

Medieval urbanisation in north-eastern Slovenia

Miha MURKO

Summary

Two main urban centres developed during the early and high medieval period in the area of north-eastern Slovenia. Ptuj, known to have been an important Roman urban centre, and Maribor, with no well-known Roman settlement in the area of the later medieval town, became centres of medieval commerce, administration and artisanship. Town plans suggest diverse development through time. Late medieval Ptuj formed around the ancient centre on Castle Hill, but late medieval Maribor, by contrast, was built in a regular rectangular town plan far away

from *Marchburch* Castle. Thus, researchers for a long time thought the town was created in an area with no previous medieval settlement. However, archaeological and art historical research in the area of later Conventual Franciscan (Minorite) Monastery suggest pre-medieval non-agrarian settlement beside the Drava River. The article reviews historical and archaeological data about the beginnings of the most important medieval centres in the Drava plain area.

Keywords: Medieval archaeology, urbanisation, continuity, north-eastern Slovenia, Ptuj, Maribor

1. Introduction

The medieval town, its history, beginnings, and development have been the main topic of medievalists since the 18th century. However, research into medieval urban settlements was the domain of historians and art historians until the 1980s, when archaeology introduced new methodology and data interpretation, especially concerning the earliest phases of medieval towns. In interpreting this data, we try to understand the topographical and historical conditions for the formation of a settlement nucleus, when and how these developed, how they were later integrated into town plans, or just ceased to exist.

For understanding the evolution of a medieval town, analyses of written historical sources, historical topography, historical building structural analyses, a study of broader historical circumstances, and archaeological data are needed.¹

The earliest non-agrarian medieval settlements in the area of modern-day Slovenia date back to the 9th century and continued to develop throughout the 10th and 11th centuries. These types of settlements are referred to as *forum*, *oppidum*, *civitas*, or *villa*.² Essential functions of these non-agrarian settlements were trade and crafts.

In modern-day Slovenia, medieval towns are mentioned in written sources for the first time as late as the 13th century. Therefore, it is doubtful that all of them were created at once in previously uninhabited areas. New data from recent excavations in Ljubljana, Kranj, Slovenj Gradec, Črnomelj, and especially in Maribor show that not a single medieval town occupied a previously uninhabited area.

Medieval urbanisation in north-eastern Slovenia began at the end of the 12th century and peaked in the second half of the 13th century. The medieval towns of Ptuj and Maribor were centres of urbanisation in the area. The first was erected on the site of an older Roman and later early medieval central settlement. The second was built on the plateau of the Drava River, where no known larger Roman settlements existed. The latter also has a more regular town plan, and for a long time it seemed that it had been erected in a previously unoccupied area. However, modern archaeological investigations in the area of Maribor show a level of continuity in settlement patterns. Archaeological excavations in the area of former Minorite Monastery and on Castle Hill have revealed evidence of Roman and late Roman era settlements.³ It seems that the location of medieval Maribor was important throughout time due to the proximity to the Drava River and its position on the crossroads of ancient communication routes from south

¹ BAERISWYL 2003, 14.

² KOSI 2009, 120.

³ MURKO 2014, 214.

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Figure credits

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Fig. 5: Nataša GRUM (TICA SISTEM d.o.o.)
Fig. 6, 11: source: <https://gisportal.gov.si/>; plan: Miha MURKO
Fig. 7: Andrej MAGDIČ (archive ZVKDS, OE Maribor)
Fig. 8: Boris TUŠEK (PJP d.o.o.)

Mittelalterliche Urbanisation in Nordost-Slowenien

Während des Früh- und Hochmittelalters entwickelten sich auf dem Gebiet Nordostsloweniens zwei urbane Zentren. Ptuj, bekannt als wichtige römische Stadt, und Maribor, ohne bekannte römische Vorgängersiedlung im Bereich der späteren mittelalterlichen Stadt, wurden zu Zentren des mittelalterlichen Handels, der Verwaltung und des Handwerks. Die Stadtpläne lassen auf eine unterschiedliche Entwicklung durch die Zeiten schließen. Das spätmittelalterliche Ptuj entwickelte sich um das antike Zentrum auf dem Burgberg herum. Im Gegensatz dazu entstand das spätmittelalterliche Maribor als rechtwinklig angelegte Planstadt weit abseits von der Burg *Marchburch*. Aus diesem Grund wird in der Forschung vermutet, dass die Stadt in

einem Bereich gegründet wurde, der nicht bereits zuvor von einer früheren mittelalterlichen Siedlung eingenommen worden war. Jedoch lassen archäologische und kunsthistorische Forschungen auf dem Areal des späteren Minoritenklosters auf eine nicht-agrarische Siedlung am Fluss Drau schließen, die bereits vor dem Mittelalter bestand. Der vorliegende Aufsatz liefert einen Überblick zu den historischen und archäologischen Daten bezüglich des Beginns der wichtigsten mittelalterlichen Zentren der Drau-Ebene.

Schlagworte: Mittelalterarchäologie, Urbanisation, Kontinuität, Nordostslowenien, Ptuj, Maribor

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