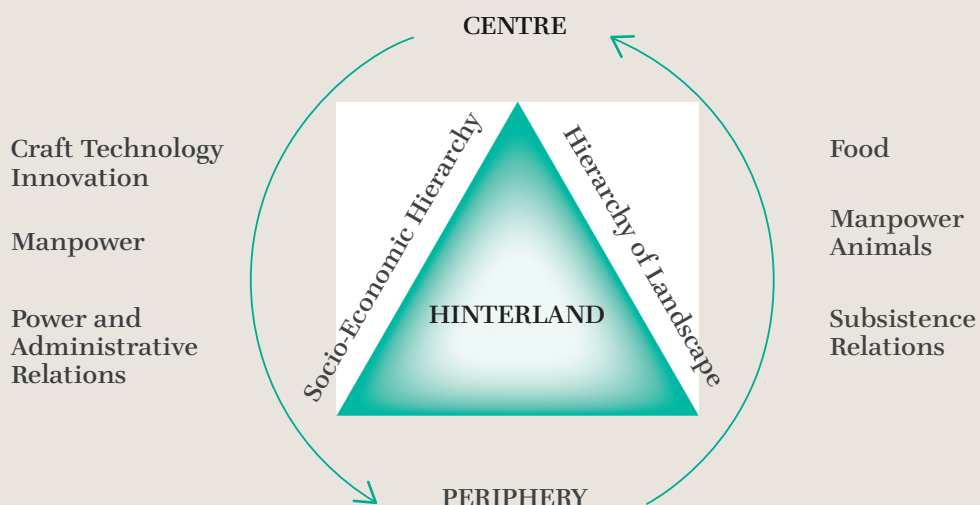


# GREAT MORAVIAN SETTLEMENT IN MIKULČICE-TRAPÍKOV AND ECONOMIC HINTERLAND OF THE POWER CENTRE

Rural Economy, Centres and Organisational and Functional  
Principles of Great Moravia



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Rural Economy, Centres and Organisational and Functional Principles of Great Moravia

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STUDIEN ZUM BURGWALL VON MIKULČICE

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With contributions from

Peter Barta - Petra Brukner Havelková - Gabriela Dreslerová - Rastislav Milovský

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Prof. Mgr. Jiří Macháček, Ph.D. and PhDr. Gabriel Fusek, CSc.



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# 1. Introduction

Economic and social relationships are the building blocks of any historical or present-day society. These relationships are a prerequisite for the functioning of communities and the formation of complex social systems and are the primary focus of archaeological research as we understand it (HLADÍK 2012, 111-135; 2019; MAZUCH/HLADÍK/SKOPAL 2017, 14-20; NAKOINZ 2013). The concept of this book is based on this statement. None of the archaeological record involved in our research should be studied separately, in isolation. We aim to maximise their information potential and place them in a wider time and space context. This means that localisation and dating of the archaeological materials are fundamental to the issues under consideration because they define (delimit) the community whose spatial and temporal relationships were studied.

The primary archaeological record studied mostly come from the rescue excavations at the Mikulčice-Trapíkov site on the periphery of the Mikulčice agglomeration (FIG. 1). These were carried out over 15 years in the late 20th and early 21st century (see Chapter 5). This enabled us to approach the fieldwork in the last period (2010-2012 and 2015) not as rescue excavations where previously the site had been *terra incognita*, but as systematic excavations. These enhanced our knowledge of the components of the settlement network and were functionally interpreted based on previous excavations. The situation enabled us to predict many circumstances of the research during the excavations and to modify the methodology to focus on specific historical issues.

Thus, the excavations at Trapíkov in the cadastral territory of Mikulčice could be included in the concept of the research into socio-economic interactions and social organisation in Great Moravia and interactions with the landscape, which includes several case studies recently published (FIG. 2; HLADÍK/HLADÍKOVÁ/TAMAŠKOVIČ 2018). The concept is based on the principles of relational archaeology (MAZUCH/HLADÍK/SKOPAL 2017, 14-20; WATTS 2013), which to a large extent, draw on Kristiansen's concept of renewed modernity in archaeology (KRISTIANSEN 2014). In line with these theoretical concepts, we intend to study global topics using the most

complex study of data on a lower local level as possible. Relational archaeology and the renewed modernity theory form an ideal theoretical, linguistic and methodological framework for research designed in this way (HLADÍK 2019). The power of both these concepts crosses the boundaries of individual research scopes. At the same time, the research scope is a crucial factor influencing the final output in many ways. However, it significantly affects the entire research process, from excavations through description methodology to data analysis and synthesis.

In terms of specific historical issues, the main ambition of our long-term research is to engage in a debate on the form, description and interpretation of social and economic relations in Great Moravia. This has been taking place among Moravian, Czech and Slovak archaeologists and historians in recent years (see below). Before we progress to our model of the socio-economic relations in Great Moravia, or more specifically, to a model of the socio-economic relations of the Great Moravian central site of Mikulčice-Valy and the neighbouring settlements along with the relationship of this settlement to the landscape, we can present actual archaeological materials discovered at the Trapíkov site. As mentioned, we aim to study the relationships in early medieval society in a more global scope, which we deem possible by using the data from the excavations of unfortified settlements around the central agglomeration of Mikulčice-Valy. Generally, in such research, the starting point we have defined about the types of burial pits, wooden structures in graves and tombs in Mikulčice (MAZUCH/HLADÍK/POLÁČEK 2018, 87-117) holds true. The research into the phenomena that provide us with plentiful resources to construct an image of the social and economic relations in Great Moravia, such as subsistence strategy, building/architecture, craft and trade, is based primarily on data from the central sites. However, to extract information from archaeological sources as efficiently as possible, it is essential to focus on the settlement outside the centres to balance the disproportion in the archaeological materials from the centres with those from the neighbouring areas. If this was not reflected and the disproportion remained unbalanced



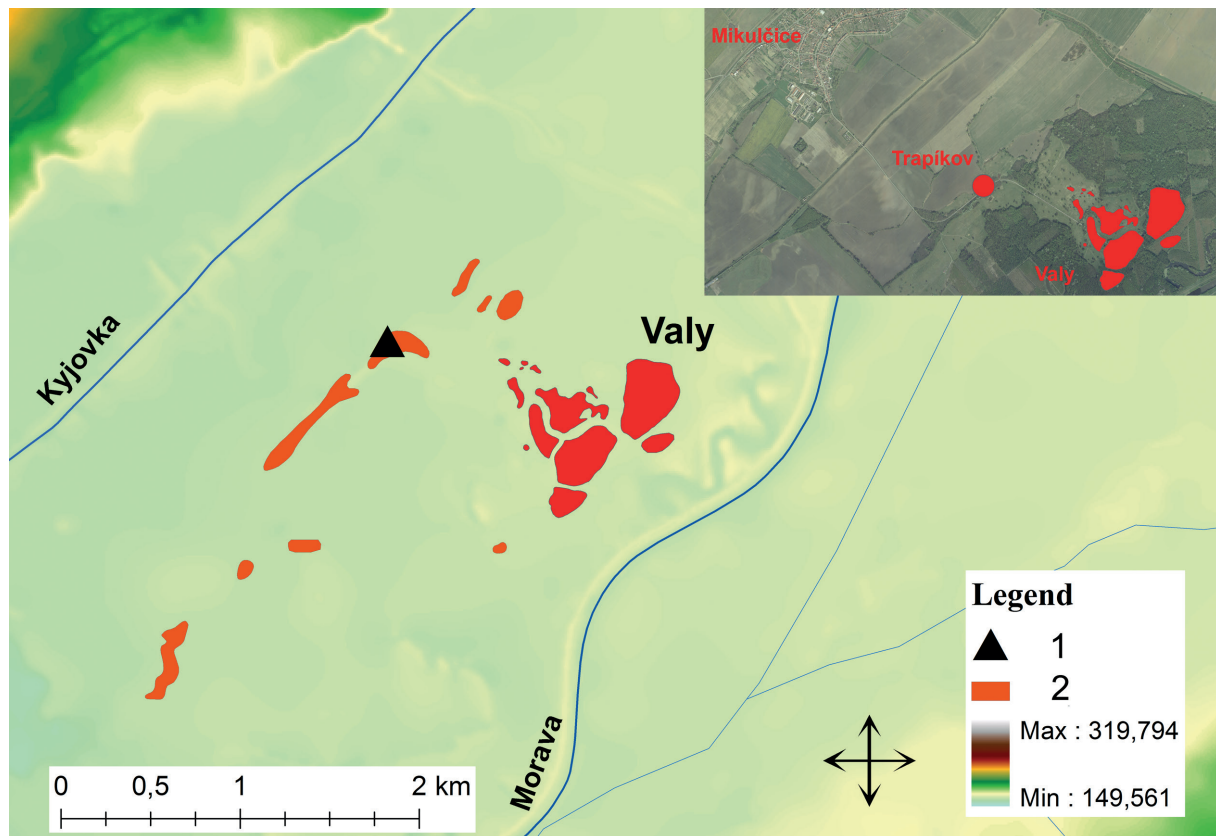


FIG. 1 | The position of the Trapíkov and Virgásky dunes, where the described archaeological records were excavated. Legend: 1 - Trapíkov and Virgásky, 2 - sand dunes.

then conclusions and comparisons would be made based on abnormal data. If only data from the central sites were used, this would just take into account a small “anomaly” - a segment of a wide range of social and economic interactions in the studied society. The central sites, the notional tops (anomalies) of the entire settlement and economic hierarchy, accumulated a great concentration of functions and meanings, which makes it difficult to extract the basic economic, social and spiritual patterns of the functioning of the society. On the other hand, if we used only data from the area outside the centres, we would not be able to reveal the important parameters of the relations between the centres, the adjacent area and the periphery. This is why it is necessary to study the Great Moravian society in a spatially and functionally variable “landscape”. When using such research, we must accept a certain ambiguity in our conclusions and that the interpretative narrative models constructed on them are never going to offer simple, or even unambiguous, answers to most questions. Although such a statement might make us feel desperate with ambiguity and relativisation of any attempt at objectivity, thinking it through more thoroughly will reveal the correctness of the presented concept. This is particularly because studying historical societies means looking into an extremely complex network of relationships. Therefore, our

models cannot offer simple - or even unambiguous - explanations. In other words, if something in the past used to be complex, the image of it must also be complex.

The Trapíkov settlement, where the archaeological record used in this work was primarily discovered, has a unique position in terms of the proposals mentioned above. As will be discussed in the interpretative parts of this book, the Trapíkov settlement is situated at the border of the agglomeration and its hinterland. This allows us to see the agglomeration and its surroundings from the unique perspective of a link connecting two worlds, two levels of reality, and two links in the chain of social relations in Great Moravia.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As the present text contains many mentions of “surroundings” and “hinterland” in various contexts, we consider it necessary to define our understanding of these terms in our research. The surroundings denote an area geographically close to the agglomeration or another component of the settlement network. It is a term that is used analytically, without the burden of historical or cultural interpretation. However, the term hinterland is interpretive, and is used as such in our text. It is used in passages addressing specific social and economic relationships between the centre and other components of the settlement network in its surroundings.

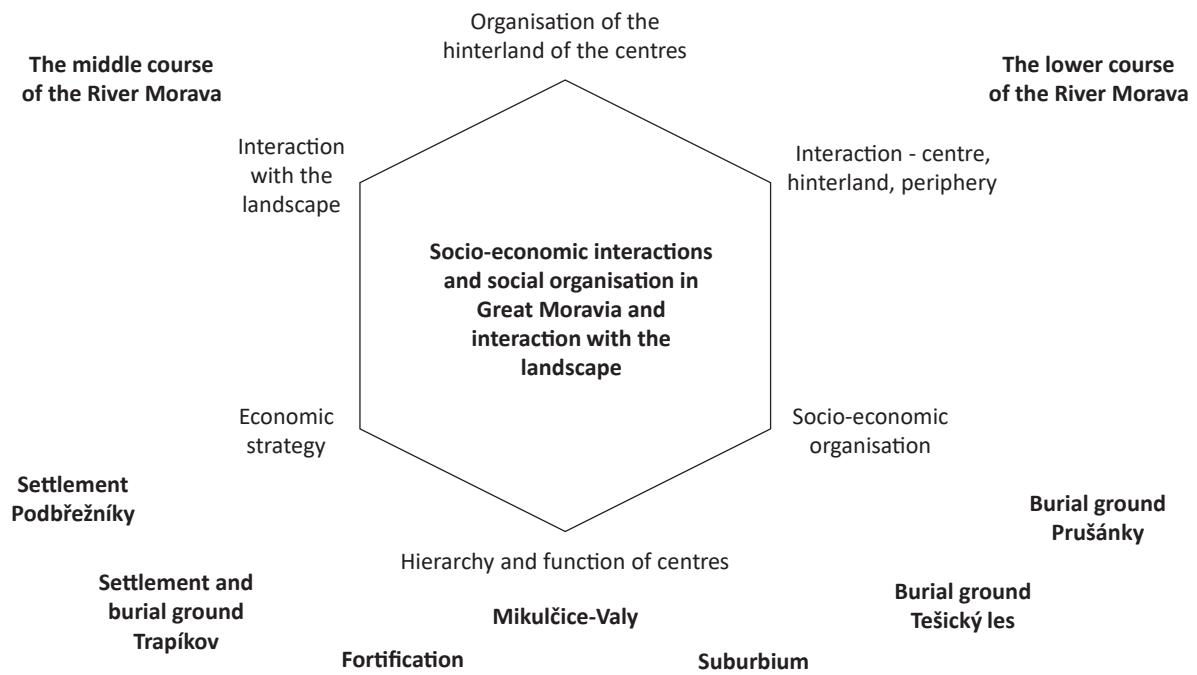


FIG. 2 | Concept of the research into the socio-economic interactions and social organisation in Great Moravia and the interaction with the landscape. Selected case study references: Middle Morava: HLADÍK 2014, Lower Morava: HLADÍK/HLADÍKOVÁ/TAMAŠKOVIČ 2018; TAMAŠKOVIČ/HLADÍK 2015; TAMAŠKOVIČ 2016, Podbřežníky settlement: MAZUCH 2008, fortification: HLADÍK et al. 2014; MAZUCH 2014, Mikulčice: MAZUCH 2013; LÁTKOVÁ 2017, suburbium: HLADÍK/MAZUCH/POLÁČEK 2008, Tešický les burial ground: HAVELKOVÁ et al. 2013; HLADÍK 2010, Prušánky burial ground: MAZUCH et al. 2017.

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