

# Chronica Boëmorum (The Chronicle of the Czechs)

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*By Cosmas of Prague, 1125; translated from Latin by Lisa Wolverton, 2009*

## BOOK ONE

[Prologue omitted]

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

1.1. After the effusion of the Flood, after the confusion of evil-minded men building a Tower, in divine revenge for such illicit and audacious deeds, the human species, which then consisted in about seventy-two men, was divided into as many diverse kinds of languages as there were heads of men-as we learned from the historical account. Each and every man a fugitive and a wanderer, they  
5 roamed throughout various regions of the earth, dispersed far and wide. And even while weakening in body from day to day, they multiplied, in generations and generations. Whence the human species, with God arranging everything according to his will, was so dispersed throughout the sphere of the earth that after many ages it came even into these regions of Germania. For this whole region, located under the north pole, extending from the Thanay [River Don] and into the west, is  
10 called by the general term "Germania" (although each of the places in it has its own name). We mention these things so that we might better be able to accomplish what we declared as our intention. In the meantime, before we come to the beginning of the narrative, we will try to explain briefly the location of this Czech land and whence it was assigned its name.

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

**At that time great solitudes of forest prevailed on the surface of the land, without human  
20 inhabitants, but very loud with swarms of bees and the singing of birds. Flocks of animals wandered through the lonely places of the land, terrified by no one.** Almost as innumerable as the sands of the sea or the forests, as many as there were stars in the sky, the earth hardly sufficed for them. Beasts of burden could hardly be compared to the number of locusts jumping through the fields in summer. **The waters there were very clear and safe for human purposes; likewise, the**

25 **fish were sweet and healthy to eat.** It was a wonderful thing, and you might well consider how high this region sits: such that no outside waters flow into here while so many streams, small ones and large, originate from different mountains and are received by the larger river called the Elbe, to flow north to the sea. **And since at that time this region lay untested by the plow, and the man who would try had not yet entered it, it seems better to keep silent concerning its fertility or**  
30 **sterility than to speak in ignorance.**

**Seeking places suitable for human habitation,** whoever the man was (it is uncertain with how many souls) who later **entered these solitudes, he surveyed with keen sight the mountains, valleys, and wastes and, so I think, located their first settlement around Mt. Rip between two rivers, namely, the Ohre and the Vltava. He established their first dwellings** and rejoiced in the guardian deities that he had carried with him on his shoulders, now erected on the ground. Then the  
35 elder, whom the others accompanied as if he was their lord, spoke thus to his followers (among other things): "O comrades, you who have endured with me heavy burdens **through lonely forests,** halt your step. Offer a thankful libation to your gods, through whose wondrous work you have come to your fatherland, as once foreordained for you by destiny. This is it. **This is that land which you**  
40 **often reminded me I promised you, a land subject to no one, filled with wild animals and fowl, wet with nectar, honey, and milk, and, as you yourselves see, air delightful for living. The waters are abundant on every side and full of fish beyond measure. Here nothing will be lacking to you, because no one will hinder you.** But since a region such as this, both beautiful and great, lies in your hands, think what name might be fitting for the land." Immediately they said, as if  
45 moved by a divine oracle: "Since you, O father, are called 'Bohemus,' where might we find a better or more fitting name than for the land to be called 'Bohemia'?" Then the elder, moved by the divination of his comrades, began to kiss the ground for joy and, rejoicing, named it from his own name. Rising and stretching both hands palms upward to the stars, he thus rose to say: "Greetings, fated land, sought by our thousand prayers, once widowed of man in the time of the Flood. Now, as  
50 a kind of monument to men, keep us safe and our offspring plentiful from generation to generation."

1.3. The men of that time were so honorable in their mores, so simple and righteous, so loyal and merciful to one another, so moderate, sober, and continent, that if anyone tried to describe them to present-day men, who thoroughly represent the opposite qualities, he would be met with considerable irritation. Therefore, we omit these things and desire to say a few true things about the  
55 quality of that first age. How happy was that age, content with moderate expense and not puffed up with swollen pride. **They hardly knew the rewards of Ceres and Bacchus, which were not**

**available. They made their evening meal with acorns and wild game. Uncorrupted springs provided healthy drinks.** Like the brightness of the sun and the moisture of the water, so the fields and the forests, even their very marriages, were held in common. For in the manner of cattle, they  
60 tried new lovers on various nights and, with dawn rising, broke the tie of the Three Graces and the iron shackles of love. Wherever and with whomever they had spent the night, there they caught sweet sleep, spread out on the grass under the shade of a leafy tree. **The use of wool or linen, even of clothing, was unknown to them; in winter they used the skins of wild animals or sheep for clothing.** Nor did anyone know to say "mine" but, in the likeness of monastic life, whatever they  
65 had the word "our" resounded in their mouth, heart, and deed. There were no bars on their stables, nor did they close their gate to the poor, because there was no theft or robbery or poverty. There was no crime among them more serious than theft or robbery. They saw the weapons of no people and **themselves had only arrows, which they carried for killing wild animals.** What more can be said?

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

One particular man had arisen among them, called Krok, after whom a castle is known to have been  
80 named, located in the forest adjacent to Ztibecna and now overrun by trees. He was a man absolutely perfect in his generations, exceptional for his wealth in secular things, discreet in considering lawsuits. Like bees to their hive, so everyone, both from his own tribe and from the common folk of the whole province, flocked to him to sort out their lawsuits. such a great man lacked manly offspring. Nevertheless, he fathered three daughters, to whom nature gave riches of  
85 wisdom no fewer than she was accustomed to give men.

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