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BOGUSŁAW GEDIGA, ANNA GROSSMAN UND WOJCIECH PIOTROWSKI



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łączyła się z wprowadzeniem nowych praw dotyczących moralności, zobowiązań ekonomicznych, diety i była nauczana, a także kontrolowana przez specjalistów. Dyskredytowała stare tradycje, bogów, a także zabraniała spełniania starych kultów i przestrzegania starych zwyczajów. W takich warunkach poziom niepewności społecznej musiał wzrosnąć w sposób znaczący, a stare rytuały były przywoływane, aby odtworzyć pierwotny, a w domyśle lepszy, porządek moralny. Wzrost znaczenia niektórych rytuałów, w tym przypadku – budowlanych, których pozostałościami są ofiary zakładzinowe, odzwierciedla zatem próbę poradzenia sobie ze wysokim poziomem niepewności społecznej oraz podkreślenia własnej tożsamości.

Alžběta Danielisová, Jan Mařík
Archeologický ústav AV ČR, Praha

From Late Iron Age Oppida to Early Medieval Stronghold. Continuity of economic system?¹

'persistent economic way of living'

1. Introduction

The main objective of our contribution is to critically explore the nature of economic interaction between so-called 'central places' and traditional farming communities under two seemingly different political economical and social systems of late Iron Age oppida and Early medieval settlement agglomerations (Fig. 1).

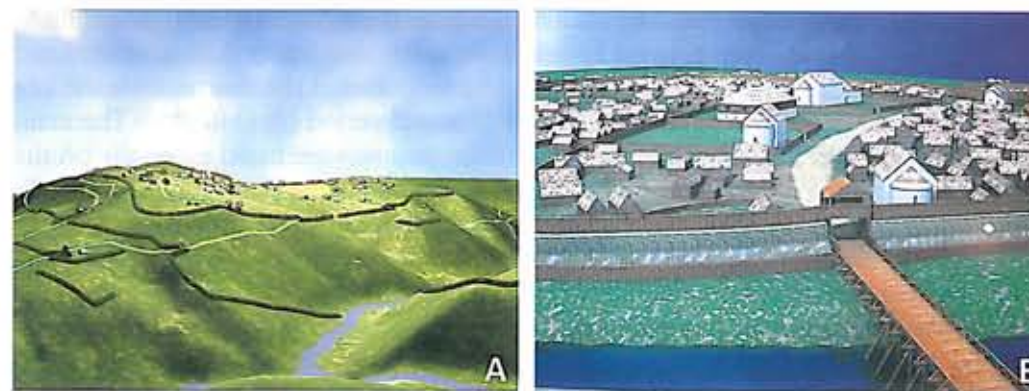


Fig. 1. Late La Tène oppidum (A) and Early Medieval stronghold (B) in Czech Republic

¹ This paper is based on a research funded by projects of the Czech Science Foundation: GAČR GA404/08/1696 and GAČR P405/12/0926.

The study of central places within Czech archaeology is limited chronologically. Central places from different periods are evaluated separately; therefore it is of particular interest for us to compare two apparently different economical and social systems. We see in common that these represent the nodal points which were affecting the development of society for both periods in question. They represent the climax of long-term developments within Celtic and Slavic history respectively. Their urban nature and the presence of a distinctively stratified society presuppose a vital interaction with surrounding open peasant settlements. Though the centres from both periods apparently functioned within different political systems, the interaction between these and traditional farming communities appears to be based on the same principles, which were affecting the development of political systems and structures.

The goal for us is the **identification of the key factors** for establishing social hierarchy within past societies and question of their continuity. In this paper we focus attention on the relationship between the agricultural base of the society and the local development of settlements and their ranking. We will argue in our contribution that a set of interactions existed between the rural communities and urban structures recurrent for the whole period of 'protohistory'.

2. Focus and aims

The examined eras are chronologically separated by the Roman period and Great Migration period which are believed to disrupt the traditional schemes of the structuring /organizing of the societies and socio-cultural principles. But traditional systems and principles are something to appear over a long time even when being interrupted by the periods of absolutely different organization of the social and political life.

In this contribution we would like to explore the nature of these systems and to focus on issues concerning the long-term process of developing cultural entities and identities through discussing the role and functions of the centres from the late La Tène period (the oppida) and Early Medieval period (the hillforts). The main argument in this contribution is that those systems were based especially on the bonds of the centres with rural regions and traditional farming systems which remained unchanged for the period of later prehistory until the Early Medieval period. Also network of commercial or communication routes was developed and functioned even before establishing of the Iron Age centres and exchange systems of the late Iron Age and Early Medieval period are very close and based on similar principles.

The main focus of this paper will lie in the exploration of the cultural, social and economic strategies of settlements and their contacts during **late Iron Age** and **Early Medieval** period in central Europe and their comparison. The questions why the central sites from the late La Tène and Early Medieval periods were being founded and whether and how they acted as the centres within their own agricultural regions, how they were intermediating long distance contacts and handling

the socio-cultural relationships, could be approached from several points of views. But where probably lies the key factor for the social hierarchy and so what deserves the attention is the relationship between the agricultural base of the society, the economic potential of the landscape and the local development of settlements and their ranking connected to the exchange networks. An interesting factor is also highly embedded long-term notions of the hierarchy of the settlements which affects strongly the interpretations of their economy and subsistence.

There are several issues we would like to tackle in particular for each period separately: (1) centrality: central sites and their origins, location, and chronology; (2) specialization and long distance contacts; (3) social structure (what was the social hierarchy, political systems and ritual life); (4) interaction and relations of production (relationships between central sites and their hinterlands, subsistence strategies, settlement patterns), and then discuss them together in order to answer the consequent issue of the **continuity and tradition** of socio-economic identity and structures of the Iron Age and Early Medieval societies.

3. Late La Tène period

The late La Tène fortified agglomerations known as oppida are usually perceived as the new elements within the settlement structure and their genesis is generally regarded as the eminent phenomenon within the Iron Age settlement structure connected with the urban concept unknown before but from the Mediterranean area. According to their location and chronological range of material it is presumed that they were being established during the 2nd cent. BC due to the local economic and political development connected to the redistribution of goods and probably to the new system of a distance trade formerly carried out rather at the open agglomerations. The distinct intensification of settlement pattern during the late La Tène period accompanied by the specialized activities and the trade led to the intensification of the exchange networks and possibly involved the founding of the fortified agglomerations at the margins of the traditional settlement zones, the phenomenon which provoked many questions and discussions over time (e.g. Guichard et al (eds.) 2000; Arnold, Gibson 1995; Drda, Rybová 1997; Kaenel 2006; Haselgrove (ed.) 2006).

3.1. Origins, locations and chronology of the late La Tène centres

On a transition from middle to late La Tène period we encounter a transformation of the society which was manifested especially by disappearance of cemeteries and by new settlement forms. The phenomenon of the settlement concentrations with new commercial, economic and craft functions and not only the agricultural focus in a wider European area dates back as far as to the 3rd cent. BC (Kaenel 2006, 31). In the beginning of 2nd century BC in Bohemia we encounter the moving of the part of the society behind the ramparts of the oppida probably as the reaction on the new economic and political development

in Europe (after the vivid period of military events) and probably also change in the long distance trade strategies. The late Iron Age oppida are very diverse both in size and morphology and appear in different parts of Europe at different periods. Embodying a long tradition the fortified settlements of the late La Tène are distinctive chiefly in terms of the very large amounts of energy and materials invested in them. However in very few instances can hierarchies be demonstrated and sites may be ranked in terms of the number of functions they perform (Woolf 1993, 214). The question of the urban concept reflected in the distinctive layouts of the sites and monumental ramparts – was often discussed and the principle of urbanism acting in planning these sites is generally not doubted now (Kaenel 2006, 32). This process is recently considered as purely Celtic phenomenon and thus not influenced by foreign elements (Kaenel 2006, 30, 33). Reasons for the establishment of the oppida were probably various and thus our point of view should not be simplistic in terms of just strategic reasons due to the ‘crisis period’ or only economic reasons because of the increased dynamics in long distance contacts at the beginning of the late La Tène period. It is apparent that practically all of the Bohemian and Moravian oppida follow the pattern of the long distance communication routes (like Vltava or Amber route), but except few of them (like Závist) they are excluded from the traditional settlement zone and moved towards the margins to more elevated and hilly areas (Fig. 2). This phenomenon can have more possible explanations which probably acted altogether within the foundation processes. Although the oppida were usually perceived as the new structures within the Iron Age settle-

ment hierarchy, there are deeper roots in terms of the site locations, knowledge of the landscape and society interactions which affected the site pattern both in early and late Iron Age. However, the general spatial structure of the rural settlements and connection to the main commercial routes were preserved. The process of the oppida foundation and their often quite exceptional locations raise the important question: was this a brand new location strategy never to be repeated in following periods or the oppida in central Europe were part of the regional settlement traditions? From the long-term investigations it is apparent that some of the oppida reveal the occupational phases also from different periods. This phenomenon was already addressed in case of the other European sites (Büchschütz 2006) and it suggests that the oppida in fact formed a part of the longer settlement tradition within the individual regions from the later prehistory up to the Middle Ages. The evidence of the long-term regional settlement traditions connected especially with the traditional farming systems and communication routes is apparent in many cases. It is where the settlement pattern of rural sites does not differ substantially through ages but it is the position of the centre which is moving within the region according to the different functions and demands through different times of later prehistory (Fig. 3).

3.2. Long distance contacts

Past and recent investigations of the Iron Age centres were usually focused on interpretations of the material culture according to the chronology, settlement pattern, products of specialized activities and sphere of relationships represented by the commodities of the regional and long distance trade. Structured organization of the built up area was influenced by the conception which was reflecting the community structure and complex of the social relationships modified by the actual conditions of each site. Basic settlement units at the oppida were the enclosed farmsteads which reflected the traditional organization of the rural society, but within the oppida they became also the productive units, in terms of specialized crafts. The artisanal compounds at the oppida closely resemble the open agglomerations that oppida in many areas functionally replaced. Virtually all these sites seem to represent the concentration of activities previously dispersed more widely in the landscape (Woolf 1993, 214).

An eastern branch of the Amber route, connecting northern Baltic shore with southern Mediterranean area was of a main importance for the Bohemian oppida locations. During the Iron Age there is visible how the cultural and political background of the central sites and their sole existence affected the orientation and intensity of the long distance contacts. The east Alpine communication route and contacts with Roman colonies in northern have been accelerated especially after the founding of Aquileia in 181 BC and increasing contact with Noricum (e.g. Magdalensberg) during the beginning of the late La Tène period and again in 1st century BC (Fitzpatrick 1993, 239). Via this commercial axis and also from the one referred to as the Elbe route the oppida were receiving beside the popular

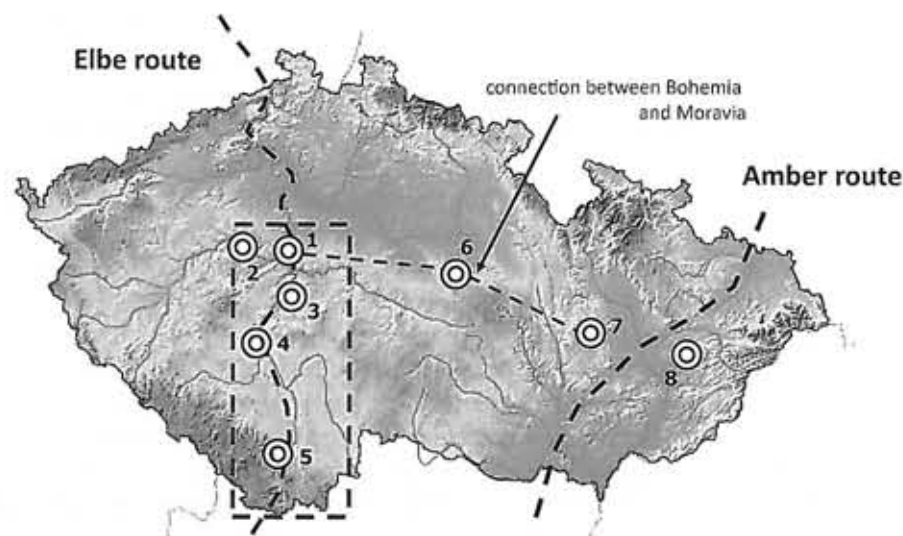


Fig. 2. Map of the oppida in Czech republic and connection to the long distance commercial routes; 1 – Závist, 2 – Stradonice, 3 – Hrazany, 4 – Nevězice, 5 – Trisov, 6 – České Lhotice, 7 – Staré Hradisko, 8 – Hostýn

Baltic amber also the Mediterranean imports, such as bronze drinking services, medical instruments, ceramics, personal items etc. (cf. Svobodová 1985; Božič 1998) and acted here as the active intermediaries of the exchanges, transport and organization of the long distance trade. The adoption of the Mediterranean habits and forms of feasting connected with the consumption of wine is the integral part of the Celtic society from its very beginning. Together with the coin production – the idea which was adopted also from the Mediterranean areas, these phenomena could be referred to as ‘hybrid cultural identities’ (as in the session abstract, cf. Bintliff; Shishlina 2008, 241) which accelerated long distance commercial contacts focused especially on the wine trade (represented in archaeological material by the metal feasting equipment, amphores etc.). But it were the feasting philosophy, socially restricted access to the exceptional commodities, symbolism of the monetary systems and inequality connected to the legal rights which became the key factors in manifesting and underlining the social stratification.

3.3. Oppida and their hinterlands

Until the 2nd century BC, when the oppida appeared, the rural character of the landscape and society was the premise of the Iron Age. Agglomerations even if engaged in intensive specialized production were deeply rooted in the country. When the oppida emerged as the new aspect of the settlement structure, some of the opinions see their supplying as intermediated through the social relationship of these sites to the rural regions (Fig. 3). Earlier publications refer to two different forms of subsistence summarized in either the absolute independence or total dependence

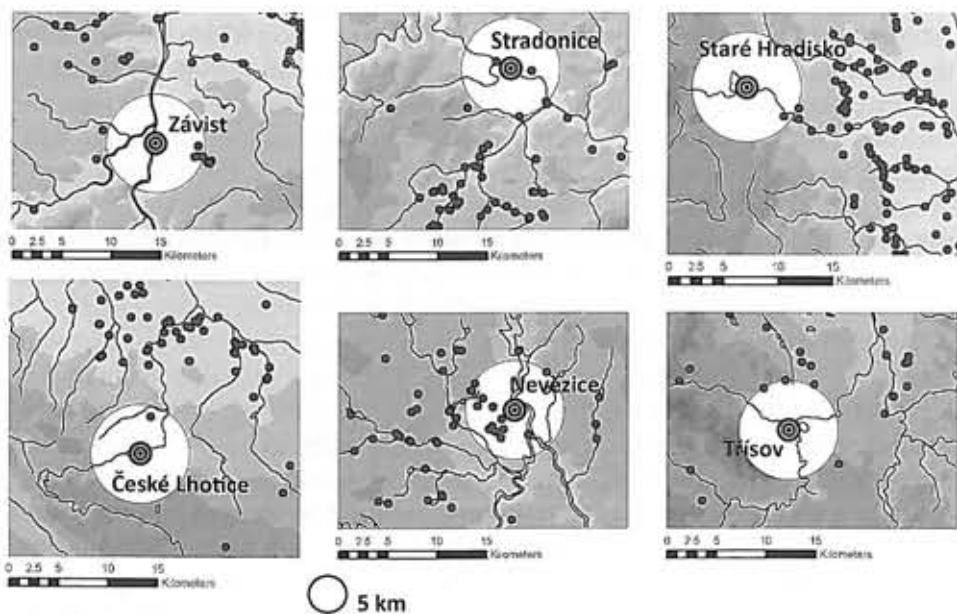


Fig. 3. Settlement patterns around the oppida

(Danielisová 2010, 373). Agricultural potential of the oppida has been challenged many times, but there are also arguments supporting the agricultural basis of the oppida (Küster 1993, 59–60; 1991, 426–428). Spatial structure of the oppida reveals the evidence of the traditional agricultural household units, storage facilities, cultivated cereal spectra and together with the evidence of breeding the livestock the subsistence requirements should presuppose at least minimum human labour dedicated to the agricultural work and show that there was no separation between urban and rural populations during the late La Tène period whatsoever. The very idea of the oppida acting as total receivers of the agricultural products needs some reconsideration in the lights of the new arguments. The strategy of more resistant crop races cultivation together with the cattle based breeds might be a good solution for the environments where some oppida took place. Cereal taxa within the oppida assemblages show high ratios represented by barley (Danielisová 2010, 378–380). The increased production of barley could be explained also as the higher emphasis on keeping the numerous cattle livestock (confirmed by archaeozoological numbers) (Danielisová 2010, 378–380) and cattle dung could ensure the manure for oppida fields under the intensive cultivation (van der Veen 2006, 984). Naked wheat at the other hand which also appears at the oppida is usually regarded as an import (or a weed in glume wheat fields), so mutual contacts with the cereal producing regions are also evidenced. We should therefore see the late La Tène oppida and rural communities as a complex system tied with different sorts of bonds, but this form of contacts probably does not rise from any form of subsistence dependence. We can assume that the exchange between individual settlements and the oppidum was one of the social mechanism and coping strategy against shortage which helped to develop and maintain social and cultural contacts. The scale of the suggested contacts is yet the factor which should be further examined and tested.

3.4. Social structures and political systems

Different access to sources (often linked to the different agricultural techniques) in fact represented the primary level of social inequality and causes for the competition of sites and further social implications. Considering the Iron Age society from this point of view would show the bigger aggregated communities also as bigger producers, but with employing more intensive agricultural technology, the production of surplus eventually would not be so remarkable. Such environment would in fact create an atmosphere of mutual dependence of households for assistance or labour especially in case of family units. While the rural countryside examined separation of fields, pastures, hay meadows, gardens etc. in 2nd cent BC at the latest (Büchschütz 2006, 59) when each farm has exploited its own fields, pastures and forests, oppida and agglomerations at the other hand encountered the levels of integration represented by common resources – woodland, pastures, fields, raw materials, ritual, defenses (Hill 2006, 174). Since key resources were controlled communally it created new possibilities of social relationships binding societies together, which probably did not base solely on

the kin principles (Hill 1990). The oppida are usually the places where the late La Tène-higher social class is believed to be. Urban sites are considered as the residences of nobility which could use its benefits coming from the possibility of the interaction over the long distances. The nature of possible reciprocal contacts between the oppida and the open settlements should be then further examined. Supplies from the rural regions may have been realized in form of the taxes or tribute. The oppidum in this case must have been in totally superior status to the rest of the settlements. However, supplying by this form of social contacts requires developed organization sometimes even with military or other pressure control over the large areas. When we consider exchange as the possible way for obtaining the agricultural products the obligatory question would be: what was the counter value and what was the scale of the reciprocity? Contacts beyond the subsistence needs were convenient for trade and other social and cultural benefits in order to ensure the possibility of using the resources or variables intermediated by the oppidum (religious events, feasts, protection/shelter in crisis periods). Exchange of surplus is also a good coping mechanism against shortage (Halstead 1990, 74). Rural settlements could therefore maintain a relationship to the oppidum in order to benefit economically, culturally and socially.

4. Early Medieval period

The Early medieval period in Czech archaeology is defined by arrival of the first Slavic tribes connected with the Prague-type culture in the second half of the 6th century (Kuna – Profantová 2005, 348) and the Middle Age transformation of the first half of the 13th century. In the following text we will focus on the second half of the Early Medieval period that is characterized by emergence of fortified settlements. Key sites among them represent early medieval settlement agglomerations. This type of centers situated on important trade routes were economical base and places of political power of rulers who laid the foundation of the early medieval states in central and Eastern Europe.

4.1. The origins, locations and chronology of the Early Medieval agglomerations

The emergence of Early Medieval agglomerations is visible during 7th–12th century in the wide area of Northern and North – Western Europe. This type of urban settlements represents a new phenomenon beyond the borders of former Roman empire (see Hodges 1988).

While these Early towns like Wolin, Ribe, Birka, Dorestad, Haithabu, Hamwic played above all role of trade centers fortified sites in central and Eastern Europe fulfilled functions of political, military, ideological and also economical functions. The fortified sites (in Slavic languages: hradiště, grad, grodzisko.) represent quite wide group of different types of settlements at the top of their hierarchy were Early medieval agglomerations (Fig. 4).

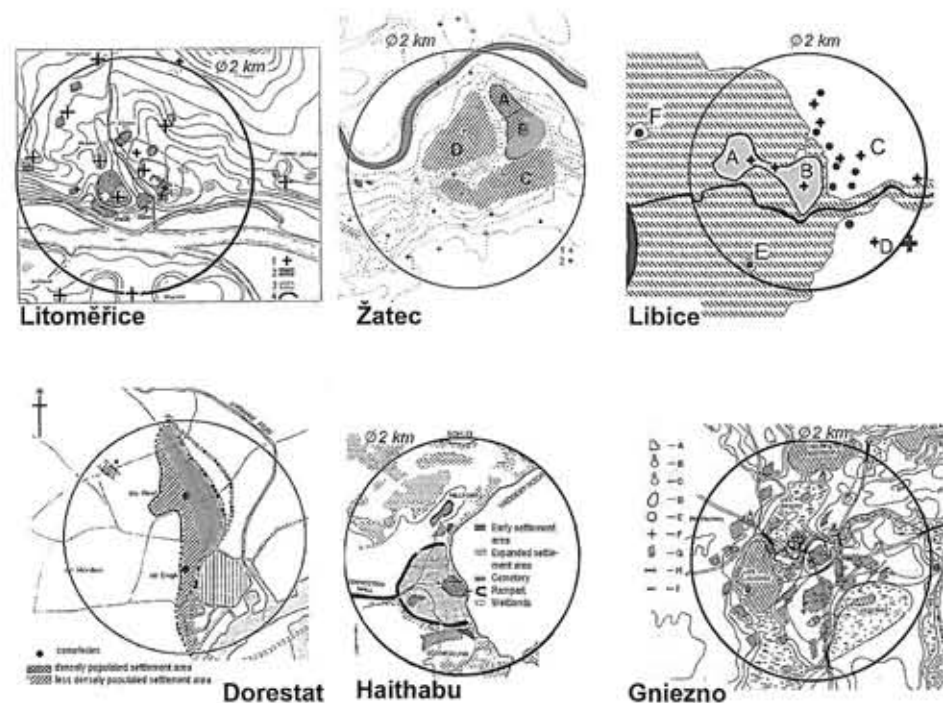


Fig. 4. Selected Early Medieval agglomerations. Litoměřice: 1 – burial places, 2 – Middle and the Late 'Hillfort' period settlement, 3 – the Late 'Hillfort' settlement, 4 – fortification (after Zápotocký 1965, fig. 27). Žatec: A – castle, B – fortified outer bailey, C – southern unfortified bailey, D – suburbium, 1 – non-church burial places, 2 – settlement (modified after: Čech 2008, fig. 1). Libice nad Cidlinou: the Middle and the Late 'Hillfort' period, A – inner bailey (acropolis), B – outer bailey, C, E-J – settlement, D – burial place. Dorestad: Early Medieval Age (after Verwers 1988, fig. 16). Haithabu: Viking period (after Clarke – Ambrosiani 1991, fig. 4.16). Gniezno: 10th-11th century, A – castle, B – cathedral, C – church, D – settlement at the Lech Hill, E – stronghold, F – burial place, G – settlement, H – dam, I – bridge (after Janiak – Strzewski 2001, Ryc. 2)

Despite different natural and geopolitical conditions the Early Medieval agglomerations and the Early towns are comparable in several aspects, above all their urban character². Other similarities are visible in terms of their spatial structure and population size³. The fortified central part covering usually tens

² The Early Medieval agglomeration correspond well to definition of early medieval town by M. Biddle (1976, 100). These criteria are: defenses, a planned street system, a market(s), a mint, legal autonomy, a role of a central place, a relatively large and dense population, diversified economic base, plots and houses of 'urban' type, social differentiation, complex religious organization, judicial centre. Possession of more than one of these characteristic is establish a prior case for urban status (see Scull 1997).

³ Haithabu: 1000 inhabitants (Steuer 1984); Hamwic: 2000–3000 inhabitants (Morton 1992, 55); Birka: 2000 inhabitants (Clarke – Ambrosiani 1991, 135), Dorestad 1000–2000 (Wickham 2005, 682), Mikulčice: 1000–2000 inhabitants (Poláček 2008), Břevlav – Pohansko 1000 (Dresler – Macháček, Libice 600–900 inhabitants (Mařík 2008).

of hectares were surrounded by open rural settlements and burial places within distance up to 2 kilometers (Mařík 2009).

The study of beginnings of Czech Early Medieval fortified sites faces to number of questions connected with their dating and the role they played in society. The oldest fortifications are to 8th–9th century in the time of destruction of relationships of connections established during co-existence of Slavic and Avar ethnics. Dating of these sites is based on several small pottery sets and rare find of luxury belt mountings that are the only witnesses of elites (Bubeník 1994). The insufficient state of research and lack of written sources disable to reconstruct complete picture of power structures of this period. In this respect conditions in eastern part of the Czech republic (Moravia) is slightly convenient. There, the Great Moravian state arose in the second third of 9th century. The main centers of this state(?) were founded at sites of previous intensive settlement. The development of Great Moravia was interrupted by attacks of Hungarian tribes in the beginning of the 10th century. But the process that led to establishing of centralized state continued under leadership of Přemyslid dukes in Bohemia.

The crucial factors for foundation of Early Medieval settlement agglomerations were the natural conditions suitable for further development of open settlements in the surrounding and location on important long-distance routes. The central fortified parts of agglomeration were usually located on places protected by natural barriers. The most of Great Moravian centers like Mikulčice, Břeclav – Pohansko, Staré Město u Uherského Hradiště were situated on sandy dunes or remnants of river terraces protected by river branches or oxbows. On the other hand elevated sites surmounting surrounding terrain with several tens of meters were preferred in the Bohemian territory (Pražský hrad, Budeč, Litoměřice).

4.2. The long distance contacts

The location of Early Medieval agglomerations on the long-distance trade routes and their crossroads opened to local rules access to bulk of luxury goods and simultaneously to incomes from trade and the first mints were established from these reasons.

The most numerous group of evidence of long-distance contacts are the finds of Baltic amber (Krumphanzlová 1992). The other evidence of long-distance trade contacts with most of wealthy European neighbors document rare finds of luxury items like weapons or jewelry and coins from Byzantium, Frankish Empire or countries under control of Arabs.

There were also a lot of goods that undoubtedly passed through the Early Medieval agglomerations but they cannot be indentified in archaeological record. Products like silk, spice, salt, peltry, horses, cattle are mentioned in customs tariffs (Poláček 2007). The most important export article of Early Medieval Czech state was slaves that were one of the main incomes.

The slaves were sold to the markets in Byzantium or Arabic Spain (Třeštík 2001).

Beside the material evidence the long-distance contacts enabled also distribution of ideas. The most important change of the society brought Christianity. Tokens of this new belief were identified in the centers where the first churches were built. Christianity was for the first time adopted by the elites. It could be used by mighty leaders as an instrument for ideological reinforcement of their domination. Conversion to Christianity was also a situation of Ideological conflict between tribal egalitarian society and the needs of centralized organization of early states. At the same time, conversion was necessary as an accomplishment of expectancies of the mighty European rules (Urbańczyk 2000, 268).

4.3. Relations of the Early Medieval centre to their environs

Among significant features of the Bohemian and Moravian Early Medieval centres belong concentrations of open settlements within their surroundings. The open settlements are considered to be an important part of economical hinterlands of these centres. The presence of people who did not take part on agricultural production (elites, craftsmen) implies that their needs had to be satisfied from the surplus produced in the open settlements. The crucial factor for the relationship between the centers and open settlements is the level of their mutual dependence seems to be the proportion of the 'productive' and 'non-productive' people.

Neither archaeology nor historical sources can sufficiently answer this question. The opinions on legal position of people living on the open settlements are ranging from the total dependence to mercantile relationship. Several analyses of settlement structures that have been done within the surrounding of Břeclav – Pohansko and Mikulčice in Moravia (Macháček, Dresler 2008) and Bohemian Libice (Mařík 2009) and Budeč (Bartošková, Štefan 2006) offer quite similar picture. The higher density of open settlements was detected within the distance of 8 kilometers and maximal number of open settlements did not exceed 20 (Fig. 5).

The written sources document the relationship between Early Medieval agglomerations and open settlements in the later phases (11th–12th century) of the Early Medieval period.

The system designated as 'service organization' (Třeštík 2001) was based on obligatory services, taxes in kind and craftsmen products. Likewise the latter settlement structures the most of the people mentioned in written sources lived up to distance of 10 km from the centre.

Comparing hundreds or thousands of inhabitants living in Early Medieval agglomerations and several tens of people per each open settlement we can conclude that the Early Medieval agglomerations were not exclusively consumer of products from their surroundings. The subsistence of the centers was based

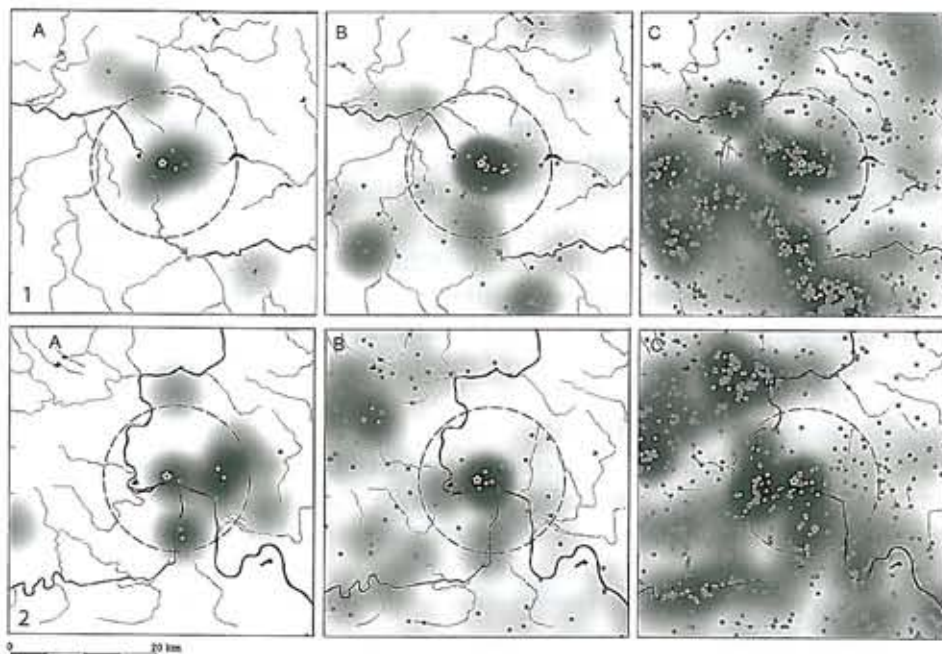


Fig. 5. Spatial analyzes of Early Medieval agglomerations according: A – Written sources, B – Archaeological evidence (Early Medieval period), C – Archaeological evidence of the entire ADB (Archaeological Database of Bohemia). 1 – Libice, 2 – Litoměřice

on several diversified sources whereas essential part of agricultural products was raised by inhabitants of Early Mediaeval agglomerations (see Clarke, Ambrosiani 1991, 7, 129; Brather 2001, 141)⁴.

4.4. Social structures and political systems

Generally said, the social structures of Early Medieval Bohemia and Moravia can be characterized by the fact that both societies stood at the dawn of the emergence of centralized states. In the process of establishing of the state two parties were challenging – the Duke on the one side and the individual local ruling families on the other. The base of power of the early state was limited on several fortified central place belonging to the Duke at the beginning. But at the same he gradually acquired under his control the local tribal centers, partly by force and partly by political instruments. The central and local rulers and their families represent the elites of Early Medieval period. Very close to this group were members of rulers 'suite' who fulfilled mainly military functions.

⁴ The production potential of Early Medieval agglomeration was tested in case of Libice nad Cidlinou in Bohemia. The most of requirements on arable land and timber could be satisfied maximally within 4,2 km from the fortification (Mařík 2009).

The elites in archaeological record could be probably connected with graves with luxurious equipment (weapons, jewelry). However, this group of finds vanish from graves inventories during the 10th century. This process that is apparent especially on cemeteries surrounding the oldest churches situated in the fortified centers can be explained by arising Christianity or confirmed position of ruling elites who did not need to display their power in grave equipments. Our knowledge about the social and legal position of the rest of population of Early Medieval agglomerations is very limited. We can assume that exceptional positions occupied some craftsmen or merchants but it is nearly impossible to recognize some differences among the prevailing 'grey' mass of inhabitants.

The lowest position of the social ladder occupied slaves with very limited rights. Although the most of them only passed the agglomerations, some graves with unusual and non-piety position of body and a few finds of chains indicate their presence.

5. Discussion

This paper attempted to explore the role of the central places in late La Tène and Early Medieval periods approaching this issue from different perspectives, those which can be then discussed together in following points:

5.1. Location and centrality. Tradition or new phenomena?

In works dealing with the urban locations it is emphasized that major factors are environment, technology, economic structure, the power structure and cultural values (Sjoberg 1965, 85). Environment sets limits but never determines it and barriers are the challenges for the technology. As technology has advanced, it has enabled cities to spring up in environments that earlier could not have nourished them. Major centres locations are also related to the economic factors, but stronger emphasis lies on technology and social power. Social power plays the major role in both urban location and growth (Sjoberg 1965, 87) and the quality of urban life is in direct proportion to strength of the central authority (Wickham 2005, 688). Another very probable possibility of the urban site location is that where it is likely that it is determined mainly by the economic factors where the higher demand for the control over the primary resources together with access to the communication routes were decisive. The oppida and Early Medieval settlement agglomerations also concepts with the idea of the 'central places', originally formulated by Christaller (1966; from the economic point of view)⁵ and Smith (1976; from

⁵ The central place in Christaller's original concept, neither means the settlement with exact spatial location within a region nor is it the largest site of them all. Central places according to Christaller (1966, 3, 72) are those sites where are offered the services and goods which are not available at any other settlement within a given distance. Due to the necessary concentration of goods, in order to offer them the sites enter the economic level of central places. The term 'central place' basically should not be understood as a spatial

the socio-cultural point of view)⁶. As it was stated before, the environment was one of the decisive points within the oppida location strategies, but certainly it was not the point which was limiting. The location of the oppida in more elevated areas further from the traditional rural regions can be regarded beside all aforementioned reasons as well as the strategy to maintain the primary resources (forests, iron ore, gold etc.). On the other hand the Early Medieval agglomerations are believed to grow in immediate contact with the rural settlement that was likely crucial for foundation of such a central place (see Nosov 1998). The communities are interrelated by both hierarchical (order of services) and horizontal (distance) links. Most important, however, for the social organization are the patterns and forms in which central-place systems are organized and this has an influence on adaptation, identity and maintenance of the whole regional system defined by the central places.

Central places existed in mutual symbiosis with the communication routes since the long time in prehistory. To build trade routes is a technological base, but development of many cities can be traced to the concentration of people at nodal points along trade routes (Sjoberg 1965, 86). Key locations in this case are determined mainly by the environment (which can be traced geographically) or by political structure (which can be determined by relief as well but not necessarily)⁷.

Long term development within the particular regions during the both observed periods showed that the fortified sites locations represented rather the long territorial tradition only partially disrupted during certain periods probably due to the different social and/or political organization. Even so the locations of the centres from the late Bronze to Early Medieval period if they were not directly at the same places they differed only on a level of the positions within the same regions and they were not substantially separated from the traditional settlement zone; spatial shifts in their locations can be explained as a matter of terrain preferences, accesses to the primary resources or communication routes or political systems reflecting the spatial organization.

term, since in the Christaller's concept the term 'central' originally meant the function of the site which gave it the central position, not its location within a territory.

⁶ Analyses of the social systems performed by the cultural anthropologists (such as C.A. Smith) regarded the central place theory from different point of view. They show central places as the organizing entities of hierarchical territorial systems (= regions) (Smith 1976, 7). They are central for the people, who perceive them as being central, because of the concentration of the higher-order functions located in them. Such places would have the corresponding hinterlands and would be surrounded by lower-order sites with more commonly used functions. Similar approach that built up the hierarchical system of central places on their functions is also apparent Early Medieval studies (Gringmuth-Dalmer 1999, Mozdioch 2001).

⁷ Descriptions of this concept correspond with the idea of port-of-trade developed by the substantivist school of economic history (Polanyi et. al. 1957). It is important to stress here that function of the port-of-trade was originally and in its origins purely economical. In accordance with this concept prehistoric urban sites or agglomerations located on major trade routes (often showing the abundance of Mediterranean imports, cf. early Iron Age princely sites or the late Iron Age oppida) and/or at distinct territorial change usually tended to be identified with this kind of institution and interpreted as agents within long distance trade.

5.2. The long distance contacts

By comparing the distance trade organization from different periods in protohistory, in the late Iron Age there is evident that the oppida took over the schemes developed during the preceding periods of Hallstatt, early and middle La Tène which were focused especially on the acquisition of wine and drinking services aimed for the feasting ceremonies took over from the Mediterranean period.

Long distance contacts can intermediate the cultural and/or political tokens which could have had enormous powers upon societies. For the Iron Age it were the feasting habits and coin production adopted from Mediterranean areas, which served to the greater representation and separation of the social higher classes manifested by the unequal access to the exceptional commodities connected with the presentation and legal rights to control the monetary systems. Both of them had enormous political and social impact. These acquisitions of the economic tokens on the background of the traditional cultural identities had wider political implications which helped to unify the late Iron Age culture over the large areas. Similar or even same schemes were observed in the Early Medieval period: for the Early Medieval period the decisive factor that linked the Great Moravians and later Czech state elites with their European neighbours was Christianity. The first churches were built at Great Moravian centres in Moravia and at the first Přemyslids castles. The introduction of the new belief was organised by the ruling authorities and the fact that they accepted it at first gave them exceptional position within the society. Another token of cultural-political contacts was the adoption of external features the higher social classes especially from the more advanced environment of Frankish empire, the so-called *imitatio imperii*.

5.3. Social systems and structure of society

According to Sjoberg the urban sites are most likely to be the residences of the nobility. The elite is expected to be urban-based in order to sustain its power position. The residential sites of nobility are the focal points of transport and communication, enabling the ruling element not only to maintain surveillance over the countryside but to interact more readily with members of their own group in other cities as well as within a city (Sjoberg 1965, 67).

Although we usually lack the evidence of the presence of the central authority at the oppida, the only organization of the large collective works as the fortification building, lay-outs planning needed someone to organize the whole work. Some higher authority also had to structure the space, centralize the collective mentality and legal systems. Some type of highly stratified society anticipate also settlement units of different size, enclosures or finds of slave chains.

On the other hand the complex society in Early Medieval agglomerations is documented by both written and archaeological sources.

5.4. Traditional farming systems and relationships of the centres to their environments

Among the variety opinions examining the nature of the both Iron Age and Early Medieval society there is very interesting causal interconnection between the interpretation of the settlement hierarchy, social systems and economic and subsistence strategies. Presumed higher levels of the site and/or society hierarchy are almost never believed to be self-sufficient (e.g. Fichtl 2000 and many others). In other words: the higher is the person/community/site in the supposed hierarchical rank, presumably the lower is the urge to use own labour to be in charge of self-supplying with food and fodder. *The key factor in fact is the producer – consumer relationship. It could be traced within the settlement patterns (efficiency of transport e.g., locational strategies) etc.*

The self-sufficiency of a population/society in supply of basic subsistence needs represented by food, animal fodder and fuel, depends especially on availability of natural resources and ability to manage them. Knowing the past husbandry (crop and animal husbandry practices and wood demands) it is clear that within the hinterland of a self-sufficient site arable land, hay meadows, grassland pastures, managed forest and timber producing forest should exist. The absence of any one of the resources would cause the stress and promote the development of other subsistence strategies. These, which would probably encounter (local) taxation, purchase, trade or exchange, are stipulated and dependent on social structure of the society and network of its contacts. There is one basic rule that the degree of specialization depends on the efficiency of the transport means in the surroundings; that means the amount of commodities obtainable through exchange in efficient time period. In the areas with bad transport the exchange wouldn't be the suitable mechanism by which the community would cope with scarcity of the resources (cf. Halstead – O'Shea 1989, 5) and it also hampers larger specialization.

An important issue concerns the production of a surplus foodstuff itself. Pre-historic societies were fully capable to produce the surplus; it was one of the basic objectives of sedentary population competences. The main prerequisites of considerable surplus production were especially the efficient agricultural system. This is documented by similar tools that were used in the both periods (Fig. 6).

Two main categories of the surplus production should be distinguished: the subsistence surplus (the one which relates to the storage mechanism to support the community in times of need) and surplus as the production beyond the existence needs or provisions for the bad years (Jones 2001, 34) which is directly connected to exchange⁸.

⁸ Single farming family unit unless being a part of the wider community practices rather small scale and intensive land cultivation. Thus there is no space for producing considerable surplus in order to enter the foodstuff market or support the potential elite groups. Wider community at the other hand with bigger

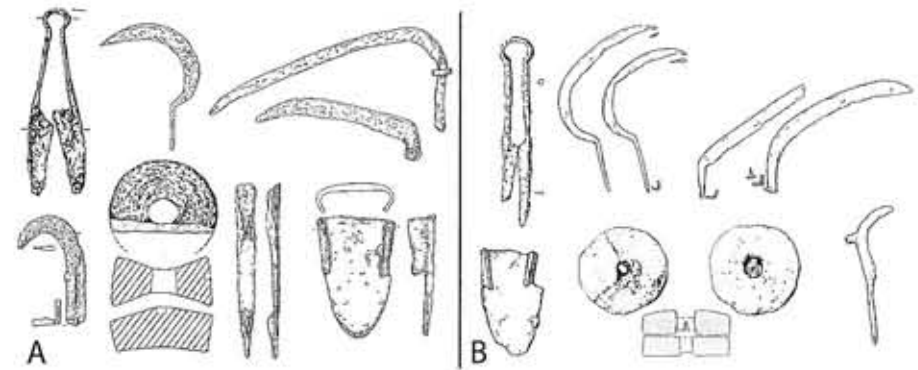


Fig. 6. Agricultural tools. A – late La Tène, B – Early Medieval (after Beranová 1980, obr. 65, 67, 70, 75; Jacobi 1974)

From the recent investigations it is apparent that the oppida despite the previous opinions did develop the mutual economic contacts with their hinterlands which involved also the exchange or the deliveries of the agricultural products, but this relationship was not the matter of the sheer subsistence. The environmental analyses and model approaches undertaken for the Bohemian oppida proved that these sites were absolutely capable of their own agricultural production which involved the growing of cereals as well as the pastoral economy. Regarding often different environments of the oppida hinterlands their subsistence strategies could be focused more on the cultivation of the more durable cereal species like glum wheat or barley together with emphasized animal production focused on cattle breeds. So far conducted environmental analyses support these notions. We can assume that the indisputable exchanges between individual settlements and the oppidum were aimed especially to develop and maintain social and cultural contacts.

The comparison of settlement structures within the surrounding of Early Medieval agglomerations and the estimations of populations living in the agglomeration excludes the possibility of their total dependence on rural hinterland. The both types of centres had a potential of their own agricultural production but they needed doubtless external support because of presence of people who spent their time by different activities (ruling authorities, craftsmen, merchants). The relationship between the centre and open settlements is documented by written sources in Early Medieval period.

work force potential can afford itself to employ extensive cultivation with larger exploitation areas and considerable surplus. According to Halstead (1989, 76) growth of large settlements forced many households to farm further from home and to adopt more extensive techniques of husbandry and communal herding. Places with such population aggregation as were the oppida beside apparent social benefits meant also a higher cost especially in terms of labour inputs in subsistence strategies either practical or social or political. Size of sites with higher aggregation of population was seen as correlating with higher potential productivity in the catchment areas around those sites (Gamble 1982, 102). This is certainly linked mainly with the estimated productivity of soils and exploitable potential of the surrounding landscape.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of comparison of the both systems we claim that the nature of economic interaction between the centre and farming communities was very similar especially in terms of:

- social systems – stratified society,
- methods of land-use,
- long-distance contacts and trade.

The both socioeconomic systems were standing very close to emergence of state. The this late La Tène fortified sites and Early Medieval agglomerations arose at the moment when the network of trade or communication routes and social contacts was developed as well as the bonds within the traditional rural regions were established. It was a matter of a wider continuity and traditions within the regions and outside of them which begun far in later prehistory and was to be seen as late as in Early Medieval period.

This type of structures was not based on ethnicity or political systems, but on the other hand they can be disrupted by collapse of political system. In times of stability they tend to develop independently from these factors⁹. The questions of economy and its relationship to social and political systems have to be solved in terms of the *longue durée* approach and not only on the level of particular period limited ethnically.

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⁹ This is close to the 'structuration theory' (as referred by Sindbæk 1999, 158–160). Questions of cultural identities can only be treated in relation to other structures of power – both the internal organisation of society, the relations with surrounding systems and the material premises, including, e.g., natural environment and forms of production (Sindbæk 1999, 160). We only need to explore and understand the ways how the resources were exploited and managed within the both periods in question and what social, political and cultural institutions structured them.

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Od oppidów późnej epoki żelaza do wczesnośredniowiecznego grodu. Ciągłość systemów ekonomicznych?

Streszczenie

Głównym celem tego artykułu jest krytyczne przyjrzenie się naturze ekonomicznej interakcji pomiędzy tzw. „ośrodkami centralnymi” a tradycyjnymi wspólnotami rolniczymi w dwóch pozornie różnych systemach politycznych, w aglomeracjach osadniczych późnej epoki żelaza i wczesnego średniowiecza.

Badania ośrodków centralnych w czeskiej archeologii są chronologicznie dość ograniczone. Ośrodki centralne z różnych okresów omawiane są oddzielnie, dlatego też dla nas szczególnie interesujące jest porównanie dwóch pozornie różnych systemów ekonomicznych i społecznych, należących do późnej epoki żelaza i wczesnego średniowiecza. Ich wspólną cechą jest to, że były punktami węzłowymi, mającymi silny wpływ na rozwój społeczeństw w obu omawianych epokach. Reprezentują moment szczytowy długotrwałego rozwoju – odpowiednio w dziejach Celtów i Słowian. Ich miejska natura i wyraźna stratyfikacja społeczna wskazuje na silne związki z sąsiadującymi osadami otwartymi. Mimo, że ośrodki z obydwu epok funkcjonowały w różnych systemach politycznych, interakcja pomiędzy nimi a tradycyjnymi wspólnotami rolniczymi wydaje się być oparta na tych samych zasadach, wpływających na rozwój struktur i politycznych systemów.

Naszym podstawowym celem jest zidentyfikowanie głównych czynników odpowiadających za ustanowienie hierarchii społecznej w dawnych społeczeństwach – i kwestia ich ciągłości. W tym artykule koncentrujemy się na związkach pomiędzy rolniczą bazą społeczeństwa a lokalnym rozwojem osad i ich statusem. Postaramy się dowiedzieć, że centralność interakcji pomiędzy wspólnotami wiejskimi a strukturami miejskimi to powracające zjawisko, przy tym szczególnie charakterystyczne dla okresów „protohistorii”.

Badane epoki są chronologicznie rozdzielone okresem rzymskim oraz okresem wędrówek ludów, które uważa się za czynniki podważające tradycyjne schematy organizacji/strukturyzacji społeczeństw o zasadach społeczno-kulturowych. Jednak tradycyjne systemy i zasady są zjawiskami kształtującymi się na przestrzeni długiego odcinka czasu, nawet jeśli proces ten jest przerywany przez okresy o całkowicie innej organizacji życia społecznego i politycznego.

Staramy się przyrzeć naturze tych systemów i skupić na kwestiach dotyczących długotrwałych procesów powstawania bytów kulturowych oraz tożsamości poprzez omówienie roli i funkcji tychże centrów od okresu lateńskiego (oppida) do wczesnego średniowiecza (grody). Podstawowym argumentem jest stwierdzenie, iż systemy te były w szczególności oparte na związkach pomiędzy ośrodkami a regionami wiejskimi oraz tradycyjnymi systemami rolniczymi, które pozostały niezmienione przez okres późniejszej prehistorii aż do wczesnego średniowiecza. Sieć szlaków handlowych i komunikacyjnych była rozwinięta i funkcjonowała jeszcze przed powstaniem ośrodków epoki żelaza, natomiast systemy wymiany późnej epoki żelaza i wczesnego średniowiecza są bardzo zbliżone i oparte na podobnych zasadach.

Jesteśmy przekonani, iż należy się przyrzeć kulturowym, społecznym i ekonomicznym strategiom osad i ich kontaktów w późnej epoce żelaza i wczesnym średniowieczu w środkowej Europie oraz na ich wzajemnym porównaniu. Do pytania w jakim celu zakładane były ośrodki centralne z późnego okresu lateńskiego i wczesnego średniowiecza oraz czy i jak działały jako ośrodki w swoich regionach rolniczych, jak pośredniczyły w dalekosiężnych kontaktach oraz jak radziły sobie z kwestiami społeczno-kulturowymi, można podejść z różnych punktów widzenia. Prawdopodobnie kluczowym czynnikiem określającym hierarchię społeczną, a więc najbardziej godnym naszej uwagi, jest związek pomiędzy rolniczą bazą społeczeństwa, ekonomicznym potencjałem terenu i lokalnym rozwojem osad i ich statusem związanym z sieciami wymiany. Interesującym czynnikiem są również głęboko zakorzenione koncepcje i paradygmaty hierarchii osad, mające wpływ na interpretację ich gospodarki i sposobów realizacji życiowej egzystencji.

Jest kilka kwestii, które wypada omówić, w szczególności dla każdego okresu oddzielnie: 1. centralność – ośrodki centralne i ich pochodzenie, lokalizacja i chronologia; 2. specjalizacja i kontakty dalekosiężne; 3. struktura społeczna (jaka była hierarchia społeczna, systemy polityczne i rytuały kultury duchowej); 4. interakcja i zagadnienia produkcji (związki pomiędzy ośrodkami centralnymi i ich zapleciami, strategie utrzymania, wzorce osadnicze). Przedstawiamy je łącznie w celu przyjrzenia się wynikającej z nich kwestii ciągłości i tradycji tożsamości socjoekonomicznych i struktur społeczeństw epoki żelaza i wczesnego średniowiecza.

Na podstawie porównania obu systemów stwierdzamy, że natura interakcji ekonomicznej pomiędzy ośrodkami a wspólnotami rolniczymi była bardzo podobna szczególnie jeśli chodzi o:

- systemy społeczne – stratyfikacja społeczeństwa,
- metody gospodarki zajętego obszaru,
- handel i kontakty dalekosiężne.

Oba systemy socjoekonomiczne były blisko związane z procesem kształtowania się struktur danego państwa. Umocnione stanowiska późnolateńskie i wczesnośredniowieczne aglomeracje powstały w momencie gdy sieć szlaków handlowych i komunikacyjnych oraz kontakty społeczne były już w zaawansowanym stadium, jak również związki z tradycyjnie wiejskimi regionami. Jest to kwestia szerszej ciągłości i tradycji wewnątrz regionów i poza nimi, która zaistniała w późnych pradziejach i była kontynuowana aż do wczesnego średniowiecza.

Tego typu struktury nie były oparte o etniczne bądź polityczne systemy, jednak z drugiej strony mogły być zachwiane przez upadek właśnie systemów politycznych. Jednakże w czasach stabilności owe struktury mają tendencję do rozwijania się niezależnie od wymienionych czynników. Na koniec chcielibyśmy podkreślić, że kwestie ekonomiczne i ich związki z systemami społecznymi i politycznymi powinny być rozwiązane na zasadach podejścia *longue durée*, a nie tylko na poziomie poszczególnych epok, ograniczonych zarówno kulturowo jak i etnicznie.

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From a Slavic stronghold to a medieval town – the example of Chobienia

From the tribal period of the 9th and 10th century to the end of the reign of the Piast monarchy at the beginning of the 14th century, Silesia underwent severe transformations in view of both the structure of domination as well as settlement and economic structures, and furthermore a dynamic transition of cultures. Although these changes have already been outlined, they still prompt a lot of questions. To investigate these changes in a small-scale region was the aim of a research project which was conducted in the town of Chobienia (German: Köben an der Oder), located about 60 km to the north-west of Wrocław, and a close-by stronghold-settlement-agglomeration just north of the town in the summer of 2010. Archaeological research and also historic studies were carried out in the context of the research project, sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Bonn-Bad Godesberg). The results of this project enable us to comprehend these transformational processes in Chobienia with their various facets.

Historic background

The territory of Lower Silesia, since the 7th century populated by Slavs, was in the 9th and 10th centuries characterized by a tribal structure which consisted of numerous small chiefdoms within larger tribal regions, a typical form of social organization in East Central Europe at that time. The territory of Głogów and Chobienia is said to have been settled by the West Slavic tribe of the 'Dziadoszanie'.