

# MYSTIFICATIONS AND RITUALS PRACTICES IN THE CZECH NATIONAL AWAKENING:

*An NCEEER Working Paper by*

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## **Executive Summary**

In this paper I examine the roles played by the Czech romantic forged manuscripts (*Rukopis královédvorský* and *Rukopis zelenohorský*) in Czech national society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Early considered to be sacred, mythic texts, the forged manuscripts played a visible role in important social rituals of the emerging Czech national society, many of which had religious overtones. These include rites of initiation into Czech national society, figured as religious conversion, the taking of a patriotic name as a version of baptism into Czech society, and defense of the authenticity of the manuscripts as a kind of confession of faith. I argue that the place of the manuscripts in these important national social rituals helps to account for the emotional reactions of patriots to later expressions of scholarly doubts regarding their authenticity.

## Introduction

Beginning in late 1816, a series of manuscript fragments were discovered that represented both a very early tradition of writing in Czech and accomplished Czech oral and written poetic traditions from a period far earlier than had been previously known. The two most important of these manuscripts were the *Rukopis královédvorský*, discovered by Václav Hanka in 1817 in the basement of the church in the town of Dvůr králové, and the *Rukopis zelenohorský*, sent anonymously by mail to the mayor of Prague about one year later. The first of these, the *Rukopis královédvorský*, appeared by its writing forms to belong to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century and contained six epic songs (one fragmentary), two shorter ballads or romances, and a handful of short lyric songs. The second, the *Rukopis zelenohorský*, appeared by its writing forms to belong to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (!) and contained two fragments (that can be read as a single song in epic form) narrating a trial procedure and judgment by Libuše, the daughter of the legendary early Czech ruler Krok whose marriage to Přemysl the ploughman founded the Přemyslid ruling dynasty.

The early fate of these two manuscripts differed. The second was clearly a much bolder forgery that suggested not only the existence of Czech writing and poetic traditions three full centuries earlier than otherwise attested, but also the existence of a written Czech legal tradition and advanced forms of statehood in that early period (9<sup>th</sup> century!). It looked immediately suspicious to Josef Dobrovský, the leading authority at the time on old Czech (and old Slavic) literary traditions. He quietly used his influence to keep the Czech National Museum from adding the manuscript to its collections, but others promoted the manuscript, managing to first get it published in Warsaw in 1820 and then in the Czech journal *Krok* in 1822. As a result, Dobrovský went public with his doubts in 1824, calling the *Rukopis zelenohorský* a literary

fraud, a betrayal by his own students. In spite of this, or even in part *because of this*, as I will try to show, Czech patriots embraced the manuscript along with the Rukopis královédvorský (the authenticity of which no one doubted) and made them a part of the emerging national mythology. While some outside the small circles of Czech patriots kept doubts alive concerning the Rukopis zelenohorský and others of the less important manuscripts associated with it, including the Slovene scholar Jernej Kopitar, for the Czechs these two manuscripts came to function as sacred texts, as objects of a quasi-religious faith that functioned until the mid 1880s, 70 years after the manuscripts were first presented to the public.

This essay will explore the way in which these manuscripts functioned or were used in Czech patriotic society of the nineteenth century as sacred texts and in related ritual practices. The status of the manuscripts as cult objects and their central place in the national faith is most clearly seen at the end of this period, at the moment when this faith was massively challenged by a group of professors in the new Czech university that emerged from the splitting of Prague University into German and Czech faculties. The coordinated scholarly amassing of evidence, begun in 1886 with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the historical linguist Jan Gebauer in the lead, led to the recognition that these manuscripts were indeed forgeries, at first in scholarly circles and eventually more broadly as well. In memoir accounts and later reflections on the so-called manuscript battles, the participants in the debates and those who were affected by them constantly compare belief in the authenticity of these manuscripts to religious faith.

In his memoirs, the historian Josef Šusta recalls his encounter with the historical arguments against the manuscripts as a young student just out of gymnasium in the early 1890s. He compares his change in perspective on the manuscripts to a loss of religious faith: “Úplně jsem ještě sice neporozuměl této bystré studii kritické, nemaje dosti vědění o pramenech v ní

užitých, ale byl to první dotek s ovzduším, v němž jsem měl vzápětí tak hluboko zakotviti. Víra v Rukopisy, tak důležitý pilíř mého dosavadního nazírání na národní dávnověk, spadla se mne takřka naráz, a podobně jako u rozchodu s dětskou vírou náboženskou, prošlo to téměř bez bolestného otřesu, spíše jako *cosi samozřejmého*“ (I did not entirely understand that keen critical study [Jaroslav Goll’s book], not having sufficient knowledge of the sources used in it, but it was my first contact with the atmosphere in which I would shortly be so deeply anchored [that is, at the university]. Faith in the manuscripts, so important a pillar of my views to that point on the ancient national past, fell away from me all at once, so to speak, and just as in saying farewell to one’s childish religious faith, it passed almost without painful upheaval, but rather like something obvious.) (Šusta 195).

Similarly, Jan Herben, in a volume of reflections by participants in the manuscript battles from the perspective of 25 years later, asks how the manuscripts’ defenders could have ignored the obvious evidence amassed by Gebauer, Masaryk, Goll and others and defended them so ardently. He sees the answer in their status as part of a national dogma: “Ale což kdyby lidé byli jen odporovali, ale oni rdousili odpůrce vlasteneckými provazy. Vysvětlení je jedno—šlo o národní dogma a dogmata se nezkoušejí, v ty se věří“ (So what if people had merely defended [the manuscripts], but instead they strangled their opponents with patriotic ropes. There is but one explanation: a national dogma was at stake and dogmas are not tested, one simply believes in them.) (Herben 5). Gebauer later referred to the defenders as “rukopisověrci,” suggesting a kind of religious cult (Herben 17). And Goll, in his attempt to understand the vehemence of the defenders from the distance of 25 years, likened them to religious fanatics burning heretics at the stake: “Můžeme již snadněji pochopit bolest a třebaš i nespravedlivý hněv obranců, kterým jsme brali, co bylo kusem národní víry. Vysvětlíme si, proč tu někdy se objevila až fanatická krutost;

kacíři se upalovali vždycky, pokud tu byli plně věřící“ ([Today] we can more easily understand the pain and perhaps even the wrongful anger of the defenders, from whom we took a piece of their national faith. We can explain to ourselves why it even came to fanatical cruelty here; heretics were always burned, so long as there were plenty of believers.”) (Herben 25).<sup>1</sup>

How did the manuscripts come to occupy such an entrenched position? How did faith in the manuscripts come to be so essential a sign of one's status as a Czech patriot that any expression of doubt resulted in one being labeled as a national traitor, an opponent of the Czech cause? “Víra se vžije,” says Herben, in a phrase hard to render in English (Herben 5). Faith takes hold, gets lived into place. How did belief in these manuscripts become so intrinsic a part of Czech national patriotic life? I suggest that the association between belief or faith in the authenticity of the manuscripts and Czech patriotism was established very early, and that the roles played by the manuscripts in some of the quasi-religious rituals of Czech patriotic national life, including conversion, rebaptism and renaming, and eventually even confessions of faith, made these manuscripts an almost inseparable part of Czech national self-identification.

The connection between patriotism and belief in the manuscripts is established very early, with the first polemics over the authenticity of the *Rukopis zelenohorský* in 1824. For Dobrovský the association is entirely negative. Angered by what he sees as a betrayal by his former students in his Slavic seminar and forced to go public with his suspicion that they had forged the *Rukopis zelenohorský*, Dobrovský is insistent that no one be fooled by it. The opening

<sup>1</sup> The pressure put on these scholars by the Czech community defending the manuscripts was intense. The publisher of the journal *Athenaeum* in which the attack was launched pulled out in 1887 and Masaryk had to gather funds to continue publication. Gebauer's daughter had to endure ridicule from a Czech teacher at school and he had great difficulties publishing his scholarly work for almost a decade Dagmar Blümllová. "Václav Tille--zrod pozitivistického skeptika." *Čas pádu rukopisů: studie a materiály*. Eds. Dagmar Blümllová and Bohumil Jiroušek. České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita, Historický ústav, 2004. 78. Print. , Jan Herben. *Boj o podvržené rukopisy: zpomínky po 25ti letech*. V Praze: Pokrok, 1911. Print. The untimely deaths of Antonín Vašek and Alois Vojtěch Šembera, whose publications in the 1870s provided key evidence of forgery that would be consolidated by Masaryk's allies, were blamed on the intense pressure put on them. Šembera's son became an enemy of the Czech national movement Dalibor Dobiáš. "Komentář." *Rukopis Královédvorský / Rukopis Zelenohorský*. Ed. Dalibor Dobiáš. Brno: Host, 2010. 251. Print.

sentence of his article, entitled “Literarischer Betrug” (Literary fraud), brings great rhetorical force against too ardent patriotism that would lead to blind belief: “It is hardly to be believed how anyone, in a century in which one scoffs at the Privilegium bestowed by Alexander [the Great] upon the Slavs, ridicules the peace between the Marcomanni and Slavs noted on a stone, [he lists a long series of false legends and historical mystifications that have been debunked]...[how anyone] could dare to deceive, with an obviously planted scrawl containing Libuše’s Judgement in Czech verse, not the learned world, but a few gullible/credulous warmer/ardent Patriots (leichtgläubige wärmere Patrioten) that were highly pleased to now be able to boast of an ancient monument in their language” (Dobrovský 152). Twice further in his short article he connects easy belief or gullibility to over ardent patriotism. In his reply, Václav Alois Svoboda, a poet and first translator of both manuscripts into German as well as a friend of Dobrovský’s suspects, Hanka and Josef Linda, turns Dobrovský’s negative association into a positive one. Svoboda claims the honor of warm or ardent patriotism against Dobrovský’s cold logic, which he also exposes as not logical in its argumentation, but merely the expression of a different pre-formed belief: “...he finds his earlier stated conviction strengthened by a single look at the manuscript. But his vehemence, his skirting of all thorough argumentation, the fact that he further constantly speaks only in platitudes of all too devout, gullible wishes of all too ardent patriots [allzufrommen, leichtgläubigen Wünschen allzuwarmer Patrioten]—(and is it then an honor not to be one? to coldly and heartlessly pick at the glory of the ancestors?), finally the frequent contradictions and variations in his opinions and hypotheses makes his conviction suspicious to us” (Svoboda 158). In claiming the ardent patriotism here, Svoboda continues to associate it with belief in the authenticity of the manuscripts, with both figured positively. Doubts, which are also treated as mere beliefs, are cold and negative. Svoboda later addresses



Dobrovský's skepticism regarding the historical accuracy of the events depicted in the manuscript: "The ordered court of Libuše further seems perhaps to displease him. We have to absolutely avow that we do not share Mr. D's opinion on the cultural level of our ancestors. We cannot think ourselves so outrageously rough, so entirely uneducated, as this critic paints us. We are conditioned to think so not only by our patriotism, of which we are in no way ashamed, but also by the idea of Humanity" (Svoboda 160). Here too the ability to believe, rather than doubt, is figured positively and in connection not merely with a narrow patriotism but with a broader humanism. Even though Svoboda takes on Dobrovský's arguments and engages him in a scholarly discussion of evidence, the rhetoric cited here suggests that one's convictions about the authenticity or inauthenticity of the manuscripts is beyond any argumentation, is a result of an intuitive insight (Dobrovský's own passionate rhetoric seems to support Svoboda's interpretation). This appeal to the irrational is very romantic in a certain way. It is also very familiar from the debates over the authenticity of the east Slavic *Slovo o polku Igoreve* in which proponents from both sides often begin from the "obvious" conclusions formed in intuition and go on to collect evidence in support of that irrational insight (Zalizniak 23). In any case, I would suggest that we see here very early on the formation of a kind of paradigm for the reception of the manuscripts among self-proclaimed Czech patriots that makes belief in the manuscripts a natural part of one's national convictions. In the years following this exchange, among Czech patriotic circles, Dobrovský had few followers in his skepticism (exceptions included the Slovak Juraj Palkovič, Josef Vlastimil Kamarýt, and Josef Jaroslav Langer) (Dobiáš 231, 236).

Who are these self-proclaimed Czech patriots, then, that might embrace the manuscripts? It might not be going too far to say that in the first half of the nineteenth century they are the entire Czech nation (if the nation consists in its self-identified members). Czech national patriotic

society (that is, the Czech nation) in this period has been described by contemporaries as a kind of religious order (Malý 60) or, more negatively, as a “sect of Czech zealots” or a “club” (Dobrovský, in Macura 139)—more recently some have suggested it resembled a kind of lodge of freemasons (Dobrovský and others were members) or other secret society (Macura 140). Here we see new social forms (nationhood) operating through analogy with other social forms. In the main metaphor of the day, the Czech nation was conceived of as sleeping, and those who had awakened (to their Czech national identity) were *buditelé*—awakeners, charged with the task of awakening the entire nation. One was not simply born into the Czech nation, though one be born into a Czech-speaking family. Through the German-language education they all received, many were encouraged to consider themselves members of the German nation. Being Czech involved a process or moment of self-realization and an act of self-declaration. And this momentous change in self-identification became ritualized in the Czech national community with typical forms, an older patriot mentoring a younger one, awakened mothers raising patriotic sons. It must have been a common question among Czech patriots to ask, how did you become a Czech? It certainly became a topos or commonplace of the memoirs and biographies of “awakeners” to narrate this moment of self-transformation. (Macura notes that the mentor and mentee pairs were long remembered in patriotic circles: who brought who in (Macura 140).) And the activity of awakening was a primary sign of one’s belonging to Czech society. In his biography of the composer Bedřich Smetana, Zdeněk Nejedlý describes the typical activity of a member of the newly forming and active Czech patriotic society of the 1830s: one reads the Czech press, “láká a obrací na víru jiné, dosud neprobuzené” (Nejedlý IV: 82) (one entices and converts to the faith others, not yet awakened). Here again we see the religious analogy, with becoming Czech likened to religious conversion.

Open the biography or memoir of any member of this early Czech patriotic society and you will more than likely find a narrative of their awakening. Not in every case does this appear as a kind of eureka moment of awakening or religious conversion. As one might imagine, in most cases there were many factors that influenced the realization that one is, or the decision to become, Czech. That is, in most cases one imagines that there was a longer process of input and reinforcement that gradually leads to a decision or realization that may or may not be experienced as momentary. Sometimes the mentor that encouraged the process figures largely in the narrative. Dobrovský is considered to have been won over to Slavic studies and the Czech cause by his teacher Václav Fortunát Durych (Novák 11). At other times, the future patriot's reading and personal experiences have a more important role. The "father of the Czech nation" and author of its first history, František Palacký, relates in his memoir two experiences in his youth as a result of which "zapálil sem se celý upřímnou vlasteneckou horlivostí, kteráž od té doby u mne ještě neustydla, aniž bohdá kdy ustydne" (Palacký and Nováček 7) (I caught fire/became enthused entirely with genuine patriotic ardor, which has not since gone cold with me, nor, God grant, will it ever go cold.) While passing through the Slovak town of Trenčín on his way to his secondary school studies in Prešpurk (Bratislava) he was asked by his host to explain, as a Moravian, some passages in some news articles in Czech, and was ashamed to find he understood them no better than his host. He dedicated himself to learning his mother tongue as a result, and not long after discovered Josef Jungmann's "Dialogues on the Czech Language," texts that lit the patriotic fire just mentioned.

Such transformations or conversions may be common to other subject nations in this time period. While I was working on this topic, a colleague discovered a similar, almost mystical

event in the life of the Ukrainian writer Panteleimon Kulish.<sup>2</sup> In his memoir about Nikolai Kostomarov, Kulish recounts how he and Kostomarov became Ukrainian patriots: “Николаша, как мы все, питомцы общерусских школ, вначале пренебрегал хохлатчиною и думал на языке Пушкина. Но с обоими нами, на двух отдаленных точках Малороссии, произошел замечательный случай. Ему в Харькове попал в руки сборник украинских песен Максимовича, 1827 г., а я в Новгород-Северском также случайно сделался обладателем украинских дум и песен того же Максимовича, 1834 г. Мы оба в один день из великорусских народников сделались народниками малорусскими” (Tkachenko 9). I do not know how common an experience this was among Ukrainian patriots (this event occurred in the late 1830s, probably) or whether it becomes such a ritual aspect of self-narration for Ukrainian patriots. For the Czechs, there seems to be a kind of cultural compulsion to discover and elevate such moments. In reading the memoirs of the poet Jan Kollár, one has the sense of a death by a thousand blows (or a new Czech life by the same). Kollár himself does not single out a moment of transformation or a single most important influence or experience among the many that clearly made him into a Czechoslovak patriot (Kollár’s patriotism was never merely Czech; himself a Slovak, he followed the broader Slavic line of Czech patriotism common at the time). This has not stopped his biographers from seeking such a key moment, whether in his university studies in romantic Jena (1817–19) (this is argued by Felix Vodička in (Vodička II)) or elsewhere. Indeed, it seems natural that the author of *Slavy dcera*, a Slavic divine comedy with a Slavic heaven, purgatory, and hell, should have at some point converted to this Slavic national religion. Two authors have claimed to see this moment in Kollár’s brief visit in Prague on his way home from Jena in March 1819, and both have connected it, at least in part, to the first publication of the

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Valeria Sobol for this reference.

Rukopis královédvorský, which became available just before the new year in late December 1818. Ferdinand Menčík suggests that Kollár noticed the brighter, more optimistic atmosphere in Prague, in contrast with two years earlier, resulting from the discovery of the important manuscript, and that the memory of the discovery of the manuscript led him to encourage his compatriots, in *Slavy dcera*, not to despair but to pursue their national cause (Menčík 58, 65). Vladimír Forst, also drawing on Kollár's letters from the time, suggests his meeting with Jungmann in Prague and acquaintance with the manuscript led him to a new dedication to national work (Forst 108-120). This is speculative to a large degree—there is little specific evidence in the memoir or letters. One piece of indirect evidence, not cited fully by these authors, is the following passage from his Prague visit in his memoir: “Jakový to rozdíl byl, když jsem ponejprv a nyní po druhé Prahu uviděl! Tehda jsem byl ještě nevinný jako Adam v ráji, nyní jsem již jedl ze stromu národnosti ovoce trpké a bolest ducha působící; zdálo se mi, jakoby Praha byla zkamenělé dějiny Českého národu. Na Vyšehradě ukazují se rupy pohanského chrámu: odrýpav zlomky z něho v papíře zavinuté nosil jsem je při sobě a chovám je do dnešního dne“ (Kollár 281) (What a difference there was between when I first and now for the second time saw Prague! Back then I was still as innocent as Adam in paradise, now I have eaten of the tree of nationality a fruit bitter and causing spiritual pain; it seemed to me that Prague was the petrified history of the Czech nation. At Vyšehrad some rubble was showing from a pagan temple: having poked loose a fragment from it, I carried it with me wrapped in paper and keep it to this very day.) Kollár is, as always, interesting. Rather than a conversion or an awakening, he figures his new awareness of nationality as a biblical fall from innocence to knowledge—still a religious figure, but one that is darker and more troubling, necessitating a search for (national) salvation. How Menčík gets from this passage to the more optimistic atmosphere in Prague is

unclear to me! But I do see the Rukopis královédvorský implied in this passage, precisely in the fetish object that Kollár selects as a Prague souvenir, a piece of the stone history of the Czech nation. There never was a pagan temple at Vyšehrad, where the first fortifications appeared in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (that is, after the ruling Czech princes had been Christianized), nor, likely, at the older site of Hradčany, where Prince Bořivoj I built the first fortifications after being baptized in 883. That Kollár sees the rubble at Vyšehrad as the ruins of a pagan temple is a vision that is strongly influenced by the old Czech legends (in which Libuše had her seat there), made newly relevant by the two pagan-period epics in the Rukopis královédvorský. There is a strong desire to hold on to this pagan period, imagined as purely Czech, untainted by the non-Slav influences that accompanied Christianization. This is the source and origin of Czech national identity, newly reimagined in the manuscripts, and Kollár, with his troubling new knowledge of the fallen state of the Czech nation, clings to what he presumably conceives as a piece of it from its pure, unfallen state as to a holy relic.

With Kollár we see our first example of the involvement of the forged manuscripts in an oblique rite of passage into Czechness, in the form of awakening, conversion, or, in this particular case, figured as original sin. Others have left more explicit evidence of the Rukopis Královédvorský as a text that prompts this transformation. Palacký himself, already burning with patriotic fire, upon reading the first publication fresh off the press records his ecstasy in his diary (the first entry for 1819) and rededicates himself to his homeland, figured here as a mother: “S nevymluvnou radostí četl sem z počátku léta tohoto s milým Šafaříkem poprvé Rukopis Královédvorský. Tedyliž proměnila si se ve slavě své, ó Vlasti má! Vyneslas ještě jednou velebnou hlavu svou, a národové hledí k tobě s udivením! ... Tobě, dobrotivá máti, posvěcen buď znova život můj i dech můj!” (Palacký and Nováček 28-29) (At the start of this year, with inexpressible

joy I read, along with dear Šafařík, the Rukopis královédvorský for the first time. You have come into your glory, o my Homeland! Once again you have raised your reverend head, and the nations look to you with wonder!... To you, benevolent mother, be rededicated my life and my breath!) For others, the encounter with the manuscripts is associated with the decisive moment of transformation. The Jireček brothers, Hermengild and Josef, discovered the manuscript as secondary school students: “Bibliotéka gymnasijní měla nepatrnou zásobu českých kněh, jež profesorové z mladší školy skoro pokoutně půjčovali studentům. Z této knihovny seznali [sic.] jsme my dva, můj bratr a já, Rukopis královédvorský a tato malá „knížečuška“ rozhodla o našem národním vědomí. Od té doby, co jsme četli Zábaje a Jaroslava, pocítili jsme hluboko v srdci svém, že jsme Čechové. Nemluvím ani o zápalu, jenž vzbuzen byl básnickými krásami jednotlivých zpěvu“ (Mezník 176-177) (The gymnasium library had a tiny collection of Czech books, which the teachers of the younger grades loaned to students almost illicitly. From that library we two, my brother and I, obtained the Rukopis královédvorský, and that little ‘booklet’ determined our national consciousness. Ever since we read Zábaj and Jaroslav, we have felt deep in our hearts that we are Czechs. I will not even mention the enthusiasm that was awakened by the poetic beauties of individual songs.) Josef Jireček would go on, as a specialist in literature and the son-in-law of Šafařík, to be one of the most important defenders of the authenticity of the manuscripts in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. For him, and for many like him, the manuscripts were an essential part of the Czech national myth with which they so strongly identified and even a part of their ritualized rite of passage in becoming Czech. (I should note here that the great Czech semiotician and student of the Czech national revival Vladimír Macura has also discussed the ritual aspect of becoming Czech, but on the model of an initiation rite into a secret society (Macura 140). I do not disagree here, but rather wish to emphasize another possible model, that

of religious conversion, that fits better with aspects of the practices and experiences of certain patriots, and with the general quasi-religious aspect of ritual practices surrounding the manuscripts.)

While this rite of passage (whether as conversion or initiation) can be narrated in response to the question, how did you become Czech, it leaves no external sign of its completion. When confronting a new acquaintance, how should one know whether or not that person has experienced this transformation, whether the individual belongs to Czech patriotic society? At times, it could be dangerous to ask. Many Czech patriots chose to mark this rite of passage with an external sign, a signpost indicating their belonging to the Czech nation, by changing their names. This could involve changing the orthography of the name (Schneider – Šnajdr, Rettig – Retík) or translating a name (Fejérpataky – Bělopotocký, Benedikti – Blahoslav) (Macura 141). Most often, however, it involved the taking of a second name, following the fashion of the times for triple names, in which the patriotic name followed or sometimes replaced the baptismal name: Božena (Barbora) Němcová, Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová, Josef Vlastimil Kamarýt (already mentioned as a skeptic in relation to the mss.), Josef Krasoslav Chmelenský, Jan Alois Sudiprav Rettig, Václav Vladivoj Tomek. Vladimír Macura has analyzed the fascinating semiotic qualities of these names: women's names most often appealed to the highest religious or moral values (Božena, Dobromila), while men's names were more varied and could indicate patriotism (Vlastimil), a relationship to art and aesthetics (Krasoslav, Ladislav—this one representing a folk etymology for an existing name), one's profession (Sudiprav—law, Silorad—physics, Lékoslav—medicine), or the image of the warrior hero (Vladivoj) (Macura 142). The taking of a patriotic name has, then, certain overdetermined, ritualized forms. And in fact, we have one account of a large group of people taking such names together in a kind of ritual of



rebaptism that became a model for later patriots in taking their names. Antonín Rybička, in his biographical sketch of the life of Josef Ziegler, describes the event, which probably took place sometime during the second decade of the century:

Jedenkrát bylo několik přátel a dobrých známých u něho shromážděno a mluveno tu horlivě o věcech literatury a národnosti naši se týkajících. Uživ této příležitosti, Ziegler promluvil důtklivě a jadrně o věci výše připomenuté, ukázav, kterak každá v cizozemských spůsobech sobě libující pošetilost nemálo jest na újmu citu a vědomí národnímu a kterak právě předkové naši rázněji a národněji si počínali, pokud libovali sobě v obyčejích, kroji a jmenech domácích a vlasteneckých: Vratislavech, Bořivojích, Soběslavech, Libuších, Boženách, Ludmilách a t. p. I povzbuzoval přítomné tu přátele své, aby jeden každý z nich pro zdárnější oživení citu vlasteneckého působil také k užívání a rozšiřování jmen národních na místě dosavadních u nás oblíbených jmen cizích a neznámých. Jakož pak Ziegler již před tím k svému jménu křestnému druhé české jméno „Liboslav“ byl přizval, přimlouval nyní také přítomným hostům, aby taktéž se zachovali, čehož oni uposlechnuvše, nazývali potom: Jaroslavy, Zdirady, Sudipravy, Sudimíry, Mírovity, Silorady, Hostivity, Lidurady, Dobromilami, Boženami, Vlastami a t. p. Věci této dostalo se později nemalé pochvaly a takového účastenství, že téměř každý spisovatel a vlastimil český k svému jménu křestnému jiné české jméno připojil. (Rybička II: 172)

Once a few friends and good acquaintances were gathered at his home ardently discussing things concerning our literature and nationality. Making use of the occasion, Ziegler spoke earnestly and pithily about these things, indicating how every folly that glories in foreign ways is detrimental in no small way to national feelings and consciousness, and how precisely our ancestors acted more resolutely and nationally insofar as they gloried in native and patriotic customs, dress and names: Vratislavs, Bořivojs, Soběslavs, Libušes, Boženas, Ludmilas, etc. And he encouraged his friends present, each one of them, for the more successful revival of patriotic feeling, to also foster the use and spread of national names in place of the foreign and unknown names favored among us so far. As Ziegler himself had already taken the second Czech name “Liboslav” to follow his baptismal name, he now persuaded his present guests to act similarly, with which they complied and were later known as Jaroslavs, Zdirads, Sudipravs, Sudimírs, Mírovits, Silorads, Hostivits, Lidurads, Dobromilas, Boženas, Vlastas, etc. This event later received no small praise and such participation that every Czech writer and patriot added another Czech name to his baptismal one.

In a footnote, Rybička lists all of the “novokřtěnci” —the newly or re-baptized (Rybička II: 193).

Here we have a legend from the 1810s of the founding of this patriotic name tradition in a kind

of ritual of rebaptism and renaming. I should note that Ziegler and his friends were not actually the first to take such names, but Ziegler does appear to be responsible for a certain institutionalization and ritualization of the practice. To take one prior example, the writer Antonín Puchmajer, a member of the first generation of Czech awakeners, took the name Jaroslav as a patriotic name, in honor of the Šternberk noble family (and thus the name of the same Jaroslav who is the hero of the epic poem by that name in the *Rukopis královédvorský*, leading the Czech defeat of the Tartars).

What role do the forged manuscripts play in this common ritual of Czech national society? Without knowing a more precise date of this semi-legendary account, I hesitate to draw a direct line, but the manuscripts, with their own markedly Slavic names for figures in the epic poems (many clearly invented using the same derivational forms as the patriotic names), were one potential and very timely source for Ziegler's observations about the naming practices of the old Czechs. And the manuscripts did become a source of such patriotic names for some figures: Václav Bolemír Nebeský and Karel Slavoj Amerling both took names from figures from the epic poems of the *Rukopis královédvorský* (Dobiáš 232-233). Moreover, the key patriotic values reflected in the highly symbolic names chosen—moral and religious piety, love of country, and especially the attributes of the warrior hero—are values that the manuscripts modeled for Czech patriots.

I do not have the space here to examine and analyze how the manuscripts come to be an integral part of the myth (that is, in a certain definition of myth, the sacred narrative) of the ancient Czech past, with all the implications that has for the importance of the values the manuscripts represent. I am fortunate that this work has already been done. In an extensive article published in 1968 entitled "Poezie, mýtus a hodnota: Konkretizace a estetické hodnocení

RK” (Poetry, myth, and value: the concretization and aesthetic evaluation of the RK), Mojmír Otruba examined how the Rukopis královédvorský in particular played a key role in elaborating the image of the ancient Czechs and thus establishing particular national values (democracy, patriotism, a peace-loving attitude backed by valor in the defense of the homeland, etc.). He notes that this myth of the Czech ancient period is primarily based on the manuscripts, but this is gradually forgotten and the manuscripts are used instead to guarantee the truth of the myth. This is typical of the circular reasoning by which myth naturalizes itself (Otruba 380). Even the early responses to doubts coming from outside the circles of Czech patriots in the first half of the nineteenth century respond not with scholarly engagement with the problematics, but with defense of the authenticity of the manuscripts, indicating that already at that point the manuscripts were being read as key support for a mythic narrative that represented central national values (Otruba 370). Typically for Czech patriots, the aesthetic qualities of the manuscripts guarantee their authenticity and thus their documentary value for establishing the nature of the ancient Czechs.

When the texts are the primary guarantors of the myth of the ancient Czech past, doubts about their authenticity are met by ritualized defenses. In another article from two years later, “Mýtus a ritus: Pokus o sémantickou interpretaci obran pravosti RKZ” (Myth and ritual: An attempt at a semantic interpretation of defenses of the authenticity of the RKZ), Otruba examines the numerous defenses of the manuscripts from 1878 to 1900, a period when doubts began to be expressed, hesitantly at first, from within Czech patriotic circles. He closely examines the rhetorical strategies of the defenses, which, insofar as they address the scholarly argument at all, tend to draw on the same evidence (again they have a ritualized form). These defenses primarily create opposing value categories, NÁROD and OPONENT, where the nation category collects

all positive values (including morality and science) and the opponents represent the destruction of all these collective values, and thus the nation. The basic argument of all these defenses is that Oponent škodí NÁROD (Otruba 232-234) (the opponent harms the nation). Otruba concludes that the defenses are a ritual act of purification—the defenses cast opponents of the manuscripts out of the national collective and its shared values. He compares it to the Catholic rite of excommunication (Otruba 266-268).

While Otruba's analysis is of essential value and key to my reading of the functioning of the manuscripts as sacred texts, I disagree with his conclusion about the ritual that the defenses represent. Rites of communal purification or excommunication are typically dependent upon and carried out by communal or church authorities. But the striking thing about the defenses of the manuscripts is how widespread they were, how democratic in participation. It was not sufficient for the national scholarly authorities to have defended the manuscripts and to have already cast their doubters out of the national collective. Rather, it seems that it was incumbent upon all patriots to make a kind of public statement in defense of the manuscripts. Otruba notes that the defenses were produced in large numbers and appeared in all levels of the press, and in most cases, they are the author's only public statement on the manuscripts (Otruba 215). I would suggest, then, that we see the ritual not in what the documents do rhetorically (casting out the opponents), but in what the authors are doing by making such a statement—the speech act as the ritual act—following an authoritative rhetorical pattern. The ritual the authors are participating in is one of making a statement or confession of faith, marking themselves as members of the community of believers. They do so following a rhetorical pattern that marks their opponents as outside that community.

One early model for such a confession of faith was given in 1834 by one of the key

authorities for defenders of the manuscripts, František Palacký. Until that point, Palacký had written primarily on the *Rukopis královédvorský* and had avoided the issue of the more problematic *Zelenohorský rukopis*. But after more careful study (and after the death of Dobrovský in 1829), he was ready to confirm the authenticity of that manuscript as well. He thus made “s pravým srdce svého potěšením ... vyznání” (with true delight in my heart ... a declaration/confession) and dated the ms. to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, also promising to undertake a critical publication of the manuscript with Šafařík (Dobiáš 236). Palacký thus demonstrated that the authenticity of the manuscript was something to be declared or confessed like a religious dogma.

To conclude, I would like to address the question of why there is such a religious cast to the ritual practices of the Czech national community. They do indeed appear similar to a protestant sect (Dobrovský’s accusation), with their evangelical practice of recruiting new members, their practice of adult rebaptism (recalling the radical Anabaptist reformation) and renaming, their impulse to publically confess their faith, and their own sacred texts. Some possible influences, in a quick list: certainly the newly open religious atmosphere after Emperor Joseph II’s Tolerance Patent stimulated the Czech national revival and its great interest in Jan Hus and his followers. One should also note the prominent role played by Slovak Lutherans in the Czech movement (Kollár, Šafařík, and even Palacký by education). There is a kind of natural analogy between the protestant conception of conversion and spiritual rebirth and the birth of Czech national identification. I would also note that the pagan epics in the *Rukopis královédvorský* link patriotism and the issue of national faith: *Záboj* and *Slavoj* defend their homeland against a Frankish overlord who is forcibly converting them to Christianity, destroying their idols and sacred spaces and not allowing them their ritual practices. Thus the manuscripts themselves thematize conversion and patriotism, perhaps also modeling the way in which they

would be used and received by Czech patriots.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in the largest perspective I would note that recent studies of religion from an evolutionary perspective suggest that we as humans are evolved to practice religion because religious beliefs and practices confer important advantages to the community and its survival, strengthening the social bonds that are key to our ultrasocial species' success (Boyd 117). For an emerging new Czech national social community, then, it may be a great advantage if communal practices take on the forms of religious ritual as a means of building a stable community, and religion may be a natural social form for such a goal.

<sup>3</sup> In his influential review of the *Rukopis královédvorský*, one of the first to be published, J. G. Meinert summarizes the importance of the epic poems thus: "The heroic songs [Heldenlieder] are a unique phenomenon, because they combine inborn magnificence of poetic representation and the purest patriotism. They also have the advantage of being grounded in highly important regional history and in heroic deeds which, like the location on the whole, offer quite precise evidence for the not-unbloody conversion of the Czechs up into the ninth century and in the first times. They are in this respect a repository of old concepts, customs, and mores and a kind of authentication of the Czechs' historical way of being" Miroslav Heřman. "K prvním německým pokusům o estetické hodnocení Rukopisu královédvorského." *Česká Literatura: Časopis pro Literární Vědu* 14 (1966): 465-466. Print. Religious belief, conversion, and patriotism are linked here, too, as key attributes related to the history of Czech national being.

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