

Hošek, Radislav

Antique traditions in Great Moravia

In: *Magna Moravia : sborník k 1100. výročí příchodu byzantské mise na Moravu*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1965, pp. 71-84

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/119651>

Access Date: 30. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

ANTIQUÉ TRADITIONS IN GREAT MORAVIA

The great and remarkable discoveries of archeologists in South Moravia brought to our notice a considerable and hitherto unassumed standard of old Slavonic civilization.¹ These archeological finds have since many times been dealt with by interpreters and evaluators — both in cursory and more detailed analyses — and this material was again treated on a broader basis by such research workers as tried to derive from it more general historical conclusions.² Yet, be it as it will, these extensive excavations have by no means come to an end, and thus every coming year may considerably alter the picture that appears to be true at the present moment.

The recently discovered old Slavonic culture attracted the interest of a number of scientists, some of which see in it the product of domestic environment,³ while others attribute it to the influence of other cultures (Byzantine,⁴ Iro-Scottish⁵). The latter theories have, however, one characteristic feature in common, i. e. they acknowledge interrelations of cultures more or less contemporary or quite concurrent with the Slavonic culture, and they see in such influence just mere impulses that prompted further independent development of the South-Moravian Slavs.

Yet, such a conception, concentrated primarily on the prospective growth of the Slavonic culture subsequent to its encounter with the foreign culture in question, fails to investigate the depth of the roots of the wide-branched tree of South-Moravian culture. It is as if such an orientation wanted to separate Great Moravia from the pan-European cultural evolution, especially from the mid-Danubian regions, thus making of it a kind of separate, isolated unit. These widely spreading views originated partly out of a certain aversion from linking up too closely our countries with the preceding culture of the Ancient Roman Empire — this attitude finds support in the not always correctly interpreted association of our countries with the East as well as in the fact that the knowledge of Latin and of ancient history seems to have been greatly limited here at that time — and partly were founded on short-sighted argumentation that the quantity of gold, and all the more the standard of its workmanship, is a decisive criterion for estimating the standard of culture in general. Especially the latter finger-post may be misleading, for the methods of working in gold need not in themselves indicate a higher grade of culture. Sure, we can see even today that the fine workmanship of manual products in the Middle East or even in the Balkans, for that part, does not find a corresponding match in the general standard of culture of the respective countries. An analogical situation can be found also in Great Moravia, where the rich finds in gold are contrasted by comparatively primitive forges.

The origin of the Great-Moravian culture must be sought in a lasting and uninterrupted connection of this territory with the European and mainly South-

European and East-European world, this connection not being restricted to contemporary Europe but extended to everything that had up till then survived from the pre-existing European culture. We can hardly imagine such a standard of culture being established by a casual arrival of Byzantine merchants, if there had not existed other favourable conditions of a longer duration besides. Now, these other conditions must be seen above all in the fact that Great Moravia was formed as a state in a territory which had had an extensive contact with the Danubian area and with the South-East long before. The very circumstance that the Byzantine market found here such ready customers as to induce them to start a home production of the goods in South Moravia points to a considerably high degree of economic development of the local civilization. If namely the Byzantine merchants — by this designation we mean trading people coming from Byzantium, i. e. Greeks, Jews, Arabs, and others — had been coming to the Moravian Slavs as to tribes living in a less developed community from the economic point of view, the offered goods might have been a welcome article of sale, but organizing their local produce would have been out of the question. We assume that such conditions actually existed in our countries at the turning point of the eras, when Roman products were occasionally imported to this country, the attitude of the buyers being similar to that in Gaul, as we know it from I. Caesar's description in his introductory passages in *De bello gallico*: "not unfrequently merchants arrive there importing things that contribute to the refinement of human nature" (BG I3 . . . *minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea, quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent, important* . . .).

The conception which tore away Great Moravia from the foregoing development, admitting the existence of this connection with diffidence at the best, was demonstrated in practice at the Exposition "Great Moravia" in Brno in 1963, set up on the occasion of 1100th anniversary of the arrival of the Byzantine mission (Cyril and Methodius) in Moravia. The exhibition illustrated extensively the era of Great Moravia and its successive cultural influence, but the foregoing stages of development were ignored.⁶ It was partly due, no doubt, to conditions prevailing in Czechoslovak archeology, whose more recent investigation failed to comprise the pre-Slavonic settlements, especially the Roman era and the migration of nations, and partly was at fault also our history, which neither found this period very attractive.⁷ To prevent the rich archeological material from remaining rather isolated, a close and complex co-operation of archeologists, historians, lawyers, philologists, and other scientists will be necessary so that we may ultimately succeed in reconstructing a most probable all-round picture of Great Moravia and of her development and life in the course of her duration.⁸

When speaking about the political form of ancient Moravians, i. e. about the Great-Moravian Empire, we should realize that this form represents a culmination of a development whose beginnings go back to approximately the 5th cent. A. D. This early stage is in fact one of the most acute Great-Moravian problems, as its hitherto discovered archeological and written documents are rather scanty. That is why present investigation has avoided this question, restricting its interest in it to such works as deal with the fortunes of Teutonic tribes in the mid-Danubian area towards the close of the Roman era, especially in Noricum, i. e. the present East Austria. It was above all J. Dekán who pointed out in his stimulative lecture at the International Congress in Brno in 1963 that this is a problem not to be overlooked.⁹ The problem of continuity, that is to say of direct contact

between the Roman culture and the Slavonic one, is, to be sure, by no means a new one, and various answers to this question, either positive or negative, have been given since the close of the last century.¹⁰

The outcome of all this investigation are different theories, many of which got adapted to the spirit of nazism in various German publications.¹¹ Of the most outstanding are the two following views: 1. The arrival of the Slavonic tribes to Moravia and Noricum was preceded by an older wave of migration, i. e. of the Teutonic tribes. These latter actually got into immediate contact with the Greek and Roman culture, and many of them were gradually transformed into the so-called foederati, i. e. practically into Roman citizens, free on principle, yet under certain obligations to the Empire, chiefly of a military character. Numerous foederati became legitimate Roman provincial citizens, but under the pressure of historical events they had to evacuate Noricum. Thus the Slavs, who were the next to arrive, entered a deserted territory, and their direct contact with the antique world could not be established for the simple reason that there existed in their neighbourhood at that time no mediator of the antique culture. As a result of it, the Slavonic culture, deprived of the beneficial influence of civilized Europe, must be looked upon as lower and inferior.

2. The end of the provincial Roman culture in Noricum must be ascribed to the Slavonic tribes, who invaded this territory and destroyed the seats of the old culture. This means that in contrast to the Teutonic tribes these peoples were incapable of appropriating anything of the antique traditions, as they represented a lower social standard.

Both these theories have weak spots in their argumentation and are not void of contradiction.¹² Either there were no pre-Slavonic inhabitants present and the immigrating Slavs had no chance of destroying their culture, or else the Slavs were actually destroying the native seats, and when doing so they were bound to get into some contact with the antique culture of the conquered tribes.

All this implies serious problems, and the approach does not appear to have been fortunate. It is specially the evacuation of Noricum — as we shall try to specify later — which is wrongly imagined as a total depopulation of the country.¹³ Thus the rich archeological finds in South Moravia demand an all-round interpretation in the light of these problems, some of which we are now going to discuss briefly.

First of all, let us consider to what extent the Roman culture affected the Moravian territory, that lay outside the Limes Romanus, which Augustus and later specially Traianus decreed to be the northern boundary of the Roman Empire. The boundary made use of natural obstacles as support, was fortified, but not impenetrable. The Roman territory was raided by barbarians with hostile intentions. We find proofs of it both in the area of the lower Danube (*ILS* 8913 Dessau — *CIL* III 3385),¹⁴ and in the mid-Danubian region, e. g. in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who defeated the Marcomanni crossing the Danube and allotted the booty to the provincial citizens (*SHA*, Vita Marci 21,10).¹⁵ The barbarian territory beyond the Danube was allied, on the top of it, as we can judge mainly from the united action of the mid-Danubian and south-Danubian tribes during the revolt. Information about it we again find in *The Life of Marcus Aurelius* (*SHA*, Vita Marci 22.1) when reading that „*all the tribes from the boundaries of Illyricum down to Gaul conspired together*“.¹⁶ This information is very significant, for on its basis we can assume the existence of similar alliances among the

Slavonic tribes along the whole course of the Danube a few centuries later, while the news we hear about the south-Danubian area induces us to presuppose similar events in the mid-Danubian region. Here we have in mind primarily military documents from the end of the 6th or beginning of the 7th cent., quoted by Maurikios in his work *Strategikon*. This source informs us that the Slavs have not settled down along the course of the Danube not to be held in contempt by other nations owing to their small numbers, but neither do they reside in a great distance from the river, wishing to assault from the rear troops crossing the Danube. (XI, 5 p. 279 Scheffer.) They also try according to the same author to smuggle into the hostile camp a person of their own pretending desertion (XI, 5 p. 282), themselves fighting in a guerrilla fashion so that those who wish to engage them in battle must carry only light arms (XII, 20 p. 337).

The Roman penetration northward was not restricted only to military expeditions, such as Marcus Aurelius's campaign with the object of founding new provinces (*SHA, Vita Marci 27,10*) or expeditions of minor detachments, like the one that spent winter at Trenčín, as we are informed by the well-known local rock inscription, whose remarkable counterpart we find in another inscription discovered several years ago in the African Zana.¹⁷ The Roman penetration northward bore also a commercial character,¹⁸ and the routes of this progress were the same as those connecting the south-east with the north of Europe in the neolithic era already.¹⁹ One example will do: the Mycenaean gold cup from Vaphium in Peloponnesos finds its earthenware copy in a similar vessel in Nienhagen, Saxony.²⁰ Vanguard garrisons outside the Roman Limes were therefore supposed to protect these commercial routes. This task was allotted in Moravia to Mušov and in Slovakia to Stupava. Thus the Roman goods were imported to Moravia not only to be used but also to be imitated by the local population. The Roman settlers built quite far beyond Danube villas as early as in the 4th cent. A. D., one of which was unearthed near the present Milanovce.²¹ Likewise in Staré Město in Moravia Roman bricks were found on a Slavonic site.²² Even if we do not know from which Roman building the bricks were taken by the Slavs, yet we have to assume that the place was not very far off, and the phenomenon rightly serves as a proof of a continuity of the two cultures, the provincial Roman and the Slavonic. Bricks are namely a comparatively fragile material, and their long-distance transport, in contrast to stone, appears improbable. This is, of course, only a very fragmentary attempt at a reconstruction of the assumed situation on the basis of facts, nevertheless it justifies us in proceeding to further observations and conclusions. Sure, the Roman epoch in our ancient history is neither restricted to the Danube nor to the duration of Mušov or Stupava. Our archeologists are therefore up to a hard task to investigate properly from this point of view the south districts of Moravia and Slovakia. As for us, we may draw another preliminary but basic conclusion: The traditional route via Morava had positively existed prior to the Roman era, and it went on existing throughout its duration irrespective of the composition of the local population. It was a route that had been familiar to countless generations residing in South and South-East Europe, and this fact must have lived in the subconsciousness of also the early Slav settlers. This may be demonstrated when we follow further development of Moravia.

Moravia was connected with the trans-Danubian countries, i. e. the Roman provinces Noricum and Upper Pannonia primarily by two trade routes of pan-European significance. One of them ran from the most northern projection of the

Adriatic Sea, i. e. from Aquileia, to the Baltic Sea, while the other one, mentioned before, connected South-East Europe with Bohemia, Saxony, and other countries and passed through the valley of the river Svitava. Both these routes are illustrated on coins, showing clearly not only the direction of the routes, but indicating also the periods in which the routes were used.²³ Even if disregarding the Roman Empire we are informed about the duration of this travelling by Byzantine, Persian, and Arabian coins found either in our territory or north of it. It is true that the Byzantine numismatic finds are not so numerous as those of the Roman Empire, nevertheless they indicate that the use of these routes survived the Roman era.²⁴ Besides we must realize that the Byzantine state, in contrast to the Roman Empire, displayed both in politics and in trade rather an eastward and southward expansive tendency. The supplemented table shows that the traders were passing through Moravia even in the earlier half of the 7th century, i. e. just at the onset of political consolidation. There is no doubt that the growing power of the Great-Moravian state did not put a stop to this trading although no coins from this period were found. (The golden coins see Note 45.)

Pochitonov	The Time of	Locality
1326	Justinianos I 527—65	Mafatice (Uh. Hradiště)
1328	Justinianos I 527—65	Kroměříž
1329	Justinianos I 527—65	Zaovice
1427	Zenon, Anastasios I Justinianos I (474—564)	Zašovice (Třebíč)
1330	Chosroes I (531—579)	Uherský Brod
1332	Phokas (602—610)	Střelice
1333	Justinos II (565—578) Heraklelos (610—641)	Hrozová (Krnov)
	Konstans II (641—668)	
1334	Konstantinos VII Porph. and Zoe (913—919)	Rakvice (Břeclav)

This break can be explained by the contemporary situation in the Byzantine Empire, which was at that time resisting Arabian and Bulgarian assaults, suffered from a sharp interior conflict between the iconoclasts and worshipers of images, and had inferior rulers on the top of it. „It was a tragic destiny of the ancient Empire, for at the time when at the head of the Frankish state there was one of the greatest medieval rulers, the fortunes of Byzantium were in the hands of women and eunuchs“ (Ostrogorski).²⁵ The crisis, however, abated and the trade went on. Coins from the ninth and tenth centuries found in our countries tell us about it. Thus the inhabitants of Byzantium were familiar with the existence of the Moravian thoroughfare prior to the arrival of the Byzantine mission to Moravia, and the latter country must have drawn upon the sources of Byzantine culture before this event. At the same time, however, we may also assume that despite the passage of some Teutonic tribes through Moravia, especially of the Rugii,²⁶ who established here their short-lived empire, some descendants of the pre-Teutonic settlers were still residing here and could therefore influence the immigrating Slavs either with their own culture or with some mixed Roman-barbarian civilization.²⁷ It may be that this earlier population withdrew to the more hilly parts of the country, as a few research workers assume.²⁸ And neither must we forget that Great Moravia comprised in the south some parts of the

former Roman provinces with surviving original population. which, as we shall point out, was still drawing upon old traditional sources.

Now, if the current of trade ran through Moravia northward, it must be assumed that the same process took also the reverse direction, namely southward. It was first of all the export of corn from fertile regions north of the Danube that supplied the more mountainous Noricum as well as Raetia beyond its west frontier.²⁹

The character of trading between Noricum and Moravia was of course different from that which was carried on by the Byzantine merchants. Whereas the oriental import represented goods which were rare in Central Europe, Noricum and Moravia exchanged complementary home produce. Moravia supplied the mountainous regions of Noricum with cereals; but what was imported to Moravia from Noricum? We believe that it was mainly gold, whose rich finds in South-Moravian graves — and many of them were robbed — can hardly be explained by the assumption that they represented spoil from Avaric treasures or graves.³⁰ After all the allusion to this practice in the chronicle of 791 concerns one instance only. Neither the import from the rather remote Dacia can serve as a satisfactory explanation, all the less since the finds of gold in Slovakia, which was much nearer to Dacia (present Roumania) were by far not so plentiful.³¹ That is why we take into account the East-Alpine area with the town of Noreia, situated on the ancient trading route from Aquileia to Moravia. The place was famous with its gold and articles worked in iron. This was known to Strabo already who describes it as a center where gold is washed extensively and iron goods made in workshops. V 1, 8, C 214; ἔχει δὲ ὁ τόπος οὗτος χρυσοπλῆσια ἐσφυῆ καὶ σιδηουργεῖα cf. RE XVII, 968 s. v. Noreia (*E. Polaschek*.)

It is worth noting that Strabo indicates the position of Noreia by giving its distance from Aquileia, which was the starting point on the trading route to the north.

When admitting the continuity of such trading we must take for granted also the continuity of local traditions. Let us first discuss objections against the latter. There are particularly two: the devastation and destruction of ancient Roman towns prior to the arrival of the Slavs, and the so-called nihilistic approach of the Slavs to antique culture.³²

The downfall of antique towns is usually connected with the end of the Roman Empire. It is already the historians writing towards the close of the 4th cent. A. D., such as Ammianus Marcellinus, that refer to devastated Carnuntum, and similar allusions are to be found also in the biographies of the saints who were said to have seen the ruins of antique towns, e. g. St. Rupert inspected the ruins of ancient Iuvanum — the predecessor of the present Salzburg.³³ This is no doubt important information, but cannot play a decisive role in solving our problems. It is beyond questioning that a number of ancient Roman towns gradually decayed and altogether disappeared as the result of economic, political, and ideological changes that were in progress in the Roman Empire from the 4th century onward. Let us mention at least the following: social disintegration of the Empire, the tendency in the provinces to gain independence, invasions of the so-called barbarian tribes, the migration of nations. Yet, on the other hand, there were a number of towns that kept surviving, such as Batavium oppidum, which still had a Roman garrison towards the close of the 5th cent. as a symbol of the Roman imperial power. The latter was officially liquidated in Noricum in the year 488,

i. e. at a time when the existence of Slavonic population in Bohemia and Moravia is verified by archeological finds.³⁴ Eusebius in his biography of St. Severin (*Vita s. Severini* XX, 1) describes the situation as follows: At the time of the Roman Empire the garrisons of numerous towns were sustained from public revenue so that they might guard the Roman Limes. When this practice, however, was being abandoned, the military detachments were liquidated too, although some troops still remained in their post, associated with the Batavian zone of defence. (*Per id temporis, quo Romanum constabat imperium, multorum milites oppidorum pro custodia limitis publicis stipendiis alebantur. Qua consuetudine desinente simul militares turmae sunt deletae, cum limite Batavino utcumque numero perdurante.*) Another similar castellum (Favianis) is referred to by the same author (*Vita s. Sev.* III). Be it as it will, the selection of either liquidated or surviving antique settlements we find in chronicles must be looked upon as incidental, because the writers allude only to such instances as appear significant to them from the narrative point of view, i. e. when they relate about battles, visits of important personages etc., while other similar cases they fail to mention. Thus for instance in the *History of the Langobards* by Paul Diakon we find not a single allusion to the above-mentioned town of the Batavians (now Passau) or to Vindobona (now Vienna), though specially the existence of the former in the Langobard epoch is verified, not to speak of the continuity of these places to the present day, which, nevertheless, might have been interrupted at some unknown time. In the light of our problems it appears significant that also Roman towns in Pannonia go on existing.³⁵

The Slavs who came to Noricum found there a population that outlived the end of the Roman rule only by 70 years. It would not be right to conclude that in the withdrawal of the Roman troops and officials to Italy participated the entire provincial population. Information we have to this effect surely concerns Roman subjects in the narrow sense of the word, i. e. primarily the townspeople. It appears incredible that also the countryside should have evacuated the province.³⁶ There are noteworthy reports about the existence of Roman population or even Roman institutions to be found in the records of the Germanic law, which, on the one hand, indicate that some principles of the Roman law had actually been adopted, while, on the other hand, they directly allude to tributary Romans (*Romani tributales*) in the area of the present Salzburg. Now, such Roman citizens the Slavs were bound to meet, and took over from them not only their habits of making earthenware and earrings, but also some notion of Roman administration, as we shall demonstrate later.

And now let us discuss the second objection to the absorption of Roman culture by Slavonic civilization. It is the alleged outright negative attitude of the Slavs to antique culture. According to this theory they are supposed to have been together with the Avars „eradicating the entire antique heritage much more radically than the West“, e. g. the Narbonnic Gaul.³⁷ This fact is said to explain for instance the great difference between the preservation of antique monuments in South France, on the one hand, and in Austria, on the other. We admit that a hostile attitude of the Slavs to antique culture is alluded to in some sources, but it is necessary to differentiate between an a priori negative approach and the storming of towns in Roman provinces. The antique civilization was not incorporated in buildings only, but it was perpetuated mainly in the habits and thoughts of every-day life among the surviving population. At first, naturally, there was

bound to be a tension, but by and by — specially with the spread of Christianity among the Slavs — a peaceful symbiosis of the Slavonic population with the pre-Slavonic remnants was established. Such a friendly intercourse of the two strata is documented not only in written material, but also by articles of use. Apart from the before-mentioned Roman-Slavonic relations in the production of earthenware and earrings let us mention also the adornment of the so-called belt-end on which we can trace the development.³⁸ This decoration had an apotropaic character protecting its wearer from misfortune. The oldest form known to us (from Pohansko) shows some kind of figure — of a daemon maybe — which is in a later stage replaced by a deity holding a hammer and a horn, while the last likeness is ecclesiastic depicting a blessing adorant. It is just the symbol of a deity with a hammer and a horn that betrays the perpetuation of preceding Celtic or Pannonian ideas, a phenomenon that we meet with also in the lower-Danubian region. The so-called negative approach of the Slavs to the centers of the Roman culture in the mid-Danubian area was the result of the then existing situation. It was not due to some characteristic tribal feature of the Slavs, as the Nazi scientists would have it. Let us think of Dalmatia and Illyricum, which were likewise Roman provinces conquered by the Slavs, yet they preserved their original antique culture to about the same extent as we see it in South France.³⁹ After all, even the relation of the Teutons to the Romans was the same, as we are told in the prologue to *Lex Salica* (Prologus 4, ed. K. A. Eckhardt: *Romanorum iugum durissimum de suis cervicibus excusserunt pugnando, atque post agnitionem baptismi sanctorum martyrum corpora, quem Romani igne cremaverunt vel ferro truncaverunt vel bestiis lacerando proiecerunt, Franci super eos aurum et lapides preciosos onnaverunt*) or in the *Annales Boiorum* (IV, XII 14) by Ioannes Aventinus (*Brymo . . . partem inferioris Pannoniae et Norici iuxta Seunam flumen, quae tum deserta erat, recipit. Ubi cum filio Hezilone dirutas colonias et arces a Romanis quondam deductas et a Germanis solo aequatas, instaurat. Inter quas Celeia et Petauio et Mosaburgium numerantur*).

Of late research workers rightly point out the different conditions in which various Slavonic tribes lived when accepting Christianity, this depending on the history of their contact with the Christian world: as to the southern Slavs, they had a continual intercourse with the Greek-Roman provincials, representing the antique world transformed by Christianity, whereas in the West a dominant part was played by the christianization of the Teutonic tribes and by the increasing power of the Franks, Carolingians and the like. Even so, however, the influence of the Teutonic tribes is still upon the whole overestimated, while that of the Roman provincials neglected.⁴⁰

So far we have been discussing partly the survival of the ancient Roman provincial environment after the arrival of the Slavs to the mid-Danubian area and partly the perpetuation of trading contact of the middle Danube with the Orient, which went on even after the departure of oriental settlers with evacuating Roman troops. But there was another possibility for the mid-Danubian population, the Slavs including, to get acquainted with antique culture and its heritage. It was personal knowledge of Italy, involuntary at first, lasting either a shorter or a longer time, which resulted by and by in a closer intercourse of Central Europe with the Apennine Peninsula. Thus we are told that Odoakar invaded the land of the Rugi, who had Feletheus for their king and inhabited a territory north of the Danube, being separated just by this river from Noricum

(Pauli Hist. Lang. I, 19: *Qui Feletheus illis diebus ulteriorem Danubii ripam incolebat, quam a Norici finibus idem Danubius separat*). The words that the region was fertile (*erat solo fertilis*) suggest that it was identical with North Austria and South Moravia of today. It is from this region and from Noricum that Odoakar takes numerous population as war prisoners with him to Italy (*copiosam secum captivorum multitudinem abduxit*). This deportation of inhabitants to Italy is not an exceptional case. In 569 the Langobardian King Alboin invaded with his troops Italy, and the Romans weakened by plague and famine were incapable of putting up a resistance. His army included also soldiers of foreign tribes, whom either he himself or allied kings had taken captives, and these foreign soldiers settled down in Italy, the names of their settlements — such as *Norici, Pannonii* — surviving to the time of Paulus, i. e. to the 8th cent. (Pauli Hist. Lang. II 26: *Certum est autem, tunc Alboin multos ex diversis, quas vel alii reges vel ipsa ceperat, gentibus ad Italiam adduxisse. Unde usque hodie eorum in quibus habitant vicos Gepidos, Vulgares, Sarmatas, Pannonios, Suavos, Noricos sive aliis huiuscemodi nominibus appellamus*). And finally in Paulus's allusion to events in the year 603 Slavs are directly named as members of the Langobardian army of King Agilulf: „He besieged the town of Cremona with the Slavs, who were left to him as indemnity by the kakanus, i. e. the Avaric ruler, and he stormed the town and utterly destroyed“ (Pauli Hist. Lang. IV 28: *Rex Agilulf . . . obsedit civitatem Cremonensem cum Sclavis, quos ei cacanus rex Avarorum in solacium miserat, et cepit eam . . . et ad solum destruxit*).

This migration of Danubian population to Italy was not insignificant, because their return to their original countries must be considered probable. The contact of Langobards with Avars and Slavs had one advantage for the third mentioned race: the Slavs found themselves gradually on equal footing with the rest of the mid-European population, and turned into a factor whose significance kept increasing. One sign of this change was also the fact that they were finding it natural to perpetuate the old local traditions including those that sprang from the Roman provincial civilization. And by that time they themselves began to be interested in paying visits to Italy.

As to the time and manner of establishing this new and deliberate contact between Moravia and Italy we find some information associated with King Svatopluk and his era. He appears in the role of a ruler who endeavoured to reconstruct the Moravian state by giving it as firm foundations and as good organization as he possibly could. Svatopluk was not a sudden daybreak. He had predecessors who also tried to strike new paths, but he seems to have surpassed them in having a much wider political horizon. A considerably later chronicle speaks of four rulers, and the fifth in succession was Svatopluk's father, whose reign begins with an interesting event: the Slavonic persecution of the Christians came to a stop. This is a most striking piece of news, for it brings us back to the stage when the non-baptized Slavonic people oppressed Christian population speaking Latin. It was therefore the before-baptized population, linked up with the Roman tradition which returned with much rejoicing and glorifying Christ from their hiding places in the hills to the settlements when Svatopluk with the nation as a whole turned Christian. Both Latin and the hiding places in the hills seem to indicate some exterior non-Moravian territory, most likely Noricum. According to the annalist Svatopluk ordered his people to settle down again and rebuild the towns and communities destroyed originally by the heathen, i. e. by the Slavs

before they accepted Christianity.⁴¹ Thus we are offered here an important piece of information about an actual approach of the Slovanic culture to the pre-Slovanic tradition and about the continuity of the latter. (From the Annals of priest Duchljanin IX: *Post haec Svetopelek rex iussit christianis, qui latina utebantur lingua, ut reverterentur unusquisque in locum suum et readificarent civitates et loca, quae olim a paganis destructa fuerunt.*)

And this was not all. The same annalist tells us that Svatopluk found ancient traditions profitable in reorganizing his own empire, for he wanted to renew all the frontiers and boundaries of his lands and provinces as they had been in the past. He was therefore bound to have good information about the excellent organization of the Roman Empire, and that is why he wanted to apply the Roman method of administration to his own country. The annalist's records seem to be true, because Svatopluk simply had to be keenly interested in a sound organisation of his dominion mainly for two reasons: partly because his territory was extending geographically, and secondly because the inland differentiation of the inhabitants was getting more and more complicated. Besides it was necessary to be on a level with the neighbouring Frankish Empire, where the law, to some extent at least was based on the old Roman law, and the Frankish law as well as the Frankish Church could not be transferred to Great Moravia for purely political reasons, which point was stressed by old writers already.⁴² It was not a matter of chance that in the years 870—879 there appeared in the Byzantine Empire the first volumes of a new codex, with which Emperor Basileios I, who was a great admirer of the ancient Greek culture and of the Roman law, wanted to reestablish the old Roman legal tradition in his empire by modifying the Justinian code.⁴³

Svatopluk's Empire comprised parts of old Pannonia and old Noricum, whose population had considerably changed since the sixth century from the tribal point of view. For this reason it is probable that Svatopluk did not find there residents still well remembering the ancient Roman organization and therefore turned to Rome and to Byzantium. Also this information is not untrustworthy, because we safely know about Svatopluk being familiar with conditions then prevailing in Rome. He even tried to induce King Arnulf to interfere in the political fortunes of the contemporary Rome. This piece of news comes from the Annals of Fulda (*Cont. Ratisbonensis* p. 118 ad ann. 890) informing us about a meeting of King Arnulf with Prince Svatopluk in the Pannonian Omuntesperch, where Svatopluk as the Pope's spokesman tried to persuade King Arnulf to retain the Italian kingdom in his power (*Ibi inter alia praefatus dux ab apostolico rogatus regem enixe interpellabat, ut urbe Roma domum sancti Petri visitaret at Italicum regnum a malis christianis et imminentibus paganis ereptum ad suum opus restringendo dignaretur tenere*).

According to this source Svatopluk dispatched messengers both to the Pope and to Byzantium with the request to be sent old documents instructing the reader about the ancient legal organization, as well as expert interpreters of these texts. When his request was granted, a united synod was held of the representatives of Byzantium and Rome in the presence of King Svatopluk, and among the items of the proceedings were also the position of the Church in Svatopluk's state as well as the position of the ruler and the extent of his sovereignty. After the session there was a public reading of the ancient documents brought by the envoys of the Roman Pope and Byzantine Pope, describing the original division

of the territory in question as it had been instituted by the Roman Emperors. And in accordance with these documents Svatopluk divided his empire into units of administration, imposed taxes and appointed collectors, just as it was the custom under the Roman rule.

Now, whatever the methods of administration introduced by Svatopluk might have been, the annalist's information is definitely based on his actual contact with Rome and Byzantium, which he considered the guardians of the ancient traditions of the antique world. When taking into account the concurring Byzantine efforts to revive more profound knowledge of the Roman past and to reestablish contact with the old traditions, we may conclude that even Svatopluk's political thinking was strongly influenced by some sort of half-intuitive knowledge that the fate of his country was linked up with a foregoing stage of its development, a stage that appeared to him to be a model for his own reconstructive efforts. It was this attitude which resulted in the above-mentioned reedification of towns and in studying „*antiqua privilegia tam Latina quam Graeca de divisione provinciarum ac regionum seu terrarum, sicuti ab antiquis imperatoribus scripta et ordinata fuerunt* (Ljetopis popa Duchljanina IX). Of course, we have to admit that so far we have not discovered any more lasting traces proving that the Roman legal traditions had been the object of expert application in Great Moravia.

Thus we may take for granted that Svatopluk considered himself to be in the light of the contemporary Byzantine tendencies one of the heirs of the great traditions of the ancient Roman Empire. Having accepted Christianity he put the Christian and non-Christian population of his kingdom on equal footing and revived in this respect the same state of things that had existed under the Roman rule and similar to conditions prevailing in contemporary Byzantium, where Christians of the Roman Catholic denomination and of the Greek Church enjoyed equal rights. The mass baptism of the Moravians was therefore an action of supreme political significance, and the fact that the new faith came to them from the East instead of being imparted to them by their western neighbours made them realize that socially they were not just catching up with their Christian countrymen, but that they were in fact on a level with them. That is why the Christianizing of the Moravians put a stop to the conflict between the different creeds, but on the other hand started a non less violent struggle between two different forms of liturgy and differing general orientation. These are, however, phenomena that are no more related to the antique world.

Summing up we may say that the knowledge of the antique world was penetrating into Moravia from the neighbouring provinces, in which every-day life — just as in the whole Danubian area — went on as before even after the official departure of the representatives of the Roman political power, making use of the old trading routes starting in countries with direct antique continuity, specially Byzantium and Italy, while the observation by the Slavonic newcomers was responding to this environment. A minor factor we may see in the assumption that even in Moravia proper some remnants of the Roman influence were surviving. It will, however, be the task of further investigation to determine exactly what Moravian phenomena may be designated as antique heritage, adopted and modified with creative approach. Yet, neither the Roman contribution should be overestimated. To be sure, even the so-called barbarians accomplished along the technical line many a thing unknown to the Romans.⁴⁴ And this process of outgrowing Rome kept on increasing and penetrated gradually even into the

minds of contemporaries (Venant. Fort. Carm. 2, 8, 21 sq.):

*Lauebodis enim post saecula longa ducatum
dum gerit, instruxit culmina sancta loci.
Quod nullus veniens Romana gente fabrivit,
Hoc vir barbarica prole peregit opus . . .*

In this essay we are just trying to point out the complexity of these problems and their significance for those who wish to acquire thorough knowledge of this stage in the history of our peoples, a stage all the more important, since in it our nation for the first time occupied a worthy place in the European coordination and development, which again predetermined its political and cultural progress in the coming centuries.

NOTES

¹ *La Grande Moravie — The Great Moravian Empire* (J. Böhm, B. Havránek, J. Kojka, J. Poulik, V. Vaněček), ČSAV, Prague 1963, 2, 137.

² Survey of views, see e. g. Josef Cibulka, *Velkomoravský kostel v Modré u Velehradu a začátky křesťanství na Moravě* (The Great-Moravian church in Modrá near Velehrad and the beginnings of Christianity in Moravia), ČSAV, Prague 1958, 362; Josef Poulik, *Dvě velkomoravské rotundy v Mikulčicích* (Two Great-Moravian rotundas in Mikulčice), ČSAV, Prague 1963, 235.

³ Melting-furnaces, indicating local production, were found e. g. in Staré Město, Mikulčice, Nitra. Cf. the exhibition guide-book: *Great Moravia*. Exhibition of the first joint State formed by the Ancestors of the Czech and Slovak nations, arranged in honour of the thousandth anniversary of the arrival of the Byzantine Mission in this country and the beginnings of the Slavonic literature. Text Josef Poulik et al., Brno 1963, 30.

⁴ Cf. Bedřich Svoboda, *Über das Nachleben der römischen Kultur im mittleren Donau-becken*, Limes Romanus Konferenz, Nitra 1959, pp. 107—116, and a more detailed treatment *Poklad byzantského kovotepce v Zemianském Vrbovku*, PA 44, 1953, pp 33—108 (Treasure of a Byzantine metal-man in Zemianské Vrbovko).

⁵ Josef Cibulka, o. c.

⁶ It was only when the pages of this study were read that there appeared the book by Josef Dobřiš, *Dějiny československého území před vystoupením Slovanů* (History of the Czechoslovak Territory before Appearance of the Slavs), ČSAV, Prague 1964; see 446.

⁷ These tendencies become already manifest in more recent works of archeologists, cf. books quoted in Note 2.

⁸ Josef Poulik, *Staroslovanská Morava* (Old-Slavonic Moravia), Prague 1948, particularly p. 107, and *Josef Cibulka*, o. c., p. 115.

⁹ Ján Dekán, *Predcyrilometodejské styky našich zemí s neskoroantickou a byzantskou oblasťou* (Pre-Cyrillo-Methodian contact of our countries with the late Antique and Byzantine area), off-printed lecture, p. 16.

¹⁰ As to older literature see Karl Hofbauer, *Wurde das untere Ufernorikum im Jahre 488 vollständig geräumt?* (63. Jahres-Bericht des k. k. Staats-Gymnasium in Oberhollabrunn 1905—6), pp. 17—39; of later literature e. g. J. Cibulka, o. c., p. 349, and B. Svoboda, *Poklad byzantského kovotepce*, p. 83.

¹¹ Cf. Fritz Kaphahn, *Zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, Das Donau — alpenland im Zeitalter H. Severins. München—Brunn—Wien, 1944, p. 231. Republished in 1947 in Munich. Josef Cibulka (o. c., p. 135) believes that „the beginnings of Christianity among the Alpine Slavs were not a heritage of the disappearing Antique culture, which the Slavs still intercepted in the mountainous region they started populating, but they were connected with an impetus of Bavarian expansion to the territory of which the Slavs had taken possession.“ In contrast to it, Cibulka acknowledges (p. 166) this continuity in Pannonia.

¹² Fritz Kaphahn, o. c., 145.

¹³ Fritz Kaphan, o. c.

¹⁴ ILS 8913 Dessau — CIL III 3385. *Imp. Caes. M. Aur. [Commodus] Antoninus Aug. Pius Sarm. Ger. Brit. pont. max., trib. pot. VI, imp. IIII, cos. IIII p. p. ripam omnem burgis a solo extractis item praesidis per loca opportuna ad clandestinos latrunculorum transitus oppositis munivit per L. Cornelium Felicem Plotianum leg. pr. pr.*

¹⁵ SHA Vita Marci 21, 10: *Marcomannos in ipso transitu Danuvii delevit et praedam provincialibus reddidit.*

¹⁶ SIII Vita Marci 22, 1: *Gentes omnes ab Illyrici limite usque in Galliam conspiraverant . . .*

¹⁷ For the survey of respective extensive literature see Josef Dobiáš, *Dějiny československého území* (History of the Czechoslovak Territory), p. 257 et al., and Pavel Oliva, *Pannonia and the Onset of Crisis in the Roman Empire*, Praha 1962, p. 280.

¹⁸ Roman import to the Baltic area is to be found e. g. in the collections of the Gdańsk Museum.

¹⁹ As to the list of finds in the Polish territory, consult Kazimierz Majewski, *Importy rzymskie na ziemiach słowiańskich*, Wrocław 1949 (Roman imports in Slavonic countries), giving also a survey of the main commercial routes — p. 20 n. See further Josef Dobiáš, o. c., pp. 323—326.

²⁰ Kept today in the Municipal Museum in Halberstadt.

²¹ Titus Kolník, *Ausgrabungen auf der römischen Station in Milanovce in den Jahren 1956—1957*, Limes Romanus Konferenz Nitra, 1959, p. 40 nn. Cf. further Josef Dobiáš, o. c., p. 297, Note 77.

²² Věra Hochmanová-Vávrová, *Nálezy římských cihel u Starého Města u Uherského Hradiště* (Finds of Roman bricks at Staré Město near Uherské Hradiště), SPFB E3, 1957, pp. 23—36.

²³ Josef Skutil, *Soupis antických mincí, nalezený na Moravě* (List of Antique coins found in Moravia), NČC III, 1927, 113—171.

²⁴ Lists of coins arranged by Eugen Pochitonov, *Nálezy antických mincí* (Finds of Antique coins) in *Nálezy mincí v Cechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku I* (Praha 1955). See also Vojtěch Ondrouch, *Nálezy keltských, antických a byzantských mincí na Slovensku* (Finds of Celtic, Antique, and Byzantine coins in Slovakia), Bratislava 1964, p. 196, and consult here Map 6: Finds of East-Roman (Byzantine) coins in Slovakia from the 4th—11th cent. of our era. Cf. Josef Poulik, *Dvě velkomor. rotundy 91*. See Note 45.

²⁵ Georg Ostrogorski, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, 148, Munich 1952.

²⁶ The question of the origin of the Rugii was investigated of late by G. Labuda who tries to demonstrate their Slavonic descent.

²⁷ Emanuel Šimek, *Poslední Keltové na Moravě* (The latest Celts in Moravia) Brno 1958, p. 464. Josef Cibulka, o. c., p. 117.

²⁸ Josef Cibulka, o. c., p. 115.

²⁹ Fritz Kaphan, o. c., p. 113 n.

³⁰ The origin of Slavonic gold is acknowledged from Avarian hrings (cf. *Ann. regni Franc. ad an. 796* = *Ann. Maximiani* — MG, SS, 13, 22; *Ann. Laureslan.* — MG, SS, 1, 37; *Ann. Juvaven. maximi* — MG, SS, 30, 736; *Conversio Bag. et Car.* p. 132, 16). It is, however, necessary to keep in mind that after the foundation of the Bulgarian State the gold of Byzantium was no more transported to the Avars, while its main portion enriched the revenue of King Charlemagne.

³¹ According to M. Chisvasi-Comsa, *La pénétration des Slaves dans le territoire de la Roumanie entre le VI-me et IX-me siècle à la lumière des recherches archéologiques* (Slavia Antiqua II 1960, 175—188) the finds from Hlinceum I (7th—9th cent., p. 179) are upon the whole poor; the Slovanic-Avarian complexes in Transylvania (7th—8th cent., page 181) supply us with bronze products of the Keszthely type; finds from Tartarium contain a pair of iron spurs (9th—10th cent., p. 183), coming from Great Moravia after its occupation by the Magyars. Cf. Jaroslav Kudrnáč, *Slované na území bývalé Dácie* (Vznik a počátky Slovanů I, 259), Praha 1956.

³² Fritz Kaphan, o. c., p. 145.

³³ St. Rupert saw *Aliquem esse locum . . . antiquo vocabulo Juvavensem vocatum, quo tempore Romanorum pulchra fuissent habitacula constructa, quae tunc temporibus omnia dilapsa et silvis fuerant obiecta* (MGH, Script. rer. Meroving. VI, 160), cf. RE X, 1355 (Keune) s. v. Juvavum and *Conversio Bag. et Car.* p. 127, 20 *antiquo vocabulo Juvavensem vocatum, ubi antiquis scilicet temporibus multa fuerunt mirabiliter constructa aedificia, et nunc paene dilapsa silvisqua cooperta.*

³⁴ Josef Poulik, Jižní Morava (South Moravia), Brno 1948, page XXX.

³⁵ See survey by Bedřich Svoboda (Note 5).

³⁶ Here we have to deal with routine relations of the Teutons to the Roman Law; analogical situations are known from elsewhere, e. g. from the life of the Vandals in Africa. Also in Byzantine writings the Franks are mentioned as a tribe that took over their institutions (politeia) from the Romans (e. g. Agathiae Hist. I e. p. 13). With reference to Romani tributales see Jaroslav Kudrna, *Studie k barbarským zákonikům Lex Baiuvariorum a Lex Alamanorum a počátkům feudálních vztahů v Jižním Německu* (Studies of the barbarian codes Lex Alamanorum and of the beginnings of feudal relations in South Germany). Prague 1959, pp. 114 and 118.

³⁷ Fritz Kaphahn, o. c., p. 145. Arnold Schober, *Die Römerzeit in Österreich*, Vienna 1953, speaks (p. 28) about the extinction of provincial Roman culture in Noricum after the arrival of the Avars and the Slavs (die Slovenen), yet, he admits that "in numerous places the Roman way of living still kept on vegetating".

³⁸ With reference of the continuity of population cf. e. g. Arnold Schober, *Die Römerzeit in Österreich*, 28–29. See also Radislav Hošek, *Vestiges des croyances pré-chrétiennes dans les monuments archéologiques grand-moraves*, Sbornik prací fil. fak. Brno E 10 (1965).

³⁹ Josef Cibulka, o. c., p. 77.

⁴⁰ Cf. Günther Stöckl, *Geschichte der Slavenmission* 76 = Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte, ein Handbuch, herausgegeben von Kurt Dietrich Schmidt u. Ernst Wolf, Bd. 2, Lieferung E (Göttingen 1961).

⁴¹ In the Life of Constantine and the Life of Methodius we read that the Moravian population had been baptized prior to their arrival already (cf. Josef Cibulka, o. c., p. 11). Permeation of the Christian and pagan populations is a current phenomenon and is known also in other countries and other times. Cf. e. g. Diploma Dagoberti III regis Francorum (ann. 706) published there for Christians and pagans alike, and narrating about the christianization of Thuringia and about the Slavonic settlements (PL 88, pp. 1105–1106, Migne).

⁴² Agathiae Hist. 2, p. 13, A. C. 552.

⁴³ Georg Ostrogorski, o. c., 193.

⁴⁴ E. A. Thompson, *The Class. Rev.* LXIII (1949), p. 65–66 (Review of F. W. Walbank, *The Decline of the Roman Empire in West*, London 1946).

⁴⁵ J. Halačka, *Nález byzantské mince ve Vysoké* (Byzantine Coin from Vysoká), *Mor. numism. zpr.* 1–2, 1956–1957, p. 23; J. Halačka, *Nález byzantské mince v Mikulčicích* (Byzantine Coin from Mikulčice), *Mor. numism. zpr.* 7, 1960, p. 52–53; Z. Nemeškalová-Jiroudková, *Římské zlaté mince na Moravě v době tzv. stěhování národů* (Moravian Gold-Coins from the period of the migrations of the peoples), *Mor. numism. zpr.* 9, 1962, p. 5–14.

	The Time of	Locality
MNZ 9, 1962-7	Zenon (474-91)	Mušov (Břeclav)
MNZ 1-2, 1956/7-23	Justinos II and Sophia (565-78)	Vysoká (Žďár n./S.)
MNZ 7, 1960/52	Michael III (842-67)	Mikulčice (Hodonín)

ANTICKÉ TRADICE NA VELKÉ MORAVĚ

(Resumé)

Kultura Velké Moravy musí být zkoumána v souvislosti s evropským vývojem v době jejího vzniku, jehož zárodky můžeme posunout do 5. stol. n. l. Toto období je však většinou zpracováno tak, že se přeceňuje germánské osídlení. Naproti tomu se opomíjejí tradice doby římské, kdy bylo Podunají jedním z center evropských událostí. Kromě toho Moravou procházely staré obchodní cesty, jak dosvědčují mince. Ty však současně odrážejí i stav uvnitř svého státu, např. situaci v byzantské říši. Obchodní styky nevedou jen na sever, ale i obráceně. Zlato z velkomoravských hrobů není jen původu avarského, lze je vysvětlit i tak, že přišlo z Norika výměnou za velkomoravské obilí. Kontinuita obchodu a přežívání nižších vrstev obyvatelstva z dob římské nadvlády vede k udržení místních tradic. Nadto se Slované seznamují s římskou kulturou i v Itálii, kam přicházejí jako zajatci, ale často se opět po určité době vrací do Podunají. Aplikace právních zvyklostí pozdního Říma a současně Byzance.