

Lowland settlement in Slovenia between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages

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Summary

From the 1990s onwards, several lowland sites were excavated that shed a new light on the pattern of settlement on the territory of today's Slovenia in the 5th and 6th centuries. The previous, rather simple, image of a typical settlement – with the autochthonous inhabitants on the hills and, later, with the Slavs in the lowlands – is becoming a much more complex one.

In this paper three areas with lowland settlement are presented; the oldest and most extensive early Slavic settlement in Prekmurje (Northeast Slovenia), the site Cerklje near the Krka River (Southeast Slovenia), and the plains

north of Ljubljana (Central Slovenia) with focus on the site Pržanj.

The lowlands could have been inhabited in these unstable times for various reasons: exploitation of the empty areas of the fertile Pannonian plains; for reasons to do with the Byzantine army and politics. Yet it also appears that an economically important activity given favourable conditions for its implementation in the lowlands could also withstand the dangers of turbulent times.

Keywords: Late Antiquity, Migration Period, Early Middle Ages, Slavic settlement, lowland settlement

1. Introduction

From the 1990s onwards, several lowland sites were excavated that shed a new light on the pattern of settlement on the territory of today's Slovenia in the 5th and 6th centuries. The previous, rather simple, image of a typical settlement – with the autochthonous inhabitants on the hills and, later, with the Slavs in the lowlands – is becoming a much more complex one, in which it is clear that each region has its own characteristics. Despite so far modest archaeological material and only a small number of sites, we are trying to understand which events, historical circumstances or processes were responsible for the differences between regions.¹

Three areas (**fig. 1**) are interesting in this regard; the oldest and most extensive early Slavic settlement in Prekmurje (Northeast Slovenia), the site Cerklje near the Krka River (Southeast Slovenia), with material comparable to the Prekmurje region, and the plains north of Ljubljana (Central Slovenia), with a group of sites: Pržanj and Dragomelj, with similar material culture, but not comparable to Prekmurje region, and contemporary Podgorica and Mengeš. The Pržanj site is characterised by extensive met-

allurgic activity, which was present in this area already in the Roman period and Late Antiquity.

2. Areas with lowland settlement

2.1. Prekmurje (Northeast Slovenia)

The first area discussed in this paper will be Prekmurje, where in the early 2000s the first lowland settlements attributed to Early Slavs were discovered. These discoveries shed a totally new light on our understanding of Slavic arrival on the territory of present-day Slovenia² and also of the use of lowlands in periods of general unrest.

A series of sites was excavated south of the city of Murska Sobota, which revealed a hitherto poorly known pattern of early medieval settlement in the lowlands. The largest investigated area, covering as much as 40 ha, was at Nova tabla near Murska Sobota (**fig. 2**).³ The site yielded remains ranging from the Eneolithic to the modern period, with those from the Early Middle Ages comprising

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² First reports on these new discoveries were presented in GUŠTIN 2002 and GUŠTIN 2008 and in an exhibition curated by Branko KERMAN, cf. KERMAN 2011.

³ GUŠTIN 2002; GUŠTIN 2008 with references; PAVLOVIČ 2008; PAVLOVIČ 2012; PAVLOVIČ 2013; PAVLOVIČ 2015; PAVLOVIČ 2017a; PAVLOVIČ 2017b.

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Figure credits

Fig. 1: Map: © GURS, PK 500, May 1998, amendments: Daša PAVLOVIČ

Fig. 2: Branko KERMAN

Fig. 3: Documentation of National Museum of Slovenia

Fig. 4, 10: Tomaž LAUKO (National Museum of Slovenia)

Fig. 5: Arhej d.o.o., Jašar SKORUPAN

Fig. 6: after PAVLOVIČ et al. 2021, fig. 10

Fig. 7: after PAVLOVIČ et al. 2021, pl. 2

Fig. 8: Ivan M. HROVATIN

Fig. 9: Daša PAVLOVIČ

Flachlandsiedlungen in Slowenien zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter

Seit den 1990er Jahren wurden einige Flachlandsiedlungen ausgegraben, die ein neues Licht auf das Siedlungsmuster des 5. und 6. Jahrhunderts im heutigen Slowenien werfen. Die frühere, relative einfache Vorstellung eines typischen Siedlungsmusters dieser Zeit – mit den autochthonen Einwohnern auf den Hügeln und später den Slawen im Flachland – zeigt sich nun deutlich komplexer.

Dieser Beitrag präsentiert drei Gebiete mit Flachlandsiedlungen; die älteste und weitläufigste frühslawische Siedlung in Prekmurje (Nordost-Slowenien), die Fundstelle Cerklje nahe des Flusses Krka (Südost-Slowenien), und die Ebene nördlich von Ljubljana (Zentral-Slowenien) mit der Fundstelle Pržanj.

Die Ebenen wurden in diesen unruhigen Zeiten aus unterschiedlichen Gründen besiedelt: die Nutzung der siedlungsleeren Gebiete in der fruchtbaren Pannonischen Tiefebene, aus Gründen in Zusammenhang mit dem byzantinischen Heer und aus politischen Gründen. Es zeigt sich aber auch, dass wirtschaftlich bedeutende Aktivitäten unter günstigen Voraussetzungen für ihre Umsetzung im Flachland auch den Gefahren stürmischer Zeiten standhalten konnten.

Schlagworte: Spätantike, Völkerwanderungszeit, Frühmittelalter, slawische Siedlung, Flachlandsiedlung

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