

increase the Volume I to an unacceptable extent. But such a tradition has its place in the research and the gap between medieval and later – not yet scientific – processing of this topic is questionable.

Finally, collective of editors made a great job with reedition of *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici I*. Let us hope that other volumes will come as soon as possible and become the same tool for next generation of historians as former editions served until today.

Miroslav Lysý
Právnická fakulta, UK Bratislava

BARLETT, Robert. *ROYAL BLOOD. Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020. ISBN 9781108490672. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.5.7>

Dynastic politics shaped medieval Europe in many ways. Robert Barlett (University of St Andrews, Scotland) is fully aware of these matters and he presents his latest thoughts in a scholar work focused on the medieval dynasties of Europe. As the title presents, royal blood was the most important medieval determinative element. The presented book is divided into two main parts with 13 chapters in total. It also includes a significant number of pictures, lists of rulers and family trees, as well. Barlett provides a full scale picture of how the dynasties developed and how they shaped medieval Europe. Barlett as an English historian is naturally more or less centred on England or Western Europe, but he also managed to turn his attention to Central Europe. The aim of this work is to show how strong the influence of dynasties on the political matters of medieval Europe was.

The first part (*The life cycle*) focuses on the lives and deaths of the royals. In this situation royal blood is considered the key stone to claim the throne or any title. In some cases, however, there were a lot of illegitimate children or marriages without children. Barlett is showing us how kings tried to secure a crown or royal title for their illegitimate children, sometimes even to maintain the continuity of a dynasty. We can say in medieval Hungary this was also the case with King Matthias Corvinus, who tried to secure the throne for his illegitimate son John. A male heir was therefore a strategic element to ensure the survival of the dynasty. The author says there were also kings without any children and strongly devoted to the Church, as was the case of Saint Edward the Confessor or Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor. Maybe there are at least two similar figures missing – Saint Emeric of Hungary (†1031) and Saint Wenceslas of Bohemia (†935), well known as a pious and humble ruler, having perhaps only one and not a legitimate child. The important thing is that these royals became saints and later were perceived as holy forbears of a particular dynasty.

One of the crucial questions for the members of any dynasty was how to ascend to the throne. Barlett summarizes four possible ways: to be an heir, to be elected by the people or by nobles, by marriage or receiving the crown from the Pope or from the Emperor (Holy Roman Emperor or Byzantine Emperor). Kings of Hungary acquired

their crown in these ways. Saint Stephen received the crown from Pope Silvester II or Emperor Otto III. Sigismund of Luxemburg became King of Hungary by his marriage to Mary of Anjou, the daughter of previous King of Hungary. There were also the cases of kings getting another crown by a quite different way. Saint Ladislav invaded Croatia after the death of King Demeter Zvonimir since he left no heirs. Ladislav was knowingly breaking papal rights, since Croatia was considered to be a papal fief.¹ Nevertheless, since then kings of Hungary were also known as kings of Croatia. Croatia and Dalmatia were also considered to be a duchy for the junior members of the Arpád dynasty. Barlett also mentions these junior titles in Western Europe. In England, for example, the heir presumptive held and still holds the title Prince of Wales, while in France it was the Dauphin. European society in the early and high Middle ages was dominantly patriarchal, however there were occasional cases of ruling women, for example Eleanor of Aquitaine or Matilda of Tuscany. It was very rare for a woman to be direct heir to the crown. It was the case with the abovementioned Mary of Anjou in Hungary. On the other hand, Byzantium had a series of powerful empresses. The Westerners thus looked on Byzantium as an effeminate realm.

The author again talks about illegitimate children. From a few examples he demonstrates how powerful even these “bastards” might become. One of them was Arnulf of Carinthia, Holy Roman Emperor or Robert, the Duke of Gloucester (son of Henry II of England), who played a key role during times of anarchy in England. Some of these children, often born from concubines, were destined to enter the church. As the sixth chapter states, dynastic strife was not so rare. It was the question of legacy of the crown which provoked harsh feuds. Here the author quotes *The Chronicle of the Czechs* written by Cosmas describing the events following the death of Duke Břetislav of Bohemia in 1055. During the next decades there was no agreement whether to follow the seniority or the primogeniture system. Dynastic strife might also result in fratricide, as was the case with Saint Wenceslas. Barlett also mentions how kings secured (or tried to secure) lands and titles for their sons. King John of England for example, is best known by his nickname as “Lackland”, since he was not supposed to inherit any lands. The Frankish Empire witnessed several attempts to divide the whole realm between the descendants of Charlemagne.

Every dynasty had its centres or in the other words, focal points of palaces, castles and favourite churches. In France, the most significant church was the Basilica of Saint Denis serving as royal burial place. The German rulers, however, were buried at many different places. In Bohemia, Prague was always the capital. Barlett here presents an interesting fact: 12 out of 18 Bohemian kings or dukes were buried in Prague. We can also add that the situation was similar in Hungary as well. Most of the Hungarian kings were buried in the Basilica of the Virgin Mary in Székesfehérvár. These points were also devoted to local saints and their veneration. This chapter partly mentions *damnatio memoriae* – forcible damnation of memory of particular rulers or royals. Barlett shows

1 FINE Jr., John V.A. *The Early Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000, s. 283. ISBN 9780472081493.

a few examples (Sicily, Byzantium) of destroying their tombs. This *damnatio* however might appeared in textual form.²

The second part of the book is purely dedicated to dynasties. As Barlett exactly states, particular dynasties label specific periods. For example, Plantagenet/Angevin England, Hohenstaufen Germany and many others, including Arpádian Hungary. Dynastic names also played an important role. In France it was always Louis or Philip, while the name Louis appeared in Germany as well. The prominent role of the name Charles derives from its most famous owner – Charles the Great (Charlemagne). The very name Charles might even indicate a family tie with Charlemagne. Medieval chroniclers were a bit confused by the same repeating names; thus, they always add some adjective (“the Pious”, “the Bald”) which we still use today.

Chapter IX explains the importance of royal saints. Firstly, the author says a few words about the process of “making” the saints. The turning point is to be found at the end of 12th century during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216). Barlett states that the creation of new saints came from their active cult, miracles, liturgical commemoration or veneration of their tombs. We can add this process was originally in the hands of the local church and its members (bishop, monastery or chapter). Pope Innocent III set strict rules for new canonizations and thus any promoting of future saints had to be approved by the Pope. The royal saints consist of different types. During the early medieval times there were martyred kings (Edmund, Wenceslas), later the confessors (Edward of England, Stephen of Hungary). By the 13th century there was also an increasing number of female saints, especially as Barlett says, there was “the cluster” in Central and Easter Europe mainly represented by Saint Agnes of Bohemia and Saint Elisabeth of Hungary. If someone was connected by blood to a saint (dominantly royals in the early and high Middle Ages), thus came from the correct dynastic line “linea recta”. Every royal or noble family sought to have its own saint or be connected in some way with saints. Kinship to saint was highly valued and welcomed and it is known as *beata stirps*.³

The rulers were very cautious about the astrology and the prophecies. Royal astrologers operated at the court of Hungary and in Byzantium. Some of the prophecies were even connected with saints, especially in France. English medieval prophecies were tied up with Arthurian romance which flourished during the 12th century. The next chapter observes pretenders and returners to the throne. There were also the kings who mysteriously got lost in battle, like Harold Godwinson who allegedly fled to a monastery where he spent his last days, or very similarly Vladislav of Hungary after his battle at Varna in 1444. We need to add that this might be a hagiographical topos. Svätopluk of Moravia

2 SHIPPEY, Timothy. The Merov(ich)ingian Again: *damnatio memoriae* and the *usus scholarum*. In O'BRIEN O'KEEFE, Katherine – ORCHARD, Andy (eds.). *Latin Learning and English Lore. Volume 1*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005, s. 389–406. ISBN 9781442676589.

3 The best scholar work on the subject is KLANICZAY, Gábor. *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. ISBN 9780521420181.

disappeared in a very similar way (according to Cosmas) just to hide and spend his last days in the Monastery at Zobor.⁴ Some of the dead or missing rulers “appeared” again. There were two false-Frederick IIs of Germany for example. Pretenders or impostors claimed what they could not have – and that is royal blood, a statement of the author we can fully agree with.

The dynasties have their mythical origins. In Bohemia and Poland these myths were written at the beginning of the 12th century. In Hungary it was a century later but very probably based on older texts. However, the actual relationship to a famous ruler proves to be relevant element. The French and German rulers often accented their kinship to Charlemagne. However not all the titles were inherited. As Barlett, Venice was a completely different realm with elected doges. Elected kings happened to appear also in the Holy Roman Empire. Some of the Roman kings or Holy Roman Emperors also set new rules for election (e.g. Charles IV).

The Church played an undeniable role in the medieval world. Many members of the dynasties found their place in the Church. This was the case of the “royal nuns”, as the author says. One of the striking examples is of course Saint Agnes of Bohemia, who never married. Especially the 13th century with its mendicant orders brought new devotion to medieval Europe. These royal nuns appeared in Hungary as well. We can gladly welcome the author (page 406) mentioning Salomea, wife of Coloman of Galicia, who after her husband’s death in 1241 during the Mongol invasion, became the founder of the order of Poor Clares in Poland. These (later canonized or beatified) ladies, as Barlett states correctly, represent dynastic cults – greatly desired by any dynasty. Men of the dynasties, however, did not enter the church so often. In many cases illegitimate sons of the ruler became abbots or bishops. The author here speaks about England or France. In Byzantium, the emperors gave the title of Patriarch of Constantinople to a brother or a younger son. We can mention the male members of the Přemyslid dynasty holding ecclesiastical offices. In Hungary this was very rare. King Coloman (1095–1116) before his ascension to throne happened to be the bishop of Eger or Oradea. His namesake, illegitimate son of King Charles Robert, was bishop of Győr during the 14th century.⁵ Barlett here summarizes using the example of Canterbury how the church was trying to expand to new territories. There was a similar attempt by the archbishop of Kalocsa to subjugate Bosnia under his jurisdiction in cooperation with Arpád dynasty.⁶ This chapter also tries to explain the relationship between a dynasty and non-dynastic elements, such as republics (Venice) or independent cities (Milano).

4 Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum. In BRETHOLZ, Bertold (ed.). *Monumenta Germanie Historica – Scriptores. Nova Series*. Weidman: Berolini, 1923, pp. 32–34.

5 BAK M., János – VESZPRÉMY, László (eds.). *Chronica de Gestis Hungarorum e Codice Picto saec. XIV. The Illuminated Chronicle. The Chronicle of the Deeds of the Hungarians from the Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Codex*. Budapest: Central European University Press – National Széchényi Library, 2018, p. 280, 382. ISBN 978-963-386-264-3.

6 BARABÁS, Gábor. Heretics, Pirates, and Legates. The Bosnian Heresy, the Hungarian Kingdom, and the Popes in the Early 13th century. In *Specimina Nova, Pars prima, sectio mediaevalis*, vol. 9., 2017, p. 56. ISSN 1558–8002.

The book has four useful appendices, namely a list of dynasties in medieval Europe, list of rulers ascending the throne in childhood, list of female rulers and family trees of Aragon and Scotland. Robert Barlett's attempt to explain the importance of royal blood is rather good. There are a few slight errors and perhaps some matters were omitted. In this form however the book is approachable for students of history and might help as a perfect guide to the medieval world of royal families.

Peter Bučko

Katolícka teologická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova, Praha

RUSINOVÁ, Zora. *SÚDRUŽKA MOJA VLASTĚ. Vizuálna kultúra obdobia stalinizmu na Slovensku*. [MY COMRADE MOTHERLAND. *Visual culture of the Stalinist period in Slovakia*.]. Kraków: Filozofická fakulta Trnavskej univerzity v Trnave in Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, 2015, 691 pages. ISBN 9788374905428.

KUSÁ, Alexandra. *PRERUŠENÁ PIESEŇ. Výtvarné umenie v časoch stalinovej kultúrnej praxe 1948 – 1956*. [AN INTERRUPTED SONG. *Visual art during in the era of Stalinist cultural praxis 1948–1956*]. Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2019, 642 pages. ISBN 9788080592189.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.5.8>

A growing number of publications, in which the visual culture of the Stalinist period is thematized, reflects a certain return of this topic into the scope of both scientific and popular interest. This change can be partly attributed to new “reading” habits, related to the development of electronic media, which easily makes the image a focal point, not just an additional historical source.

Another reason is rooted in the growing time lag, which weakens the personal connection of authors and audiences with the period under study. It also helps not to directly associate plain scientific interest with political sympathies anymore. The authors leave the long-established primary position of political history and reconfigure the accented position of political victims.

From a historian's point of view, art history books of this type are both a welcome product of a close discipline and in a way also a mirror of our own production. Places and themes where their historical contextualization may seem unnecessarily superficial or obsolete, can signal weaker points in our argumentation but also gaps in making recent historiography available to the wider professional public.

The book of Zora Rusinová, who combines her research with university teaching practice, will serve future researchers as evidence of what an experienced teacher finds – already – necessary to explain as an unknown phenomenon or concept to today's reader at the students' age. The book is divided into four major chapters. In the first one, entitled *From Heroic Utopia to Totalitarian Regime*, she briefly introduces the concept of the new socialist man within the framework of the political history of the researched period – through the rapid satellitization of political and economic life by the Soviet Union from 1948 to the phase-delayed de-Stalinization of the late 1950s. An explanation of the