

The Question of Evaluating and the Present Level of Knowledge about the Great Moravian Agglomeration of Staré Město - Uherské Hradiště

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The Staré Město settlement agglomeration belonged in the 9th century to the most important Slavonic Central European centres as well as Mikulčice. Quite old archaeological finds together with the strong Velehrad tradition which was strengthened by the near religion centre of Velehrad resulted in an early boom of the historical-archaeological research. As early as in the year 1862 was *Staré Město*, the Na valách position, signed as a Great Moravian site by V. BRANDL. The first excavations were done by J. HOMOLA in these places even in the years 1880-1865. The archaeological research came to a significant boom thanks to A. ZELNITIUS, who started rescue excavations in the Na valách position in the year 1924. After some time he discovered more than 300 graves and numerous settlement features. He distributed excavations on the whole area of Staré Město and its surroundings. Results of his excavations were regularly published in the Velehrad Reports (Sborník Velehradský 1930, 1931, 1933 etc.). Members of the Old Velehrad association with a great enthusiasm made an archaeological research on the Uherské Hradiště region. A great boom of the research of Staré Město was reached after the 2nd World War and is connected with the name VILÉM HRUBÝ (Tab. 15:A). In the years 1948-1985 he discovered a lot of supports of the old Slavs' lives in the Uherské Hradiště region which he published in his fundamental publications (HRUBÝ 1955, 1965) and in a lot of studies (HRUBÝ 1955a, 1967, 1970, 1972 etc.). Many of the V. HRUBÝ's conclusions are valid today as well. This brief historical survey of the archaeological research which began in the 19th century was told by me on purpose because it was a certain speciality and it has influenced the method of evaluating of the find stock. In order to compare: the first excavations in Mikulčice were realised by J. POULÍK in the year 1954 and at Pohansko near Břeclav by F. KALOUSEK in 1959 - it means these began in the times of modern archaeological researches.

The second a little bit negative reality which influenced the methodology of the Staré Město researches is that the excavations have to be done in the built-up area. An archaeologist cannot work therefore just in the places which should be the most suitable for him, and he can work only in those places which are not in use at the moment or on the contrary in the places which are defined to be built on. Therefore it happens that we have to return to the same find spot several times and we excavate those places which were not possible to be researched in the previous excavation from various reasons. It was for example the Na valách position case in the centre of Staré Město. Researches were provided here by A. ZELNITIUS in the years 1924-1932, by V. HRUBÝ in 1948-1951 (Tab. 15:B), by V. HOCHMANOVÁ-VÁVROVÁ in 1957-1959 (published HOCHMANOVÁ-VÁVROVÁ :1962), and under my leadership since the year 1989 till today. In spite of this we are not able to give final conclusions about this Staré Město position.

The situation in the places of the present *Uherské Hradiště-centre* is maybe even more difficult. In this place the pre-Great Moravian as well as Great Moravian settlement horizon was uncovered by R. SNÁŠIL not before the year 1979 (SNÁŠIL - PROCHÁZKA 1981, SNÁŠIL 1987). While large excavations could be realised in Staré Město (U Vítu, Za zahradou, Za radnicí, Na valách positions) on the area of Uherské Hradiště small excavations and researches of technical pits were provided.

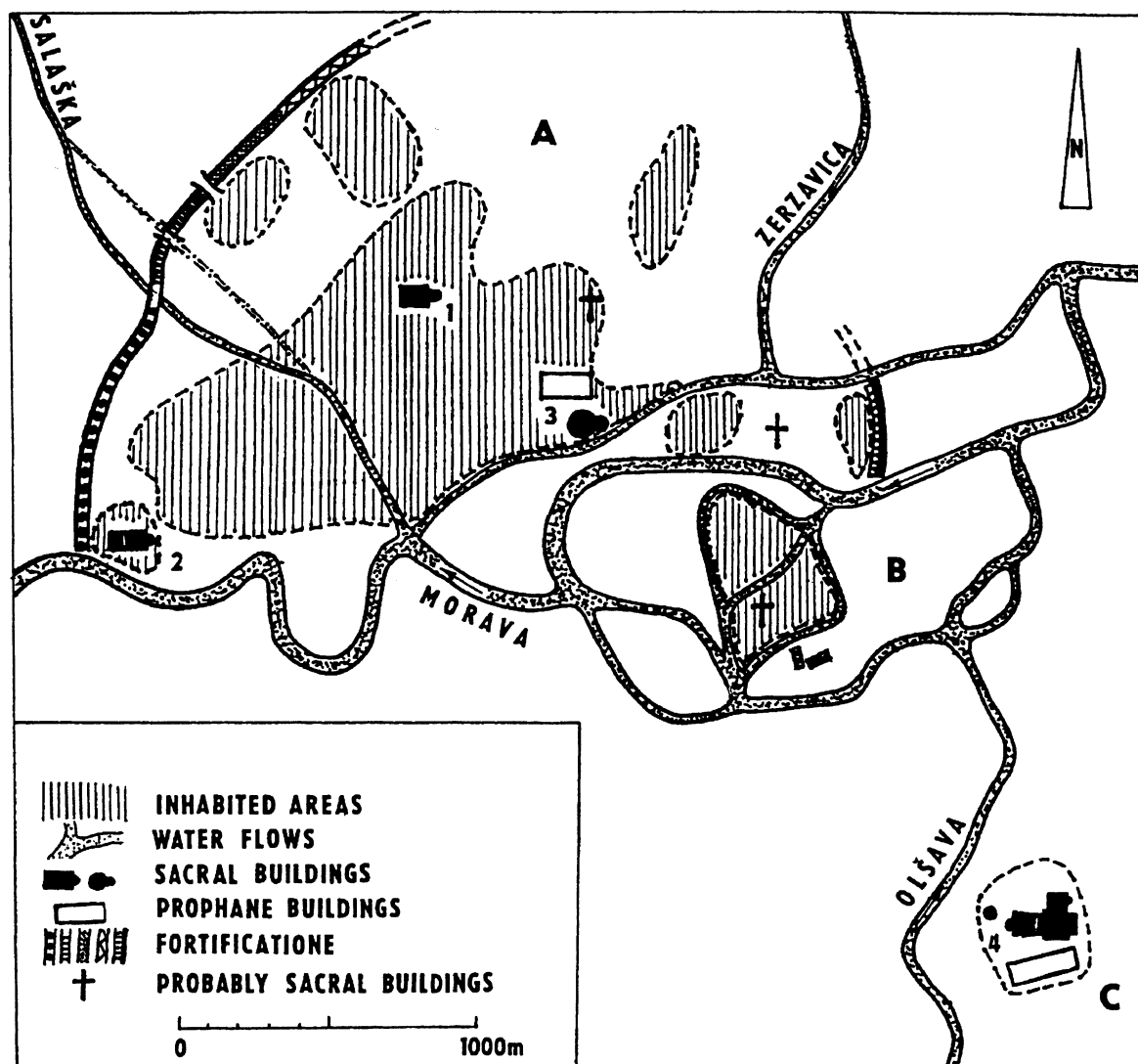


Fig. 1. The Great Moravian Agglomeration Staré Město-Uherské Hradiště from the 2nd half of the 9th Century. A Staré Město Position, B The St. George's Island, C Uherské Hradiště - Sady Position, 1 The Na valách Church, 2 The Na Špitálkách, 3 The St. Michal's Church and the Most Significant Profane Building of the Agglomeration, 4 The Sacral Area of Uherské Hradiště - Sady. The Situation of the St. George's Island According to R. SNÁŠIL, the Other situations According to V. HRUBÝ and L. GALUŠKA.

This is the reason why the conclusion from the research of Uherské Hradiště have got limited signification for the time being and they cannot be overvalued. As you can see there is a significant difference in the *methodology* of the archaeological research, too. While in Mikulčice and Pohansko near Břeclav it is possible to excavate all the places in their complexity because of the free research area, in Staré Město there is the situation different and more difficult. One more negative is there when doing excavations in a built-up area. There are medieval and new age interference, which sometimes destroyed Great Moravian find situations. These interference were found on the present relatively best investigated Na valách position. West of the foundations of a religion construction there was for a long time sand mined, south-west of the construction there was a large 36m long cellar dwelled. In the both cases some hundreds of graves and settlement features had to be destroyed. It can influence the whole situation on this find spot. And for example a whole settlement in the Čertuj kůt position was destroyed during the building of railways in the past. While in Mikulčice where the area

of the ringwall was not significantly contaminated by the younger interference, the excavation can uncover majority of objects from the period of the distinction of the ringwall: in the built-up sites an archaeologist can find only parts of the original find stock. What was said just now is according to me also one of the reasons why I consider the comparison of the importance of the sites Mikulčice and Staré Město on the basis of for example grave finds (swords, crosses and so one) - to be unacceptable and unscientific.

The fact that in the research of the Staré Město agglomeration three *institutions* take parts at the same time - regional Slovak Moravian Museum Uherské Hradiště, Institute of the Archaeological Care of Historical Monuments Brno, and Moravian Museum Brno, is according to me a quite unsuitable situation for the overall evaluation of the find stock of the Staré Město agglomeration. Nevertheless, the true is, that non from the mentioned institutions is able to do the excavations on its own. Important is here the question of the personal background. While in Mikulčice the excavations were provided by a great number of workers, in Staré Město agglomerations there was not and is not a sufficient number of workers. I regard this fact to be one of the reasons why some attractive and important parts of the find stock have not been worked up and evaluated. At present I have been working them up. Comparatively simple was the evaluation of the part of the excavations in the U Víta position from 1976 to 1977 and 1979, in the finds there were some characteristic find units. It was a settlement position in which in the layer and features from 9th century finds typical for working with metals and pottery productions were found (GALUŠKA 1989, 1991). Workshops were situated in such a way that they created specialised areas. These areas were singly worked up and all the get-at-able methods were used (metalography, chemic-physical research experiments and others).

The evaluating of the find situation and finds from *Uherské Hradiště - Sady* was more difficult (Fig. 3:8). It was caused by the fact that the excavation took place 35 years ago (1959-1962, 1964) and also it was briefly published in advance by its discover V. HRUBÝ (1963, 1979 and etc.). With regard to the importance of the excavation a number of scientists expressed their view on it which were sometimes significantly controversy. At the same time a lot of important facts have stayed unevaluated. A complex of sacral constructions was discovered during the excavations of the Uherské Hradiště - Sady position (Fig. 3:5). It contained a church with a sign of a cross disposition to which on the western side a building with a small apse and two entrances was annexed. On the northern side a walled grave room and a small chapel with a semicircular apse and an independent entrance were annexed to the church. West of this complex there was a rotunda probably a baptisterium built. South of the church there were found traces after a big wooden hall construction. North of the church complex 11 floors of houses of wattle walls were found. In the surroundings and inside the sacral complex 87 Great Moravian graves were investigated. The description of the complex situation itself indicates complexity of evaluating it. The complex of sacral constructions was the main feature on the Sady height. To it a majority of conclusions made by well-known historians, architects and archaeologists was directed (GALUŠKA 1993, 1993a). Therefore after getting into acquaintance with the topography and older settlement of the mentioned places the former older conclusions were put together and evaluated. This was followed by studding of find reports and then by analysing of gained archaeological finds connected especially with walled constructions. By the comparison there were gradually differentiated: 4 groups of binding mortars, 7 groups of plaster mortars, and 4 groups of floor mortars. The mortars as well as red-fired roofing was according to the find place possible to determine to individual parts of the complex. These parts of the complex were evaluated separately, nevertheless on the basis of all get-at-able information.

The situation and furniture of the graves inside and next to the buildings of the sacral complex on the Sady height played an important role. The knowledge that parts of plaster mortars together with painting found in fills of grave pits are significant according to my opinion because they do not point to the distinction of the building. On the basis of the find situation in Uherské Hradiště - Sady we can say that at least a part of mortars in fills of graves can come even from the period of building the church or, from the times of its existence. The church could had been for example rebuilt. The fact that the church with the sign of the cross disposition was repaired is supported by the presence of

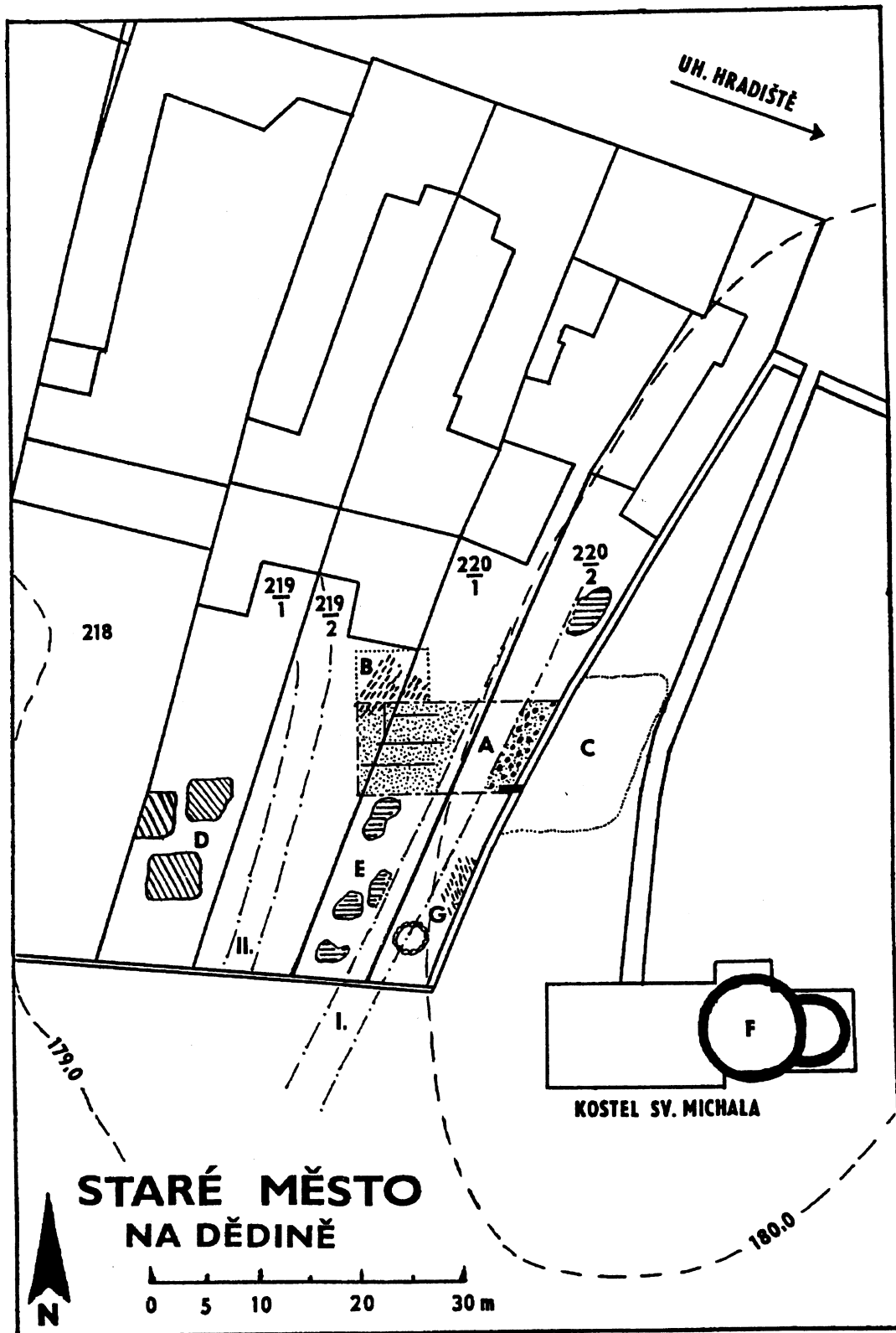


Fig. 2. Staré Město. Na dědině Position, the Features from the Great Moravian Period. A and B The Significant Building with Mortar Floors, C Remains of Mortar Floors having been Discovered on the Present cemetery, D Posthole Constructions, F St. Michal's Rotunda. Features from the 11th-18th Centuries. G The Wall and a Part of the Building with the Mortar Floor, I and II Ditches. According to L. GALUŠKA.

three layers of paintings on same pieces of plasters. Therefore I suppose that a group of ostentatious jewellery of the Staré Město - Veligrad type, found often in the graves with mortars and dated till today to the period from the end of the extinction of Great Moravia to the middle of the 10th century, was used even in the 2nd third of the 9th century. A question is, when these jewellery were put into the graves. After having studied the burial ground in the Na valách position in Staré Město, I came to a conclusion that some of rich graves with jewellery of the Staré Město - Veligrad type were put into ground before building of the church. This church in the Na valách position was dated to the period early after the middle of the 9th century (HRUBÝ 1955, 1955a). There exists also such a hypothesis, that this church is younger (KLANICA 1985). I suppose, however, that the deeds with Staré Město - Veligrad type jewellery were buried at the latest around the middle of the 9th century. This acknowledgement belongs also to some graves on the Uherské Hradiště - Sady height. It is obvious that the mentioned change in the chronology of the Great Moravian jewellery is not a final one, it should be made more accurate by a next research.

As far as Uherské Hradiště - Sady position is concerned we were able to determine some very probable conclusions on the basis of a combination of results of the analyses of grave units and finds as well as situations connected with the walled architecture. The church with the sign of the cross disposition was built as early as in the beginning of the 9th century and very probably it is a common work of missionaries coming from the West (Salzburg, Pasov) and from the South (Aquileia). They began burying in the church at the beginning of the end of the 1st third of the 9th century. A younger construction is that one with two entrances and a small circle apse which is from the period directly after the middle of the 9th century. It might have been an original mausoleum of significant Moravians. A majority of graves which were put in is from the 3rd fourth of the 9th century. In that times the older church with the sign of the cross disposition was not used for burying. Our hypothesis is that the mausoleum was connected with the newly coming monks from Grad. Annexes on the northern part of the church with the sign of the cross disposition were the work of the Moravians. They were a grave room and a small chapel which belonged to an owner built sometimes at the end of the 3rd or in the beginning of the 4th fourth of the 9th century. A low stone wall inbuilt in front of the apse inside the building with two entrances belonged by the character of the wall and used mortar to the youngest constructions of the complex. The mausoleum was by the low stone wall changed to a sacral school. Inside the school some styles were discovered. In the course of the last fourth of the 9th century the function of the chapel on the North side of the complex probably changed. A grave of a significant Moravian might be an owner of the chapel, was laid into the original mortar floor of the chapel. This fact changed the character of the chapel from the owner's one to a grave chapel.

Another interesting find was discovered in the wall of the apse on the left side of the church. An empty grave chamber was discovered here. It is the only place which by its position agrees with the description of the place where a grave of the archbishop Methodius was laid as it is written in the legend The Live of Saint Methodius. It is presupposed that the sacral complex in Uherské Hradiště - Sady could have been the Methodius' working place and the place of his burial. This possibility is supported by a lead cross with a motif of the Crucified and an inscription "Jesus Christ - light - shadow - victory (HOŠEK 1965). The inscription was engraved in the Greek language (Fig. 3:7).

Even if the Uherské Hradiště - Sady position presents a very important find unit, from the point of view of the inhabited area it was just a small part of the Staré Město agglomeration. A big part of the agglomeration was situated in the places of the today's Staré Město near Uherské Hradiště, a small part of it was situated in the places of today's Uherské Hradiště. It is obvious that on such a great area which presented more than 300 ha of an inhabited area the intensity of habitation could not have been the same. The whole agglomeration went in the course of the 7th up to the 9th centuries through a specific development.

Older *interpretations* of the Great Moravian Staré Město which came from the first archaeological finds had a mark of a certain romantic revival-struggle for Velehrad (BRANDL 1862; MYKLÍK 1890, 81-87; ZELNITUS 1937, 18-31; 1942, 33-55). Conclusions of VILÉM HRUBÝ grew up both from older excavations as well as from new ones provided by him on the ground of the whole

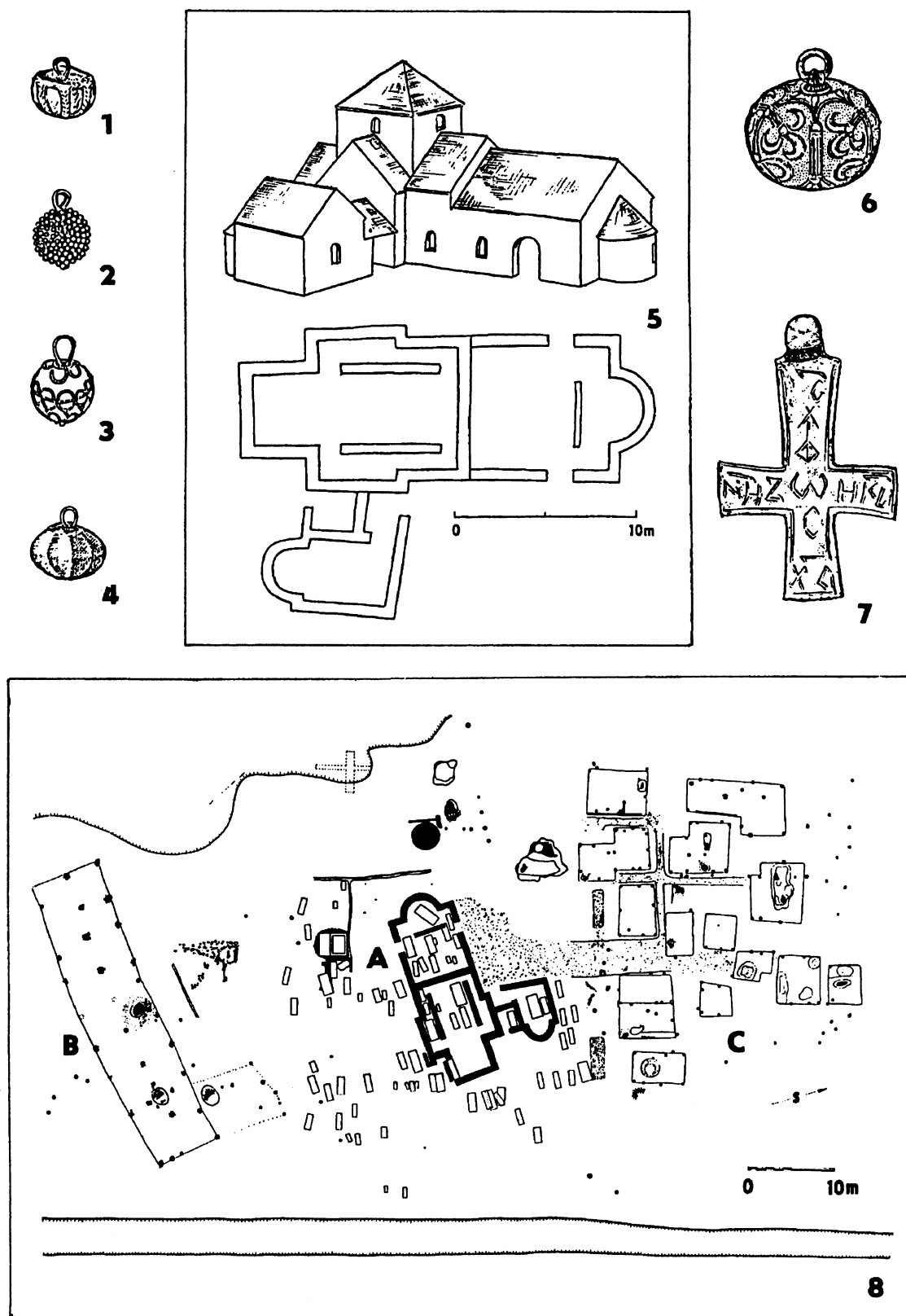


Fig. 3. Uherské Hradiště - Sady. 1-4, 6 Gold and Silver Buttons from the Graves, 5 Ground Plan and Reconstruction of the Sacral Buildings, 7 Leaden Cross with the Greek Inscription, 8 Plan of the Find Spot: A Sacral Buildings and Burial Ground, B Long Wooden Hall, C Settlement.

Staré Město area. VILÉM HRUBÝ did not suppose a Great Moravian horizon in the places of today's Uherské Hradiště. This conclusion of his resulted from a certain overestimation of the influence of the Morava river on the lives of the Slavs in the Uherské Hradiště region from the 6th to 10th centuries. He supported that the Morava river in spring flooded from its bed all the lower situated positions. To the flooded places according to VILÉM HRUBÝ (1965, 12, 14, příloha C) should have belonged also the place of the today's Uherské Hradiště and the lower places situated in Staré Město. This hypothesis was supported by the contemporary excavations in the 1960-ies, because the finds were discovered in majority in the higher situated places of Staré Město. Therefore VILÉM HRUBÝ supposed that on the territory of Staré Město in the 9th century there was a system of villages situated only on higher places. According to him the villages should have had mainly agricultural character and should have been fortified by a fortification. This HRUBÝ'S evaluation of Staré Město has been sometimes quoted also in new works. The mentioned conclusions have been changed by the archaeological excavations and researches. On the other side ROBERT SNÁŠIL (1986) overestimated his own conclusions which flew out from his studying of Uherské Hradiště finds. R. SNÁŠIL adopted the development of the Staré Město agglomeration according to the development in Mikulčice. In the frames of the agglomeration he selected an island castle (central part of Uherské Hradiště), fortified and unfortified settlements round the castle (Staré Město). By this pattern the Staré Město agglomeration would be similar to the ringwall in Mikulčice. But Mikulčice has got its own specific development among the Moravian ringwalls. According to my opinion it is not good to copy this development and not to take into account the level of research of independent sites. I cannot for the time being agree with a conclusion that on the Saint George's Island there was situated a Great and pre-Great Moravian castle and in the places of Staré Město a Great Moravian settlement round the castle. It is not in concord with the present level of knowledge.

The following description of the *development of the whole agglomeration* is according to me quite obvious. The first Slavs settled in the Staré Město region as early as in the 7th century. There were good living conditions here, floods of the Morava river did not endanger the people. The oldest, originally probably an agricultural settlement Na valách was in the course of the 2nd half of the 8th century fortified. Even in that period members of the higher society lived there. From the middle of the 8th century some new settlements around the fortified Na valách settlement came into existence. The settlements were separated from each other. There was an island created in the Morava River, later called the Saint George's Island. The Slavs based a settlement on this island in the 8th century. Spurs with hooks among the finds support the presence of the higher society on the island. R. SNÁŠIL has presupposed that the settlement on the island was fortified in the 8th century. Concluding the above mentioned, we can say the following: in the Uherské Hradiště region in the last third of the 8th century we have found a situation that in the distance of nearly 1,5 kms evidently two fortified settlements, between which the Morava River flowed, existed there. I suppose that this situation lasted also in the first half of the 9th century. However; there were more and more inhabitants there. As a result of this fact a compact unit became to the existence by the connection of the former separated settlements. This unit was on the territory of Staré Město fortified by a wall which ended on the right bank of the Morava River (Fig. 1).

Staré Město agglomeration was divided to settlements, specialised production areas - e.g. jewellers, potters, metal founders or smiths, ecclesiastic areas around churches. The agglomeration had one big central burial ground in the Na valách position. The original settlement function of the Na valách position gave ground to the funeral function from the middle of the 9th century. Till today, more than 1 800 graves have been uncovered. We suppose that another 500-700 graves were destroyed by later interference. The seat of people of power from the beginning of 2nd half of the 9th century became to be a place in the heart of the agglomeration (Fig. 1:3). A ground ostentatious stone construction of minimum 19m of length and 10m of width with east mortar floors and decorative roofing (GALUŠKA 1990, 121-136) was built some 20m of Saint Michael's rotunda (HRUBÝ 1967, 47-74). There is no more outstanding position in the Uherské Hradiště region than the mentioned one, at present (Fig. 2).

To the frames of the agglomeration belonged of course the important settlement on the Saint George's Island. For the period of the Great Moravian Empire I suppose that the Staré Město - Uherské Hradiště agglomeration is an example of the early Middle Ages' centre of an urban character, after Mikulčice probably the younger capitol of Great Moravia. In the 2nd half of the 9th century Velehrad (Veligrad) was probably the original name of the Staré Město - Uherské Hradiště agglomeration.

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