

REVIEWS

MAGNAE MORAVIAE FONTES HISTORICI I. Annales et chronicae.

Eds. Dagmar Bartoňková, David Kalhous, Jiří K. Kroupa, Zdeněk Měřínský, Anna Žáková. Praha: KLP, 2019, 506 s. ISBN 9788087773369.

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It was an extraordinary result as since 1966 editors of historical sources began publishing *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici* (*Sources on the Great Moravian History, 1966–1977*). The series contained four main volumes, consisting (mainly) from annals and chronicles, letters and charters, hagiographic texts and legal texts. Indexes, historical chronology and maps can be found in the fifth volume, created by Lubomír Havlík. Considering the whole series, the collective of editors had no limits in the sense of extent and variability. Texts in Latin and Greek, Old Church Slavonic and Arabic, Hebrew and Old Czech; the variability of edition necessarily followed the variability of sources on the history of the “Great” Moravia.

Let us also mention that among Slovak editions, there were perhaps two most important attempts to publish main sources from “Great” Moravian period of our history. Peter Ratkoš edited his *Sources on History of Great Moravia* (*Pramene k dejinám Veľkej Moravy*) as early as in 1968, while in 2007 we could enjoy the second volume of *Sources to the History of Slovakia and the Slovaks* (*Pramene k dejinám Slovenska a Slovákov*). Unlike the Czech edition, the Slovak ones contained selected list of sources and reader could use the Slovak translation only and not the original text. Such concept is perhaps more favourable for lay readers. For historians, on the other hand, it was more practical to work with either foreign editions of imperial narrative and diplomatic sources (like *Monumenta Germaniae historica*), or with *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici*.

The author of 1st volume preface Lubomír Havlík was right, when he paid attention to written sources in contrast to incredibly rich archaeological material, rapidly growing in the discoveries of 1950’s and 1960’s. In contemporary relevance of “Great-Moravian statehood” and its ties to the Czechoslovak state ideology, material sources could not be interpreted separately from contemporary chronicles and charters. This was the purpose and environment of edited volumes.

During the next 50 years, the research went dynamically on. Having passed years 1989 and 1992, there is no need to present “Great” Moravia as a predecessor of Czechoslovakia and to project it into our actual national feelings. Simultaneously, along with the end of the Cold War, the presentation of Germany’s historical predecessors (East Frankish empire, for instance) as a permanent enemy of “our” historical predecessors have gone to the past of historiography. “Great” Moravia was furthermore presented in complexity with eastern Slavic political units, with some analogies in Carantania and other Slavic units east of Frankish borders.

As the first edition of *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici* was spawned as early as in mid-1960’s, the first reedition has been published in 2008. Meant as a remake of the first edition, the main characteristics, especially original commentaries, remained preserved.

In 2019 we could witness the last reedition of the first volume, with more complex reprocessing of the work while the main idea of whole project remained preserved.

The concept of all editions of *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici*, including the last one, is based on parallel texts, original and translated (Czech) excerption of sources. Thanks to this, all sources to the history of “Great” Moravia are to be published in one perhaps monumental, but still complex collection. On the other hands, as editors correctly notify, excerpts misrepresent our idea on the level of the interest from the side of the authors of sources. This is obviously very good point; if for example for *Annals of Fulda* Moravian events played an essential role in certain parts of its texts, in many other Annals and Chronicles, Moravia was mentioned very briefly, and in comparison with main subject of these sources, marginally, as a supplement to the “main events”.

Every single source text has its own preface and a detailed commentary. Commentaries mostly refer to the relations to other sources to the history of “Great” Moravia, but often serve also as explanatory texts or as a reference to literature. Here is perhaps the most significant difference between 1st and 3rd edition of the Volume I. Former commentaries created by Lubomír Havlík were revised by Zdeněk Měřínský, together with David Kalhous, Jiří K. Kroupa and Anna Žáková. The level of revision can be seen in comparing commentaries from 1966 and 2019. Many of Havlík’s notes remained preserved in 2019, but in some cases editors decided to correct and/or add new data. For example, Lubomír Havlík often stressed the subjectivity and prejudices of imperial authors towards Moravians, Czechs and other Slavic ethnics on Eastern borders of Frankish (later Eastfrankish) empire. At the same time, subjectivity of domestic sources (that found its place mostly in Volume II) was not observed with such a vehemence. Such a discrepancy in former edition was – as it seems – already solved. This is important especially for measuring the historical value of imperial annals. Therefore, editors react on actual stage of research and the spectre of views and research interpretations is therefore wider and more balanced.

When speaking about the content of the first edition and the number of sources incorporated within, we also may not forget an important issue, which editors clearly put on the table in the preface, that the core of the information on the history of 9th century from Annals and Chronicles is represented by few of them only. Among almost one hundred sources there are perhaps four major ones (*Annales Xantenses*, *Annales Fuldenses*, *Annales Beriniani* and the *Chronicle of Regino*) that served as a source for almost every other of them. On the other hand, this observation does not mean the meaningless of later sources, important for the next Moravian tradition revealed in Bohemia, Hungary or Russia. In some cases, late sources may be the only information on some issues, like the baptism of “all the Moravians” in 831, reflected in Bavarian tradition from the mid 13th century. In this case, we can verify the ancientness of tradition with the context of the famous letter of Bavarian clergy in 900. In the edition, all those relations are digestedly noticed.

In this context, there is another issue on the method of selection. Edition (already the former one) incorporates the medieval sources only and does not reflect the later tradition on Mojmirid’s and Cyrillo-Methodian tradition since the second half of the 16th century. It is obvious, that the number of works from the period of baroque literature would

increase the Volume I to an unacceptable extent. But such a tradition has its place in the research and the gap between medieval and later – not yet scientific – processing of this topic is questionable.

Finally, collective of editors made a great job with reedition of *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici I*. Let us hope that other volumes will come as soon as possible and become the same tool for next generation of historians as former editions served until today.

Miroslav Lysý
Právnická fakulta, UK Bratislava

BARLETT, Robert. *ROYAL BLOOD. Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2020. ISBN 9781108490672. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2020.68.5.7>

Dynastic politics shaped medieval Europe in many ways. Robert Barlett (University of St Andrews, Scotland) is fully aware of these matters and he presents his latest thoughts in a scholar work focused on the medieval dynasties of Europe. As the title presents, royal blood was the most important medieval determinative element. The presented book is divided into two main parts with 13 chapters in total. It also includes a significant number of pictures, lists of rulers and family trees, as well. Barlett provides a full scale picture of how the dynasties developed and how they shaped medieval Europe. Barlett as an English historian is naturally more or less centred on England or Western Europe, but he also managed to turn his attention to Central Europe. The aim of this work is to show how strong the influence of dynasties on the political matters of medieval Europe was.

The first part (*The life cycle*) focuses on the lives and deaths of the royals. In this situation royal blood is considered the key stone to claim the throne or any title. In some cases, however, there were a lot of illegitimate children or marriages without children. Barlett is showing us how kings tried to secure a crown or royal title for their illegitimate children, sometimes even to maintain the continuity of a dynasty. We can say in medieval Hungary this was also the case with King Matthias Corvinus, who tried to secure the throne for his illegitimate son John. A male heir was therefore a strategic element to ensure the survival of the dynasty. The author says there were also kings without any children and strongly devoted to the Church, as was the case of Saint Edward the Confessor or Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor. Maybe there are at least two similar figures missing – Saint Emeric of Hungary (†1031) and Saint Wenceslas of Bohemia (†935), well known as a pious and humble ruler, having perhaps only one and not a legitimate child. The important thing is that these royals became saints and later were perceived as holy forbears of a particular dynasty.

One of the crucial questions for the members of any dynasty was how to ascend to the throne. Barlett summarizes four possible ways: to be an heir, to be elected by the people or by nobles, by marriage or receiving the crown from the Pope or from the Emperor (Holy Roman Emperor or Byzantine Emperor). Kings of Hungary acquired