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**THE TRANSFORMATION OF COURT ELITE
AS A REFLECTION OF THE DECREASE
OF LANDLORD PRESTIGE OF THE OPAVA
PŘEMYSLIDS**

The transformation of elite at the court of the third generation of Opava Přemyslids (sons of Nicholas II) corresponded with the development that is discerned in the whole territory of late medieval Silesia. The prominent category of local nobility was leaving the milieu of impoverished dukes and the places of former elites were assumed by the less important families. Besides the traditional landlords thus there emerged a parallel stratum of elite that ceased to be dependant on their favour.

The research of the depth of transformation of the society of the „small dukedom“ however faces many obstacles. When reconstructing the likeness of late medieval courts we can no more rely on the lists of witnesses that lose their testimonial value. The milieu of a „small dukedom“ is also characteristic by little emphasis on bureaucratisation of the administration that thus left fewer written sources.

Historian therefore must seek alternative ways of studying the transformation of elites. The preserved sources enable to trace several levels of relations: 1) landlord – land, 2) residential network – towns, 3) landlord – new stratum of courtiers.

It seems that the less important nobility from the Moravian-Silesian borderland was at the Přemyslid court joined and often overshadowed by the courtiers from the clerical state and burghers, even if they officially did not hold the highest positions. The Transformation of court elite thus did not bring only the rise of the new local nobility, but also the change of the mechanisms of the land administration and the weakening of the role of traditional court offices.