

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

International Workshop

Intentions and Meaning: A Comparative View of Late Antique Hilltop Sites in Europe

National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana

From 22nd to 24th September 2021



LJUBLJANA 2022

SLOVENIA



GERMAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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LJUBLJANA



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Publisher:
National Museum of Slovenia

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(Leipzig)

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Madeleine Hummler (York)

Photo on the cover:
Daša Pavlovič, National Museum of Slovenia – Metelkova

Graphic design:
Boris Radjenović (Ljubljana)

Ljubljana, January 2022

This edition was supported by the National Museum of Slovenia (research programme ARRS P6-0283) and the Leibniz-Institute for History and Culture of Eastern Europe (Leipzig).

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v
Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
[COBISS.SI-ID 96569603](#)
ISBN 978-961-6981-58-3 (PDF)

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The National Museum of Slovenia is the oldest museum in Slovenia: in 2021 it will celebrate its 200th anniversary. The National Museum of Slovenia is located in a neo-Renaissance palace built according to designs by Viljem Treo and was opened to the public in 1888. The museum's history dates back to 1821, to the founding of its predecessor, the Provincial Museum of Carniola. Today it houses rich collections of valuable objects: archaeological, numismatic and graphic collection.

www.nms.si

The Leibniz Institute for History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) conducts comparative historical and cultural research on the border region between the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and Adriatic Seas from the Early Middle Ages to the present. The Institute currently has around 50 researchers from all disciplines of the humanities working in Germany and abroad. In its activities, the Institute relies on a dense network of cooperation with eastern and Central European as well as international research institutions.

www.uni-leipzig.de/gwzo

Venue:

National Museum of Slovenia – Metelkova, Maistrova ulica 1, Ljubljana

Concept and Organisation:

Daša Pavlovič, Zvezdana Modrijan, Tina Milavec, Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska, Marcus Zagermann

Programme

Wednesday, 22nd September 2021

9:00 –17:00

Moderation: Daša Pavlovič

9:00 – 9:10 Pavel Car and Daša Pavlovič (Ljubljana), Greetings

9:10 – 9:30 Zvezdana Modrijan, Tina Milavec (Ljubljana), Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska (Leipzig) and Marcus Zagermann (Munich):
Introduction

9:30 – 10:00 Tina Milavec (Ljubljana): Late Antique hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alps: state of research and open questions

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee Break

10:30 – 11:00 Elisa Possenti (Trento): Late Antique Hilltop Sites in Southern Middle Alps

11:30 – 12:00 Annina Wyss (Bern): Hilltop sites in the central Alpine region: characterisation and contextualisation of a settlement form at the transition between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Moderation: Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska

14:00 – 14:15 Hrvoje Gračanin (Zagreb): Comment from the historical point of view to the Alps

14:15 – 14:30 Zvezdana Modrijan (Ljubljana): Comment from the archaeological point of view to the Alps

14:30 – 15:00 Discussion

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

Moderation: Zvezdana Modrijan

15:30 – 16:00 Marcus Zagermann (Munich): The phenomenon of hilltop settlements in the Vosges, Black Forest, Hegau and Swabian Alb

16:00 – 16:30 Sebastian Ristow (Cologne): Hilltop sites in Northern Gallia and Germania

16:30 – 17:00 Andy Seaman (Canterbury): Late Antique Hillfort Occupation in Southern Britain: Chronology, Context, and Interpretation

Thursday, 23rd September 2021

9:30 – 17:30

Moderation: Tina Milavec

9:30 – 10:00 Damien Martinez (Lyon): Hilltop settlements in middle and southern Gallia

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee Break

10:30 – 10:45 Roland Steinacher (Innsbruck): Comment from the historical point of view to the West

10:45 – 11:00 Roland Prien (Heidelberg): Comment from the archaeological point of view to the West

11:00 – 11:30 Discussion

Moderation: Roland Prien

11:30 – 12:00 Slavko Ciglenečki (Ljubljana): Hilltop sites in the settlement's patterns of late antique Dalmatia (Höhensiedlungen in der Siedlungsstruktur der spätantiken Dalmatien)

12:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 14:30 Chavdar Kirilov (Sofia): Hilltop settlements at the Eastern Balkanpeninsula between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age

14:30 – 15:00 Stavroula Sdrolia (Larissa): Late antique hilltop sites in Greece

15:00 – 15:30 Mihailo Milinković (Belgrade): Hilltop Settlements at the territory of present-day Serbia and Montenegro

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

Moderation: Marcus Zagermann

16:00 – 16:30 Carolyn Snively (Gettysburg): Fortified Late Antique Hilltop Settlements in North Macedonia: Purpose and Geographical Distribution

16:30 – 16:45 Alexander Sarrantis (Warsaw): Comment from the historical point of view to the Balkan

16:45 – 17:00 Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska (Leipzig): Comment from the archaeological point of view to the Balkan

17:00 – 17:30 Discussion

Friday, 24th September 2021

9:00 – 17:00

9:00 – 10:00 Database (Marcus Zagermann, Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska)

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee break

10:30 – 12:30 Exhibition: Venues, Content and Title, scientific background, partners (Daša Pavlovič)

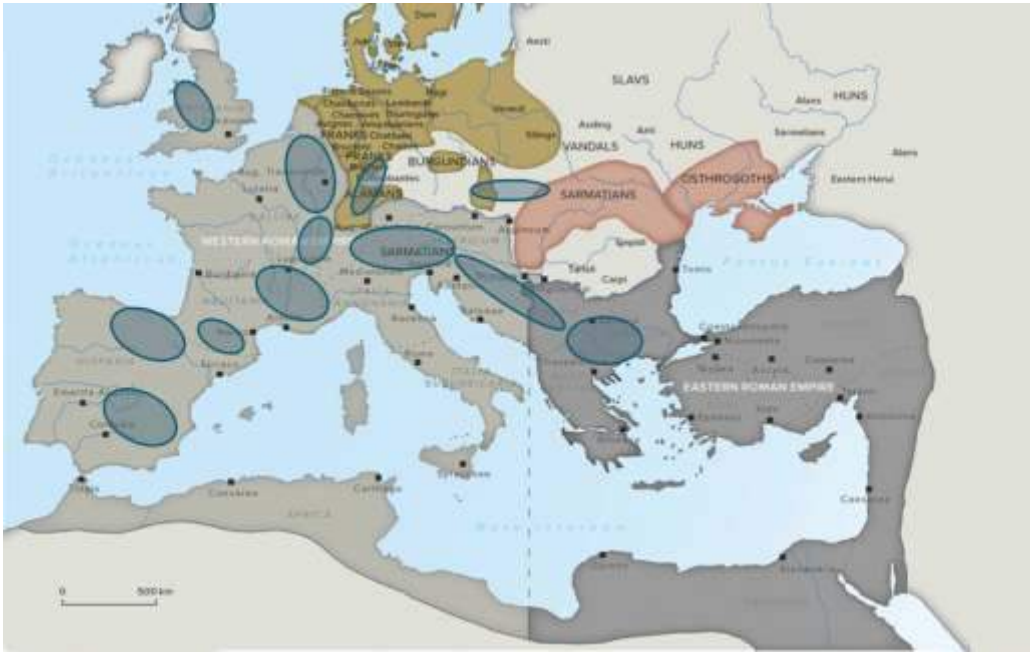
12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Application Creative Europe, part 1 (Saša Rudolf)

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 – 17:00 Application Creative Europe, part 2

Introduction



Areas with hilltop settlements in Europe (4th/5th century AD). – Map redrawn from Rome and the Barbarians 2008.

The workshop “Intentions and Meaning” was the initial event of the scientific programme accompanying a planned international exhibition on Late Antique hilltop settlements in Europe. It addressed the origins, types, duration of occupation, and importance of these sites. In particular, questions relating to the definition of hilltop settlements as well as to the political, social, and economic conditions that led to their establishment were considered. How can we define this settlement type? What are the characteristic topographical and architectural elements of hilltop sites? Who decided to build such sites, and who was responsible for their planning, construction, and financing?

These points have fuelled discussions in research right from the start and formed part of the overarching questions considered by the workshop. In particular, we tried to evaluate critically the models that have dominated past interpretations, which depend, among other factors, on the data available. Comparing national research traditions also played an important role, as did the analysis of the influence of such interpretative approaches. Our papers followed a regional structure from the Alps and Western Europe to the Balkan Peninsula, defined the settlements' temporal and spatial scale, and discussed comparative perspectives for further investigations.



Areas with hilltop settlements in Europe (6th/7th century AD). – Map redrawn from Rome and the Barbarians 2008.

Section 1: The Alps



Aerial photograph of the Late Antique hilltop site at San Martino (Italy). – Photography: Link3D, Freiburg (August 2019).

Late Antique hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alps: State of research and open questions

Tina Milavec (University of Ljubljana)

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To summarize the state of research, Late Antique hilltop sites have been investigated systematically since the 1970s in Slovenia, Italy, and Austria, while the phenomenon in Croatia was noticed more recently. The first major work, based on topography, was conducted by Slavko Ciglenečki and published in 1987, later followed by systematic excavations of the sites of Ajdovski gradec above Vranje, Hrušica, Ajdna above Potoki, Rifnik near Šentjur, Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj, Tonovcov grad near Kobarid, and elsewhere. Some sites were systematically published, but sometimes only selected materials or topics were chosen for publication. The results of this work have led us to a point where we need to ask new questions. Many issues have not been resolved, nor can they, in my opinion, be fully answered by further excavations or even publishing already excavated sites. Aspects of chronology, the interpretation of function, who built the sites, the presence of workshops, the organization of trade, the sites' economy, what happened in the lowlands, all these questions remain on the agenda but require new techniques and approaches.

How can we define this settlement type? Essentially, the typo-chronology of the small finds is similar, with two or three or main phases: most sites have phases dated to the late 3rd century AD, the 4th–5th century, and a main settlement phase of the late 5th–early 7th century. Often, the hilltops contain remains belonging to prehistory, the Early Roman period, and the Early Middle Ages. In some cases, there are medieval castles nearby, but usually not directly on top of the Late Antique settlement. This is intriguing, but only rarely mentioned. Some recent work suggests variations in chronology – for example Vesna Tratnik has identified a phase dated to the 3rd–4th century at Zidani gaber near Mihovo in south-western Slovenia instead of the two separate short settlement phases originally proposed. S. Ciglenečki defined defended hilltop settlements as a naturally and artificially defended location with timber and/or stone architecture, dwellings, water cisterns, one or several churches, and a cemetery. They were refugia, military posts, or other short-term settlement types in the Late Roman period and various combinations of permanent settlement in the 5th–6th century.

Regarding the origins, type and duration of occupation, and importance of these sites, it is assumed, on the basis of some written sources, that people were ordered or advised to move to locations that were safer than the highly dangerous crossroads that connected Italy with the north-east in Late Roman times. The major difference between the south-eastern Alps and other regions is that the move seems to have been more or less total: organization and administration, cult and defence, all moved to the hilltops. Not necessarily all the people, but the functioning elements of lowland settlements were transferred to better defended locations in the landscape.

How and when exactly this happened is unresolved. The precise date of the end of the hilltop phenomenon in Late Antiquity is also a mystery. Their chronology at least tells us that not all ended simultaneously. In eastern Slovenia and Croatia, the settlements were apparently abandoned in the late 6th century, but persisted longer in the west, or even in some cases remained functional into the Early Middle Ages. There is most probably no common reason for the end of hilltop settlement in general.

To what extent the lowland settlements remained active after the mid-5th century constitutes another open question. There are some indications that they did so, especially in the Gorenjska region, but the documented Late Antique remains will need detailed investigation. Most agricultural exploitation may have remained in the valleys, with people moving daily to work in the fields, but the continuous use of these fields makes it unlikely that traces of ancient use have survived.

Some scholars see defended hilltop sites as elite locations and status symbols. I believe that the architecture and small finds discovered so far do not endorse this interpretation. There is no elite material culture, and very few sites are located within sight of the roads. There are far more indications, in archaeological and historical sources, that most of the elites retreated to safer regions. Most hilltops sites in our region are predominantly self-sufficient settlements of local people with limited access to imported goods; in some cases government representatives were present in the form of small military garrisons. There are exceptions, such as Kranj, with evidence of its settlement and cemetery representing an “international” and elite hub.

With respect to the political, social, and economic conditions that led to the establishment of defended hilltop sites, danger is most often cited as the main reason for a complete shift in the settlement pattern in the 5th century. The agricultural lowlands were almost completely deserted, and towns ceased to function as the main administrative units. Could it be that only sites located along the most exposed roads experienced such a fate?

In terms of the topographic and architectural characteristics of the defended hilltop sites, the settlements are usually located on hills of medium elevation, on sunny slopes with good natural defence. Depending on the sites' function, their locations can be hidden or strategically placed. The architectural features generally include one or more churches, defence walls, dwellings, water cisterns – all quite simple in their execution. Exceptions include sites that only contain timber architecture, in some cases no church is recorded, and sometimes no defence walls were needed, etc. The settlements have strong similarities in their main features, but they are also individual creations, well thought-out and adapted to the terrain and climate. They were obviously the work of people familiar with the landscape. The evidence suggests that the settlements were probably established in a single event. Research shows a Justinianic phase of renovation of their ecclesiastical and defensive elements in some cases. The ground plans of the houses were relatively simple and show no luxury, although the Mediterranean tradition remained strong.

Who decided and who was responsible for the planning, construction, and financing of defended hilltop settlements?

Outside the written sources, there are very little indications of the people behind the construction of hilltop sites. In rare cases, as at Teurnia in Carinthia, a high official may have been involved in planning and possibly financing such a venture. But elsewhere, with the withdrawal of the elites, only the clergy could still be considered as likely to be taking the initiative to organize the population.

References

Ciglencički 1987; 2008; 2011; Ciglencički/Modrijan/Milavec 2011; 2020; Milavec 2020.

Late Antique hilltop sites in the southern central Alps

Elisa Possenti (University of Trento)

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This paper examines the phenomenon of hilltop sites in Late Antiquity (4th–6th century AD) in the Trentino Alto Adige region, with some comparisons in Friuli. As required, the intervention will address the following points: definition, topographic features, architectural elements, who decided to build and finance the defended hilltop sites, their economy, and society. Regarding the definition and topographical characteristics of the sites, let us note that the Trentino Alto Adige and parts of Friuli Venezia Giulia are mountainous regions, crossed by rivers whose valley floors were frequently flooded in the past and whose slopes were often unstable. It is therefore not surprising that upland settlements were successful sites in protohistoric and Roman times. But we must distinguish between settlements located on the slopes, raised above the valley floor, and hilltop settlements proper.

The settlements on the slopes were present in Roman times, alongside a more limited number of settlements on the valley floor. During Late Antiquity, neither category disappeared entirely, even if the total number of settlements decreased; moreover, while the number of sites on the slopes increased, those on the valley floor decreased dramatically. The phenomenon can be explained not so much by the uncertainty of the times, but rather by the lack of maintenance of the valley floor and, in particular, of the roads. The hilltop sites were less numerous, and the impression is that their presence was essentially functional: to control the road network on the one hand, and as a consequence of militarization in the region on the other. This situation is in any case reflected by the road system that used the slopes rather than the valley floor already in Roman times.

Hilltop settlements, although not very numerous, were present in Roman times already. An example in the Trentino area is the site of Doss Penede (Nago). After the Iron Age, the settlement was occupied from the 1st to the 3rd century AD and then abandoned. It had a monumental terracing system and controlled the road network that connected the northern part of Lake Garda with the Adige valley. The monumentality of the site, as well as the quality of its material culture, suggests that its construction was linked to a public authority, a situation that in some ways is similar to that of the Castelraimondo hilltop site in Friuli.

During the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries, the situation changed. The Late Antique fortified hilltop sites are only precisely dated in some instances, given that archaeological investigations were almost never conducted on a sufficiently large scale. At least in two cases (on the lake island of S. Andrea di Loppio and on the hilltop site of S. Martino di Lundo), archaeological research established a foundation date around the middle or second half of the 5th century and a continuation of occupation at least until the beginning of the 7th century (in this paper I do not consider the late Lombard and Carolingian periods). Unfortunately, the overall chronological span of occupation at important hilltop sites like Castelveter in Appiano, Castelfeder in Auer, the Sigmundskron in Bolzano, and others is still uncertain. All these sites, however, show some similarities: they control important roads and they are monumental, fortified sites with walls and towers.

It is these elements that suggests that their foundation was initiated by the public authority and that the local people provided the workforce under the guidance of military architects. In Trentino, on the other hand, there were seemingly no fortified hilltop sites in the 4th century, indicating that the *Tractus Italiae circa Alpes* was a phenomenon essentially linked to the 5th century. This situation is different from that in Friuli, where the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* defensive system was in place; there the fortification of Cuol Ciastel was identified in Carnia, in an area practically uninhabited in Roman and Late Roman times but featuring an important road. Cuol Ciastel remained in use from the middle of the 4th century until around AD 470. The material culture included imported ceramics, amphorae, and militaria. All these elements suggest that the site had a military character linked to the control of the road network.

Nevertheless, hilltop settlements did develop in the Trentino already during the 4th century. Although only partially excavated, the site of San Martino ai Campi di Riva, located along an important road network between Lake Garda and the Alpine regions, offers a possible confirmation. Here, a sanctuary was present in the Iron Age and the Roman period. But in the second half of the 4th century a series of interventions led to the foundation of a village, different from the later hilltop sites of S. Martino di Lundo and perhaps of Castelfeder, Castevetere, and others. The characteristic elements of San Martino ai Campi di Riva are: buildings in which an element of planning is identifiable; the absence of a surrounding wall, the reuse of the structures of the sanctuary in an architectonic complex comparable to the so-called Grande Edificio at Monte Barro (dated to the mid-5th century), the presence of a second large building very similar to some Late Antique *horrea*, a material culture with a limited proportion of imported pottery and amphorae.

All these elements seem compatible with an intervention from above (perhaps public?), but with topographic features and architectural elements that are different from those of the later site of S. Martino di Lundo and presumably also with different purposes. Indeed, it is believed that San Martino ai Campi di Riva may have been an administrative or management centre supporting military activities which were then located further north, behind the frontier line in which the Garda area and the rest of northern Italy were located, and in which the local population was directly involved.

In sum, in the Trentino, there were always settlements on the slopes, even if their number decreased during Late Antiquity, as did those on the valley floor. In the later 4th century, if we believe the example of San Martino ai Campi di Riva, hilltop settlements that were real villages were established. They were organized and structured, they controlled the road network, they were not defended by fortifications, but had buildings that suggest the presence on site of people with a certain authority and perhaps a public function. This situation is different from that in Friuli, where fortified hilltop sites were founded as early as the 4th century. Other hilltop sites were built in the Trentino about a century later. They were generally smaller, always located along the main road network, and their boundary walls, towers and sometimes a church had a different architecture.

References

Brogiolo 2014; Possenti 2004; 2013; Villa 2020.

Hilltop settlements of the central Alpine region: Character and context at the transition between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

Annina Wyss (University of Bern)

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In the following, the Alpine Rhine valley south of Bregenz/Brigantium and the inner Alpine region of the Canton of Graubünden in Switzerland are presented with regard to their settlement development between the end of the 3rd and the 8th century. The focus is on hilltop settlements, leaving aside graves, churches, and individual finds.

In the late 3rd and especially the 4th century, the *limes* was moved back and several forts (Bregenz/Brigantium, Schaan-Kastell, Weesen, and Irgenhausen) were built in what is today eastern Switzerland and the lower Alpine Rhine valley, so that the region was behind the line of fortification of the *Imperium romanum*. During this period (end of the 3rd and 4th century), the rural settlements (*Gutshöfe* in German), which are found only in the lower Rhine valley and not in the Alpine regions, were abandoned. From the 3rd and especially in the 4th century, the heights were reoccupied in large numbers. What all the hilltop settlements discussed here have in common is their prehistoric antecedents and a subsequent decline in finds from the first three centuries AD onwards. It is nevertheless striking that, especially in the Alpine region, individual finds of the 1st–3rd centuries regularly occur in the area of the hilltop settlements. This is probably due to a constant focus on upland sites owed to the topography of the Alpine regions (see Appendices 1 and 2).

In terms of evidence, finds are sparse and the circulation of coins ceased entirely at the end of the 4th century. Dating is therefore mostly based on a few individual finds, which makes it difficult to document a possible continuity between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. In addition, many sites have been insufficiently excavated and/or excavated long ago, so that the majority have no interpretable building structures. Sites that have been extensively excavated (but insufficiently published) are Schaan "Krüppel" (no. 9), Castiel "Carschlingg" (no. 16) and Malader's "Tummihügel" (no. 15).

What is described here as a hilltop settlement comprises different settlement forms whose common feature is their elevated position. Some have a surrounding enclosure (no. 4 Göfis "Heidenburg", nos. 5/6 Nenzing "Stellfeder" and "Scheibenstuhl"; no. 8 Gamprin "Lutzengüetle", no. 16 Castiel "Carschlingg"), while others are demonstrably unenclosed or their enclosures were not recorded. Whether these walls were used as fortifications cannot currently be ascertained. In most cases, there are also no indications concerning the economy of these settlements. It is conceivable that some were only visited for a short time, seasonally or perhaps only once (coin hoard). It is difficult to draw conclusions about the settlements' inhabitants but a military component can almost entirely be ruled out. It seems that the local population primarily lived in the hilltop settlements in the region. The presence of North African *sigillata* (African red slip ware) and amphorae as well as pottery from present-day southern Germany (*germanische Keramik*) and northern Italy (glazed pottery), and the location of the sites on important traffic axes, indicate that trade relations were maintained in most settlements until the 7th century. Whether the upland location of the settlements was actually chosen for protection against external threats is at least doubtful. Many hilltop settlements are clearly visible, which would probably not be desirable in the event of a threat. In this discussion of the external threat and protective function of hilltop settlements, note that at least three valley settlements (no. 26 Schiers "Chrea", no. 27 Riom "Cadra, and no. 28 Zernez) are attested for the Alpine region from the 4th century onwards.

The duration of occupation of these settlement sites reveals a trend: while in the lower Rhine valley (north of Chur) almost all hilltop settlements (with the exception of no. 10 Wartau "Ochsenberg") were only used for a short time in the 4th century, those in the alpine regions seem to have been occupied for significantly longer periods into the Early Middle Ages. Whether an early medieval upper class emerged here cannot be currently established with certainty. Finds at Wartburg "Ochsenberg" (no. 10) and at Sagogn "Schiedberg" (no. 18) show that a higher echelon of society is likely to have occupied these sites. The latter site was also mentioned in the Tello Testament (AD 765).

Only in two cases (no. 21 Hohenrätien and no. 19 Trun "Grepault") was a church built within the hilltop settlement, which raises the question of the spread of Christianity. Churches do not seem to have been a feature of hilltop settlements in this region.

References

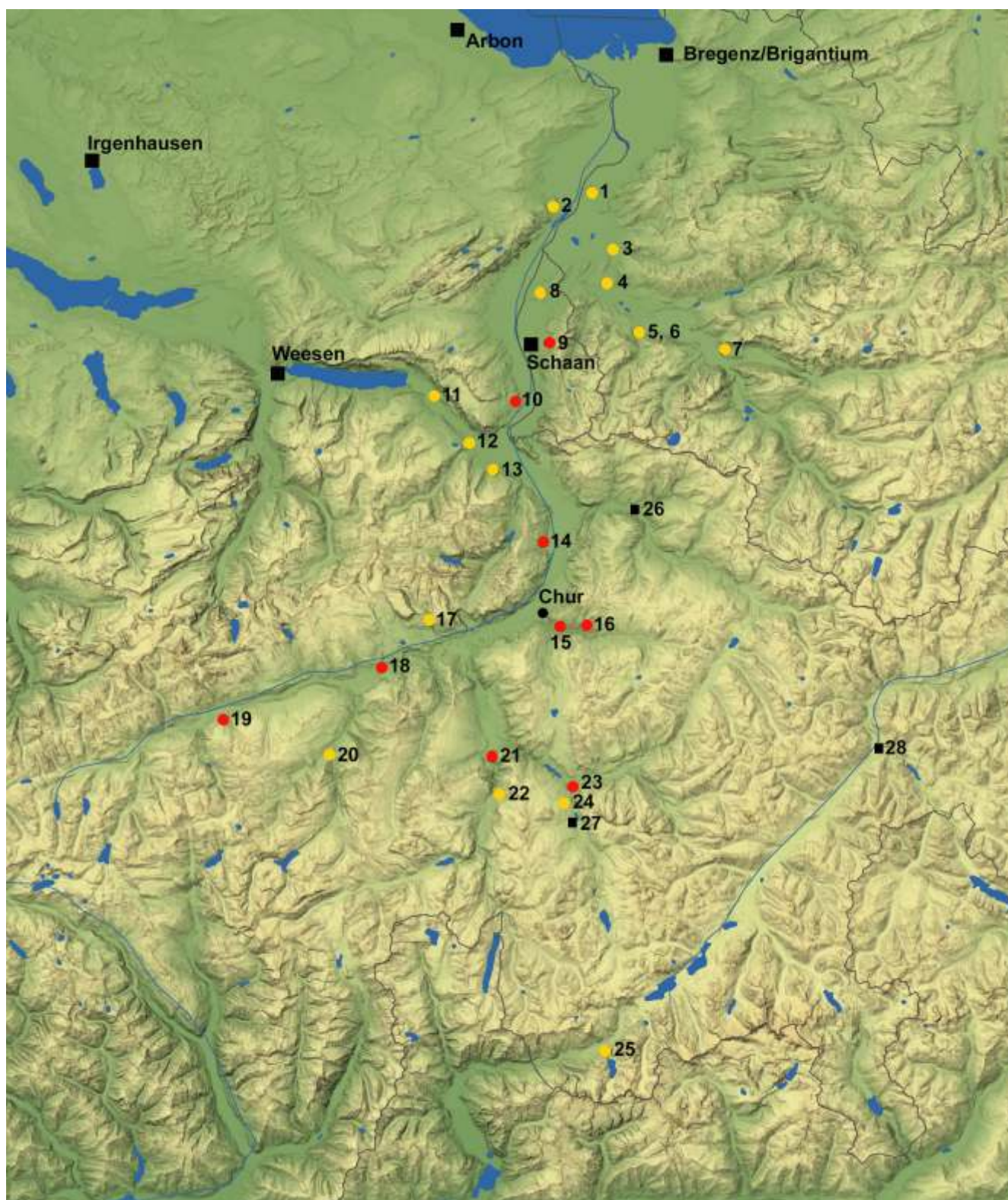
Archäologie in Graubünden 1992; Beck 1965; Caduff 2003; Clavadetscher 1992; 1979; Gairhos 2011; Gairhos/Janosa 2011; Gredig 1979; Hild 1940; 1941; Kaiser 2008; Kellner 1965; Martin 2008; Meyer 1977; Overbeck 1982; Primas et al. 2001; Rageth 1992; Schneider-Schnekenburger 1980.

Hilltop settlements and their duration of occupation (compiled by Annina Wyss)

Number	Name	Settlement type	Enclosure	Enclosure size	Church	Ar - Amph			Zwiebknopfteil			Finds (not cons)		
						Argonen	Arkan Red Slip	Amph	Dating from	Dating until	Dating basis	former use	1st - 2nd/3rd century	3rd - 4th century
1	Koblach "Neuburg"	hilltop settlement	no structures found			●	●		3rd/4th century	4th/5th century	Pottery, coins	neolithic, bronze age, early iron age,		
2	Oberriet "Montlingerberg"	hilltop settlement?	no						3rd century	3rd century	coinhoard 3. century	?		
3	Rankweil "Liebfrauenberg"	hilltop settlement	no structures found				●		3rd/4th century	4th century (7th century)	coins, pottery, small finds	●		neolithic, bronze age, late iron age
4	Göfis "Heidenburg"	hilltop settlement	most probably	8 ha		●			late 3rd century	4th century	small finds, pottery			broze age, iron age
5	Nenzing "Stelfeder"	hilltop settlement	yes	1,6 ha					4th century	4th century	glazed pottery	?		
6	Nenzing "Scheibenstuhl"	hilltop settlement	yes (prehistoric)	8,5 ha					4th century	4th century (7th century)	glazed pottery, Iron lance			neolithic, early bronze age, late iron age
7	Bludenz "Montikel"	hilltop settlement	no structures found						3rd/4th century	4th century	Coins, glazed pottery			late iron age
8	Gamprin "Lutzengüttelekopf"	hilltop settlement	yes (prehistoric)	2,1 ha					3rd century	3rd century	coin hoard 3rd century, glazed pottery	●		since neolithic
9	Schaan "Auf Krüppel"	hilltop settlement	yes	1,8 ha			●		3rd/4th century	5th century (6th century)	coinhoard, pottery, small finds			bronze age, iron age
10	Wartau "Ochsenberg"	hilltop settlement	no (not until 7. century)				●		4th century	1st half 7th to middle 8th century	pottery, small finds, coins	●		none
11	Berschis "Georgenberg"	hilltop settlement	no		yes (11./12. century)		●		3rd/4th century	4th century	coins, pottery, bracelet			bronze age
12	Mels "Castels"	hilltop settlement?	no				●		4th century	4th century	1 coin (Constantin I 313/315)	●		neolithic, bronze age, iron age,
13	Vilters "Severgal"	hilltop settlement?	no				●		3rd/4th century	End of 4th century	coins, brooch	●		neolithic, bronze age, late iron age
14	Untervaz "Haselbodenkopf"	hilltop settlement?	no				●		End of 4th century	1st half 6th century	pottery, Dendrochronology			since neolithic
15	Maladers "Tummihügel"	hilltop settlement	no					lamp	3rd/4th century	6th/7th century	pottery, small finds, coins	●		bronze age, iron age
16	Castiel "Carschling"	hilltop settlement	yes (0,8 m strong)	1,1 ha			●		2nd half 4th century	6th/7th century	Pottery, coins, small finds			late iron age
17	Films "Belmont"	hilltop settlement?	no						4th century	4th century	glazed pottery			"prehistoric"
18	Sagogn "Schiedberg"	hilltop settlement	no (not until the 8th century)				●		3rd century	14th century	Pottery, coins	●		"prehistoric"
19	Trun "Grepault"	hilltop settlement	no (not until 7. century)		yes (6./7. century)				5th century	7th century	pottery, coins, small finds			bronze age, iron age
20	Surcasti, Sogn Luregn	hilltop settlement?	no						4th century	4th century	bone object with "Kreisaugen", glazed pottery	●		bronze age, late iron age
21	Hohenrätien	hilltop settlement?	no		yes (2nd half 5. century), Baptistry around 500		●		4th century	15th century	Radiocarbon, Pottery			late bronze age, early iron age
22	Zillis, Burg Hasenstein	hilltop settlement?	no						4th century	4th century (14th century)	Pottery	●		none
23	Tiefencastel "St. Stephan"	hilltop settlement	no				●		3rd/4th century	7th century (10th century)	Pottery, coins			bronze age
24	Salouf "Motta Vallac"	hilltop settlement?	no						4th century	4th century (10th-12th century)	3 coins 4th century	●		bronze age, late iron age
25	Vicosoprano "Crep da Casiac"	hilltop settlement	yes (1.1 m high, 1.1 - 1.2 m strong)				●		2nd half 4th century	4th century (10th century)	Pottery, coins	●		late iron age
26	Schiers "Chrea"	Settlement	no		yes (5./6. century)		●		4th century	7th century	Pottery, coins, small finds			iron age
27	Riom "Cadra"	Settlement/Mutatio	no				●		1st century	6th/7th Century	Pottery, Coins, small finds	●		none
28	Zerneuz	Settlement	no				●		3rd/4th century	7th (9th) century	coins, Lavez, pottery	●?		none

Hilltop settlements (and other Late Antique/early medieval settlements) in the region discussed (compiled by Annina Wyss)

Yellow dots: Late 3rd/4th to late 4th century; red dots: late 3rd/4th to 6th/7th and 8th century; large black squares: military fortifications; small black squares: other settlements 4th to 7th/9th century



Late Antique hilltop sites in the central and south-eastern Alpine region: A historical perspective

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In this paper, the main points from three case studies concerned with Late Antique hilltop sites in the central and south-eastern Alpine region are briefly discussed and some conclusions and observations from each study are offered. The overview will proceed from east to west.

The first study (by Tina Milavec) surveys the state of research in the region and introduces questions concerning the Late Antique hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alps (present-day Slovenia). Two or three chronological phases can be discerned among the Late Antique hilltop settlements there: the late 3rd to 5th century AD (which may be subdivided into two phases: the late 3rd century, and the 4th to 5th century), and the late 5th to early 7th century, which appears to have been the main occupation phase on most known sites. The outstanding questions revolve around dating, interpretations of who initiated the construction of the sites and for what purpose, the function of the hilltop settlements, and the fate of the lowland settlements especially after the mid-5th century. The settlements in eastern Slovenia and Croatia were abandoned in the late 6th century, while in western Slovenia they persisted into the Early Middle Ages. The sites were often occupied in prehistoric or earlier Roman times as well as in later periods, and in some cases medieval castles were built nearby. As for their function, based on the typology proposed by S. Ciglencečki, the sites were used in late Roman times as *refugia*, military posts, and other short-term settlements, while in the 5th and 6th centuries the sites shifted towards permanent settlement in various combinations. The main architectural features, such as church(es), defence walls, dwellings, and water cisterns are commonly encountered on most sites, but specific traits are due to peculiarities of the terrain and climate. There are exceptions: some sites possess only timber structures, with no church or defence walls. There are several hypotheses concerning this situation. It is thought that people were probably ordered in Late Roman times to move to locations that were safer than the dangerous crossroads that connected Italy with the neighbouring north-eastern provinces, for which evidence may be deduced from literary sources. The existing archaeological finds do not seem to indicate that the sites were elite locations and status symbols. As for the question of initiative, a few rare cases suggest that the state stood behind the establishment of the defended hilltop sites, but later only the clergy seems to have been capable of taking the lead in such projects.

The second study (by Elisa Possenti) is centred on the southern central Alps (present-day Trentino Alto Adige with Friuli). Hilltop sites were less numerous in earlier Roman times and there were two reasons for their appearance: control of the road network and militarization of the region. This seems to reflect primarily the road system, which already existed in earlier Roman times and used the slopes rather than the valley floors. An example of an early Roman hilltop site is the 1st–3rd-century hilltop settlement at Doss Penede, which was apparently abandoned in the 3rd century. It is monumental and its construction is thought to have been linked to a state initiative. In the 4th to 6th century, the situation changed, and new hilltop sites emerged, even though their dating is rarely precise. Two Late Antique hilltop sites that have been investigated on a sufficiently largely scale are a site on the lake island of S. Andrea di Loppio and the site of S. Martino di Lundo, both dating from the mid- or late 5th century to the early 7th century. They seem to have served to control the road network and had monumental fortifications. Their construction is believed to have been commissioned by the state authorities and led by military architects. The absence of 4th-century defended hilltop sites in the Trentino is explained by the fact that the *Tractatus Italiae circa Alpes* system is linked to the 5th century, whereas the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system made the situation in present-day Friuli different. Hilltop sites nevertheless emerged in the 4th-century Trentino too, for example San Martino ai Campi di Riva, a later 4th-century unfortified village located along an important road, which may have had an administrative or managerial function in support of military activities. This would also presuppose the presence of people with official authority. In the late 5th century, a different kind of hilltop sites was constructed in the Trentino, consisting of generally small sites always situated along main roads, with a surrounding enclosure and tower (possibly a defensive wall?) and sometimes a church.

The third paper (by Annina Wyss) focuses on the central Alpine region (present-day eastern Switzerland) and its hilltop settlements, which date to between the late 3rd and the 8th century. These hilltop sites were occupied in prehistoric times, declined in the 1st to 3rd century but were never completely abandoned, and were reoccupied in the late 3rd and especially the 4th century. This seems to have been due to the region's mountainous terrain, which made hilltop sites a necessity. Material evidence is however sparse, and the circulation of coins dried up at the end of the 4th century. Different settlement forms characterize the hilltop sites: some settlements have no surrounding enclosure, others do, and these may or may not have had a defensive function. In most cases there is no indication concerning their economy. Some settlements may have been in use only seasonally. Their military purpose can be (almost entirely) excluded, even though many settlements were located along important traffic routes, and it is doubtful whether their location was chosen for defensive or strategic purposes. Only in two cases was a church associated with the settlement, and ecclesiastical buildings seem not to have been a feature of this type of settlement.

It may therefore be inferred that the northern Italian and Slovenian cases show greater similarity than the cases in eastern Switzerland since, for the period which is usually seen as connected to the phenomenon of Late Antique hilltop sites (4th to late 6th/early 7th century), the former two regions present, up to a point, similar situations and motives in terms of the types and of hilltop settlements. This may be explained by their geographic proximity. However, some Slovenian hilltop sites resemble those in eastern Switzerland in that they have no enclosures and no church; possibly they were not intended to be permanent settlements. The 5th–6th-century, hilltop settlements in Slovenia seem to have been primarily designed to be refuges and strategic places, and this strategic function appears to have been the main characteristic in northern Italy too. Moreover, the hilltop settlements were largely permanent.

The peculiarity of eastern Switzerland may have been due to its proximity to the *limes* and its protective role as well as a gradual (but shorter-lasting) degradation of its defensive effectiveness, which caused the local population that was connected to and dependent on local troops to withdraw. The circulation of coins ceased at the end of the 4th century, and, although previous coin issues were probably used for decades, the absence of a new influx of coinage could indicate a permanent departure of troops and officials. Thus, it may be suggested that the population that remained seems to have chosen to adapt to new power relations in the region and apparently felt no need to seek additional or even permanent security on more elevated positions. Nothing appears to have changed after the region came under the control of the Ostrogoths, as a *dux Raetiarum* is known from the time of Theoderic the Great, or after it was taken over by the Franks (for the situation in 5th- and 6th-century Raetia, see Reindel 1966; Castritius 1982; on the *dux* Servatus mentioned in Cassiodorus' *Variae* 1.11, with 7.4, see Lotter 2003, 129–130; for the Ostrogothic and Frankish control of present-day eastern Switzerland, see Clavadetscher 1979, 160–168).

With respect to the typology of the hilltop sites, I would suggest that the sites that only came into existence from the late 3rd to the 6th century (the Late Antique hilltop sites proper) be differentiated from other hilltop sites that show continued settlement from earlier Roman times and are not directly linked to the phenomenon. In determining the characteristics of hilltop sites in relation to their possible functions several factors need to be taken into account: size; defensibility; living conditions; remoteness or connectivity (closeness to roads or travel routes); control of local resources; visibility in the landscape. The concepts of continuity and/or persistence (see Schlanger 1992) or resilience (see Redman 2005) should also be further considered.

In connection to questions relating to the initiators of the defended hilltop sites, I believe that the concept of elites in Late Roman and post-Roman provincial societies should be revisited. The senatorial and provincial aristocracy as the traditional urban elites should give way to the variously defined elites in local contexts. That is to say, the medium and small landowners as well as the lower echelons of the clergy could be regarded as elites capable of instigating and financing such efforts. In the case of clergy, this is particularly relevant when hilltop sites include more than one ecclesiastical building. Furthermore, the existing literary evidence cited in support of the construction of hilltop settlements being centrally directed (cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae* 1.17, 3.48 for two *castella*, one in the vicinity of Dertona/Tortona in Liguria and the other called *Verruca* near the river Adige, where the local inhabitants were ordered to build houses for themselves) seems far-fetched, given the lack of such testimonies for earlier times. There is notably a law dated 11 April 408 and preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus* (11.17.4), addressed to the *praefectus praetorio Illyrici*, Herculius, which is concerned with the obligation of all provincials of Illyricum to provide money for the construction of walls; this seems to refer to city and military fortifications in specific circumstances, following a move by the Gothic leader Alaric who left Epirus in 408 and set out for Italy. As for the testimony from the *Variae*, the mention of the *castella* is a clear indication that these were military strongholds, refurbished to offer local inhabitants a refuge when necessary (see Bierbrauer 2008, 645–647, with Brogiolo 2014, 143), and not sites originally built as hilltop settlements. In any case, the focus in Ostrogothic times was on fortifications, both of towns and forts, as well as on the restoration of urban life (see Brogiolo 1999, 105–108).

As for the question of the political, social, and economic conditions for establishing hilltop settlements, clearly not only an immediate (real or perceived) danger was responsible for the construction of these sites. Even though current knowledge does not seem to support the idea that some sites in the central and south-eastern Alpine region were new places of power in the Late Antique context, this cannot be excluded. One may even envisage a change in settlement habits (a return to pre-Roman times), in which hilltop settlements may have also functioned in some instances as a way for local elites to emulate the senatorial aristocracy and their move to fortified *villae* (this does not mean that the aristocrats permanently relocated to the countryside, but alternated between city and country; see Wickham 2005, 467–468). Additionally, the transformation of the territorial organization, coupled with the process of militarization of space and the shrinking of urban areas in general, may have also had an impact on the emergence of hilltop settlements.

Finally, a possible explanation for the quasi abandonment of hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alpine region by the late 6th century may lie in a significant decrease in population, which would have been a result of the mid-6th-century crisis caused by the outbreak of the plague. Such a demographic crisis would have had a huge impact on the ability of local communities to sustain hilltop settlements. Furthermore, the advent of new conquering populations (Avars, Slavs), whose settlement habits differed from those of previous populations, may also have contributed to the demise of Late Antique hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alpine region.

References

Bierbrauer 2008; Brogiolo 1999; 2014; Castritius 1982; Clavadetscher 1979; Lotter 2003; Redman 2005; Reindel 1966; Schlanger 1992; Wickham 2005.

The Alps from an archaeological perspective: A comment

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In the region under consideration (the south-eastern Alps, the southern central Alps, and the central Alps), hilltop settlements are not a unified phenomenon. Different historical backgrounds, different natural environments, and probably also other unidentified reasons all created differences between settlements. Moreover, the state of research is an important element that influences our knowledge of hilltop settlements.

Yet, despite the differences, all researchers in the region deal with similar questions concerning the hilltop settlements. When were the hilltop settlements occupied? What was the cause of their establishment? Were they permanently occupied or do they show disruptions in their development? When and how did they fail? What did they look like and what were their functions? Who lived there? Questions about their economic and social aspects have also recently gained in importance. Given the great diversity of hilltop settlements, their definition differs in different parts of the region. What does the term "hilltop settlement" mean? While Annina Wyss described it as a conglomerate of different settlement forms whose common feature was their upland location, Tina Milavec follows Slavko Ciglencečki who defined hilltop settlements as naturally and artificially defended locations with timber and/or stone architecture. Elisa Possenti highlighted settlements on the slopes – unfortified settlements, on the slope of a hill above the valley floor – and drew attention to a distinction between these and "real" hilltop settlements.

The time of the establishment of hilltop settlements, their continuity or discontinuity during Late Antiquity, and a possible continuation into the Early Middle Ages differ from region to region. Some of these differences may also be related to the state of research in each region. For the south-eastern Alps and for some better-explored sites in the southern central Alps, it has been possible to establish a more precise chronology and identify individual stages of development within individual settlements, while insufficient research in the central Alps currently precludes such precision.

The causes of the emergence of hilltop settlements also seem to vary, and not only in different regions, but also within them. For the southern central Alps, Elisa Possenti emphasizes the connection between their origin and public authority and the military. On the other hand, Annina Wyss views the military component as not playing a role in the origin of hilltop settlements in the central Alps. Tina Milavec noted in her assessment of the different forms and functions of hilltop settlements in the south-eastern Alps that a military role was more prominent in the Late Roman period, while in the 6th century most sites are presumed to be the self-sufficient settlements of local people.

Indeed, most settlements appear to have been essentially self-sufficient, as attested by the predominance of domestic ceramics and tools needed for agriculture and crafts. Imported goods nevertheless appear on almost all sites in the regions in question, indicating that limited trade links (especially with the Mediterranean) still existed in the 6th century, in some cases even in the 7th century. Additionally, there are also settlements for which both the architecture and rich material culture indicate their different, more important status and their connection with the dominant authorities of the day.

In sum, it is difficult to expect uniform answers to the questions asked of a phenomenon as widespread as hilltop settlements. Above all, we need to better research individual settlements, analyse their material culture (which includes not only the so-called "special finds", but also everyday artefacts), and study their architectural and environmental characteristics. Only this will produce a better picture for each region and allow us to compare between them.

References

Ciglencečki 1987; 2008; Martin 2008; Milavec 2020; Possenti 2013, Villa 2020.

Section 2: Western Europe



Aerial photograph of the Late Antique hilltop site of La Couronne (France). – Photography: D. Martinez, 2016.

The hilltop settlements in the Vosges, Black Forest, Hegau and Swabian Alb

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South-western Germany is defined differently, depending on the individual authors' preference or origin, and one could easily include other low mountain ranges in this paper. I will concentrate on the two low mountain ranges flanking the Upper Rhine Graben, the Vosges and the Black Forest, as well as the Swabian Alb and the Hegau.

The Vosges, here especially its southern part, from the Porte de Bourgogne to about the height of Strasbourg, run west along the Upper Rhine Graben. The peaks are characterized by rounded summits. In contrast to the Black Forest, the Vosges have a true summit ridge and slope steeply downwards on both sides. In the Black Forest, the eastern slope towards the Alb and Baar is much gentler. In addition, different topographical characteristics are apparent, for example in the Hegau's extinct volcanic landscape and its cone-shaped mountains.

Depending on their location, the individual sites have different historical starting points. The areas around the Swabian Alb had not been under direct Roman administration since shortly after the middle of the 3rd century. In some places, however, there are indications of a limited reoccupation of the countryside. Its inhabitants were probably in close contact with the Gallic Empire. The situation was different in the Rhine valley, the Vosges, and the Black Forest. Here, direct Roman control can be assumed until the end of the 3rd century, and only then did the state abandon the area on the right of the Rhine. It was only resettled in the course of the 4th century. This area then lay on *solum barbaricum* but remained a kind of control zone to which Rome always claimed access. The Vosges were still within Roman provincial territory, now as part of the newly defined territorial entities of *Germania prima*, *Sequania*, and *Belgica prima*. These completely different starting points for the hilltop settlements characterize south-western Germany and also significantly determined the discourse around its sites.

Only from the second half of the 3rd century at the earliest can we expect the Late Antique hilltop settlements to emerge in our study area. The Vosges were located in the provinces of *Germania prima* and *Sequania*, while the sites on the edge of the Black Forest, on the Swabian Alb and in Hegau were already on *solum barbaricum*. However, there is not always unanimous agreement on the relationship of the individual hilltop settlements with the Roman Empire.

Clearly the hilltop settlements did not stand alone. In their local and regional surroundings, other settlements existed at the time, namely individual rural settlements, village-like places, and even urban centres in the areas still under Roman administration. The state of research on the environment of the hilltop settlements varies from region to region, influenced by a combination of factors. The soils that are typical of southern Germany lead to the poor preservation of buildings constructed in timber and earth, a process exacerbated by erosion processes, making it difficult to assess the composition of the structures.

The ancient landscape was very different from what it is today. In the 19th century, the course of the Rhine was straightened, and the plain became agricultural land. Additionally, it cannot always be ascertained whether forested zones, especially the mountain zones of the Vosges and Black Forest, were as heavily forested in antiquity as they are today.

A current project is dedicated to hilltop settlements in the middle and northern Vosges. Eighteen such sites are likely to have Roman/Late Antique phases, but their dating is largely based on a few isolated finds. Most sites seem to date to the 3rd/4th century; no evidence is available for the 5th century, and only two sites probably date to the 6th/7th century.

Some hilltop sites on the eastern slope of the Vosges were almost certainly foundations of the Late Roman military. The "Drei Exen" above Husseren-les-Châteaux are three neighbouring medieval castles with a wide field of view as far as the Black Forest. Stamped bricks of the *legio I Martia*, a newly founded unit of Tetrarchic times, were recovered there, indicating intensive state involvement in the Rhine Valley from the 3rd century until well into the 5th century.

Augst "Kastelen", Basel, and Breisach are hilltop settlements that are also Late Roman urban fortifications. For the first time since the Roman occupation in this area, settlements were established in elevated locations. All three were founded in the late 3rd century and all contain urban elements: public buildings, under-floor heating, painted walls, and various imported goods. These features and the massive military architecture distinguish these sites from the hilltop settlements on the slope of the Black Forest outside the Roman provincial territory.

The location of two hilltop sites, the Geißkopf and Kügeleskopf near Offenburg, is striking. They guard the entrance to the Kinzig valley and its important road, which is the direct route from Strasbourg over the Black Forest. Occupying the same position but in a valley location, the two forts of Rammersweier and Zunsweier fulfilled this function in Flavian times. The Geißkopf is interpreted as an army camp. The Zähringer Burgberg near Freiburg has repeatedly been considered to be the seat of a local *rex*. Although no military architecture is present, these sites appear to be Late Roman in character. Imported pottery and especially the numerous belt components distinguish the hilltop settlements from the contemporary rural settlements on the right bank of the Rhine.

South of the Upper Rhine, several hilltop settlements, e.g. Toos-Waldi and the Wittnauer Horn, are likely to be refuges predating the last major building programme under Valentinian. In most cases, dating is still problematic but increasing evidence suggests that they played a role again later, from the 6th century onwards, some even from the 10th century onwards. Kaiseraugst is a special case. The fortified town of the *castrum Rauracense* had a bridgehead in Wyhlen. The nearby hilltop settlement on the Hertenberg was rediscovered in the 2000s. Ammianus Marcellinus (Book 18,2,16.17) informs us that a "*rex Vadomarius, vero nostris coalitus*", had a "*domicilium contra Rauracos*", and therefore the site has been repeatedly associated with this king.

The Hegau's terrain is quite flat and very convenient for artificial roads, making it possible to reach the old *via publica* on the banks of the Danube within a day's march from the nearest Roman fortresses of Constance and *Tasgaetium*. This makes the area strategically important but also increases its exposition to danger. This shortest connection from the Upper Rhine/Lake Constance to the Danube may still have been under Roman control or at least contested until around the middle of the 4th century. The hilltop settlements may therefore have stood in a very similar functional context.

On the Swabian Alb, especially in the east, the relative vicinity to *Raetia secunda* is noticeable, in particular its proximity to the provincial capital of Augsburg. The Roman Iller line, which meets the Danube road in the area of Neu-Ulm, was newly established in Late Antiquity. Fortified sites (*Burghöfe*) continued to play an important role in protecting Augsburg well into the 5th century. In the 1st century, the chain of forts of the Alb *limes* was located on the plateau of the Alb, accompanied by a road connection. Some hilltop settlements seem to refer to this road. A concentration is noticeable on the northern slope of the Alb. The sites are all located at valley entrances, at the beginning of the Alb crossings leading to the Alb plateau and Danube road.

The Runder Berg near Urach is one of the few extensively researched and published hilltop settlements in this region. The elongated summit plateau was almost completely excavated. The Late Antique settlement began in the second half of the 4th century, perhaps even in the late 4th century. Around AD 500, occupation ended violently, to resume much later under different circumstances with a possible use in the 10th century as an early castle complex. It is difficult to date the jumble of postholes and produce convincing ground plans on the plateau. The finds, including evidence of specialized crafts, include numerous Roman imports such as *sigillata* pottery, Mayen ware, glass vessels, and the well-known belt components. The ground plans of the houses are reminiscent of some farmsteads. However, the interpretation of a partial defence with double posts on the Runder Berg is controversial: while a connection with the Alamannic-Franconian conflicts has long been favoured (i.e. it served as a fortification), the structure is now seen in the context of a tendency towards separation and thus social differentiation on the hill.

Modern large-scale excavations are largely absent in all the mountain regions studied. Individual cases are the Odilienberg, the Breisacher Münsterberg, the Zähringer Burgberg, and the Runder Berg near Urach. Little is known about the inner development of the sites. In many cases, there are no surveys, so that evaluations cannot even be based on finds but rely almost solely on undated ramparts and ditches visible above ground or in LiDAR scans. The sites' location in currently heavily wooded area means that there is little threat of construction work and therefore few opportunities for preventive archaeological investigations.

The sites on the edge of the Black Forest (the Geißkopf, Kügeleskopf, Zähringer Burgberg, Hertenberg, Altenburg) are difficult to classify. Interpretations range from their being the seats of Alamannic kings to sites of *foederates* with specific tasks in controlling the Rhine valley. The numerous undated sites are obviously equally difficult to interpret.

Indeed, dating is particularly difficult. If Roman imports and other well-dated classes of finds (*terra sigillata*, clothing components, coins) are available in reasonable quantities, it is possible to establish a sequence. This usually applies to the earlier phases of the sites but dating their final stages is more challenging. The end of the settlements was often seen in connection with historical dates and a reorganization of the settlement system, but some recent work has shown that the use of the settlements can be expected to continue for much longer. Few larger series of radiocarbon dates exist for these sites, which may help document activities in times without easily datable material and fill gaps resulting from reduced settlement intensity. Coins sometimes suggest that some sites played a role as short-term refuges during the Magnentius period in the mid-4th century. Who stayed there and to what extent can this be linked to later use? The end of the sites or a continuity into the Carolingian period still needs to be better recorded in many cases.

References

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Hilltop sites in northern Gallia and Germania

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The fact that settlements on hills or hillsides were not mentioned in Late Antique written sources cannot be taken as read because the corresponding terms and their respective uses cannot be identified with certainty. So, each *castellum* mentioned could mean a fort, a hilltop castle, a hillfort, or perhaps a hilltop settlement. A written reference from Late Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages to what we understand scientifically and archaeologically to be a "hilltop settlement" does not currently exist. A general question is whether our distinction of a hilltop settlement or fortified site at high elevation makes sense from today's perspective compared to other fortified settlements in a region. Rather, the phenomenon seems to depend on natural, geographic, spatial, historical, and military conditions and is not based on any well-founded typology that follows a reliable chronology.

Up to 2008, the state of research has been summed up in a good overview by Raymond Brulet and with references to a three-digit number of predominantly Late Antique hilltop sites in north-western Germany, Belgium, and north-eastern France. Luc Bourgeois recently summarized the state of research on the early medieval hilltop settlements as mansions, especially in northern France; other researchers have focussed more on the function of these sites.

After an initial phase of establishment of hill settlements from the so-called Gallic Empire onwards, a second phase of expansion of hill settlements took place in Germania in the first third of the 4th century. This is followed by a period of destruction in the middle of the 4th century by the Franks and Alamanni. But in our study area, only a few hill top sites in the east of the region were newly established at that time, and most, if not all, were in continuous use. This could reflect the success of the new Valentianic defences in the region. Perhaps a passage in the *Mosella* of Ausonius from around AD 371, which reports that some of the fortifications in Belgica are now barns (Aus. 457: "*non castra, sed horrea*", see Gilles 1985, 80) fits this scenario. In the west and north, i.e. in present-day Belgium and northern France, on the other hand, new fortified sites on heights were established in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, such as Pry, Vieuxville, Virton, and Omont.

Many of the small finds allow us to date the sites: in addition to weapons, coins, and ceramics, artefacts made of metal and bone are especially numerous in Belgium, at Ben-Ahin, Dourbes, Éprave, Falaën, Furfooz, Lustin, Nismes II, Pry, Thon, and Virton.

Remarkably, almost no weapons have been found in the early medieval fortifications established in the mid-5th century. These fortifications may be better interpreted as a symbol of the status of the fortified settlements and of their inhabitants' control over their surroundings; an example is the site of Thier d'Olne in eastern Belgium. There is a fortification that was reused in the Merovingian period, just as in southern Belgium in Buzenol and Virton, Château Renaud. This reuse has been observed several times in the Merovingian Empire. A defensive ditch was also dug in Le Cheslain near Ortho in southern Belgium. For the larger systems, Heiko Steuer's remark, "that according to our previous knowledge, there were no great fortified heights in Europe around 700. The youngest sites were abandoned in the 7th century" is still valid.

In terms of the function of hilltop sites, essentially two types of usage were adopted, civil or military. Occasionally, as in Ortho, it has been suggested that a fortified height was used for civil purposes but set up at the instigation of a higher authority. Such assumptions can hardly be proven archaeologically. Changes in civil and military uses also occurred more frequently in the course of occupation.

It is possible to envisage that defensive systems had a purely and often only temporary protective function when only fortifications are present and there is no or hardly any evidence of internal buildings, such as on the Katzenberg near Mayen. However, research on the sites' interiors is often not comprehensive, as only parts and often only small sectors have been excavated.

If the fortifications do not have walls that are as thick as the "regular" Late Antique castles and are simply enclosures without towers, it can be assumed that their construction was a private initiative undertaken by the local population.

Some fortifications were not exposed to view but hidden amongst the vegetation somewhat away from the infrastructure; nevertheless, they could still offer short-term protection against "marauding gangs of plundering and murdering Franks". Overall, Hunold rates the northern Gallic hill fortifications as "by no means remote", having good connections with routes of communication. There are only ten defensive systems that are located away from such routes. Other authors emphasize the "high visibility" of the hilltop settlements built from the 4th century onwards. They suspect that the reason for the choice of location lies in "increased visual presence, expressed through the choice of the building site". So far, this has only been mentioned for the Early Middle Ages, i.e. that the main function of the hilltop castles was to act as regional centres of power. Fortifications such as Furfooz in Belgium can be viewed as centres dominated by the military on the basis of the range of finds. Nevertheless, these well-known sites must be reassessed and questions concerning their "Germanic" occupation and local and supra-regional significance must be considered. The role of border defence in the hinterland of the Late Roman Empire must also be evaluated, for example in the context of linear defence strategies in interaction with *burgi* on traffic routes.

Jacob Schneider devised a three-part scheme for the fortified heights as early as 1844. It included the larger forts and smaller "*Hochwarten*" with an official military character, and the mostly lightly walled places of refuge intended for the civilian population. In addition, in a later assessment of the location on the travel routes, the defensive systems were interpreted as measures undertaken by the state, or, if the sites were located in the hinterland, they could have had a more private character. Brulet used the frequency of finds in his classification, whereby he considered establishments with abundant ceramics and coins to be of a military nature. Gilles, on the other hand, rated the so-called *refugia* in hidden locations near *villae* in the country as belonging to private landowners but he later gave up this group.

In 2011, based on the catalogues of Gilles and Brulet, Hunold recorded 144 hilltop settlements in the northern Gaulish region.:108 sites used in the Late Roman period are located in a protected location embedded in the natural environment. This also includes the incorporation of steep slopes in the fortification; 63 sites are located in the Hunsrück-Eifel area, but only 17 of these were properly excavated.

The interiors and chronological position of the hilltop sites cannot be interpreted in relation to each other. Traces of interior development reflect the local topography and the same applies to tall structures, which are determined by the natural environment. Only very few towers have been recorded and gates and infrastructural development are rarely documented or preserved in a way that could be interpreted archaeologically Earthworks containing timber are just as likely as stone structures, which, however, remain rare.

Clearly, fortified sites above roads and waterways controlled these, just as the fortified heights must be viewed in connection with the rest of the development and military protection of the landscape.

Various cemeteries associated with the hilltop settlements, more or less completely recorded, have been found at distances ranging between 100 and 1000 m from them. The Belgian cemeteries of Thon-Samson, Vieuxville, Furfooz, and Éprave belong to the hilltop settlements and contain graves associated with the rich belt sets of "*Kerbschnittgürte*" type with military connotations known from Böhme's work and dated to the last quarter of the 4th century and the first decades of the 5th century. But women and children could also be buried in such cemeteries as family members. That would either speak in favour of a fairly permanent occupation or at least the presence of incipient socially distinguished strata who established themselves on the hilltop sites.

Mostly there is no information about the water supply, which must have represented a significant problem on high-altitude settlements or fortifications and castles. In a fortified early medieval palace in the Moselle valley, Venantius Fortunatus (*Carmina* 3,12) reports an aqueduct and a water mill. The Furfooz thermal baths also needed a reliable water supply, which may have come from a remote spring at a higher level.

The early medieval fortification of La Malène (Lozère) in southern France, perhaps the *castrum* of Melena mentioned around AD 530, has a cistern and an associated representative building regarded as a residence. However, there is no equivalent known in northern Gaul.

Fully equipped, fortified early medieval small settlements in hilltop areas with churches and monasteries, such as in Saint-Mont in the southern Vosges, known from 7th-century written sources as *castrum Habendum*, or the well-known Roc de Pampelune (Hérault) in southern France are not known in northern Gaul.

In sum, until the Carolingian era, the various types of fortified heights known from Late Antiquity are characterized by militarily aspects such as security and retreat, but also by their function as centres of power. Some fortified systems, such as at Thier d'Oline, fulfilled both roles. In the north of the study area, the systems are more singular and adapted to their natural, economic, and military conditions.

(I thank Quentin Hutchinson, Seahouses/GB for help with checking the English version of this text.)

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Late Antique hillfort occupation in southern Britain: Chronology, context, and interpretation

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This presentation derives from a comprehensive assessment of evidence for hillfort use and occupation in Late and post-Roman southern Britain undertaken for a forthcoming monograph. Here, “hillfort” is used as an umbrella term for a range of defended sites, including hilltop sites (contour, partial contour, and promontory forts), hillslope forts, and lower-lying defended enclosures. In British archaeology these sites are synonymous with the Bronze and Iron Age, but the Roman and post-Roman use of hillforts is well evidenced, although less often the subject of focused research.

Romano-British material culture is frequently encountered at hillforts but, in many cases, this consists of small quantities of pottery, deriving from little more than low-level agricultural activity or small rural settlements situated within long-abandoned hillforts. There is very little evidence for the refortification of hillforts before Roman control ended in the early 5th century, and it is likely that there was an imperial prohibition against civil occupation of fortified sites. Thus, whilst we can talk about “life within hillforts” during the Roman period, rarely do we encounter “hillfort life” on the scales seen in prehistory. Nevertheless, there is a strong association between Romano-Celtic temples and hillforts in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, especially in Somerset, Dorset, and Gloucestershire, where temples are found within or close to hillforts such as Lydney, Maiden Castle, and Badbury Rings. Moreover, in the far west – in present-day Cornwall and the north and west of Wales – some hillforts, such as Dinas Emrys and Coygan Camp, have yielded comparatively large assemblages of Late Roman pottery and glass that are indicative of activity of some scale and significance. Contemporary structural evidence is limited, and we are not certain what this material represents in terms of the function and use of hillforts in the Late Roman period. There is no evidence of a Roman military presence at these sites, and feasting and/or ritual activity associated with assembly sites is more likely. It is undoubtedly significant that some of these sites show evidence for continued use in the 5th to 7th centuries. The widespread (re)fortification and use of hillforts is therefore predominantly a post-Roman, i.e. 5th to 7th century, phenomenon in southern Britain. There is very little evidence for the use of hillforts in the eastern, Anglo-Saxon, region where elites did not adopt the hillfort tradition before the construction of civil defences in the Viking Age. By contrast, the (re)occupation of hillforts is frequently encountered in the Brittonic speaking west. By the middle of the 5th century, almost all Roman towns and *villae* in this region had been abandoned and rural settlements became extremely ephemeral in terms of structural features. Hillforts are therefore one of the few site types that can be confidently ascribed to the post-Roman period in western Britain. The (re)occupation of hillforts was however not ubiquitous, and there are large areas, such as the Lake District of Cumbria and the Welsh Marches, where evidence for hillfort use is sparse. These “gaps” must be due, in part at least, to a lack of excavation and the patchy distribution of imported pottery and glass (including Late Roman amphorae and red slip wares), which, in the absence of native pottery traditions, provides our main way of identifying sites. Where imports are absent, sites are much harder to identify, although the increasing use of radiocarbon dating is helping us. Nevertheless, some of the “gaps” do appear to be real, and we need not expect to find hillforts right across the region.

Some hillforts were constructed in the 5th to 7th centuries, but prehistoric sites were frequently reoccupied. Re-use can be seen as functional, but prehistoric sites would have been understood as “ancient” places with deep histories embedded in local tradition, and their re-occupation must have been ideologically and symbolically charged. This may explain why at sites such as Coygan Camp activity took place within dilapidated prehistoric ramparts that offered little in terms of defence.

The major period of reoccupation appears to be the mid to late 5th century, but the dating evidence is weak. Late to post-Roman continuity may be suggested, but not proven, for some sites, particularly in the far west. Apart from a small number of outliers, the dating evidence suggests that activity at most hillforts came to an end before the final quarter of the 7th century, and many sites may have been abandoned no later than AD 600. Nevertheless, there are hints that whilst hillforts were rarely occupied on a substantial scale after the 7th century, they may have retained some local significance and continued to be visited periodically. A mid-/late 7th century phase of hillfort abandonment would broadly coincide with other important changes in western Britain at this time and shortly after. These include the emergence of larger, more powerful kingdoms, the resurgence of the Christian Church, and the growth of monasticism. Thus, it has been suggested that the abandonment of hillforts could be placed within the context of a period of political, economic, and religious resurgence described by historians as the “long eighth century”. However, many sites were abandoned well before this, and evidence for changes in the fabric of rural society in the early 7th century may imply a period of economic and political instability at this time. Thus, factors including plague and climate change should also be considered.

Hillforts were defended by one or more circuits of banks and ditches, but sherds of pottery from contexts sealed by ramparts suggests that hilltop activity often preceded the (re)construction of defences. Ramparts were either drystone or earthen and were usually sited in positions that exploited the natural topography to maximize its defensive capabilities and visual prominence. Some ramparts were of simple “dump” construction, but revetments and evidence for timber lacing has also been identified. In contrast to Scotland, no vitrified forts are known in southern Britain. The construction and refurbishment of defences attests to political instability, but the multivallation of some sites is difficult to explain in functional terms.

References in the 7th-century Irish legal tract, the *Críth Gablach*, state that the construction of ramparts at a king's fort was a labour-due expected from royal clients, and it has been suggested that the ability to demand this service formed part of how royal status was defined. This idea can be applied to the interpretation of British hillforts, and the multivallation of Dinas Powys, for example, has been linked with periods of royal succession.

Most post-Roman hillforts are small. The area enclosed by their defences is usually between 0.1 and 2 ha. These are not “community” sites, but a small number of larger hillforts, including Tintagel and Cadbury Castle, enclose up to 7.5 ha. The larger sites are thought to be of higher status and often yield the most impressive artefact assemblages. Comparatively little is known about the use of space within hillforts. Ewan Campbell's detailed analysis of Dinas Powys suggested that different activity zones existed within the inner rampart, but currently there is limited evidence for the hierarchical organization of space seen within the contemporary “nuclear forts” of Scotland. The site that may come closest to this level of complexity is Tintagel in Cornwall, where the upper, lower, and inner wards, and various locations on the headland could represent a structured demarcation of space.

Evidence for houses, both rectangular and round, is encountered at sites such as Dinas Powys and Cadbury Congresbury. These are usually represented by little more than postholes and gullies and the form of these structures and whether they were used for residential or religious purposes is debated. There is much more substantive evidence for houses at Tintagel, where around 150 buildings constructed from slate and clay have been identified, but the dating evidence for these is weak, and many could date to a later phase of the site.

Hillforts are found on open hilltops, coastal and inland promontories, and craggy hillocks. Some are situated at high altitude and exposed locations unsuited to year-round occupation, but many are close to rich agricultural lowlands. There is a strong coastal distribution, and many hillforts are adjacent to natural harbours or navigable rivers. Some of these sites played an important role in the regulation and control of trade. Many of the inland sites were located close to routeways and some, such as Dinas Powys, may have been strategically placed in ways that facilitated surveillance and territorial control. Others, such as Tre'r Ceiri, are more remote from the occupied lowlands, but are visually striking. There is also evidence that hillforts, such as New Pieces, were associated with upland hunting landscapes.

The relationship between hillforts and the wider rural settlement pattern is poorly understood, but it is thought that sites with strong evidence of domestic activity were at the top of the settlement hierarchy; many of these are adjacent to areas of good land that would have been intensely settled. Most research has focused narrowly on individual sites, but it is becoming clear that hillforts could form part of “central zones”, consisting of clusters of high-status sites spread over a kilometre or more that included trading places, cemeteries, and religious centres. At Glastonbury, for example, a group of sites includes the hilltop settlement on the Tor, cemeteries, industrial activity on the site of the later abbey, and a potential riverine landing-place or trading location.

The limited number and extent of modern excavations and the material poverty of post-Roman western Britain, combined with acidic soil conditions, mean that artefact assemblages from hillforts are generally sparse. Moreover, building traditions involved usually ephemeral structural features. Thus, post-Roman activity is often attested by little more than a few sherds of pottery. Around 60 hillforts have a reasonable level of post-Roman evidence, but this is likely to be only a fraction of the total that was (re)occupied. The best evidence comes from major excavations at sites including Dinas Powys, Cadbury Castle, Cadbury Congresbury, and Tintagel. Assemblages of imported pottery and glass are a key feature of these sites. The pottery reflects a desire to emulate Roman-style dining practices and is often associated with drinking equipment. This includes glass vessels of Anglo-Saxon origin, which must have reached the west through networks of elite gift-exchange. Hearths and large animal bone assemblages can also be associated with feasting, whilst the presence of wild species, including deer, suggests that hunting was an important aspect at some sites.

Evidence for metalworking is also common. This included the smithing of domestic tools, but fine non-ferrous metalworking is also well evidenced and appears to have focused on the production of jewellery, including penannular brooches that were distributed by leaders as gifts and functioned as badges of military honour. The scale of the evidence suggests that metalworking was an aspect of the activity at these sites, but not their main function. Evidence for weapons, usually spearheads and ferrules, is rare, but consistently encountered and attests to the martial nature of elite society at this time and the likelihood that hillforts served as mustering points for warbands. Such weapons could also have been used in hunting, whilst an axe-hammer from Cadbury Castle is of a type thought to be associated with the ritual killing of animals. Evidence for literacy, in the form of *styli* and occasionally inscriptions, reminds of us of the Late Roman Latin inheritance and alludes to administration and record keeping at hillfort sites.

The evidence for trade and exchange of exotic goods, feasting, metalworking, hunting, violence, and record-keeping, in congruence with rare documentary references, attests to the high status of hillfort occupation in the 5th to 7th centuries and to the role of these sites as “central places”. Key figures of 20th-century early medieval archaeology, such as Leslie Alcock, emphasized the defensive and domestic functions of hillforts and described them as “strongholds”, “citadels”, and “defended homesteads”. They are usually called “settlements” in the archaeological literature and are associated with elites of greater or lesser status. But these descriptions are perhaps overly simplistic. Post-Roman activity at hillforts cannot always be understood purely in terms of domestic occupation. Glastonbury Tor, for example, is sited on a high and exposed hill on what would have been an island in post-Roman times and the hilltop has no source of water. Here metalworking and feasting were associated with an “altar-like” structure, but evidence for houses was limited. An unusually high quantity of ammonite fossils was also recovered. Tintagel is similarly unsuited to year-round domestic occupation, but has features, such as impressive rock outcrops that could have been the focus of ritual activity, including cremation, which is evidenced here but is otherwise extremely rare in post-Roman contexts. Sites such as Chun Castle and Trevelgue Head have strong associations with prehistoric monuments and have been interpreted as meeting places and assembly sites in the Iron Age and Roman periods. The post-Roman assemblages from these sites would seem to be best understood as deriving from short-term visits rather than sustained occupation.

When considering hillfort use collectively, it may be useful to envisage a spectrum of sites of greater and lesser importance within their localities. Some of the smaller enclosures undoubtedly represent the primarily residential and probably permanently occupied homesteads of local nobles, while a class of “major potentate centres” with wider reaching political influence also existed. These include sites like Dinas Powys and Cadbury Castle, which show evidence of significant and prolonged, occupation associated with households that were part of extra-regional elite networks. They would have been centres for the collection and redistribution of goods and tribute, and much of the “domestic activity” there can be understood within the context of social interactions, including feasting and gift exchange, associated with the negotiation of power between rulers and their clients. Other sites, such as Tintagel and Dinas Emrys, may be better understood as ceremonial centres that were not primarily residential. Activity at these sites may have included political assembly, royal inauguration, seasonal gatherings, and religious festivals. Looking at our major sites from a wider, north-western European perspective, can they be described as “theatres of power”? This term has recently been coined by Gabor Thomas in reference to Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian “central place complexes” such as Yeavinger and Rendlesham, i.e. “stages” through which emergent elites enacted rituals of rulership and political authority.

In summary, in the Late Roman period, hillforts were an important part of the religious landscape and may also have been used as places of local assembly, particularly in the far west where Roman towns and *villae* were rare. Hillforts did not play a significant role in the infrastructure of the Late Roman administration, but their importance grew after the collapse of imperial control in the early 5th century. In the post-Roman period, hillforts formed part of the apparatus of elite power. They should not, however, be considered a single or unified site type or simply described as “settlements”.

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Hilltop settlements in central and southern Gaul

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Long ignored by French research, the fortified hilltop settlements of Late Antiquity in Gaul were considered anecdotal phenomena, resulting from the prevailing insecurity reported by contemporary authors such as Sidonius Apollinaris or Gregory of Tours. These sites have recently received renewed attention, especially in the south of France thanks to long-term excavations on sites such as the Roc de Pampelune at Argelliers near Montpellier.

This southern research initiative established a new framework for thinking about these sites, allowing them to be considered real establishments, inhabited over the long term and fully integrated into the local settlement pattern (and sometimes being one of its main components). Research on this new form of land use during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages was extended to the Massif Central, with emblematic excavations at La Malène (Lozère) or La Couronne at Molles (Allier), but also further east, in the Jura, with a research programme that highlights the vitality of this phenomenon between the end of the 4th century and the 7th century.

The excavations of the Roc de Pampelune, directed by Laurent Schneider in the early 2000s, uncovered a fortified hilltop establishment built from scratch in the 5th century, in a region where no form of state power was previously known. The site, covering a surface of just over 2 hectares, is sited on a rock platform delimited by steep slopes topped by a surrounding wall. The interior is marked by two distinct spaces: an upper flat area in the western part of the site housing a large church and its outbuildings, including a baptismal hall; elsewhere on the site, groups of buildings possibly corresponding to different family units are evenly spread. This original configuration, which so far has no parallels in Gaul, raises the question of a new form of pioneer occupation within the framework of investment in a previously neglected territory.

Further north, the hilltop site of La Malène overlooking the Tarn valley and known from a copy of the *Vita* of Hilarius, bishop of Gevaudan in the 6th century, was investigated in an ambitious planned excavation project on a site that was very difficult to access. Also directed by Laurent Schneider, it revealed the exceptional remains of what is thought to be a fortified palace, composed of a reception room with wall paintings, a residential building decorated with columns, a vast cellar, thermal baths built on the slope, and a probable church located not far from the fortification's entrance. La Malène, and other sites such as La Granède at Millau, shows that the phenomenon of hilltop settlement is not restricted to southern Gaul but was also present in the Massif Central.

The excavations of the site of La Couronne near Vichy, on the north-eastern periphery of this vast semi-mountainous range, are still in progress: there, the exceptionally well-preserved remains of a fortified establishment built at the beginning of the 5th century in a transition zone between the plain and the mountain illustrate the strategic role of this type of site. This monumental complex, covering an area of approximately 5000 m², is delimited by an imposing surrounding wall. At the site's western end, a vast basilica was built around AD 450; its size and associated liturgical installations show the role the site played as a religious pole in a territory located on the margins of Aquitania Prima within the context of the Christianization of the countryside and on the margins of Clermont's territory. At the site's eastern end, the remains of a probable reception establishment have been uncovered, revealing one of the possible functions of a site oriented on the road network. One may even question the possible role of sites such as La Couronne in the organization of the *cursus publicus* of the Late Roman Empire.

Finally, to round off this far from exhaustive overview, another mountain range in eastern France, the Jura, began to be investigated in the early 2000s. There, research by Philippe Gandel and David Billoin illustrates the hilltop phenomenon in a region close to the *limes*, where, more than elsewhere, the interpretation of "refuge sites" seems naturally significant. The excavations and collection of legacy data carried out over a vast territory have highlighted the vitality of this phenomenon. It currently encompasses about fifty sites of varied morphology and function. The research strategy focused on numerous surveys in high locations, as well as by soundings and even excavations of sites such as the Camp du Château at Salins-les-Bains, Gaillardon at Ménétru-le-Vignoble, or the Mont-Châtel at Pressiat, to name a few examples.

In addition to these examples, research on hilltop sites dated to Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in France is now being followed by studies in Burgundy, the Limousin, and the Rhône valley (the latter's southern part comprising emblematic sites such as the oppidum of Saint-Blaise at Saint-Mitres-les-Remparts or the oppidum of Constantine at Lançon-Provence). The study of hilltop settlements constitutes one of the main lines of research in medieval archaeology currently being conducted in France. The various excavations, carried out over several years, show the richness, diversity, and complexity of a phenomenon which today must be considered a fully-fledged form in the settlement network of Gaul. Such hilltop settlements may have been at the origin of some fortified castles, in other cases they developed into hilltop villages, or they are now marked by chapels today isolated on a high point but safeguarding the memory of a site.

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Joint comments on hilltop sites in Gallia, Britannia, and Hispania

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1) Master narratives: Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Barbarian invasions vs the transformation of the Roman Empire, an Age of Darkness? (RS)

The Roman Empire slid into chaos and faced its downfall at the hands of Barbarian conquerors in the 5th century AD. This view roughly summarizes a long-standing and still popular view of history. Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) had set the cornerstones with his monumental work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Based on the Enlightenment and Montesquieu's ideas on decadence as well as Voltaire's critical thoughts on Christianity, Gibbon presented a historical narrative from the reign of Marcus Aurelius to the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453.

Gibbon put it like this: because the new Christian faith had turned the ancient world upside down, Rome had lost its inner cohesion. No longer did a young Roman want to become a soldier, because belief in the afterlife and Christian altruism drove him into the hands of the clerics. These priests, Gibbon continued, furthermore ruined the wealth of Greek and Latin literature by censoring the available manuscripts. Furthermore Gibbon accused late antique clerics being generally uneducated and ignorant. When Barbarian hordes appeared on the scene, the glorious Roman Empire was already finished. These ideas are still vivid in the minds of the public as well as in academic circles.

There are, however, better analytical tools to approach what has been dubbed the “Dark Ages” of the 5th–8th century. First, throughout the Imperial period, there were different Roman identity patterns used in parallel. Apart from “central Roman-ness” (i.e. the city of Rome itself with its Republican institutions continuing under Imperial rule and its founding myth as well as its claim to world domination), there existed regional specifics and traditions in the provinces. Since the reign of Diocletian and Constantine respectively, Imperial administration became more regionalized. Multi-imperial rule, praetorian prefectures, and the smaller and more numerous provinces had a deep impact on local Roman identities.

Second, beginning with the 3rd century, new large associations, i.e. armed Barbarian groups, formed in a relatively short time along the Roman borders: Alemanni and Franks on the Rhine and, in a second row, Saxons, Burgundians, and later Thuringians, while on the middle and lower Danube, Goths, Vandals, Rugians, Gepids and others gathered. Rome had a considerable interest in the military potential of these “gentile groups”, which initially secured rather than threatened the borders. Around AD 375, the Huns destroyed this complex network of alliances, treaties, and obligations between Romans and Barbarians. Thus, from the end of the 4th century, a Barbarian group with sufficient fighting power had three alternatives: it could join the Huns and stay north of the borders, its members could become soldiers in Roman service, or they could invade Roman provinces on their own and by force. Important Barbarian armies – such as Goths and Vandals – feared for their own power within Barbaricum and moved to the Empire to find their fortune there. After years of insecurity and conflict with and against Roman units, various Gothic groups in Gaul, Spain, and later Italy itself, the Suebi in present-day northern Spain, the Vandals and Alans in North Africa, and the Franks in the northern part of Gaul took power in the former Roman provinces.

2) Uniformity and inconsistency: What is a hilltop site? (RP)

In the 3rd century AD, the north-western provinces witnessed a growing number of violent conflicts. Civil wars and frequent incursions of “Barbarian” war bands led to an increasing need for security, especially among the rural populations. A number of “civilian” fortifications erected during that time illustrate that State and Imperial armies could not uphold peace and order. Usually individual *villae* were fortified or revived *burgi* on their grounds. According to the numismatic evidence, the first hilltop sites were built at the same time as additional shelters by and for civilians. However, the beginning of the hilltop sites in the North-west during the last third of the 3rd century is disputable since the numismatic evidence is currently being re-examined.

Unsurprisingly, hilltop sites are diverse. As mentioned, they can be located near or far from major roads and rivers, close to already existing settlements or newly founded away from them, on a rough mountain or on a promontory. A larger group of sites reoccupies Bronze Age or Iron Age hillforts, where earlier fortifications could be reused, but continuity of settlement from the 1st century BC to the 4th and 5th century AD is rarely attested. In some cases, a cult continuity from the Late Iron Age to Late Antiquity can be observed.

As also mentioned, the physical appearance of the sites also varies. Some hilltop sites were probably unfortified; many had simple defences in the form of drystone walls without towers or complex gateways, and only a few resemble typical Late Antique fortifications such as *castra* or city walls. The examples discussed here all come from northern Gaul and illustrate the great range of different hilltop sites present within this single region. A broader view on the entire “West” shows many more, different features and types, especially if we turn to the inner surfaces of the sites.

In northern Gaul and partly also in Britain, most hilltop sites are only known from stray finds and very limited excavations. Examples like the Roc de Pampelune in southern Gaul or other sites on the Iberian Peninsula, where modern excavations have uncovered entire settlements, are practically unknown in the north. Without substantial data from the interior of the hilltop sites, any attempt at analysing their chronology and function is practically doomed to fail. Numerous sites in the Mediterranean included ecclesial buildings, which are abundant in the Alps and on the Balkan Peninsula but are almost entirely missing from the North-west.

A rare exception is a site on the river Meuse, where the remains of a small 7th-century church have been excavated. Mont Vireux is a remarkable site with a Late Roman fortification and related burial grounds that in Merovingian times received a chapel, over which a medieval castle was built in the 11th century. This pattern is atypical for hilltop sites in northern Gaul, where no traces of early medieval occupation on most Late Roman sites have so far been found. But the re-examination of older excavations is now changing this picture.

3) Central Roman-ness – local Roman-ness (local courts): Do hilltop sites play a part in these developments? (RS)

In the Roman West, Imperial central rule and “central Roman-ness” ceased to exist in the last decades of the 5th century. Local elites no longer had the chance to make a career at the Imperial court, among the central Imperial authorities, or the army. Throughout the 5th century, however, new local centres of power emerged. The Hasding kings now offered the African upper class attractive opportunities at the court of Carthage, the Gothic lords did the same for the Gallic and Spanish elites in Toulouse, Toledo, and later for the Italian elites at Theoderic's court in Ravenna. The spheres of power ruled by Barbarian kings were very similar to the Roman one but at a smaller scale. Peter Brown labelled these courts as the centres of a multitude of a new local *Romanitas*, and used the term “democratization” to describe the culture of the local elites. Large parts of “vernacular,” non-Classical culture came to occupy the top of a new Romano-Barbarian society. Alternatives to the Empire had emerged.

Landowning elites across western Europe replaced the professional Roman army. Military manpower was now procured directly, rather than by paying for professionals, be they Roman citizens or comparably cheap Barbarian mercenaries. “Some of these landowners derived from the immigrant groups (Goths, Franks, Burgundians) but Roman landowning elites, or rather their descendants, also came to be drawn upon for military service [MRH1].” (Heather 2000, 440) All in all, a much smaller, local military organization had replaced the Roman superstructure.

Guy Halsall defined “the key factor in the break-up of the Empire” as “the exposure of a critical fault-line between the imperial government and the interests of the regional elites.” (Halsall 2007, 19) Thus, although central Imperial Romanness and its supra-regional levels had disappeared throughout the 6th century, it was replaced by the Barbarian kings, their courts, armies, and their entourage in the local centres. Not only did members of the local elites now find better, more numerous career opportunities, but also trade, crafts, and agriculture benefited from smaller-scale structures. Why finance the wars of the emperors on the Persian front, one might have asked, why supply the huge Roman army and the densely populated capitals, when our Vandal king in Carthage can provide cheaper and more efficient security and prosperity in the African provinces?

Certainly, economic and urban development was different in each region. In Africa and southern Gaul, for example, there was still a dense urban landscape, in other regions the settlements were reduced, but not always to the detriment of most of the population. Representative monumental buildings were expensive to erect and maintain. They too are testimonies of a now obsolete central Roman identity. Overall, cities were constantly changing since the 4th century. No longer did the forum, the temples, and the baths mark the urban centre; cities were increasingly organized around parish or episcopal church buildings.

Finally, prominent ecclesiastical structures had a major impact. Emperor Constantine had started with decisive measures that ultimately transformed the Roman Empire into a Christian one. The establishment of episcopal courts and the privilege of the Church to receive inheritances were crucial for the dominant position that the Church held throughout the subsequent centuries of European history. Walter Pohl noted that Christianity profoundly and sustainably transformed traditional Roman patterns of identification. The apostles Peter and Paul, as well as a multitude of martyrs and saints, replaced the ancient gods and mythical figures. Sacred topography replaced the urban cult and memorial places. In the ancient centre of Rome, the bishop and his clerical apparatus slowly took over the Republican institutions (e.g. the pope labelled himself pontifex). All the new centres of power were Christian ones, the Church organized itself in parallel with the elites who held political and military power. It remained a hierarchical and Roman institution with its local authorities.

4) Uniformity *versus* diversity: People and power behind hilltop sites from an archaeological perspective (RP)

In provincial Roman archaeology, it is still very difficult to classify the hilltop settlements in the settlement hierarchies known from the Imperial period. This difficulty is reflected in particular in the term “irregular fortifications” coined early on, which emphasizes that the complexes are, to a certain extent, “anomalies”. The term “irregular” referred to both the structural appearance, which does not follow the pattern of the other known Roman fortifications, and to their legal status, which is disputed. It was thought that the majority of the fortifications were built in times of crisis on private initiative – as opposed to the right to build fortifications exercised exclusively by the Imperial administration or with its tacit acquiescence in times of crisis. Several references have been made here to a rock inscription near Sisteron (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence), which is possibly the only written evidence of an upland fortification built on private initiative for the civilian population: It mentions a place called Theopolis, which was built at the initiative of the *praefectus praetorio galliarum* Claudius Postumus Dradenus at

the beginning of the 5th century to protect the general population. This "civilian" approach is contrasted with the thesis that sees the hilltop settlements as part of a militarily initiated building programme for better control of the traffic routes in the provinces behind the Rhine border threatened by Germanic invasions. This "military approach" is highly debatable, since it raises the following questions:

a) What troops were stationed in hilltop sites? and b) How can control over roads and river courses be exercised from a sometimes remote stronghold on a hilltop?

Other larger hilltop sites appear in areas with no prior settlements and economic activity. For example, sites in the Palatinate forest appear to be more like *vici* on hills, often without built defences when they were founded. These new settlements may have been driven more by economic entrepreneurship than by military needs (Prien 2018, 83). The west of Britain in the 4th century shows similarities with Gaul, where the local elite moved to new centres of power often replacing the *civitates* (small towns) as seats of petty kings and chiefs. Despite their "un-Roman" residences, their feasting habits were still deeply rooted in "Roman" traditions. Strikingly, these sub-Roman hilltop sites also appear in territories beyond the old frontiers of the empire, notably in Scotland.

5) Local site development and regional archaeological background: From hilltop site to castle

Hilltop sites in southern Gaul and the Iberian Peninsula often have an appearance that differs entirely from that of their northern counterparts. As in other regions near or on the Mediterranean, they are more like cities and include walls and churches. Some sites in Visigothic Spain were indeed the seats of state officials and bishops, as reported in written sources of the 6th and 7th century. Most were abandoned after the 9th or 10th century, while hilltop sites in northern Gaul are usually thought to fall out of use by the mid of the 5th century already. Their possible further development in Gaul is still problematic, but some sites were apparently used by Merovingian "nobles" as *villa* or *castrum*, like the site of Castrum Habendum in the Vosges, which was converted into a monastery in the 7th century. Others show traces of reoccupation especially in Carolingian times and quite a few became the locations of medieval castles from the 11th century onwards. A possible link between Late Antique hilltop sites and later castles has been discussed for a number of sites.

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Section 3: The Balkan Peninsula



Aerial photograph of Jelica-Gradina (Serbia) with the reconstructed structures of the Late Antique hilltop site.
Photography/Reconstruction after Milinković 2010, pl. I, 1.

Hilltop sites in the settlement pattern of Late Antique Dalmatia

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The geographic and climatic conditions of the former province of Dalmatia allow us to distinguish between a coastal strip, which is better researched, and a hilly hinterland in the interior of the province, where the conditions for identifying upland settlements are more difficult and the sites are consequently less well explored.

In the coastal belt, continuity of occupation is attested in some prehistoric hillforts that received city status in Roman times and were additionally fortified in Late Antiquity (Asseria, Varvaria, Nedinum). The town of Rider moved from the plain to the nearby hill of Gradina, where the acropolis was reinforced in the 6th century. Many of the *civitates* mentioned by Anonymous of Ravenna on the eastern Adriatic show the characteristics of fortified hilltops. Some took advantage of their location by the sea and of communication on waterways, which could provide supplies in case of danger.

Research in recent decades has revealed many sites, which, given their well-preserved architecture and careful investigations, can be dated to the 6th century. They are mostly fortifications on islands, among which Gradina on Žirje is undoubtedly the best known. The fort has a characteristic narrow defensive wall with protruding towers and contains a large residential building. Proteichism (the addition of an external wall), built as a drystone wall, is clearly visible. Similar, but more modestly researched sites are the outposts of Sv. Marko, Korintija, Svetojanj, Veliki Sikavac, Vrgada, Osinj, and others. They all have a similar design, except that some also contain the remains of Early Christian churches. The protection of the sea route to the west is complemented by smaller fortifications, mostly in the form of towers (including Svetac and Toreta.). All occupy characteristic positions located in naturally well-protected strategic places next to favourable harbours, which attest to their function of controlling and protecting the sea routes. Their location in an often completely barren environment suggest that they are military outposts supplied by sea. Perhaps some were also used as refuges for the surrounding population (e.g. Tribanj Šibuljina) in case of threat. Their chronology is not always unambiguous, but for the better researched site of Gradina on Žirje, the archaeological material supports its dating to Justinian times.

The hilly hinterland of the province is less well known. The data collected in Bosnia and Herzegovina show a large number of fortified settlements but they are only partly recorded, mostly by older surveys. Hilltop settlements, which would appear to be densely populated autarchic settlements, are rarer here than in the eastern Alpine world. Among them, Debelo brdo, Gradec near Ilinjača, Biograci, Gradac Todorovići, Bugar grad, and Gradina Dabravine contain residential buildings and often a church. The recently explored, heavily fortified and built-up settlement of Gradina Bakinci on the northern edge of Dalmatia stands out for its three large Early Christian churches located outside its walls.

Hilltop fortifications linked to nearby settlements occupied contemporaneously on the plain are often encountered. A typical example is the Glamočko polje plain, where the remains of Late Antique settlements were discovered, of which only one church is better known and dated. These settlements are located below the fortifications of Gradac in Halapič and Gradina in Podgradina, dated to the same period. Among the many hilltops, some can only be interpreted as refuges. A partially investigated example is the small fortified area of Gradac in Lepenica, with only a wall and an Early Christian church on the hill and, just below it, numerous traces of an unexplored Roman settlement. The combination of a military post and a refuge was explored in the Grad in Gornji Vrbljani, where a larger building for a permanent crew was discovered along the wall. No other buildings within the defended area have been identified. These kinds of forts were probably used for only a short time, since the inhabitants mostly lived in the lowland settlements below them. Such micro-landscape with traces of contemporary settlements at the foot of Late Antique fortifications have been discovered recently (Dikovača Bublin, Zmijavci, Proložac Donji, Rankovići, Doci near Vitina). Differently structured settlement remains are also known to have coexisted along the coast. The lowland settlement of Bosar on the island of Krk and its partly explored remains of numerous residential buildings and churches dated to the 6th century is situated under the fortified hilltop of Korintija.

Detailed examinations of some prehistoric hillforts on the edge of some karst fields have also revealed the remains of Late Antique defensive structures, often even with clearly visible proteichisms. Narrower, mortar-bound defensive walls, as well as partly residential buildings, were built into the stone prehistoric ramparts. The plan of Čuker near Mokre polje, a prehistoric fort with stone rampart transformed into a Late Antique fortress, is known and further examples of such structures exist in Livanjsko polje (Gradac above Potočani, Velika gradina above Veliki Kablič, and Gradina above Vašarovine). Their numbers indicate dense settlement of the hinterland. Their smaller size suggests that they served primarily as refuges in times of danger.

Fortifications have been explored to a greater extent in the hilly interior. Located along important routes, they show signs of being strongly fortified, while evidence of settlement is less evident. Permanent military crews were probably stationed in them, and they also served to shelter the local population in case of danger. Gradina Zecovi near Čarakovo, Blagaj on Buna, Koštur near Dabrica, Kosmaj near Biletići, and the recently explored Crkvišće Bukovlje near Generalski Stol are among the better-known examples.

The Late Antique settlement pattern of the heavily populated province will be better understood only when systematic research is undertaken in at least a few key places. A recurrent pattern is nevertheless already apparent: on the one hand, our study area contains permanently inhabited autarchic settlements or military fortresses in strategic locations and, on the other hand, fortified hilltop settlements coexisted with unprotected lowland settlements in their immediate vicinity.

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Hilltop settlements at the eastern Balkan Peninsula between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

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Initially, the Late Antique fortified hilltop settlements in Bulgaria were perceived as military fortresses. Gradually, the concept of a "fortified village" emerged. Both stem from the idea of a threat to the Late Roman Empire and its citizens. Yet, there is no evidence that the so-called "defence system of military fortresses" ever stopped a Barbarian attack, and the latter were at any rate usually busy besieging towns.

A careful spatial analysis of about 500 fortified Late Antique hilltop settlements in what is now central-western Bulgaria shows that other interpretations may be considered. The sites are located in then intensively exploited mining areas, and they are closely connected to regional and micro-regional road networks. Metal extraction and production in this region was a real industry in Late Antiquity. It presupposes that the production areas and centres, the extracted raw materials, and the finished products were protected, that the labour force was used and controlled, and that an efficient logistics and transport network was developed to ensure the movement of people and goods.

With that in mind, one can envisage various roles for the Late Antique hilltop settlements, as headquarters of garrisons and/or forces ensuring security, warehouses, production centres, road stations, even seats of the local elites engaged in the mining industry. There is no reason to assume that all (or even most) defended hilltop sites were built to respond to an impending external danger. Their appearance is most likely to have resulted from internal economic and social processes within Late Roman society.

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Late Antique hilltop sites in Greece

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A great number of fortified sites that can be dated to the Early Byzantine period are known in Greece. Although a general overview does not exist and current study has given emphasis to urban fortifications, one can attempt to outline some general characteristics for the non-urban forts of the period, most of them located in hilly surroundings, from the material recorded in some parts of the country.

Starting in Macedonia, Late Antiquity can be described as a flourishing period, as more than 200 sites have been catalogued recently. About a quarter of them can be considered hilltop settlements, usually fortified. They are situated mostly around valleys, which served for thousands of years as ways of communication, or on mountain slopes overlooking the fertile plains. In most cases they occupy sites where previous habitation is documented, being sited in strategic and physically protected locations. Most are dated roughly to Justinianic times and some can be equated with mentions by Procopius. All these aspects are common characteristics also found in other regions.

In western Macedonia, in the territories of the ancient cities of Pella and Europos, which were continuously inhabited, Palaiokastro in Aravissos and the fortification in Kali (Pella region) can be considered as built by imperial motivation. Other hillforts also exist and alongside them numerous rural settlements have been identified in the plain.

Another concentration of hillforts and open rural settlements is found in the area of Philippi in eastern Macedonia. The Late Antique fortifications surround the plain of Philippi and continue in the small valley of Aggitis in the region of Paranesti, which is a passage to Thrace. All these sites, for example Platania and Adriani, are carefully constructed with lime-mortared walls, projecting towers, cisterns, and other structures typical of the period. Some can be distinguished as the bases of military units, depending on their strength and special features, and some other smaller sites can be considered as controlling posts. In the region of Epirus and south-western Greece, only a few sites can be characterized as hillforts during the Early Byzantine period; they were usually established within deserted ancient acropolises. Kastritsa outside Ioannina, the castle of Saint Donatos in Paramythia, the fortifications in Rizovouni, and on Agia Triada Hill in Vassiliki in Aitolia, can be cited as examples. To the east, in Boeotia and Attica, a few hillforts appear to be guarding the land, some of them dating to the transitional period.

Finally, in central Greece, a carefully organized network of fortifications flanked the main roads and surrounded the large plain of Thessaly, ensuring connectivity and the safe movement of people and goods. Excavations in two of them, Velika and Dolichi, can serve as a model for their role, the former as a maritime fortification and the latter for the interior of the country. Finds suggest that both were established by imperial initiative and indicate that the fortification system was centrally organized during the Early Byzantine period, with hillforts playing an important role.

In conclusion, in Thessaly and in the entire Greek peninsula, an increase in the number of fortifications in hilly positions is noticeable in the Early Byzantine period. Several sites bear traces of habitation but the lack of excavations (with some exceptions) does not permit us to follow the evolution of this trend. When dates are available, they place the construction of these fortifications in the time of Justinian and sometimes validate the mentions of Procopius, although most sites have yet to be identified.

In addition to churches, which are found almost everywhere, guardrooms and stores are the most frequently encountered spaces inside these hillforts, which, in addition to their strong defensive construction, indicate a military presence in the region.

In some cases, there are indications of the presence of state officials in these hillforts, as shown by finds including imperial weights and jewellery. These sites should be regarded as administrative centres or places that controlled agricultural production. Important finds, such as pottery and coins, also show the commercial interest of some establishments, mostly those close to important maritime routes or roads on land. Most of these finds are dated to the 6th century or 7th century at the latest, indicating that the occupation of Early Byzantine hillforts was short-lived. The luxurious decoration found in churches in a number of hillforts show the power of the Church and the benefits given by Justinian to the local bishops.

References

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Late Antique/Early Byzantine hilltop settlements in present-day Serbia and Montenegro

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In Late Antique/Early Byzantine times, the territory of present-day Serbia and Montenegro was divided into several administrative units: the provinces of Moesia Prima, parts of Dacia Ripensis, Dacia Mediterranea, Dardania, Praevalitana, and possibly Dalmatia. The exact frontiers of these provinces during the 4th–7th century cannot be traced precisely in most cases. For example, it is not clear whether present-day western Serbia still belonged to Dalmatia in Late Antique/Early Byzantine times as it did in ancient Roman times. The borders between Moesia Prima, Dardania, and Praevalitana may also not be exactly defined.

In today's northern Serbia, which forms the southern part of the Pannonian Plain, there are mostly no substantial hills or mountains and, so far, no hilltop settlement of the Late Antique/Early Byzantine period has been found. The rivers Sava and Danube separate this part from other regions of the Balkan Peninsula. Further south, the first fortified sites, built in almost every case on Roman foundations, are located on the right bank of the Danube: they belong to the ancient *limes*. These sites are not discussed here since they are not hilltop settlements and follow a completely different system of fortification. Nevertheless, the small finds recovered in these *castella* indicate that the sites became fortified settlements (villages) in Late Antique/Early Byzantine times and were not only military strongholds.

The terrain towards the south becomes more mountainous (reaching an altitude of over 2500m) and includes river valleys and some plains. The mountains end abruptly above the eastern Adriatic coast in Montenegro; note that there are almost no islands along the Montenegrin coast, in clear contrast to present-day Dalmatia. While the river valleys, like the valley of the Morava, a very important communication axis between East and West even today, made inland traffic easier, the mountains were an obstacle to connecting the Adriatic coast with the hinterland. The coast of Montenegro made trade by shipping possible. Inland, the Danube played a role in the traffic of goods too, as indicated by many amphorae finds along its banks. In Serbian archaeology, Late Antique/Early Byzantine hilltop settlements became an object of study relatively late, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and rather by accident. It was first thought that the fortified hilltop sites with an irregular plan could be medieval. Excavations revealed that there was mostly no medieval occupation but Early Byzantine layers of the 6th and early 7th century were present; the idea emerged that these places, which are difficult to access, had only been used as temporary refuges, not as permanent settlements. Even today such opinions persist. In the meantime, hundreds of fortified hilltop sites have become known, some of them through surveys, some by small-scale excavations, and some by larger systematic investigations. Nevertheless, large-scale excavations are still too few.

In Montenegro, research of Early Byzantine hilltop sites is only just beginning. Only a few sites, with some remarkable finds, are known so far, but the first results fit the general picture of the Balkans.

The state of research does not permit us to draw conclusions about the economy of that region, especially because the use of the lowlands is yet to be understood. Finds of slag on many fortified hilltop sites suggest iron mining, while the location of the settlements in the mountains and the archaeological finds of bells for sheep or other domestic animals attest to husbandry or pastoralism as one of the main activities. Agriculture, woodworking, the production of antler objects, fibulae, belt buckles, other crafts, and in some cases artworks are also attested by the archaeological finds.

The fortified settlements are located in elevated positions, which makes them easier to defend in the times of the Great Migrations and the Barbarian raids. That is the main reason why fortified hilltop sites existed at all. With some exceptions, there were no such hilltop settlements in Roman times, and there are only a few known Early Byzantine settlements in the lowland valleys (e.g. Gamzigrad/Romuliana, Gračanica/Ulpiana, or Maskare-Bedem). Leaving the prehistoric period aside, the first significant move to the mountains took place in the 3rd century AD and is probably connected to the Barbarian invasions, like the incursion of the Goths. Those raids, in comparison with later raids, did not have a catastrophic result, and this first “uphill movement”, according to current knowledge, left no architectural traces such as walls or buildings; some small finds have been recovered from the interiors of prehistoric hilltop fortifications that were re-used as refugia for a short time. Only a few such sites have been explored so far. One of them is located on the Trojan hill in south-western Serbia. The situation changed substantially in the 6th century, when 4th-century fortified sites were refurbished and fortified hilltop sites were built from scratch on a much larger scale; they became the basic settlement unit of the region. Several hundred are known in Serbia and Montenegro, and the situation is similar in the surrounding regions. Their number grows yearly, and it seems that it will reach thousands. To put it simply, the basic settlement type in the region is a village. The fortification alone does not make these places towns or military strongholds. Just their number (thousands), compared to the strength of the army in the Balkan provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire, makes it clear that each fortified site could have contained no more than a token number of soldiers, if at all.

The archaeological finds (architectural remains, tools, and other small finds) suggest that the hilltop settlements in present-day Serbia and Montenegro were mostly villages. In situations of danger, the population could turn to warriors, possibly a kind of militia. Typically for this period, the structure of the towns changed, villages were fortified, military forts became places for a mixed population including men, women, and children (attested by burials or small finds) who drew a living, at least partly, from rural professional activities.

All these settlements were difficult to access, although not to the same degree. Some were located “only” several hundred metres above sea level (asl), some at over 1500 m, and some up to 1800 m asl. But all had a substantial difference in elevation compared to the land below. Most sites were built above 500 m asl, i.e. in conditions better suited to cattle breeding than to agriculture. The settlements' plan was irregular, adapted to the terrain. They had ditches, mortared stone walls, towers, gates, water cisterns, and other elements of fortification. *Intra muros*, mostly stone buildings of different sizes included dwellings, workshops, granaries, or buildings designed for other uses. In less ruralized agglomerations, such buildings were erected using mortar and had glass windows. Churches, often more than one, were in the interior of the settlements but churches and associated burial grounds were also established *extra muros*.

It is better not to insist on the strict categorization of settlements, given the state of research. The dividing line between towns, forts, and villages became less pronounced. This does not exclude sites that are or should have been primarily military forts; nonetheless, hilltop fortifications were mainly villages and, in some cases, central places in a region. Joachim Werner noted this decades ago, commenting on the excavation results of Golemanovo and Sadovsko Kale in Bulgaria. In such centres, but not only inside them, traces of supra-regional trade or contacts (for instance African amphorae or pilgrimage items), artworks, wall paintings, and stone carvings have been found. Yet, generally, the material culture seems to have been without wide variations, with some exceptions. Perhaps this suggests some kind of remote direction and distribution, in the undertaking of an imperial reconquest after the disruption caused by the Huns and other tribes in the 5th century. By reconstructing all these processes, archaeology made huge progress in the last decades and promises to provide, relatively soon, new insight into what happened in the Balkans of the 6th century.

Who built all those fortified hilltop settlements? One could envisage a cooperation between the central government, the army, the Church, and the local population. Similar fortification solutions, similar building techniques, a largely uniform material culture, and some inscriptions have so far supported this interpretation.

Finally, the population was largely Christian and Latin speaking (north of the “Jireček-line”). Christianity was consolidated even in quite inaccessible places. Some “foreign ethnic elements” including members of German tribes and perhaps Slavs too, were part of this world. A brick inscription from *Sirmium*, dating to before AD 582, shows what the identity of most of them was and what they called their homeland: they were true subjects of *Romania*, the Roman Empire.

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Fortified Late Antique hilltop settlements in North Macedonia: Purpose and geographical distribution

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The prefecture of eastern Illyricum consisted of two dioceses, that of Dacia to the north and Macedonia to the south. The modern state of North Macedonia straddles the line between the two dioceses. It includes the entire province of Macedonia Secunda and parts of several other Late Antique provinces. This was the situation in the later 5th and 6th centuries. The division between the two dioceses reflects the linguistic and cultural divisions between the southern, Hellenized, and more urban provinces and the northern provinces added later to the empire, as well as the different local, Roman, and Hellenistic traditions of settlement and construction.

Whereas Thessalia, Macedonia Prima, Epirus vetus, and Epirus nova were well supplied with cities, and Macedonia Secunda somewhat less so, the northern provinces in the diocese of Dacia were heavily rural. Although several substantial settlements, usually dated to the 6th century but not mentioned by Hierokles or other authors, have been identified in the field and in some cases investigated, the northern provinces were less urbanized. Christianity seems to have spread more slowly in the less urbanized northern provinces, raising interesting questions about the process of dissemination of the new religion across rural regions and about the location of bishops within such regions. The fortified hilltop settlement of Gradište at the village of Stenče has been proposed as the seat of a rural bishop on the basis of its church and three baptisteries or fonts. The existence of hilltop settlements, their distribution across the landscape, and their varied functions appear to depend on three conditions: 1) regional geology and geography; 2) economic conditions; and 3) the risk of Barbarian invasion or other military operations in that region during particular times. About two thirds of North Macedonia can be described as mountainous, with numerous hills, mountains, knolls, ridges, spurs, plateaus, and slopes. Many hills show evidence of human habitation or other activity from one or more periods between the Neolithic and Ottoman eras. People looking for a hilltop site, if civilian, chose a site that met their criteria. This would not be based solely on the features of the hill, but also on the usual requirements for a settlement, i.e. water, proximity to communication routes, arable land, other natural resources, etc. It is not always clear why a specific site was used or inhabited, when others nearby appear equally attractive to us. Because of limited excavation, information about chronology and organization largely derives from survey and chance finds. Some sites became desirable only under certain conditions, i.e., during Late Antiquity, the need for defence. The site of Golemo Gradište at the village of Konjuh, in eastern North Macedonia, provides an example. The river Kriva surrounds its northern terrace on three sides, and the acropolis consists of a steep-sided, 100-m-high ridge. In winter the sun sets behind the ridge by 2 p.m., leaving a cold and damp northern terrace, where the lower town stood. Even in summer the wind is always blowing on the acropolis. Rainwater was channelled into at least two cisterns on the ridge. Late Neolithic pottery has been found on both the northern terrace and the acropolis, along with some Iron Age material, a few sherds of Hellenistic pottery, and an overwhelming majority of Late Antique material and architectural remains, mostly from the 6th and early 7th centuries. There is no Roman pottery earlier than the 4th century on the acropolis or the northern terrace, according to two ceramic analysts, although an extensive Roman cemetery only a few hundred meters distant indicates that a Roman settlement existed nearby. In short, no one wanted to live on that cold northern terrace or that high ridge except when threatened by enemies.

The acropolis was separately fortified, and a military garrison may have occupied the acropolis for some time. After they left, and after the lower city on the northern terrace suffered serious destruction, probably in the early 7th century, the population fled to the acropolis and jammed themselves into every nook and cranny, quarrying houses into the bedrock, and creating a densely packed hilltop settlement containing many pithoi and other storage vessels. The northern terrace continued to be used, however, for burials, crop farming and grazing, and for at least one large building attached to the Episcopal Basilica. Thus, the political situation, or perhaps from our point of view the historical situation, influenced the choice of hilltop and other sites and the periods in which they were occupied.

Economic conditions, or the need to locate settlements near natural resources, directly influenced the choice of sites. Although agriculture and pastoralism were relevant, mining and quarrying were major factors in the siting of certain settlements. As pointed out, for example by Slobodan Dušanić, mining and metallurgy were so important for the Roman Empire that the presence of metal ores in a province affected its administration, its cities and other settlements, and the stationing and activities of military units within it. Less is known about mining in Late Antiquity, but the importance of metal did not diminish.

What kind of Late Antique hilltop settlements are found in North Macedonia? A first category comprises cities and towns, and it includes Roman or earlier cities that continued to exist into Late Antiquity as well as smaller towns of the 5th and especially the 6th century. Frequently, such settlements were not sited on hills but incorporated hills or slopes into their urban plan. A very common pattern consists of a lower town and an acropolis, or a lower town, upper town, and acropolis. Scupi, Heraclea Lynkestis, Lychnidos on Lake Ohrid, and the anonymous city at Golemo Gradište at Konjuh fall into this category. Bargala and Stobi were built on sloping terrain.

A few settlements that may be described as towns stood on hills, e.g. Davina Kula, at the village of Čučer, Kamenica (possibly ancient Armonia), and Viničko Kale at Vinica (perhaps ancient Kelenidin). These 6th-century towns display multiple churches and some internal organization; they are at least 4 hectares in size although most are larger.

Several regional studies and publications of individual sites have appeared in recent decades. The publications of the late Ivan Mikulčić, especially his *Befestigungen* (2002), must be taken into consideration, because almost all of the hilltop

settlements in North Macedonia were fortified to some extent. Although Mikulčić is now sometimes out of date, occasionally just wrong, and, as has been pointed out by at least one participant here, his categories of sites are difficult to apply in practice, nevertheless his work remains essential.

Mikulčić's categories consist of cities, walled villages, refuges, and several types of military or "official" sites, i.e., border forts, roadside forts, lookout posts and toll or customs stations. His category of walled villages is probably the most problematic, among other reasons because of the similarities among a large village, a small town, and some military installations. Sites identified as villages were usually small, occupying an area of less than 4 hectares. The recently published settlement at the village of Taor on the site of Gradište, located some 20 km south-east of Skopje, provides an example of a fortified village. According to its excavator, Kiril Ristov, the first Roman occupation in the 2nd to 3rd centuries probably consisted of a small military guard post, which gradually developed into a prosperous agricultural and pastoral village, perhaps with other functions, given the rich finds and relatively sophisticated architecture. In the 6th century, probably as part of an outer network of fortifications around Scupi, the village received a small military garrison and a fortification wall, but it did not survive beyond the late 6th or early 7th century.

Many fortified hilltop sites had a military or official function of some kind, although exactly who the soldiers were who spent time in those sites or even if they were officially soldiers is unclear. The three major categories are border forts, roadside forts, and lookout posts, although it is likely that many such forts served more than one purpose.

One of the best-known fortifications that probably served as both a border fort and a roadside fort is the so-called Castle on the Pčinja River, beside the southern leg of the modern highway between Skopje and Gevgelija, just north of the confluence of the Pčinja river with the Vardar. It was located near the border between the provinces of Macedonia and Moesia (later Dardania), as well as near the point where the road leading east along the Pčinja forked off from the north-south Vardar route. A 6th century church is located near the castle, on a bedrock outcrop.

A close examination of the roads and the probable provincial border in this region shows that the hilltop establishments followed the lines of the roads and of the border. The road along the Pčinja ran north-east until it forked at Klečovce; one road continued north along the Pčinja, but another ran east through the Kriva valley as far as the village of Psača, where it joined the main road east to Pautalia. A line of at least eight forts guarded that road, from Strežovce to Psača. The fort or lookout post on the hilltop of Kalište was probably related to the nearby settlement site of Viziana, and overlooked the confluence of the Kriva with the Pčinja and the crossroads there. At the village of Dovezence, a promontory now marked by the church of St George rose directly above the Kriva. A second possible fort stood further south-east on a high elevation, marked by the church of Sveti Spas. A large, fortified site at the hamlet of Svirkovci (village of Beljakovce) was followed by Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, the only definite city or town in the Kriva valley, although a town might have existed at Viziana. At the village of Šopsko Rudare, the fortress of Kralica stood high above the river and the road and probably also marked the provincial boundary between Dardania and Dacia Mediterranea. A possible fort at the village of Vakuf and another one at Trenovec are followed by the spectacular, 90-m high site of Opila near Rankovci.

Fortifications, natural or manmade, and water supply were major concerns in the hilltop installations. Churches have been documented in at least half of the fortified hilltop sites, either within the fortification or nearby, often associated with cemeteries.

In general, if we leave out cities, one group of sites consists of fairly substantial settlements, some appearing more military, others existing on agriculture or mining, but possibly with mixed official and economic functions. Another group consists of fortified establishments, often exposed sites high above the surrounding countryside, perhaps with a few buildings. They served as lookout posts or roadside forts. In some instances, they were close to contemporary settlements located at a lower elevation. I would suggest that, in some cases, personnel based in the lower settlement were stationed temporarily at the high forts, carrying their provisions with them. They observed road traffic and looked for trouble, but were too far away to be actively involved with travellers on the road or bands of Barbarians. Such hilltop sites might have served as refugia when needed. They relied on the lower settlements for provisions, cemeteries, and in some instances for intervention on the roads. It is not clear whether they should be considered paired sites or the higher-altitude installation was a branch of the lower settlement.

Issues for future investigation include defining what is a settlement, as opposed to a site, and examining the relationships among sites. The research that has identified outlying fortifications in networks around major cities, e.g. Scupi and Bargala, should be continued. Viktor Lilčić Adams has proposed a system of signal fires between high altitude points to alert distant towns to imminent danger.

Because of the lack of excavation, the dating of many sites is uncertain. Nevertheless, hilltop sites were occupied at various times from the 3rd to the 7th century, with the largest number in use during the 6th century. The periods of possible use reflect various threats during those centuries. Fifty years ago, it was generally accepted that urban life ended in northern Macedonia in AD 518. The evidence provided by pottery and dates derived from dendrochronology have now begun to push the existence of sites, on hilltops and elsewhere, beyond the date of AD 586, a date that was more recently accepted for the demise of cities, and into the 7th century. A clearer typology is needed for the pottery of the so-called "Dark Age", and more samples of wood and charcoal should be dated dendrochronologically. At present, the 7th century appears to be the next chronological frontier; the question of continuity *versus* re-occupation on certain sites in the 9th–10th centuries remains open.

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Late Antique hilltop forts in the Balkans: Comments on the historical context

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Contemporary historical accounts tell us mainly about the military context in which Balkan fortifications were built—raids on the region by Barbarian groups from north of the Lower Danube frontier and the deployment of Eastern Roman field armies and diplomatic initiatives in response. In the process, they also give us insights into periods of greater or lesser Eastern Roman political involvement in the region, as do legislative texts and inscriptions. Periods of heightened imperial interest in the region tend to be those in which the archaeological evidence suggests major waves of fortification work took place. From AD 376 to 488, for example, the region saw invasions by Goths and Huns and rebellions by Barbarian federate troops. By the mid-5th century, the Eastern Roman empire had lost control over western Illyricum and Constantinopolitan authority was waning in the northern part of eastern Illyricum. This 'Migration Era' was accompanied by major fortification works in cities in the southern Balkans, for example Thessaloniki, and the contraction and fortification, or relocation to hilltops of cities in the north, where most regions experienced an economic recession.

The greatest increase in fortifications, however, accompanied the Balkan restoration projects of the emperors Anastasius (AD 491–518) and Justinian (AD 527–565). These emperors deployed large armies to repel Barbarian raids on the region, recruited Barbarian warlords and their followers to the Roman army, and pursued an aggressive diplomatic approach to the northern world.

That fortifications were a means by which these emperors sought to exert greater control over the region, as highlighted by Procopius' *Buildings*, composed ca. in c. AD 551. This part ekphrasis, part panegyric, was designed to promote the Emperor Justinian's building achievements across the empire, especially in militarized borderlands. Book 4 dedicated to the Balkans mentions more fortifications than any of the other books. Some of these works are described or mentioned in the main text, others included in lists of completed works.

Who built the forts? Procopius' *Buildings* suggests that the fortifications were all the result of top-down funding and initiative – specifically the designs and genius of the Emperor Justinian. This is of course a rhetorical construct. But the organization of Procopius' text by administrative regions shows that he was drawing on official records and thus suggests the involvement of the imperial authorities in the building programme.

The inscriptions from Byllis in modern Albania reinforce the impression that some degree of imperial oversight contributed to the construction of Balkan fortifications. These texts mention an imperial official named Victorinus who, according to Inscription II, had some responsibility for building the 'frouria' across the Balkan region. This recalls texts and inscriptions mentioning the role of imperial architects at work at fortresses in Syria and Mesopotamia in the same period.

The employment of imperial officials, sometimes architects, to supervise the construction of provincial fortifications does not mean that this was entirely a top-down process. Instead, initiating, planning, funding, and executing these works was the result of a complex interaction between local groups and central authorities. An inscription commemorating the restoration of the aqueduct at Serdica in AD 582 provides an insight into these processes: the project was initiated at the request of the local bishop, funded by the imperial government, and organized by a local official, apparently the provincial governor of Dacia Mediterranea. Legislative evidence reinforces this impression of centre-periphery interaction, highlighting the responsibility of local authorities for funding and implementing public works, including fortifications.

Of course, we are dealing here predominantly with hilltop forts of sophisticated construction in strategically important locations. It is harder to say whether less well built, more remote enclosures would also have been part of fortification drives organized by a local city or the provincial authorities. Perhaps these were built *ad hoc* as refuges by local rural communities as has been suggested in some of the papers we have heard.

With respect to the purpose of the forts, Procopius stresses that the fortifications were built predominantly to protect the Balkans from the terrible depredations of Barbarian raiders. We need to be wary of Procopius' rhetorical exaggeration of the Barbarian threat, which, in this period, was hardly as serious as it had been in the later 4th to 5th century or would be again in the era of the Avar Slav invasions of the later 6th to early 7th century. Moreover, these fortifications did not stop Barbarian invasions, which periodically crossed the frontier region and reached the southern Balkans.

From a strategic perspective, fortifications were intended to blunt the impact of Barbarian raids rather than prevent them. Because Barbarian raiders in the later 5th to 6th century were generally inept at besieging walled sites, these forts and fortified cities were designed to protect people and their resources. They were also a means of regulating and monitoring the movements of raiding parties, funneling them into the interior regions where they could be engaged and defeated by imperial field armies. Networks of fortifications provided a platform for the military campaigns of these field armies, furnishing them with accommodation, intelligence, and provisions.

Leaving aside the military context, forts were a means of projecting political control over a region or monitoring it, its populations, and their industrial and commercial activities. Political authorities have always found it difficult to control the Balkan Peninsula since it is a largely mountainous area. In a Roman context, its northern regions were similar to Iasuria or Tzanica in Asia Minor, areas whose populations could periodically drift out of imperial control and sometimes rebel. This did happen in certain northern and western Balkan regions in the 4th to 5th century. In addition, by the early 6th century, older *villa*-owning elites had been killed or had left the region and some of these areas were populated by Barbarian groups. The

governments of Anastasius and Justinian needed to find ways of building relationships with these local populations, including those who did not necessarily have a Roman cultural background. That they achieved this is clear from their establishment of federate groups and Barbarian generals across the northern Balkans.

It seems likely that fortifications were used as one of the ways of co-opting these new agricultural and military populations. In a pre-modern context, siting fortifications in prominent hilltop locations was a tried and tested means of controlling a region. Late Antique military bases in the Balkans were not merely islands of imperial authority, stranded in an inhospitable landscape, but a means of integrating these areas and their populations. They were located at the centre of networks of forts within specific sub-regions. Fortifications not only reminded provincial populations who was in charge, but offered them benefits, such as shelter, and places to store and exchange goods. For local military leaders, forts perhaps offered a means of legitimising their own power at a local level along with the military ranks and titles we know they received. It is no coincidence that hilltop forts in regions like modern Serbia contain evidence of Barbarian military cultures as well as 'Roman' Christian identities.

Procopius' *Buildings* Book 4 reinforces what has been outlined above. *Buildings*, at its core, is as much about Justinian managing to tame the hostile Balkan landscape as it is about keeping out Barbarian intruders whose regular presence in the region is in effect assumed. Interestingly, most fortified sites included in Procopius' text were located in regions over which imperial control had weakened in the 5th century. These included the frontier regions, and especially Dardania and Dacia Mediterranea, which account for the vast majority of the works in the text. The major site in this region was the new administrative and ecclesiastical capital of Justiniana Prima. This is the centrepiece of Book 4, the focus of the opening and, indeed, one of the longest sections of the text.

More generally, it is striking how many more works there are in Illyricum than in interior Thrace, away from the Danube frontier (nearly three times as many in Illyricum as in Thrace). This may owe something to the fact that Thrace had been the main focus of Anastasius' fortification drive, with Justinian continuing this work in the northern Illyrian provinces and along the Danube. Alternatively, it could relate to the fact that larger areas of central and south-eastern Thrace were plains, less suited to dense networks of fortifications. Indeed, Procopius' passages on Thracia, Rhodope, and Europa are dominated by descriptions of large fortified cities and cross walls situated in lower lying areas and contain fewer long lists of hilltop forts. There are also comparatively few works cited in Procopius' sections on Thessaly and Achaia, south of the Via Egnatia, i.e. areas that had been less militarized than the northern Balkans in Late Antiquity. As noted by Professor Sdrolia, fortifications have been studied along the road network in Thessaly and Achaia and Procopius' main focus here is indeed the control of mountain passes in the region of Thermopylae.

Finally, Dalmatia is absent from Procopius' work, possibly because Roman fortification work there post-dated his *Buildings*. Or perhaps the region was omitted along with Italy because Procopius did not have access to relevant sources. Or, could it be that fortifications there predate the Eastern Roman conquest and belong to the Gothic period?

Whenever they were built, the Dalmatian fortifications can be understood, like those in North Africa, as a means by which the Eastern Romans projected control over a province newly conquered from a Barbarian successor kingdom. The network of Dalmatian coastal fortifications also connected by sea the former Western Roman regions conquered by Justinian's armies, thus providing a crucial platform from which military operations in Italy could be launched from and supported by the Balkans in the 540s and 550s.

From the 7th century, it was the coastal centres that remained under Byzantine control in many areas, continuing to integrate the non-Anatolian possessions of the Empire via the sea lanes, underpinning what has been referred to as the Byzantine *thalassokratia* of the Early Middle Ages.

Quite what happened to Balkan forts in inland areas from the 7th century onwards remains a mystery.

In the later 6th to 7th century, the Avars and the Slavs raided extensively, causing huge damage and provoking an economic collapse in most Balkan regions. With the great wars in the East from the 7th century onwards, the Eastern Roman government lacked the resources for a Justinian-style *renovatio*. It instead relinquished control over most of the peninsula. Balkan forts and settlements more generally were traditionally believed to have been abandoned in most regions. New evidence, however, suggests some kind of early medieval afterlife at sites in areas including northern Macedonia and Albania.

The ways these forts continued to be used or maintained and how this compared with their role in Late Antiquity should be addressed by future research. The data obtained thus far clearly indicate that, in the absence of imperial or local elite investment, these fortifications fell into disrepair, being no longer maintained to the standards of the earlier period. Concurrently, many northern Balkan areas show a movement away from the uplands to undefended lowland sites. This suggests the presence of new, smaller, localized socio-economic and political networks, controlled by groups for whom building hilltop forts was not a natural way of controlling a region. It may also suggest that warfare was not taking place on the same scale as in Late Antiquity.

Monumental fortifications were only again built systematically across wide areas of southern Thrace and Macedonia when the Byzantine empire started to reintegrate these regions during their wars with the Bulgar empire in the late 8th to 9th century. As well as building fortifications, this involved co-opting local warlords and power bases, as had been the case in Late Antiquity.

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The phenomenon of Late Antique hilltop settlements in the Balkan Peninsula: an archaeological comment

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As the historical comments have shown, the questions relating to hilltop settlements in the Balkan region are complex. They touch on aspects of urban and demographic development, on military strategy and frontier defence, on Church organization, or on the structure of local power. The key point for the Balkan Peninsula is that the hilltop phenomenon took place in the Eastern Roman Empire and was not connected to the decline of Roman rule in the West or in the Alps. The hilltop settlements must therefore be explained in terms of processes within Late Roman society, even though the threat posed by Barbarian raids and internal transformations, such as settlement by new occupants, must have played a part in their emergence. In the following, I shall stress some points made in the presentations and discuss or complement aspects including: 1) the Balkan regions from a geographical and a research perspective; 2) the chronology of the hilltop settlements; 3) the emergence and function of these settlements.

1) The geographic characteristics of the Balkan Peninsula, namely the region's well-developed relief, with only a few natural routes crossing its mountain ranges, must be taken into account when considering the emergence of the hilltop settlement phenomenon. In Graeco-Roman times, towns were established in geographically favourable locations, along the coasts and rivers. The occupation of the uplands in Late Antiquity was, from the viewpoint of settlement history, a decisive stage but it was short-lived since the hilltop sites were abandoned as early as the 7th century AD. Nevertheless, we must determine what the topographic conditions were for the sites that were selected for occupation, since not all are actually located on hilltops in the mountains. There are indeed also examples known along the coast (mostly Dalmatia), in river valleys and on islands. From a research point of view, two categories can be distinguished. Selected sites, which have been very intensively investigated during the last decades (for example Jelica-Gradina, Galemo Gradišće in Konjuh, Biogranci-Lističe, Odarci or Velika) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a large number of sites without detailed data that would allow us to refine their chronology, evaluate their size, or ascertain their function. In other words, it is barely possible to assess how intensively the hilltop settlements were occupied in Late Antiquity in the Balkan Peninsula. Several sites reoccupied and reused prehistoric structures (most often their ramparts), which adds to the complexity of their dating and phases of use. Moreover, published overviews tend to respect the boundaries of present-day countries, thus reflecting the degree of local research activity but not the actual distribution of sites in Late Antiquity.

2) The use of hilltop settlements in the Balkan Peninsula falls into two periods: those of the 3rd to early 5th centuries and those of the 6th and early 7th centuries, which differ in their size, construction, and function. The hilltop settlements of the latter period are in the majority and are often seen in the context of the threat posed by Barbarian raids and mobility, and consequent defence strategies. The precise start date of these sites is difficult to establish, and their connection with Justinian's building programme described by Procopius requires closer examination. We also need to reassess the abandonment of the hilltop sites, which is generally explained by the Avar incursions and Slavic occupation. Nevertheless, since both phases correspond with hilltop occupation in other parts of Europe, we can consider it a supra-regional phenomenon.

We must also investigate, in relation to chronology, what macro-regional transformations took place. We must try to establish whether shifts in settlement activity onto upland sites led to the abandonment of lowland sites (such as villages, towns, and *villae*) or whether several forms of settlement coexisted, at least in part. A spatial and temporal comparison, as well as an examination of the relationships between hilltop and lowland settlements (bearing in mind the unequal state of research from region to region) constitutes an important area of enquiry.

3) Concerning the emergence and function of these sites, we should ask the following key questions:

- Is the occupation of hilltop sites indicative of self-defence, a reaction to a threat and/or an expression of a process of spatial and social separation, and/or a manifestation of a (new) power structure?
- Who were the people who commissioned these new foundations? What was the composition of the settlements' population and the duration of their occupation?
- On what economic resources could the hilltop settlements rely? Were the sites established to exploit nearby natural resources and raw materials? Did the hilltop sites' inhabitants otherwise have a subsistence economy?

In Appendix 3, I have tried to articulate the different concepts and interpretations offered for the individual provinces. The following categories can be distinguished: a) a military context, which is mostly explained by imperial order; b) military cum civilian sites are mostly a mixture of refugia and military posts; c) a civil context, encompassing the seats of local elites as well as towns, which are related to the imperial organization; d) an ecclesiastical context, which is closely linked to point c. General-purpose buildings, sacral buildings, churches, and baptisteries should form part of the comparative study of towns and hilltop settlements.

The question of resource procurement has so far been insufficiently researched with respect to the hilltop settlements of the Balkans. Several contributors have assumed that the emergence of hilltop settlements was due to mining but archaeological investigations and analyses of the landscape which would confirm such hypotheses are so far missing. Questions of resources and the economic basis of individual settlement areas with reference to archaeozoological, archaeobotanical, and anthropological data are also mostly under-researched. The varied social and economic role played by the hilltop

settlements, combined with specific regional traits, can provide significant insights into their land use, environment, and resources. In addition, investigations of landscape changes and living conditions through palaeoecological analyses should be undertaken. Comparing the hilltop settlements with those in the valleys or lowlands forms an important part of this enquiry, as it allows us to identify different evolutionary trajectories or change and movement in the settlement pattern. Looking at these different concepts and interpretations reveals that hilltop settlements could have fulfilled different tasks and functions. We intend to compare the various topographical conditions of the hilltop sites in the Balkans at a supra-regional level and consider the results and interpretations stemming from different research traditions. The role continuity or discontinuity played in the evolution of individual sites and their landscapes will be emphasized.

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	Military context	Civil context	Military cum civilian sites	Ecclesiastical context
Dalmatia	military outpost (coastal location), military posts, military fortresses	towns	protection of sea and land routes; refugia as well as military posts	
Moesia/Thracia	military fortresses (as part of a defence system: Limes behind the Limes), road stations, headquarters of garrisons	seats of local elites	mining/ production centres (?)	bishop sites?
Macedonia	base of military units, controlling posts	towns		
Dardania/ Preavalatiana/ Dacia	forts along roads, guard posts, small fortifications	villages as central places, towns	mining/ production centres (?), villages (militia), refugia	bishop sites?

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The participants of the workshop. – Photography: Renny Rovšnik, NMS.