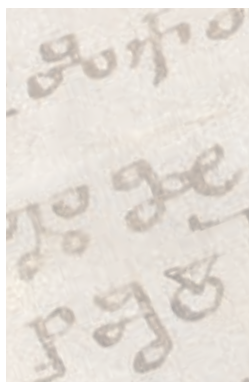
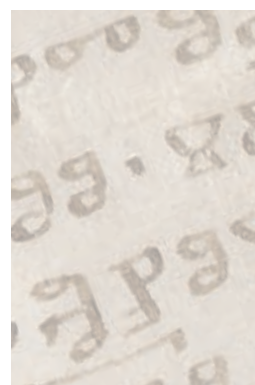
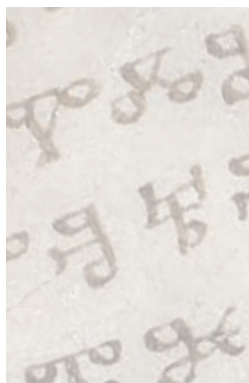


THE CYRIL AND METHODDIUS MISSION AND EUROPE

1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers
in Great Moravia

Pavel Kouřil et al.



The Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Brno



**VELKÁ
MORAVA**

1150 let křesťanství ve střední Evropě



Cyril a Metoděj
1150 let

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A MONTIBUS USQUE AD MARE: MORAVIA AND VENICE IN THE 9TH CENTURY

Petr Charvát

This is a contribution on relations between the early state of Moravia and the Italian city of Venice in the 9th century. The author presents an overview of the historical, philological and archaeological evidence which is currently at our disposal. Both regions had apparently been in contact at least since the 850s. The Thessalonian brothers themselves passed through Venice at least upon one occasion. We know of an important personage, priest John of Venice, who served Svatopluk, ruler of Moravia, in diplomatic missions. Some loanwords in Old Church Slavonic imply a considerable significance in the contacts between old Moravia and, most probably, the Friuli-Veneto ecclesiastical centres (Old Church Slavonic uses a term of Latin origin for Holy Communion). Archaeological finds bear out contacts in the sphere of church architecture, as well as in that of the minor arts.

Key words: mediaeval history, mediaeval Moravia, Venice

The theme with which I am humbly contributing to this collection thanks to the kind invitation of its publishers has already been touched upon in the literature.¹ However, a lot of time has passed since then, and the time has come to have a look at this issue from new points of view, in order to find out if new information has surfaced in relation to the contacts between the headquarters of early Moravian statehood, and one of the most important European hubs of early mediaeval long-distance trade.

In the supporting written evidence, contact between Moravia and the Republic located on the Adriatic lagoons appears in three places. According to the *Life of Constantine*, the envoy of the Papal Curia caught up with the two brothers in 867 in Venice, while they were returning from Moravia back to Byzantium, in order to pass on the Pontiff's invitation to join him for a debate on the nature of their Moravian mission directly in Rome.²

The second case concerns Svatopluk's court member and cleric called John of Venice (Johannes de Venetiis). Written resources from 874 describe him as a member of the company of Moravian ruler Svatopluk, namely as the leader of his envoys to Louis the German, the monarch with whom he negotiated the Forchheim peace treaty.³ In 879, Svatopluk put him in charge of a significant mission to Rome: his task was to refute accusations

towards Archbishop Methodius at the Holy See in Rome, namely accusations related to the spreading of untruths. His task was to assure the Pontiff that Moravian religious life did not deviate from the principles of ecumenical Christianity. It is clear that this skilful diplomat succeeded in his task; the following year he brought the Papal bull called *Industriae tuae* from Rome to Moravia.⁴ Roman sources, however, mention a person of the same name, referred to as *fidelis familiaris noster* or *venerabilis presbyter* in the environment of the Papal Curia under John VIII (872–882). This John, however, resided in Rome, and then took part in a mission to Croatian Dalmatia almost at the same time as the Forchheim peace talks were being held, which indicates that it could hardly be one and the same person.⁵ Martin Eggers clearly did not take this fact into account in his newest study, regarding the identity of both Johns as proven.⁶

In the well-known gospel – Evangelium de Cividale – one of our protagonists is mentioned as *prb Johannes de Venetiis*.⁷ The manuscript probably originated at the turn of the 6th century in one of the major Friuli monasteries, located on the pilgrim route into the Italian interior; it might have been San Giovanni Al Timaro near the town of Duino, or even closer in an unknown religious chapter, maybe even the one of Aquileia.⁸ Later, it became the property of the Aquileian patriarchs, and from there, it was passed to Cividale in 1409. Starting from the late 8th century, the names of all visitors to this religious institution were written on the first pages of this manuscript (*venerunt in isto monasterio*); it also included the names of those who explicitly requested that their name be included in the manuscript (*nomina sua scribere rogaverunt*). Personal names listed here come from

1 Oldřich TŮMA, *Great Moravia's Trade Contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Mediating Role of Venice*, *Byzantinoslavica* 46, 1985, pp. 67–77. See also Lech LECIEJEWICZ, *Great Moravia and Venice in the 9th century*, in: Dušan Čaplovič – Ján Dorula (ed.), *Central Europe in 8th–10th Centuries*, International Scientific Conference, Bratislava, October 2–4, 1995, Bratislava 1997, pp. 115–120.

2 O. TŮMA, *Trade Contacts* p. 76. see *Žitje Konstantina*, ed. Radoslav Večerka, in: MMFH II, p. 85. In the 9th century Venice was (at least nominally) subordinate to the Byzantine empire, see Antonio CARILE, *La Romània dalla Venetiarum provincia alla signoria di Venezia*, *Porphyra*, year 5, no 11, 2008 ("Venezia e Bisanzio"), pp. 18–45; Giorgio RAVEGNANI, *Venezia Bizantina*, *Porphyra*, year 5, no 11, 2008 ("Venezia e Bisanzio"), pp. 5–17, [online]. The two texts available from: <http://www.porphyra.it/Porphyra11.pdf>, [accessed 18 March 2014]. However, it seems that, in their case, one can expect a relatively high degree of integration into Byzantine culture: Michael McCORMICK, *The Imperial Edge: Italo-Byzantine Identity, Movement and Integration, A.D. 650–950*, in Helene Ahrweiler – Angeliki E. Laiou (ed.), *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, Washington, D. C. 1998, p. 17–52, [online]. Available from: <http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic450602.files/McCormick%201998%20Edge.pdf>, [accessed 18 March 2014].

3 Marie BLÁHOVÁ, *Italiener in den böhmischen Ländern der altmährischen und frühpfemysylidischen Zeit*, *CIVIS – Studi e testi*, year. 19, no. 56, 1995, pp. 101–116, on p. 104.

4 M. BLÁHOVÁ, *Italiener*, p. 105.

5 Zdeněk MĚŘÍNSKÝ, *České země od příchodu Slovanů po Velkou Moravu II*, Praha 2006, pp. 696–697.

6 Martin EGGERS, *Die Flussfahrt ostfränkischer Gesandter von Siscia nach Bulgarien (892) in weiterem historischem Kontext*, *Südost-Forschungen* 63/64, 2004–2005, pp. 1–17, p. 11.

7 Udo LUDWIG, *Transalpine Beziehungen der Karolingerzeit im Spiegel der Memorialüberlieferung* (MGH Studien und Texte Bd. 25), Hannover 1999, p. 233–234, and O. TŮMA, *Trade Contacts*, pp. 75–76.

8 U. LUDWIG, *Beziehungen*, p. 178.

the Germanic, as well as Lombardic, Slavic⁹ and Bulgarian linguistic areas. Perhaps around the year 866 even Tsar Michael-Boris¹⁰ was registered here, and the name of the Croatian leader Trpimir too.¹¹ These entries gradually ceased towards the end of the 9th century. From the persons from the Pribina and Kočela areas¹², we can find names such as *Szuentepulk*, *Rastislaus*, *Szuentezina* and *Predezlau*.¹³ The name of the well-known and famous Wiching is not missing either.¹⁴ The name of *Santpulk* might be a mention of Svatopluk II.¹⁵

This manuscript, however, is not very helpful with answering the question of the existence of one or two Johns, since an honourable ecclesiastical leader would venture to Moravia or Croatia through the Venetian region in either case. Also, the similarity of one of these Johns to the papal legate who was instructed by his Roman superiors in 879 to travel to Bulgaria through Croatia remains unsolved.¹⁶

We should also mention another source of information which might shed light on questions related to the mission of a Venetian cleric or clerics in Rome. On the relief located today on the portico of the Roman temple Santa Maria in Cosmedin, which is decorated with evangelist symbols and other motifs, one can read the following inscription: JOANNES DE VENETIA ME FECIT.¹⁷ The inscription dates back to the period of the middle 9th century.¹⁸ John of Venice seems to have served at Santa Maria in Cosmedin at the time of the pontificate of Nicholas I (858–867).¹⁹

The simplest solution to the whole situation would naturally lie in considering the last John of Santa Maria in Cosmedin to be a person completely unrelated to the Moravian diplomat, which is of course possible. However, it is very interesting that during the period of dramatic changes in Moravia, there were two persons of the same name present in Rome with obvious connection to the north of Italy (sculptural style). The hypothesis about two (or three?) Johns would then gain some supporting evidence. What the correct solution is, is difficult to say.

The third written record of the connection of Moravia to the main Adriatic port is related to the infamous fate of Methodius' pupils after the Master's death in 885. They were sold into slavery to Venice, and only after the merciful intervention of a Byzantine dignitary, who was present in this lagoon city at the time, were they able to regain their freedom.²⁰ It is possible that the path that these unfortunate fellows had to take was designated by specific toponyms.²¹

High-quality information about the situation in Moravia and Bohemia in 900 is provided by a Hebrew chronicle called *Josifon*, probably written in Italy soon after 953. The circumstances under which the writer of this chronicle obtained such information unfortunately remain unknown.²²

Philological research has uncovered some traces of the relations of the Slavic environment of Moravia with the Friuli, Romansh or Alpine Romanesque environment, in the form of language borrowings. This applies not only to the word "steel", which was taken from there some time around the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century,²³ but surprisingly also relates to the old Slavic term used for the Eucharist, *ъсѣдѣ*, borrowed from Latin *usandum*.²⁴

Even in the early Middle Ages, and specifically in the 9th century, Venice undoubtedly represented a long-distance trade centre of unique size, making use of both its protected location and its open access to the Mediterranean Sea for intensive commercial business activities; it connected centres of advanced manufacture and trade, in particular on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, with the areas along the northern shore,²⁵ thus embracing the role of an intermediary between consumers looking for prestigious luxury goods processed with strong added value, and those trying to get access to raw materials and half-finished products, which were either unavailable or hardly accessible in their motherland.

20 L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Great Moravia and Venice*.

21 Rudolf PLASCHKA – Anna DRABEK, *Österreich im Hochmittelalter (907 bis 1246)*, Wien 1991, pp. 479–480.

22 Most recent publication dealing with this chronicle Dariusz A. SIKORSKI, *Początki Kościoła w Polsce – Wybrane problemy*, Poznań 2012, p. 49 with literature.

23 František V. MAREŠ, *Die Metalle bei den alten Slawen im Lichte des Wort-schatzes*, Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 113/11, 1976, pp. 247–256; reprinted F. V. MAREŠ, *Cytilometodějská tradice a slavistika*, Praha 2000, pp. 583–589.

24 F. V. MAREŠ, *Das altkirchenslawische ѡсѣдѣ, "communio, eucharistia"*, in: D. Messner (Hrsg.), *Das romanische in den Ostalpen, Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historischen Klasse*, Bd. 442, Wien 1984, p. 125–131; reprinted F. V. MAREŠ, *Tradice*, pp. 578–581. On Christian missions to the western Slavs D. SIKORSKI, *Początki*, pp. 194–207.

25 History of Venice in the early Middle Ages see Andrea DA MOSTO, *I dogi di Venezia*, Firenze – Milano 2003. As for the latest archaeological work in the area please see Sauro GELICHI, *Flourishing Places in Northeastern Italy. Towns and Emporia between Late Antiquity and the Carolingian age*, in: Joachim Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman Towns and Trade in Europe, Byzantium and the Near East*, vol. 1: *The Heirs of Roman West* (Millennium-Studien 5/1), Berlin – New York 2007, s. 77–104, text available on <http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/dokumente/a/a150503+0001.pdf>, [accessed 18 March 2014]; Sauro GELICHI, *The rise of an early medieval emporium and the economy of Italy in the late Longobard age*, *Annales – Series Historia et Sociologia* 18/2, 2008, pp. 319–336, [online]. available from: http://www.google.cz/url?sa=t&rc=t&ig=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dlib.si%2Fstream%2FURN%3ANBN%3ASI%3ADOC-SXWOPMKH%2F5088d8f8-a4ff6-4c9d-bf40-de0a37642306%2FPDF&ei=hu_JUb_-04rQsgb8gIGQCg&usq=AFQjCNEpdA96aEX-6M13g6DWeNZ8E1Ditw&sig2=1T9J0ka2b2jwy55k4VHKRQ&bm=bv.48293060,bs.1,d.ZWU [accessed 18 March 2014]; and Richard HODGES, *Aistulf and the Adriatic Sea*, *Acta Archaeologica* 79, København 2008, s. 274–281 (collection of the latest research in the Adriatic sea area, among others, fieldwork in Comacchio – older than Venice i.e. 8th–9th century). See also Michael MCCORMICK, *Where the trading towns come from? Early medieval Venice and the northern emporia*, in: J. Henning (ed.), *Post-Roman Towns and Trade in Europe, Byzantium and the Near East*, vol. 1: *The Heirs of Roman West* (Millennium-Studien 5/1), Berlin – New York 2007, s. 41–68, [online]. Available from: <http://www.mgh-bibliothek.de/dokumente/a/a150503+0001.pdf> [accessed 18 March 2014].

9 *Ibidem*, pp. 178nn.

10 *Ibidem*, pp. 178nn.

11 *Ibidem*, pp. 222–224.

12 *Ibidem*, pp. 226–230.

13 *Ibidem*, pp. 230–235.

14 *Ibidem*, pp. 232–234.

15 *Ibidem*, pp. 216–217.

16 Florin CURTA, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500–1250*, Cambridge medieval textbooks, Cambridge 2006, p. 173.

17 Its original appearance was of course modified by the cutting off of the original construction for the purposes of the insertion of a younger portal from the 11th century. I focused on this particular issue in: Petr CHARVÁT, *Presbyter Johannes de Venetiis*, in: Šimon UNGERMANN – Renata PRICHYSTALOVÁ – Michal ŠULC – Jana KREJSOVÁ (ed.), *Zaměření na středověk – Zdeňkovi Měřinskému k 60. narozeninám*, Praha 2010, pp. 566–568.

18 Nicolette GRAY, *The Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions in the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Centuries in Italy*, in: *Papers of the British School at Rome* vol. XVI (New Series vol. III), 1948, pp. 38–163, such as no. 109, p. 119. The plastic decorations of this monument are connected to another Roman inscription, which probably originates in the middle of the 9th century and records the depositing of the reliquaries of the listed saints (St Sabinus of Spoleto, St Caesar, St Sebastian, St Abundius Quadrag[?]) in the temple of the Virgin Mary on the Aventine in Rome: N. GRAY, *Palaeography*, no 108, pp. 118–119. The iconography of the plastic decorations on both monuments is of Lombard character, in its content rather than technique. From an epigraphic point of view, these are typical examples of the "popular style", which reflected connections with Carolingian inscription culture and "Lombard" plastic art, i.e. works of art which were not of Roman origin.

19 N. GRAY, *Palaeography*, p. 107, note. 41.

One of the main articles of Venetian trade of that time was undoubtedly represented by male and female slaves, especially those from Slavic speaking areas, whose exploitation was not viewed as morally, ethically or catechetically wrong by Venetian slavers and their suppliers.²⁶ Venice became a popular destination for suppliers of such “goods”, and the prohibition of this kind of trade had to be repeated several times until it was finally terminated in around the 960s. The sale of Slavic slaves to Italy and beyond was documented in written sources from the 9th century.²⁷

Let us then state a concrete example, which is exceptional for the detailed information it provides. It is a letter dated from 906, written by Mrs Berta, “The Queen of all the Franks”, the wife of the Margrave of Tuscany – Adalberto II il Ricco, addressed to the Caliph of Baghdad – Al-Muktafi. In this letter, Mrs Berta informs the Caliph that she has learnt of his fame and power from the Moslem captives taken prisoner in the naval war with the states of the Moslem Maghreb in Pisa, and that she has decided to enter into an alliance with him. As a gesture of goodwill, Berta’s envoys delivered honourable gifts to the Caliph: fifty swords, fifty shields, fifty spears, twenty golden robes, twenty Slavic eunuchs and twenty graceful and well-built Slavic slave girls. Further on, the Margrave presented the Caliph with ten large dogs, seven hawks, sparrow-hawks, a silk tent with all accessories, and twenty woollen clothing robes dyed in a mysterious way with a colour extracted from marine bivalve molluscs, so that the substance changed the colour of the robe every hour of the day. She also added three more birds from the Frankish Kingdom, who gave a horrifying cry and started beating their wings if poisoned food or drink was presented to them, as well as glass beads, allowing one painlessly to remove arrowheads and spearheads from the body.²⁸ There are more similarly written records available at hand.²⁹

Where did the Slavic slaves in Tuscany come from? Were they either part of one of the Venetian exports, or did they come from other parts of the world, such as Moslem Spain or North Africa? The City on the Lagoons used to be visited by traders from all over

Europe, especially the Mediterranean, and their significant relations connected them with the areas subordinate to the Moslem Caliphate.³⁰ In that respect, it is necessary to remind ourselves of a recent finding which could shed light on information which is still unresolved by modern science, no matter how long it has been available to us already. In the 840s, the Caliph’s Minister of Post and Communications – Ibn Churdasbih – in his book called *The Book of Roads and Kingdoms*, described the business activities of a trading group called *Rādhānīja*.³¹ These wholesalers, from their bases in Moslem Spain, used to develop far-reaching commercial and business activities across the countries of the Franks and Slavs, and from Central Asia to China. They allegedly also used sea routes, across the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez straits, into the Indian Ocean and all the way to China. Churdasbih’s information on *Rādhānīja* has evoked rather contradictory and sceptical feelings in some researchers. Nowadays, new information has been uncovered from written Indian records, regarding a trading company of *Añjuvaṇṇam*, a company of businessmen of mainly western Asian origin, who were active in the 9th century on a continental scale from Arabia to Indonesia.³² The sea route on which the trading company called *Añjuvaṇṇam* was active most certainly makes up more than half the distance which had to be overcome on the seas of the southern hemisphere by the ships of *Rādhānīja*. Therefore, the existence of the *Añjuvaṇṇam* trading group evidences the extraordinary “action radius” of early Mediaeval wholesalers, and so if not proving the existence of *Rādhānīja*, then at least making the possibility easier to acknowledge.

As for the archaeological evidence, one should first note the items which have to be excluded from our considerations. This applies in particular to Moravian – or, to be more precise, Mikulčice – findings, in the form of Italian coins from the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, obtained in all likelihood during the Hungarian raids on northern Italy. However, how they appeared in Mikulčice and what they can tell us about the Moravian connection to these Hungarian raids remains a mystery.³³ An ancient jasper gem found in Mikulčice in one of the main graves, which represents a cluster of a divine head (?), human head, and the head of a bird (*gryllos*), very likely comes from somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, and could have arrived in Moravia by any possible means.³⁴ A bone or antler target from Mikulčice, showing a quadruped with a long nose and horns attacking

26 Slavery in the early Middle Ages was documented in detail by Nicolas CARRIER, *Les usages de la servitude – Seigneurs et paysans dans le royaume de Bourgogne (VI^e–XV^e siècle)*, Paris 2012, pp. 41–96, 97–132, 133–194. Written sources even depict the release of a priest from slavery at the moment when secular dignitaries give him over to religious dignitaries, who intend to appoint him parish priest of a certain church (the same source p. 167–168). “Slaves” were bound to the land, which they were not permitted to leave, but it was also not allowed to take the land from them (same source p. 182). Before 850 in Burgundy, the position of the servant staff used to be recorded in detail (same p. 184); between 850 and 1150, however, these people, including their property, wives and children, became part of one’s property, under the collective term of *servi* or *manipia* (same sources p. 181), *servus* = general expression for one’s subject (same source p. 184); interpretation of the term used for “Slave-holding society” (Carl HAMMER, *A Large-Scale Slave Society of the Early Middle Ages – Slaves and their families in early medieval Bavaria*, Aldershot – Burlington 2002) therefore depends on what exactly the term *servus* means, the meaning of which clearly changes over time; see also J. HENNING, *Strong Rulers – Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians and the Archaeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD*, in: Jennifer Davis – M. McCormick (ed.), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe – New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, Aldershot and Burlington 2008, pp. 33–54, [online], available from: http://books.google.cz/books?id=e7b_LPPpL88C&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=the+long+morning+of+medieval+europe&source=bl&ots=JXt809Kfq9&sig=55MVIDgnPz4MqTKGTa17_qVkg5g&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=7ebJUnh0BP308-pgcAl&sqi=28&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAQ [accessed 18 March 2014].

27 O. TŮMA, *Trade Contacts*, p. 67–68. On that note L. LECIEJEWICZ, *Great Moravia*, p. 115–120; on that note Catia Renzi RIZZO, *Pisa e il mare nell’Alto Medioevo*, in: Marco Tangheroni (ed.), *Pisa e il Mediterraneo – Uomini, merci, idee dagli Etruschi ai Medici*, Pisa – Milano 2003, p. 121–125; and Khalil ‘ATHAMINA, *How did Islam contribute to change the legal status of women: The case of the jawārī, or the female slaves*, in: *Esclavitud e islam*, Sección monográfica de Al-Qantara, Revista de estudios árabes XXVIII/1–2, 2007, p. 383–408. The finding of possible slave shackles from Chotěbuz – Podobora settlement: Pavel KOUŘIL, *Slovanské osídlení českého Slezska*, Brno – Český Těšín 1994, s. 156, tab. XIII: 1 on p. 217.

28 C. R. RIZZO, *Pisa e il mare*, pp. 123–124.

29 K. ‘ATHAMINA, *How did Islam*, p. 389. In 886, another “Queen of all the Franks” sent the Caliph a group of 20 male and 20 female Slavic slaves.

30 On this topic: I Dietrich CLAUDE, *Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer während des frühen Mittelalters*, Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr im Mittel- und Nord-europa II. Kolloquium der Kommission für die Altertumskunde Mittel- und Nord-europas 1980, Göttingen 1985, p. 241; and Stefano CARBONI, *Moments of Vision: Venice and the Islamic World, 828–1797*, in: St. Carboni (ed.), *Venice and the Islamic World 828–1797*, New York – New Haven – London 2007, pp. 12–35.

31 On that topic Petr CHARVÁT, *Slyšte volání muezzinova – České země a arabský svět ve starším středověku (do roku 1300)*, Plzeň 2010, pp. 30–33.

32 Yellava SUBBARAYALU, *Añjuvaṇṇam: A Maritime Trade Guild of Medieval Times*, in: Y. Subbarayalu, *South India under the Cholas*, New Delhi 2012, p. 176–187. This was a merchant’s guild of Western Asian marine traders (Arabs, Persians, Jews, Syrians, Christians). The inscriptions from the mid-9th century mention locations from Arabia to Java. After 1000 the members of *Añjuvaṇṇam* were mostly Muslims; references to them in India appear in inscriptions located on the sea shore. The *Añjuvaṇṇam* company functioned until the end of the 13th century, then gradually disappeared from written records (here on pp. 185–187).

33 As for the finding of coins – Marian MAZUCH, *Výzkumy severního podhradí hradiště Vály u Mikulčic: k otázce násilného zániku velkomoravských mocenských center na počátku 10. věku*, in: Jiří Doležal – Martin Whoda (ed.), *Mezi raným a vrcholným středověkem*, Pavlu Kouřilovi k šedesátým narozeninám přátelé, kolegové a žáci, Brno 2012, pp. 137–159, on p. 150 (coins issued in Pavia and in Milan during 894–895 or 896–898 come from the layer above the graves). Most recent publication on Mikulčice Lumír POLÁČEK – Petra MARÍKOVÁ VLČKOVÁ, *The archaeology of Mikulčice 1*, 1st edition, Brno 2008.

34 P. CHARVÁT, *Fliege hoch, du stolzer Adler: Eine orientalische Gemme aus frühmittelalterlichen Mähren*, CIVIS – studi e testi, year. 29, no. 86, 2005, pp. 105–114, [online]. Available from: <http://web.ff.cuni.cz/ustavy/uprav/pages/publikace/charvat.deutsch.doc> [accessed 18 March 2014].

an enemy represented by a great reptile (crocodile?), most likely represents a piece of late-ancient art, and therefore does not belong to the mediaeval era. Similar analogies show a similar mystic figure only during the 7th century³⁵, then the originally unified icon falls apart into two mutually completing elements, which together form the animal sign of Capricorn (and possibly also Sagittarius), to which the original image was most probably related.³⁶

It would be appropriate to draw attention to the fact that the 9th century Moravian jewel, according to the judgement of experts, has nothing to do either with Byzantium³⁷ or with the Islamic Orient.³⁸ The problem with finds of Byzantine origin is the fact that they could have been brought to Moravian territory from practically anywhere, including the “middle stations” in Western Europe. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to take into account only those objects in whose case it could be inferred that they were brought through northern Italy, based on their appearance and relevant contextual information.³⁹ One of the pieces of information that sheds light on the logistics of the contacts between Moravia and the Mediterranean areas in the early Middle Ages is represented by donkey bones, pointing to the Mediterranean origin of the animal.⁴⁰ Archaeological evidence related to contact routes in Italy and the Danubian areas was collected by Dietrich Claude.⁴¹

The small reliquary of Mikulčice with a double lens of high quality red glass, decorated with genuine pearls on a silver wire and containing the blood of the Lord, might have been brought to Moravia from Reichenau, but it might also have been brought directly from Rome.⁴² In that case, transport through Venice would have represented a possible and feasible alternative.

The equipment and appearance of some Great Moravian architecture evidently attained some Mediterranean quality as well.⁴³

The third stage of the temple in “Sady” near Uherské Hradiště is an example of an imported form of a double church, which often occurs on the northern side of the Mediterranean, especially in northern Italy.⁴⁴

Direct evidence of the contacts between Moravia and the areas of the Adriatic and Mediterranean is represented by the presence of a certain kind of marine shell, namely the purple dye murex, originating, according to scientific analyses, exactly from these areas.⁴⁵ In the case of the genuine pearls on earrings from grave no. 209/59 uncovered in Uherské Hradiště – Sady, a route through Venice is very likely, given the fact that genuine pearls in early mediaeval Europe were mainly imported from the Gulf region.⁴⁶

Personal contact of some Moravians with the Mediterranean area also cannot be entirely ruled out, as well as the possibility of the arrival of some people of Mediterranean origin in Moravia. The authors of anthropological research in Mikulčice confirmed the presence of unspecified discrepancies in one of the dead, buried at the burial ground of the first church in Mikulčice, whose origin might be traced to the Mediterranean.⁴⁷ In view of the fact that the burial ground might represent a burial temple of the monastery or of some religious faction, the dead person might really be somebody from the south.⁴⁸

A serious problem, however, is represented by noble minerals of Greek origin, which were used in some complex Great Moravian works of architecture (*porfido Verde Antico*).⁴⁹ They may represent spolia from Roman buildings, no matter how sceptical modern researchers are about the question of obtaining greater volumes of complex materials from the ruins of ancient architecture.⁵⁰ If, however, we take into account the distribution of minerals for aesthetic purposes, which were extracted (not only) on the Peloponnese, and used in a variety of significant architectonic works of art of early mediaeval Europe and the Mediterranean (Jerusalem, Cordoba, Bavaria, Aachen, Hedeba/Haithaba [*porfido rosso*], Kiev),⁵¹ their transportation through the Venetian area is certainly an alternative worth considering.⁵²

The symbolism of precious and semi-precious stones also deserves attention. They were worn as part of the personal

35 P. CHARVÁT, *Velká Morava a koptský Egypt*, Památky archeologické 77, 1986, s. 5–17; IDEM, *Die Langobarden und Böhmen*, CIVIS – Studi e testi, year. 19, no. 55, 1995, pp. 7–14, 9–11. On that note – Claudio FRANZONI – Enrica PAGELLA, *Arte in Piemonte – Antichità e Medioevo*, Ivrea (To) 2002, p. 48, Fig. 50 – *Orafo lombardo*, reliquary with remains of Santa Presepe, Santo Sepolcro, stone with which St Eusebius was stoned to death, and reliquaries of other martyrs, second half of the 7th century to the beginning of the 8th century, today deposited at Vercelli, Museo del Tesoro della cattedrale. The pouch-shaped early mediaeval reliquary, a rectangular double field on its bottom lower part, depicting animals with opened mouths, showing their tongues, while facing one another, on the circular medallions an animal with plaited body and antlers, similar to the creatures depicted on discs in Mikulčice.

36 Such decoration also appears on an ivory comb, which might have been made in the court of the King of the Western Franks – Charles the Bold (840–877): Michael PETER, *Elfenbeinkamm aus Pavia*, in: Matthias Puhle – Gabriele Köster (ed.), *Otto der Grosse und das römische Reich*, Kaisertum von der Antike zum Mittelalter, Regensburg – Magdeburg 2012, pp. 495–496.

37 Hanna KŮČKA KRENZ, *Bizuteria północno-zachodnio-słowiańska we wczesnym średniowieczu*, Poznań 1993, pp. 152–153.

38 Jennifer K. ZIMMER, *Early Islamic Bead Earrings*, in: Na'ama Brosh (ed.), *Jewellery and Goldsmithing in the Islamic World*, International Symposium, The Israel Museum 1987, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 39–53, on pp. 47–50. For this quotation I have to express my gratitude to my learned colleague and friend Ludvík Kalus (université de Paris IV – panthéon – Sorbonne).

39 A similar hypothesis was formed by Naďa PROFANTOVÁ, *Byzantské nálezy v 6.–11. století v Čechách a na Moravě*, in: P. Charvát – P. Maříková Vlčková (ed.), *Země Koruny české a východní Středomoří ve středověku a raném novověku*, Praha 2008, pp. 73–120, on pp. 85–93.

40 N. PROFANTOVÁ, *Byzantské nálezy*, p. 99.

41 D. CLAUDE, *Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer*, p. 138, note 60; also the findings of Arab coins on this route, see P. CHARVÁT, *On Slavs, silk and the early state: The town of Čáslav in the pristine Middle Ages*, Památky archeologické 85/1, 1994, pp. 108–153, on p. 114.

42 Ivan MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny ve středověku Moravy a Slezska*, Brno 2000, p. 39; P. CHARVÁT, *Kult krve Páně na Velké Moravě*, Marginalia Historica IV, Praha – Litomyšl 2001, pp. 63–72.

43 Jana MAŘÍKOVÁ KUBKOVÁ, *Interiérová výzdoba raně středověkých církevních staveb*, in: P. Charvát – P. Maříková Vlčková (ed.), *Země Koruny české a východní Středomoří ve středověku a raném novověku*, Praha 2008, pp. 125–129.

44 P. CHARVÁT, *Eine frühmittelalterliche Doppelkirche in Mähren: Ihr Ursprung, Charakter und Deutung*, CIVIS – studi e testi, year 25, no. 74, 2001, pp. 79–90.

45 N. PROFANTOVÁ, *Byzantské nálezy*, p. 98; I. MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny*, pp. 35–37.

46 I. MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny*, p. 34–35, pict. 19, pp. 35, 44. The case of the genuine pearls from the Mikulčice reliquary with the blood of the Lord might be similar (see above); I. MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny*, pp. 39, 44.

47 Milan STLOUKAL – Luboš VYHNÁNEK, *Slované z velkomoravských Mikulčic*, Praha 1976, pp. 146–147.

48 M. STLOUKAL – L. VYHNÁNEK, *Slované*, p. 38.

49 I. MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny*, pp. 29–30.

50 Jiří MUSIL, *Römische Ziegel*, in: L. Poláček (ed.), *Studien zum Burgwall von Mikulčice sv. 2*, Brno 1997, pp. 311–339.

51 Vasilios MELFOS, *Green Thessalian stone. The Byzantine quarries and the use of a unique architectural material from the Larissa area, Greece, Petrographic and geochemical characterization*, Oxford Journal of Archaeology 27/4, 2008, p. 387–405. Regarding the import of valuable minerals into early mediaeval Europe see also H. DANNHEIMER, *Porfido rosso, Porfido verde und Verde antico. Exotische Steine aus dem frühmittelalterlichen Bayern*, Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter 71, 2006, pp. 283–291.

52 See the findings of the seal of a Byzantine dignitary called Theodosios Baboutzikos, who was authorised by the emperor in Venice to reside in Riba, Haithaba/Hedeba and Tissø in the Baltic States during 840–841 in order to obtain the assistance of the Western sovereigns against the Muslims. M. MCCORMICK, *Where do trading towns*, p. 52.

jewellery and decoration of the Great Moravian elites, and had Christian connotations.⁵³ The so-called Zelnitius' belt buckle from grave no. 96/A from the burial ground in the Old Town in Uherské Hradiště⁵⁴ bears two red colour pads in the centre of the fields on its front side, in two square-shaped fields with rounded corners. In the corners of both fields, the artist inserted pairs of red and green pads facing one another diagonally, whereas the triangular areas dividing the middle part of the buckle between the two fields bear two pads of yellowish colour. The colours are created by inserted glass; genuine almandine only appears in the upper corners of both fields. The symbolism of the set of red and green colours refers to mediaeval ecclesiastical authorities from St Bede the Venerable, to the power of the Lord, exercised through the Creation, and the idea of Paradise (green), as well as the earthly life of Jesus Christ and his suffering, through which Man was redeemed (red).⁵⁵ The belt buckle set was also decorated with a yellowish, most likely golden colour, symbolising wisdom.⁵⁶ The person wearing this buckle, accompanied by wisdom, should therefore during their earthly life have their attention drawn constantly to the Christian promise of paradise. The fact that the buckle contains only two genuine precious stones, while the others were made of glass, suggests that a significant artistic feature was the colour, not the material. The author, or better the inspiration, of such a style of the "Zelnitius' belt buckle" was most likely a Christian cleric; however, we do not have the opportunity to decide if he was active in one of the Bavarian headquarters (Regensburg? Passau?) or even in the areas of northern Italy, Rome or Byzantium.

To sum up, we can conclude that we may garner some information about the contacts between Moravia of the 9th century with Venice, primarily from written and philological sources. These are supported by archaeological evidence, which, no matter how vague and indefinite, gives valuable testimony to the economic, religious and spiritual aspects of mutual interaction between the Moravian elites and the foremost dignitary circles of the city located over the Adriatic lagoons, for which we would be looking in vain in the texts of the written sources of that time.

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54 I. MRÁZEK, *Drahé kameny*, pp. 33–34, fig. 18.

55 H. ŠEDINOVÁ, *Symbolika*, p. 43.

56 *Ibidem*, p. 42.

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