

A contribution to the structure and character of the landscape of the Great Moravian agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště

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The settlement agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště, which is one of the centres of Great Moravia, originated on a strategically very advantageous place (HRUBÝ 1965; GALUŠKA 2001a, 123–137; GALUŠKA 2005b, 525–530). Its western part was spread on two elevated terraces on the area of contemporary Staré Město. The middle part that was the lowest one covered islands and dunes in the Morava River flood plain, which was also situated in the area of present both Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště. The eastern part made use of slopes of the Vizovice highlands (Fig. 1).¹

In the area of the mentioned vast agglomeration there was a concentration of a high number of inhabitants, creating a considerably differentiated society in the second half of the 9th century. Members of the prince's class and significant representatives of the Church were on the head of the society, on the opposite end of the society there were slaves and people who were dependent in the society. The class of specialised craftsmen and obviously merchants, too, created a significant part of the society. In my opinion it is probable that a considerable part of local people were baptised people, Christians.

The agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště was spread on both sides of the Morava River, very near of its confluence with the Olšava River. This river was flowing from the East, from the slopes of the White Carpathians. Along the banks of the both rivers there were well known trade communications going (HRUBÝ 1965, 28, 30–31; SNÁŠIL 1975, 13–18; JŮZOVÍ 2003, 9–12, and others). They were branches of the old Amber Track, which together with other tracks going west through the Chřiby Mountains towards central Moravia and then further into Bohemia created an important crossroads of trade ways in the area of the agglomeration (Fig. 1).

The agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště was situated in the centre of a territory, the borders of

which were created by natural dominant features in three sides. Its centre was an approximately 5-6 km wide flood plain of the Morava River (in the place of the agglomeration it was, however, only 2-3 km wide). On the west, in the 10-12 km distance of the agglomeration, there were the Chřiby Mountains, on the east there was a rough countryside of the Vizovice highlands, which was divided by small rivers flowing to the Morava River in the east-western direction. In the distance of 22 to 25 km the highlands were gradually changing into the White Carpathians Mountains, creating the border. On the north of the agglomeration, in the distance of 10 km, there was only a narrow, approximately 0.5 km wide, Napajedla pass. On the other hand, on the south of the agglomeration there was no natural dividing line. It is probable that a defined territory approximately 40 km long from the west to the east and 25-30 km long from the north to the south created an important area of interest, or an important part of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration. We can presume that the mentioned territory had been used even before Great Moravia originated, and it may obviously have been connected with an area of a tribe, later with a territory owned by an old important family. On the south, hypothetically somewhere between contemporary Veselí nad Moravou and Strážnice, the mentioned territory could have touched the area of interest of the Valy stronghold at Mikulčice.

In my opinion, ringwalls of the Chřiby area, especially the ringwall on St. Clement hill at Osvětimany, could be included into the broader strategic landscape of the agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště. Those ringwalls were not part of the inhabited territory, however, they were located near important tracks. The tracks were directed from the agglomeration through the Chřiby mountains at the area of Brno and Kroměříž. As far as the ringwall of St. Clement is taken into account, it is very probable that in its area there a manor, who built a church there, permanently lived, and a workshop for jewellery existed there for

¹ The study originated in the frames of solving a scientific-research intention of the Moravian Museum Brno.

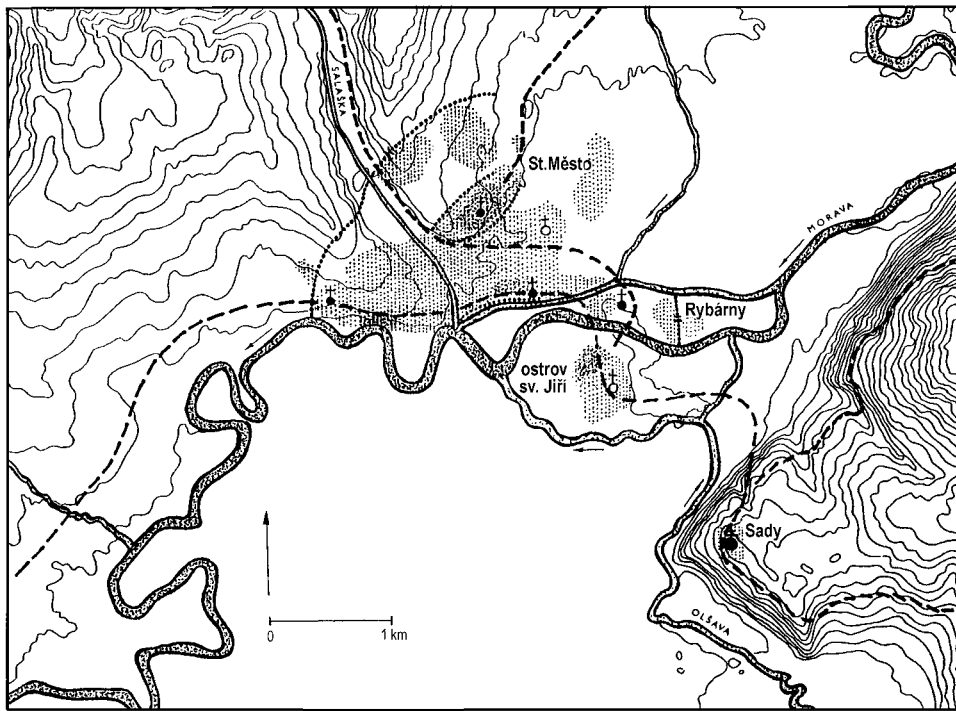


Fig. 1. Great Moravian settlement agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště with marked inhabited area (thick dots), archaeologically proved fortifications (lines of dots), church constructions (spots with crosses), and a palace (triangle), and a supposed line of main communications (small lines). According to the author.

his needs. The influence of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration then obviously overdrew the Chřiby mountains themselves in the west. In the east it reached as far as the Váh River Basin, and in the north its influence reached the Přerov area (Fig. 2, this topic for the territory of Bohemia was written about by BUBENÍK 2001, 256–278).

The nearest landscape of the agglomeration belonged to the mentioned important area. In the past it was written that there was a territory in the shape of a circle with its centre in Staré Město and a radius of 10 km (Fig. 6). In its frames – there were 67 settlements and almost 40 burial grounds (HRUBÝ 1941, 55–64; HRUBÝ/PAVELČÍK 1992, 158–161; SNÁŠIL 1995, 30–31). Such a number did not exist in any other Great Moravian site. Nevertheless, we have to say that only parts, individual objects, and graves have been investigated in majority of the settlements and burial grounds. In my opinion, however, the artificially made 10 km circle is only a very formal criterion for defining the extent of the settlement agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště. What seems to be more important for defining a probable extension of the territory according to me is the whole configuration of the terrain and presupposed trade communications within the settlement structure.

On the north-west as far as south-west of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration there were settlements founded in a little rough countryside of the

foothills of the Chřiby Mountains. Those settlements were from 2 to 5 km far from the centre. They often had skeleton burial grounds, mostly flat, but also barrow burial grounds have been found (HRUBÝ/PAVELČÍK 1992, 158–161). Modrá near Velehrad, which is situated some 3 km in the north-eastern direction of the edge of Staré Město, presents a dominant site in this part of the landscape (HRUBÝ/HOCHMANOVÁ/PAVELČÍK 1955, 42–126; HRUBÝ 1965, 95–97; GALUŠKA/VAŠKOVÝCH 2002, 76–86; GALUŠKA 2005a, 13–22). The beginnings of its settlement can very probably be dated not later than into the 7th-8th centuries,² however, the settlement gained a greater extent and importance in the 9th century. In that time there was also a mortar church built, which is one of the oldest on the territory of the later Great Moravia. In its surrounding a skeleton burial ground arose. Members of the ruling class were buried there, too. A manorial estate that is mentioned in written sources from the period of the latest Middle Ages has not been discovered so far. The settlement and obviously the church, too, existed also after the period of discontinuation of Great Moravia. Let us mention at least some of the other founding places – Boršice at Buchlovice, „Oujezdky” and „Zelnice”, Polešovice

2 It is a new find from the year 2005 which has not been published so far. It is a part of a settlement feature with a heating equipment, in which both pottery of an archaic shape and production showing some connections with early Slavonic pottery of the Prague type, and Old-ringwall pottery were found.

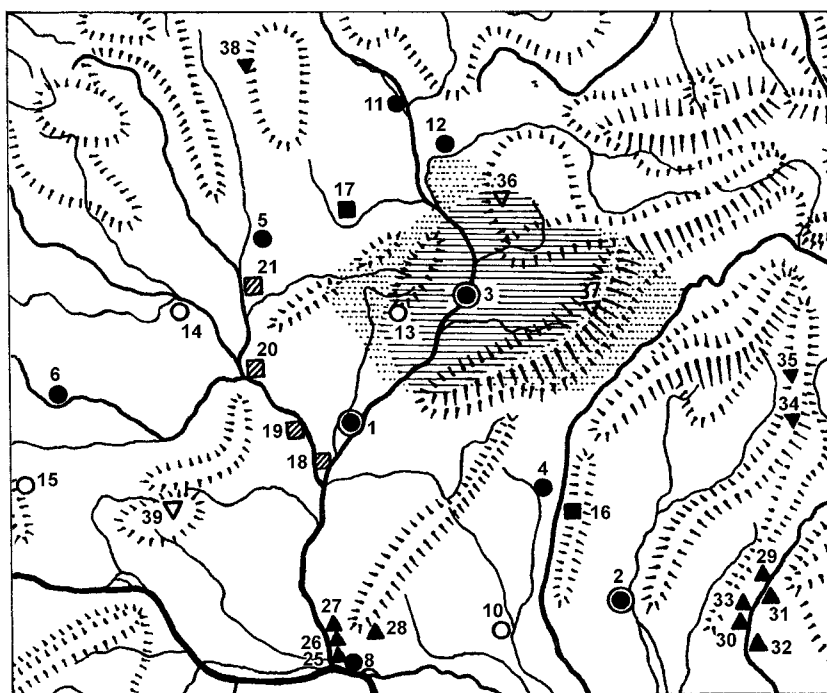


Fig. 2. Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště settlement agglomeration (3) with marked area of supposed spheres of influence (small lines) which may continue to the Vah River Basin, Přerov area, Kroměříž area, and Brno area (dots). According to the author, based on maps of Moravian ringwalls (STAŇA 1990, Fig. 1: 1 Mikulčice, 2 Nitra, 12 Přerov, 13 Osvětimany - St. Clement, 36 Hostýn, 37 Klášťov).

„Mšky”, and „Dorštot”, or some founding places not far from near Zlechov.

In the north-eastern, even south-eastern, direction of the agglomeration of Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště there were settlements on the slopes of the Vizovice highlands. Some of them were located in the present „big” Uherské Hradiště, which means that in the 9th century it was situated only 1 to 3 km from the agglomeration. The settlements created a line which was spread from the Olšava River in the south as far as towards Kněžpole in the northern direction. A majority of the settlements had their burial grounds with flat skeleton burials, somewhere only burials or only features were found. The most important sites are represented by the above mentioned settlement and burial ground in Uherské Hradiště-Sady „Kotvice” (MAREŠOVÁ 1983, 1985), then „Zelnice”, and „Vinohrady”, in the Mařatic suburb it was „Mezicesty”, in Jarošov „Nad Hřištěm” and „Na Dědině” sites. The settlement in Uherské Hradiště-Sady „Kotvice” originated not later than in the 8th century. In the following century it had a form of a group of several houses or estates. Each house-estate was created by a dwelling, agricultural construction, and a production object, as for example a smithy, bakery, or a workshop for working on horns or producing spindle whorls. There were 252 individuals buried on the nearby burial ground. An extraordinary fact is that a high amount of war axes (15 pieces) and knives were found in the

graves of men, and besides other objects, there were also silver earrings of the Byzantine-Oriental character found in the women’s graves. A cult object which could have been used during the burial rite was also a part of the burial ground.

From the distant sites of the north-eastern up to south-eastern landscape of the agglomeration I would like to mention at least the settlement in Hluk „Dolní Konec” and „Babí hora”, as well as an extent barrow burial ground „Hluboček” (about 10 km far from the agglomeration), then Dolní Němčí (about 14 km), elevated settlement in Ostrožská Lhota on „Hradištko” (about 13 km), and the Březolupy settlement „Pastvisko” (about 11 km). I am not convinced about the relations of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration with more than 20 km distant find spots in the surroundings of Luhačovice and Slavičín, where barrow burial grounds were discovered. Nevertheless, the agglomeration may have been supplied with iron ore from the deposits in the surroundings of Rudimov. I believe we are not making a mistake when we consider the ringwall Gradca to have been an administration centre of the Rudimov iron ore area (HRUBÝ/PAVELČÍK 1992, 173), similar to the connection between the ringwall Brno-Líšeň „Staré Zámky” and its role in the relation to the iron ore deposits in the area of Blansko – Olomučany (STAŇA 1988, 173).

The iron ore area of Rudice – Bojkovice was with its southern edge touching the Olšava River Basin

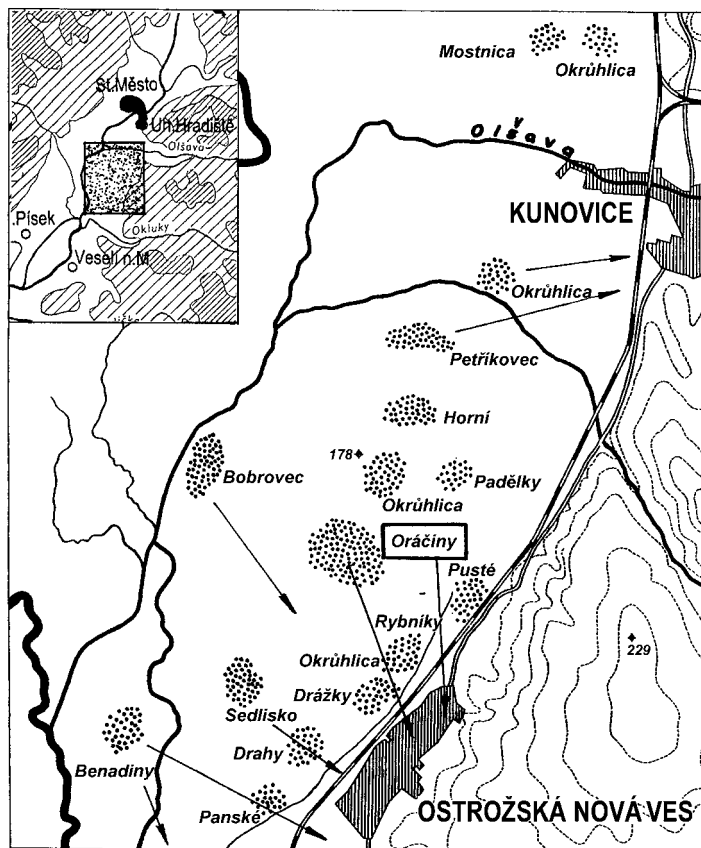


Fig. 3. Western parts of the Kunovice and Ostrožská Nová Ves areas south of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration with marked settlement sites according to František Botek (MAREŠOVÁ 1967). Arrows show further development in the 12th - 13th centuries, when settlements were left by the inhabitants because of floods, and people moved to higher (elevated) places (according to the author).

track, having been the former Brigetium branch of the old Amber track. Through it, however, not only iron ore and trade caravans could get into the Morava River Basin, but very often also enemy groups. The significance of the Olšava River Basin is documented by several settlements and probably also by two ringwalls which existed on both banks of the Olšava River, about 9 to 11 km from the agglomeration of Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště. The ringwalls were: Bolegradica at Hradčovice and Valy at Vlčnov, both, however, still waiting for a more detailed archaeological research and more precise dating followed by it (POLÁK 2005, 45–47). There were also settlements and burial grounds in Uherský Brod „Konečník” (15 km), Havřice „Nad Zahrádky” (13 km), Drslavice (11 km), Veletiny „Losky” (9 km), Podolí „Výpusta” (6 km), and especially the above mentioned Uherské Hradiště-Sady (HRUBÝ 1941; MAREŠOVÁ 1983, 1985; GALUŠKA 1996; POLÁK 2005). Kunovice, which is located on the left bank of the Olšava River – on the South of its bend under the Sady height, is usually also put among the sites of the Olšava River Basin. In Kunovice there have been discovered four Slavonic settlements. For example the settlement in the „Úzké” site existed in

the same time as the settlement in Uherské Hradiště-Sady. It is supposed that inhabitants of both the settlements together controlled the mouth of the Olšava River Basin (Brigetium) Track into the central Morava River Basin (MAREŠOVÁ 1985, 7–16; HRUBÝ/PAVELČÍK 1992, 172; SNÁŠIL 1996, 23–24). Further settlements of the 9th century in the land register of Kunovice were situated in the following positions: „Záhony”, „V Grni”, „Nové čtvrti”, and „Hlaviny”. A majority of the mentioned sites, unfortunately, has not been properly investigated, therefore our knowledge about them is only shallow.

Not far from Kunovice, which is located 2 to 3 km on the south of the agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště, there is Ostrožská Nová Ves and Chylice (GALUŠKA 2001a, 51–55). In the western part of their land registers as far as the northern edge of Uherský Ostroh in the southern direction, there were obviously not less than 10 settlements in the river basin on elevated dunes (Fig. 3). They were as follows: „Oračiny”, „Rybníky-Pusté”, „Bobrovec”, „Drážky”, „Sedlisko”, „Drahy”, „Panské”, besides the river basin, at the Ostrožská Nová Ves spa, there was another settlement „Padělky”. Most research attention was given to

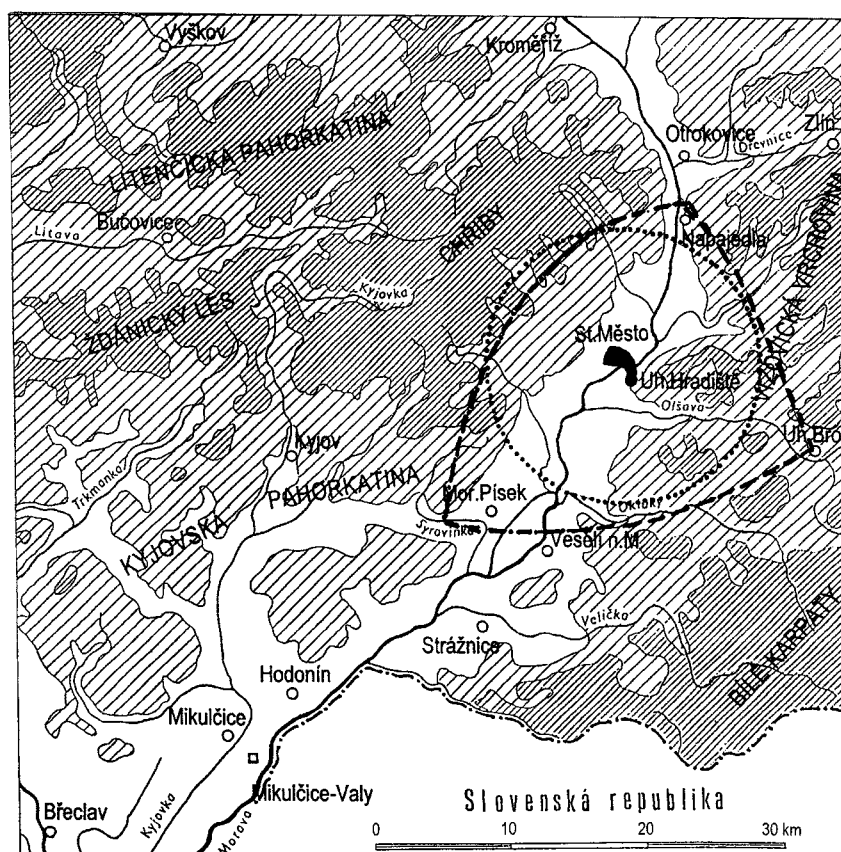


Fig. 4. Northern part of the central Morava River Basin. Hypothetical area nearest to the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště settlement agglomeration according to V. Hrubý (circle), and according to the author (triangle with curved lines).

the settlement „Oráčiny”, which was founded as early as in the 6th century as well as to the settlement in Uherský Ostroh-Kvačice in the „Benadiny” site. Except for other finds, an iron spur with arms ended with eyes (MAREŠOVÁ 1967, 78), and shell of an Ostranka Adriatic that was imported in Great Moravia from places as far as the Mediterranean is, or cast bronze mount of an Avar style, were found in the mentioned settlement. They are evidence of the life of members of higher class in the society. R. SNÁŠIL (1992, 390) supposes that in „Oráčiny” a lowland ringwall could have been. Fortification, however, has not been found there yet. The group of settlements at Ostrožská Nová Ves, which was spread in the length of 3 to 5 km in the distance of 6 to 10 km from the agglomeration and presented a considerable high concentration of population. Unfortunately, a big part of the settlements was destroyed by the industrial exploitation of sand (Fig. 3).

Similar but obviously not as extent concentration of settlements as at Ostrožská Nová Ves was in the distance of 2 to 4 km in the north from the agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště, in the land register of the village Huštěnovice (HRUBÝ/PAVELČÍK 1992, 158). There are traces after settlements in the positions „Huštěnůvky”, „Vinšovaté”, „Lněné”, „Závlahový kanál”,

and „Padělky”. A line of settlements continued along the Morava River further on the north, towards Babice. Settlements were discovered there in the following positions: „Les”, „Okolí školy”, „Zárudné”, „Předcesty”, „Za hřbitovem”, and „Dlouhý”. Similar to the settlements at Ostrožská Nová Ves, the settlements at Huštěnovice and Babice were located near the main north-southern way of the Amber track. Especially an elevated dune in the Morava River Basin and mild hilly terrain on the edges were used. Exploitation of the countryside in the direction north of the agglomeration was not limited only on lowlands but reached probably also to the mountains, to the area of Kudlovice valley. That valley was created along a brook of the same name and is 5 km long. The brook flew into the Morava River Basin from the eastern hills of the Chřiby mountains. The old tradition of iron ore mining there, as well as deposits of limonite ore which are often discovered even nowadays, show that iron ore was imported from the Kudlovice area into the Morava River Basin very early, probably as early as in the time of Great Moravia. In connection with the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration it is obvious that there was an important and quite near source of economic and strategically very significant raw material.

We may draw a conclusion from the above mentioned that the landscape of the agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště created an imaginary triangle with slightly rounded sides, which expresses the character of the countryside in the surroundings of the agglomeration rather better than a circle, which was used to describe it before (Fig. 4). One of the sides of the triangle, the western one, was spread on the slopes of the Chřiby Mountain following the line Ořechov – Stříbrnice – Buchlovice – Velehrad – Napajedla. The other side was spread somewhere among Bzenec, Veselí nad Moravou or Strážnice, and Hluk, towards Uherský Brod. The third side of the imaginary triangle connected the Uherský Brod area with the Napajedla pass. When we take into account the edge points of the imaginary triangle and we count its area, we will come to the number 330. That number probably presents the extent of the area of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration in square kilometres. It's remarkable that only a little smaller area would be contained by the former used imaginary circle with a radius of 10 km.

Some interesting facts, which are connected with the pre-field area of the agglomeration Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště, can be deduced from the spreading of the settlements themselves. It seems to be obvious that in a semi-circle in the direction from the south to the north-west there existed some non-inhabited area which was from 2 to 3 km wide, next to the agglomeration. It was situated out reach of floods and its surface was created by a good quality agricultural land. We may deduce that on that land there were fields and pastures (see CULEK/IVAN/KIRCHNER 1999, 211–212, 216–219 for more information about the natural environment of Staré Město and its surroundings). We cannot exclude some strategic importance of the mentioned non-inhabited pre-field area, as the easiest access into the agglomeration existed there. They were places which defenders needed to have had a good view of in cases of attacks of enemies. Only behind this economic and strategically important territory, there was a line of settlements and dwellings which gradually disappeared in the foothills of the Chřiby mountains. Another non-inhabited territory existed south of the agglomeration. It was also about 2-3 km wide, however, it was situated in the Morava River Basin. In those places there was a wet, soaked land which was unsuitable both for founding permanent settlements and grain fields. In some dried places there could have been only pastures. Only further on the south behind that terrain there were settlements, which we nowadays discover on the territory of Kunovice, Ostrožská Nová Ves, and Uherský Ostroh-Kvačice, also Nedakonice, Polešovice, and Moravský Písek. Similar situation was

on the north of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration. Geologists proved the existence of old arms of the Morava River from the pre-historical times as well as areas with permanent stagnant water. A quite big part of the area was covered by a forest. It was again a territory which was not suitable for founding permanent settlements and grain fields. Only behind this territory there were settlements at Huštěnovice and Babice on dunes and on edges of the river basin. A line of those settlements went either further to Napajedla, or finished as the foothills of the Chřiby mountains. On the contrary, on the east of the agglomeration, on the mild hilly terrain of Vizovice Highlands, there was the situation for settlements very good. Therefore settlements and mansions courts were situated in a close neighbourhood of the agglomeration, about 1 or 2 km far from it, which means that they were almost connected. It is obvious that in their surroundings there were not only fields and pastures, but also orchards and vineyards. However, further into the mountains there were mainly forests, which was similar in the Chřiby mountains (MAREŠOVÁ 1985, 15–16).

To gain information about the Great Moravian Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration and its background in complex is a long-term process based on a wide co-operation among many scientific branches. It is not possible for one person to be able to have the capacity for the supposed 330 square kilometres. We have to admit that except for the natural „borders” we objectively do not know how to assign the territory. We have no historical note at our disposal. We, for example, do not know if an administrative unit of a land having a landlord clerk of a Great Moravian ruler as its head, which is mentioned in the written sources, was on the same territory as we suppose so or it was not. We also do not know how the area of the agglomeration was being changed in the period of time, when it became to be a seat of a ruling prince. We are not able to answer those questions. We can use archaeological finds and on the basis of them we are able to guess at least approximate reach of craftsmen workshops, producing a specific object, e. g. pottery. That, however, may not be true in all cases, as in some of them, especially when a piece of the pottery was found further from the workshop, it may have been an import or a loot. Concluding we may say that the term „hypothetical” in connection with the area of the Staré Město – Uherské Hradiště agglomeration in the period of Great Moravia should be used. Nevertheless, we must study the problems of the background as well as of the spheres of interest of significant centres and their units, i.e. villages and settlements. We are, however, on the beginning of the study.

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