

ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИСТОРИИ И АРХЕОЛОГИИ СРЕДНЕВЕКОВОЙ ЕВРОПЫ

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SLAVIC AND MORAVIAN IDENTITIES IN THE 9th CENTURY

The article is concentrated on the dual identity of the inhabitants of so-called Great Moravia (the 9th century). A concise overview of the concepts of ethnogenesis and ethnic identity used in historiography is given, with a special attention to contemporary “post-modern” skeptical views on the origin of the Slavs. It seems that there is no rational reason for denying at least some level of Slavic identity. The meanings of terms *the Moravian* and *the Slav* in various Latin and Old Church Slavonic written sources of the 9th century are analyzed. As it seems, concrete identity played more important role in comparison with the more general Slavic one, however, they had both place in the mental structures of early medieval Moravian society. Before the 9th century the Slavic identity was not always connected with the name *Slavs*. When analyzing the *Lives* of Constantine and Methodius, we can conclude, that there was a strong increase of using the term *Slavs* in the second text in comparison to the first one. This phenomenon can be explained by the needs of the church administration in Moravia during the attacks of the Bavarian clergy against Methodius and his interests both in Moravia and Pannonia. The protection of his interests was associated with the protection of the Slavic language, therefore the enemies of Methodius were considered to be at the same time the enemies of the Slavic liturgy and the Slavic language.

Keywords: *Life of Constantine*, *Life of Methodius*, identity, *gens*, Slavs, Moravians, Great Moravia, Church administration.

Discussing the issues of ethnicity and identity is – as a matter of fact – discussing a social structure and social ties that hold society and public power together with common acceptance and legitimism. Therefore, social organization is not just a matter of institutions and individuals, it is not merely a brief and strict list of functionaries and offices.

Thus, the problem of identity and ethnicity is a problem of how social groups work together. I will focus on the example of a unit of the 9th century, which is traditionally – although incorrectly – called Great Moravia, where two basic identities can be recognized: the Moravian one and the Slavic one. Unfortunately, in this article I

have to ignore an interesting problem of the Eastern part of Moravia and the question of ethnicity of Prince Pribina from Nitra (for various approaches see Steinhübel 2016. P. 111–137; АЛИМОВ 2015. P. 246–273; Lysý 2014. P. 82–107). The ethnicity of the population of the Eastern part of the Moravian Principality is, however, questionable and cannot be studied in detail, due to the lack of written sources of the same or comparable quality as to that of the Moravian or Slavic ones.

Therefore, let us focus on the Moravian and Slavic ethnicities. Firstly, we shall explain who *the Moravians* were, as referred to in our Latin and Slavic sources (what the meaning of this term was). Then, we shall try to explain what role was played by the concept of Slavinity in respect to the inhabitants of Moravia in the 9th century.

For the start, let me explain some methodological approaches that I have found the most relevant to this topic. When discussing identity and ethnogenesis, we shall consider the following issues.

Although ethnic groups are able to be studied thanks to their common features like language, culture, or territory, these features, however, are not always relevant in the same way to all ethnic groups. For example, there are good reasons to presume that the languages of Slavic ethnics were very much alike and in many cases they could be almost the same. Despite this fact, the language proximity was not considered to be a reason for uniting all the Slavs in one *gens*. This is why the discussion of identity should always involve the consciousness of individuals. Therefore, we cannot study this phenomenon basing on objective criteria only. In earlier scholarly literature much work has been done, but the methods used today do not allow to agree with many previously made conclusions grounded on observations on languages and/or dialects (from among the Slovak Slavists let us mention Stanislav 1940/41. P. 5–43), while the traditional sin of archaeology is the straightforward connection of material culture and ethnics (as an example see Třeštík 1997. P. 24–25). Neither should we forget racial criteria of the ethnics (Franek 1940/41. P. 138–154) such as the morphology of skeletons and craniums, that were supporting ethnogenetical studies at the beginning of the 20th century and became very popular again in the first half of the 1940s.

Even though racial criteria stopped to be used by historians after the World War II, other objective criteria remained. Let me mention one good example of such “objectively” constructed ethnicity.

A very prominent Slovak Slavist Ján Stanislav claimed in several of his works that Moravian Prince Rastislav could be only of Slovak (and not Moravian) origin, because his name is rendered in Latin and Greek sources with the root vowel *-a-* (*Rast-*) and not *-o-* (*Rost-*) (Stanislav 1958. P. 150–151, 158–159, 190). To legitimize this hypothesis, he stressed Latin variants of Rastislav's name and did not satisfactorily explained the existence of both forms in the Old Church Slavonic texts, especially in the Lives of Constantine and Methodius (see MMFH. T. 2. 143).

Since the studies of Reinhard Wenskus and the Vienna-school of ethnogenesis (see e.g. Wenskus 1961; Daim 1982. S. 58–71; Geary 1983. P. 15–26; Pohl 1994. S. 11; 1998. P. 13–24; Typen der Ethnogenese 1990; Integration 2002) we can observe that ethnic self-consciousness is a subjective phenomenon, and this places different demands on the object of research. Due to this, a described or anticipated use of the Slavic language is no more a good reason to be considered in respect to the existence of Slavic identity (or self-identity). Therefore, the Slavic identity should be studied in a different way.

Thus, if the ethnicity as an expression of collective identity originated in the minds of individuals, we can say that it does not exist only as some kind of cultural heritage or a tradition, and certainly it is not so much dependent on language as it could seem.

Historians have often stressed the difference between the ancient, the early medieval, and modern ethnicity. But there is one common feature of all ethnicities. Ethnicity is always a collective *imago* (projection) of common (usually unreal) origin.

According to Ján Steinhübel, ethnicity is a common projection and a common will. It is founded on common myths that cultivate common feelings of a society (cheer or pain), which make the given collective body more united (Steinhübel 2012. P. 23–26). We can move further and ask one simple question: why are identity and ethnicity so important for individuals? And what needs do they meet and satisfy?

Well, to be honest, the historical materials concerning the 9th century are not abounding enough to fully answer this question. Still, we can study ethnic movements throughout centuries and use some analogies. It is quite clear that, for example, modern nationalism would not work without other values, such as the equality before the law and the abolition of feudalism. For many people, nationalism of the modern period has been somehow a way how to legitimate their

rights. Together with language demands, that were acute in Central Europe, nationalism also satisfied some cultural or practical essential needs. Therefore, the dual identity, especially in multinational countries (like Hungary), was not exceptional.

For decades, we were confronted with a conclusion that pre-modern societies' nationalism did not play an essential role because the most important role was played by the estate affiliation. However, national myths played their role even during the estate periods. For the nobility in Hungary, regardless of whether their members spoke Hungarian, stating their being part of the nation, claiming that some nobleman could trace their origin from legendary Scythia, the alleged motherland of all Hungarians, did legitimate the high social status. But there were other communities in Hungary which derived their rights from their ethnical membership. Although they were mostly members of the towns, the value of their ethnicity was as important as that of the nobility.

Therefore, ethnic identity could play various roles, and when answering the questions concerning the ethnical identities in 9th-century Moravia, let me focus on the fact, that both Moravian and Slavic identities played their own roles and had their specific purposes.

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To be exact, let us not forget that there were various concepts of *the Moravians*. For example, in the works of the authors of old times we can find two variants of "German", or Marcoman, theory. Václav Hájek of Libočany identified Marobud, a chieftain from the beginning of the Christian era, as a Moravian and Marcoman king (Kolár 1981. P. 38). This absurd view was not too much popular among later scholars, but a very similar idea was presented by Bertold Bretholz who postulated the continuity of German settlement in the Czech lands from the ancient period till his present times (Bretholz 1921).

For other scholars supporting the concept of the uniform Slavic nation the ethnicity of Moravian inhabitants was Slavic, and the Slavs were divided into many smaller groups (tribes), that could be distinguished by their features (like material culture, dialect or costume) (Dudík 1860. P. 56–58).

Finally, some authors wrote about Slavic or 'Slovienic' ethnicity of Moravian inhabitants, while the term *the Moravians* served as an identification of the upper class of Moravia (Dejiny Slovenska I. P. 90).

In our paper, we will divide the meanings of the term *the Moravians* into two columns; the references in Latin sources can be seen on the left, while the Old Church Slavonic contexts are in the right column:

Table 1

**The term *the Moravians*
in Latin and Old Church Slavonic sources**

Latin sources	Old Church Slavonic sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – territory; – <i>populus/gens</i> (<i>legati Marvanorum</i>); – convention, collective decision (<i>omnes Marahoni, omnes Moravi</i>); – army (<i>exercitus</i>); – market (<i>mercatum Marahorum</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – territory; – <i>gens</i>; – convention, collective decision (<i>вѣса люди МОРАВСКЪЯ, съ вѣсѣми МОРАВЛАНЪИ</i>).

As we can see, the first three meanings are common for both Latin and Slavic sources. *The Moravians* could mean:

1) territory (very often in Latin sources, rarely in the Slavic ones) (*Annales Xantenses*. P. 30–31; *Annales Fuldenses*. P. 78, 110, 121–122, 130, 132–134; *MMFH*. T. 3. P. 76, 287, 270–271);

2) *populus* or *gens* (the difference between *gens* and *populus* was not so sharp in medieval Latin) (*MMFH*. T. 4. P. 34; *Annales Fuldenses*. P. 109);

3) conventions (the term is used to designate the subject of collective decisions, we do not know the expression for the institution) (*MMFH*. T. 2. P. 98, 154; Schwarzmaier 1972. P. 57);

4) army (*exercitus*) – this meaning is not surprising, it is often used in various Frankish chronicles and annals (*Annales Xantenses*. P. 21, 28);

5) market – the expression *the Moravians* is used (*mercatum Marahorum*) in one case for the central Moravian market (*MMFH*. T. 4. P. 119).

The question has been already asked, what purpose being a part of an ethnic group had served for an individual. Answering this question, due to the lack of sources, we shall be brief and careful. However, it is perhaps not so hard to imagine, when we can see, for example, the importance of conventions, that for an ordinary member of *the Moravians* his affiliation could be relevant to his social status.

We can find in our sources more references concerning conventions and their functions. Such questions as tribute, church matters,

or questions of international importance, were discussed during conventions (MMFH. T. 2. P. 153).

Even though both Latin (Waitz, 1880. P. 620) and Slavic sources mention in those cases *all the Moravians*, it does not mean all the members of the Moravian community participated in conventions. From later analogies we know that the elite of the society took part in conventions, and that expressions like ‘all the Moravians’ served as an instrument of legitimization (Žemlička 1997. P. 343–347). Although later analogies are always risky, the presence of all the community in one place was hardly possible.

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Let us now turn to the question of the Slavinity of the Moravians. Because of the popularity of this topic, it was discussed so many times that we can only mention various concepts. Among them, first of all, there is the idea that all the Slavs were just “naturally” Slavs, as they had come from their *Urheimat* and had spread over European territories, like it is described in the Rus *Povest' vremennykh let* (with an important difference: the localization of the *Urheimat*) (Niederle 1953).

Various works operated also with Slavinity as a cultural identity in contrast with *the Moravians* as a political identity (Dejiny Slovenska I. P. 132). This was typical especially by using the term *Sloviens*, invented by modern Slavists and later used in historiography. From these views there was just a short step to claim that the Moravian Slavs were, as a matter of fact, the Slovaks, in ethnical sense, while *the Moravians* was just a kind of regional expression (Ďurica 2003. P. 25–47). A special variant of this concept could be that the Slovaks and the Moravians were two different ethnic groups in Moravia (Kučera 2009. P. 96).

Such concepts have been confronted by the American scholar Florin Curta. His study has some good points, when he stresses that the question of Slavinity was for many scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries not only an object of research, but also an object of political program of the time, while Slavinity was a mere opposition to Teutonism (Curta 2001. P. 6–9, 125–148). Curta also discredited archeological evidences of a possible Slavic migration and the concept of the entire Prague-type. Therefore, for Curta, there were no Slavs and no Slavic culture, and perhaps even no Slavic language. There were just amorphous groups considered to be the Slavs by Byzantine authors, because they needed to put their thoughts in order.

We can say that Florin Curta has many good points, but he went too far with his criticism. For example, Curta insists that the idea of the Slavic unity was only mentioned in a few uncertain words by Procopios and Jordanes. While Jordanes was not very concrete and just pointed to the river of Visla as the birthplace of the *Venets* (Jordanis Romana et Getica 1882. P. 62–63), Procopios indicated some kind of *origo gentis* (Procopios 1963. P. 358). But, as Dušan Třeštík wrote 15 years ago in his book *The Myths of the Czech Tribe* (Třeštík, 2003. P. 31–42, 52–53), there were two most interesting versions of pan-Slavic origin, one preserved in 9th-century *Descriptio* (the *Bavarian Geographer*) (MMFH. T. 3. P. 289), and the other in the Arabic work of Al-Mas‘udi (Ibid. P. 405, 408). Those sources are independent one from another and can show that the Slavic myth did exist, and perhaps we can assume that both pieces of information originated in Slavic communities.

However, it is obvious that the common name for those Slavs was never the same. Name is to be considered one of the most important ethnic features, but as we can see, until the mid-9th century, the Slavs did not use a single designation of themselves. A single designation was never used by Byzantine authors, either. For Prokopios the *Antae* and the *Sklavenoi* were just two separate groups and their common name should have been *Sporoi*. For Jordanes, the common name was the *Veneti*, but in another place of his work *Venets* are also a separate people, different from the *Slavs* and *Ants*. The *Volyns*, as we assume from the Arabic source, could be perhaps accidentally used as a common name for the Slavs. And Theofylaktos does not use any common name for *Sklavenoi* and *Antae*.

Analyzing various chronicles of the 8th and 9th centuries, we can see that majority of them use the term *Slavs*, but as a common name the term *Venets* is used, and there were some authors who viewed these terms as synonyms.

Let us therefore conclude that the myth of the common origin did exist among the Slavs. As it is reflected in very few sources, it seems that this myth was of less importance in comparison to particular myths of the Slavic tribes.

In the Slavic sources, the term *Slavs* was used in several meanings, but not so intensively as *the Moravians*. We can compare both basic texts, the *Life of Constantine* and the *Life of Methodius*, and the *Life of Constantine* seems to contain not only less references, but also a smaller number of meanings, referring to the language (or books) and students only.

A much better source is the *Life of Methodius*, thanks not only to a higher quantity of mentions (though this text is shorter), but also to a higher variability of meanings, too. We can see that *Slavs* as a substantive or an adjective are mentioned as a *gens*, territory, customs, but also the diocese of Methodius.

Above, we asked the question, what was the purpose of claiming oneself a *Moravian*. This same question can be asked here, too. Why did people claim to be *Slavs*? For what purpose? Was there any advantage to be a *Slav*?

We could observe in non-Slavic sources that the origin of the Slavs was never connected with the same name, and maybe the importance of the Slavinity played a different role than their tribal identities. While somebody could have real and putative prospects that there was an advantage in being a *Moravian* in order to participate in a military expedition and get a booty, or to participate in a tribal convention, in the case of Slavic identity we cannot speculate on this. Even if we can find some material on Slavic origin, it does not mean that Slavic identity was widely shared. We can assume that it could be of interest for some Slavs, if they felt a necessity to mention and explain the fact, that there was a likeness between Slavic dialects. But the consequences of this identity were never very important. Slavic tribes fought with each other so often, that it does not seem that they really constituted a *gens*. We have no consistent evidence for existence of Slavic *gens* in their *Urheimat*.

But the difference between the both *Lives* shows us that Slavic identity could have spread between the writing of those two texts (10–15 years). It was the use of Slavic language in the process of teaching, the idea of Constantine, that brought a new quality to the Slavic identity. In the *Life of Constantine*, the Slavic language is an object of defense against the Three-Language-Priests. The *Life of Methodius* catalyzes this by creating a very clear dichotomy of the Slavs (and Slavic liturgy) and their enemies.

Let me mention in this context that, in the first place, Methodius was perhaps the initiator of the restoration of the archbishopric in Pannonia, together with Kocel'. On his departure from Moravia (867) the mission in Moravia was completed and there is no reason to assume that the brothers should have come back. It was interesting that, when they visited Kocel' in Pannonia, the latter liked the Slavic script and also praised some students to the Byzantine brothers. This was a new task for both brothers. They left Pannonia

and probably intended to return to Constantinople, but, as we know, they accepted the Pope's invitation to Rome (Marsina 1985. P. 11–33).

In Rome, after Constantine's death, the Pope sent Methodius to teach not only in Pannonia, but to 'all Slavic lands', that means to the lands of Kocel', Rastislav, and Svätopluk (MMFH. T. 3. P. 154–155). Thus, Methodius got involved in the complicated relations between the Bavarian church, the papacy, and Kocel', and the only thing we know is that, after all, when Methodius appeared in Moravia in 873, and then later, after his death in 885, he was always defended by his supporters who referred to the concept of the Slavic liturgy and the leave granted by the Pope.

Therefore, the author of the *Life of Methodius* described the controversy between the Bavarian church and Methodius in Pannonia (and later also Moravia) not as a personal affair of Methodius who tried to obtain a new job after the death of Byzantine emperor Michael III, when he perhaps did not want to return home. It was described as a controversy between the Slavic liturgy and the enemies of the Slavic liturgy.

This is also the reason why the persons involved in this initiative used new weapons: the idea of Slavinity and the defense of their language and script created by Constantine as a tool for the teaching.

It may be of importance that this defense was not too successful in Moravia. After Methodius's death, Svätopluk, either by his own will or with his approval, displaced Methodius's students. The *Life of Methodius* or *Industrię tuę* suggests that he did not support Methodius and that the concept of Slavic identity could be restricted to the group of former students of Constantine and Methodius only.

The idea of Slavic identity, which often appears to have been barely existing among the Slavs before the Byzantine mission, might have strongly catalyzed especially thanks to Kocel' and Methodius. Later it spread to other countries. Eventually, the name of the Slavs remained alive also for Slavic-speaking inhabitants of the Danube region. After the fall of "The Great" Moravia, it became either an opposition to the Hungarians, or a complementary expression.

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Мирослав Лысы

СЛАВЯНСКАЯ И МОРАВСКАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В IX В.

Статья посвящена двойной идентичности жителей Великой Моравии (IX в.) – славянской и моравской. Кратко разбираются подходы к проблемам энтогенеза и идентичности, применявшиеся в предшествующей историографии. Особое внимание уделяется «постмодернистским» скептическим подходам к происхождению славян, причем показывается, что отсутствуют рациональные основания отрицать существование славянской идентичности хотя бы на каком-то уровне. Анализируются контексты, в которых латинские и старославянские источники IX в. используют «моравскую» и «славянскую» терминологию. Как представляется, «узкая», моравская идентичность играла в IX в. большую роль, нежели «широкая», славянская. Анализ житий св. Константина и Мефодия показывает, что в промежутке между их написанием значение славянской идентичности резко возросло. Это связано с кристаллизацией самосознания моравской церкви во главе с Мефодием, использовавшей славянское богослужение, в ее борьбе против баварского духовенства. Защита интересов моравской церкви воспринималась как защита славянского языка, а враги Мефодия – как враги славянского языка и богослужения.

Ключевые слова: «Житие Константина», «Житие Мефодия», идентичность, славяне, Моравия, Великая Моравия, церковь.