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Early medieval agglomeration of Libice and its hinterland : contents

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14. EARLY MEDIEVAL AGGLOMERATION OF LIBICE AND ITS HINTERLAND

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14.2. Summary

This book deals with the issue of Early Medieval central place in Libice nad Cidlinou, its settlement structure and hinterland. This site belongs to the group of the most important Bohemian Early Medieval settlement agglomerations. The Early Medieval stronghold in Libice nad Cidlinou is situated on the confluence of the rivers Elbe and Cidlina in the eastern part of Central Bohemia, approx. 60 km east of Prague. The agglomeration of Libice can be defined as the stronghold and its immediate vicinity. This area formed part of the stronghold's daily life. It includes all traces of human activity, especially settlement and burial places, located within a range of 2 km (Fig. 2) outside of the fortified area. Border of the agglomeration can be determined on the basis of high density of archaeological trenches especially in the cadastre of the modern villages of Libice and Kanín, to the south and north of the fortified enclosure.

The Early Medieval agglomerations emerged during the 7th–12th centuries in the wide area of Northern, North-western, Central and Eastern Europe (Clarke – Ambrosiniani 1991; Piekalski 1999). This type of urban settlements represents a new phenomenon beyond the borders of the former Roman Empire (see Hodges 1988). While the North-western early towns like Wolin, Ribe, Birka, Dorestat, Haithabu and Hamwic played mainly their roles as trade centres, the fortified sites in Central and Eastern Europe fulfilled functions of political, military, ideological and also economical centres. The fortified sites (in Slavic languages: hradiště, grad, grodzisko) represent quite a wide group of different types of settlements at the top of their hierarchy were Early Medieval agglomerations. Despite the different natural and geopolitical conditions, the Early Medieval agglomerations and the early towns are comparable in several aspects, above all in their urban character¹. Other similarities are visible in terms of their spatial structure and pop-

¹ The Early Medieval agglomerations correspond well to definition of Early Medieval town defined by M. Biddle (1976, 100). These criteria are: defences, a planned street system, a market(s), a mint, legal autonomy, 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).

ulation size². The fortified central part covering usually tens of hectares were surrounded by open rural settlements and burial places within distance up to 2 kilometres (Fig. 1).

Historical Background

The earliest recorded date in the history of Libice is 981: the Chronicler Cosmas (d. 1125), wrote that on that date: *Obiit Zlaunic, pater sancti Adalberti ... ducis metropolis fuit Lubic sita loco, ubi amnis Cidlina nomen perdit suum intrans liberioris aque in fluvium Labe* (Kosmas, 49). Libice is assumed to have been a centre of extensive domains of the Slavníks family. Libice had awaked the interest of historians and archaeologists already at the end of the 19th century. The stronghold is considered to be the seat of the Slavníks noble family among whose members belonged also the second Prague bishop Saint Adalbert. The long-time discussions of historians, archaeologists, and numismatists have focused mainly on the nature of interrelations between two noble families ruling in Bohemia – the Slavníks and the Přemyslids (Sláma 1995, Lutovský – Petrář 2004). Importance of the Slavník family position is, among other things, attested by a reference preserved in the legend written by Adalbert's biographer Bruno of Querfurt concerning the kinship of Saint Adalbert's Father Slavník to the German Emperor Henry II.

The Slavníks' exceptional position in Early Medieval Bohemia is documented also by two mints situated in Libice and in Malín (20 km south of Libice) that ran in the 980's and 990's. The rule of the Slavníks family ended on September 28th, 995 when Libice was attacked by troops of the Duke Boleslav II and all present members of the family were killed. During the 11th century Libice became a Přemyslid warden castle, one link in the Přemyslid castle system. In the year 1108 warden Božej of the Vršovci noble family together with his son Bořut fell victims to the wrath of the Prince Svatopluk. The last men-

² Haithabu: 1000 inhabitants (Steuer 1984); Hamwic: 2000–3000 inhabitants (Morton 1992, 55); Birka: 2000 inhabitants (Clarke – Ambrosiniani 1991, 135), Dorestat: 1000–2000 inhabitants (Wickham 2005, 682), Mikulčice: 1000–2000 inhabitants (Poláček 2008), Břeclav – Pohansko: 1000 inhabitants (Dresler – Macháček 2008), Libice: 600–900 inhabitants (Mařík 2008).