

THE SLAVS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF EARLY-MEDIEVAL CENTRAL EUROPE

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Critical conclusions and new facts about Slavic settlement in Central Europe are presented. New facts about the Slavic ethnogenesis in relation to Central Europe (territory around the middle Danube in the basin of the river Theiss and in the supra-Danubian region of the Carpathians) from the second to the sixth centuries A.D. are described.

It is beyond doubt that archaeological explorations carried out so far offer results that can be included in the large reservoir of knowledge on the extensive Slavic research in our country and in the neighbouring countries of Central Europe. The outcomes significantly influenced the facts about the oldest settlement of these areas by Slavic ethnic groups, the beginnings and the existence of the Samo's realm, contacts – clashes and symbiosis with a new nomadic ethnic group – the Avars, formation of the Principality of Nitra, its development and, ultimately, union with the Moravian Kingdom leading to the early-medieval state formation of western Slavs – Great Moravia, but also its contacts with the neighbouring world, particularly with the Frankish realm, Byzantium and the Holy See, development in north-eastern Transdanubia, the regions around the middle Danube and Lake Balaton, and finally also the northern Carpathians and the regions around the Vistula river. The new facts concern the fall of Great Moravia and the Frankish realm, arrival of the nomadic tribes (*Ungari-Ungaris-Ougri*) in the regions around the Theiss and the middle Danube to the beginnings and the constitution of the Hungarian, Polish, Czech, and German kingdoms. A wealth of archaeological material culture from field researches, published sources, theoretical studies and monographs from the period between the fifth/sixth and the tenth centuries serve as evidence. Today we can write responsibly that it is chiefly the achievements of the archaeology of the Middle Ages (historical archaeology) which has enriched our

knowledge about historical-settlement development in the early and at the beginning of the high Middle Ages most comprehensively.

If we compare the present state of knowledge with the work *Slovanské starožitnosti* (Slavonic Antiquities) by P. J. Šafárik, it is necessary to compare his views – hypotheses, considerations and the period state of knowledge – with the possibilities of the level of knowledge in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is the way to approach the monumental work *Slovanské starožitnosti*.¹

In spite of the fact that Pavol Jozef Šafárik was not, according to B. Polla “*even an amateur archaeologist*”,² his work was not only analysed but also critically supplemented by younger generations of Slavists, primarily in connection with the latest scientific achievements. Despite the historical time – one and a half century from the publication of Šafárik’s work, a number of his achievements, original considerations and hypotheses put forward have survived as a proof of the author’s magnificent intuition and far-seeing capabilities, evidently trying to look at the ancient history of the Slavs in a more comprehensive manner. The work remained a symbol of a splendid period synthesis “*de rebus Slavicis*” of the ancient past of Slavic history.

P.J. Šafárik followed the work of Josef Dobrovský and, within the links of the period, also the work of Ján Kollár. They all wrote their works on the basis of the tradition of the partially “codified” classical archaeology of the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. P.J. Šafárik also paid attention to the sources of material culture preserved from ancient times below the ground as well as above ground.³ He undoubtedly went beyond the standards of the time on the way to the constitution of an independent and modern scientific discipline – archaeology. He even pointed to the necessity of legal protection and preservation of the cultural, architectural and archaeological heritage. The chief aim of Šafárik’s work was to prove the Indo-European origin of the Slavs (Slavonics, Slavics), their “antiquity and autochthony” in the European early historical and early medieval environment. Therefore, he directed attention towards the ethnogenesis of the Slavs, the questions of the Slavic “original homeland” where the ‘first’ Slavs had come from and where they had emerged. The most remarkable is his scientific treatise proving that the Slavs (Danubian Slavs) were also settled in the “pre-Tatra” region on the middle Danube before the coming of the Celts.⁴

It took one and a half centuries before studies and monographs appeared again not only in historical linguistics but also in archaeology which alerted to or revitalized the autochthonous theory of the ethnogenesis of the Slavs, particularly in rela-

¹ ŠAFÁRK, P.J.: *Slovanské starožitnosti I.-II.* Praha 1862–1863.

² POLLA, B.: *Archeológia na Slovensku v minulosti*. Martin 1996, p. 42.

³ ŠAFÁRK, P.J.: *I.*, 1862, pp. 10–11.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 421–423. For details, see KUČERA, M.: *Pavol Jozef Šafárik a slovanské starožitnosti*. In: *Acta Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Šafarikanae*. Prešov 1993, p. 244.

tion to our Central European setting. In spite of the fact that archaeological methods have failed to prove the Slavonic character of the pre-Slavic cultures in Central Europe, this research orientation deserves much attention. We would like to refer to the scientific conclusions of J. Böhm⁵ who was critical of the fact that in Central Europe and among the Slavs in general the beginnings of feudalism are considered independently of the preceding development – without a deeper knowledge of the genesis of the Slavic ethnic group. For that reason, they suddenly “emerge” – also in the field of interest of modern historiography – as a brand new ethnic component, a new ethnic community of the Slavs. By contrast, it should be, as J. Böhm argues, understood as an important part of early historical community differentiated by its inner development and by different approaches to the ancient, slave owning world. In his review of the work of J. Niederle: *Rukověť slovanské archeologie* (Prague, Vol. 1, 1931),⁶ he states that if L. Niederle presupposes the Transcarpathian cradle of Slavdom, we have to presume that at least towards the end of the first millennium B.C. some culture or some cultures were Slavic and that only one ethnic group was bearer of these archaeological cultures; they were rather mono-ethnic, intermixed, as we can suppose the situation around the Theiss and Danube rivers. J. Dekan⁷ added to the above consideration that the formation of medieval nationalities cannot be successfully resolved without knowledge of the foregoing development of tribal dialects; therefore, the question of the roots and the beginnings of the Slavs forms a single whole with the problems of the establishment of the oldest Slavic state formations, Slavic nationalities and their early medieval culture. These statements require, however, not only a return to many verbalized hypotheses and contemplations not only in the work of P.J. Šafárik, but also to the “forgotten” study of J. Böhm.⁸ The latter deals with the ethnogenetic development in prehistoric and protohistoric periods of the region around the river Theiss and around the middle Danube with the adjoining northern regions, and the regions around left-bank and right-bank tributaries. It will be important to distinguish, to make a literally minute selection and to identify these ethnogenetic elements, particularly in broader cultural-historical and historical-settlement connections at least in the pre-Roman and Roman periods up to the first safely provable Slavic findings at the end of the fifth and in the sixth centuries, as notified recently by P. Mačala.⁹ It would probably be desirable to return to the idea of W. Hensel, who recom-

⁵ BÖHM, J.: *Studie o periodizaci pravěkých dějin*. Památky archeologické 44, 1953; *Nejstarší dějiny národa českého a slovenského (koncepte slovanských dějin na území Československa)*. These. Liblice 1963.

⁶ BÖHM, J., reprint – for details, see pp. 198–204 (p. 201 in particular).

⁷ DEKAN, J.: *Nad Šafárikovými “Slovanskými starožitnostmi” (Úvaha k 100. výročiu smrti)*. In: Sb. FFUK – Musica 22 (1), 1961, p. 7.

⁸ BÖHM, J.: *Nejstarší dějiny*, see Note 5.

⁹ MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza Slovanov v archeologii*. Košice 1995.

mended a branch of interdisciplinary character to do research into the genesis of particular tribes-ethnic groups-medieval nationalities, nation-formation: ethnogeny (formed at the intersection of scientific branches – archaeology, history – medieval studies, historical linguistics, ethnography, anthropology, folkloristics, history of religion, sociology, law).¹⁰ It would undoubtedly be a research that would fit in the frame of Slavistics; it would be a sort of return to the original aims of the research attempted by P.J. Šafárik, and especially by many later representatives, chiefly of the Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and Czech scientific schools. B. Chropovský¹¹ has recently pointed to these research tasks in the Central European region in search of the genesis of the Slavic settlement from the end of the Stone Age. The role of Slavic archaeology will be to judge the achievements of O.N. Trubachev¹² by the method of reappraisal of new archaeological sources, a comparison in relation to the latest achievements in historical linguistics. Trubachev proves that the “original homeland” of the Slavs was in the region of Central Europe, more precisely in the territory between the Tatra mountains and the river Danube. He relies not only on linguistic but also on historical data and states that the original Slavic peasant tribes were in this geographical space as early as in the third millennium B.C.¹³

We should admit that the question of the relation of the “Danubian or Carpathian” region to the beginnings – the oldest ethnogenetic process of the Slavs – is still open. In his monograph,¹⁴ P. Mačala showed that the theory of the sources in archaeology has not been worked out and this led and still leads to ambiguous and controversial conclusions, particularly in the interpretation of social phenomena. By and large, we can agree that today it is impossible to answer the question, what is the relation between an archaeological culture and an ethnic group, or what is the relation between an archaeological culture and any other taxonomic social unit, either on the general or the specific level. Unfortunately, such is the status of our research into the ethnogenetic process of the Slavs, settlement, or completion of settlement in the region of Central Europe. This applies especially to study of developments in the early-historical period and at the beginning of the early medieval period (from the 3rd to the 5–6th centuries). In accordance with the foregoing state-

¹⁰ HENSEL, W.: *Do etnogenezy Słowian. Słowianie v dziejach Europy*. Poznań 1974, pp. 37–39.

¹¹ CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Niekoľko poznámok k problematike pravlasti Slovanov*. Studia Archaeologica Slovaca Mediaevalia 1/1998, pp. 38–40.

¹² TRUBAČEV, O.N.: *Jazykoznanije i etnogenез Slavjan. Drevnije Slavjane po dannym etimologii i onomastiki*. In: *Voprosy jazykoznanija* No. 4, pp. 10–26; No. 5, pp. 3–18, Moskva 1982; *Jazykoznanije i etnogenез Slavjan (daļnejšeje prodolženije)*. In: *Trudy V. Meždunarodnogo kongressa archeologov – slavistov. Tom 4, sekciya I. Drevnije Slavjane*. Kijev 1988, pp. 216–223; *Etnogenез i kultura drevnejšich Slavjan*. Moskva 1991; *Starí Slovania na Dunaji*. Slovenské pohľady 4, No. 1, 1994, pp. 113–117.

¹³ Ibid., *Etnogenез*, 1991, p. 22

¹⁴ MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza*, see Note 9.

ment, a warning of F. Graus,¹⁵ from the time of the discussion on the beginnings of feudalism at the beginning of the 1950, is again of current interest. It concerns especially his idea that it is impossible to reconstruct the entire past on the basis of one type of source, which we unfortunately see in the separation of scientific disciplines – historical linguistics, archaeology, history – medieval studies, historical geography up to the present. It is often precisely the written or material sources that become merely an illustrative embellishment of the professional text. A solution to this problem lies in interdisciplinary research or seeking new transdisciplinary views on a researched problem, with the help of mathematical modeling, or environmental archaeology. One field of research or a frequent shift to “isolated” multidisciplinary solution of the issues of the ethnogenesis of the Slavs, raised by P.J. Šafárik more than one and a half centuries ago, cannot today correspond to the needs of scientific research, particularly also in deepening knowledge of early-Slavic settlement.

A sort of symbiosis of Slavic and German tribes – ethnic groups of Indo-European origin probably existed as early as the Roman period (1st–4th centuries). A new basis of knowledge could be provided mainly by information about settlements in the northern mountainous regions of the Slovak Carpathians. There is evidence of the existence of certain generation links in common fates northward of ancient Rome, namely borrowings of pre-Slavic hydronymy in our territory known from the works of ancient Greek and Roman authors, e.g. *Maro*, *Marus* (Morava), *Cusus* (Váh), and *Granoua* (Hron)¹⁶ as well as the ancient names of the mountains such as *Karpaty* (Carpathians), *Tatry*, *Fatra*, *Beskydy*.¹⁷ The history of particular territories cannot be understood without knowing the cultural and historical process of communities – families, tribes and ethnic groups. It is beyond doubt that it was precisely this process that historical memory was preserved in the chronological layers of the periods of time. The isolated mountainous regions were especially suitable for a less “disturbed” development of settlements in contrast to frequently ruined settlements in the lowlands in the period of the military conflicts of early history and the early Middle Ages.

A complex of relics of material culture represents – not only at the hypothetical level – some indications of the “Slavicization” of the Púchov archaeological culture. P. Ratkoš alerted to this fact a longer time ago by declaring that at the time of its decay, the inhabitants met the first smaller groups of the Slavs.¹⁸ Finally, in that

¹⁵ GRAUS, F.: *O poměr mezi archeologií a historií*. Archeologické rozhledy 9, 1957, p. 551.

¹⁶ MAJTÁN, M.: *Z lexiky slovenskej toponymie*. Bratislava 1996, p. 137. The author says that borrowings and survival of their names by particular ethnic groups is seen and he reminds us that the majority of the river names in the Carpathian region are of Slavic (Slovak) origin (see p. 138).

¹⁷ Ibid., *Z lexiky*, p. 127.

¹⁸ RATKOŠ, P.: *Slovensko v dobe veľkomoravskej*. Košice 1988, p. 16.

period of the contact of the two “worlds” separated but not divided by the Roman limes on the Danube, we witness very intense contacts through archaeological sources, which must have been reflected in the traditional cultural-historical reception, transformation and joint adaptation. This early-historical process was accompanied by repeated cultural radiation of new elements within the framework of the examined and documented “archaeological cultures” of early historical communities, ethnic groups in the particular region of Central Europe. The decisive role was obviously played by the elements of ancient economy and ancient cultural circle in the connection between “centres and provinces”, namely Rome, Pannonia and the regions to the north of the Danube frontier. This is evidently the reason why the tribes and ethnic groups north of the Danube became coheirs of the advanced ancient world. The proximity of the Roman provinces was strongly felt throughout the historical process. Also for these reasons, this territory is of crucial importance to the studies of and solutions to the questions pertaining to the ethnogenesis of the Slavs. With some reservation we rank the records provided by Roman historians – Pliny (Plinius) around the year 77 A.D. in his work *Naturalis historia* and Tacitus in the work *Germania* (98 A.D.)¹⁹ as the first pieces of information about the Slavs in the Carpathians. Among the ethnic groups (ancient nations) from the Baltic Sea (Gulf of the Venedi) to the Vistula river ethnic communities such as the *Venedi*, *Veneti*, *Venadi* are also mentioned and in their southern neighbourhood e.g. the Sarmatians. Tacitus describes the nature and morals of the *Venedi* among the Germans and Sarmatians but also in the vicinity of *Peucini* and the *Fenni* (*Finno-Ugric/Ungrians*) in the north.²⁰ We think that these tribes were not only settled north of the Carpathians but also in the centre of the mountainous region. An indirect indication is the period name of the Carpathians – *Venedic mountains* (Fig. 1, p. 34). In the second half of the second century, the Greek astronomer, geographer and mathematician Ptolemy (*Ptolemaios*) wrote that the inhabitants of Sarmatia (Sarmat-land) – in the territory of Scythia with its western border up to the Vistula river and the *Sarmatian mountains* (Carpathians), in the north to the *Sarmatian Ocean* (the Baltic Sea) – was composed of great and small tribes and one of the great tribes he called *Venedi*. A generally accepted view is that it might have been the name of the Slavs.²¹ There are also younger data in other ancient sources: let us mention *Peutinger's map* from the end of the third century, a Greek list of different nations which was probably prepared at the beginning of the third century, and a record

¹⁹ ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské, II.*, 1863, both sources are published on pp. 675–678.

²⁰ For details see CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Slované. Historický, politický a kulturní vývoj a význam*. Praha 1989, p. 18; GASSOWSKI, J.: *Dejiny a kultúra starých Slovanov*. Bratislava 1969, pp. 47–48.

²¹ ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské, II.*, 1863, the source is published on pp. 678–684; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Slované*, p. 18; GASSOWSKI, J.: *Dejiny*, pp. 48–49.

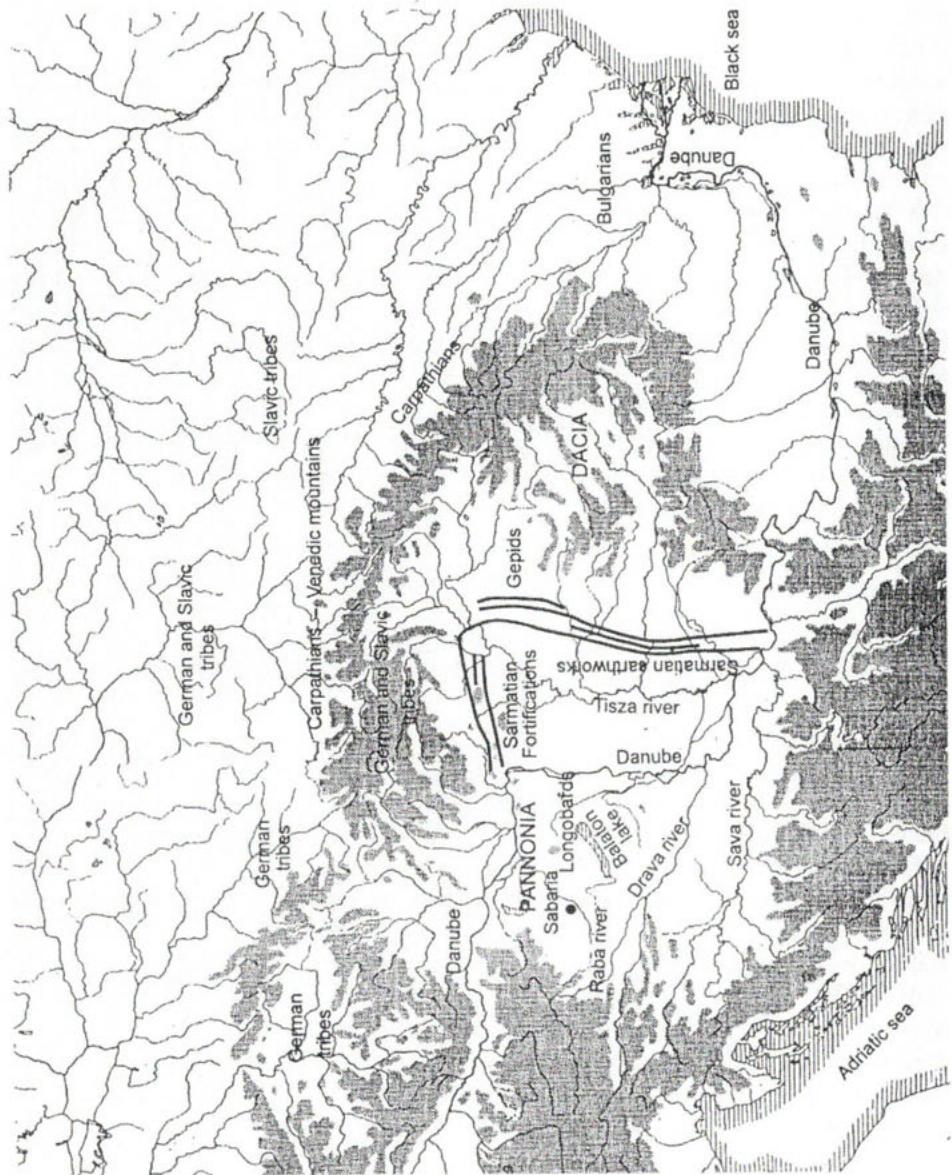


Fig. 1. The map of Central Europe from the 4th to 6th centuries A.D.

from around the year 400 in *Marcian's (Markian's) periplus*, again under the name *Venedi*.²² We know from historical writings that the Slavs were named *Venedi* by the Germans in the Middle Ages. It is also possible that some unspecified tribes, who caused the Marcomanic wars of the second half of the 2nd century by their pressure on the Germans, were actually Slavonic (Slavic).²³ Further development of the "Slavic" tribes in the region of Central Europe remains questionable.

Slovak archaeology launched a systematic comparison of the new facts and results from archaeological research to the north and east of the mountain ridges of the Transcarpathian regions. Intentional field surveys and researches were carried out in particular regions (micro- and mesoregions) of north-eastern Slovakia. For example, in the upper Topla river basin, new early historical and early medieval settlements were discovered in locations where no settlements had been expected in the past.²⁴ Naturally, as we have already mentioned, the more northerly regions in the mountainous setting are "ethnically" purer in contrast to the multiethnic and mixed regions in the middle Danube Basin and the upper and middle Theiss river. Given the results of archaeological exploration in Prešov and in the near surroundings, V. Budinský-Krička posed a hypothesis long ago that one can speak of this mesoregion (on the middle Torysa and its Svinka tributary) as one of the crystallizing "centres" of ethnogenetic processes of the Slavs in the region of Central Europe as early as from the third to the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁵

The latest monographs – syntheses on the beginnings of the Slavic settlement in Central Europe with a particular focus on the territory of Slovakia were written by P. Mačala²⁶ and G. Fusek.²⁷ G. Fusek recognizes the first evident and undeniable proofs of Slavic settlements – according to the traditional typological scheme in the reflection of archaeological material culture, chiefly through pottery – in this territory as late as from the end of the fifth century,²⁸ on the other hand, P. Mačala²⁹

²² ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské II.*, 1863, the source *Markian periplus* is published on pp. 685–686 and the source *Peutinger's map* on p. 687; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Slované*, p. 18; ibid.: *K počiatkom Slovanstva*. In: *Slovanské listy I*, No.1, 1994, p.37;

²³ DOBIÁŠ, J.: *Dějiny československého území před vystoupením Slovanů*. Praha 1964, p. 194; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Včasnoslovanský a predvelkomoravský vývoj na území Československa*. In: *Velká Morava a počátky československé státnosti*. Praha – Bratislava 1985, p. 83.

²⁴ Research findings chiefly by J. Machník and P. Mačala. For details, see MACHNÍK, J. – DROZD-PIASECKA, M.: *Koncowe merytoryczne sprawozdanie z realizacji projekt KBN-u 1P108 058 05*. Kraków 1996.

²⁵ BUDINSKÝ-KRIČKA, V.: *Slovanské osídlenie*. Unpublished manuscript for a guide and the catalogue of archaeological exhibition in Východoslovenské múzeum, Košice, 1981.

²⁶ MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza*, see Note 9.

²⁷ FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko vo včasnoslovanskom období*. Nitra 1994.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 151–152.

²⁹ MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza*, pp. 65–71.

argues and tries to alert to the importance and the need of recognition of the ethno-genetic process of the Slavs already in the material culture, namely during the first half of the first millennium A.D. at the latest. However, one agreement can be observed in the two opposite concepts (autochthonous and migration).

Also G. Fusek points to a strong impact on the sub-Roman setting around the middle Danube and/or Pannonia and its share in the process of the early Slavic settlement and in the process of production.³⁰ Some historical links (not only within the generation historical memory) but also some settlement bonds to the older Roman – provincial settlements certainly existed here. We think that some groups of the Slavic population – as we have already said – penetrated into the Central European region as early as before the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. It is unthinkable that the Slavic tribes would not have been swept along by demonstrable extensive ethnic migrations, particularly at the end of the first half of the first millennium. Large areas of eastern and north-eastern Europe including mountainous regions of the Carpathians were probably populated by Slavic tribes even before the fourth century. The identification of this ethnic component in archaeological finds will be, however, very difficult since the Germanic and Slavic ethnic groups are represented by very similar ceramic material and other artefacts. It was a reflection of the crisis of the Roman Empire also in the region to the north of the Danube even in the areas of the mountainous heart of the Carpathians. Obviously, the immense changes taking place in ancient Europe penetrated into our regions that were peripheral to ancient Rome. The lack of records about the Slavs from the region of Central Europe and/or from the area to the north and north-east of the Carpathian mountain arc can be explained precisely by their way of life: their activities represented no threat to ancient Rome and its provinces in Central Europe. They were probably not interesting enough for most historians, writers and travellers or dangerous for ancient Rome. In younger, early-medieval literary works, the above mentioned historical emergence of the Slavs came with their more extensive movements, chiefly southwards and south-westwards threatening the political interests of the newly-forming early-medieval powers – the Byzantine Empire and the Frankish realm.

The roots of the Slavic ethnic group were undoubtedly older. The further process, during, and mainly after the so-called Migration Period, can therefore be merely characterized as a more intense Slavic completion of the process of settling in the region of Central Europe. I want to point out that already P.J. Šafárik tried to identify the social structure of the Slavic ethnic group by means of archaeological finds – the sources available. In the chapter on antiquities he mentioned the burial ritual,³¹ which represents an important basis for the recognition of the internal struc-

³⁰ FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, pp. 97–98, see Note 27.

³¹ ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské, I.*, pp. 558–561.



Fig. 2. The map of Central and South-Eastern Europe from the 5th to 6th centuries A.D.

ture of the process of differentiation of the Slavs, especially for the identification of their spiritual culture, even at present. However, his published views are today rather schematic and simplified. A number of burial grounds and the oldest Christian cemeteries of different character have been archaeologically explored since the first edition of Šafárik's *Starozitnosti*. The greatest problem of the exploration is, however, the identification of the graves and complexes of graves, especially from the early-Slavic period; that is in the process of the demonstrable ethnogenesis of the Slavic ethnic group also in the region of Central Europe. The overwhelming

majority of graves were of pit character. As a result of their relative shallowness and systematic recultivation in medieval and modern times – the graves were only rarely preserved. But also in this setting it is possible to think about the burial in a traditional Indo-European way, by cremation and a solemn “placing”, scattering around or scattering of the ashes over the revered water (river, lake, marsh). This method of burial was certainly close to both Slavic and Germanic tribes in our territory as early as in the first to fourth centuries A.D. (Fig. 2, p. 37).

The original Slavic settlement foundation in a multiethnic milieu gradually became dominant in Central Europe. It was chiefly thanks to later systematic inflow of “new” Slavic communities during the ongoing process of the completion of settlement – also in the Migration Period – that it also became the most numerous and the most adaptable ethnic group. It became particularly evident in relation to new geopolitical conditions after the break-up of the Roman Empire. We think that was just one of the first, and maybe one of the most important prerequisites that decided on the later definite “Slovienization” – of the regions along the middle Danube and the Theiss rivers, chiefly, however, the regions above the Danube, i.e. the Carpathian regions. Several ethnically mixed streams (the Goths, Huns, Herules, Gepids, Langobards) entered the area of the Carpathians and the adjoining southern regions on the Theiss and Danube rivers in the period of the formation of a “new” ethnic map of early medieval Europe in the middle of the first millennium. The latest knowledge proves that the mountainous central and northern Slovakia was not completely isolated from the above mentioned influences. In a chain of ethnic migration movements and conquests, Central Europe became the scene of encounters, raids, military expansions – invasions with desires for the wealth of the collapsing Roman Empire and its provinces. Jacques Le Goff gave a truthful account of them, saying that “*it is invasions that are primarily almost always an escape forward*”.³²

The settlement of the Slavic tribe of Sclavins in the upper Vistula region to the east of the Eastern Carpathian arc (western Ukraine and the neighbouring parts of Rumania) found by archaeological exploration dates back to the second half of the fifth century.³³ During the process of the completion of settlement these tribes penetrated through the Carpathian passes into our territory. They obviously did not enter unpopulated regions but they arrived in a territory, which, as V. Budinský-Krička said, was one of the regions colonized by older multiethnic groups – including the Slavic ethnic component – before the fifth century.³⁴ We consider the unambiguous arguments of K. Pieta that in spite of the fact that the relics of the Prešov type represent remnants of a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous group from the

³² LE GOFF, J.: *Kultura středověké Evropy*. Praha 1991, p. 31.

³³ FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, pp. 150–151.

³⁴ BUDINSKÝ-KRIČKA, V., see Note 25.

late Roman period, they do not show a Slavic substrate,³⁵ to be too categorical and hypothetical. He did not explain the non-Slavic character of this archaeologically unique cultural complex in north-eastern and northern mountainous regions of Slovakia. The complexity of the problem is on two levels: documentation of the settlement in the territory of eastern Slovakia as early as in the early Roman period and a share of this region in the process of the ethnogenesis of the Slavs, was shown by V. Budinský-Krička but also by D. Bialeková, B. Chropovský, J. Eisner, T. Kolník, J. Kudláček, P. Mačala, T. Štefanovičová, A. Točík, J. Werner.³⁶ P. Mačala³⁷ argues correctly that the occurrence of hand-made ceramics cannot be taken as a proof of the coming of a new (i.e. Slavic) population, but as evidence of the destruction of the existing social systems bound to the Germanic elite. Finally he reminds us that the absence of Germanic finds from the second half of the fifth to the first half of the sixth centuries in eastern Slovakia as well as the absence of the horizon of hand-made ceramics can serve as evidence of the stabilized social situation up to the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. (This insufficiently analysed phenomenon is confirmed by unique rich graves of the social élite from Cejkov and Ostrovany, potter's workshops producing a unique pottery designated as ceramics of Blažice type, etc.) There is another fact that points to the intensity of the settlement of these Carpathian regions, namely that the Gepids respected the "fixed border" in the north,³⁸ which was demarcated by former Sarmatian fortifications (*Limes Sarmatiae*, Fig. 1, p. 34). They were originally earthworks starting in the regions along the Danube bend, encircled almost the whole lowland in the north and the east and joined the river Danube again in its lower part. They were probably built as the defence of Roman provinces and territories inhabited by the Sarmatians after their defeat in 322, particularly under the increasing pressure of the Goths.

³⁵ PIETA, K.: *Beginnings of the Migration Period in North Carpathians*. *Antiquity* 65, 1991, p. 385.

³⁶ BIALEKOVÁ, D.: *Nové včasnoslovenské nálezy z juhovýchodného Slovenska*. Slovenská archeológia 10, 1962, p.136; BUDINSKÝ- KRIČKA, V.: *Novyje materialy dlia izučenija drevneslavjanskoy keramiki na poselenijach Vostočnoj Slovakií*. SIA 38, 1990, pp. 90–91; EISNER, J.: *Rukovéť slovenskej archeologie. Počátky Slovanů a jejich kultury*. Praha 1966, p. 104; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *K otázke najstaršieho slovanského osídlenia na Slovensku*. In: *Študijné zvesti AÚ SAV* 14, pp. 43–44; *Včasnoslovenský*, 1985, p. 84; KOLNÍK, T.: *Doba rímska doba stáhovania národov*. Slovenská archeológia 28, 1980, p. 202; KUDLÁČEK, J.: *Kultúra pohrebných polí čerňachovského typu na Ukrajine a antská problematika*. Slovenská archeológia 5, 1957, pp. 363–401; MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza*, 1995, pp. 71–73; ŠTEFANOVIČOVÁ, T.: *Etnické premeny v strednej a juhovýchodnej Európe v 6.–8. storočí*. In: *Historica* 32–33, 1981–1982, p. 8; TOČÍK, A.: *Súčasný stav archeologickej bádania najstarších dejín slovenského národa*. Archeologické rozhledy 15, 1963, p. 594; WERNER, J.: *Slawische Bügelfibel des 7. Jahrhunderts*. In: *Reinecke Festschrift*. München 1950, pp. 152–172.

³⁷ MAČALA, P.: *Etnogenéza*, 1985, p. 72.

³⁸ BÓNA, I.: *Der Anbruch des Mittelalters. Gepiden und Langobarden im Karpatenbecken*. Budapest 1976, Abb. 3; LOVÁSZ, E.: *Újabb adatok Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye 5.–6. századi történetéhez (Az egerlövői temetőj)*. In: *Móra Ferenz Múzeum Évkönyve 1984/85*, Szeged 1991, pp. 55–71.

It was already said, that the Slavic ethnic core had older roots. Later, thanks to a more significant arrival of Slavic inhabitants during the Migration Period in the fifth century, it was one of the largest ethnic groups, capable of adapting to new social development. This was probably also the basis of the “Slovienization” mentioned above not only of the region of the Carpathians but also the neighbouring southern and western areas. Extensive changes in the development of the middle-Danubian and Carpathian Slavs were of such intensity and importance that the fact was reflected in the content of Nestor’s annals *Povest’ vremennyh let* (from the beginning of the 12th century) even after centuries; a mention of the Danubian origin of the Slavs was preserved there.³⁹

The definite end of ancient Rome and its provinces led to general economic and cultural decay. The crisis and the fall of the Roman Empire led to a crisis in the so-called barbarian regions to the north of the Roman border on the rivers Rhine and Danube. There is a report from 448 sent by a rhetorician Priscos to the Byzantine emperor about his journey to the King of the Huns Attila which points to the existence of the Slavs in the Carpathians and on the middle Danube; during his journey, he met people who offered him a drink called *medos* (Slavic “*medovina*” – mead).⁴⁰ This Byzantine author writes that the “Scythians” (i.e. the Huns) are a mixture of different nations, who, in addition to Germanic (Gothic) and Scythian (Hunnish) and Latin languages, use another domestic dialect.⁴¹ Burial ceremonies at Attila’s grave were described by the late-Roman (Byzantine) historian of Gothic origin *Jordanes*, who denoted one of them as “*strava*”⁴² (Slavic denotation). In his work *On the origin and the deeds of the Goths (Getica)* he provides other priceless facts about the Slavs’ original homeland, particularly about their common advance with the Goths against the eastern part of the Roman Empire on the lower Danube that dates back to the fourth century. He gives their three names: *Veneti*, *Anti*, and the *Sclavini* (*Slov/eni*).⁴³ Later on, the Byzantine historian *Prokopios* from *Caesaria* registered the data on a Germanic tribe of *Herules* in his work *On the Gothic War*. The tribe was probably passing around 512 from Pannonia (the territory which is today approximately Magyar Republic) through Slovakia and Moravia – either

³⁹ ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské II.*, 1863, the source (Nestor’s annals) is published on pp. 724–727; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Slované*, 1989, p. 19; KUČERA, M.: *Veľká Morava a začiatky našich národných dejín*. Historický časopis 33, No. 2, 1985, pp. 164–165 (see other references therein).

⁴⁰ NIEDERLE, L.: *Rukověť slovanských starožitnosti*. Praha 1953, p. 53; RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene k dejinám Veľkej Moravy*. Bratislava 1964, p. 29; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Včasnoslovanský*, 1985, p. 83.

⁴¹ AVENARIUS, A.: *Stav, problémy a možnosti historického bádania o slovanskom období dejín Slovenska*. In: *Študijné zvesti AÚ SAV* 22, 1986, p. 22.

⁴² ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské II.*, 1863, pp. 687–692; RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, p. 29, Note 15 – § 49 JORDANES: *De origine actibusque Getarum (Getica)*; CHROPOVSKÝ, B.: *Včasnoslovanský*, 1985, p. 83.

⁴³ ŠAFÁŘÍK, P.J.: *Slovanské II.*, 1863, p. 689; RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, p. 28.

along the river Váh and the Moravian gate or the Devín gate and along the Morava river – to the regions on the lower Elbe and met there friendly Slavic people.⁴⁴ All this happened half a century before the coming of the Avars to the Danube lowland. *Prokopios* mentioned another fact concerning the significant position and organization of the Slavs, who also lived in that period in the territory of present-day Moravia and Slovakia, with links, “relationships” to the Langobards, who had their power centre in Pannonia (Fig. 2, p. 37). He describes how *Hildigis*⁴⁵ (pretender to the Langobardian throne), one of the legitimate sons of *Riusulf*, ran away from danger (of the king *Wach*) to the Slavs. It was probably later that a military alliance was concluded between the Langobardian commander *Hildigis* and the already well-organized Slavs, who were able to form an army (of warriors) as M. Kučera thinks.⁴⁶ New facts enable us to deduce that they were probably the Slavic tribes on the middle Danube, most probably the Slavic tribes in the territory of what are today Moravia and Slovakia.⁴⁷ These events took place almost a century before the establishment of Samo’s realm; this supports the existence of a well-organized community of Slavs in the region of the middle Danube in that period that was able to actively participate in military expeditions as early as during the sixth century.

The above mentioned sources also use the name *Sclavini* (Slováci). According to the results of scientific exploration obtained so far, this name was used to denote one of the largest groups of the Slavic population, which probably formed the ethnic basis of the west Slavic and partly also south Slavic tribes (Fig. 2, p. 37). It is beyond doubt that the Slavs living in the Carpathian mountains and throughout the region above the Danube river also belonged to them. They probably had – within generation links – contacts not only with the ethnic remnants of Celtic, Sarmatian, and Germanic tribes in that macroregion (north of the Danube, on the middle Danube and the Theiss rivers). Not only the epitaph on the tombstone of Bishop Martin of Tours, but also the above mentioned report by Prokopios from the beginning of the sixth century, refer to possible contacts between Slavic and non-Slavic ethnic groups in the then important geopolitical region during the 4th–6th centuries. Although there is some doubt about the precision of the words inscribed on the tombstone of Bishop Martin (died 397), who came from Sabaria (Szombathely), and worked as a missionary⁴⁸ (the church tradition praised him for his share in

⁴⁴ ŠAFÁŘI, P.J.: *Slovanské, II.*, 1863, the source published on pp. 692–694; RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, pp. 31–40.

⁴⁵ ŠAFÁŘI, P.J.: *Slovanské, II.*, 1863, p. 692 (original in Greek), pp. 693–694 (Latin translation by Claudio MALTRET: *De Bello Gothicō*); RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, p. 33.

⁴⁶ KUČER, M.: *Velká Morava*, 1985, see Note 43, p. 170; FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, 1994, p. 119.

⁴⁷ ŁOWMIŃSKI, H.: *Początki Polski 2.* Warszawa 1963, p. 312; KUČERA, M.: *Velká Morava*, 1985, p. 170.

⁴⁸ RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, p. 63; FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, 1994, p. 118; RADLINSKÝ, A.: *Nábožné výklyvy* (14th edition). Trnava 1945, p. 1118.

Christianization of the regions of Central Europe),⁴⁹ the ethnic communities probably correspond to particular realities preserved in tradition. The localization of the Slavs (Sclavus) – inscribed on the epitaph – in the fourth century might have corresponded to the contemporary situation in Central Europe.⁵⁰

In spite of the fact that by means of current archaeological methods the Slavic component can be singled out and recognized more precisely within the multiethnic strongly intermixed autochthonous settlement structure up to the end of the fifth but particularly from the first half of the sixth centuries (the finds belong to a group of objects of the “*Prague type*”, produced by the historically known tribe of the Sclavins);⁵¹ it is necessary, in terms of the foregoing views, to think about the older, so far archaeologically unidentified Slavic finds before the fifth century. The low number of the finds in southern regions is a consequence of the unstable conditions of that time and the northern regions are still waiting for their “discoverers”. There is another historically and archaeologically documented fact proving the existence of settlements in the region above the middle Danube. The Langobards moved along the whole territory of what is today Slovakia.⁵² Their most northerly settlements were identified in the territory of present-day southern Moravia, the neighbouring part of Austria, with the unique intervention in the setting of the Devín gate. Early Slavic finds dated from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the eighth centuries are archaeologically documented in the current territory of Slovakia from almost 150 localities.⁵³

As has already been said and illustrated by several examples, it is the task of archaeological research and survey to verify systematically all data and facts available not only from the perspective of material culture. Our aim is to find out the expected extent of the contacts of the Slavic tribes with the remnants of Celtic settlements in the northern Carpathians, with the Sarmatian ethnic group in the south and south-east and, especially with Germanic tribes (with “archaeological cultures”) throughout the Carpathian region, the territory north of the Danube river. Relations to the northern regions around the Vistula⁵⁴ and the eastern Transcar-

⁴⁹ AVENARIUS, A.: *Stav, problémy*, 1986, p. 22. The author says that the identification of Slavic settlements over such a large territory is problematic.

⁵⁰ ŁOWMIAŃSKI, H.: *Początki*, see Note 51, pp. 313–314; SZYDŁOWSKI, J.: *Zur Anwesenheit der Westslawen an der mittleren Donau im ausgehenden 5. und 6. Jahrhundert*. In: WOLFRAM, H. – DAIM, F. [Eds]: *Die Völker an der mittleren und unteren Donau im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert*. Wien 1980, p. 235; ZEMAN, J.: *Zu den chronologischen Fragen der ältesten slawischen Besiedlung im Bereich der Tschechoslowakei*. Archeologické rozhledy 18, 1966, pp. 165–166; RATKOŠ, P.: *Pramene*, 1964, p. 63.

⁵¹ FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, 1994, p. 151.

⁵² Ibid., p. 121.

⁵³ For details, see FUSEK, G.: *Slovensko*, 1994, pp. 153–267 (A list of localities and finds).

⁵⁴ PARCZEWSKI, M.: *Najstarsza faza kultury wczesnosłowiańskiej w Polsce*. Kraków 1988; *Die Anfänge der frühslawischen Kultur in Polen*. Wien 1993; GODŁOWSKI, K.: *Z badań nad*

pathian regions,⁵⁵ particularly in relation to the early Slavic settlement of eastern Slovakia, are important and often determining. I have already mentioned that the settlements of northern and central Slovakia are worthy of research since surprises are certainly waiting for us there. It is beyond doubt that archaeological survey and research have contributed to the deepening of our knowledge on the beginnings of Slavic settlement in Central Europe, from our point of view mainly the regions of the Carpathians and the middle Danube; it also helped to better define questions and new tasks in the research on the history and culture of the oldest Slavs from the time of the appearance of Šafárik's *Slovanské starožitnosti* (Slavonic Antiquities). It supports the fact that some events, developmental processes and changes of the past cannot be judged unambiguously and irrevocably because of their immensely controversial character and complexity. The research into the Slavic past, interactions of the Slavs with other ancient and early medieval tribes and ethnic groups fills the mentioned process with more content over the whole historical panorama during the first millennium A.D. The latest scientific achievements show that the remote world of the early Slavs is not only very instructive but it also contains many inspiring sources in the search for a truer image of their role and importance in the all-European cultural-historical process of civilization from the early historical and the early medieval period when the foundations for the formation of the "new" medieval Europe were laid.

zagadnieniem rozprzestrzenienia Słowian w V–VII w.n.e. Kraków 1979; *Zur Frage der Slawensitze vor der grossen Slawenwanderung im 6. Jahrhundert*. In: *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studii sull'alto medioevo*. Spoleto 1983, pp. 257–284; ŽAK, J.: *Problematik der westlichen Ausbreitung der Westslawen zu Beginn des Frühmittelalters (5./6.–7. Jh.)*. In: *Rapports du III^e Congrès d'Archéologie Slave T. I.* Bratislava 1979, pp. 917–939.

⁵⁵ BARAN, V.D.: *Istoki ranneslavjanskikh kul'tur Vostočnoj Jevropy v svete retrospektivnogo analiza*. In: *Slavjane Jugo-Vostočnoj Jevropy v predgosudarstvennyj period*. Kijev 1990, pp. 322–334; BARAN, V.D. – KOZAK, N.D. – TERPILOVSKIJ, V.R.: *Pochodžennja Slovjan*. Kyjiv 1991; TIMOŠČUK, V.O.: *Slovjani Pivničnoji Bukovini V–IX st.* Kyjiv 1976; RUSANOVA, I.P.: *Slavjanskije drevnosti VI–VII vv. Kul'tura pražskogo tipa*. Moskva 1976; PEŇAK, S.I.: *Novyje ranneslavjanskije pamjatniki serediny I. tys. n.e. v Zakarpatskoj oblasti USSR*. In: *Trudy*, Kijev. Tom IV, pp. 174–181.