

Jan Havrda – Michal Tryml

Medieval Pavements in the Old Town of Prague (an Archaeological Contribution to the Knowledge of the History of Communications)

ANNOTATION

A presentation of important early medieval stone mettaled roads from the 11th to the onset of the 13th centuries documented by NPÚ in rescue excavations in the earliest settlement of Prague Old Town. In the vicinity of the join between Judita's bridge and the Old Town Square several significant features revealed the construction technology, including the make-up of the surface of the roads. Detailed characteristics are supplemented by a selection of the planning documentation and a brief comparison with other parts of Prague historic centre.

SUMMARY

It is almost exclusively by archaeological means that we gain information on character and construction details of medieval communications. The results of excavations so far executed inform us that the earliest roads in the Old Town were prevalently simple, without any consolidation, eventually had the form of a holloway as in the Kaprova street. The probable reason why this solution was used in the latter case may be the fact that settlement of this area reposed on even stable loam-sandy subsoil which on its turn rests on fluvial gravel terraces. On the Vltava's left bank, on the other hand, different geomorphological conditions and the clay-loamy subsoil requested more sophisticated solutions of road construction. Therefore, it was not necessary **in the Old Town** to resort to further consolidation of street surfaces until (after a prolonged period of utilization) new requirements necessitated another solution. An intense traffic on the most frequented streets requested repeated surface adjustments leading to creation of layers up to 0,5 – 1 m thick (cf. e.g. the excavation in the Platneřska street). The cases in which a communication follows after an earlier settlement, production or funeral horizon are relatively common. The Old Town's communication network becomes stable and is amply constructed in the 12th century in whose first third the central market place stabilizes in its present position. The material employed in the construction of the earliest roads were almost exclusively local river boulders. As an illustration, we presented important archaeologically documented communications constituted between the 10th and the early 13th century related to the Old Town's earliest settlement horizon.

English by Jan Kysela