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Impacts of the plague epidemic on the Kingdom of Bohemia in the second half of the XIVth century and at the beginning of the XVth century¹

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The hopes held until the summer of 2020 have proved to be wrong. The SARS-CoV-19 RNA coronavirus epidemic, which broke out at the end of 2019 in central China's Hubei Province, without the knowledge of people in the West, has become a daily affair around the world. Experience with previous viral diseases (SARS, MERS), the impact of which was limited to a few regions and affected a maximum of thousands of people, has become out-of-date. COVID-19 has spread to all the continents of the world and has so far killed several million people. Although several vaccines have been developed in record time to prevent or at least alleviate the onset of the disease, after a year and a half it seems that society will have to learn to live with the disease for a long time.

From a historical perspective, this is, however, certainly not anything unique. People had to learn to live with diseases with a global reach already in the Middle Ages. In the Modern Period, several other diseases have emerged that have acquired an endemic or even pandemic character: cholera, smallpox, tuberculosis, Ebola, Spanish influenza, and many others. However, the most destructive effects were achieved by a bacterial plague, which hit Western Europe in the mid-XIVth century. If we look at these globally widespread diseases with purely statistical eyes, their impact on population mortality was much greater than in the case of COVID-19. However,

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statistics alone cannot capture the mental changes that pandemics cause in human society. The civilization of the twenty-first century believes in progress, in extensive growth, in prosperity, the contours of which appear rosy on the horizon in the near term. And that is why the COVID-19 epidemic caused such a shock. Only the darkest of visionaries imagined that cross-border travel would stop, that hospitals would be filled beyond capacity, and that thousands of people would die in isolation, without the presence of loved ones. In Europe, no one thought that governments would regulate the movement of populations, that they would close all shops except the most necessary food and drugstores for several weeks, that production lines would be stopped, that relatives would not be able to visit, and that all culture and sports would go into hibernation. Repeatedly turning off the lights and then trying to turn the lights on again after a few weeks proved to be effective, although the disease did not disappear. However, with the turning on of the lights, many social and psycho-social problems have emerged that people will have to deal with for decades. Nevertheless, a glimpse into the past shows that even without modern technology, pre-modern society soon learned to live with epidemics. In the case of bacterial plague, that coexistence lasted for hundreds of years and claimed the lives of millions of people. At the same time, historical experience teaches us that it is not possible to prepare for epidemics, that there are very few ways to delay or alleviate them, and that the most important thing is to learn to coexist with them.

Although the medieval plague epidemic had a global impact, its intensity varied from region to region in Europe. Plague rates as well as mortality rates were conditioned by climatic and geographical conditions, population density, migration and trade activities, as well as by nutritional opportunities and mental or cultural habits. If we look at Europe as a whole, then the Czech lands, the Bohemian Kingdom, and the Moravian Margraviate were among areas much less affected by plague epidemics in the XIVth and XVth centuries than medieval France, England, Italy, or the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire². The causes of the lower intensity of the plague epidemic in Bohemia and Moravia can be seen in all of the aspects mentioned above, which does not, however, mean that the impact of the plague epidemic in the Kingdom of Bohemia was not in some regards comparable to that in Western Europe.

Research on the medieval plague epidemic in Bohemia and Moravia has struggled with a lack of relevant sources from the very beginning³. However, this fact

² From classical works cf. John Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348–1530* (London–Basingstoke 1977); Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death. Natural and Human Disaster in medieval Europe* (London 1984); *The Black Death: The Impact of the fourteenth-century Plague*, ed. Daniel Williman (Binghamton 1982); Klaus Bergdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa. Die Große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters* (München 1994); David Herlihy, *Der Schwarze Tod und die Verwandlung Europas* (Berlin 1998).

³ The first more detailed reflection on the impact of the plague on the Bohemian and Moravian milieu was published by František Graus, “Autor de la peste noire au XIV^e siècle en Bohème”, *Annales E.S.C.* 18 (1963): 720–724.

already to a certain extent indicates that the plague had a lesser impact and so also a smaller scope in the Bohemian and Moravian lands than in Western Europe. The limited explanatory power of the sources has also influenced the marginal interest of Czech historians in this topic. The only debate that was ever conducted about the impact of the plague epidemic in the Czech lands concerned its possible influence on the outbreak of the Hussite revolution, or the degree of plague intensity in 1380⁴. This debate quite clearly led to the conclusion that in plague epidemics, or in their impact on pre-Hussite society, it is not possible to see a significant or even decisive cause of the outbreak of the Hussite revolution. At the same time, however, this debate has shown that an isolated view of Czech history, without taking into account the developments and situation in Western Europe⁵, only leads to *a priori* or elided conclusions. Despite the insufficient number and thematic limitation of the sources, however, there are still possibilities of expanding our knowledge of the impact of the plague epidemic on Czech society in the XIVth and XVth centuries, and of increasingly perceiving it in the context of European events in the late Middle Ages. At the same time, quantitative views must be combined with qualitative interpretations, because only in this way is it possible to understand pre-Hussite society in its complexity.

In chroniclers' texts of Bohemian origin from the XIVth century, reports on the outbreak of the plague appeared very quickly. Francis of Prague, who wrote the second recension of his chronicle probably in 1353–1354⁶, perceived the whole of 1348 as a series of exceptional phenomena and events that did not bode well. It all started on 17 January, when there was a lunar eclipse lasting 3 hours and 28 minutes, and this eclipse was said to be accompanied by a combination (conjunction) of the planets. Francis of Prague considered the earthquake of that year to be a consequence of this astronomical phenomenon. However, according to his report, the earthquake devastated Bohemia much less than the surrounding lands: "No one remembers such an earthquake nor mentions it in the chronicles". But the same was true of the terrible contagion, the plague: "No such contagion has been heard of or even traced". According to Francis of Prague, the plague contagion spread very quickly and the Italian cities of Genoa or Pisa allegedly lost their entire populations and were deserted. In Venice, Florence, and Bologna, half the people died, according to his claim. Nevertheless, in his description, the plague epidemic

⁴ From this debate cf. Jaroslav Čechura, "Mor, krize a husitská revoluce", *Český časopis historický* 92 (1994): 286–303; Jaroslav Mezník, "Mor z roku 1380 a příčiny husitské revoluce", *Český časopis historický* 93 (1995): 702–710; Martin Nodl, "Předhusitské mory k problémům jedné interpretace", *Časopis Matice Moravské* 120 (2001): 491–503. David Charles Mengel, "A Plague on Bohemia? Mapping the Black Death", *Past and Present* 211 (2011): 3–34, summed up the debate for the last time.

⁵ Cf. Petr Čornej, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Vol. V (Praha 2000), 11–71.

⁶ *Kroniky doby Karla IV.* (Praha 1987), 566.

did not have only a local character but a purely global character, because it killed even in non-Christian lands. And to make matters worse, a huge fire broke out in Ancona, Italy, at the same time, and a thick, dark fog fell in Paris, so that “a person could not see a nearby person”. In China, it rained water mixed with worms, snakes, and frogs, a consequence of which was “a large number of people being swallowed, and whoever touched the dead soon fell and died”. At the same time between China and Persia, fire fell from the sky that burned everything, and the smoke that rose from the sites of the fire also had a deadly effect. In France, huge stones supposedly fell from the sky.

According to Francis of Prague, the plague came to Bohemia from Austria. At the same time, however, the chronicler noticed that the extent of death and dying was not as great in Bohemia as in neighbouring lands, which he attributed not only to God’s help, but also to the fact that “it was blown away by a fresh and cold wind”. Information from abroad was drawn *inter alia* from law students, who had returned to Bohemia from Italy, from Bologna. They referred to an enormous death toll, the exhaustion of those who survived, great losses in the lives of priests and physicians, mass burials, and death without last rites being given to the dying. The chronicler, Francis of Prague, as we have stated above, connected the causes of this epidemic with astronomical phenomena; he also saw in them divine punishment, which affected believers and unbelievers alike. This follows from an exemplum given by him, according to which one pagan king, whose wives had all died, wanted to accept Christianity. However, when he learned that Christians were also dying, he realized that this was in vain, and he remained with his original pagan faith. In the Christian world, God sent the plague as punishment for the conduct of those who had sinned excessively through extravagance, greed, or unrighteousness, with the greatest sin being committed against nature. The plague was a punishment of God, but according to Francis, there was also the hope that it would eventually disappear. It might also have been for that reason that the chronicler called the plague “temporary”⁷.

However, he was deeply wrong about that. Another Bohemian observer, the chronicler Beneš Krabice of Weitmile, who wrote his chronicle in the 1370s, already evaluated the plague epidemic in terms of its longevity. While writing his chronicle, he had before his eyes the text of Francis of Prague, from whom he copied the information on the earthquake and lunar eclipse. In Francis’s spirit, Beneš Krabice also considered the plague to be a consequence of an inauspicious constellation of the planets. However, unlike Francis of Prague, he noted that in Bohemia and the whole world, the plague lasted fourteen years, “right here, right over there”, in Christian and in pagan lands. The disease had thus spread from place to place and subsequently returned. “There was no sanctuary, because people died both in the plains and in the mountains and forests. Large and

⁷ *Ibidem*, 147–148; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, ed. Josef Emler (Praha 1882), 448–451.

numerous pits were dug everywhere in the individual years mentioned, in which the bodies of the dead were buried. There was never such a plague or one so long in the world”⁸. For 1361, Beneš Krabice noted that the plague continued, but, in that year, it was joined with a large crop failure and famine. According to the same chronicler, some disease engulfed Bohemia again in 1367, once again preceded by a lunar eclipse. First, in Bohemia there was a huge flood, which flooded half of Prague. After that, in March and April, there came a “sudden contagion on all the people; there were few in the villages and towns who were not ill, but by the grace of God it lasted only three or four days and few people died of it. But mainly all the people became ill”⁹. Nevertheless, Beneš Krabice did not call this contagion the plague. After all, the fact that the infection lasted only three to four days practically preclude the possibility that it was plague. On the contrary, for 1369 he again spoke of the plague or the great plague that lasted the whole year. As it approached Prague from southern Bohemia, the church ordered a procession and observance of fasts. This succeeded in reconciling God, and the plague soon ceased¹⁰. Even for Beneš Krabice, there were possibilities of fighting the plague. God was behind everything. And if God was reconciled by repentance, God had mercy on people, at least temporarily.

For the following years, especially for 1380, we unfortunately do not have any comparable chronicler’s texts that help to map the events in the Kingdom of Bohemia in detail and to note systematically in European and global contexts the contagions and epidemics with which human beings inhabiting the land had to struggle. For the later period, we therefore rely only on small, annal-like records. Although they document the rampage of the plague in Bohemia and Moravia at the end of the XIVth century and in the first decades of the XVth century and prove the fixation of these demographic catastrophes in the collective memory, they did not encourage their readers to think more deeply. For us, these annal-like records are remarkable for two main reasons. In small chronicler’s texts, the plague epidemic of 1380 is referred to as “*pestilencia magna*” or “*magnissima*”. And since a whole series of these texts were created only considerably *ex post*, we can say on their basis that, from a memorial point of view, the plague epidemic of 1380 was indeed the largest in the Bohemian and Moravian lands. The second aspect, which must be related to the period before 1380, is demonstrated by documents in the period ascribing ordinal numbers to plague epidemics¹¹. The enumeration of the first, second, and third epidemics (the third reflection 1368 or 1379) testifies to an awareness of its longevity, or the recurrence of plague epidemics, the next impact of which people could anticipate to some extent.

⁸ *Kroniky doby Karla IV.*, 225; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, 516.

⁹ *Kroniky doby Karla IV.*, 238; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, 535.

¹⁰ *Kroniky doby Karla IV.*, 242; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, 540.

¹¹ Graus, “*Autor de la peste noire*”, 722–723, pointed them out.

Today, we know quite clearly that the plague came to the territory of Bohemia and Moravia with a certain delay in comparison to Western Europe, and that its demographic impact was much smaller. Quantitatively conceived research, which establishes low mortality in the Czech and Moravian lands, is unfortunately limited by the lack of sources. The analysis of Jaroslav Mezník for Brno at the turn of the 1340s and 1350s demonstrated that in the residential city of the Moravian margraviate, the plague was already raging at the beginning of the 1350s¹². However, with a certain degree of probability, it caused a decrease of a maximum of 20% in the urban population, i.e., much less than in Western European cities¹³. Nevertheless, the Moravian Margrave John Henry had to react to the situation, and so on 11 November 1351 he freed newcomers to the city from paying excise tax for four years and at the same time reduced the excise tax obligations of the surviving burghers of Brno¹⁴.

The situation as regards sources is even more complicated for 1380. The only quantitative analysis has been performed for the West Bohemian royal town of Stříbro. My research clearly shows that this plague epidemic, which killed not only in the town but also in the wider region (we know this clearly through the deaths of the parish clergy and lower nobility), led in 1380 to the death of a maximum of 10% of the population of Stříbro¹⁵. In the subsequent years, until the outbreak of the revolution, the plague epidemic did not return to Stříbro with the same intensity, and if the town was struck by the plague, its impact on the size of the population of Stříbro was minimal. Unfortunately, it is not possible to study quantitatively the influence of plague epidemics on the size of the pre-Hussite urban population, or the mortality of burghers due to plague infections, in other Bohemian and Moravian cities.

It is different in the case of the mortality of parish clergy. Eduard Maur, with his quantitative analysis of the official books of the Prague archbishopric (confirmation books) clearly showed in which years we can speak of plague epidemics for the Bohemian lands and how they differed from one another in terms of intensity: 1357–1360, 1362–1363, 1369–1371, 1380, 1390, 1403–1406, and 1414–1415. In the period 1354–1418, about 4,000 clergy died according to his calculations. About 1,400 of their deaths were plague infections. Thus, in individual plague years, the

¹² Jaroslav Mezník, "Mory v Brně ve 14. století", *Mediaevalia historica bohemica* 3 (1993): 225–235. Cf. Jaroslav Čechura, "Srovnání berních knih města Brna z let 1365 a 1442. (Poznámky k metodice studia pramenů hromadné povahy)", *Časopis Matice moravské* 117 (1998): 341–352.

¹³ Cf. Neithard Bulst, "Der Schwarze Tod. Demographische, wirtschafts- und kulturgeschichtliche Aspekte der Pestkatastrophe von 1347–1352. Bilanz der neueren Forschung", *Saeculum* 30 (1979): 45–67.

¹⁴ Mezník, "Mory v Brně ve 14. století", 230.

¹⁵ Cf. Martin Nodl, "Západočeské Stříbro v roce 1380 (Kvantitativní analýza vlivu moru na demografický vývoj města středověkého města)", *Minulostí západočeského kraje* 29 (1994): 7–14.

number of deceased clerics sometimes doubled, which undoubtedly testifies to the otherwise well-known fact that clerics were among the most affected members of the medieval population alongside doctors¹⁶, mainly due to their daily contact with infected parishioners. Although we know from the Czech lands of examples of prelates who tried to hide from the plague – the most flagrant is the case of the archdeacon of Bechyň Boreš, who according to the claim of Archbishop Jenštejn fled abroad to escape the plague (but according to Jenštejn this was not an isolated case among the Bohemian clergy in 1380)¹⁷ but the high mortality of the parish clergy, traced by Maur, suggests the opposite.

In addition, we must realize that the research by Maur¹⁸ reflects the minimum rather than the maximum number of deaths of parish clergy¹⁹. Unfortunately, there are few options for complementing Maur's innovative research. Through an analysis of sources preserved for the Rakovník deanery (there were 44 parish and 6 filial churches under it), I was able to prove that in the plague year 1380 the mortality of the parish clergy was twice as high as in the confirmation books of the Prague archbishopric²⁰. Nine deaths of clerics are documented in the Rakovník deaconate through confirmation books. However, thanks to the statements of the parishioners during the visitation of archdeacon Pavel of Janovice²¹ in 1382, we know that not only nine, but twenty parish benefices were held here in 1380. If we assume that outside the confirmation books, all eleven of the newly identified clerics succeeded a pastor who died of the plague, then it follows from the above that more than two-fifths of all pastors died during the plague epidemic in the Rakovník district. The number of deaths in the Rakovník district, thus, far exceeds the national average determined by Maur (by about one third). At the same time, however, it should be noted that there were large differences between the individual Bohemian regions in terms of the intensity of the plague in 1380²², and that it is, therefore, not possible to claim that in 1380 almost half of all parish clergy died.

¹⁶ Bergdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa*, 172–178.

¹⁷ Johann Loserth, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitischen Bewegung", *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 55 (1877): 393.

¹⁸ Cf. Eduard Maur, "Příspěvek k demografické problematice předhusitských Čech (1348–1419)", *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Philosophica et historica* 1 (1989): 7–71. Maur worked on the issue on the basis of *Libri confirmationum ad beneficia ecclesiastica Pragensem per archidioecesim*, Vol. I–X (Praha 1865–1889).

¹⁹ However, it is clear that the death rate of the Bohemian parish priests was incomparable with the mortality of the parish clergy in Western Europe in 1347–1351. Cf. Bernd Ingolf Zaddach, *Die Folgen des Schwarzen Todes (1347–51) für den Klerus Mitteleuropas* (Stuttgart 1971).

²⁰ Martin Nodl, "Morová epidemie na Rakovnicku v roce 1380. Modelová studie k životu farního kléru", in *Facta probant homines. Sborník příspěvků k životnímu jubileu Prof. Dr. Zdeňky Hledíkové* (Praha 1998), 301–310.

²¹ *Visitační protokol pražského arcijáhensví pražského arcijáhna Pavla z Janovic z let 1379–1382*, eds. Ivan Hlaváček, Zdeňka Hledíková (Praha 1973).

²² Nodl, "Západočeské Stříbro v roce 1380", 7–14.

The problem is that the confirmation books are not preserved for the whole year 1380 and that they are absent for the years 1381 and 1382. Our quantitative considerations must therefore remain only relative, which is exacerbated by the fact that we do not have relevant sources to document the mortality of parish clergy in detail, not recorded by confirmation books, even in other plague and non-plague years. Despite these limitations, however, the situation in the Rakovník deaconate still at least roughly indicates the fact that the mortality of the parish clergy was higher in the plague years than that indicated by Maur.

The chroniclers' response to the plague epidemics that began to afflict Western Europe as early as 1347 and 1348 was, as we have shown, relatively very rapid in the Czech lands and testifies to the Kingdom of Bohemia's close lines of communication with more developed European regions. Using another three examples, I will try to capture how quickly and, at the same time, at what intensity other phenomena, which are associated with plague epidemics, began to manifest themselves in Bohemia and Moravia. The first of them, which concerns the field of medicine, clearly testifies to the significant and very lively intellectual interconnectedness of Czech and European milieus, which in this case was conditioned by the development of university education in Prague in the second half of the XIVth century, and thus the increasingly important position of the Prague royal (and later also imperial) court in the coordinates of European politics and culture. The early emergence of medical treatises of Czech provenance which responded to the plague as a new, rapidly spreading disease should be considered a truly significant reaction to the outbreak. The writing of the first tract against plague is seen in the Czech lands already in the 1370s, thus a mere two decades after the emergence of the so-called Paris Councils²³. The oldest, originally Bohemian, work is *Missum imperatori*, which was written down in Latin for the courtly milieu of Charles IV by the Prague physician Havel of Strahov. And because the Prague court milieu was in many respects more German than Czech, this document, it seems, quite soon, was translated into Middle High German²⁴. Havel of Strahov is also thought to be the author of the German letter by the lady from Plavno (*Brief an die Frau von Plauen*), written in Prague before 1375²⁵. In the subsequent decades, perhaps under the influence of the plague wave of the 1380s, several

²³ Cf. Gundolf Keil, "Pest im Mittelalter: die Pandemie der «Schwarzen Todes» von 1347 bis 1351", in *Das 14. Jahrhundert: Krisenzeit*, ed. Walter Buckl (Regensburg 1995), 100, according to whose opinion the impetuses for the standardisation of plague therapy in the imperial milieu of the fourteenth century came from Prague.

²⁴ For German translation of the *Missum imperatori* G. Werthmann-Haas, *Altdeutsche Übersetzung des Prager "Sendbriefs" ("Missum imperatori")* (Würzburg 1983).

²⁵ On the letter from the lady from Plavno Hans Peter Franke, *Der Pest-"Brief" and die Frau von Plauen. Studien zu Überlieferung und Gestaltwandel* (Würzburg 1977).

tracts were written in Prague, the authors of which were the Prague University graduates Albík of Uničov²⁶ and Křišťan of Prachatice. They were later translated into Old Czech. In the XVth and XVIth centuries, when waves of plague returned repeatedly, there was great demand for medical tract literature in Bohemia, as well as for medicines that were supposed to stop or reduce the consequences of the disease. The physicians lecturing in the pre-Hussite period at the Medical Faculty of Charles University also, of course practiced medicine. Their medical procedures are reflected in the small treatises written by Křišťan of Prachatice²⁷. The lengthiest of them was *Zpráva proti šelmovému času točizto proti moru, kterýžto z božieho dopuštění jest a z běhu planět a hvězd, teď se píše* (*Message Against the Beast of Time, which is against the plague, which is by divine permission and is now being written from the course of the planets and stars*)²⁸. The Old Czech text, which is preserved in three very different variants, is in fact a free treatment of Křišťan's Latin treatise with the incipit *In ista peste sive pestilencia*²⁹. We do not know when this treatise was written. In the manuscript in Prague's National Library (NK IX A 4), from which Karl Sudhoff produced his edition, there is a note in the margin next to the word "pestilencia": "quae erant de anno domini M^oCCCC^o9^o post festum Sancti Bartholomei"³⁰. However, research based on a study of the mortality of holders of church benefices has shown that the plague was not rampant that year³¹. It is, thus, necessary to take the year 1409 only as indicative.

Křišťan of Prachatice, who in the Czech lands was just as recognised an authority in treating the plague as Václav's court physician Albík of Uničov before, was aware, based on his own medical practice, that it was in fact impossible to treat the plague³². In this way, he was no different from contemporary medical men,

²⁶ Milada Řihová, *Dvorní lékař posledních Lucemburků. Albík z Uničova, lékař králů Václava IV. a Zikmunda, profesor pražské university a krátký čas i arcibiskup pražský* (Praha 1999), where also links for rich source research from the Czech and Silesian environment.

²⁷ Pavel Spunar, *Repertorium auctorum Bohemorum protractum idearum post universitatem Pragensem conditam illustrans*, Vol. 1 (Wratislaviae–Varsoviae–Cracoviae–Gedani–Lodziae 1985), 116–132, records Křišťan's writings. On his plague treatises cf. Martin Nodl, "Lékař a mor, aneb intelektuál rezignující i bojující", *Listy filologické* 124 (2001): 252–276.

²⁸ The Křišťan's work is published in *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, Vol. 2 (Praha 1964), 574–575.

²⁹ Edition: Karl Sudhoff, "Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren nach der Epidemie des «schwarzen Todes» 1348, VI. Prager Pesttraktate aus dem 14. und dem Anfange des 15. Jahrhunderts", *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 7 (1914): 100–101. Gellner noticed that this was a draft *Learning Report in those places* (*Zprávy o naučení v těch místech*), G. Gellner, "Jan Černý a jiní naši lékaři do konce doby jagellovské", *Věstník královské české společnosti nauk, Třída filosoficko-historická* 3 (1934): 65.

³⁰ Sudhoff, "Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren", 100, pozn. 4.

³¹ Maur, "Příspěvek k demografické problematice", 33.

³² For the diagnosis of plague Neithard Bulst, *Krankheit und Gesellschaft in der Vormoderne. Das Beispiel Pest*, in *Maladies et société (XII^e–XVIII^e siècles*, eds. Neithard Bulst, Robert Delort (Paris, 1989), 17–47; Keil, "Pest im Mittelalter", 95–108; Dále srov. Jean-Noël Biraben, "Das medizinische

and even his anti-plague tract shows no signs of medical originality, as he rather adopts the opinions and advice of the authors of earlier texts. In his opinion, plague was closely connected with the human psyche³³. Fear of the plague, thus, could cause the outbreak of this disease and to speak of it was to call it down on yourself. Another Bohemian physician, Albík of Uničov, wrote this even more succinctly: “Quia dicunt doctores generaliter approbati, quod sola ymaginacio pestis hominem facit pestilenticum”³⁴. Thus, if one succeeds in displacing the idea of plague, one has a much better chance of survival than one who is battling the disease today and every day. It is remarkable how completely modern ideas are reflected in similar medieval ideas.

Although Křišťan himself prepared, as did other doctors, pills against the plague, his so-called “powder of Master Křišťan – pilulis magistri Nicolai”, on a theoretical level he placed emphasis on prevention in the case of a threat of plague contagion. He considered, in the Boccaccian spirit, leaving the place where the plague was raging to be the best prevention against the plague. “Najprvé dobré jest, muož-li to býti, aby člověku tu nebyl, kdež mor jest” (“First, it is good if possible for a person not to be where the plague is”)³⁵. Nothing is better than escape³⁶. Albík z Uničova in his treatise *Collectorium minus* from 1406 also defended staying away from a place where the plague was raging: “Tercio prae omnibus abstiendum est

Denken und die Krankheiten in Europa”, in *Die Geschichte des medizinischen Denkens. Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. Mirko D. Grmek (München 1996), 356–401.

³³ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, Vol. 2, 574: “Druhé, aby banie ani strachu o moru neměl, neb o to časté mluvenie a rozjímanie přivodí k hlíze” (“The second, so that he will not be afraid of the plague, because frequent talking and contemplation leads to the boils”). At the end of the tractate, it also adds: “Item nade všeko lékařství v ten čas dobré jest mieti dobrú mysl, ani hněvati se, a varovati se bázni, strachu, tesknosti, zlé mysli. Nemnoho mysliti, čehož člověk nemuož mieti, i přelišné starosti se varovati” (“It is good above all medicine at that time to have a good mind, not to be angry, and to beware of fear, anxiety, longing, evil thoughts. Few to think about, which one cannot help, and to be very worried should be avoided”).

³⁴ Sudhoff, “Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren”, 92.

³⁵ The manuscript of the Library of the National Museum I H 4, f. 546, has the following wording: “Najprvé, muož-li to býti, aby se člověk odtud přestěhoval tam, kdež nemrú, a to na počátku moru. Pakli nemúž býti, aby se ostříhal nemocných od hlíz anebo vystříhal se, aby duchu jich v se nevtáhl, a to zvláště ti, kteříž se smrti a nakažení bojí, neb časté o tom rozjímaní připraví k hlíze, a tak k smrti činí” (“First, if it is possible, that a person may move from there to where he does not die, at the beginning of the plague. But if he cannot be, then to keep away from the sick of boils, or to keep himself from taking trouble in their breath, especially those who fear death and contagion, for through its consideration they often prepare for boils, and so make for their own death”). The Latin tract speaks even more clearly: “In ista peste sive pestilencia est melius nisi fugere loca petifera, quia sicuti qui fugit ignem, ignis non sequitur”.

³⁶ Generally on the issue of escape, Heinz-Peter Schmiedebach, Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio, “«Fleuch pald, fleuch ferr, kum wider spat...». Entfremdung, Flucht und Agression im Angesicht der Pestilenz (1347–1350)”, in *Fremdheit und Reisen im Mittelalter*, eds. Irene Erfen, Karl-Heinz Spiess (Stuttgart 1997), 217–234.

a loco pestilencie et a patientibus pestilentia quamdiu pestilentia dura”³⁷. In this regard, both Bohemian physicians adopted the opinions of the French and Italian physicians (*Compendium de Epidemia, per Collegium facultatis medicorum Parisiis ordinatum*, prepared at the request of French king Phillip VI already in 1348³⁸, or the physician of the bishop of Milan, Giovanni Dondi³⁹, from the second half of the XIVth century). Nevertheless, similar opinions persisted deep into the XVIth century, as evidenced by many anti-plague writings of Bohemian origin. The leading position in them is the treatise of the Brethren’s physician Jan Černý, *Spis o nemocech morních (Treatise on Plague Diseases)*, repeatedly issued in print, which in the response to it surpassed not only Křišťan’s treatise, but also Czech-written medical texts of other Czech physicians writing in the first half of the XVIth century, Jan of Choceň and Jan Kopp. However, escape from a plague-infected place was supposed to be only temporary, because according to Jan Černý, people could return to their place of residence without fear after the disease had subsided, as there was little chance that the epidemic would break out again⁴⁰.

We thus can generally say that medical reflection of the plague contagion in the Czech lands (in the XVth century mainly at the sovereign’s court) was very quick. Undoubtedly, medical writings of Czech provenance were created before the greatest plague epidemic of 1380 and were clearly influenced by texts written soon after 1347 in Western Europe. The plague of 1380, or following the epidemic, the interest of Bohemian physicians in the topic of plague, made the theoretical anti-plague treatises purely into practically utilisable medical instructions on how to prevent the disease and how to suppress or even treat it. In this way, physicians of the type of Albík of Uničov or Křišťan of Prachatice went from university lecture halls to the lay urban world.

The interconnectedness of the Bohemian lands with Western Europe is also proved by the fact that the first flagellants had already appeared in Prague in 1349. It is all the more remarkable that the oldest Central European reports of flagellants come from the end of 1348, or rather only from the spring of the following year, when small, purely male groups appeared in several Western European cities, whose members flogged themselves in an ostentatious manner and wore red hats with signs of the cross⁴¹. In the period chroniclers’ texts, the flagellants were clearly associated with the plague, while their actions were aimed at averting

³⁷ Karl Sudhoff, “Pestschriften aus den ersten 150 Jahren”, 122.

³⁸ Keil, “Pest im Mittelalter”, 116. Edition of Parisian greetings: Robert Hoeninge, *Der schwarze Tod in Deutschland. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1882).

³⁹ Bergdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa*, 27–29.

⁴⁰ Gellner, “Jan Černý a jiní naši lékaři”: 75. Newly cf. Karel Černý, *Mor 1480–1730. Epidemie v lékařských traktátech raného novověku* (Praha 2014).

⁴¹ For flagellants cf. most recently Franz-Reiner Erkens, “Busse in Zeiten des Schwarzen Todes: Die Züge der Geißler”, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 26 (1999): 483–513; Ingrid Würth, *Geißler in Thüringen. Die Entstehung einer spätmittelalterlichen Häresie* (Berlin 2012).

this infection, or at the Atonement of God, who sent the disease to sinful believers. In Bohemia, the chronicler Francis of Prague was the first to mention the arrival of flagellants in Prague. In his account, however, the connection between the plague and the flogging of flagellants is not entirely clear. Their ethnic origin is also not precisely defined, although both Bohemians and domestic Germans are said to tend towards it:

In the course of the same year, many penitents from different countries, old and young, came to Prague and visited churches in droves and processions. Hands bound in a linen scarf, naked at the top, they walked and whipped hard until their blood flowed profusely, because their whips were knotted, and needles or iron spikes were attached to them. And on their first arrival, they encouraged many people to worship, whipping themselves and singing a song in the vernacular language. Numerous inhabitants of the Czech lands were amazed by their unusual and difficult repentance and showed them too many acts of mercy, and many of the Bohemians, both Bohemians and Germans, joined them. And because their sect was quite perverted, containing various heresies, the archbishop and the other prelates of the churches, when they recognized the heresies, did not want to suffer them anymore and forced them to leave Bohemia⁴².

The fact that the flagellants were received positively in Bohemia and that they were shown mercy deserves the most attention in the chronicler's account. In the second part of his account, however, Francis called the flagellants a sect professing heresy. And it is in this spirit that the archbishop also opposed them. However, we have no documented order from Ernest against the flagellants from 1349 or from the following years, so the question is whether Francis's words are based on the truth. The second report by Beneš Krabice is, in fact, based on Francis's version. Unlike it, however, Beneš Krabice no longer talks about the positive reception of flagellants and, on the contrary, adds news that flagellants confessed each other, repented, and preached, i.e., that they had appropriated priestly powers to themselves: "In the same year, some perverted men from Germany came to Bohemia, who flogged themselves in front of people and confided their sins and repentance, preached to the people and deceived many common people. When the venerable lord Ernest, the first archbishop of Prague, discovered their heresies, he forbade and prevented this activity"⁴³. Beneš Krabice therefore tried to "make credible" Francis's report by referring to obvious transgressions against church customs, which had to be refuted in the spirit of orthodoxy. The most important thing for us in both cases is that the flagellants appeared very soon in Prague, unlike in other European cities even before the plague, and therefore, those who manifested support for them had no immediate experience of the plague.

⁴² *Kroniky doby Karla IV.*, 149; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, 451.

⁴³ *Kroniky doby Karla IV.*, 224; *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum IV*, 516.

In this respect, however, it is somewhat surprising that in Prague we do not hear anything about anti-Jewish pogroms in connection with the self-flogging of flagellants. While even in the Western European lands, not in all cases were the performances of flagellants associated with pogroms, there are many examples of the subsequent or joint outbreak of these crowd psychoses⁴⁴. The only pogrom that we have documented in our lands in 1350 took place in Cheb (Cheb was an imperial town, but also an imperial fief of the Bohemian king). The pogrom in the town occurred sometime in the course of 1350 (the date of 25 March 1350 is given by very late sources), while its initiators were labelled in a contemporary deed of Charles IV as burghers of Cheb⁴⁵. We do not know anything more of the course of this pogrom, just as we do not have any sources available that would have connected it with the plague. In the same way, we cannot answer the question as to whether Cheb was stricken by the plague at all at the turn of the 1340s and 1350s. In fact, it is possible that the Cheb pogrom was more an echo of pogroms in other imperial cities from 1348–1349 than a direct consequence of deaths from the plague in the locality. Also, the pogrom against the Jews of Prague, which happened at Easter in 1389, has nothing to do with the plague epidemic⁴⁶. This is documented in Prague only a year later. However, we know from German sources that the connection between the plague and the pogroms is not always completely clear, and that pogroms erupted in many cities even before the plague arrived. And, of course, there are many imperial cities in which a Jewish community lived and which were demonstrably affected by the plague, but in which there was no pogrom in the XIVth century.

In order to understand the response and impact of plague epidemics in the Bohemian and Moravian lands, it is, of course, necessary to monitor social and economic aspects in addition to demographic aspects. If we were to look in the Czech source material for sovereign or noble interventions in social life in cities, we would look in vain. Interventions were a result of the lack of jobs, which in some regions of Western Europe resulted in uncontrolled wage growth, which had to be controlled by regulations on maximum levels of wages (and subsequently also regulations on the maximum prices for basic foodstuffs)⁴⁷. The only two norms of Bohemian origin from the pre-Hussite period come

⁴⁴ František Graus, *Mory, flagelanti a vraždění Židů. 14. století jako období krize* (Praha 2020), 33–46.

⁴⁵ Graus, *Mory, flagelanti a vraždění Židů*, 119, 466–467.

⁴⁶ On the Prague pogrom in 1389 cf. Alexandr Putík, “On the Topography and Demography of the Prague Jewish Town Prior to the Pogrom of 1389”, *Judaica Bohemiae* 30–31 (1994–1995): 7–46. The latest Evina Steinová, “Passio Iudeorum Pragensium: Tatsachen und Fiktionen über das Pogrom im Jahr 1389”, in “Avigdor, Benesch, Gitl”. *Juden in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien im Mittelalter: Samuel Steinherz zum Gedenken (1857 Güssing – 1942 Theresienstadt)* (Brünn–Prag 2016), 159–185.

⁴⁷ Karl Georg Zinn, *Kanonen und Pest. Über die Ursprünge der Neuzeit im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Opladen 1989), dealt with this issue in many ways. On the English environment, cf. analyzes and editions of sources in *The Black Death*, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Manchester–New York 1994).

from Prague and Cheb. And not one of them can be dated precisely and any connection with the plague is purely hypothetical⁴⁸. In fact, Cheb Town Council's regulation stipulates only the ratio of the wage of a day labourer and of a master mason⁴⁹, and the Prague data relates to the real wages of construction labourers and their assistants. So, these are not classic regulations of maximum wages, but of a currently determined level of wages, while the reasons for these interventions are not mentioned anywhere.

Similarly, lordship attachments to the land are not documented in the Bohemian and Moravian context, as we know them in detail from the Holy Roman regions⁵⁰. Neither is it possible to assess the decree of the Moravian Land Assembly from 1380 as an attachment to the land⁵¹. It is also difficult to interpret the rejection of serf escheat by Jan of Jenštejn on the arch-episcopal estates. However, it rather seems that for villagers to give up escheat meant release from the condition of serfdom⁵².

We also do not know from the Bohemian and Moravian lands any regulations of immigration or methods of accepting municipal law which would have been connected to a reaction to the demographic changes as a consequence of the plague epidemics. If there had been, indeed, a rapid decline in the population in Bohemia and Moravia, then town councils would have sought to facilitate the adoption of municipal law (by reducing or waiving the payment of fees), as was done for example by the town councils in Nördlingen, Esslingen, or Schwäbisch Hall⁵³. The only evidence of such an intervention is the already mentioned regulation of Margrave

⁴⁸ František Graus, *Chudina městská v době předhusitské* (Praha 1949) 74, 78; Eduard Maur, "Morová epidemie roku 1380 v Čechách", *Historická Demografie* 10 (1986): 47.

⁴⁹ Maur, "Morová epidemie roku 1380", 47, s odkazy na edice pramenů.

⁵⁰ Claudia Ulbricht, *Leibeigenschaft am Oberrhein im Spätmittelalter* (Göttingen 1979); Johannes Mötsch, "Sponheimische Nichtabzugverpflichtungen. Landflucht in der Crafschaft Sponheim und ihre Bekämpfung 1324–1435", *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte* 9 (1983): 100–117, mainly follow the normative legal question of the limitation of migration. On the contrary, the real situation is reflected by Hans-Martin Maurer, "Masseneide gegen Abwanderung im 14. Jahrhundert. Quellen zur territorialen Rechts- und Bevölkerungsgeschichte", *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte* 39 (1980): 30–93.

⁵¹ Josef Válka, "Předpisy o stěhování osedlých v českých zemích a Polsku ve 14. století", *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské university* C 8 (1961): 121–133. On the possible limitation of emigration on monastic estates in the surroundings of Stříbro, cf. Martin Nodl, "Sociální aspekty pozdně středověkého městského přistěhovalectví, in *Sociální svět středověkého města*, ed. Martin Nodl (Praha 2006), 40–47.

⁵² Most recently, on the dispute over taking serf escheats, which broke out between Archbishop Jenštejn and Canon Vojtěch Raňkův of Ježov, see "Naposledy ke sporu o brání poddanských odúmrťí, který propukl mezi arcibiskupem Jenštejnem a kanovníkem Vojtěchem Raňkův z Ježova Miroslav Černý", *Kuneš z Třebovle – středověký právník a jeho dílo* (Plzeň 1999).

⁵³ This issue was followed in detail by Hanno Vasarhelyi, "Einwanderung nach Nördlingen, Esslingen und Schwäbische Hall zwischen 1450 und 1550", in *Stadt und Umland*, eds. Erich Maschke, Jürgen Sydow (Stuttgart, 1974), 129–165; Andrea Theissen, "Die Neubürgerpolitik der Stadt Braunschweig im Rahmen ihrer Finanz- und Wirtschaftspolitik vom Ende der 15. Jahrhundert bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg", in *Stadt im Wandel (Kunst und Kultur des Bürgertums im Norddeutschland 1150–1650)*, eds. Cord Meckseper (Braunschweig 1985), Vol. 4, 119–129.

John Henry for Brno in 1351⁵⁴. However, no other intervention from other Bohemian and Moravian towns has been documented from the period 1350–1420.

Based on research relating to Prague's Old Town and Střibro in West Bohemia, we can unequivocally rule out that the demographic consequences of plague epidemics could have had an immediate impact on the Czechisation of Bohemian and Moravian towns in the period up to 1420. After all, the analyses conducted showed that immigration had a rather limited effect on the Czechisation of these cities. Indeed, in Střibro the intensity of immigration decreased from the 1390s in comparison with the 1380s (its level before the plague of 1380 is unknown)⁵⁵. On the contrary, in the Old Town of Prague we know the numbers of persons who adopted municipal law only until 1393. Compared to the years before 1380 and after 1384, according to a quantitative analysis performed by Martin Musílek, there was a rapid, approximately twofold increase in the number of new burghers compared to that of non-plague years in 1381–1383⁵⁶. So far, however, there has been no qualitative analysis of this increase in the number of new burghers, i.e., whether that increase was accompanied by changes in the places of origin of these new citizens, changes in their occupation or even in their social status. In one aspect, however, the migration trend in Prague changed in the 1380s, because it is precisely from the 1380s that the requirements for the submission of conservation and release certificates appear much more frequently in the records on the adoption of municipal law. In fact, this is a paradox, because the obligation to submit a release or conservation document could lead to a worsening of the chances of adopting municipal law, so that at the moment when the town was certainly affected by the plague (perhaps to 10% or at most 15%), we would rather expect the town council to act in the opposite way.

The issue of rural desolation is also quite complicated. Unlike some English or imperial regions, where the desolation of the countryside is proved to be due to plague epidemics, or due to the high mortality rate from the plague⁵⁷, we do not encounter a desolation of the countryside in Bohemia and Moravia, in terms of an intensity comparable to the situation in Western Europe. Even if we omit the fact that the desolation of the countryside may be conditioned by other than purely demographic aspects, it can still be argued on the basis of previous research that the Czech lands were not significantly affected by this socio-demographic phenomenon⁵⁸. In the same way,

⁵⁴ Mezník, "Mory v Brně ve 14. století", 230.

⁵⁵ On the decline of immigration to Střibro, see Martin Nodl, "Národnostní vývoj předhusitského Střibra (Modelová prosopografická analýza)", *Český časopis historický* 94 (1996): 544–550.

⁵⁶ Martin Musílek, *Patroni, klienti, příbuzní. Sociální svět Starého Města pražského ve 14. století* (Praha 2015), 144–148.

⁵⁷ The very fundamental difference between the desolation of the countryside in the Austrian and Bohemian lands was stated by Čechura, "Mor, krize a husitská revoluce", 293.

⁵⁸ On the desolation in the Bohemian rural area in the second half of the fifteenth century, cf. the dissertation by Antonín Kostlán, *Feudální zatížení českého venkova po husitské revoluci. K hospodářským a sociálním dějinám jagellonského období českých dějin (1471–1526)* (Praha 1988).

the sources preserved from the Czech lands do not say anything about the at least partial depopulation of villages. Unfortunately, detailed surveys on this issue are not yet available. Tomáš Klír was the last to attempt to prove the desolation of the rural area in the Cheb region after 1380. In this specific region, which has unique sources of a registration nature for a rural area in Central Europe, the author documented the abandonment of between 8–19% of localities in the period 1392–1409⁵⁹. He connected this desolation clearly with “high mortality” and “extreme” depopulation during the plague epidemic of 1380. The problem of relating the relatively high number of deserted localities to the plague year 1380 lies in the fact that half of the desolate localities were registered as desolate in 1392, but as “real” localities were rewritten as new ones in the following years. However, with the method of constructing tax sources by copying them from the old data to the new data, it is possible that these localities were deserted before 1380, but they still remained, mechanically, part of the tax sources. Klír’s interpretation is also made problematic by the fact that these deserted or partially deserted villages are in foothills and mountain areas and that their desertion may have been significantly affected by their unsuitable location, i.e., settlement conditions, and not primarily by demographic aspects. Their demise could thus respond to other social phenomena than high mortality rates. On the other hand, it is quite probable that the Cheb region, like Western Bohemia in 1380, was hit by a plague epidemic (direct evidence for the plague in Cheb and its surroundings, however, is missing), which may have been the most intense in Cheb and its rural hinterland in the XIVth century, and that even as a result, some of the villages, which sources from the 1390s describe as deserted, could have disappeared soon after 1380, or during this year. On the other hand, it should be noted that, for example, not one village in the environs of Stříbro in 1380, or after this year, was abandoned⁶⁰. In addition, the data of the court tables on the proclamation of aristocratic property without heirs fallen to the king in West and North Bohemia do not mention deserted villages as part of these aristocratic holdings. So the Cheb region would be a quite exceptional region in this respect. Certainly, however, in 1380 there could have been partially isolated epicentres of the plague, and this part of the epicentre could be some parts of Cheb, just as it is possible in 1380 to describe as an epicentre of the plague the Knights Hospitallers’ property in Manětín⁶¹ or the properties of the cloister Teplá in North Bohemia, which were still treated as deserted in the mid-1380s⁶².

⁵⁹ Tomáš Klír, *Rolnictvo na pozdně středověkém Chebsku. Sociální mobilita, migrace a procesy pustnutí* (Praha 2020), 492–498.

⁶⁰ Nodl, “Západočeské Stříbro v roce 1380”, 12.

⁶¹ Libor Jan, “Jan z Kladrubec. Příběh jednoho johanitského rytíře z druhé poloviny 14. století”, in *Pohané a křesťané. Christianizace českých zemí ve středověku*, eds. Martin Nodl, František Šmahel (Praha 2019), 57–58.

⁶² Maur, “Morová epidemie roku 1380”, 48.

If we consider the effects of medieval plague epidemics, it should be borne in mind that, unlike in 2020 and 2021, life in the Kingdom of Bohemia did not stop in the XIVth century. This also applies to the year 1380, which was the year of the strongest epidemic in terms of plague intensity. The persistence of normal life can be seen in the Old Town's urban administration, in the official agenda of the Prague Archbishopric, or in the activities of the University of Prague. None of the faculties of the University of Prague interrupted their teaching in 1380. In 1380, matriculation took place as in other years, and in the spring and autumn, students sat their bachelor's and master's examinations normally. In the case of lawyers, we see a decrease in matriculation by half in 1379 and then in the following year, but this decrease is offset in 1381 and 1382. In the case of bachelor's exams for artists, the decline is not even significant and only concerns 1380. In the following years (1381–1385), on the contrary, the number of graduated bachelors increased⁶³. However, we must realize that in the 1380s the numbers involved in Prague higher education were the highest and that this was also influenced by other than demographic trends (the papal schism, the crisis at the University of Paris, the subsequent establishment of new universities in the imperial lands, etc.). Everyday life at the University of Prague was not paralyzed in 1380, as it was in Western Europe in 1347–1351⁶⁴.

The judicial acts of the Prague Archbishopric also testify to uninterrupted official activities. In comparison with 1379 and 1381, the number of convicts did not change significantly. Also, the building books of the Prague Archbishopric do not indicate that the official agenda had ceased. On the contrary, the records for the period from October 1380 are missing in the confirmation books. However, since they are not preserved for the whole of 1381 and 1382 and the records do not begin until March 1383, while they remain fragmentary throughout the 1380s, it is not possible to say that the interruption of confirmation books was directly conditioned by the plague epidemic.

Also in the Old Town's town office, official life, even in the most exposed months, did not cease in 1380. This is clearly evidenced by the records on the adoption of municipal law⁶⁵. The court agenda dealing with debt was also not interrupted⁶⁶. In the same year, without any interruption, courts also met in Strůbro,

⁶³ Cf. František Šmahel, *Pražské univerzitní studentstvo v předrevolučním období 1399–1419* (Praha 1967); Hana Václavů, "Počet graduovaných a negraduovaných studentů na pražské artistické fakultě v letech 1367–1398 a jejich rozdělení podle původu do univerzitních národů", *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 17 (1977): 7–32.

⁶⁴ Zaddach, *Die Folgen des Schwarzen Todes*, 90–91.

⁶⁵ *Liber vetustissimus Antiquae Civitatis Pragensis 1310–1518*, ed. Hana Pátková (Praha 2011), 311–312.

⁶⁶ Cf. Archiv hlavního města Prahy [Archive of the Capital City of Prague] Archive of the Capital City of Prague, Manuscript Nr. 2070, Novoměstská kniha soudní dlužních zápisů pod 10 kop

West Bohemia, where, of course, during the year 1380, taxes were also collected, namely several times a year⁶⁷. The summons of the royal court's court, which took place in 1380 in all regions in the Kingdom of Bohemia - and as a result of the deaths of the nobles, often certainly to the plague, there were more of these summons this year than in other years - clearly prove that life did not stop throughout the kingdom⁶⁸. Not even in the following years, or during other plague epidemics, the intensity of which was lower than in 1380, do we have any reports that the disease paralyzed urban or rural society. In my opinion, all the above facts clearly indicate that medieval people learned to live with the plague epidemic. They could not control it, they could not cure it, but they learned to adapt to it in the long run. In the Bohemian and Moravian lands it was all the easier that mortality never reached an intensity comparable to that in Western Europe in 1347–1351. The collective immunity acquired by the German, French, or English survivor populations was costly, but only for those who had the disease. In the coming decades, therefore, Western Europe had almost no comparative advantage over the Bohemian kingdom. However, it had to deal with the social, economic and certainly also psychological consequences of the plague much more than Bohemian and Moravian society. Thanks to close communication, both commercial and intellectual, however, many of the phenomena associated with plague very soon penetrated into the Bohemian kingdom (although protected by its mountains), and found a response that proves that even in the second half of the XIVth century and in the first decades of the XVth century the medieval world was not made up of atomized units and that, in some ways, Europe, perhaps precisely because of the plague, became a global Europe.

Martin Nodl

Impacts of the plague epidemic on the Kingdom Of Bohemia in the second half of the XIVth and at the beginning of the XVth century

Although the medieval plague epidemic had a global impact, its intensity varied from region to region in Europe. Plague rates as well as mortality rates were conditioned by climatic and geographical

[New Town Book of Court Debt Records under 10 threescore]; Archive of the Capital City of Prague, Manuscript Nr. 2069, Novoměstská kniha soudní zápisů trhových a dlužních [New Town Book of Court Market and Debt Records]; Archive of the Capital City of Prague, Manuscript Nr. 988, Staroměstská kniha soudní pro menší dluhy [Old Town Court Book for Lower Debts] (the number of records here for 1380 is relatively lower in comparison with other years).

⁶⁷ Cf. Státní okresní archiv Tachov [State District Archive Tachov], fond Městský archiv Stříbro [City Archive Fund], Manuscript Nr. 174 (1380–1392).

⁶⁸ Cf. *Desky dvorské království českého. Tabulae curiae regalis per Bohemiam I. První kniha provolací z let 1380–1394. Liber proclamationum primus inde ab anno MCCCXX usque ad annum MCCCXCIV* (Praha 1921).

conditions, population density, migration, and trade activities, as well as nutritional opportunities and mental or cultural habits. If we look at Europe as a whole, then the Czech lands, the Bohemian Kingdom and the Moravian Margraviate were among the areas affected by plague epidemics in the XIVth and XVth centuries much less than medieval France, England, Italy, or the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire. The causes of the lower intensity of the plague epidemic in Bohemia and Moravia can be seen in all of the aspects mentioned above, which does not, however, mean that the impact of the plague epidemic in the Kingdom of Bohemia was not, in some regards, comparable to that in Western Europe. Research on the medieval plague epidemic in Bohemia and Moravia has struggled with a lack of relevant sources from the very beginning. The limited explanatory power of the sources has also influenced the limited interest of Czech historians in this topic. The only debate that was ever conducted about the impact of the plague epidemic in a Czech intellectual milieu concerned its possible influence on the outbreak of the Hussite revolution, or the degree of the intensity of the plague in 1380. This debate quite clearly led to the conclusion that in plague epidemics, or in their impact on pre-Hussite society, it is not possible to see a significant or even decisive cause of the outbreak of the Hussite revolution.