



East central Europe

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Western historians have only occasionally discussed the early history of the territories now defined as Eastern Europe. Only under the impact of the Mongol invasion did westerners begin to conceptualize the existence of an eastern European area.¹ Many historians, however, continue to view the distinction between West and East as rooted in the medieval history of the Continent, to the point of associating 'the frontier dividing Charlemagne's Europe from the barbarian east' with 'the line along which the Iron Curtain fell at the end of World War II'.² Despite the fact that the region was beyond the effective reach of either the Frankish or the Byzantine powers during the ninth and tenth centuries, Eastern Europe is viewed as 'a child of the West, who later married the East'.³

Because of the debate surrounding the Pirenne thesis, McCormick deals mainly with the Mediterranean component of early medieval trade, while pointing at various times to the 'northern arc'. Like Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse,⁴ he believes that 'the Carolingian empire was surrounded by a series of distinct trading worlds which were now beginning to intersect and interweave' (p. 613). Like them, McCormick has a Braudelian emphasis on *longue durée* change; unlike them, he emphasizes not the 'northern arc', but Venice and the Mediterranean. What about the area between Italy and the Caspian Sea? Both Arab and Byzantine coins showed up in areas excluded from McCormick's investigation, but not from (all) maps in his book. For example, ninth-century coins are known from the Lower Danube region in southern Romania. To name just a few, a coin of Nicephorus I is said to have

¹ G.A. Bezzola, *Die Mongolen in abendländischer Sicht, 1220–1270. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Völkerbegegnungen* (Berne and Munich, 1974); F. Schmieder, 'Der Einfall der Mongolen nach Polen und Schlesien – Schreckensmeldungen, Hilferufe und die Reaktionen des Westens', in U. Schmielewski (ed.), *Wahlstatt 1241. Beiträge zur Mongolenschlacht bei Liegnitz und zu ihren Nachwirkungen* (Würzburg, 1991), pp. 77–86.

² P. Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe* (New York, 1992), p. 8. See also J. Szücs, *Die drei historischen Regionen Europas* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990).

³ G.H. Hodos, *The East-Central European Region. An Historical Outline* (Westport and London, 1999), p. 19.

⁴ *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, 1983).

been found at Şirna (Walachia); coins of Leo V at Urluia (Dobrudja); coins minted for Emperor Theophilus at Sălcuța (Walachia) and Rasova (Dobrudja); a gold coin struck in Constantinople for Michael III at Găvănoasa (Republic of Moldova); coins of Basil I at Urluia and Constanța (Dobrudja). The catalogue of 'Byzantine coins in and around Carolingian Europe' should also include the gold coins minted for Emperors Theodosius III and Leo III found in Oltenia (southern Romania) and Vodinjan, in Istria; the coppers struck for Constantine V found in Voila (Transylvania) and Urluia; the coppers found in Constanța and the *miliaresia* found in Tichilești (Walachia) and Urluia, all struck for Leo IV; the four *folleis* and the silver coin struck for Constantine VI and his mother, Irene, all in Urluia.⁵ The number of missing coins on maps 12.6 and 12.7 in McCormick's book increases suddenly when one considers issues of the tenth-century emperors: eastern and south-eastern Romania produced coins of Romanus I, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, and John Tzimiskes in relatively large quantities, and tenth-century coins are equally well represented in both isolated finds and hoards found in the Black Sea region. All this suggests that instead of an Amber Trail from north to south, the Danube axis may have been the key factor in the distribution of Byzantine coins from east to west. This conclusion is substantiated by recent results of archaeological research in Moravia and Bohemia that point to increasing contacts between this region and Bulgaria during the ninth century.⁶

⁵ I. Dimian, 'Citeva descoperiri monetare pe teritoriul RPR', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche* 8 (1957), pp. 197–9; C. Preda, 'Circulația monedelor bizantine în regiunea carpato-dunăreană', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche* 23 (1972), p. 408; G. Gorini, 'La collezione di monete d'oro della Società istriana di archeologia e storia patria', *Atti e memorie della Società istriana di archeologia e storia della patria* 22 (1974), p. 146; G. Petre-Govora, 'Continuitatea dacoromană în nordul Olteniei în sec. IV–VII e.n. în lumina noilor descoperiri arheologice și numismatice', *Drobeta* 2 (1976), p. 114; N. Harțuche, 'Preliminarii la repertoriul arheologic al județului Brăila', *Istros* 1 (1980), p. 335; G. Custurea, 'Unele aspecte ale pătrunderii monedei bizantine în Dobrogea în secolele VII–X', *Pontica* 19 (1986), p. 277; E.S. Stoliarik, *Essays on Monetary Circulation in the North-Western Black Sea Region in the Late Roman and Byzantine Periods (Late 3rd Century–Early 13th Century AD)* (Odessa, 1992), p. 142. For more coins of Leo V, Theophilus, and Basil I from unknown locations in Dobrudja and southern Romania, see Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 'Monede bizantine din secolele VII–X descoperite în nordul Dobrogei', *Studii și cercetări de numismatică* 7 (1980), pp. 163–4; B. Mitrea, 'Descoperiri recente și mai vechi de monede antice și bizantine în RSR', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche* 18 (1967), p. 201; Ioan Barnea, 'Dobrogea în secolele VII–X', *Peuce* 2 (1971), p. 214. For Byzantine coins in eighth- and ninth-century burial assemblages in Bulgaria, see Z. Vázharova, *Sláviani i prabǎlgari po danni na nekropolite ot VI–XI v. na teritoriata na Bǎlgariia* (Sofia, 1976), pp. 60 and 341.

⁶ T. Stefanovičová, 'Zur materiellen Kultur der donauländischen Slawen in der Beziehung zum Südosteuropa', in *Mitteleldonaugebiet und Südosteuropa im frühen Mittelalter* (Bratislava, 1995), pp. 87–103; N. Profantová, 'On some Danubian Influences in 8th–9th-Century Bohemia: Particular Pottery Shapes', in D. Bialeková and J. Zábajník (eds), *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert. Symposium Nitra 6. bis 10. November 1994* (Bratislava, 1996), pp. 227–44.

As for Arab coins, the situation is somewhat different from that described on McCormick's maps. First, the distribution of Arab silver finds in *all* of Europe⁷ suggests a line of demarcation along the Elbe–Danube axis running across the continent. In other words, most finds north and north-east of that axis are from hoards, while coins south and south-west of that line are, with few exceptions, either stray finds or individual coins in burial or settlement assemblages. Since this distribution coincides with that of balances and weights, it has been suggested that the northern area was dominated by what German authors call *Gewichtsgeldwirtschaft*,⁸ an economic system based exclusively on the intrinsic value (as opposed to the fiduciary value) of currency. More important for this discussion of the early medieval economy, most hoards of Arab silver found in Poland are no earlier than c. 900. Second, the Carpathian basin (the Hungarian Plain and the surrounding areas in Slovakia, Serbia and Romania) has so far produced no significant finds of ninth-century *dirhams*, except a few controversial specimens in Vojvodina.⁹ East of this region, the westernmost assemblage with *dirhams* of an early date is the late ninth- or early tenth-century hoard of silver from Răducăneni.¹⁰ The east European 'dirham zone' did not extend, apparently, into the lower and middle Danube region, despite the presence, here and there, of clear artistic influences from the Abbasid Caliphate.¹¹

Within east central Europe, the closest one comes to a trade network in the 800s is the evidence provided by axe-shaped bars, which appear

⁷ For distribution maps, see J. Herrmann, 'Slawen und Wikinger in der Frühgeschichte der Ostseevölker', in J. Herrmann (ed.), *Wikinger und Slawen. Zur Frühgeschichte der Ostseevölker* (Neumünster, 1982), pp. 102–4 with Figs 119–121; S. Brather, 'Frühmittelalterliche Dirham-Schatzfunde in Europa. Probleme ihrer wirtschaftsgeschichtlichen Interpretation aus archäologischer Perspektive', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters* 23–24 (1995–1996), p. 91, Fig. 4; p. 99, Fig. 7; and p. 104, Fig. 11.

⁸ See, for example, H. Steuer, 'Gewichtsgeldwirtschaften im frühgeschichtlichen Europa (Feinwaagen und Gewichte als Quellen zur Währungsgeschichte)', in K. Düwel, H. Jankuhn, H. Siems and D. Timpe (eds), *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa*, vol. 4 (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 405–527. The earliest balance finds are of the late ninth century, but most other finds are of the tenth.

⁹ For two eighth-century *dirhams* in the numismatic collection of the Novi Sad museum, see Nebojša Stanojević, 'Naselja VIII–IX veka u Vojvodini', *Rad Vojvodanskih Muzeja* 30 (1987), pp. 130–1. For Arab coins in east central Europe, see now Władysław Losiński, 'Chronologia, skala i drogi napływu monet arabskich do krajów europejskich u schyłku IX i w X w.', *Slavia Antiqua* 34 (1993), pp. 1–41 and Andrzej Bartzak, 'Finds of Dirhams in Central Europe Prior to the Beginning of the Tenth Century A.D.', in Przemysław Urbańczyk (ed.), *Origins of Central Europe* (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 227–38.

¹⁰ Besides coins struck for the caliphs Al-Mansur (775–785) and Al-Mahdi (785–786), the hoard produced five *dirhams* of Harun al-Rashid, two of which were perforated to be used as pendants. See Dan Gh. Teodor, 'Tezaurul de la Răducăneni-Iași', *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 31 (1980), pp. 403–23.

¹¹ E.g., K. Benda, 'Zwei Zierstücke mit abbasidischen Motiven aus Mikulčice (Mähren)', in G. Rózsa (ed.), *Evolution générale et développements régionaux en histoire de l'art*, vol. 1 (Budapest, 1972), pp. 91–5.

in great numbers, usually in bundles, in large hoards from central Moravia and Silesia.¹² Such artefacts could hardly be considered money, for they did not exist within a fully monetarized economy. However, they may have served as tokens in commercial transactions, much like Maori axes and cloaks, Kwakiutl coppers, and Kula armshells and necklaces known from the anthropological literature.¹³ Similar bars were in use as tokens in contemporary Norway, especially in the hinterland of the important port-of-trade at Kaupang, and at Birka in Sweden.¹⁴ This further suggests that far from exclusively relying on markets in the east or in the west (or south, as McCormick now persuasively argues), elites in east central Europe and Scandinavia could create competing trade networks to accommodate a highly localized demand for the means to represent power.¹⁵

But lack of *dirhams* should not be interpreted as isolation from, or lack of contacts with, Muslim markets in the east. Very significant in this respect is the presence of cowrie shells in much greater numbers and in a greater variety of archaeological contexts than suggested by McCormick's book (p. 384). Cowrie shells appear in seventh-century hoards of silver and bronze, as well as in burial assemblages in Left Bank Ukraine (east of the middle Dnieper River).¹⁶ Shortly after 700, however, they also appear in burial assemblages in the Balkans and in the middle Danube region.¹⁷ Carnelian beads produced in the Caucasus

¹² E. Zaitz, 'Frühmittelalterliche axtförmige Eisenbarren aus Klempol', *Slovenská Archeológia* 36 (1988), pp. 261–76; R. Pleiner, 'Kotazce funkce a rozsireni sekerovitých hriven', *Slovenská Numizmatika* 10 (1989), pp. 81–6. A study based on the factorial analysis of the main attributes of 270 bars shows a strong correlation between length and weight, which suggests that bars were manufactured as standard units of raw material. They were made in a restricted range of weights, usually equivalent to some division of the Roman pound. This suggests that they may have served as means to 'store' and display wealth, in other words as currency (*Gerätageld*). See A. Tirpaková, D. Bialeková and I. Vlkolinská, 'The Application of some Mathematic-Statistical Methods in Solving the Possibility of Exploitation of Roman Measures in Manufacturing of Slavic Axe-Shaped Currency Bars and Pottery', *Slovenská Archeológia* 37 (1989), pp. 427–50.

¹³ See D. Graeber, 'Beads and Money: Notes Toward a Theory of Wealth and Power', *American Ethnologist* 23:1 (1996), pp. 4–24.

¹⁴ For a distribution map of Scandinavian axe-shaped bars, see H. Jankuhn, *Haithabu. Ein Handelsplatz der Wikingerzeit* (Neumünster, 1986), p. 51, Fig. 23.

¹⁵ For ninth-century hoards of iron implements and weapons in eastern Europe (including axe-shaped bars) as a form of power representation, see Florin Curta, 'Iron and Potlatch: Early Medieval Hoards of Implements and Weapons in Eastern Europe', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999), pp. 15–62.

¹⁶ G.F. Korzhukhina, 'Klady i sluchainye nakhodki veshchei kruga 'drevnostei antov' v srednem Podneprov'e. Katalog pamiatnikov', *Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii* 5 (1996), pp. 372–3, 406–7, 612, Pl. 22/53 (a specimen of *Cypraea pantherina*) and p. 663, Pl. 73/4 (110 specimens of *Cypraea moneta*); V.S. Aksenov and L.I. Babenko, 'Pogrebenie VI–VII vekov n.e. u sela Mokhnach', *Rossiiskaia Arkheologiia* 3 (1998), pp. 111–21 (two specimens, one of *Cypraea tigris*, the other of *Cypraea arabica*).

¹⁷ Vázharova, *Slaviani i prabálgari*, pp. 54, 321 and 468; U. Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn, 1992), p. 468 and Pl. 61/16; H. Bulle,

region may also testify to contacts with the Caspian Sea region.¹⁸ By 800, millefiori beads manufactured within the Caliphate reached the western Balkans¹⁹ along a trade route from the Near East to the Adriatic and further north, across the Alps to the Rhine valley.²⁰

The evidence of beads brilliantly confirms McCormick's picture of the rise of the Venetian trade network and the earliest contacts across the Mediterranean with the Muslim world. But at the same time, it raises some important questions regarding his chronology. An important argument in this book is that land communication and overland corridors between western (or northern) and eastern Europe collapsed around AD 600. At the same time, while the Via Egnatia (the road from Dyrrachium to Constantinople) was still in use in the early 500s (p. 69), Emperor Constans II's trip to Sicily that circumnavigated Greece²¹ indicates that communications along the Via Egnatia ceased 'entirely in the seventh century' (p. 501). According to McCormick, only in the ninth century did the Corinth and the Danube corridors reopen for communication and trade. However, the archaeological record suggests a different interpretation. First, there is evidence that the Via Egnatia between Ochrid and Edessa/Vodena was repaired at some point during the eighth century.²² This is the region with some

'Ausgrabungen bei Aphiona auf Korfu', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 39 (1934), pp. 221 and 231; G. Rhé and N. Fettich, *Jutas und Óskü. Zwei Gräberfelder aus der Völkerwanderungszeit in Ungarn* (Prague, 1931), p. 24 (a specimen of *Cypraea voluta*).

¹⁸ For a distribution map of carnelian beads in eastern and northern Europe, see I. Gabriel, 'Hof- und Sakralarchitektur sowie Gebrauchs- und Handelsgut im Spiegel der Kleinfunde von Starigard/Oldenburger', *Bericht der römisch-germanischen Kommission* 69 (1988), p. 196, Fig. 36. For carnelian beads as indication of contacts with eastern markets, see I. Jansson, 'Communications between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe in the Viking Age', in Düwel *et al.* (ed.), *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr*, vol. 4, pp. 773–807.

¹⁹ F. Prendi, 'Një varrëze e kulturës arbërore në Lezhë', *Iliria* 9/10 (1979–1980), p. 129; A. Degrand, *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie* (Paris, 1901), p. 260; H. Spahiu, 'Gjetje të vjetra nga varreza mesjetare e Kalasë së Dalmaces', *Iliria* 1 (1971), Pl. IX; S. Anamali and H. Spahiu, 'Varrëza e herëshme mesjetare e Krujës', *Buletin i Universitetit shtetëror të Tiranës* 17 (1963), p. 63, Pl. XIV/2; S. Anamali and H. Spahiu, 'Varrëza arbërore e Krujës', *Iliria* 9/10 (1979–1980), Pl. I/8.

²⁰ J. Callmer, 'Oriental Beads and Europe, A.D. 600–800', in A. Ellgård and G. Åkerström-Hougen (eds), *Rome and the North* (Jonsæder, 1996), pp. 53–71. Such beads only rarely appear in early Moravian cemeteries, in Istria, Pannonia, Austria, or the hinterland of Venice.

²¹ *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. T. Mommsen (Berlin, 1898), p. 186: 'Huius temporibus venit Constantinus Augustus de regia urbe per litoraria in Athenas et exinde Taranto.' The year is 661 or 662. Paul the Deacon's account of Constans II's campaign is based on the biography of Pope Vitalian in the *Liber Pontificalis*. As a consequence, he too claims that the emperor marched overland from Constantinople. See Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* V 6, ed. G. Waitz (Hannover, 1878), p. 146. Since communication by land between Constantinople and Thessalonica was re-established only under Constantine IV, it is unlikely that Constans crossed through southern Thrace and Macedonia to reach Athens.

²² N. Oikonomides, 'The Medieval Via Egnatia', in E. Zachariadou (ed.), *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380–1699)* (Rethymnon, 1996), p. 13. See also N. Čeka and L. Papajani, 'Rruga në luginën e Shkumbinit në kohën antike', *Monumentet* 1 (1971), pp. 43–59.

of the most important cemeteries of the so-called Komani culture (Sv. Erazmo, Radolishta, Krusharski Rid, Goren Kozjak, and Viničani),²³ which have been associated with local garrisons in the hinterland of Dyrrachium.²⁴ True, the road between Dyrrachium and Ochrid (the westernmost part of the Via Egnatia) along the river Shkumbi was abandoned sometime between the sixth and the ninth century, because the stretch across the Polis plateau required regular repairs that were just too expensive. However, alternative routes were in use along the Rivers Mat (from Dyrrachium to Kruje, then to Dibër and Ochrid) and White Drin (from Shkodër to Kukës and then to Skopje, through Prizren).²⁵ In short, while there is no doubt that trade along the Via Egnatia almost disappeared between the sixth and the ninth century, it would be a mistake to assume that communications along the great overland highway were completely broken, only to be revived in the late 800s. That the Corinth and Danube corridors reopened in the 800s may be significant for trade, but in terms of communications the situation seems to have been much more complex. Distinguishing between trade and communication may indeed not be an easy task, but it is crucial for understanding the take-off phase of the early medieval economy of Europe in McCormick's terms. If communications were not interrupted, most probably because of constant military needs, then the question is, why did trade not start in earnest much earlier than it is currently assumed it did? The answer, in my opinion, has little to do with the existence of communication networks and much more with the dramatic changes taking place within those societies which were engaging in long-distance trade after c. 800.

On the other hand, amber still moved from the Baltic shore to the Carpathian basin during the Early Avar period (c. 570 to c. 650) and amber beads, presumably from the south-eastern Baltic coast, were found in seventh-century hoards of silver and bronze in Left Bank

²³ V. Malenko, 'Ranosrednovjekovna materijalna kultura vo Okhrid i Okhridsko', in M. Apostolski (ed.), *Okhrid i Okhridsko niz istorijata*, vol. 1 (Skopje, 1985), pp. 288–9 and 291–3; Z. Beldedovski, *Bregalnichkiot basen vo rimskot i raniot srednovjekoven period* (Štip, 1990), pp. 65 and 76; M. Čorović-Ljubinković, 'Viničani', in M. Apostolski (ed.), *Zbornik posveten na Boško Babić. Mélanges Boško Babić 1924–1984* (Prilep, 1986), pp. 133–6. The Radolishta cemetery is located next to the Via Egnatia. See also E. Maneva, 'La survie des centres paléochrétiens de Macédoine au Haut Moyen Age', in N. Cambi and E. Marin (eds), *Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju. Split-Poreč (25.9–1.10.1994)*, vol. 2 (Vatican and Split, 1998), p. 847. For an overview of the Komani culture, see Vladislav Popović, 'Byzantins, Slaves et autochtones dans les provinces de Prévalitane et Nouvelle Epire', in *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin. Actes du colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome, Rome 12–14 mai 1982* (Rome, 1984), pp. 181–243.

²⁴ H. Saradi, 'Aspects of Early Byzantine Urbanism in Albania', in C. Gasparis (ed.), *Hoi Albanoi sto mesaiona* (Athens, 1998), p. 121.

²⁵ A. Baçe, 'Rrugët shqiptare në mesjetë (shek. VII–XV)', *Monumentet* 27 (1984), p. 62.

Ukraine,²⁶ as well as in contemporary burial assemblages in Crimea.²⁷ In contrast, amber is relatively rare in eighth- and ninth-century assemblages in east central Europe and there is no evidence that the Amber Trail was revived in the aftermath of Charlemagne's conquest of the Avar khaganate (pp. 369–79).²⁸ On the contrary, the evidence points to a shift in emphasis from the Vistula to the Dnieper Rivers taking place at some point after 600 AD. In other words, ninth-century amber does not seem to have played any significant role in early medieval exchanges between the Mediterranean and the Baltic across the lands of east central Europe. In Bohemia, no medieval amber finds can be dated earlier than c. 900 AD.²⁹ It has long been suggested that the appearance of amber beads in tenth-century Bohemia is the result of accelerated exchange with early Piast Poland.³⁰ This nicely dovetails with the written evidence (Ibrahim ibn Yakub al Turtushi and Hasdai ibn Shaprut's letter to the King of the Khazars) of the second half of the tenth century, according to which Prague was one of the most important trade centres of eastern Europe, most famous for its slave market.³¹

²⁶ Korzukhina, 'Klady i sluchainye nakhodki', pp. 372–3 and 401–2; B.A. Rybakov, 'Novyi Sudzhanskii klad antskogo vremeni', *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniakh Instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury AN SSSR* 27 (1949), pp. 75–84 and 79, Fig. 32a; M. Iu. Braichevs'kii, 'Pastirs'kii skarb 1949 r.', *Arkheolohiia* 7 (1952), pp. 161–73 and Pl. IV/1–9; I.O. Gavritukhin and A.M. Oblomskii, *Gaponovskii klad i ego kul'turno-istoricheskii kontekst* (Moscow, 1996), p. 198, Fig. 23/1–12. For seventh-century amber finds within the Carpathian basin, see F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge and New York, 2001), pp. 196 and 197, Fig. 15. There are no amber beads in any eighth- to ninth-century burial assemblage in Istria, while the large Albanian cemetery at Kruij produced just one amber bead, possibly an heirloom. See Anamali and Spahiu, 'Varrëza e herëshme mesjëtare e Kruijës', p. 64. To my knowledge, the only seventh-century find of amber in the Balkans is that from Corinth. See G.W. Davidson, 'A Wandering Soldier's Grave in Corinth', *Hesperia* 43 (1974), pp. 512–21 and Pl. 111b.

²⁷ E.V. Veimarn and A.I. Aibabin, *Skalinstinskii mogil'nik* (Kiev, 1993); N. Repnikov, 'Nekotorye mogil'niki oblasti krymskikh gotov', *Izvestiia imperatorskoi arkheologicheskoi kommissii* 9 (1906), pp. 5–6; E.V. Veimarn, 'Arkheologichni roboti v raioni Inkermana', *Arkheologichny pam'iatki URSS* 13 (1963), pp. 57–9 and 60. Luchistoe, burial chamber 10: A.I. Aibabin, 'Kompleksy s bolshymi dvuplastinchatymi fibulami iz Luchistogo', *Materialy po arkheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii* 4 (1994), pp. 132–6.

²⁸ For the Amber Trail, see now J. Kolendo, 'Naplyw bursztynu z Polnocy na tereny imperium rzymskiego w I–VI w. n.e.', *Prace Muzeum Ziemi* 41 (1990), pp. 91–100. For the relative scarcity of amber finds in the south-eastern region of the Baltic coast, see R.V. Sidrys, 'Vakuru baltu gintaro ikapes gelezies amziuje', in A. Nikzentaitis and V. Zulkus (eds), *Klaipedos miesto ir regiono archeologijos ir istorijos problemas* (Klaipeda, 1994), pp. 59–87. For early medieval amber finds in east central Europe, see Z. Krumphanzlová, 'Amber: Its Significance in the Early Middle Ages', *Památky Archeologické* 83 (1992), pp. 350–71.

²⁹ For the earliest datable finds, see J. Frolík *et al.*, 'Vyzkum slovenského pohřebiště v jzním křídle jízdního Pražského Hradu', *Památky Archeologické* 79 (1988), pp. 437–8. See also Krumphanzlová, 'Amber', p. 366: no Amber Trail existed during the ninth century.

³⁰ J. Sláma, 'K česko-polským stykům v 10. a 11. století', *Vznik a počátky Slovanů* 4 (1963), pp. 221–69.

³¹ See A. Putík, 'Notes on the Name GBLYM in Hasdai's Letter to the Khaqan of Khazaria', in P. Charvát and J. Prosecký (eds), *Ibrahim ibn Yakub al-Turtushi. Christianity, Islam and Judaism meet in East-Central Europe, c. 800–1300 A.D. Proceedings of the International Colloquy,*

According to McCormick, slaves, particularly those of Slavic origin, were the main ingredient in the Venetian recipe for success. As elsewhere in recent years, the Slavs appear in his work as the object of conquest and colonization that shaped medieval Europe. Their episodic role in the history of the continent is thus restricted to that of victims of the 'occidentation', the shift towards the ways and norms of Romano-Germanic civilization.³² The conceptual division of Europe leaves the Slavs out of the main 'core' of European history, though not too far from its economic engines to be ignored in any discussion of the 'language of slavery'. The 'Slavic east' supplied slaves to early medieval Europe that were then sold to Muslim merchants or on Muslim markets against commodities that became the building blocks of the European economy. And here, I think, lies the main problem of McCormick's vast study. There is enough evidence to suggest a balance of exchange tilted towards the east. If so, we may presume that a lot more value moved eastwards, primarily, if not completely, in the form of slaves. The evidence, both written and archaeological, for this presumably large-scale trade with slaves is frankly slim. Most important, the 'archaeology of slavery' clearly points to Bulgaria as an important supplier of eastern markets, first and foremost of Byzantine ones, but perhaps of Muslim markets as well.³³ In both cases, there was no need of a Venetian intermediary, nor did the Bulgarian connection have any major implications for the 'origins of the European economy'. By contrast, the evidence for slaves of Slavic origin within the Muslim world overwhelmingly points to suppliers located along the same routes on which Arab silver travelled to Scandinavia. Indeed, the solid, most reliable evidence for trade with the Muslim world is (still) that of the 'northern arc'. This is not to say that networks in the Mediterranean area could not have been activated by 800. Given the nature of the impressive amount of data presented in McCormick's book, however, the evidence is more of communications than of trade. If trade is to be measured by such things as monetarization and commercial transactions, then we must admit that the 'northern arc' should by all means

25–29 April 1994 (Prague, 1996), pp. 169–75. For ibn Yakub's account, see *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, ed. by G. Jakob (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), pp. 12–18.

³² R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton, 1993), p. 295.

³³ See, for example, the distribution map of iron shackles that may have been used to restrain captives, in J. Henning, 'Gefangenensesseln im slawischen Siedlungsraum und der europäischen Sklavenhandel im 6. bis 12. Jahrhundert. Archäologisches zum Bedeutungswandel von "sklabos-sakaliba-slavus"', *Germania* 70 (1992), p. 416, Fig. 8. With one exception, all early specimens dated between the eighth and the eleventh century come from Bulgaria and the steppes north of the Black Sea.

be given priority in any discussion of European economy during the early Middle Ages. There is in fact no link between this 'northern arc' and the Mediterranean area along the old Amber Trail. This is perhaps the strongest argument against the idea of a trade corridor from the Baltic to the Adriatic enabling Venice to tap the vast resources of the 'Slavic hinterland'. The absence of Arab coin finds from east central Europe substantiates this conclusion. Whatever goods of eastern origin may have reached the Carpathian basin or the Balkans before c. 800 most probably exchanged hands many times after leaving the east. By contrast, the distribution of carnelian beads and cowrie shells in eastern Europe strongly suggests that the main network was that of the 'northern arc'. When beads produced within the Caliphate made their first appearance in the western Balkans, c. 800, they did not move so much to the north, along the Amber Trail, as across the Alps in the direction of the Frankish lands. If anything, goods of eastern origin and coins minted in Constantinople moved slowly into east central Europe along the Lower and, after c. 800, middle Danube, not through Venice. Against this background of 'parallel worlds', the distinctive feature of east central Europe is one of relative isolation from major developments in the north, as opposed to much greater openness towards the south-east. To the extent that any specific role may be assigned to this region in the economic take-off of (western) Europe, east central Europe did not become a major supplier of slaves until after c. 900. It is precisely at that time that the Latin word *Sclavus* (Slav) began taking on a new meaning, namely that of slave.³⁴

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³⁴ C. Verlinden, 'L'origine de "sclavus" = esclave', *Bulletin Du Cange* 17 (1937), pp. 97–128. See also H. Köpstein, 'Einige Aspekte des byzantinischen und bulgarischen Sklavenhandels im X. Jahrhundert. Zur Novelle des Joannes Tzimiskes über Sklavenhandelszoll', in V. Tăpkova-Zaimova, S. Dimitrov and E. Sarafova (eds), *Actes du premier Congrès international des études balkaniques et sud-est européennes*, vol. 3 (Sofia, 1969), pp. 237–47. The ethnic name *Slavi* used in a social sense (as an equivalent to *servi*) already appears in a charter of Louis the Pious and Lothar I for the monastery of Krems. See *Urkundenbuch des Landes ob der Enns*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1856), p. 11. This, however, did not become an established meaning until the tenth century. Before that, *Sclavi* could be both *liberi* and *servi*, as in an 853 charter of Louis the German. See *Ludowici Germanici diplomata*, ed. P. Kehr, in *MGH DD Regum Germaniae ex Stirpe Karolinorum*, vol. 1, 2nd edn (Stuttgart, 1956), pp. 88–9.