idealized duke, Břetislav II, who rules a united Czech land and promotes Christianity. But Břetislav’s assassination in 1100 ushers in twenty-five years of succession conflict, intrigue,

and warfare among his younger brothers and cousins and their supporters among the Czech magnates. In a nutshell, although Bořivoj, the younger brother and designated heir of Břetislav II, initially succeeded him, he was soon challenged by his cousins, first Oldřich and then Svatopluk, who successfully deposed Bořivoj in 1107. Svatopluk was assassinated two years later, and while his younger brother Otto claimed the throne and Bořivoj attempted to return to power, Vladislav, another of the sons of Vratislav, bested them. Vladislav I reigned until 1125, while his brothers and cousins went in and out of favor, exile, and bids for the control of Moravia. Vladislav also briefly abdicated in Bořivoj's favor, in 1118, only to oust him yet again.⁸ By virtue of the *Chronicle's* chronological structure, a variety of events intrude at random into this essentially political story: the deaths of bishops, the marriages of Přemyslid sons and daughters, border skirmishes, the arrival of crusaders in 1096, anti-Semitic violence and its aftermath, a miracle, a fire, the vagaries of the weather and harvests. All are events Cosmas experienced firsthand.

What holds together the wide range of material in all three books is a consistent style and tone, recurring motifs and language, and the author's own view of the events he reports. Cosmas is by no means a self-effacing writer; he often comments explicitly on the events at hand: "O exceedingly lucky *metropolis* Prague!" he rejoices, after Adalbert's relics have been installed there.⁹ In addition, from the outset to the end, the speeches of the men and women who come to life on the chronicle's pages bear the strong imprint of the author's own judgments and opinions. "You will find no reason, my lord king, for war in these parts," Cosmas has Wirpirk, the wife of Conrad of Brno, say to her brother-in-law, King Vratislav. "You bring back no victory from this battle. You commit a war worse than civil. If you see us and our goods as booty for your warriors, you turn your spears against yourself since you despoil with bloody rapine your own brother, to whom you ought to be a

8. See my *Hastening Toward Prague* for an in-depth analysis of these political machinations (186–210).

9. 2.4.

guardian. He who attacks his own people goes against God."¹⁰ This echoes a speech, earlier in Book 2, made to Emperor Henry III by Duke Břetislav I: "The wars you make, Caesar, will have no triumphs. Our land is your treasury; we are yours and wish to be yours. He who rages against his own subjects is known to be more cruel than a cruel enemy."¹¹ In both instances, Cosmas is obviously the ventriloquist.

The time of Cosmas's writing witnessed numerous political upheavals in the Czech Lands, most of them described grippingly in the chronicle that follows. But the *Chronica Boemorum* is much more than a narrative of these, and earlier, events. Scholars of medieval texts routinely class it within the subgenre of "national history."¹² Rightly so, because the opening stories about the origins of the Czechs and their rulers both assume and establish that a people is shaped by its shared past. The rhetoric of many pre-battle speeches, other appeals to unity, even the author's own acerbic asides about non-Czechs likewise betray—or, more likely, strive to construct—a sense of what we might call (only somewhat anachronistically) national consciousness. Whether Cosmas succeeded in inculcating this sensibility in others is debatable, but there is no question that he himself envisioned the nation as the object of the past he labored to discover and tell. In this he stood in a long line of medieval historians constructing the history of their people to meet contemporary political, ideological, and moral needs: from Jordanes and Bede before him to Saxo Grammaticus, Vincent Kadhubek, and many others after him. Scholars have long noted the intersection of history, community, identity, and politics in the context of Norman historiography before and during the twelfth century.¹³ Unlike his

10. 2.45, including "war worse than civil" from Lucan. Lucan, *Pharsalia*, trans. Jane Wilson Joyce (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3.

11. 2.12, another quotation from Lucan *Pharsalia* 1.12.

12. For instance, Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "Nationes" Nationaleschichtliche Gesamtdarstellung im Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), 573–82; and Kersken, "High and Late Medieval National Historiography," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 181–215.

13. See R. H. C. Davis, *The Normans and Their Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976); Leah Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historians in the Eleventh and Twelfth*

near contemporary Orderic Vitalis, however, Cosmas could by no means draw upon a rich regional historiographical tradition; he was compelled to initiate one himself. The one historical work we know he possessed, the *Chronicon* by Regino of Prüm, is of an entirely different character: a universal history, situating the later Carolingians within a chronological framework stretching back to Augustus.¹⁴ In writing his nation's first history, Cosmas worked independently—so far as we can tell—of models of national history per se.

As the quotations above attest, the *Chronica Boemorum* also has a strong political component. Its author shares this with many of his predecessors and contemporaries.¹⁵ Whereas some historians worked to legitimate the political order through history, however, Cosmas seems neither to glorify the Přemyslids as a dynasty nor to sanction the rule of the reigning Duke Vladislav I. Instead, the opening chapters set a tone that is potentially critical of Přemyslid rulership, especially when exacerbated by dynastic strife.¹⁶ Czech magnates and neighboring rulers, whose petty ambitions tended to worsen rather than improve such conflict, earn equal disapproval. Civil war appalled Cosmas, as it did one of his main literary influences, the Roman epic poet Lucan.¹⁷ Yet Cosmas writes less in bit-

Centuries (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997); Emily Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2001); and Nick Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity, 922–1154* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2005).

14. Regino of Prüm, *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensis*, ed. F. Kurze, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* 50 (Hanover: Hahn, 1890). See also Dušan Třeštík, "Kosmas a Regino," *Československý časopis historický* 8 (1960): 564–87.

15. See Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also, for a close study of a single late Carolingian author, Jason Glenn, *Politics and History in the Tenth Century: The Work and World of Richer of Reims* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

16. My views on this disagree with current scholarship (cf. Třeštík, *Kosmova Kronika*, 181–82; also Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 581–82).

17. Although Cosmas may have known some ancient writers only from excerpts in grammar books and elsewhere, others he clearly had before him in their entirety: Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Civil War* (a.k.a. the *Pharsalia*), Sedulius's *Paschale Carmen*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and Sallust's *War with Catiline*. See Antonín Kolář, "Kosmovy vztahy k antice," *Sborník Filozofické fakulty university komenského v Bratislavě* 3, no. 28 (1924): 21–99.

terness or despair than in real exasperation at such men and their deeds, and his political thinking goes well beyond mere partisanship for Bořivoj, Vladislav's rival. He was also personally committed to the parochial concerns of the church of Prague and its primacy over a single diocese comprising both Bohemia and Moravia; still, this by no means inspired him to compose an ecclesiastical history. Politics was what motivated Cosmas to write and politics was what he wrote chiefly about. The result is an account of the Czech past grounded in its present, set off from other peoples, meant as an exhortation to contemporaries to set a new political course for the future—if one he hardly expected to see.

Cosmas and His World

The *Chronica Boemorum* is the only source of information about Cosmas himself.¹⁸ He was a high-ranking and probably influential figure in Czech ecclesiastical affairs. So far as we know, Cosmas spent nearly all his life and career at the cathedral in Prague. Born circa 1045, he was schooled there as a boy, and later recalled practicing his Psalms in the cathedral's crypt.¹⁹ He must have been a child of notable intelligence and conspicuous promise. Though we do not know when, for how long, or under whose patronage, Cosmas pursued advanced studies in grammar at Liège, the preeminent center for learning in the eleventh-century German empire. He names his teacher as Franco, master of the Liège cathedral school from about 1058 to sometime in the 1080s, a man particularly renowned for his mathematical knowledge—though Cosmas himself

18. As a consequence, there is very little scholarly disagreement about the details of his life, with the exception of the uncertainties related to his time in Liège. A concise summary with an extensive bibliography is provided in Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 573–76. See also, in English, the recent article by Marie Bláhová, "The Function of the Saints in Early Bohemian Historical Writing," in *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 83–119.

19. The commonly accepted estimated birth year is 1045, calculating back from his declaration in 3.59, a passage surely written soon before his death in 1125, that he was an "octogenarian." For the miracle of his boyhood, see 2.34.

seems to have been devoted especially to classical Latin literature, especially poetry.²⁰ In 1086, at a synod at Mainz, he witnessed an important imperial charter for the see of Prague, whether because he was already in Germany or as part of a legation sent from Bohemia.²¹ This is the first time he figures as a witness to the events his chronicle reports.

Cosmas appears periodically throughout Book 3, usually involved in cathedral affairs, whether traveling in the company of an episcopal entourage or, once, in defense of the properties of the canons.²² By his own report, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1099, together with Hermann, bishop-elect of Prague.²³ Cosmas was also married, to Božetěcha, and the father of a son, Henry—a situation not out of the ordinary for a cleric in Czech Lands, or in many other parts of Europe at this time, when the reform imposing universal clerical celibacy was just getting seriously under way.²⁴ The legal case he pursued on behalf of the canons, concerning a contested estate in Moravia, was resolved in 1110. Perhaps by then he had already become dean, a position second only to the bishop, responsible for overseeing the cathedral's liturgy and often also the management of the chapter's property and incomes. When Cosmas first began to write the *Chronica Boemorum* is uncertain, but Book 1 was finished circa 1120, and he was still adding chapters to the end when he died, as a self-proclaimed "octogenarian," on 12 October 1125.²⁵

20. John Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 44.

21. Below, 2:37.

22. The property dispute appears in 3:33, the traveling in 3:3. Consult the index for other self-referential instances.

23. Below, 3:9.

24. Božetěcha died in 1117, as noted in 3:43. In 3:51 Cosmas records the death of one Bertold and describes him as "a follower of my son, Henry." The word "follower" (*cliens*) suggests that Bertold was a warrior in Henry's retinue, which in turn suggests that Henry did not pursue the clerical career of his father. Beyond this remark no record of him survives.

25. In the Preface addressed to Gervasius at the beginning of Book 1, Cosmas declares himself to be writing during the reigns of four rulers, whose dates overlap

Writing as an old man, one who had witnessed a great deal, traveled in the Czech Lands and beyond, and shouldered significant responsibility, Cosmas surveyed the events of his lifetime from the very center—the summit, he might say—of his land. Prague was the undisputed political, ecclesiastical, economic, and intellectual capital of the Czech Lands.²⁶ There were other important commercial and administrative centers (Litoměřice and Žatec stand out) but none possessed the constellation of ecclesiastical institutions found at Prague. Probably none was wealthier than Prague and nearby Vyšehrad. Above all, Prague Castle was at the heart of the Czechs' political life: the site of the royal palace as well as of the bishop's cathedral church; the place to gather on the feast day of their heavenly patron, Saint Václav; and the location of an immovable stone throne, where dukes were made. Cosmas's own rootedness in Prague gave him a proximity to power that surely affects his chronicle. It also, significantly, left him blind to life in the regions beyond it. On the larger European scene, Cosmas was a provincial; at home, in the Czech Lands, he was a man of the capital.

Frustration with the political disruptions of the first decades of the twelfth century, and with his contemporaries, seems to have moved the elderly Cosmas to take up his pen. An equally compelling reason, clearly, was his desire finally to exercise as an author the love for Latin he felt as a reader. He has a gift as a storyteller, one he must have learned to exercise in other venues, though we cannot know them.²⁷ The prefatory letters attached to the *Chron-*

only in the years 1119–22; this is probably the time when Book 1 was completed and circulated. Books 2 and 3 must have been composed between that time and the death of Duke Vladislav in March 1125. At the end of 3:58 Cosmas declares: "Let this be the book's end, where our duke's end is." He nevertheless kept writing, adding four more chapters before his death in October that same year.

26. On Prague and other aspects of the social order, political life, and ecclesiastical affairs described below, see Wolverton, *Hastening Toward Prague*.

27. In this, Cosmas shares much with other historians of the period 950–1150, especially Liutprand of Cremona, Widukind of Corvey, and Richer—whom Beryl Smalley characterizes as "classicists, entertainers, and partisans." Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 79ff.

icle's three books as they circulated show that Cosmas addressed the work chiefly to his colleagues, prominent Bohemian clergymen whose erudition he respected (and whom he flatters, following the norm for such prologues). Taken together with his chronicle's sophisticated Latinity, this testifies to high standards of education prevailing in the Czech Lands, even if only within a narrow cadre of clergy. Cosmas must have been relatively close to court, given his rank and the proximity of the cathedral to the palace—and he may realistically have expected his words to reach the duke's ears, albeit through interpreters. While this sometimes makes him careful, he is never fawning.

What was his world like? What did he experience in his days? Like most historians, Cosmas mostly describes dramatic deeds and turning points. The steady progress of dukes and bishops, their accession and death, provides the framework for his view of past and present, as well as the chronology for his history. Military expeditions, offensive and defensive, provide the drama. Central Europe in these centuries was a world dominated by warriors. Czech magnates and commoners expected to be at war routinely: in their own defense, to seize spoils from others, to assist sworn allies, or, in their own land, to participate in succession contests, even open rebellion. As a cleric, Cosmas hardly participated in these military endeavors, but they were a staple of life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as were other incidental acts of violence. More routine for him was the liturgical year, the regular celebration of Christian feasts—Christmas, Easter, St. Václav's Day (29 September)—that brought clergy and laity together. Like the seasons and the cycle of agricultural work, these shaped the course of life year in, year out.

Looking back over his eighty years and the generations that preceded them, Cosmas could perhaps discern larger developments. The progress of converting a previously pagan people to Christianity stood out, and here Cosmas marks clear transitional points in his chronicle, key moments when Christian truth earned a victory over older beliefs. In Cosmas's understanding, the see of Prague (founded circa 973) played a crucial leading role in this process,

as did certain Přemyslid dukes. Equally important were the early saints whose relics were preserved at Prague. Václav, himself a Přemyslid duke of Bohemia, was murdered and so martyred by his own brother in 929, to become the first and most important native saint. The second bishop of Prague, Adalbert, who fled his stubborn, barely Christian flock for Rome and was later, in 997, martyred as a missionary to the Prussians, also had a significant cult in the Czech Lands, at least after the translation of his relics to Prague in 1039. For Cosmas, however, most of Bohemia's pre-Christian tradition lies in the past, or in the remote countryside. By the time of his writing, after more than two hundred years of exposure to and progressive adoption of Christian mores and teachings, the Czech Lands seem to have been as fully Christian as many other parts of western Europe.

Decisively oriented toward Rome religiously, the Czechs had also long since achieved a rapprochement with neighboring powers, the Germans to the east, above all, but also the Hungarians to the southwest. The Poles to the north were another matter; Cosmas's generation, like the ones before it, would witness much conflict over territory among Czechs, Poles, and Germans, each capitalizing whenever possible on the other's internal instability. The Bohemians' involvement with their powerful neighbors to the west originated under Charlemagne (768–814). They could never be conquered outright, given Bohemia's mountainous geography, but they could be made to pay tribute and would serve alternately as allies and as duplicitous enemies of the eastern Franks over the subsequent two centuries. Cosmas declines to report these developments; he simply takes for granted the long-standing tributary overlordship of the German kings. Later events in Germany, most notably the civil wars of the 1070s, drew the Czechs actively into the internal affairs of the empire. Other circumstances, religious, economic, and intellectual, led them increasingly to travel: to the empire, to Rome, to Jerusalem. They would also bring, slowly at first, a variety of travelers and immigrants, including crusaders, to the Czech Lands. Population growth and a flourishing econo-

my, hard to trace in our sources, must have accompanied all this.

The dukes of Bohemia oversaw this thriving society, dominating it in nearly every way. They had far-reaching rights over the land, its people, and its resources. The personal characteristics, abilities, and inclinations of individual dukes thus had a profound effect on Czech society—as did their quarrels, death and succession, or assassination. While one dynasty, the Přemyslids, dominated the ducal throne in this period (indeed until 1306), they did not, and could not, rule single-handedly. For this they relied on a broad range of freemen, from magnates of the highest rank by virtue of property or lineage, to younger, newer, lesser men. They manned the castles, filled the armies, guarded the borders, and gathered to advise the duke on regular and special occasions. Such men had a great deal vested in their lord, as well as a host of customary expectations of him; as a consequence, they were actively involved in determining succession to the throne in Prague or in deposing an unsatisfactory ruler. The *ducatus*, the duchy over which they fought, was understood to mean the office of the duke as well as the territory under his control. That territory, called here “the Czech Lands” for convenience, actually consisted of two separate parts, Bohemia and Moravia. Moravia was geographically distinct, separated from Bohemia by mountains and forests, and also oriented on a different river system, running southeast toward the Danube rather than northwest into the Elbe. However, from the mid-eleventh century it was controlled by the dukes in Prague, usually by grant to lesser members of the Přemyslid dynasty. The Czech Lands were not a feudal society per se, characterized by fief-holding or a titled nobility. Very little is known about land tenure or social relations among the peasantry, so we must be careful about what we assume by comparison with other regions.²⁸ Still, there is no question the Czechs shared much culturally with their German, Slavic, and Magyar neighbors, even as they lived according to their own

28. Once again, for a comprehensive analysis of these issues, see my *Hastening Toward Prague*.

native laws, customs, and social norms. *The Chronicle of the Czechs* is our chief window onto this society.

The Translation

All medieval texts, because copied by individual scribes by hand, show variations. No autograph, an original copy in Cosmas's own hand, survives for the *Chronica Boemorum*, allowing us to trace the nature of his revisions as he wrote or dictated.²⁹ Nor are there significantly different versions of his text.³⁰ The various additions and continuations that appear in certain manuscripts were clearly made by subsequent copyists, a process that seems to have begun immediately after Cosmas's death in 1125.³¹ The earliest manuscripts date roughly to the late twelfth century, thus about fifty years after Cosmas's death. Not only was the *Chronicle* immediately circulated within Bohemia, it was moderately popular elsewhere in central Europe. More than a dozen manuscripts originating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century survive today in modern libraries. This is not always the case for medieval historical writings; some

29. As is the case for Richer (see Glenn, *Politics and History in the Tenth Century*). Jeff Rider has also studied the process of historical composition, though in the absence of an autograph, in *God's Scribe: The Historiographical Art of Galbert of Bruges* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

30. As, for instance, Ademar of Chabannes. Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1049* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

31. Occasional scribes made additions to the text, in the margins or the body, to include information about people and places—usually their own—that they felt were unfortunately excluded from Cosmas's history. Two such writers, an anonymous canon at the collegiate church of Vyšehrad and an anonymous Benedictine monk (or monks) at Sázava, went further, writing historical accounts of the years after Cosmas's death. Since all these represent interpolations to Cosmas's original text, they are not included here in either the text or the notes. Together with other variants, the insertions are reproduced in the Bretholz edition (see the following note). However, the continuations by the anonymous Canon of Vyšehrad and Monk of Sázava are available in *Fontes rerum bohemicarum*, ed. Josef Emler (Prague: Nakladatelství Musea Království českého, 1874), 2:203–37 and 238–69, respectively.

of the most important to us now were virtually unknown in their own times. The more manuscripts, the more variants, the more the need for a critical edition of the original Latin text as near as can be reconstructed. For Cosmas's chronicle, we are very well served by the critical Latin edition published by Bertold Bretholz in 1923, the basis for the translation here.³²

The Bretholz edition has helpfully traced Cosmas's copious citations from biblical, classical, and other late antique and medieval authorities. I have relied on these identifications and have consulted them systematically in preparing this translation.³³ Copious annotations from classical sources and the Bible are the result. Translators sometimes choose to bypass the potentially distracting apparatus necessary to convey the nature of these citations.³⁴ I include it here because I believe that as a writer, Cosmas was keenly attuned to the details of language, and the particular words and phrasings he found in his favorite religious and literary works influenced him deeply. They were as much the building blocks of his

32. Cosmas of Prague, *Cosmae pragensis chronica boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, new series, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1923).

33. My renderings of the quotations from the Bible are based on the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate. However, since its language is somewhat stilted and old-fashioned, and thus reads awkwardly in context, I have rarely inserted language directly from the Douay-Rheims verbatim. Using the Douay-Rheims as a guide, as well as the more colloquial Oxford Revised Standard Version, the translations are essentially my own and aim to preserve the flow of Cosmas's own prose. I have treated the classical citations similarly, referring to an English translation for guidance without necessarily citing it exactly. I have normally preferred editions with facing pages showing Latin and English (usually the Loeb edition). In some instances—for Horace and Lucan, in particular—other, independent English translations were more suitable. Since Cosmas chiefly cites poets, and English translations of Latin poetry vary widely, it was sometimes necessary to consult more than one translation. Where English translations were unavailable or wholly unsatisfying, the reference here is to the Latin edition and the translations are my own.

34. They do not appear at all in the Czech translation, and only very rarely in the Polish translation: Karel Hrdina, trans., *Kosmova kronika česká* (Prague: Melantrich, 1950); Maria Wojciechowska, trans., *Kosmasa kronika czechów* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1968).

chronicle as the texts he consulted for historical facts. Moreover, in many cases, Cosmas clearly intended the words he borrowed from ancient authorities to resonate with his readers as citations, to trigger associations from their original contexts that would reinforce or ironically inflect their meaning in his own work. When Cosmas reaches for a more elevated register, he expects his audience to appreciate and understand it in manifold ways. For educated Christian clerics routinely reciting the Bible as part of the liturgy, even two words might suggest a meaningful comparison to the language and context of scripture. The same holds, though somewhat differently, for those ancient writers who formed the "core curriculum" to train future clerics across Catholic Europe to read and write in Latin. While it is customary to identify biblical references within the main text in parenthesis, I have placed them in the notes; Cosmas so frequently interweaves classical and biblical citations that it would give the reader an artificial impression to present them differently. Likewise, there is much cross-referencing in the notes, as Cosmas recycles handy phrases, repeated to provide continuity across the whole *Chronicle* but modified to endow each sentence with originality.

Cosmas's rhymed prose and occasional forays into verse are rendered as straight prose here. The usual reasons for this apply: in the hands of anyone other than a poet, translation in verse results in terrible English. Another reason is Cosmas's habit of inserting one or two lines of verse into the middle of a sentence, or interrupting several lines of verse with half a line of prose. Many of these verses are quotations or composites from classical poetry. Though clearly a fan of both epic and Christian poetry, Cosmas was less a poet himself (as he admits) than a dramatist or a storyteller. In a few instances, signaled in the notes, I judge Cosmas to have employed verse rather than prose self-consciously, to convey particular meaning.

I have provided a range of explanatory notes for undergraduates, for those unfamiliar with central Europe in the Middle Ages, and for scholars new to Cosmas. These identify people, explain

technical terms, and indicate Cosmas's reliance upon older written texts. Their aim is to explain, just that, rather than to offer a kind of alternative or corrective narrative to Cosmas's. Though Cosmas is often factually mistaken, especially in Book 1, I have not made emendations to the body of the text. In those instances where Cosmas's confusion complicates the identification of specific individuals, I have explained the situation as succinctly as possible in the notes. The one consistent alteration to the original medieval text is the adoption of modern methods of dating; occasionally I have left in place Cosmas's astrological terminology, but otherwise all references to *ides* and *kalends* have been effaced in favor of the equivalents provided in the Bretholz edition. Overall, the annotations are designed to provide minimal guidance without offering interpretation. They do not engage in debates with, or heavily cite, the specialized literature. The bibliography, likewise, is not meant to be comprehensive of the matters treated in the chronicle; it is merely a list of works cited in the notes.

Significantly, the majority of the individuals mentioned here, including the addressees of Cosmas's prefaces, are unknown outside the *Chronicle*. Annotations have been provided only when other sources offer independent information about a person—a circumstance that chiefly applies to popes, saints, and non-Czech kings, bishops, and noblemen. Přemyslid rulers of Bohemia and Moravia are listed as part of this work's preliminary material and in the genealogical chart. A list of bishops of Prague and Olomouc is also provided. All these are key players in the story as it unfolds; as such they do not come in for annotations. Readers should consult the charts, use the index, and follow the cross-referencing should confusion arise. Likewise, most of the important place names mentioned can be found on the maps provided; others have been explained, where necessary and possible, in the notes. The maps were created specifically for this translation: they reflect Cosmas's worldview.³⁵

35. I have relied particularly on the excellent map that accompanies Wojciechowska's Polish translation (see previous note).

Cosmas's choice of language opens a window onto medieval Czech social history. Translators are necessarily careful not to import anachronisms in the process of rendering Latin terms, themselves imperfectly equivalent to the vernacular words in everyday use. Thus it is expedient to clarify the translation of certain words that appear throughout the chronicle. For instance, *regnum* may be translated either "kingdom" or "realm," dependent as it is on the Latin verb for ruling, *regere*, which also gives rise to *rex*, king. Since Bohemia was not a kingdom but a duchy, it is rendered here as "realm." Cosmas also sometimes uses the familiar Roman phrase *res publica*, literally meaning "public affairs," as a singular noun to stand for the Czech polity. This is the phrase from which the English "republic" derives, but such a word obviously suggests a variety of inappropriate connotations. I have therefore retained the Latin in all instances.

Following other translators of earlier medieval texts, I have consistently rendered *urbs* and *civitas* as "burg."³⁶ I have generally translated *oppidum* as "fortress" and *castellum* or *castrum* (where it refers to a castle and not a military camp) as "castle." Since *oppidum* generally refers to a larger fortified settlement, a "fortress" is little different from a "burg." And while *castrum* sometimes refers to an isolated fortification, other times, again, the implication is the same as "burg." All these words indicate populated settlements surrounded by walls, but it is difficult to know whether they are military forts with garrisons, fortresses serving as administrative centers, castles that have acquired settlers within or immediately outside the walls, or larger urban and protourban economic centers. Above all, Cos-

36. David Warner puts it well in his Introduction to Thietmar's *Chronicon*: "As with other early medieval authors, Thietmar faced the challenge of trying to describe the institutions and practices of his own day with a language (Latin) developed in the far different circumstances of classical and late Antiquity. At times, this language was clearly inadequate. So, for example, Thietmar uses the terms *urbs* and *civitas* to describe everything from a bustling commercial or ecclesiastical centre to a fortress occupied by nothing more than a temporary garrison. Except where a locale can clearly be identified as an urban settlement (e.g., Madgeburg), I have employed the relatively neutral term 'burg'" (64).

mas does not deploy these terms systematically or consistently: he may refer to the same place as *civitas* or *urbs*, *urbs* or *oppidum*, in the course of a few chapters. Moreover, although sometimes a comment about a particular *civitas* seems to refer to the town and its population, more often the context suggests that the administrative authority over a town, conferred upon a magnate or lesser Přemyslid, is at issue—power that was probably wielded from, and physically symbolized by, the town's fortification.³⁷

With regard to Prague, Cosmas's descriptions are often sufficiently specific to distinguish Prague Castle, located on a promontory on the left bank of the Vltava, from the urban settlement below it and across the river. Anyone familiar with the geography of today's Prague can immediately picture the castle's relationship to the town, albeit on a reduced, twelfth-century scale. Then as now Prague Castle housed both the ruler's palace and the cathedral church; it was also the site for a duke's enthronement and the home of the women's monastery dedicated to St. George. In many instances it is clear from the context that *urbs* means the castle proper: for instance, in reference to a siege or an event at the cathedral. In translation, I have nonetheless retained the usual "burg of Prague"; readers should themselves be able to infer when the castle is meant, with help from the annotations.

Metropolis is the only word Cosmas applies to towns very deliberately. It specifically signals a burg of particular preeminence, whether ecclesiastical or political. He applies it often to Prague, chiefly on what might be called state occasions—for instance, the enthronement of a duke or the return of a newly consecrated bishop. In these instances, *metropolis* again signifies Prague Castle, the location of both the ducal throne and the cathedral church. In medieval Latin, *metropolis* also regularly connotes an archepiscopal see (a metropolitan church), and Cosmas employs it in that sense as well, especially of Mainz, also of Gniezno. Since Cosmas uses the word *metropolis* in nothing like the modern sense, with connota-

37. See Wolverton, *Hastening Toward Prague*, 31–37. For this reason I have been more conservative in this translation even than Warner (cited in the previous note).

tions of territorial expanse and population size, I have generally left the Latin word in italics.

The ubiquitous term *miles* I have consistently rendered "warrior." I chose "warrior" over "knight," or even just "soldier," as the term that carries the least inappropriate baggage. The word "knight" might easily be misunderstood in light of feudal or chivalric ideals, anachronistic even for Germany in this period, rather than in the rudimentary sense of a mounted professional soldier.³⁸ Yet "soldier" perhaps fails to register the often elite nature of military service, conjuring instead any man with a ready weapon. "Warrior" seemed a safe middle ground, a word open to interpretation. Readers should remain aware, above all, that Cosmas's chronicle is our only source for what *miles* meant in a specifically Bohemian or Moravian context before 1125—whether in terms of military equipment and activity or social rank, lineage, and shared ideals—and that, as noted above, social conditions in the Czech Lands were not quite the same as those prevailing elsewhere.³⁹

Nobilis translates as "noble," but it is hardly the primary designation for the social elite. Far more common are words like *proceres*, which I have generally rendered "leaders" or "leading men," and *seniores* or *maiores natu*, which literally means elders but substantially connotes the same as *proceres*. *Comes*, which in other regions might normally be translated "count," is always left untranslated, as the term does not carry the same hierarchical or vassalic connotations in the Czech Lands that it does elsewhere in Europe. Sometimes *comites* in the plural seems akin to *proceres*, but it is also used as an individual title for men of prominence.⁴⁰ Cosmas also routinely uses the word "satraps," which he takes from the Old Testament, to mean the same thing as *comites* or *proceres*. While "satraps" is unique to Cosmas, his use of *comes* accords with other mid- and late twelfth-century Czech sources.

38. Warner voices similar reservations in his Introduction to Thietmar's *Chronicon* (64).

39. Again, see my *Hastening Toward Prague*, esp. 37–41.

40. This usage persisted in the Czech Lands well beyond Cosmas's time and appears even in late twelfth-century charters (*ibid.*, 45).

In most instances I have translated proper names according to ethnicity and relied on the standard modern usage within the specialized historiography (though no uniform standard exists per se). For Czech personal names I have taken Karel Hrdina's Czech translation as authoritative.⁴¹ It is common practice to use English equivalents, such as Henry or Judith, where such exist, and that has been my habit here. In the specific case of *Odabricus*, an originally German name that was in common enough use in the Czech Lands to have shifted phonetically in accordance with Czech pronunciation, I have used different translations for German and Czech individuals: the holy bishop of Augsburg is called Ulrich, while the Přemyslid duke bearing his name is called Oldřich. This also has the advantage of avoiding confusion. The reader should likewise be able easily to distinguish the Czechs named Boleslav and Vladislav from Polish dukes named Bolesław and Władysław (though of course these names are the same and these men are often relatives named for one another). Place names are given according to modern usage unless otherwise appropriate or common English equivalents exist, such as for Prague (Praha in Czech).

Cosmas has frequent occasion to refer to German rulers, the Czech dukes' neighbors to the west, acknowledged by them as overlords. For those unfamiliar with medieval German history, it might be useful to explain that such men as Otto II or Henry III were both kings of the Germans *and* emperors of the Romans. They did not become emperors automatically upon their coronation as kings, however; a separate coronation was required, performed exclusively by the pope and in Rome. As a consequence, there was often a time lag before a king could assume the title of emperor. At the very least, an arduous journey across the Alps had to be arranged, leaving German territories to fend for themselves; uncooperative popes could create further difficulties. Nonetheless, all but one—Henry I (919–36)—of the medieval German kings was also crowned emperor. Cosmas is not particularly fastidious about

41. Hrdina, *Kosmova kronika česká*.

the titles he gives these rulers, calling some emperors or caesars before their formal assumption of the title, or kings as it suits him. However, mindful of the fact that Henry I was king but not emperor, Cosmas *numbers* the three eleventh-century emperors named Henry differently than is customary in modern scholarship (i.e., his Henry II is our Henry III). I have retained Cosmas's original number but also, to prevent confusion, provided the modern equivalent in brackets.

As a rule, throughout this translation square brackets in the text indicate my own insertions: for cross-referencing, as a quick clarification, or to emphasize the original Latin or relevant Czech word. Ordinary parentheses bracket Cosmas's own parenthetical statements.

One final word: I have made a conscious decision to translate this work's title, *Chronica Boemorum* as "The Chronicle of the Czechs," rather than as "The Bohemian Chronicle," or "A Chronicle of Bohemia" or "of the Bohemians." The Latin *Boemia*, for the crater-shaped region comprising the watershed of the Elbe River, originates with the ancient Romans and derives from the name of the Celtic inhabitants, the Boii, documented there as early as the second century BC. Although successive waves of migration displaced the Celts, medieval Latin authors retained the older name for the region, and both the English Bohemia and the German *Böhmen* are based on this usage of *Boemia*. The Slavic inhabitants of the place, however, call it *Čechy*. Whereas Latinate outsiders used *Boemii* or *Boemani* (with a number of spelling variations), the inhabitants call themselves *Češi*, with *Čech* the masculine singular form (hence English "Czech") and *Česka* the feminine. *Morava*, however, is territorially distinct from *Čechy*, though the inhabitants of Moravia are considered ethnically Czech. As a consequence, to translate *Boemii* as "Czechs" includes the residents of both Bohemia and Moravia, whereas rendering it "Bohemians" excludes the Moravians.⁴² In the

42. Hence, in 1997, with the establishment of Slovakia as an independent state, the "Czecho-" parts of the former Czechoslovakia were officially designated the "Czech Republic."

chronicle, *Boemii* sometimes distinguishes Bohemians from Moravians, but usually it means Czechs. While Cosmas gives short shrift to internal Moravian developments, to be sure, he clearly understands both its inhabitants and their land as part of his story. This is the history of *both* a place *and* a people—as we will soon see—yet Cosmas's own title emphasizes the people: *Chronica Boemorum*, rendered here as *The Chronicle of the Czechs*.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CZECHS

✠ BOOK ONE

Prologue Addressed to Provost Severus¹

To Lord Severus, provost of the church of Mělník,² endowed with both literary knowledge and spiritual understanding, from Cosmas, dean in name only of the church of Prague,³ who after the contest of this life will have his reward in the celestial kingdom. I submit myself to your paternity with so much love and devotion of my mind that—I call God as my witness—I cannot speak, just as human reason cannot comprehend a love so great. True love can in no respect be kept one's own, private or hidden; it should be expressed to the one whom it loves with sincere affection. If true love had not been present, I would by no means have presumed to offer these, my senile delusions, to a man of such authority. Seeking something to offer you, I truly sought something pleasant or idle, but I find nothing as laughable as this little work of mine. If we laugh gently when we see someone dash his foot against a

1. Of the two prefatory letters here at the chronicle's beginning, this one was probably intended as a prologue to the whole text and was added at a point when Cosmas had all three books nearly complete. Notice that it stresses the author's old age.

2. The provost was the head of a collegiate chapter, rather like the abbot of a monastery, except that the members of the chapter were secular canons charged with ministering to the laity. The chapter at Mělník, an older castle situated at the confluence of the Elbe and the Vltava, was established sometime before the middle of the eleventh century. Typical of such early foundations, no early documentation exists. See Wolverton, *Hastening Toward Prague*, 115.

3. On Cosmas's rank as dean, see the Introduction. The remark here that he is dean "in name only" may suggest that, by the time this was written, he had effectively retired from his duties as dean, though he retained the formal rank and title.

stone,⁴ you will see so many of my stumblings in this work and so many errors of the grammatical art that if you wished to laugh at every one, you would be able to do so beyond what is fitting to a human being. Farewell. Whether these senile trifles please or displease you alone, I ask that no third eye see them.⁵

Preface to the Work that Follows, Addressed to Master Gervasius⁶

To Archdeacon Gervasius,⁷ fully imbued with the pursuits of the liberal arts and anointed with the wisdom of every kind of knowledge, from Cosmas, a servant of the servants of God and Saint Václav⁸ (though he is hardly worthy to be so called): a gift

4. Mt 4:6 and Lk 4:11.

5. Here and elsewhere in his prefatory letters, Cosmas adopts a false humility that is entirely typical of medieval authors. This "humility trope," involving protestations of intellectual inadequacy, pleas for correction, and groveling flattery of the addressee, was a kind of literary etiquette, sincere in its insincerity. It was usually expressed in difficult, arcane Latin which belied the author's contradictory claims of inability to achieve a proper, erudite style. Readers should, therefore, not take too seriously Cosmas's request that Severus not share his laughable, error-riddled trifles with others, or similar statements in the prefaces that follow.

6. This prefatory letter was probably written when Cosmas circulated the first book (of the three he planned) among friends. The reign dates at the end point to its composition between 1119 and 1122. Most scholars consider this the date when the letter was attached to a finished or nearly finished Book 1, rather than the point at which it was begun or substantially written.

7. A clerical office subordinate to the bishop with administrative authority within the diocese, whether over a particular subregion or the whole. The specific functions of an archdeacon in early twelfth-century Bohemia are unknown. The implication here is that Gervasius, like Cosmas, was a member of the cathedral chapter, though he may have had duties that kept him away from Prague regularly, hence the need for such a formal letter. As with the other men named in Cosmas's prefaces, we know nothing of Gervasius beyond what is written here.

8. Another way of indicating the cathedral church in Prague, which was originally dedicated to St. Vitus but was often known as well by the other martyrs buried there, Sts. Václav and Adalbert, both of them native Czechs. Wolverson, *Hastening Toward Prague*, 158.

of owed prayer and a pledge of mutual love. When you receive this little sheet, know that I have sent you a chronicle of the Czechs. I resolved to send it, although polished by no charm of grammatical art but arranged simply and scarcely in a Latin manner, to be examined by your singular prudence so that by your wise judgment it might either be rejected altogether, so that no one reads it, or if it is judged worthy of reading, it might be smoothed to perfection⁹ by the file of your examination. What I especially ask is that, through you, it might be explained afresh in better Latin. For the only value I calculate in my work is that either you, on whom God conferred wisdom, or others who are more knowledgeable, might make use of my work as the material for demonstrating their own knowledge to posterity, thus making a great monument to their own names forever¹⁰ (just as Virgil used the fall of Troy and Statius the Aeacidæ).¹¹

Therefore I have taken the origin of the narrative from the first inhabitants of the land of the Czechs. The few things that I learned from the fabulous stories of old men, I set out for the love of all good men, so far as I know and am able, not from the ambition of human pride but lest the tales fall altogether into oblivion.

I always burn to please the good and the skilled, and I am not afraid to displease the ignorant and the unschooled. I know several

9. Horace *Ars poetica* 294. Although Cosmas cites only two words, *ad unguem*, they indeed appear among Horace's comments on the virtues of revision—honing, sharpening, paring down the text. Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, trans. Burton Raffel, with James Hind and David Armstrong (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 55.

10. Cf. Jdt 9:15, Ex 3:15, and Gn 12:2 (components of all three verses are here combined).

11. The Aeacidæ are the lineage of warriors that included Achilles, the subject of Statius's unfinished epic poem *Achilleid*. At first glance Gervasius is here simply enjoined to use Cosmas's stories as the building blocks for his own literary works, as Virgil did with the tales of Troy and Statius for Achilles. Yet, since both those poets were working from one of antiquity's most revered and authoritative texts, Homer's *Iliad*, Cosmas may also be making bold claims for his own achievement under the guise of humility. See Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. Joseph B. Solodow, rev. Don Fowler and Glenn W. Most (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 487.

rivals exist and that they will die of laughter and scorn¹² when they have seen the form of this work. Such men are only taught to disparage others and know nothing good per se to bequeath themselves. Concerning such people, the prophet sings: "They are wise in doing evil, but do not know how to do good."¹³ They only look at things with the eyes of Lynceus¹⁴ and fix in their hearts by memory, as if in stone, which phrases were improper or where my drowsy mind faltered. What's to wonder at, when even good Homer nods?¹⁵ I am neither frightened of their envious disparaging nor am I flattered by ironic fawning. Let those who want to, read it, and those who don't, cast it aside. But you, dearest brother, if you love me as your friend, if you are touched by my prayers, gird the loins¹⁶ of your mind and take into your hand a scraper, an ink bottle, and a pen, so that you can scratch off what is superfluous and insert over it whatever is missing. By changing improper phrases to their proper ones, your skill should mitigate my stupidity. I am not embarrassed to be corrected by a friend, and so I beg to be improved by my friends with great affection.

This first book contains the deeds of the Czechs, so far as it was permitted me to know them, set in order until the time of

12. Cf. Ez 23:32 and Ps 43:14 in combination with Terence *Eunuch* 3.434, in Terence, ed. and trans. John Barsby (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Cosmas's Latin *emori risu subsannationis* draws on the biblical phrase *subsannationem et derisum* (i.e., scorn and derision) as well as on Terence's *risu emoriri* (died of laughter).

13. Jer 4:22.

14. One of the mythic Argonauts, known for his keen eyesight. The phrase is used by Horace, Boethius, and probably others.

15. Horace *Ars poetica* 359. Even as he confesses irritation at Homer's occasional failing, Horace's point is that even a poet as good as Homer did falter and that his doing so was understandable given the length of his poem. In Raffels's loose translation of Horace: "I scowl too, when even Homer nods, though [sleep] can't really be kept away from a really long poem" (25; cf. 58 for a literal rendering). In effect, Cosmas is claiming an indulgence for himself similar to the one for Homer, and chiding his detractors with Horace's exemplary attitude. Two sentences later he switches authorities and invokes verbatim Jerome's call to either read his text willingly or toss it aside (Jerome, *Praefatio Hieronymi in Ezram*, PL 28:1474).

16. 2 Mc 10:25 and often elsewhere.

Břetislav I, the son of Duke Oldřich. Because I was unable to uncover a chronicle, and thus to know when or in whose times the deeds took place that I will now relate, but I did not wish to invent the dates at the beginning of this book, I began to order the years of the Lord's incarnation only from the time of Bořivoj, the first Catholic duke.¹⁷ Farewell. By your command I will either gird myself to disclose the rest, or I will halt my step¹⁸ on the spot and put an end to my silly undertakings. Live, be well, and may you not reject my wishes, but fulfill them.

This chronicle was composed when Henry IV [V] reigned as emperor of the Romans and Pope Calixtus governed the holy church of God, in the time of Vladislav, duke of the Czechs, and also of Hermann, bishop of the church of Prague.¹⁹ So too, it is given in what follows to all those wishing to know, in which years of Christ or indictions²⁰ the events occurred.

Here Begins the First Little Book of the Chronicle of the Czechs, Which Cosmas, Dean of the Church of Prague, Composed

1.1. After the effusion of the Flood, after the confusion of evil-minded men building a Tower, in divine revenge for such illicit and audacious deeds, the human species, which then consisted in about seventy-two men,²¹ was divided into as many diverse kinds of languages as there were heads of men—as we learned from the

17. The first date provided by Cosmas is 894; see 2.14.

18. Virgil *Aeneid* 6.465, in Virgil, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

19. Henry V (1106–25), Pope Calixtus II (1119–24), Duke Vladislav I (1109–17, 1120–25), and Bishop Hermann (1099–22). The overlap between these reigns is either 1119–22 or 1120–22, depending upon how seriously Cosmas interprets Vladislav's temporary abdication of the throne from 1117 to 1120.

20. A fifteen-year dating cycle originating in the late Roman Empire and used in the Middle Ages, especially to date various documents. Cosmas will never use it, though it appears in the imperial privilege of 1086 (2.37).

21. Cf. Gn 10, where Noah's sons' descendants, born after the flood, are listed.

historical account. Each and every man a fugitive and a wanderer,²² they roamed throughout various regions of the earth, dispersed far and wide.²³ And even while weakening in body from day to day,²⁴ they multiplied, in generations and generations. Whence the human species, with God arranging everything according to his will, was so dispersed throughout the sphere of the earth that after many ages it came even into these regions of Germania. For this whole region, located under the north pole, extending from the Thanay [River Don] and into the west, is called by the general term "Germania" (although each of the places in it has its own name).²⁵ We mention these things so that we might better be able to accomplish what we declared as our intention. In the meantime, before we come to the beginning of the narrative, we will try to explain briefly the location of this Czech land and whence it was assigned its name.

1.2. In the division of the globe according to geometricians Asia comprises half of the world and Europe and Africa half.²⁶ In Europe is situated Germania, in whose regions, across the northern plain, is a place spread very wide, girded everywhere by mountains in a circle. They are stretched in a marvelous way around the whole land, so that to the eye, it is as if one continuous mountain circles and protects all that land.

At that time great solitudes of forest prevailed on the surface of the land, without human inhabitants,²⁷ but very loud with swarms of bees and the singing of birds. Flocks of animals wandered through

22. Gn 4:12, in reference to Cain.

23. Cf. Gn 11:8-9, in reference to the Tower of Babel.

24. Cf. 2 Kgs 3:1.

25. This sentence is lifted from Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* (132), who is himself citing Paul the Deacon, *The History of the Lombards*, trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), 1.

26. Cf. Sallust *War with Jugurtha* 17.3, in Sallust, ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931). Cf. also Isidore *Etymologies* 14.2.3, in Isidore of Seville, *Etimologías*, ed. and trans. José Oroz Reta and Manuel-A. Marcos Casquero (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1982).

27. Cf. Jer 33:10, where the land is without animals as well.

the lonely places of the land, terrified by no one. Almost as innumerable as the sands of the sea²⁸ or the forests, as many as there were stars in the sky, the earth hardly sufficed for them. Beasts of burden could hardly be compared to the number of locusts²⁹ jumping through the fields in summer. The waters there were very clear and safe for human purposes; likewise, the fish were sweet and healthy to eat. It was a wonderful thing, and you might well consider how high this region sits: such that no outside waters flow into here while so many streams, small ones and large, originate from different mountains and are received by the larger river called the Elbe, to flow north to the sea.³⁰ And since at that time this region lay untested by the plow, and the man who would try had not yet entered it, it seems better to keep silent concerning its fertility or sterility than to speak in ignorance.

Seeking places suitable for human habitation, whoever the man was (it is uncertain with how many souls) who later entered these solitudes, he surveyed with keen sight the mountains, valleys, and wastes and, so I think, located their first settlement around Mt. Říp between two rivers, namely, the Ohře and the Vltava. He established their first dwellings and rejoiced in the guardian deities³¹ that he had carried with him on his shoulders, now erected on the ground. Then the elder, whom the others accompanied as if he was their lord, spoke thus to his followers (among other things): "O comrades,³² you who have endured with me heavy burdens through lonely forests, halt your step. Offer a thankful libation to your gods,

28. 2 Kgs 17:11; 3 Kgs 4:20; also cf. Ps 77:27.

29. Cf. Jgs 6:5.

30. The whole Bohemian basin comprises the watershed of the Elbe, whose many tributaries originate in the encircling mountains just described, eventually flowing into the Elbe and thence north-northwest.

31. Cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 4.598 and 1.68.

32. While only the phrase "O comrades" is taken verbatim from Virgil (*Aeneid* 1.198), it may nevertheless be intended to remind readers of the Trojans' laborious search for a new home in Latium. Note also the repetition of the Virgilian "halt your step" (see above, n. 18) and the number of other phrases from the *Aeneid* in this chapter.

through whose wondrous work you have come to your fatherland, as once foreordained for you by destiny. This is it. This is that land which you often reminded me I promised you, a land subject to no one, filled with wild animals and fowl, wet with nectar, honey, and milk,³³ and, as you yourselves see, air delightful for living. The waters are abundant on every side and full of fish beyond measure. Here nothing will be lacking to you, because no one will hinder you. But since a region such as this, both beautiful and great, lies in your hands, think what name might be fitting for the land." Immediately they said, as if moved by a divine oracle: "Since you, O father, are called 'Bohemus,' where might we find a better or more fitting name than for the land to be called 'Bohemia?'"³⁴ Then the elder, moved by the divination of his comrades, began to kiss the ground for joy and, rejoicing, named it from his own name. Rising and stretching both hands palms upward to the stars,³⁵ he thus rose to say: "Greetings, fated land,³⁶ sought by our thousand prayers, once widowed of man in the time of the Flood. Now, as a kind of monument to men, keep us safe and our offspring plentiful from generation to generation."³⁷

33. Cf. Dt 6:3, concerning the "land flowing with milk and honey." The addition of nectar comes from Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.111: "Streams of milk and streams of sweet nectar flowed, and yellow honey..." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1:111.

34. It is usually assumed that, rendered in Cosmas's native Czech, this elder's name was "Čech," since the Czech word for Bohemia is "Čechy." See, for instance, the Czech translation of this passage by Karel Hrdina, *Kosmova kronika česká*, 17. Cosmas, however, uses the Latin terminology to tell this story: thus "Boemus" and "Boemia." Medieval Latin writers adopted "Bohemia" and "Boemii" (or "Bohemani") from Roman geographers' descriptions of this region's earlier Celtic inhabitants, the Boii. Note that there are ample Virgilian parallels for naming places after people, not least the naming of Rome after Romulus (*Aeneid* 1.276).

35. Virgil *Aeneid* 1.93; see also David West's prose translation of the *Aeneid* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 6.

36. Cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 7.120. Again, although only the "Greetings!" (Salve!) is verbatim, it is drawn from the passage in which Aeneas—with obvious parallels to the story here—cries: "Hail [Salve], land destined as my due! and hail to you, faithful gods of Troy! Here is our home, here our country!"

37. Lk 1:50.

13. The men of that time were so honorable in their mores, so simple and righteous, so loyal and merciful to one another, so moderate, sober, and continent, that if anyone tried to describe them to present-day men, who thoroughly represent the opposite qualities, he would be met with considerable irritation. Therefore, we omit these things and desire to say a few true things about the quality of that first age. How happy was that age,³⁸ content with moderate expense and not puffed up with swollen pride. They hardly knew the rewards of Ceres and Bacchus,³⁹ which were not available. They made their evening meal with acorns and wild game. Uncorrupted springs provided healthy drinks. Like the brightness of the sun and the moisture of the water, so the fields and the forests, even their very marriages, were held in common. For in the manner of cattle, they tried new lovers on various nights and, with dawn rising, broke the tie of the Three Graces⁴⁰ and the iron shackles of love. Wherever and with whomever they had spent the night, there they caught sweet sleep,⁴¹ spread out on the grass⁴² under the shade of a leafy tree. The use of wool or linen, even of clothing, was unknown to them; in winter they used the skins of wild animals or sheep for clothing.⁴³ Nor did anyone know to say

38. This first phrase matches the first line of meter 5 in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, book 2. The sentences that follow continue to cite and allude to Boethius's poem, which captures precisely the spirit Cosmas himself is striving for in this description: a nostalgic view of simpler times before greed led people to quarrel. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 206–9.

39. Meaning food and drink, with connotations of abundance and festivity. Ceres was the ancient Roman goddess of growth, harvest, abundance, etc., while Bacchus among the Romans was the god of fertility and wine. Given that the next sentence describes the people living off the more primitive fruits of hunting and gathering, this may be a reference to specific products of agriculture, thus bread and wine.

40. In myth, the Three Graces personify charm, grace, and beauty. Though something more specific seems to be implied here, I am not certain of its source.

41. Virgil *Aeneid* 4.555.

42. *Ibid.*, 1.214.

43. Cosmas has lifted this description from a description of the Scythians found in Regino of Prüm's entry for 889 (*Chronicon*, 132). Regino is himself quoting verbatim from an account of the Scythians by a historian of the second or third century

"mine" but, in the likeness of monastic life, whatever they had the word "our" resounded in their mouth, heart, and deed.⁴⁴ There were no bars on their stables, nor did they close their gate to the poor, because there was no theft or robbery or poverty. There was no crime among them more serious than theft⁴⁵ or robbery. They saw the weapons of no people and themselves had only arrows, which they carried for killing wild animals. What more can be said?

Oh, alas! Prosperity gave way to the contrary, and communal goods to private ones. They avoided and fled secure poverty, once beloved, as if it were a muddy wheel, because in all of them lust for gain burned fiercer now than Etna's fires.⁴⁶ With these and similar evils emerging, they patiently endured from day to day worse and worse injury, which no one had ever incurred before, inflicted by one man upon another. And they had no judge or prince⁴⁷ to whom they could appeal their grievance. Later, they turned to someone in their tribe or generation, someone considered better in character and more distinguished by virtue of wealth. Without a tax collector, without a seal, of their own free will they came to him and, with their freedom whole, debated uncertain cases and injuries incurred.

One particular man had arisen among them, called Krok, after whom a castle is known to have been named, located in the forest adjacent to Ztibečná and now overrun by trees. He was a man

CE named Justin. *Epitoma historiarum philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, ed. Otto Seel (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972), 2.103.

44. This echoes a famous passage on the ownership of property in Augustine's commentaries on John, specifically Jn 1:32-33: Augustine, *In Johannem Evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, ed. Radbodus Willems, *Corpus Christianorum* 36 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), 66-67.

45. Again, from Regino (*Chronicon*, 131) on the Scythians, again citing Justin, a little above the previous quotation (n. 43).

46. Having strayed, some sentences back, from a close paraphrase of Boethius, Cosmas returns now to cite the *Consolation of Philosophy*, book 2, meter 5, verbatim. Etna refers to the active volcano on the island of Sicily, the highest in Europe.

47. Cf. Acts 7:27.

absolutely perfect in his generations,⁴⁸ exceptional for his wealth in secular things, discreet in considering lawsuits. Like bees to their hive, so everyone, both from his own tribe and from the common folk of the whole province, flocked to him to sort out their lawsuits. Such a great man lacked manly offspring. Nevertheless, he fathered three daughters, to whom nature gave riches of wisdom no fewer than she was accustomed to give men.

1.4. The eldest of them was named Kazi, who surpassed Medea of Colchis⁴⁹ in herbs and song and the Paeonian master⁵⁰ in medicinal art, because she often made the Fates⁵¹ themselves cease their unending work and oracles follow the commands of her song. Hence the inhabitants of this land, when they lose something and despair of its recovery, say the following proverb about her: "Even Kazi herself cannot get it back." Like the place where the daughter of Ceres was abducted by a tyrant,⁵² her burial mound can still be seen today, heaped up very high by the inhabitants of the land in memory of their mistress, on the bank of the River Mže near the road which leads to the province of Bechyně, over the mountain called Osek.

Worthy of praise though second by birth, Tetka was a woman of keen discernment⁵³ lacking a husband. She built a castle on the River Mže, named Tetín after herself, well fortified by the nature of the place, with rocks reaching steeply to the summit. She taught the stupid and senseless people to adore and worship Oreads, Dry-

48. Gn 6:9, of Noah.

49. A mythic figure, sometimes a goddess, especially famed for her knowledge of potions; see nn. 65 and 69.

50. Paeonia is a region in Macedonia, but the word chiefly refers to Aesculapius, the healing hero, or his father, Apollo. Both Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 15.535) and Virgil (*Aeneid* 7.769) use the term in relation to healing with herbs.

51. A set of three goddesses that controlled every individual's destiny, down to the moment of death.

52. A reference to the mythical abduction of Proserpina, the daughter of Ceres, by Pluto, god of the underworld, which took place near Henna. Cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.391, though no burial mound is mentioned.

53. "Emuncte naris" from Horace *Satires* 1.4.8, in Horace, *Satires and Epistles*, trans. Smith Palmer Bowie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 52.

ads, and Hamadryads,⁵⁴ and established every superstitious sect and sacrilegious rite. Like many villagers up until now, just like pagans, this one worships waters or fires, that one adores groves and trees and stones, another sacrifices to mountains or hills, and still another beseeches and prays to the deaf and dumb idols he has made himself, so that they rule both his home and his own self.⁵⁵

Younger by birth but older in wisdom, the third was called Libuše. She built a castle, the most powerful then, next to the forest which reaches to the area of Ztibečná, and called it Libušín after her own name. She was truly a woman among women: cautious in counsel, quick to speak, chaste in body, upright in character, second to no one in resolving the lawsuits of the people. Affable, even lovable, in all things, she adorned and glorified the feminine sex while handling masculine affairs with foresight. But because no one is altogether blessed,⁵⁶ this woman of such quality and of so great praise—alas the terrible human condition!—was a prophetess [*phitonissa*].⁵⁷ Since she predicted many proven futures for people, that whole people took common counsel and set her up as judge over them after the death of her father.

At that time not a small litigation arose concerning the boundaries of a contiguous field between two citizens,⁵⁸ both among the more eminent in wealth and birth, men who considered themselves leaders of the people. They erupted to such a degree into mutual conflict that one flew at the thick beard of the other with his fingernails. Exposing the sounds of their confrontation and

54. Mountains nymphs (oreads) and wood nymphs (dryads and hamadryads), inhabiting trees and forests.

55. This sentence is modeled, with but a few verbatim borrowings, on Sedulius *Paschale Carmen* 1.259, in Sedulius, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Johannes Huemer, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 10 (Vienna: Gerold, 1885).

56. Horace *Odes* 2.16.27, in *Odes and Epodes*, trans. C. E. Bennett (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914).

57. For an extended discussion of the varied and complicated biblical and classical usages of the word "phitonissa," see Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 37–39; also n. 125, below.

58. Cosmas's use of *cives*, here and elsewhere, derives from classical Roman authorities. It is meant as a general term, with no specific legal connotations of citizenship.

confounding each other disgracefully with a finger under the nose, they entered the court raving. Not without a great din, they approached the lady and asked humbly that Libuše resolve the undecided case between them by reason of justice. She, meanwhile—as is the wanton softness of women when they do not have a man whom they fear—reclined very softly deep in a painted coverlet, propped on an elbow, as if she had just given birth to a child. Walking on the path of justice,⁵⁹ not respecting men's persons, she brought the cause of the whole controversy that had arisen between them to a state of rectitude.

Yet he whose cause did not win the palm [of victory] in the judgment, more indignant than was fitting, shook his head three or four times,⁶⁰ foolishly hit the ground thrice with his staff, and with a full mouth, saliva sprinkling his beard, cried out: "O the injuries hardly to be tolerated by men! A woman full of cracks treats manly judgments with a deceitful mind. We know indeed that a woman standing or sitting on a throne knows little; how much less must she know when she is reclining on a coverlet? Truthfully, this posture is more suitable to the approach of a husband than to prescribing laws to warriors. They all have long hair, to be sure, but women are short on sense. A man should rather die⁶¹ than suffer such things. A disgrace among nations and peoples, nature has forsaken us alone, who lack a ruler and manly severity, and whom feminine laws rule." At this the lady smiled, dissembling the insult made to her and concealing her heart's pain in feminine modesty. "It is," she said, "as you say: I am a woman, I live as a woman, and for that reason I seem to you to know too little. Because I do not judge you with a rod of iron⁶² and since you live without fear, you rightly look down on me. For where fear is, there is honor.⁶³ Now, it is very necessary that you have a ruler fiercer than a woman. Just as the doves once spurned a white bird for a kite whom they had chosen as their king, so you spurn me. They appointed as

59. Cf. *Prv* 2:20.

61. Terence *Eunuch* 7.773.

63. Cf. *Mal* 1:6 and *Rom* 13:7.

60. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2.49 and 1.179.

62. *Ps* 2:9.

their duke a much fiercer hawk, who, inventing crimes, began to kill both the innocent and the wicked.⁶⁴ From then until now, the hawk eats the dove. Go home now. I will accept as my husband whomever you should choose tomorrow as your lord."

Meanwhile, she summoned the aforesaid sisters, who stirred up matching rages. With their magical skill and her own, she made a fool of the people through everything. Libuše herself was, as we said above, a prophetess like Sibyl of Cumae, the other sister a sorceress of potions like Medea of Colchis, and the third an enchanter like Aeaeon Circe.⁶⁵ What kind of counsel those three Eumenides⁶⁶ obtained that night and what kind of secret they carried out was then unknown. Nevertheless it was made manifest—clearer than light—to everyone in the morning, when their sister Libuše revealed both the place where the future duke was hidden and who he was by name. Who would believe that they would request their first duke from the plow? And who would know where plows the man who would become ruler of the people? What does prophetic rage not know? And what is there that magical skill cannot make happen? Sibyl was able to predict to the Roman people the course of their destinies almost to the day. She even—if we can believe it⁶⁷—foretold of Christ. (A certain teacher inserted verses

64. Cosmas here alludes to a fable by Phaedrus, in which a kite (a kind of hawk) who is not swift enough to catch a flock of doves he desires instead persuades them to appoint him their king. He then devours all but one, who voices the moral of the story: "Deservedly does the doom of death await us, for letting this brigand be lord of our lives." Phaedrus, *The Fables*, trans. P. F. Widdows (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 31. For a further warning of this sort, illustrated by another fable by Phaedrus with a similar theme, see 1.5 and n. 75.

65. The phrase "Aeaeon Circe" is from Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4.205. The Sibyl of Cumae features in Virgil *Aeneid* 3.441 and 5.735. See also below, nn. 68–71.

66. The Eumenides are the Furies (also Erinyes) by another name, one sometimes taken as a euphemism, since it means "kind ones," to indicate the Furies in a more beneficent mode. Always female, though varying in number, the Eumenides were avengers of wrongdoing, especially of crimes beyond the reach of human justice. As personifications of vengeance, retribution, and blood curses, they were fearsome. However, they also stood for order, balance, and right.

67. This phrase, *si fas est credere*, appears in both Statius and Prudentius. In Prudentius it seems to signal something indeed incredible, whereas in Statius the tone is

about the coming of the Lord, composed by Virgil for the persona of Sibyl, in the words of his preaching.)⁶⁸ Medea was often able to lead Hyperion and Berecynthia back from heaven through her herbs and song; she was able to call forth rainstorms, lightning, and thunder from the clouds; she was able to make the Aegean king a youth from an old man.⁶⁹ By the song of Circe, the friends of Ulysses were transformed⁷⁰ into various forms of wild animals, and King Picus into the flying creature which is now called a *picus* [woodpecker].⁷¹ What wonder? How much did magi in Egypt do through their arts, they who performed almost every kind of wonder with their songs, as many wonders as Moses, God's servant, was said to have produced from God's power?⁷² Enough of that.⁷³

1.5. The next day, as was ordered, they convened an assembly without delay and gathered the people; at once, everyone came together into one. Sitting on the highest throne, the woman addressed the boorish men: "O most pitiable common folk, who do not know that you live free and that no good man gives up [freedom] except with his life.⁷⁴ You flee that freedom not unwillingly

more skeptical; the latter, "if we can believe it," has been adopted here. Prudentius *Contra Symmachum* 1.351, in *Prudentius*, ed. and trans. H. J. Thomson, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949); and Statius *Thebaid* 2.595, in *Statius*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

68. This must be based upon Augustine of Hippo's *Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 3; the Virgilian line discussed there is *Eclogues* 4.4. *Augustine on Romans*, ed. and trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 55.

69. Hyperion, sometimes taken as equivalent to his son Helios, and Berecynthia, if equivalent to Cynthia (a byname of Artemis), probably represent the sun and the moon; this reading seems to fit the context here. The Aegean king made young again was Aeson, father of Jason. The story is recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (7.162–293), where it involves the moon, sun, and control of nature suggested by Cosmas.

70. Virgil *Eclogues* 8.70. The story of Ulysses' encounter with Circe appears in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 14.247–307.

71. The story of Picus and his companions, turned into various animals by Circe when Picus rejected her advances, appears in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 14.312–96.

72. Ex 4–11.

73. Horace *Satires* 1.4.63.

74. Sallust *War with Catiline* 33.4.

and submit your necks voluntarily to unaccustomed servitude. Alas, later you will regret it in vain, as the frogs regretted it when the serpent, whom they had made their king, began to kill them.⁷⁵ If you do not know what the rights of a duke might be, I will try to tell you in a few words. First, it is easy to appoint a duke, but difficult to depose one appointed. For he who is now under your power, whether you established him duke or not, when later he is established, you and everything yours will be in his power. In his presence your knees will tremble and your mute tongue stick to the roof of your dry mouth.⁷⁶ Because of great fright you will hardly respond to his voice, 'yes, lord, yes, lord,' when by his command alone and without your forejudgment he will damn this one and slaughter that one, order these sent to prison and those hung from the gallows. He will make you yourselves and from your midst, as he pleases, some slaves, some peasants, some taxpayers, some tax collectors, some executioners, some heralds, some cooks or bakers or millers. He will establish for himself tribunes, centurions, bailiffs, cultivators of vineyards and fields, reapers of grain, makers of arms,⁷⁷ sewers of various hides and skins. He will force your sons and daughters into obedience to him. From even your oxen and horses and mares and cattle he will take, at his pleasure, whichever are best. Everything yours, what is better in villages and in plains, in fields and meadows and vineyards, he will take away and reduce to his own use. Why do I delay with words? Toward what end do I

75. Phaedrus *Fables* 1.2, an Aesopian fable on the themes of liberty, tyranny, and making do with the status quo. In the fable, a group of frogs, frolicking in freedom, ask Jupiter for a king "who would curb their excesses by force." When he tosses them an inert log, they sport with it and then ask for a king less useless. The god next sends a snake, which immediately begins to eat the frogs. Though at first "their power of speech failed them," they later begged Jupiter for mercy. His answer was: "You were grudging and ungrateful when I gave you the good: so put up with the present, bad as it may be."

76. Ez 3:26.

77. From "tribunes" to "makers of arms": 1 Kgs 8:12. This scene in Cosmas is clearly modeled on the whole of 1 Kgs 8, where Samuel attempts to dissuade the Israelites from appointing a king.

speak, as if to frighten you? If you persist in what you have begun and do not swear your oath falsely, I will now announce to you both the duke's name and the place where he is."

At this, the base commoners⁷⁸ jumped up with a disordered shout; with one voice everyone demanded a duke be given to them. Libuše said to them: "Behold! Beyond those mountains"—and she pointed to the mountains with her finger—"is a river not yet large, named Bílina, on whose banks a village is to be found, Stadice by name. In its territory lies one newly cleared field, twelve paces in length and in width, which—wonder of wonders—while positioned in the midst of so many [arable] fields, yet pertains to no field. There your duke plows with two parti-colored oxen: one ox is girded with white and has a white head, the other is white from forehead to rear and has white rear feet. Now, if you please, take my ankle-length robe and mantle, and capes fitting for a duke, and go. Report my and the people's commands to that man, and bring back your duke and my husband. The name of the man, who will think up [*excogitabit*] many laws upon [*super*] your necks and heads, is Přemysl (for this name means, in Latin, 'thinking upon' [*super-excogitans*] or 'thinking beforehand' [*premeditans*]). His subsequent progeny will rule all this land forever and ever."⁷⁹

1.6. Meanwhile, messengers were chosen, who would bring the lady's and the common folk's orders to the man. When Libuše saw them delaying, as if they did not know the way, she said: "What delays you? Go confidently: follow my horse. He will lead you on the right road and bring you back, because that road has been trod by him more than once." Empty rumor and false conjecture both fly⁸⁰ that, always at night, Libuše, on an imaginary ride, was accustomed to go there in the evening and return before daybreak. (Let Apella the Jew believe it!)⁸¹ What then? Wise, though unedu-

78. Virgil *Aeneid* 1.149.

79. Ex 15:18 (though of the Lord).

80. "Rumor flies": Virgil *Aeneid* 3.121, and elsewhere.

81. Horace *Satires* 1.5.100. In context, this means something like "go tell that to someone more credulous."

cated, well aware of their ignorance,⁸² the messengers proceeded, following the horse's footsteps. Soon they crossed mountains and eventually approached the village to which they went. One boy ran to meet them; they said to him, inquiring: "Hark, excellent boy! Is not that village named Stadice? If it is, is a man named Přemysl in it?" The boy said: "It is the village you seek. And behold, the man Přemysl goads his oxen in the field nearby so that he might finish more quickly the work he is doing." Approaching him, the messengers said, "Happy man! Duke produced by the gods for us!" As is the custom for peasants, it was not sufficient to have said it once, so with puffed out cheeks, they repeated: "Hail, duke! Hail, most worthy of great praise! Release the oxen, change your clothes, and mount this horse!" And they showed him the clothes and the neighing horse. "Our lady Libuše and all the common folk demand that you come quickly and take up the realm fated for you and your descendants. Everything ours and we ourselves are in your hand.⁸³ We elect you duke, you judge, you ruler, you protector, you our only lord."

At this speech, the foreseeing man, as if unaware of future things, halted and fixed in the earth the prod he carried in his hand. Releasing the oxen, he said, "Let us go to the place you came from." Immediately, quicker than can be said, the oxen vanished from his sight⁸⁴ and were never seen again. The hazel-wood prod which he had fixed in the ground produced three branches⁸⁵ and—what is more miraculous—leaves and nuts. Seeing such things happen thus, the messengers stood astonished. In turn thanking the visitors, Přemysl invited them to a meal, shook moldy bread and part of a cheese out of his cork-woven bag, put the bag on the ground for a table, and placed other things on the rough cloth. Then, while they were eating the meal and drinking water from

82. Gregory I *Dialogues* 2, prologue, in Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959).

83. Gn 47:(23-)25, concerning Joseph and the Jews' obligations to Pharaoh.

84. Jgs 6:21 and Lk 24:31.

85. Gn 40:10.

a jug, two of the branches (or two of the bushes) withered and died, but the third grew much higher and wider. Whence greater astonishment, mingled with fear, grew in the visitors. Přemysl said: "What are you astonished at? You should know that from our progeny many lords will be born, but one will always dominate. If your lady does not immediately hurry in this matter, but awaits the galloping fates awhile and does not quickly send for me, as many master's sons as nature produces, your land will have that many lords."

1.7. Afterward, dressed in a princely garment and shod with regal shoes, the plowman mounted his spirited horse. Still, not forgetful of his lot, he took with him his boots, stitched in every part from cork, and ordered them preserved for posterity. They are indeed preserved now and forever in the duke's treasury at Vyšehrad.

It so happened that, while they took a short cut, until now the messengers had not yet dared to speak more familiarly to their new lord. Just like doves when some falcon approaches them, they first tremble at it but soon become accustomed to its flight, make it their own, and love it.⁸⁶ Thus, while the riders chatted, shortened the trip with conversation, and lightened their labor by joking and with jesting words, one of them, who was more audacious and quicker to speak, said, "O Lord, tell us: why did you make us save those woven cork shoes, fit for nothing except to be thrown away? We cannot wonder at this enough." Přemysl said to them: "I had them saved and will have them preserved forever for this reason: so that our descendants will know whence they sprang, and so that they will always live trembling and distrustful, and will not unjustly, out of arrogance, oppress the men committed to them by God, because we are all made equals by nature. Now allow me to inquire in turn of you, whether it is more praiseworthy to be raised from poverty to honor or to be reduced from honor into poverty? Of course, you will tell me that it is better to be raised to glory than to

86. Alluding to the fable from Phaedrus already mentioned; see 1.4 and n. 64, above.

be reduced to indigence. Yet some people, born of noble parentage, are later reduced to base indigence and made wretched. When they proclaim their parents to have been glorious and to have had power over others, they are hardly unaware that they confound and debase themselves more when they lose through their own laziness what their parents had possessed through industry. Fortune always plays this game of chance with her wheel: now she raises these men to the pinnacle, and now she plunges those into the depths.⁸⁷ Whence it might happen that earthly honor, which brought glory for a time, is lost to disgrace. Truly, poverty conquered through virtue does not hide itself under a wolf's pelt but lifts up to the stars as a victor him whom it had once dragged to the depths."

1.8. After they had traversed the road and eventually arrived near the burg, the lady rushed to meet them, surrounded by her followers. With their right hands entwined, Libuše and Přemysl went indoors with great rejoicing, reclined on couches, refreshed their bodies with Ceres and Bacchus,⁸⁸ and gave themselves up to Venus and Hymen⁸⁹ for the rest of the night. This man—who is deservedly to be called a man [*vir*] from his force [*virtus*]⁹⁰—restrained this savage people with laws, tamed the untamed populace by his command, and subjected them to the servitude by which they are now oppressed. All the laws which this land possesses and by which it is ruled, he alone with only Libuše decreed.

1.9. One day, at the beginning of the new reign of laws, the

87. The *locus classicus* for Fortune's wheel is the first several chapters of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, book 2.

88. See above, n. 39.

89. Venus, the goddess particularly associated with sexuality and procreation; Hymen, the god of marriage. This is therefore a kind of euphemism: Libuše and Přemysl spent the night having sex to consummate their marriage.

90. Isidore *Etymologies* 11.2.17, with a more explicitly gendered emphasis: "Man [*vir*] is so called because in him there is more strength [*vis*] than in women; whence the word 'force' [*virtus*] also derives; or perhaps because of what a man does to a woman by force [*vi*]." The next line defines "woman" in terms of softness, which resonates with the charges against Libuše in 1.4: "Woman [*mulier*] is so called from softness [*mollitia*, also *molliter*]; if you remove a letter and change another in 'molliter,' that makes 'mulier.'"

aforesaid Libuše, excited by prophecy, with her husband Přemysl present and other elders of the people standing nearby, foretold thus: "I see a burg,⁹¹ whose fame touches the stars,⁹² situated in a forest, thirty stades⁹³ distant from the village where the Vltava ends in streams. From the north the stream Brusnice in a deep valley strongly fortifies the burg; from the south a broad, very rocky [*petrosus*] mountain, called Petřín from *petrae* [rocks], dominates the place. The mountain in that spot is curved like a dolphin, a sea pig, stretching to the aforesaid stream. When you come to that place, you will find a man putting up the doorway of a house in the middle of the forest. From that event—and since even a great lord must duck under a humble threshold—the burg you will build, you will call 'Prague' [Praha, from *prah*, threshold]. In this burg, one day in the future, two golden olive trees⁹⁴ will grow up; they will reach the seventh heaven with their tops and glitter throughout the whole world with signs and miracles. All the tribes of the land⁹⁵ of Bohemia, and other nations too, will worship and adore them, against their enemies and with gifts. One of these will be called 'Greater Glory,' the other, 'Consolation of the Army.'"⁹⁶

91. Throughout this chapter Cosmas refers to Prague as *urbs* in Latin, which I have translated as English "burg," meaning a fortified place, whether a town or a stronghold. *Urbs* carries the connotation of a town, often a walled town, and Libuše does indeed seem to prophesy Prague's greatness as a city. However, the specific site described here accords precisely with the location of Prague Castle. The point of the story is to attribute prophetic origins to Prague Castle in particular, as the seat of ducal power and the location of Prague cathedral, where the relics of Sts. Václav and Adalbert were housed. By using "burg," I am trying to suggest both the castle specifically and the town that grew up around it. Already in Cosmas's day the town of Prague included what are today Malá Strana (Lesser Town), below the castle, as well as parts of Staré Město (Old Town) across the river.

92. Phrases akin to this are quite common, and can be found in Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Sedulius. See Book 3, n. 180.

93. A stade is an ancient measurement of distance, approximately equivalent to five hundred feet.

94. Rv 11:4 and Zec 4:3.

95. Ps 71:17.

96. These are oblique references to Sts. Václav and Adalbert, based on the meanings of their Slavic names. "Consolation of the Army" (*voje útěcha*) is Vojtěch, Adal-

More was to be said, if the pestilential and prophetic spirit had not fled from the image of God. Immediately passing into the primeval forest⁹⁷ and having found the given sign, in the aforesaid place they built the burg of Prague, mistress of all Bohemia.⁹⁸

At that time the maidens of that land, growing up without a yoke, pursuing military arms like Amazons⁹⁹ and making leaders for themselves, fought together like young soldiers and trod manfully through the forests on hunts. Men did not take them, but they took men for themselves, whichever ones they wanted and whenever they wanted. Just like the Scythian people, the *Plauci* or

bert's original given name (see 1.26). This same interpretation of "Vojtěch" appears in Bruno of Querfurt's *Life of Saint Adalbert* (*S. Adalberti pragensis episcopi et martyris, vita altera*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, new series, vol. 4, fasc. 2. [Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1969], 3). Václav is a contraction of the longer Václav (Latin Wenceslaus), i.e., "Greater Glory" (*více slávy*). Although Cosmas does so only rarely, Thietmar frequently offers similar explanations of contemporary Slavic personal names (e.g., *Chronicon*, 245); such interpretations must have been common and laid the basis for this prophetic riddle.

97. Virgil *Aeneid* 6.179.

98. Incidentally, the *Life and Passion of Saint Václav and His Grandmother Ludmila*, by Kristián (Christian), also presents the stories of Libuše and Přemysl, and of the foundation of Prague, although in much shorter form than Cosmas's version: "But the Slavs of Bohemia, who settled under Arcturus and venerated idols, lived like horses unrestrained by a bridle, without law, without a prince or ruler, and without a city. Roaming about sporadically like reckless animals, they inhabited only the open country. Finally, after being overtaken by a disastrous plague, they, as the story goes, turned to a prophetess [*phitonissa*] to request good advice and a prophetic pronouncement. And having received it, they founded a city and named it Prague. Afterward, they found a very discerning and prudent man named Přemysl, who merely spent his time plowing, and in keeping with the pronouncement of the prophetess, they appointed him prince or ruler, giving him the above-mentioned prophetess for a wife." Marvin Kantor, *The Origins of Christianity in Bohemia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 168–69; cf. *Kristiánova legenda*, ed. Jaroslav Ludvíkovský (Prague: Vyšehrad, 1978), 16–18. Because the dating of Kristián's text remains controversial, it is unclear whether he was Cosmas's source or vice versa.

99. The famous women warriors of ancient Greek myth. In epic poetry, it is worth noting, "Amazons exist in order to be fought, and ultimately defeated, by men"—precisely what is about to happen here. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed., ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69.

the Pechenegs, man and woman also had no distinction in their dress.¹⁰⁰ Whence their feminine audacity grew so great that on a certain cliff not far from the aforementioned burg [Prague], they built themselves a fortress fortified by the nature of its location. It was given the name Děvín, from a maidenly word [i.e., *děva*, girl]. Seeing this, young men, many of them coming together at once, angry with the women and very jealous, built a burg among the bushes on another cliff, no farther than a trumpet call [from Děvín]. Present-day men call it Vyšehrad, but at that time it took the name Chrasten from the bushes [*chrasti*].

Because the maidens were often more clever at duping the young men, and because the young men were often stronger than the maidens, there was sometimes war between them and sometimes peace. At a time when they possessed peace between them, it pleased both parties to come together with food and drink as a token [of that peace]. For three days they engaged in festive sport—without arms—in an agreed-upon place. What more? In no other way could the young men have fun with the girls. And so, like rapacious wolves seeking food, they entered the sheepfold. They spent the first day merry, with sumptuous food and too much drink. While they wanted to quench their thirst, another thirst sprang up,¹⁰¹ and the young men could hardly defer their happiness to the hour of night. It was night and the moon was shining in a cloudless sky.¹⁰² Then, blowing a horn, one of the men gave the signal to the others, saying: "You have played enough, you have eaten and drunk enough. Arise! Golden Venus calls you with the hoarse rattle."¹⁰³ Immediately, each of the men carried off a girl.¹⁰⁴ Come morning and having entered into an agreement of peace,

100. On the Scythians Cosmas is here following Regino (*Chronicon*, 132), in turn citing Justin *Epitoma historiarum* 2.1. The reference to Amazons appears in Justin's original; the Pechenegs come from Regino. It is unclear who Cosmas means by the *Plauci*.

101. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3:415.

102. Horace *Epodes* 15.1.

103. Adapted from Virgil (*Aeneid* 8:696); the previous sentence is verbatim from Horace (*Epistles* 2.2.214, loose translation).

104. Cf. Jgs 21:21.

supported by Ceres and Bacchus, the girls yielded the empty walls of their fortress to Vulcan of Lemnos.¹⁰⁵ Since that time, after the death of Prince¹⁰⁶ Libuše, the women of our people are under the power of men.

But since all men have a journey to make, where Numa and Ancus have gone before,¹⁰⁷ so Přemysl, now full of days,¹⁰⁸ who was worshipped like a god while living, was carried off to the son-in-law of Ceres¹⁰⁹ after he established the rule of laws. Nezamysl succeeded him in rule. When death took him, Mnata secured the princely rods. With him departing this life, Vojen took up the helm. After his fate, Vnislav ruled the duchy. When the Fates cut off his life, Křesomysl was placed on the summit of the throne. With him removed from our midst, Neklan obtained the throne of the duchy. When life left him, Hostivít succeeded to the throne. Silence reigns concerning both the life and the death of these princes. In part because they were like cattle, devoted to their stomachs and to indolence, uninstructed and unimproved. Contrary to nature's intent, the body was a source of pleasure to them and the mind a burden.¹¹⁰ In part, too, because no one at that time commended their deeds to memory with a pen. But let us be silent about the

105. Lemnos is a volcanic island of the North Aegean, associated with the Greek god of fire, whose Roman equivalent is Vulcan; Vulcan, however, is particularly linked with destructive fire. In other words, this is an erudite way of saying that the castle of Děvín was burned down.

106. The word here is *princeps*, which seems to know no specifically feminine form at this time. Whether Cosmas assumes it will be read as akin to our "princess" or whether he is deliberately suggesting Libuše's virility as "prince" is an open question.

107. Horace *Epistles* 1.6.27. Pompilius Numa and Marcius Ancus were the legendary second and fourth kings of Rome.

108. Gn 25:8.

109. The son-in-law of Ceres refers to Pluto, king of the underworld. The phrase is taken from Juvenal *Satires* 10.112, in *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. Susan Morton Braund (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004). For some reason, Cosmas declines to name Pluto anywhere in his chronicle; instead, here and elsewhere, he employs this euphemism.

110. Sallust *War with Catiline* 2.8, verbatim from "devoted" to "burden," except for the addition of "they were like cattle." Cosmas deploys this phrase in much the same context Sallust does, thus loosely paraphrasing and adapting his source.

things that remain silent, and let us return whence we have deviated a little.

1.10. Hostivít begat Bořivoj, who was the first duke baptized by the venerable Methodius, bishop in Moravia at the time of Emperor Arnulf and of Svatopluk, king of that same Moravia.¹¹¹

We judge it not superfluous to put in writing briefly in this little work of ours, in its place, what we heard from rumor's telling. Once long ago, at the time of Duke Neklan in olden days, a battle was fought in a field called Tursko between the Czechs and the Lučané (who are now, by present-day men, called the Žatčané, after the burg of Žatec). We do not want to pass over in silence why this nation was called the Lučané in ancient times. That province is divided into five regions. The first is situated around a stream called Hutná. The second is on both sides of the River Uzká. The third is stretched along the course of the stream Březnice. The fourth, which is also called Silvana ["forested"], is situated beyond the ends of the River Mže. The fifth, which is in the middle, is called Louka [*Luca*]. It is the most beautiful in appearance, the most beneficial in its uses and very fertile, and also overabundant in meadowland—whence this region derives its name, because *louka* [*luca*] means "meadow." Since this region was first inhabited by men long before the burg of Žatec was founded, its inhabitants are correctly called "Lučané" after the region.

A duke named Vlastislav was in command of them. He was a warlike man, courageous in the weapons of war and crafty beyond measure in counsel. He could have been called quite lucky in battle if highest fate had not enclosed him within unlucky con-

111. Svatopluk, king of the Moravians (870–94). Arnulf, king of the eastern Franks (887–99). St. Methodius (d. 885), brother of Constantine (later called St. Cyril). Natives of Thessalonica, Constantine and Methodius were sent from Constantinople as missionaries to the Moravians, preached to them in the Slavic vernacular, and then traveled to Rome. Under Roman (i.e., Catholic rather than Orthodox) observance, Methodius was subsequently appointed archbishop of Sirmium in Pannonia, essentially Svatopluk's realm. Notice, however, that Methodius was already dead when Arnulf became king and that he could not have baptized Bořivoj in the year Cosmas gives below (1.14), 894.

and looking to the future, I have extinguished the spark that would harm you and have protected you and your descendants from the disaster to come, as if forewarned by a divine oracle. You, who are the heads of the land, find a name for this deed. If it was worthy, make it so that everyone knows how much I have merited. And if you say it was a crime, you should give me more because you yourself did not commit the crime.¹⁵² Should you have spared the infant when his father wanted to kill your infants and put puppies to suck from your wives? Surely, ravening wolves [deserve] neither sweet meats nor a sweet law. Behold the avenger of his father's blood,¹⁵³ who would have harmed you someday, lies vanquished without your blood. Go and take his realm in leisure instead, so that you might possess it more happily, without anxiety, forever."

Immediately he produced on a dish the delicate head, from which nothing of a living man had yet been extinguished except only this: that he was deprived of his voice. The duke became greatly frightened, the hearts of the *comites* trembled, and a confused murmur quivered in the air. Then the duke turned his head from the horrific gift and opened his mouth to say these words: "Take your gift out of our sight, criminal.¹⁵⁴ Your crimes are beyond measure and will neither find favor nor be found worthy of defense. Neither a fitting sentence nor a comparable punishment for this disgraceful act can be thought up. Do you think that I could not¹⁵⁵ have done what you did, if I had wanted to? It was licit for me to kill my enemy, but not for you to kill your lord. The sin you committed is greater than can even be called a sin. Certainly, whoever kills you or condemns you to be killed, incurs not a single sin but a double sin because it is both a sin for you to be killed and a sin that you killed your lord; and for both sins, he will carry a triple sin. Truly, if you hoped for some payment from us for this crime so immense, know that this is given to you

152. Cf. Lucan *Pharsalia* 9.1031–32.

153. Juvenal *Satires* 10.165 (*sanguinis ultor*).

154. Lucan *Pharsalia* 9.1063, though Cosmas has swapped "minion" for "criminal."

155. Mt 26:53.

as your great reward: you may choose the death you prefer from among three. Either throw yourself from a high rock, hang yourself by your own hands in some tree, or end your wicked life by your own sword." To this the man said, sighing: "Alas, can a man be considered worse off than when he finds himself beyond hope?" Leaving immediately, he hanged himself by a noose in a tall alder tree; whence that alder, for so long not chopped down (since it was next to the road), is called "During's alder."

Since these things are said to have occurred in ancient times, we leave it to the reader to judge whether they are fact or fiction. Now let our pen—though blunt, nevertheless devoted—sharpen itself for setting down those things worthy of memory which the true report of the faithful recommends.

1114. 894.¹⁵⁶ Bořivoj was baptized the first Catholic duke of the holy faith. In the same year, Svatopluk, the king of Moravia—as it is commonly said—fled in the midst of his army and was never seen again. But the truth of the matter is that he came to himself¹⁵⁷ when he recognized that he had unjustly taken up arms against his lord emperor and fellow-father.¹⁵⁸ Arnulf, as if forgetting his benefice. For Svatopluk had subjugated not only Bohemia but other regions as well, from there all the way to the River Oder and toward Hungary to the River Gron. Having repented,¹⁵⁹ with no one knowing of it in the darkness, he got on his horse in the middle of the night and, passing through his camp, fled to a place on the side

156. This chapter shows Cosmas reworking Regino of Prüm's description of relations between Svatopluk and Arnulf. The date, 894, and the last two sentences of this chapter come from Regino's account of Svatopluk's death in that year (*Regino, Chronicon*, 143). The comment that Svatopluk had rebelled against Arnulf after gaining control of Bohemia is derived from Regino's entry for the year 890, though Cosmas has modified Regino's version of events (134).

157. Lk 15:17.

158. The Latin is *compater*, which Cosmas uses (also in 3.22 and 27) to indicate that two men are linked by one's status as godfather to the other's child. Here it further testifies to Cosmas's familiarity with Regino's entry for 890, which describes how Svatopluk became godfather to Arnulf's illegitimate son and gave him his own name—usually rendered in the Germanic spelling, Zwentibold (*Regino, Chronicon*, 134).

159. Mt 27:3, in reference to Judas's repenting his betrayal of Jesus.