CHAPTER 2

Certainty and Doubts: *Legenda Christiani* in the Controversy of the Baroque and Enlightenment Era

It was in the Baroque era, despite some meager attempts in previous centuries, that a systematic and critical study began to be devoted to ancient sources.\(^1\) One of the results was *Acta sanctorum*, the materialization of the program of Catholic scholars from Society of Jesus led by Jean Bolland (1596–1665) to analyze hagiographic texts, identifying valid information contained in those texts and thereby support and safeguard the cult of the saints. At the same time, the first scholars in diplomatics appeared, the vast majority of them at the Faculties of Law and in monasteries, and they continued the endeavors of the previous lawyers and theologians, such as the well-known advocate Du Cange. Only a few of those scholars could make a living from studying history. As a consequence, their works were no longer just a hobby, the fruits of which were meant to be offered only to close friends.

The publishing of historical studies enabled people concerned with history not only to read, but also to criticize the research made by their colleagues. Slowly, through the reception and analysis of printed information, and the rejection or acceptance of the products of their peers, a community of historians came to appear.\(^2\) The community of historians started to separate from the larger group of intellectuals by using different discursive strategies that emphasized the specifics of historical methods and independence of historical studies over other fields of learned interest.\(^3\) Within that community, opinions on information and approaches in terms of their validity and acceptability were being formed and also transformed. However, the time of history as a specific discipline came later with the establishment of new university cathedras during 19th century. The learned men of 17th and 18th century were still scholars of many interests – even Josef Dobrovský, who we will speak about later, was a philologist, theologian and historian.

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\(^1\) On shifts of scholarly discourses in the Baroque period, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1970). As this chapter aims rather at shifts of ways of thinking about the *Legenda Christiani*, accuracy of ideas presented in this regard is not discussed here.

\(^2\) See above, p. 4–7.

\(^3\) See above, p. 4–7.
Scholars of the early Baroque period learned about the *Legenda Christiani* from Bohuslav Balbín (1621–1688), who was the first to publish it. When he found Christian’s work in the archives of Třeboň, he had no doubts about its authenticity.⁴ Although he was involved in the *Acta Sanctorum* project and took a realistic approach to his sources, he had no reason not to trust this legend as a legitimate source.⁵ He considered his discovery very valuable and did not hesitate to use it when bringing to light the history of Great Moravia since “(he) found Christian, who was also the son of a prince, more trustworthy because of his small distance from the events he was describing than others who were writing much later.”⁶ Moreover, Balbín, relying on the document issued by Boleslav II (972–999) for the Břevnov Monastery (993), identified Christian with the son of Boleslav I. At the same time, he concluded that if Christian had been St. Adalbert’s “nephew” (“nepos”), then the bishop Vojtěch-Adalbert’s mother Střezislava must have been his sister. He did not doubt the legend’s authentic-

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⁴ R. Urbánek claims, without giving any evidence, that Jan Tanner (1623–1694) was the first who found the work in the *Archive of the Metropolitan Chapter in Prague* in 1659, see Rudolf Urbánek, *Legenda t. zv. Kristiána ve vývoji předhusitských legend ludmilských i václavských a její autor* (Prague: Česká akademie věd a umění, 1947), vol. 1, 7. Considering that Balbín discovered the legend in 1645, that is, 14 years earlier, Urbánek’s assertion cannot be taken for granted.

⁵ In some issues, he dared argue even against such an authority as Václav Hájek of Libočany and his *Chronicle*. Balbín took over the order of succession of the earliest Přemyslids from him, but the chronology compiled on his own on the basis of original sources. See Bohuslav Balbín, *Epitome rerum bohemicarum . . . Boleslaviensium historiam placuit appellare*, vol. 1.10 (Pragae: Universitas Carolo-Ferdinandea, 1677), 82–88. The legend with a commentary was published ibid., 66–90. For his contacts with bollandists see Stefan Benz, *Zwischen Tradition und Kritik. Katholische Geschichtsschreibung im barocken Heiligen Römischen Reich* (Historische Studien 473) (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 2003), 77.