

Jiří Macháček

'Too far away' - the archaeology of the Early Medieval Society in East-Central Europe. The case of Great Moravia

The early Middle Ages is commonly viewed as a period of great significance in European history for such key issues as the emergence of individual ownership of land in areas never included into the Roman Empire; the legal codification; the conversion to Christianity; or the crystallization of new forms of social and political organization linked to appearance of medieval states. Chris Wickham's recent *Framing the Middle Ages* (2005) deals with some of these, as well as other, transformation taking place in "Europe and the Mediterranean" between 400 and 800. However, most conspicuously absent from this massive synthesis is any reference to any region in Eastern Europe. The periphery of Wickham's "core area" in central and western Europe, which is now known as East Central Europe, remained outside his and other scholars' interest in the early Middle Ages. As Paul Barford (2001) writes, the whole region "has been seen as 'too far away' for many western historians and archaeologists to consider in detail, and authors of general textbooks of European history ... often satisfy themselves with a few generalizations on the subject." There is perhaps no other topic in the historiography of early medieval east central Europe that can better illustrate such situation, than Great Moravia (in today's Czech Republic and Slovakia). The principal aim of the paper is to understand the processes taking place in early medieval society from East-Central Europe at the time of the rise and the collapse of Great Moravia in the context of the all-European history. A move forward in terms of solving the above-mentioned issues can be facilitated principally by new archaeological discoveries, such as those made by applicant over recent years especially at Pohansko near Břeclav (CZ) and its surrounding.