

Abstract

From the end of the 19th century, the Old Czech apocryphal story of Joseph (son of Jacob), called *Life of Joseph*, has not been in the center of the scholars' and editors' attention, and therefore many pivotal philological questions concerning this Old Czech composition have not been satisfactorily solved yet. This thesis offers a comprehensive analysis of the Old Czech *Life of Joseph* in terms of textual criticism and literary history and attempts to bring answers to the main problems of its contextualization. The six extant medieval manuscripts of the *Life of Joseph*, representing the inherent part of the thesis, are provided with critical edition.

The Old Czech *Life of Joseph* is a late medieval work of an anonymous author and should be dated to the second half or to the end of the 14th century. It is based on a Latin model, namely *Historia Ioseph*, which was composed in the year 1336 by the Spanish Dominican Alfonso Buenhombre (Alphonsus Bonihominis). The Czech *Life of Joseph* is the unique vernacular translation of Alfonso's Latin text. This Latin text has not been broadly disseminated. I am aware of the existence of 14 manuscripts, six of which originated in Bohemia and represent the specific Bohemian manuscript branch. The Czech translation is admittedly based on the Latin text related closely to this Bohemian manuscript branch. It would be noteworthy to underline the fact that the Czech Lands played an important role in the textual tradition of the Latin *Historia Ioseph*.

The Old Czech *Life of Joseph* is transmitted in six manuscripts (I give them under sigils **F**, **M**, **B**, **W**, **G**, and **E**) dated or datable between 1450 and 1490, and also in early prints from the second half of the 16th century. The Czech translation of the *Historia Ioseph* is identical in all manuscripts and prints. The manuscripts of the *Life of Joseph* represent four versions (**FM**, **BW**, **G**, and **E**) which should be understood as a product of the lively vernacular reception, rewriting and textual tradition based on one translation of the *Historia Ioseph*. I assume that this original translation did not contain any interpolations.

The *Life of Joseph* represented in the versions **BW**, **G**, and **E** contains many interpolations from the *Genesis* (in the Czech translation) and the interpolations from the two different Czech translations of *Historia Ioseph et Aseneth*. All these interpolations contain information on Joseph and are considered to be a sort of a generalized history of Joseph. Besides, the versions **G** and **E** contain a small interpolation from the *Historia scholastica*. The above mentioned interpolations do

not generally correspond to any Latin text of the *Historia Ioseph* and should be understood as a product of the Czech textual tradition. The version of the *Life of Joseph* transmitted in the early prints closely corresponds close to the manuscript-version **BW**.

Two Czech manuscripts contained the Old Czech *Life of Joseph* (**F** and **B**) combine the canonical Bible texts and the apocrypha: the *Life of Adam and Eve*, *Life of Joseph*, *Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs* and some Books of the Old and New Testament.