THE MEDIEVAL BOHEMIAN TOWN AND ITS HINTERLAND[1]

Jan KLÁPŠTĚ – Zdeněk SMETÁNKA – Martin TOMÁŠEK

As was the case in a number of European countries, the 1970's saw in Bohemia the occurrence of an important differentiation in the archaeology of the Middle Ages. Our discipline was divided into several parts, each essentially close to segments of the recognized social reality. Part of the discipline became committed to research into towns, a second to research into castles, and another to research into villages. At the same time, Czech "village archaeology" never gave its entire attention to the study of individual (deserted) villages, but always tended towards the wider problems of the whole village milieu.

1. Colonisation, the nucleation of villages and the beginnings of the town in the later Middle Ages

In Bohemia, the 1970's also saw the rise of a new theme - *structural changes in medieval settlement.* The main emphasis was on changes in settlement macro-structure, i.e. changes in the relationships between individual settlement sites. The knowledge framework was provided as a rule by the demarcation of regions dozen of kilometres square, within which over the course of several years the archaeological sources might be inventorised, rescue actions undertaken, and surface surveys deployed.

During the 1990's, the majority of these regional projects came to be completed, and could be evaluated through publication. Two things are clear from the results: first, from the archaeological point of view there can be no doubt about the long-term progression of medieval settlement in Bohemia, this process linking the periods from the 6th to the 13th/14th Centuries. Second: from the archaeological point of view there can be no doubt about the fundamental structural changes that took place in village settlements. These changes relate to the 13th Century, and denote various radical divisions existing between the earlier and later medieval situations. Even here, a conjuncture of continuity and discontinuity in cultural phenomena was present (and indeed could hardly have been absent). Archaeology itself, however, shows the principle variations between "early" and "later" medieval villages. The main difference is to be found in the manipulation of space. Not until the 13th century does Bohemia see a village with a relatively firm layout of core and hinterland, marked out "for the duration" and in a number of cases actually making further long-term development possible.

In short, archaeological results led to fundamental revisions in the understanding of medieval colonisation in Bohemia, i.e. to changes in approach to what is, perhaps, one of the most discussed Central European historical themes. The colonisation of Bohemia cannot be linked only to the 12th and 13th centuries, and is rather a "long term" phenomenon. The changes related to the 13th century were at the same time one of many chapters of European transformation.

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Current research directly relates to the stage of knowledge that we have just brought to the fore. At the same time, we are trying to minimalize the division of "village archaeology" from "urban archaeology". The aim has become to outline the model functioning of various regions as wholes. It was perhaps now that the town definitively ceased to be a closed island inserted into the outside world, and that emphasis came to be laid on its functional linkage of town and countryside.

2. Principles of spatial delimitation

If the theme of our seeking after knowledge has become the regions surrounding towns, then the questions looms before us as their spatial delimitation. Resolution of this question must at the same time accommodate the demands of comparative studies, since we want to have *common denominators* for the comparison of different regions. After a certain amount of discussion, we have endorsed the delimitation of circles with a radius of 1 "Bohemian mile". The ideal length of this medieval measure has been judged to be 11 kilometres, and it therefore bounds an area of some 380 square kilometres. This step is nothing but an abstraction, which we categorically do not identify with medieval conditions - in our view, however, a circle of 11km contains the territory from which the relevant town market would be easily and effectively accessible within one day. We thus gain a satisfactory standpoint for the understanding of individual regions and at the same time a common denominator for comparative studies. One of the approaches which can be effectively employed on this basis is the good old study of regional resource capacity.

3. Two regional examples

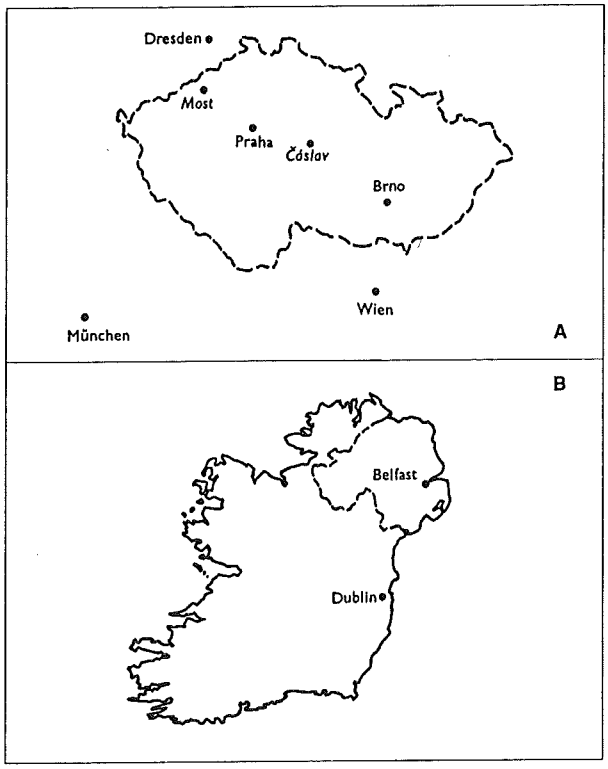

Fig. 1. A - the Czech Republic, showing Most and Čáslav, the centres of the regional case studies. *B* - Ireland to the same scale, for comparison.

3.1. The Most region

In interpreting the formation of regions around towns, we start from the question of *how it really was*, i.e. from attempts to discern the relevant historical phenomena, and reconstruct their chronological sequence, which can also bring us closer to sequences of causality (and certainly could not contradict them).

An example of this type is offered by results from the region around the town of Most (*Fig. 1*). This region lies in that part of Bohemia which from the 1940's to the present has in large part been ravaged by open cast coal mining. Major archaeological rescue programmes have been undertaken in this connection, and we can thus rely on fairly broad, comprehensive archaeological data.

At the turn of the 13th century, we can identify the appearance of the landed gentry in the Most region, this being accomplished on the basis of ownership structures characteristic for the later Middle Ages. Chronologically, this was followed by the beginnings of the royal town, the first stages of which fall in the 1230's, although the gradual formation of the medieval town took up most of the middle third of the 13th century. In parallel with the beginnings of the town, we can see changes in the village milieu on a wide scale; these are most obvious in settlement macrostructure, i.e. in the topography of the settlement sites. In the ar-

Fig. 2. Volevčice: an example of changes in the 13th century village from the Most region. *A* - archaeologically identified earlier settlement, abandoned in the 13th century (evidence from rescue excavations and surface artifact collection), *B* - later nucleated village identified from maps of the 1840's, the layout of which is typically Bohemian.

chaeology, there is a decline of settlement sites outside the core of these villages, which are characteristic of the early modern settlement network and very probably even for the later Middle Ages. The archaeological evidence indicates the desertion of older settlement sites the development of which can be traced to the early Middle Ages (*Fig. 2*), in some cases to the 6th century. The dating of this stabilisation in rural settlement structure is entirely dependent on archaeology. The relevant estimations concentrate in the period around the mid-13th century.

We have already said that changes in settlement topography are the most eloquent testimony to the divide in village development. Already by the beginning of the 13th century, the settlement network included sites in which - according to the archaeology - we can expect a relatively low number of homesteads (around 5), but smaller sites also existed. Buildings remained mutable, without any long-term correlation in their plans. The main building materials employed were wood and clay, but building stone (despite its local availability) is absent. Comparison with the map of cadastral districts (the demarcation of which is known from the 19th century) shows a series of examples where one small cadastre coincides with one earlier medieval settlement site. More complex cases include more early medieval settlement sites, in the main associated with more extensive cadastres. The 13th century in the Most region saw the foundations established of larger villages. Settlement concentration (nucleation) often contributed to this process. The later counterparts of the prior, quite small, settlement parts are no longer known.

We can speculate about growth in the domestic population, and at the same time we know that even before the middle of the 13th century inhabitants from German lands were appearing even in villages with ancient roots. As to how the form of the later (or "new") village developed, the only source of information is

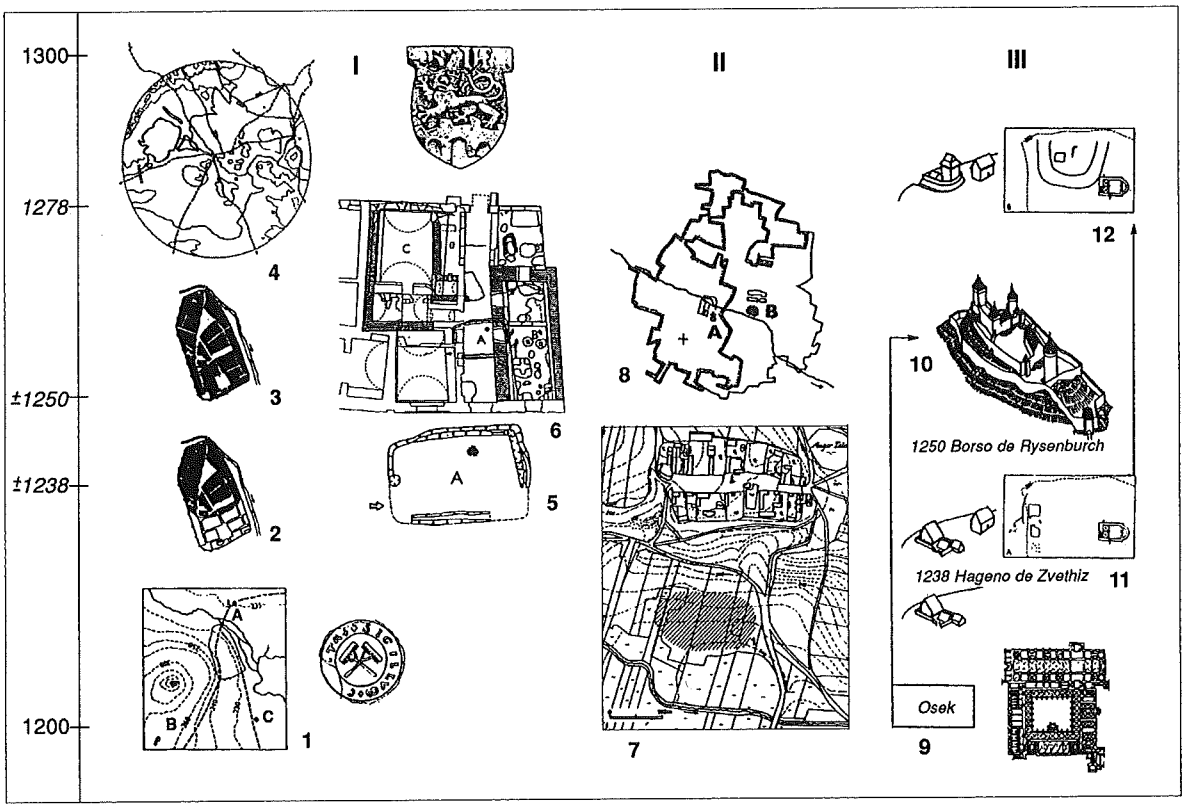

Fig. 3. The Most region: schematic comparison of development in various social *milieux* during the 13th century. The temporal axis is based on the developmental phases in the town of Most itself. *I* - Most. *1*- Most as part of the noble estates: a local market centre; *2* - the Royal Most, the core of which spread over 11 ha.; *3* - the Royal Most - the expanded core of 17 ha.; *4* - stabilisation of the urban region, the granting of expanded privileges; *5* - the provisional origins of urban dwellings; *6* - the gradual building of stable townhouses. *II* - the villages. *7, 8* - the stabilisation of settlement forms: the abandonment of earlier settlement areas and the appearance of nucleated villages. Changes in the structure of the agrarian hinterland, and the initial stabilisation of the new village homesteads. *III* - Power centres. *9, 10* - the first seats (*curiae*) of the higher landowning nobility replaced by later Medieval castles (by *9* a Cistercian monastery); *11, 12* - the first seats (*curiae*) of the lesser landowning gentry replaced by the motte and bailey castles and courts of the later Middle Ages (by *11* a small galleried Romanesque church).

archaeological excavation conducted within recent village cores. This part of the discipline has been little employed in Bohemia, and while the first substantive steps have been taken in the Most region itself an evaluation is still awaited.

The general testimony of village archaeology finds a valuable counterpart in written sources, which from the end of the 1230's appear as the first documents firmly tying pieces of land to specific payments. Documents of this kind are valued for their bearing witness to the basic changes in spatial delimitation.

The solid details provided by the archaeological results from the Most region also allow discussion about the regional significance of the *jus teutonicum*. What is essential is not the small number of documents expressing these laws, but their marked chronological distance from the appurtenant village transformations. A causal relationship between the introduction of the *jus teutonicum* and the fundamental changes in villages thus cannot be demonstrated in the Most region.

Decisive archaeological concentrations placing the divide between the "early" and "later" medieval villages in the period around the middle of the 13th century open new possibilities. In this determination, in the first place we can regard as basic an assumption of the striking rise of the town of Most (*Fig. 3*). At the beginning of the 13th century, it was one of the less important regional centres; by the end of that century, it was one of the leading royal towns in the Bohemian state. The rise of Most was indisputably underpinned by the development of its agricultural hinterland, and its relatively rapid - and fairly radical – transformation (including nucleation). Later, trade could also be developed in grain and wine to nearby Saxony, in whose mountains mining peaked at this time.

3.2. The Čáslav region

Čáslav lies on the borders of central and eastern Bohemia on the route from Bohemia to Moravia. A picture of its landscape comprises at least two elements - the central part lies in a lowland area with intensive settlement, the marches of which were heavily colonised from the 13th century onwards.

This region has, thanks also to its diversity, been a target for archaeologists since the 1950's. The archaeological information obtained to date for the Middle Ages is concentrated on the region's central zone, and on a few sites outside of this central zone. The basic survey of development is complemented by surface collection and non-destructive methods.

The appearance of the landed gentry in the region is less striking, and its upsurge can be seen from the 1260's; also at this time, the older administrative centre of the Čáslav province was turned into a royal town. This change in the character of the central place naturally provoked a reaction in the hinterland, too. As well as changes in settlement structures in the fertile parts of this region - which in the cases investigated means a concentration (nucleation) into the sites where they remain to this day. A wave of colonisation can be observed settling higher parts of region. One of the reasons for this rapid colonisation was the exploitation of ore seams. The intensive influx of colonists led in particular to the Germanisation of the region, including its rural parts.

The basic model of the development of village settlements and their transformation is best presented by the most systematically studied rural cadastre in the region of interest. Long-term archaeological excavations around the village of Bylany recovered evidence of medieval settlement activity at a number of locations (*Fig. 4*).

The Bylany 1 area was partly known from its extensive excavations, but its probably central parts remained unfortunately an aside to any test trenching or surface survey. In this area, long-term settlement can be traced to the 8th to 13th centuries. It is felt that this was one early village, whose individual homesteads were gradually moved, and it was thus as a result of this long-term process that their archaeological remains covered such a large area.

The Bylany 3 site was identified by surface survey, the testimony of which can be related to a basic chronological and spatial delimitation. Evaluation of the entire artefact assemblage has shown that the beginning and end of settlement here are hard to pin down; however, there can be no doubt that both settlement sites existed side by side for a considerable part of their existences.

The basic aspect of comparison between both areas is the comparison of the tracts from which archaeological relics have come. The extent of Bylany 1 is to a great extent related to the siting of granaries, which were probably located at the periphery. The maximum extent of the site identified reaches some 530 x 300 m. The second site, Bylany 3, is delimited by the distribution of ceramic sherds to an area of about 230 x 260 m. In summary, a

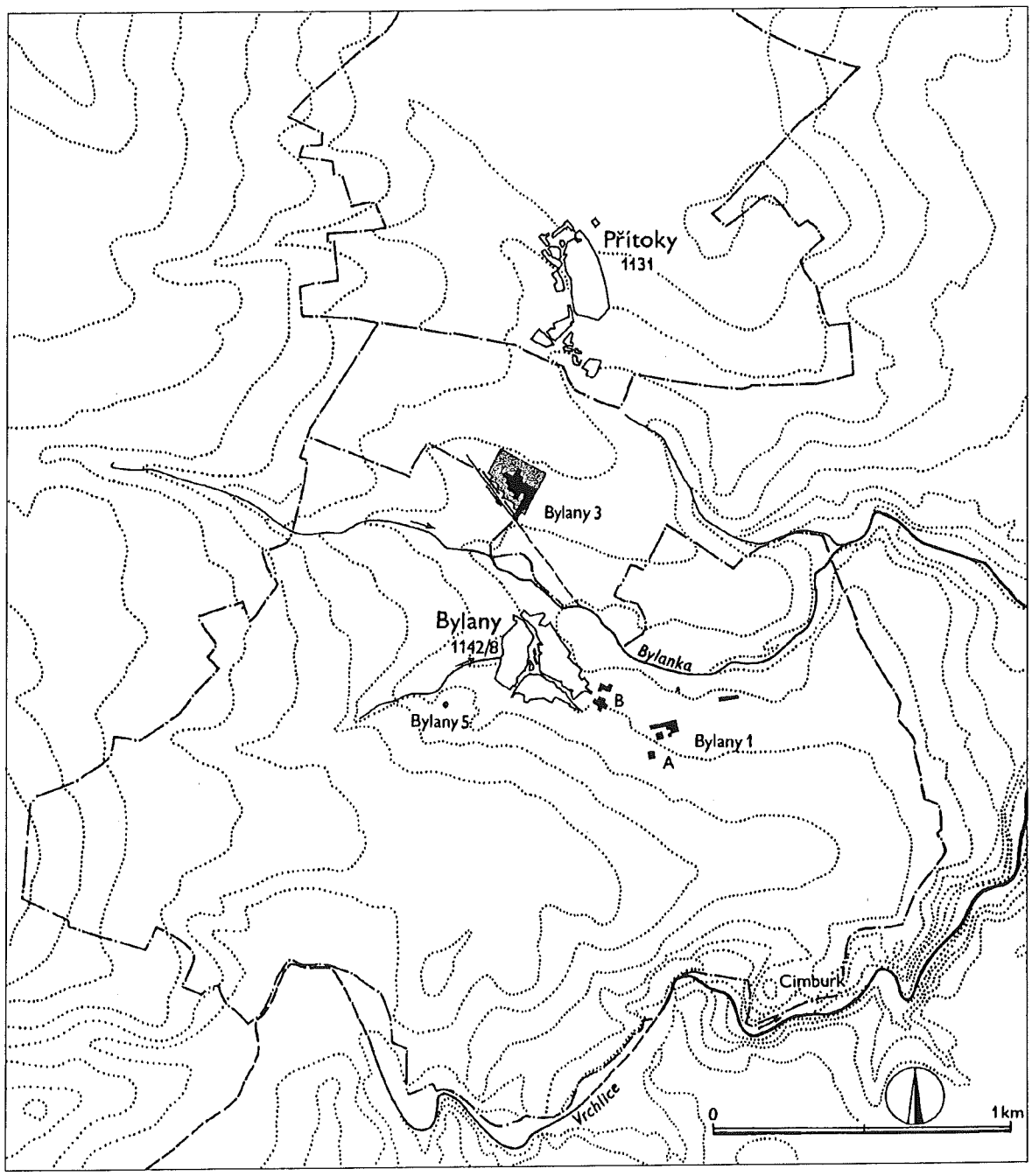

Fig. 4. The Bylany 1 and Bylany 3. Early Medieval settlement areas in the Čáslav region. Written records imply that these were probably the villages of Bylany and Přítoky, so named even prior to the mid-12th century. Written sources for both villages also demonstrate the fundamental stabilisation of the village organism: for Bylany these data relate to the year 1276, and for Přítoky 1246.

comparison for orientation between the sizes of the two sites shows a ratio of 2:3. Both sites are separated by a distance of only 700 m, which must be considered in terms of the relationships to the shared water source. The agricultural hinterlands may have formed a whole comprising two independent mirror-images.

The favourable conditions for studying medieval Bylany are complemented by the witness of written sources. *Belani* appears for the first time between 1142 and 1148; but a later charter of 1276 attests to the fundamental stabilisation of the village organism. We can relate this written evidence to the Bylany 1 site, the beginnings of which are linked to an extant village. At the same time, we assume that Bylany 3 was the forerunner of the neighbouring village of Přítoky - the village *Pretoci* appears in 1131, and the peak of its medieval transformation *de jure pheodali* came in 1246.

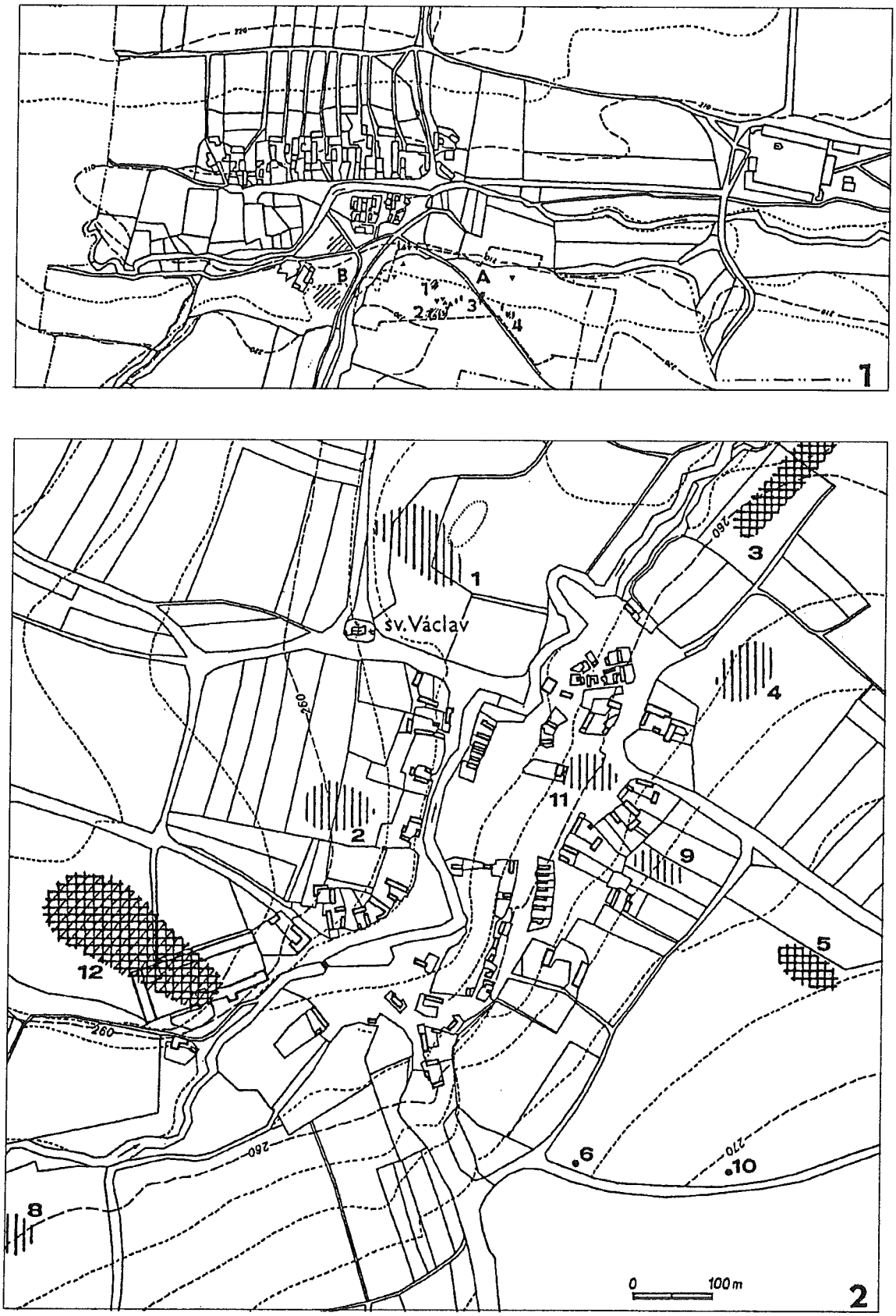

Fig. 5. Various examples of the spatial organisation of Early Medieval settlement areas. *1* - "compact" settlement (NW Bohemia, Březánky); *2* - "dispersed" settlement (E Bohemia, Řestoky).

Through the medium of examples from northern and eastern Bohemia, we have tried to draw closer to the development of the Bohemian village prior to and during the 13th century, in a period known in our country as the divide between the early and later Middle Ages. To date, we have dwelt on the theme of the situation in which early medieval villages were characterised by a group of homesteads and encircled by a common agricultural hinterland. Sometimes, we speak of the "compact type" of early medieval village. This term is not entirely appropriate. The homestead components could be here separated by a distance of several dozen metres. The term "compact settlement" does however carry the distinction from the second basic alternative, which is marked by a substantially greater deal of dispersal. In these "dispersed settlements" we can recognize clusters of small settled sites divided by distances of perhaps 200 m or more. We assume that the structure of these settlements was formed as a rule by isolated homesteads (the number of which tended to vary around 10), always surrounded by the relevant agricultural hinterland (*Fig. 5*).

There are several open questions associated with the dispersion of early medieval settlements. The relevant examples known to date come from East Bohemia, where their gradual development can be followed from the 9th/10th century. Causal differences between "compact" and "dispersed" settlements cannot be identified, we cannot find any correlation with natural or cultural factors. Perhaps we are dealing here with a cultural phenomenon that is not otherwise exceptional, i.e. to a different reaction to what are in principle similar conditions. There is another noteworthy aspect that needs to be brought into the discussion of medieval dispersed villages - this type of settlement, common across Europe, is practically non-existent on modern maps of Bohemia. Essentially, since the transformations associated with the 13th century, truly compact villages have become characteristic of Bohemia, usually surrounding a village green. From a variety of precursors, an ordering has thus arisen that is similar across the greater part of Bohemia (*Fig. 6*).

The basic contribution of the study of the regions around towns consists in the more comprehensive appreciation of the relationship between town and hinterland, the gradual genesis of the urban organism finding its natural counterpart in the mutable village hinterland. Urbanisation and nucleation both represent one and the same process. The basic developmental tendency was understandably similar, linking other great parts of Europe; however, surprising differences in the concrete details of this tendency continue to be found not only between individual countries, but even within the relatively small Czech lands.

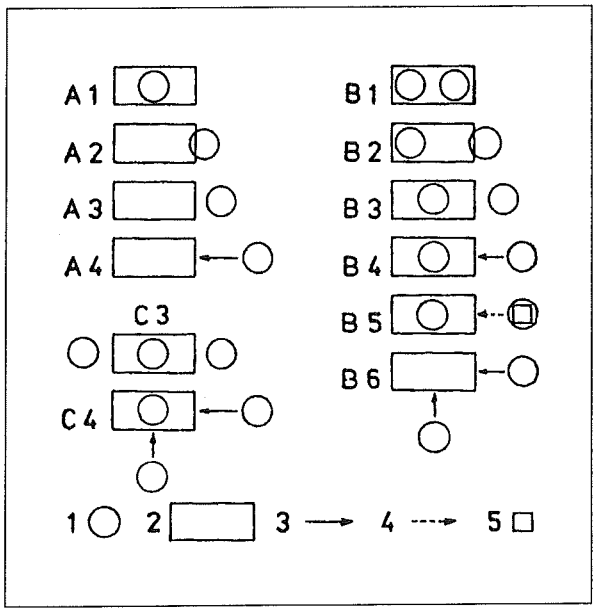

Fig. 6. Schematic diagrams of the spatial relationships between earlier and later Medieval village settlements. *1* - earlier settlement; 2 - later settlement; *3* - complete displacement; *4* - partial displacement; *5* - the reduced remains of the earlier settlement. *A* - possible relationships between an earlier and a later settlement. *B* - basic possibilities for relationships between one later and two earlier settlements. *C* - examples of more complex combinations.

DIE STADT IM MITTELALTERLICHEN BÖHMEN UND IHR UMLAND

Dieser Beitrag befaßt sich mit den strukturellen Veränderungen des mittelalterlichen Dorfes und seinem Zusammenhang mit den Anfängen der hochmittelalterlichen Stadt. Diese eng zusammenhängen Prozesse, die in Böhmen auf das 13. Jh. entfallen, werden am Beispiel zweier Regionen, des Umlands der Stadt Most (Nordwestböhmen) und Čáslav (Ostböhmen) präsentiert. Diskutiert werden u.a. die Problematik der Dispersion und der Konzentration der mittelalterlichen dörflichen Besiedlung.

LA VILLE MÉDIÉVALE EN BOHÊME ET SON TERRITOIRE

Ce texte porte sur les changements structurales du village médiéval et leurs liaisons avec les débuts de la ville du moyen age tardif. La partie décisive des deux processus mutuellement unis appartenait en Bohême au XIIIe siècle. Pour la présentation, les auteurs ont choisi deux régions - le territoire de la ville de Most (dans le N-O de la Bohême) et de Čáslav (à l'est du pays). La discussion concentre son attention sur l'habitat rural médiéval groupé et dispersé.