



Between Ravenna and Constantinople

Rethinking Late Antique Settlement Patterns

Slavko Ciglencečki

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PREFACE

The recent research of the cities and the countryside in the area between the Late Antique capital of the western Empire in Ravenna and cosmopolitan Constantinople has revealed a settlement that has many layers and one that witnessed extensive processes of transformation. Despite the growing body of evidence, it is an area that remains poorly known to a large part of the scholarly community and hence often incorrectly interpreted due to linguistic barriers, cultural differences and occasionally tumultuous political situations.

In contrast with the well-known settlement of the Roman period, its equivalent during the time when the Roman Empire was in decline, the first Germanic kingdoms emerged in the West and the Byzantine Empire became a prominent force in the East, was not well-known until the final decades of the 20th century. This was in part the result of the scholarly attention being focused on studying the vestiges of the highly-developed Roman civilisation, but also a consequence of the substantial changes in the Late Antique settlement patterns that were not appropriately identified across the Empire.

The trend of research shifted in the 1970s and 1980s, with an increasing interest in the vanishing classical world and its gradual transformation to the Middle Ages. More and more scholars recognised the significance of the last settlement cores for understanding how life changed in different areas of the former Roman Empire. This went hand in hand with a growing interest in the profoundly altered settlement pattern with dwindling cities and other lowland settlements, on the one hand, and fortified settlements at locations selected with different criteria in mind, on the other; the latter revealed a settlement pattern not noticeable in such an extent in other parts of the Roman Empire.

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed a proliferation of research into the Late Antique fortified settlements in Slovenia, in which I actively participated. At the same time or only slightly afterwards, similar research of varying intensity was conducted in other republics of then Yugoslavia. This gave me the opportunity to learn about the sites in the former Yugoslav republics (today Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Mon-

tenegro, Kosovo and North Macedonia). I also closely followed such investigations in neighbouring Austria and Italy. The idea for a publication on the subject was thus spontaneously born in the 1990s in the face of a rapidly growing number of previously unknown Late Antique sites that brought a fundamental shift in our perception of the settlement in the eastern Alpine and Balkan areas.

I set out to first illuminate the phenomenon of fortified Late Antique settlements in the area of the former Yugoslavia, which were poorly known outside the Yugoslav borders, thereby giving the impression of a sparsely inhabited area. The first major step toward this goal was already taken in 1987, when I published an overview and interpretation of the fortified sites in the eastern Alps and part of the western Balkans. During my preparations for the publication, it transpired that this phenomenon was by no means limited to the area of the eastern Alps as had been believed until the 1970s. Observing numerous similar investigations in many areas that were exponentially increasing as time went on, I expanded the overview to include the whole Balkan Peninsula. I realised that this settlement phenomenon risked to be poorly understood unless it was integrated in the complete settlement of the time. For that reason, I included in my work not only urban but also unfortified countryside settlements that allow a comprehensive understanding of the changing settlement patterns in this turbulent period in the history of the western world.

The ongoing work on the book seemed to still be manageable in the 1990s. The later investigations and innumerable publications increased the number of known sites, but also explained some of the previously open questions. This required visits to the different and in some cases poorly accessible sites, as well as reading the vast body of publications.

I was finally able to finish the book thanks to my colleagues at the Institute of Archaeology ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, who enabled me to continue work long after retiring and provided me with all the necessary logistical support. I would especially wish to thank Zvezdana Modrijan, my closest colleague, who success-

fully undertook the demanding and time-consuming role of editor-in-chief, reviewing and editing the numerous early versions, but also carefully verifying the translations. Jana Horvat and Tina Milavec also offered many helpful comments and critical remarks. Mateja Belak was entrusted with arranging the multitude of photographs and plans, creating maps, but also with desktop publishing tasks. Andreja Dolenc Vičič and Tina Berden are to be credited for carefully reading and amending the long list of references. Dragotin Valoh scanned some of the plans, Tamara Korošec made the book cover design. Andreja Maver translated the text into English that required great attention with regard to the sometimes poorly defined terms used for particular forms of Late Antique settlement. I am also grateful to all three colleagues who succeeded each other as heads of the Institute during the years the book was being written, namely Janez Dular, Jana Horvat and Anton Velušček, who attentively followed my work with a wholehearted support.

The five decades of my active research work have involved the collaboration with numerous colleagues in Slovenia. I should first mention the preceding generation of archaeologists, now deceased, with whom my professional path began; they are Lojze Bolta, Jaro Šašel, Iva Curk, Vinko Šribar, Peter Petru, Marjan Slabe, Ljudmila Plesničar Gec and Stanko Pahič. Most of my work was conducted with the members of my own generation and those slightly younger who include Timotej Knific, Rajko Bratož, Davorin Vuga, Mira Strmčnik Gulič, Dragan Božič, Marjeta Šašel Kos, Peter Kos, Janez Dular, Darja Pirkmajer, Milan Sagadin, Jana Horvat, Ivan Šprajc, Ivan Tušek, Andrej Pleterski, Nada Osmuk, Božidar Slapšak

and Bojan Djurić. Among the currently active generation of archaeologists are also two of my closest colleagues, namely Zvezdana Modrijan and Tina Milavec, with whom we performed the last major investigations of Late Antique sites. I wish to sincerely thank all of them for the innumerable insightful conversations and the generous support in my work.

The study of Late Antiquity also brought me into contact with numerous scholars from the former Yugoslavia and neighbouring Austria, Italy, Germany and Hungary. Their list is long and I should limit myself to mentioning those with whom I collaborated most frequently; they are Franz Glaser, Ulla Steinklauber, Sabine Ladstätter, Volker Bierbrauer, Michael Mackensen, Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Maurizio Buora, Luca Villa, Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáská, Vladimir Sokol, Emilio Marin, Željko Tomičić, Miljenko Jurković, Mihajlo Milinković, Vujadin Ivanišević, Ivan Mikulčić, Viktor Lilčić and Gezim Hoxha. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation offered me a fellowship and thereby enabled an in-depth study of Late Antiquity in 1989/1990 in Bonn and Frankfurt.

The book could also not come to fruition without the unfailing support of my family, Vlasta (), Živa and Jan. My partner Nataša Segulin shared with me the arduous last two decades of the work, provided encouragement and often accompanied me in fieldwork and travels.

Slavko Ciglenečki
In Ljubljana, 14 March 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE OF THE BOOK

The frequent political, military, economic and social crises of Late Antiquity coupled with a relentless pressure on the limes caused profound changes in the settlement of the areas between the Eastern Alps and Constantinople. Gradually, the elaborate network of weakened Roman cities, countryside villas, farmsteads and *vici* witnessed the development of new types of fortified cities, settlements, refuges, and military forts. These newly-formed sites are the most characteristic expression of the altered settlement of Late Antiquity and closely reflect the challenging conditions in a time when the Graeco-Roman world went into decline and the Middle Ages began.

A great amount of research has been conducted in recent decades in the area between Ravenna and Constantinople that go a long way toward explaining these new, previously poorly understood settlement patterns. The results offer a better insight into the settlement of Late Antiquity, but are – mostly due to linguistic and partly also political barriers – difficult-to-access to a large number of archaeologists and historians. The study in front of you aims to partly rectify this.

The book, which was initially intended to only discuss the newly-founded hilltop settlements in the wider area of the Roman Empire, has its roots in the previous century. At that time, the number of sites seemed manageable, particularly in view of the fact that I actively participated in the first large-scale investigations across Slovenia and sporadically also abroad from the late 1960s onwards. The field surveys, trial trenching and systematic excavations in the following decades, however, have brought an enormous amount of new data and consequently new questions; these results have rendered the substantial changes of the Roman urban and countryside settlements even more apparent. I soon realised that an appropriate understanding of the newly-founded fortifications also needed to take into account the transformation of the cities, the different unfortified settlements and the markedly altered forts, as all these elements are chronologically and functionally interdependent and form an indivisible whole.

Having said that, the broadened scope of the topic required that I set geographic boundaries, as the work would otherwise prove too extensive. I decided to focus on the area between both capitals of the Late Antique Empire, namely Ravenna and Constantinople. This is also an area straddling both sides of the border that, from the reign of Theodosius onwards, divided the Empire into two parts.

Such a geographic scope seemed sensible in spite of a slightly more limited knowledge of the eastern half of the selected area. Time and time again, I noted how the results of studies were being presented almost exclusively within the confines of contemporary state borders, where typologies and terminologies were also being separately developed. It therefore seemed important to adopt a single point of view to present the numerous sites and to use a single set of criteria to illuminate their commonalities and differences. For a proper understanding of the selected area, it is important to take into account the characteristic settlement patterns in other parts of the Empire as well; these parts are briefly presented in separate chapter (see *Chapter 5*).

The writing process was hindered by a lack of regional overviews and a mass of sites either newly-excavated, trial-trenched or detected during field surveys. On the other hand, new techniques and approaches offer a better quality of data and facilitate site identification, and the numerous rescue investigations and considerably fewer systematic excavations rapidly advance our knowledge of settlement.

1.2 CHANGES IN SETTLEMENT PATTERNS – RECENT RESEARCH

The settlement pattern of the previous, Roman period is well known: it was made up of densely spaced cities as the basic elements of habitation and administration of the Roman state, joined in the countryside by a dense network of differently-sized habitation and economic units, i.e. countryside villas, as well as small hamlets. Complementing this settlement structure was a series of forts and

fortresses along the limes and other locations of strategic importance. In the second half of the 3rd century, such a structure gradually began changing, with the civil wars, uncertainty, economic difficulties and Barbarian threats beginning to affect the heretofore stable settlement. This is particularly true of the area under discussion, which lay at the heart of the Empire and suffered greatest pressures from incursions from the north.

The transformation of the settlement together with an array of political and social changes is the most readily perceptible feature of Late Antiquity. Cities largely lost their original significance. Their last peak in the 4th century and at some places also later with the construction of mighty church complexes still gave the illusion of prosperity, but their real role was in decline across most of the Empire. This process did not take place in all areas simultaneously, nor did it have the same intensity. The differences between the west part, which witnessed the emergence of Germanic political entities, and the east part, where the Byzantine state developed more or less continuously, were enormous.

The settlement in the area under discussion included a series of fortifications in naturally protected locations. This is a specific phenomenon unknown in such a measure elsewhere across the Empire. These settlements predominantly represent the reaction of the local population to the frequent incursions of foreign peoples; the local inhabitants gradually abandoned their dwellings along the busy roads and settled on naturally protected elevations, most frequently in areas removed from the main lines of communication. In a large part of the former Empire, fortified sites are thus the most characteristic expression of the contemporary settlement and most clearly mirror the plight of the population in the face of powerless central authorities. The form, size and often also structures in the interior of these settlements largely depended on the particular terrain, which resulted in an immense diversity that contrasts the earlier, more readily identifiable forms of habitation. This diversity causes a fair amount of difficulties when attempting to identify the basic function of a settlement, as it is frequently only a comprehensive analysis of the architectural remains and small finds that enables researchers to propose a more definite identification. In the beginning, the fortifications were primarily used as places of refuge, later largely as places of habitation, while certain spots of surveillance or strategic importance hosted a combination of civilian and military inhabitants who protected the key lines of communication, barrier walls and so forth.

We can therefore speak of tectonic shifts in settlement, which only became more apparent in the more recent stages of the Late Antique research. In earlier stages, researchers mainly focused on the urban settlements that displayed the degradation and gradual decline of the Graeco-Roman civilisation. With the advancing

knowledge of the urban transformation came a more intense investigation of the Late Antique countryside, where the achievements of antiquity were discovered to be very much alive in certain places, persisting even into the early 7th century. In architecture, this is visible in the numerous houses of a high-quality construction in the newly-established fortifications and, alongside churches, in certain buildings of a public character, that in some cases reveal modest echoes of urban design.

Literary sources tell us of people migrating from the endangered parts of the Empire to safer southern regions and to islands. However, the density of the settlements proves that a large part of the population remained in the previously inhabited areas, only moving short distances within small territorial units and primarily from the lowland to higher-lying locations.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the structural changes in the settlement pattern, it is particularly important to be aware of the relationship between the periods of a weakening urban fabric and the contemporary establishment and development of new forms of habitation in the countryside. In fact, the parts that have been better investigated show a fairly significant correlation between the periods of weakened cities and either simultaneous or slightly delayed intensification of life in markedly differently organised countryside settlements. There are even instances where we can discern the first outlines of the unfortified settlements, often in combination with nearby fortified sites.

The main aim of this book is to provide an overview of the varied and extremely numerous Late Antique habitation traces between Ravenna and Constantinople, which is an area poorly known and hence poorly understood to a large part of the international archaeological and historical public. Another aim is to highlight the phenomenon of fortified hilltop sites, which is most numerous represented and also most characteristic of this very area.

1.3 GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

In discussing individual sites, I have divided the study area into two parts, roughly equal in size, by taking into account the line that in AD 395 divided the Empire into two halves (*Fig. 1.1*). This line fatefully cut into the previously common space, with increasing differences subsequently observed in the settlement pattern, the chronology of the sites and the construction of settlements. On the other hand, the dividing line also served as an intermediary between the two halves of the Empire. To obtain a balanced impression, I attempted to deal with both halves as evenly as possible.

The overview thus deals with an important part of the Roman Empire extending across vast areas between the capital Ravenna in the west and the metropolis of

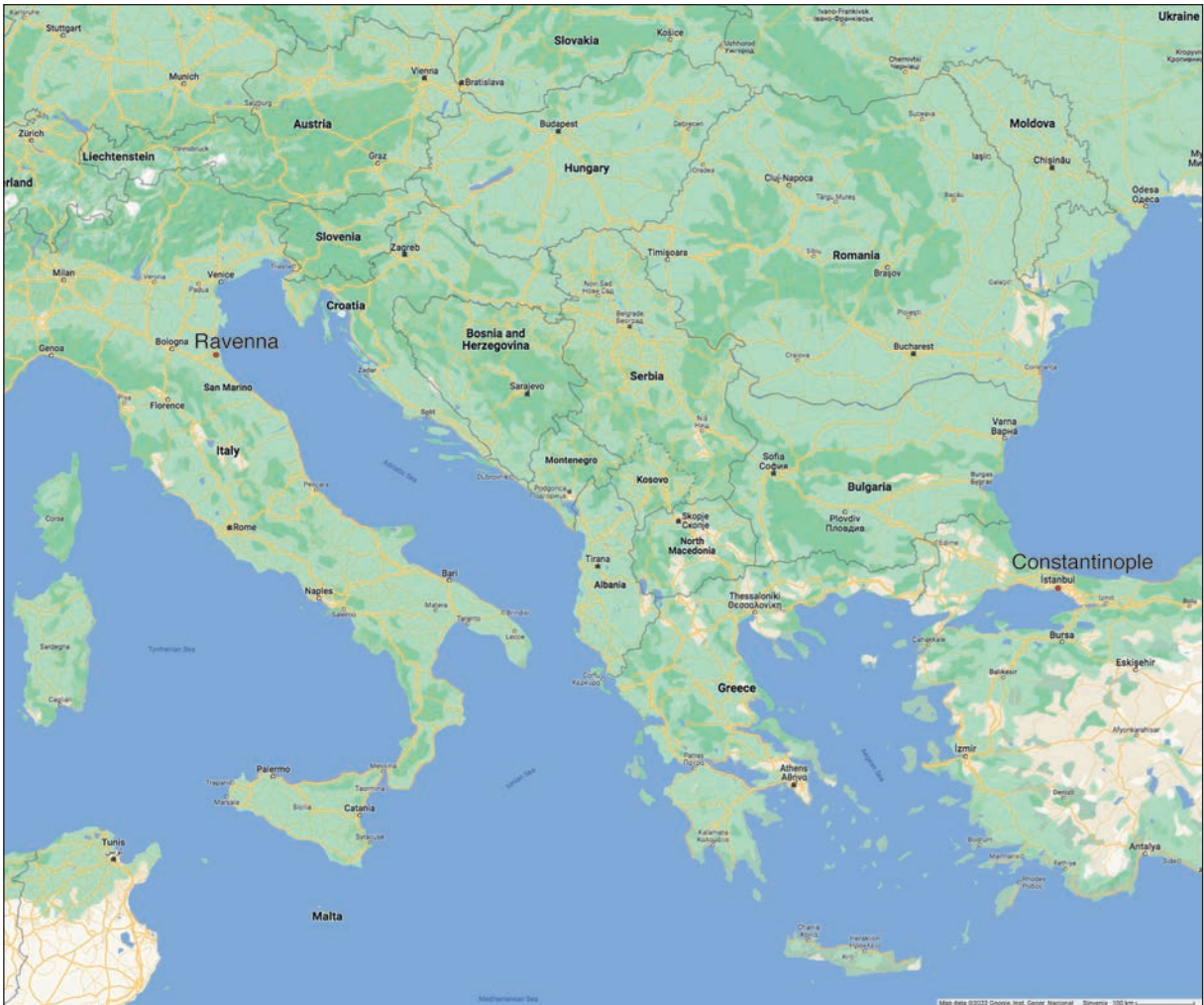


Fig. 1.1: Geographical area between Ravenna and Constantinople and the present national borders (Map data @2023 Google, GeoBasis DE/BKG (@2009), Inst. Geogr. National, Mapa GISreal).

Constantinople in the east. The Danube delimits this part in the north, the Mediterranean in the south. In the west, it includes the Eastern Alps and part of northern Italy, in the east it reaches to the Bosphorus.

With the exception of the plains of northern Italy and Hungary, it is an area that mainly covers the mountainous Balkan Peninsula. Considering Diocletian's administrative division of the Empire, it encompassed part of Italia Annonaria, the important province of Venetia et Histria, the whole prefecture of Illyricum and the Thracian part of the prefecture Oriens (Fig. 1.2). According to the present-day political division, the west part covers north-eastern Italy, large parts of Austria and Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereas the east half spans a large part of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bulgaria, part of Romania along the Black Sea, Albania, North Macedonia, Greece and the European part of Turkey.

1.4 CHRONOLOGICAL SCOPE

It is difficult to delimit the period of Late Antiquity with precise dates, which is evident from the series of different chronological definitions (cf. Demandt 1989, XV–XXI; Cameron 2012, 1–7). Considering that the book is dedicated to settlement, I opted to use the changes observable in the destruction or abandonment of certain earlier and the appearance of new settlements as the criterion. The time frame thus begins in the last third of the 3rd and ends in the first third of the 7th century, when a major part of the area under discussion witnessed the abandonment of old settlement and the onset of a clearly different settlement pattern.

This is a time between the beginning and the end of major shifts in settlement in the given area. It corresponds well with the chronological definitions of Late Antiquity as proposed on the basis of other criteria; this



Fig. 1.2: Late Roman provinces of the area under discussion (from Cedilnik 2004, binding sheet at the back /back cover).

correspondence additionally justifies the chronological delimitation. It is a time frame that I already used in 1987 when discussing the fortifications settlements in the South-Eastern Alpine area (Ciglenečki 1987a, 9) and one that can be extrapolated to the whole area discussed in this book.

Dating the beginning of the time frame to the last third of the 3rd century rests primarily on the first important changes in the settlement that occur with the destruction or abandonment of certain urban and other settlements, and the simultaneous establishment of new, mostly fortified sites on elevations. Its end comes in certain places already towards the end of the 6th and elsewhere in the early 7th century, but is so radical that the break in the continuity of the Roman way of life cannot be overlooked or ignored. It is manifested as a profound change of the settlement pattern in a large

part of the Eastern Alps and across the Balkans with the disappearance of masonry architecture.

Herve Inglebert examined several urban chronologies using a similar time frame and also offering similar reasons for the observed changes (Inglebert 2006). Andrew Poulter (2007a, 5) delimited the period for the Balkans with the dates of AD 300–600, though some argue that Late Antiquity in Athens already began after the Herulian sack of AD 267 (cf. Snively 2009, 42). In the title of his contribution, Archibald Dunn gives the period between Galienus and Justinian (Dunn 2004). The recent publications on the settlement in Bulgaria delimit the time frame from AD 284 to 610 (cf. Dintchev 2021b, 273). Among the different periodisations, we should also mention the chronology of Greece as proposed by John Bintliff, where he refers to the period to the middle of the 7th century as Late Roman and only that of 650–842 as Early Byzantine (Bintliff 2012, 382–383).

Not only to dates, differences also pertain to the names authors from different countries and different historical-archaeological traditions use to designate the time frame. For Greece, archaeologists use the terms Late Roman, proto-Byzantine and Palaeochristian to refer to the same period (Dunn 2004, 541). In the West, similar time frames are also known as the Migration period, Early Middle Ages and other terms (cf. Ciglenečki 1999, 287). In this book, I generally use the term Late Antiquity, which is most widely used and also contains a reference to the (albeit often modest) heritage of the Graeco-Roman civilisation (cf. Lavan 2003, VII–VIII). For the eastern part and for the sites in the west associated with the Byzantine state, I also used the term Early Byzantine.

1.5 SOME OVERVIEWS OF LATE ANTIQUE SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA UNDER DISCUSSION

In many modern historical-archaeological overviews, the settlement of the area between Italy and the Bosphorus in Late Antiquity is either very incomplete, in some cases distorted and often simply left out.

The overviews dealing either only with urban settlements or only with the countryside are discussed in greater detail below. In the introduction, we take a look at several major works that discussed the settlement in the former Roman Empire, i.e. cities and less well-known countryside, but that have also noted certain shortcomings in the understanding of settlement as a whole. These overviews are more or less limited to the well-known Near East (primarily the so-called Dead Cities of Syria), Turkey, northern Africa and the better-known European West. Broader regional overviews that deal with the Balkans as well as the West are rare (cf. Henning 1987; Curta 2001a; Kirilov 2006a; Milinković 2007; Ciglenečki 2014).

Cities justifiably play a major role in these overviews, as they also boast the longest tradition of research. Not so long ago, researchers attempting to understand the continuity of Roman cities only relied on the brief notes in literary sources (primarily mentioning bishops even in the 5th and 6th centuries), which they saw as supporting the hypothesis of cities existing in an almost unaltered form. A more realistic image of Late Antique cities was only revealed with the modern archaeological investigations bringing to light poorly made or even improvised buildings that had previously often been overlooked. Many novelties have been observed in the transformation of the urban character such as a different role of public buildings, reduction of city walls, appearance of cemeteries *intra muros*, modest residential and economic architecture next to rare public buildings and so forth (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001; Wickham 2005; Brogiolo 2011a).

Considerably less is known on the countryside settlement across a large part of the former Empire. Many archaeologists and historians, particularly those who dealt at least in part with the area discussed here, have acknowledged that it is only possible to understand the settlement by also exploring and comprehending the contemporary countryside. Archibald Dunn, for example, examined the settlement in northern Greece and wrote that we can only understand the settlement system of a region as a whole and the transition from *polis* to *kastron* if we understand the rural context. Furthermore, he mentions that no one has as yet proposed a functioning model of transformative factors either for the Empire as a whole or for the Balkans in particular (Dunn 1994, 71, 75). Wolfgang Liebeschuetz observed that very little is known on the dwellings of most of the urban and even more so the non-urban population. He thought it was not possible to offer a convincing description of the urban transformation, and even less to explain why it had occurred in the first place, without first establishing where the majority of the population lived (Liebeschuetz 1998, 819). The overview of the literature on settlement from 2004 even talks of a ‘relative invisibility of Late Antique settlements’ and the fact that the archaeologists in the West focused on the study of villas, whereas nothing is known of the dwellings of the lower classes (Chavarría, Lewit 2004, 4–5). Simon Ellis also admits that the Balkans remain among the most challenging regions for summarising Late Antique settlement and notes, in the introduction, that the greatest gap in the Housing in Late Antiquity proceedings lies in the absence of a synthetic overview of the Balkans and parts of the northern provinces (Ellis 2007, 5). These proceedings state that our knowledge of the dwellings is skewed as certain parts of the Balkans and the Danube Basin have been poorly researched (Uytterhoeven 2007, 80–81).

Even as late as the beginning of the 21st century, the Late Antique settlement in the Empire appeared rather simple. In the chapter on rural settlement of the prestige publication *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Brian Ward-Perkins writes of the main difference between east and west being in the existence of compact villages in the former and dispersed settlement in the latter (Ward-Perkins 2000, 327–336). Similarly, Yicak Hirschfeld wrote an overview of the residential structures in which he divided the rural settlement to farms in the west and villages in the east (Hirschfeld 2001, 268). Particularly apparent is the absence of the whole of the Balkan Peninsula with the exception of some of the most prominent Late Antique cities in the basic work by Chris Wickham (2005, 5). The western limit of the Roman settlements (villages) was, in his estimate, somewhere in Illyricum, while further west there was only more or less dispersed settlement. He takes this hypothetical division of settlement as marking a real east-west division in Illyricum! He thus presumed that Bulgaria, North Macedonia and northern Greece belonged to the eastern sphere of settlements (villages) of

the 5th and 6th centuries, with the only exceptions being the hilltop forts in northern Greece and the dispersed settlement in the Lower Danube region to the end of the 4th century. Among the fortified hilltop settlements, he only mentions rare cases in Spain and France, partly also in northern Italy, but also states that we should not overemphasise the significance of these *castra* (Wickham 2005, 465, 479)!

Having said that, a multitude of sites had already been known and also published when these overviews were written that no longer allowed for such a crudely simplified settlement. At least from the 1980s, there is a whole host of literature with partial translations or at least detailed summaries in one of the main European languages that enables a wider public to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the settlement. This literature adds a third important element in the unfortified settlement – villa dichotomy, namely fortified sites (primarily fortified settlements). These are very densely distributed across the discussed area and are gradually also being detected to the west and east. In spite of this density observed in different areas, there is a fairly common opinion in literature that the fortified sites are local phenomena. In contrast, the increasingly larger-scale and frequent field surveys and excavations have revealed they formed an important settlement pattern that is the most characteristic indicator of the transformation that Roman settlement witnessed.

In 2001, Florin Curta published the first detailed and comprehensive insight into the settlement of the eastern half of the area under discussion (Curta 2001a; id. 2001b). He took a detailed look at cities, but also numerous settlements in the countryside that included the newly identified fortified hilltop sites as an element of the settlement. Focusing primarily on the finewares as the consequence of the *annona* and with it the state supply of the garrisons led him to the conclusion that many fortified hilltop settlements were army posts. He upgraded this hypothesis in later papers and saw, in his most recent contribution, the majority of such sites only as military forts (Curta 2017). Only considering the fineware and coins without the vast amounts of other finds (mainly coarseware and a multitude of metal artefacts) when interpreting the fortified hilltop settlements does not lead to a comprehensive understanding, as most latter finds reveal an autarchic nature and consequently predominantly civilian population.

Certain categories of settlements, particularly cities and Roman villas, have been discussed in many publications and their more detailed presentation is not sensible here. For these, I only highlight the more prominent studies for individual categories. A lengthier discussion is offered on the development and the main centres of research in the group of newly founded fortifications, of which least is known.

1.6 CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The overview of the Late Antique settlement patterns first presents cities as the basic element of settlement. The cities are divided into three clearly separate groups: cities abandoned prior to the end of Late Antiquity, cities inhabited to the end of Antiquity and newly-established cities. In conclusion, the characteristics of each of the three groups are analysed, and their transformation and duration compared.

The discussion on the countryside begins with the forms that enjoyed a continuous development from the Roman period and most frequently lasted into the 4th century, very rarely longer. Here we are primarily talking of the numerous and well-known Roman villas, individual farmsteads, *vici* and other, not always clearly identifiable forms of settlements. These are followed by similar forms of undefended settlements that only appeared in Late Antiquity and existed for a brief period.

Particular attention is paid to the newly-established fortifications, which are the most significant novelty of settlement in Late Antiquity and also the most characteristic expression of the altered political and socio-economic situation in this area. Their existence is short-lived in certain areas, while they have a longer duration or repeated occupation in the more exposed parts. Substantial changes in the living conditions notwithstanding, they still exhibit the civilizational achievements of Antiquity and play a much more important role in the history of a large part of the former Roman Empire than believed until recently.

The presentation and analysis of the settlement patterns is followed by a diachronic view of the transformations both in the cities and in the countryside. The more important phases of establishment, as well as abandonment or destruction of settlements are indicated, as are the breaks that delimit the important phases of settlement. Special chapters are dedicated to the settlement structures and individual examples from the parts of the Empire beyond the area that is the focus of this book.

At the end, I briefly summarise the complex image of settlement patterns and their comparison on both sides of the dividing line set in AD 395, but also a comparison with the settlement structures beyond the discussed area. This adds a range of newly-established posts, primarily fortifications, to the previous simplified dichotomy of settlement patterns only composed of undefended settlements in the east and villas in the west.

The sites in the overview are arranged geographically, from west to east and from north to south, by also taking into account their similarities in character.

1.7 METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

Discussing the area separated in AD 395 by a sharp dividing line has an inherent problem in that the division brought a myriad of consequences and also greatly influenced the settlement (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001, 400). This influence is observable not only in Late Antiquity, but is strongly felt even in the work of modern researchers who – particularly in broader overviews – deal primarily with the east half of the area under discussion. An added difficulty is that the research is predominantly limited with modern state borders and the results only rarely juxtaposed with those from neighbouring countries or even wider regions (cf. Wickham 2005, 4).

This is why it seemed especially important to offer a balanced presentation of the west half as well, which has previously been treated rather cursorily with the exception of Italy and in part Hungary. The line dividing the Empire, running almost precisely across the middle of the area under discussion, is considered inasmuch as it makes the discussion clearer. The first to be considered are the settlements in the west half and later those in the east half. The differences between the two are highlighted in the conclusion of the chapters on cities and the countryside settlement (see *Chapters 2.6 and 3.4*).

Before presenting individual categories of sites, it is sensible to say a few words on the different methods of gathering data. They are the result of systematic research and trial trenching, as well as numerous field surveys. It should be noted that the objective of systematically investigating many of the sites in their entirety, particularly those of modest remains such as refuges or briefly occupied local fortifications, will remain unattainable for some time. The limited knowledge on the less typical forms of sites is also the consequence of the fact that investigations mainly focus on the more revealing and most exposed elements such as settlements with masonry buildings, which are also best preserved. Missing in such an image is the smaller settlements, refuges, as well as the more modest residential architecture, which in turn skews our perception of the settlement in general (cf. Ciglenečki 1994, 240–241; Cameron 2012, 150).

A fortunate circumstance is that the Late Antique remains in the Eastern Alpine area, the central Balkans and the coastal areas of the Mediterranean are frequently excellently preserved due to their remote locations and complete abandonment of some of the settlements. Many allow us to discern the degree of fortification, number of buildings and their distribution, often also their shape and size, already in relief. Examples of such settlements in Slovenia are Gradec near Prapretno, Ajdovščina above Rodik, Tonovcov grad near Kobarid, Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj. Excavations in these settlements only show minimal deviation from the ground plans drawn on the basis of relief observations. In addition, the different earthworks damaging archaeological sites

have revealed the existence of wooden buildings at some sites (e.g. Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu, Veliki vrh above Osredek pri Podsredi). For the sites not archaeologically investigated due to financial or personnel constraints, these brief observations have significantly contributed to a better understanding of countryside settlement.

An important addition in the research of countryside settlement is the intensive field surveys, particularly in Greece and Bulgaria. However, the mass of completely new results brings the problem of evaluating the vast amounts of new data, which do not necessarily enable an accurate interpretation of the different settlement traces in the absence of additional research (on the results, as well as the drawbacks and methodological problems associated with the regional surveys, see Liebeschuetz 2001, 388–390; Sanders 2004; Poulter 2007b, 41–46; Bintliff 2007; Veikou 2013, 128).

Alongside the better known and documented intensive surveys, there are also extensive surveys of varying intensity and duration conducted across large parts of the discussed area. Given the terrain that is for the most part very difficult and does not always enable results of the same quality as those in the narrow Mediterranean belt, primarily due to the vegetation cover, we need to take into consideration the fairly uneven level of investigations in different regions. Moreover, the extent of investigation is often the consequence of the zeal of individual researchers who gathered data in frequently treacherous terrain, whereas we lack large-scale systematic projects that would use the same methodology to cover areas across different modern states. A particularly prominent example of the latter is the vast fieldwork that Ivan Mikulčić and his colleagues conducted in North Macedonia. Through innumerable extensive surveys, they succeeded in revealing an extremely rich and diverse Late Antique settlement, which offers a good insight into the extent and intensity of the settlement transformation in the central Balkans, as well as the possibility of comparing the results with neighbouring areas. The extent of investigations in North Macedonia in comparison with the neighbouring areas is clearly visible on the map of Late Antique fortified settlements (*Fig. 3.307*) (Milinković 2007, 170, Fig. 6).

The poor knowledge of many of the sites in the countryside is due to their location in remote and uninhabited areas, but also to the fact that – in contrast with cities and lowland settlements – they are less exposed to modern interventions into the landscape. As a consequence, they only rarely witnessed rescue excavations, which nowadays completely predominate in more readily accessible and hence more endangered lowland areas.

In the overview, I strive to present all the important forms of settlement (cities, settlements and forts) across the area under discussion. However, there are inevitably gaps caused in some places by poor accessibility, in others by a perilous political situation, in part also the (still) hindered accessibility to local literature. I therefore present

the better investigated, documented and preserved sites more precisely. In this I greatly rely on the archaeological field surveys and visits to the sites that I have been conducting since 1975 across former Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries.

Alongside the plans of cities and other settlements, I pay particular attention to the photographs aimed at offering the reader a rough idea of the predominantly poorly known settlements and partly also of their state of preservation. The need for accompanying photographs is lesser for cities and undefended countryside settlements that mainly lie in the lowland. In some cases, photographs are only added to illustrate the text and primarily in the cases where there are substantial ruins visible on the surface. For the fortified sites, it seemed logical to use photographs to show their position within the landscape, their naturally protected location and the remains of buildings and defensive walls wherever they were sufficiently visible on the surface or the vegetation permitted it.

The use of new prospection techniques and geophysical methods, in some areas even LiDAR images, has in many ways facilitated and accelerated archaeological research. The Late Antique architecture and construction techniques are fairly well known. Numerous studies of the high-quality imported tablewares coupled with regional analyses of coarsewares already allow a more precise dating of the recovered remains. Together with the rare coin and metal finds, this enables us to identify the basic habitation phases by working with data from surface surveys.

In the recent three or four decades, the results of these types of investigation have been joined by numerous metal finds that (mostly unauthorised) metal-detectorists brought to the museums. The problem of unauthorised metal detecting is most acute at hilltop sites removed from present-day settlements, not readily accessible and hence most exposed and often at the mercy of such 'explorers'. It is a problem that archaeologists across the globe have been unable to adequately solve and one that particularly affects the area under discussion that is strewn with Late Antique settlements in the remote and largely mountainous terrain!

The discussion does not include the cemeteries that serve as indirect evidence of the existence of settlements. I only mention cemeteries where they offer additional support to defining the chronology of habitation phases as established through investigations within settlements and to defining the nature of individual sites.

1.8 TERMINOLOGICAL REMARKS

A problem unto itself is naming the different forms of settlements. This is in part due to the use of ancient terms and in part to the insufficient investigation of individual categories of sites. It is a problem pertaining

to all the major groups of sites and one mentioned in literature several times, but rarely solved in a satisfactory manner. In this book, I first acknowledge the problem in general terms in the introduction and tackle it in greater detail in the appropriate passages below.

For urban settlements, it is frequently uncertain whether they should be termed 'city' or 'town' (for more details on the problem of the urban character and the notion of cities/towns, see Wickham 2005, 591–596). Next is the unclarity regarding the naming of an urban settlement in the second half of the 5th and in many areas also in the 6th century when the classic urban character is completely absent, but a settlement is still marked as a city in literary sources. In the final phase of Antiquity, most commonly in the 6th century, there is a problem of how to name the newly-established urban settlements, with the term *civitas* also used for many fortified settlements.

Among the unfortified settlements as well, there are numerous forms that cannot be reliably interpreted given the limited degree of investigation (Roman villas, *vici*, farmsteads, roadside stations and others). There is extensive literature on the subject, but definitions vary and different authors use terms rather arbitrarily. Roman villas in particular are only rarely comprehensively known; in most cases only the main residential complex is excavated and it is unclear whether it was at all associated with a production complex. In this book, the countryside settlements where evidence indicates large units with both residential and production parts are called villas, whereas the smaller complexes are simply marked as farmsteads. Having said that, the poor or insufficient research makes it impossible to make a clear distinction between the two and the distinction is in some cases arbitrary!

The newly-established fortifications pose a particular set of naming problems. In earlier literature, the term *refuge* was used (far too) many times without defining the archaeological criteria for such an identification. Its overuse caused the permanent settlement of Late Antiquity to become blurred or unrecognizable. In addition to *refuge*, the newly-established fortified settlements were identified with a whole host of other terms, which raises another methodological issue (cf. Čurčić 2010, 10). To illustrate, the names commonly used for the variously-sized fortified settlements in the Eastern Alps are *castra* or *castelli* (Bierbrauer 1985; Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 7–8; Geuenich, Zotz 2008), but also descriptive terms (fortified hilltop settlements, military posts, refuges: Ciglenečki 1987a), those in North Macedonia are known under ancient names *oppida*, *oppidula*, *frouria*, *castela*, but also as refuges (Mikulčić 2002), those across the border in Greek Macedonia are termed fortified military sites and communal/civilian walled sites (Dunn 2004, 551, 565), those in Serbia are villages and military forts (Milinković 2008, 556–557),

those in Bulgaria are descriptively marked as fortified settlements, military fortifications, fortified refuge sites (Dintchev 2007). In spite of the varied nomenclature and interpretations, however, there are great similarities and differences in structure and function often difficult to pinpoint. The different names stem from the different archaeological traditions that have become fully accepted in different areas. All the ancient terms are appropriate where they are based on the use of these terms in literary sources. However, there are several instances in the archaeological publications – particularly in the east – of some of the ancient terms indicating different functions. For example, many authors using *castra* and *castella* presuppose a primarily military nature, which contrasts with the understanding of these terms in the west. The problem is highly complex, as not even the Late Antique authors reliably distinguished between different categories of sites (cf. Claude 1969, 201–202). In ancient Greek sources, for example, the term *kastron* marks a fortified settlement that differs from others in that it is an administrative and military centre not to be equated with smaller forts (*kasteli*, *pyrgoi*, *frouria* and so forth) (Dunn 1994, 78).

In this book, I strive to use names (as many authors before me) that are as descriptive and neutral as possible with the aim of facilitating the recognition of identical settlement patterns and highly similar settlement structures in the differently named settlements across the whole area under discussion. Wherever the research results permit, I add a specific name or a more clearly identified function to a site.

The problem is compounded by the occasionally ambiguous understanding of the term fortified hilltop site, which has a double meaning in most modern languages: on the one hand, it stands for a settlement built on an elevation and, on the other hand, it implies a location in a mountainous or high-altitude area, i.e. at greater absolute altitudes. Examples of this can be found in the German (*Höhensiedlungen* or *Höhenbefestigungen*), most Slavic (*utrjene višinske postojanke*, *visinska utvrđenja*, *visinske naselbine*), in Italian (*siti di altura*), Spanish (*yacimientos de altura*) and partly in the French language (*établissement de hauteur*). Consequently, some authors use the term primarily to denote locations on tops of naturally protected elevations, whereas others use it for settlements in the high-altitude areas. In my publication of the fortified hilltop sites in the Eastern Alps, I therefore noted in the introduction that the term *Höhenbefestigung* is used specifically for the sites that take advantage of their relative height above the surrounding area for defensive purposes, but were not always established in areas of high altitudes (Ciglencečki 1987a, 9). Much more appropriate are the terms *hilltop site* in English or *sites perchés* in French, which mark all kinds of naturally protected locations regardless of their absolute altitude. For the languages where this duality

is only implicit, it is necessary to take into account that the decisive factor is the natural protection of a site and not merely the high altitude.

1.9 OPEN PROBLEMS, SHORTCOMINGS

Several decades ago, any attempt at such a synthetic overview was greatly hindered by a lack of basic literature, reports and regional syntheses from the area poor in investigations and rich in settlement remains. This situation changed in recent times with the exponentially increasing number of investigations and publications of Late Antique remains, from Italy in the west to Bulgaria and Romania in the east. A balanced overview of the settlement in such a vast area still needs to face a highly varied state of research, for both fortified and even more so the unfortified settlements that are more endangered and also less well known due to their location in inhabited lowland areas. Only a planned recognition of their remains will give an integral settlement pattern.

In my work, I was greatly hindered by a lack of knowledge of the Hungarian, Romanian, Albanian and Greek languages. Hence, I could only consider the literature from these countries if published with translations or at least comprehensive summaries in other languages. It is the same linguistic barriers that prevented an even consideration and evaluation of sites in the earlier synthetic overviews. Regional studies accompanied by catalogues of sites in the area are rare and partially already outdated (cf. Ciglencečki 1987a; Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996; Dintchev 1999; Mikulčić 2002; Mulvin 2002; Busuladžić 2011).

This book draws attention to the problem of distinguishing between the military and civilian functions of many of the newly-established fortified sites on more than one occasion. From the Tetrarchy onwards, this is an extremely challenging undertaking, as cities, but also smaller fortifications may have combined both functions (see Claude 1969, 219–222; Ćurčić 2010, 137–138; Sarantis 2016, 190–191). It is only with great difficulty and very rarely that we can identify solely military posts in Late Antiquity, particularly in the 5th and 6th centuries. Least is known of the military presence in the newly-established fortifications that had different functions in different phases of Late Antiquity (cf. Ciglencečki 1987a, 110). Even the forts on the limes show a blurring between purely military posts and civilian settlements that occurred in the 5th and 6th centuries (cf. Popović, V. 1984, 280; Špehar 2010, 154, 173). The identification of military posts is made more difficult by the fact that these and the fortified civilian settlements are both constructed in naturally protected locations and hence no longer display the regular layouts characteristic of the earlier Roman period.

For the newly-established fortifications, there is also the problem of identifying those exhibiting the vestigial urban features and a more prominent status within smaller regions; a poor state of research for most of these sites does not allow for reliable conclusions and size is merely one of the criteria for distinguishing such 'cities'. Even in the most systematic and best documented overview of the Late Antique fortifications in North Macedonia, it is sometimes difficult to discern whether individual sites are cities or merely large settlements. Recent research has confirmed the surface observations and upgrade them with many other elements of architecture that were not recognised during field surveys and measurements (cf. the plan of the fortified settlement at Vinica, published in Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 147, and the satellite image¹ of the same site). Similarly difficult is the recognition of the newly-established central settlements in Bulgaria and Serbia, where future investigation may reveal an urban status.

The discoveries of ever new fortifications confirm the altered Late Antique settlement pattern across a large part of the area under discussion and indicate that we may expect many new additions in this very segment of settlement. Here, we only need to think of the newly-found hilltop fortifications such as Tonovcov grad near Kobarid (1994), Lobar (1999), Veliki Sikavac (2011), Gornji Bakovci (2013) or Harilaq (2017). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a part where reliable Late Antique settlements were among the first to be presented, research ground to a halt due to political issues and the war following the breakup of Yugoslavia, but it is also the very area where numerous new findings can be expected. *The archaeological lexicon of Bosnia*, published before the war, indicates a multitude of largely unexplored sites (Čović 1988). Very little is known on the whole territory

of Montenegro, while investigations in Kosovo have intensified in recent times.

With the many known countryside sites comes the problem of presenting them on maps intended to reliably show the density of settlement. The problem lies in the lack of information on the chronology for many of the sites, as some were inhabited in all phases of Late Antiquity and others only in some of them. Furthermore, there are numerous cases where sites are only shown on maps under a general designation of Late Antiquity and therefore misleading. The situation is slightly better in the eastern part, where several maps already exist, featuring more precisely identified sites as Early Byzantine fortified posts from the 6th century (Mikulčić 2002, App. 2; Milinković 2008, Fig. 1; Dintchev 2007, Fig. 1). It will only be possible to present reliable distribution maps of individual types of countryside sites when at least the basic phases of their existence will be clearly identified.

Transcribing geographical and personal names and even citing literature for the east part is a problem not always solvable to a satisfactory manner (cf. Čurčić 2010, 12)! I transcribed the personal names and place names in the text, but the quotation in the literature remains in the original spelling.

All the above-stated difficulties and reservations notwithstanding, I attempt to offer a synthesis that will be upgraded and corrected by more detailed regional studies to come that would allow for new and more comprehensive syntheses to be written. The text below presents the settlement patterns in the outlined part of the Roman Empire in which cities are discussed alongside the newly-established countryside settlements, with special attention paid to the latter that have been less well known in the past, but are crucial for a proper understanding of the settlement in the final period of Antiquity.

¹Map source: Google earth V 7.3.2.5776 (24th April 2023), North Macedonia 41° 52' 33" N, 22° 20' 14" E, camera 971 m, altitude 446 m, Maxar Technologies CNES / Airbus Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO.

2. CITIES

2.1 ALTERED APPEARANCE OF LATE ANTIQUE CITIES

The Roman cities in the area under discussion underwent different fates in Late Antiquity. There is a growing interest in this topic, more precisely in the transformation of the Late Antique urban settlement, which is mirrored in the numerous studies publishing the results of the systematic and rescue investigations in these cities. Many syntheses have already been written on the subject (cf. Claude 1969; Liebeschuetz 2001; Curta 2001b; Wickham 2005; Saradi 2006 and others), which reveal a predominantly historical viewpoint that takes into account archaeological evidence. There are also many proceedings, which tackle a variety of aspects pertaining to Late Antique cities, though individual studies in them are largely limited to outstanding case studies (e.g. Rich 1992; Brands, Severin 2003; Ghilardi et al. 2006; Krause, Witschel 2006; Burkhardt, Stichel 2010; Christie, Augenti 2012). Many of them lack the examples of cities that are less known, but numerous and significantly diverse from areas that played a key role in Late Antiquity. The eastern Alps, Pannonia and the Balkan Peninsula, for example, are only represented to a limited extent with the exception of few prominent and better investigated centres such as Athens, Corinth, Thessaloniki and Philippi in Greece, Stobi and Heracleia in North Macedonia, Salona in Croatia, Butrint and Byllis in Albania, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Novae and Iatrus in Bulgaria, declining Sirmium and an exemplary newly-founded city at Caričin grad (presumably Iustiniana Prima) in Serbia. Overviews with such lacunae thus frequently paint a misleading picture that takes us to generalised conclusions drawn from the better-known centres and often heavily reliant on literary evidence.

The data from literary sources are modest and unrevealing for most cities in the area under discussion, mainly limited to references to the large or prominent cities, or lists of the late urban agglomerations (cf. Procopius and Hierocles). More reliable are the regional syntheses based largely on archaeological evidence. Of the first comprehensive regional syntheses, we should

mention the monograph on the Late Antique cities in Bulgaria by Velizar Velkov (1967; reprint 1977). Mate Suić published a concise historical and archaeological overview of the cities on the eastern Adriatic coast and their transformation in Late Antiquity (Suić 1976a; reprint 2003). These early monographic publications were followed in the 1980s by numerous articles discussing Greece (Dagron 1984; Spieser 1984; Bavant 1984; Sodini 1984), Serbia and to a certain degree also the rest of the Eastern Empire (Popović, V. 1982), North Macedonia (Wiseman 1984; Mikulčić 1986) and Slovenia (Petru 1982; Ciglencečki 1987a). Later came a multitude of new papers, including those specifically addressing the alterations to the Roman city in Late Antiquity (e.g. Poulter 1992; Dintchev 1997; id. 1999; id. 2012; Mikulčić 1999; Ladstätter 2002; Kirilov 2006a; Snively 2009; Milinković 2015; Ivanišević 2016). Much is known of the fate of the cities in northern Italy, where the systematic research of Late Antiquity in recent decades has yielded a wealth of valuable data, particularly concerning the transformation of housing (overview in Brogiolo 2011a). Also worth mentioning is the Bulgarian systematic presentation of the Roman cities and their changes in Late Antiquity (Ivanov, R. 2012). For the areas forming part of the provinces of Noricum and Pannonia, we should mention the fundamental work on the local autonomous Roman towns, though Late Antiquity is only cursorily represented (Šašel Kos, Scherrer (eds.) 2002; iid. 2003; iid. 2004).

The literature on Late Antique cities uses very different names for the urban agglomerations that show a heavily altered structure of the former Roman cities. We come across terms and phrases such as ‘urban settlements’ (Suić 1976a, 239; Snively 2008), ‘cities–kastrons’ (Suić 1976a, 241), ‘post-Roman city’ (Christie 2000, 293), ‘semi-urban settlement’ (Snively 2008), ‘new cities’ (Rizos 2017b), ‘changing city’ (Cameron 2012, 152), ‘quasi-urban centres’ (Dintchev 2007, 482) and others. In my book on the Late Antique hilltop sites in the eastern Alps, I used the term ‘miniature city’ for the densely inhabited large fortified settlements (Ciglencečki 1987a, 114). Slobodan Čurčić introduced the category of

'miniature cities' for examples such as Split and Romuliana in his overview of the Late Antique architecture in the Balkans (Ćurčić 2010, 23). This myriad of names mirrors the difficulty in appropriately designating cities that differ from the classic Roman city in their basic features and do not always allow for a reliable distinction between a ruralised city and a large countryside settlement (generally on the problem of naming cities, see Wickham 2005, 592–594).

Also problematic are the different attempts at a more detailed differentiation of cities according to the terms employed in ancient texts. Ancient authors used different terms in a very liberal way, making the archaeological identification of individual categories exceedingly difficult. Using Procopius, Gilbert Dagron (1984, 8) indicated different categories of cities and villages in the Early Byzantine Illyricum. Even before him, Ivan Mikulčić attempted to correlate the names from ancient texts with the agglomerations established in North Macedonia (Mikulčić 1982a, 58–64; id. 2002, 51–52). Having said that, it is very challenging or even impossible to identify such names in the archaeological remains of the different and differently investigated sites, as has been noted on several occasions (e.g. Claude 1969, 201–202; Milinković 2007, 180–187; Ćurčić 2010, 182). Particularly in the continental hinterland, it is frequently difficult to distinguish between cities, forts and large settlements as the boundaries between them are unclear (Milinković 2007, 187). Most authors therefore tend to avoid ancient terms and rather strive to use neutral descriptions or terms to refer to cities. Many use the term *polihinia* for small cities, though without specifying what exactly a 'small city' is.

Researchers often very tentatively describe individual presumably newly-founded cities that come with insufficient evidence for a reliable identification. An example is Romuliana (Gamzigrad), a palace of the Emperor Galerius that transformed into a large fortified settlement or city after his death. It is described as a 'large village' (Popović, V. 1982, 556), 'urban settlement inside a former palace' (Wolff 1991, 307), 'miniature city' and 'episcopal centre' (Ćurčić 2010, 24, 139), 'independent settlement anticipating the concept of a self-sufficient medieval city' (Petković 2011, 126), as well as 'ruralised artisanal and ecclesiastical centre' (Milinković 2015, 250). This example clearly illustrates the difficulties in defining the status of a presumed Late Antique city caused by a lack of reliable criteria.

2.2 HOW TO IDENTIFY A LATE ANTIQUE CITY?

The definition of a city in Late Antiquity and the criteria for its identification are tackled in the publications mentioned above, as well as in many others that discuss what remained of the old cities and what the newly-established cities looked like. The limited investigation or outdated data available on this topic frequently prevent us from reliably assessing whether the remains of former cities or the large new settlements can be identified as urban settlements. The great diversity of Late Antique settlements rather dictates a careful examination of the distinctive features. Below, we summarise the basic observations on a city in Late Antiquity and outline the criteria that enable at least a rough identification with the emphasis on the characteristics particular to the area under discussion.

Dietrich Claude (1969, 195–229) noted the main features and difficulties in identifying Late Antique cities early on. His work was dedicated to the Early Byzantine cities in the 6th century, though the changes he outlined in a large measure also pertain to the earlier cities of the 5th and partly even the 4th century, and are not limited to the Byzantine area. As many before him, Claude stressed the absence of curiae, with their role replaced by a new order with the bishop at the head. Studying the descriptions of cities in the ancient texts, he observed that a city was primarily marked by physical characteristics (size, city walls, number of inhabitants, buildings), which caused that even large *kastra* or villages could be seen as cities; numerous *casteli* became *poleis*. In addition, a large number of fortified sites hosted a bishop, which equated them with cities in ecclesiastical terms. He also emphasised the significant discrepancy between the status of a city as noted in the ancient texts (mainly Procopius, Hierocles and the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna) and the archaeological evidence. A city was no longer defined by its legal status, but rather the buildings and defensive architecture. He noted fortifications as the element best defining a city, which is particularly apparent in the descriptions of cities as found in the ancient texts. All this contributed to an ambiguous notion of a city, which led him to posit that already by the first half of the 6th century there was an absence of criteria to clearly distinguish between *poleis* and *kastra*. With their solid fortification walls, cities also became military centres.

After Claude, several other authors tackled the subject in a systematic manner and using prominent case studies (primarily Liebeschuetz 2001; Wickham 2005; Saradi 2006; Brogiolo 2011a). They also considered the growing amount of archaeological evidence, which represents the most important source of information for the period.

An author who contributed important observations on the transformation of cities on the eastern coast of the

Adriatic is Mate Suić (1976a, 227–251, second (updated) edition 2003, 341–375). In urban areas, he paid great attention to the city walls, their particular features and the novelties of construction (proteichisma). For several cities, he presumed an interior line of defence (acropolis). He outlined the introduction of the elements of rural economy and with it rural architecture into the urban environment, i.e. ruralisation of cities. In the settlement pattern, he observed that several coastal cities became both *civitas* and *castrum* (phenomenon he called *kastrizam* in Croatian). He noted that, as a result of barbarian raids, many settlements were affirmed as new urban formations, reaching their peak of prosperity after the Gothic Wars. He also emphasised that cities in this period became refuges for the local population. For many new urban formations, he observed a development within the earlier military forts, the natural and artificial defences in which enabled a rapid transformation into small cities (e.g. Split, Gamzigrad, Mogorjelo). He indicated numerous new settlements of an urban character along the Adriatic coast, but they are still poorly known due to continuous occupation and insufficient investigation.

In his first major overview of the newly-formed hilltop forts around the city of Scupi, Ivan Mikulčić (1982a, 60–63) studied the archaeological evidence to reveal that the large *casteli* towards the end of Antiquity became small cities – Late Antique *oppida* (*casteli*-cities). They were characterised by a division between the acropolis and the lower city, as well as the presence of unfortified suburbs. They were presumably the seats of civil and ecclesiastical administration, but also held artisanal and commercial facilities. He classified Čučer, Taor and Vodno in this category. When later dealing with the whole territory of North Macedonia, he expanded these findings on several other sites and also attempted to identify newly-founded cities using passages in Procopius and Hierocles (Mikulčić 1986, 269–271; id. 2002, 50–58). He termed these newly-formed Byzantine cities *oppida* and *oppidula*. Analysing the architecture and small finds led him to observe a lack of a clear dividing line between military and civilian sites.

In contrast with large cities, which are clearly separate from their agrarian hinterland, studies in recent decades often mention ‘central settlements’ as newly-formed cities where a church in their interior serves as the strongest indication of a central role (cf. Wolff 1991, 312; Milinković 2007, 180; Ciglencčki 2011a).

Using the examples of cities in the dioceses of Thrace and Illyricum, Ventsislav Dintchev (1999) attempted to roughly determine the size that separates a city from a large settlement; in his opinion, the size of 3–7 ha indicates a small city.

In her model of new cities, Helen Saradi noted that these first and foremost ecclesiastical and military centres were without the basic features of Graeco-Roman urbanism, i.e. devoid of the agora, colonnaded avenues,

entertainment and other public buildings. The state purportedly encouraged their construction even in areas of a less obvious danger of incursions (Saradi 2006, 469).

Researching Late Antique cities in Serbia led Mihailo Milinković to present in greater detail the examples of disintegration and ruralisation, while he used the large settlement at Jelica as an example to discuss the formation of new cities (Milinković 2007, 179; id. 2010; id. 2015, 143–190). He emphasised the mass influx of countryside population into the cities in the second half of the 6th century, where they sought shelter behind city walls. He reiterated the caution associated with defining the settlements of Late Antiquity based on the terms used by ancient authors.

The text below takes a concise look at as many characteristic, but diverse and sufficiently known cities as possible that are distributed across the whole area under discussion with the aim of offering a balanced picture of the urban transformation based primarily on archaeological evidence. Even a very small city with its specific character adds to our knowledge on the complex and often poorly understood period that is Late Antiquity. The boundary separating a city from a large settlement or fort was heavily blurred even in the time of their formation.

The main criteria adopted here for identifying the urban features of a settlement are the following: size, defensive and church architecture, elite housing and mentions in ancient texts. These criteria can only rarely be clearly defined, hence it is often difficult to distinguish between urban and non-urban settlements. This is also the reason why some of the poorly-known potential ‘cities’ are discussed in the chapter on the newly-founded fortified countryside settlements (see *Chapter 3.3*).

Among the above-defined criteria, one of the most prominent and readily observable for the group of newly-formed cities is their size. Examining the lists that Byzantine geographer Hierocles compiled, researchers in Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia established that settlements covering a surface in excess of 3–4 ha are defined as cities in his work *Synekdemos* (Baçe 1976, 70; Dintchev 1999). In addition to this undoubtedly significant criterion, I considered three others deemed most important by both ancient and modern-day authors, namely the construction and maintenance of city walls, the presence of Early Christian architecture or ecclesiastical centres, as well as the presence of reliably dated and numerous late housing. For the last element, I also took into account its diversity in both layout and size that in some cases clearly points to social differentiation. This is confirmed (bearing in mind the possible ethnic changes) by the differences in the construction techniques ranging from masonry walls bound by high-quality mortar to clay-bonded drywalls, wattle-and-daub, wooden constructions, as well as sunken or semi-sunken buildings. Wherever the scale of investigations permits, it is also

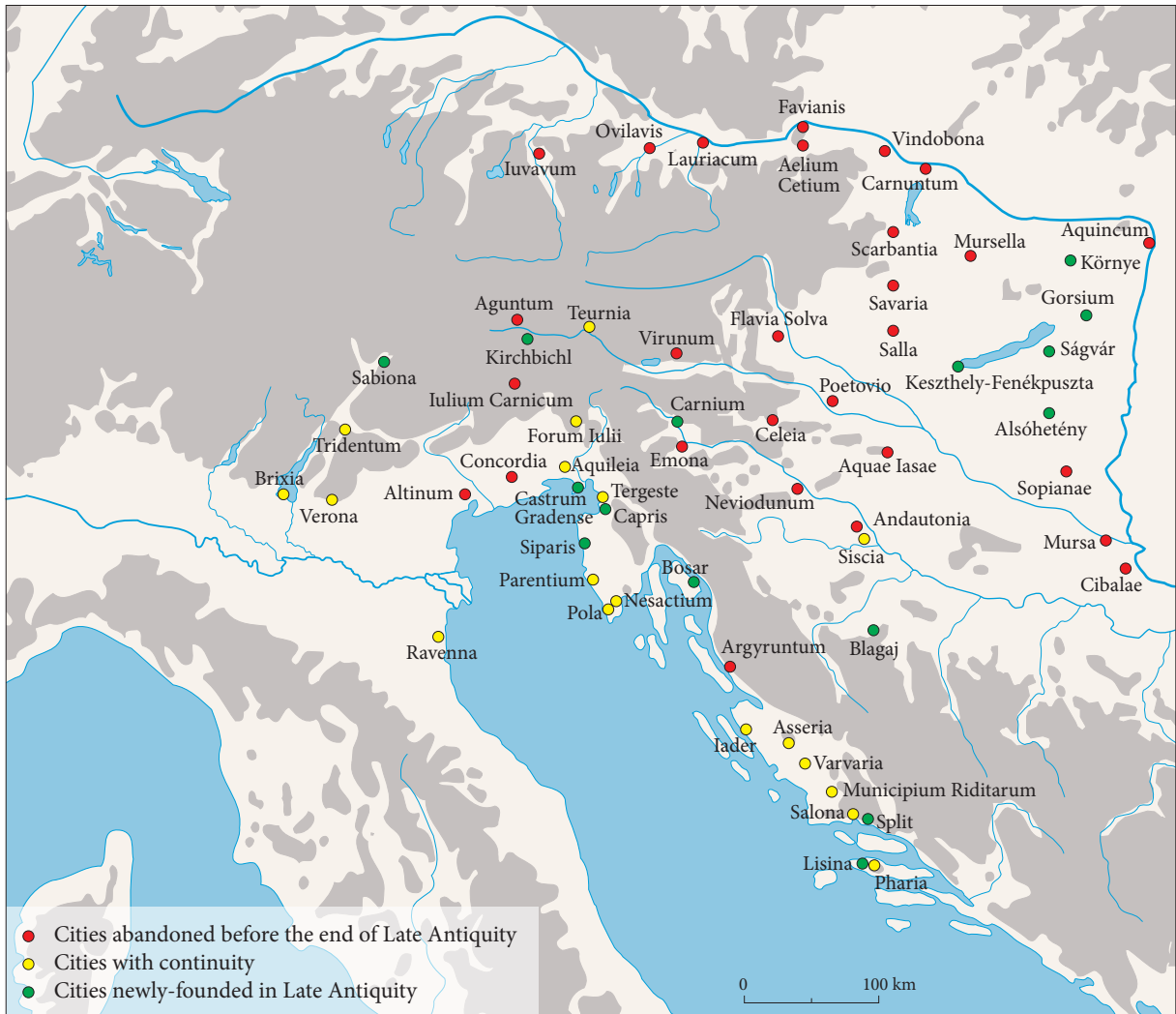


Fig. 2.1: Cities in the western part, discussed in the book.

possible to consider the presence of different workshops, which become an important element of the late, largely self-sufficient cities. The recovered artefacts enable ever new observations on the short- and long-distance trade, local production, military presence, possibility of the city dwellers to find employment in the immediate vicinity and so forth. One of the more important criteria for identifying a newly-formed city is their position within individual territorial units that included other, smaller and partly dependent settlements. The observations are juxtaposed with the passages in ancient texts where the latter enable an identification of newly-formed cities. The sites, for which ancient texts merely mention the presence of a bishop are also taken into account.

Defensive walls and church architecture as important components of Late Antique cities occasionally distort the understanding of cities and do not always enable a reliable representation of a city as a whole. Many defensive walls were already constructed in earlier

periods, while their renovations and adaptations are not always precisely dated. Numerous cities witnessed a size reduction in Late Antiquity, though we know very little of the habitation *extra muros*. In most investigations of urban structures, particular attention is paid to church buildings that are chronologically diagnostic through the characteristic architectural elements, decorations, donor inscriptions, burials and small finds. However, they only illuminate one, the most apparent and hence most frequently researched facet of urban development. Without understanding the complete city interior, which frequently hosts architecture of non-durable materials, church buildings alone can offer a skewed picture. In a considerable share of the cities under discussion, churches are also a good indicator of their duration; in many cases it is their destruction and abandonment that indicate a decline of a city!

In the desire to better understand the dynamics and extent of the changes that affected cities in Late Antiquity



Fig. 2.2: Cities in the eastern part, discussed in the book.

uity, we should consider the rare maintained houses of the elite, but also the frequently overlooked remains of modest dwellings. With the focus placed predominantly on the better preserved and richer church architecture of the central Balkans, the significance of private housing

has been rarely appropriately recognised. Two exceptions are therefore all the more important, namely two articles written by Vladislav Popović on Sirmium (1982) and Ivan Mikulčić on Stobi (1982b). They brought the first reliable results of systematic excavations that

highlighted the radical transformation of the Late Antique housing in this part of the Balkans. These great changes and subdivisions were also discussed in the first overview of Roman housing (Ellis 2000, 110–212). The increasingly numerous modern excavations bring ever new information on the subject, particularly in the cities with continuity (e.g. Brescia, Verona, Scupi, Serdica, Stobi and others). In this book, I strove to include as much as possible the evidence recently acquired on the newly-constructed buildings, their encroachment on public space and earlier buildings, all of which indicates substantive changes in the character and structure of cities. Having said that, I attempted to also consider the existence and transformation of the road network, as well as the appearance of burials *intra muros*.

The problem that is better perceptible in most cities of the first two groups than in the countryside concerns the continuity of habitation in a city versus its mere reoccupation. The spaces completely built-up today in many cases prevent us from reliably identifying the character, extent and chronology of the Late Antique cities and blur the distinction between complete abandonment and limited habitation that is combined with a simultaneous use of adjacent refuges. For such cities, this problem is particularly discussed. It is also a problem that is more likely to be researched for the group of newly-formed cities, which were mostly located atop well-defended elevations later not resettled. In contrast, the newly-founded cities share a difficulty regarding the identification of their urban character as they witnessed fewer investigations and are also less frequently mentioned in ancient texts; this issue is highlighted both for the group of newly-formed cities and lower down for the fortified settlements that include many potential urban centres.

The cities discussed in this book are divided into three groups (Figs. 2.1, 2.2):

- Cities abandoned before the end of Late Antiquity;
- Cities with continuity;
- Newly-formed cities.

Most cities can be ascribed fairly reliably to one of the three groups, others can only be classified with reservations, which are noted for each case. The first two groups comprise 'classic' Roman cities, of which those of the first group were largely abandoned in Antiquity and only exhibit minor changes in the urban fabric in their final phase, whereas those of the second group witnessed a radical transformation that brings into question their urban character. The third, most diverse group comprises newly-formed centres that in many cases take over some of the functions of the earlier cities, but have a markedly different appearance; they survived in their full extent to the end of the 6th and in places persisted into the first half of the 7th century.

2.3 CITIES ABANDONED BEFORE THE END OF LATE ANTIQUITY

This group comprises cities that saw the last peak of construction in the 4th century, followed by gradual abandonment and end that for most already came in the first half of the 5th century. Only few examples persisted longer and only in a highly reduced and impoverished form – certainly no longer as urban entities. The question here is how to classify the cities of which the inhabitants and church leaders in particular moved to a nearby elevation or even a more distant fortified location. Bearing in mind the occasionally arbitrary decision, the cities that lost their inhabitants to more remote locations are treated in this chapter as abandoned (e.g. Aguntum, Demetrias), while their new centres are discussed separately within the group of newly-founded cities (e.g. Lavant). The cities that only witnessed shifts towards peripheral areas are treated as cities with continuity (e.g. Tridentum, Teurnia, Municipium Riditarum).

2.3.1 WESTERN PART

ITALY

The province Venetia et Histria, in the northeast corner of Italy, was the best protected part of the area under discussion and, consequently, witnessed the decline of some of its cities last. But even here, several examples shared the same fate (cf. Brogiolo 2010, 76). The study of these Late Antique remains is hindered by the later occupation and their fate can often only be traced through literary sources, very rarely archaeological observations. The latter are slightly more substantial for Altinum and Concordia (Cantino Wataghin 1996, 254–255; Brogiolo 2011a; Possenti 2008, 418).

Concordia, a post with important arms production (*fabrica sagittaria*) even in the 4th and the early 5th century, does not show significant habitation traces from the later 5th and the 6th century with the exception of the basilica that persisted, was renovated on several occasions and later became cemeterial in nature (Villa 2002, 365–427; Croce Da Villa 2003; Marano 2011, 182).

Located at the edge of Italy, at the foot of the Alps, **Iulium Carnicum (Zuglio)** (Fig. 2.3) underwent an interesting transformation. The city survived to the mid-5th, in a reduced extent even persisted into the 6th century (Corazza et al. 2001, 245–247; Villa 2002, 342–365). In use at the same time was the hilltop site on San Pietro di Carnia, an elevation high above the city that revealed an inscription mentioning Bishop Ienuarius – this find indicates that the episcopal see may have moved to this protected location (Mirabella Roberti 1976, 95; Buora 1992, 107; Ciglenečki 2003a, 265). The



Fig. 2.3: Iulium Carnicum. Basilica in the foreground, San Pietro di Carnia behind it (1978).

unexplored terraces to the south below the summit allow the possibility that a large settlement unit existed there.

AUSTRIA

Much more is known on the abandonment of the Roman cities in present-day Austria, Hungary and Slovenia, to the north and east of the defensive belt marked in the literary sources as *Tractus Italiae circa Alpes* and particularly of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier walls (for an overview of the interpretation of both terms, see Ciglenc̆ki 2016). Most cities here shared a fate already outlined above, with the last peak towards the end of the 4th century followed by a rapid decline. Only some show faint signs of life in the first half of the 5th century, with some cores of habitation. After the mid-5th century, these traces become an exception rather than the rule. There are modest dwellings in the ruins of some cities, but it is no longer possible to talk of urban continuity complete with an administrative apparatus and episcopal see. The highly reduced number of inhabitants could no longer defend the extensive city walls wherever these existed (overview in Ciglenc̆ki 1987b, 267–271; Poulter 1992; Ladstätter 2002, 312–320). The recent archaeological investigations are thus fundamentally altering our knowledge of the urban continuity in the 6th century that was previously primarily based on literary evidence (mentions of bishops attending synods) and disregarded the archaeological evidence (cf. Tóth 1974; Wolff 1991, 287–311; Liebeschuetz 2001, 76–77); it should be noted that earlier authors often used stray finds (of costume,

coins) as archaeological evidence of urban continuity (cf. Kolšek 1984, 344; Šašel Kos 1994, 102).

In the provinces Noricum Ripense and Noricum Mediterraneum, in modern-day Austria, cities did not survive the final period of Antiquity with the exception of Teurnia. The information that Eugippius provides on the life of Saint Severinus, from the second half of the 5th century, is therefore all the more valuable and indicates the existence of cities along the limes in a more modest form all the way to the organised departure of the Romans to Italy in 488 (Ubl 1982; Bratož 1982; Ladstätter 2002, 340–342; Ubl 2011, 442–448). The longer existence of cities in the exposed Danubian province Noricum Ripense may be the consequence of the diplomatic efforts of the charismatic Severinus, who succeeded in creating a tolerable cohabitation with the peoples in the immediate vicinity (Wolff 1991, 313). We should note that the archaeological investigations do not entirely confirm the literary evidence on the late existence of cities; the final part of Late Antiquity is barely identifiable in their archaeological record (overview in Ubl 1982, 74–85; id. 2011; Christie 2000, 282–284; Ladstätter 2002, 313–317; Stuppner 2011, 130–141).

In **Iuvavum (Salzburg)**, most buildings were abandoned by the third quarter of the 4th century at the latest (Kovacsovic̆s 2002); only in the centre were there presumably two buildings constructed towards the end of this century. The remains of a small fort from the late 4th century were found on Hohensalzburg, a hill above the Roman city, that presumably formed part of a large fortified civilian settlement. The church that Eugippius mentions has not been recovered as yet, finds from



Fig. 2.4: Favianis. Well-preserved Late Antique eastern city walls (2018).

the 5th century are absent. The archaeological data are rather scarce, mostly due to the later occupation of the fortified area. What is certain is that the old city below the hill was abandoned (Ubl 1982, 84; Ladstätter 2002, 313–314; Winckler 2012, 248).

The colony **Ovilavis (Wels)** became the capital of Noricum Ripense in the 4th century (Ladstätter 2002, 314; Scherrer 2011, 112). In the late 2nd or at the beginning of the 3rd century, it was enclosed with 1.4 m thick city walls additionally fortified with protruding towers and as many as four ditches. A decrease in the archaeological finds has already been observed in the 4th century, which suggests a significant reduction in the population number. The city soon lost its prominent place and is no longer mentioned by Eugippius. There are only scarce Early Christian finds, but no church. Habitation traces from the 6th century are absent.

The administrative and military centre of **Lauriacum (Lorch)** witnessed great changes after the reforms of Diocletian (Ubl 2002; Igl 2011). The legion previously stationed in the camp was divided into smaller units and only a small garrison remained in the city. People gradually left the civilian settlement, which witnessed a devastating fire in the 3rd century, and moved to a well-defended legionary fortress (Scherrer 2011, 108). A church was constructed in the abandoned *valetudinarium*. Modest civilian buildings only show partial habitation. Two wooden edifices are mentioned (one with heating canals) that were built into the former army barracks. Eugippius mentions Lauriacum as *oppidum*, *urbs* or *civitas*, showing that we may see it as a modest urban (?) settlement at least until 488 and one

that already hosted German *foederati*. There are some archaeological finds that postdate the year 488, but these can no longer be seen as signs of an urban settlement (Ladstätter 2002, 314–316; Ubl 1982, 78–79).

The forts marked as *civitates* in Eugippius are a borderline category of cities that can also be found in other late literary sources (Bratož 1982, 115–118; Christie 2000, 283; Ubl 2011, 443–444). Of these *civitates*, the best known is **Favianis (Mautern)** (Figs. 2.4, 2.5), which is central in the activities of Severinus. Eugippius mentions lively trading markets in the city, the existence of an upper class of inhabitants (widow Procula, daughter of noble descent who hid supplies of grain in times of famine), granary and monastery with a church (Ubl 1982, 77; Bratož 1982, 119). Archaeological remains are well researched and also comprehensively published (see Groh, Sedlmayer 2002; Scherrer 2011, 109; Stuppner 2011, 131–133). The Late Antique fort was established with different modifications in the place of an earlier fort in Period 5 (roughly last third of the 3rd century). The small finds reflect a civilian component in addition to the military one. In Period 6 (370/380–450), there were considerable changes in the fort interior. The earlier wooden architecture was replaced almost entirely by buildings of a different concept, made of unfired brick. The fort was also extended towards the Danube and the extension used as a refuge and place for livestock or additional troops. The small finds exhibit Roman, but also Germanic elements and hence a mixing of the population, as well as a strong civilian presence. Period 7, which is the time of Severinus' activities in the city, shows a



Fig. 2.5: Favianis. Well-preserved tower on the eastern side (2018).

reduced number of inhabitants and later abandonment, which corresponds with Severinus' account.

Vindobona (Vienna), a legionary fortress in the Austrian part of the province Pannonia Prima, changed its character in the second half of the 4th century to that more like a city (Stuppner 2011, 137–139; Mosser 2011, 484–498). Instead of army barracks, the heavily fortified interior held densely spaced buildings of dried clay, which were both living quarters and workshops. The small finds reveal soldiers and civilian population including women and children, as well as an increasing presence of foreign ethnic groups. Final renovations in the interior date towards the end of the 4th century and the small finds shows that groups of inhabitants lived here at least to the first third of the 5th century. An indirect confirmation of this comes from the cemeteries, which were created in the area of the former *cannabae* and span from the second half of the 3rd to the early 5th century.

Also in the Austrian part of Pannonia Prima is the civilian city of **Carnuntum** (Ladstätter 2002, 317; Kandler 2004; Gugl 2011; Stuppner 2011, 139–141). In the first half of the 4th century, it still functioned as a city and received defensive walls presumably at this very time. It suffered an earthquake in the mid-4th century and Ammianus Marcellinus described it as abandoned already in 374. The inhabitants moved within the walls of the adjacent legionary fortress, where minor buildings have been recorded that date around 400. Modest habitation traces have also been dated to the first few decades of the 5th century.

The Roman municipium **Aelium Cetium (St. Pölten)** witnessed abandonment of some of its parts in the 3rd century and renewed prosperity with the construction of new houses after Constantine, when it became the supply base in the hinterland of the Danube limes (Ladstätter 2002, 316; Scherrer 2011, 111). It was abandoned by the end of the 4th century, which reflects the end of an organised defence of the limes. In the first half of the 5th century, there are only modest signs of Roman presence mixed with Germanic elements. It was finally abandoned soon after the mid-5th century.

The city of **Aguntum (Lienz)** (Figs. 2.6, 2.7) has a longer existence (Walde 2002, 152–158; Sossau 2018). A long wall was built in the 3rd century that protected the settlement from the attacks coming from the east. After fires, the city was renovated on numerous occasions that can reliably be dated to the second half of the 4th and first half of the 5th century. At this time, all public spaces were turned into modest dwellings or workshops, similarly as in many cities across the Eastern provinces. A prolonged existence of the city is also visible in the large Early Christian church constructed on the eastern side of the city walls. There are modest habitation traces recorded even after the fire in the early 5th century. Stray finds from the 6th century reveal that small groups of people were present in this area, whereas the church authorities and part of the population moved to the other side of the River Drau/Drava, to the naturally excellently protected Kirchbichl hill (Lavant). The churches excavated there, which include a presumed episcopal complex and other buildings, show that the hill now served as the centre of settlement (Ladstätter 2002, 319; Winckler 2012, 244–245). Evidence of

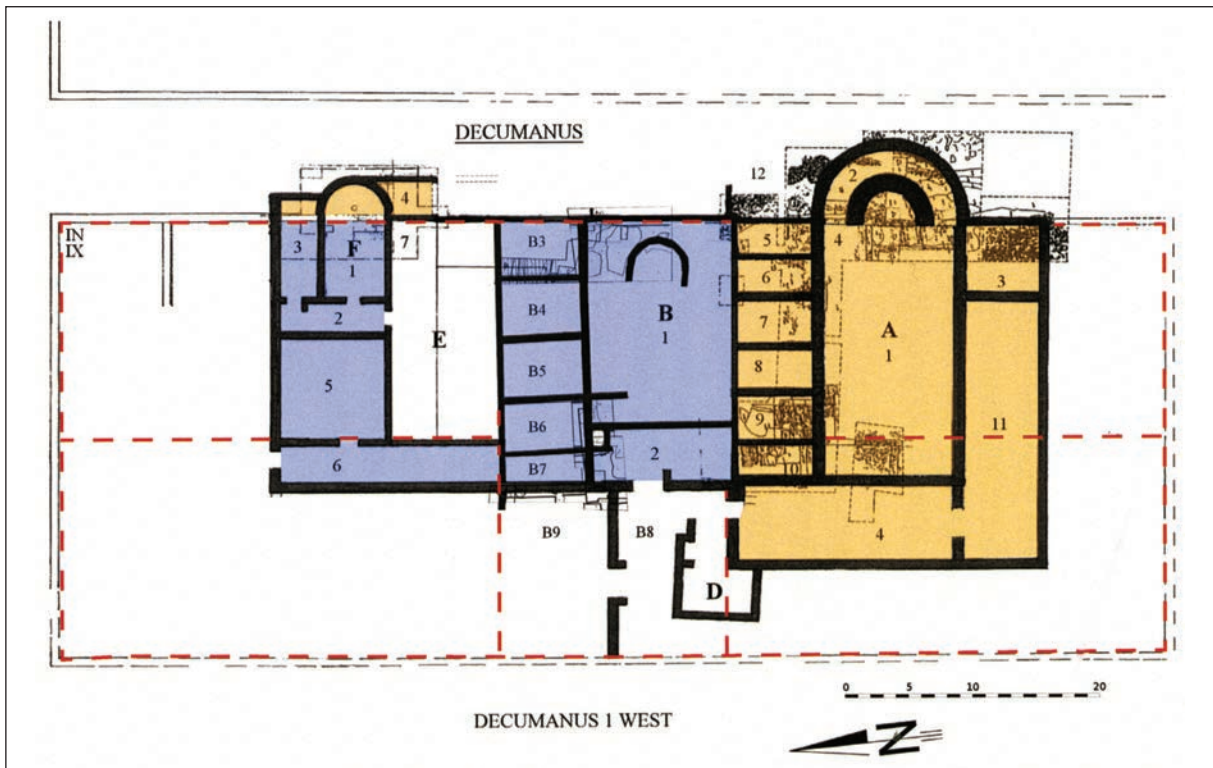


Fig. 2.8: Virunum. Plan of insulae VIII, IX, XI with suburbium (episcopal complex?) (from Dolenz et. al. 2016, Fig. 14).

building that presumably housed the seat of the provincial administration. Also constructed were large church buildings (episcopal complex?) at the edge of the city. The city was abandoned soon afterwards, which may be the consequence of its exposed location in the lowland, along major roads, and of the absence of defensive walls.

Flavia Solva (Leibnitz) (Fig. 2.9) witnessed a period of great prosperity in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, which is reflected in lavish residential buildings (Hudeczek 2002, 209–210; Groh, H. 2021). Very scarce are the archaeological traces postdating 400, which show barely any human presence. Similarly as Virunum, Flavia Solva had no city walls and was located at the fringes of



Fig. 2.9: Flavia Solva. Remains of Roman buildings (2014).

the Pannonian Plain that suffered from waves of hostile incursions. Partial continuity can be discerned on the nearby Frauenberg hill, where the recent discovery of an Early Christian church indicates the possibility of Christian population living there deep into the 5th century (Ladstätter 2002, 318; Schrettle 2014). The extensive cemetery unearthed on the slopes of the hill points to a predominantly Roman population and presence of *foederati* (Steinklauber 2002).

HUNGARY

The flatland in the hinterland of the exposed part of the limes was under relentless pressure from foreign peoples, which in itself makes the late existence of Pannonian cities questionable (cf. e.g. Tóth 1987; Poulter 1992, 105–113; Müller 2000; Vida 2007, 322; Christie 2007, 558; Reka 2015, 672). Some do show the odd primitive building of a late date, but these do not make up urban centres of their former importance. In the western part of the Pannonian Plain, in present-day Hungary, there are two cities of significance for our understanding of urban (dis)continuity, namely Scarbantia and Savaria.

Scarbantia (Sopron) (Fig. 2.10), in the province Pannonia Prima, is most frequently mentioned as a city with the continuity of Roman habitation (Tóth 1974; Müller 2000, 244, 246; Gömöri 2003, 86–87; Vida 2007,

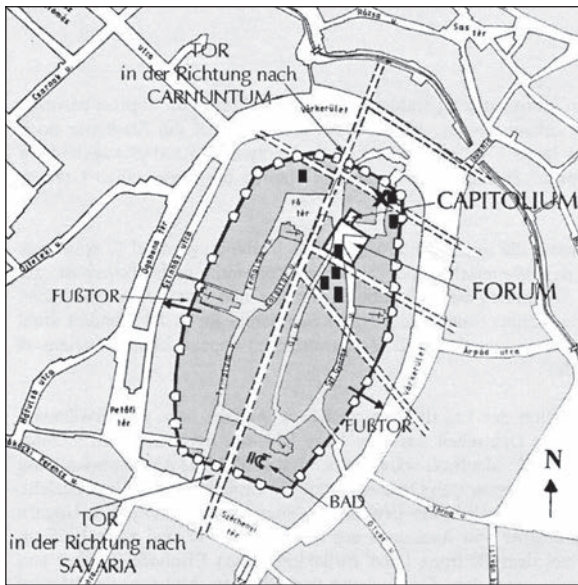


Fig. 2.10: Scarbantia. Plan of the city (from Gömöri 2001, Fig. 1a).

322, 325–326). Péter Tomka (2015) wrote the last extensive overview of excavations and recovered small finds in this city that enables a dating and an insight into the ethnic structure of its inhabitants. He particularly observed the forum being filled up with deposits early on, as well as an early abandonment of public and residential buildings. Excavations revealed fairly simple dwellings in the forum and partly along the city walls that show three phases of existence from the late 4th to the 5th/6th centuries. Also mentioned is an entirely investigated wooden building and other buildings, only partly known, that have masonry foundations and a wooden superstructure. One of these was fitted with a Late Roman system of heating canals. Tomka observed that the immediate surroundings of the city underwent rapid barbarisation and that settlements were abandoned towards the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century. The original inhabitants presumably left the city (dilapidated public buildings and houses) and some people previously living in the vicinity now inhabited the city with strong walls. They are believed to have built simple huts on top of the ruins, with at least some of the huts still exhibiting the Roman tradition. Tomka thus allows for the possibility of the habitation traces dating throughout the 5th century, but does not see – as opposed to some earlier authors – reliable contexts from the 6th century. Endre Tóth posited that we may tie *episcopus Scaravacensis*, bishop known from the records of the Synod of Grado, held in 579, with this city (Tóth 1974). The city thus far yielded no church remains, but there are elements that point to a Christianised Roman population (Heinrich-Tamáška 2012, 225). In connection with this is the mass of burnished ware believed to have been produced in



Fig. 2.11: Savaria. Plan of the palace complex (Isztin et. al. 2014, Fig. 1).

the Roman tradition, but also widely used among the Germanic *foederati*. The fact that there are no reliable contexts from the 6th century, the existence of an episcopal see in the 6th century and with it the continuity of the Roman population is questionable. The most plausible conclusion is that the available evidence does not speak of a continuity of habitation, but merely of a reuse of the monumental Roman city walls and thus the continuity of ruins (Gömöri 2001, 230).

The Roman city of **Savaria (Szombathely)** (Figs. 2.11, 2.12) lay on the Amber Route and was an important post of the Italo-Pannonian trade (Scherrer 2003, 54–55). It became the capital of the province Pannonia Prima in the 4th century. The city walls are poorly known, only identified in a few places and predominantly dated as early as the 2nd century. An inscription relates the construction of a *horreum* on imperial order and in honour of Constans II. The remains of a Late Antique palace have been found at the western city walls, which was most likely built in the time of Constantine the Great and extended across as many as six insulae, public baths and a prestigious house. The centre of the palace was a large hall terminating in an apse in the west. Its walls were richly painted and the floors adorned with a high-quality Late Roman mosaic (Tóth 2011). This out-



Fig. 2.12: Savaria. Remains of the Late Antique palace (1982).

standing building was surrounded by numerous smaller rooms and an octagon with lavish baths constructed in the former peristyle.

The city, which was the birthplace of St Martin, yielded several Early Christian finds and epitaphs, while the Passion of Quirinus even mentions a *'basilica ad Scarabetensem portam'* near the north gates. A critical assessment of the Early Christian remains, particularly the sacral buildings, has shown that we can as yet not confirm the existence of a church in Savaria (Scherer 2003, 55; Heinrich-Tamáška 2012, 224). The transfer of the reliquiae of martyr Quirinus to Italy in the early 5th century proves the collapse of the ecclesiastical organisation in the city (Bratož 2011b, 600; Vida 2011, 635). Following the earthquake of 456, Savaria is believed to have been completely abandoned (Scherrer 2003, 55).

The proximity of the Huns makes urban continuity particularly disputable in northern and eastern Pannonia. Inhabitants of **Aquincum** (Fig. 2.13) were abandoning the civil settlement during the 4th century and moved to the adjacent fort (Mócsy 1974, 310; Müller 2000, 244; Zsidi 2011). The latter was – presumably under Constantine I – extended towards the river. In its older, still well-fortified part, military buildings were renovated and given a primarily administrative function. The large baths were extensively renovated and turned to a palace, presumably to house the military commander of the province Valeria. A religious function is presumed in two buildings, but could thus far not be reliable proven (Heinrich-Tamáška 2016, 126). The last diagnostic finds from the palace date to the late 4th century, while traces from the 5th century are mentioned in connection with presumed churches. Indirect evidence of habitation in this part comes from the necropoleis, in use to the late 4th or early 5th century.

Sopianae (Pécs) (Fig. 2.14), a city in the south of Valeria, reached its apogee in the 4th century (Fülep 1984; Sándor 2001; Gábor et al. 2004, 287). This is less clear in the city itself, but indirectly proven by the

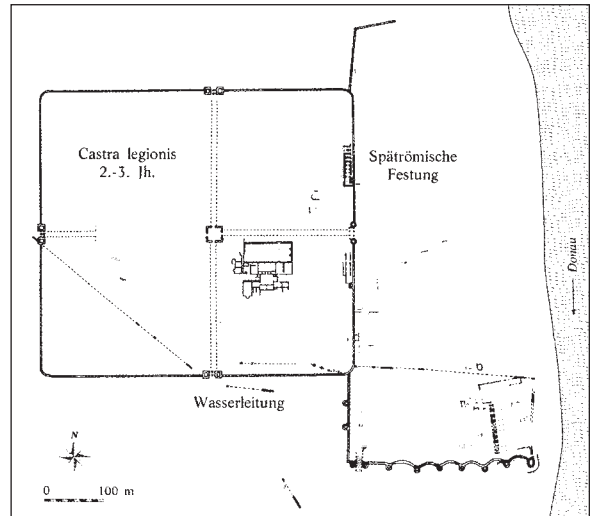


Fig. 2.13: Aquincum. Plan of the Late Antique fort (Zsidi 2004, Fig. 8).



Fig. 2.14: Sopianae. Remains of the Early Christian 'Mausoleum' (1998).

numerous Early Christian tombs (30 tombs, mausolea, hypogea, *cellae memoriae*) beautifully painted with biblical motifs and Christian symbols. No church remains have thus far been found in the city. The last excavations show that a new basilica urbana, extending into a *horreum*, was constructed in the forum in the 4th century. Wooden constructions already predominate the city in the first third of the 5th century; these were torn down and destroyed in fire, which scholars linked to the arrival of the *foederati* or even Huns and Goths. After the arrival of the Huns in 433, the urban existence of the city was no longer possible without the existence of the province and the cemeteries also no longer show continuity; only a few barbarian burials have been recorded (Gábor 2008).

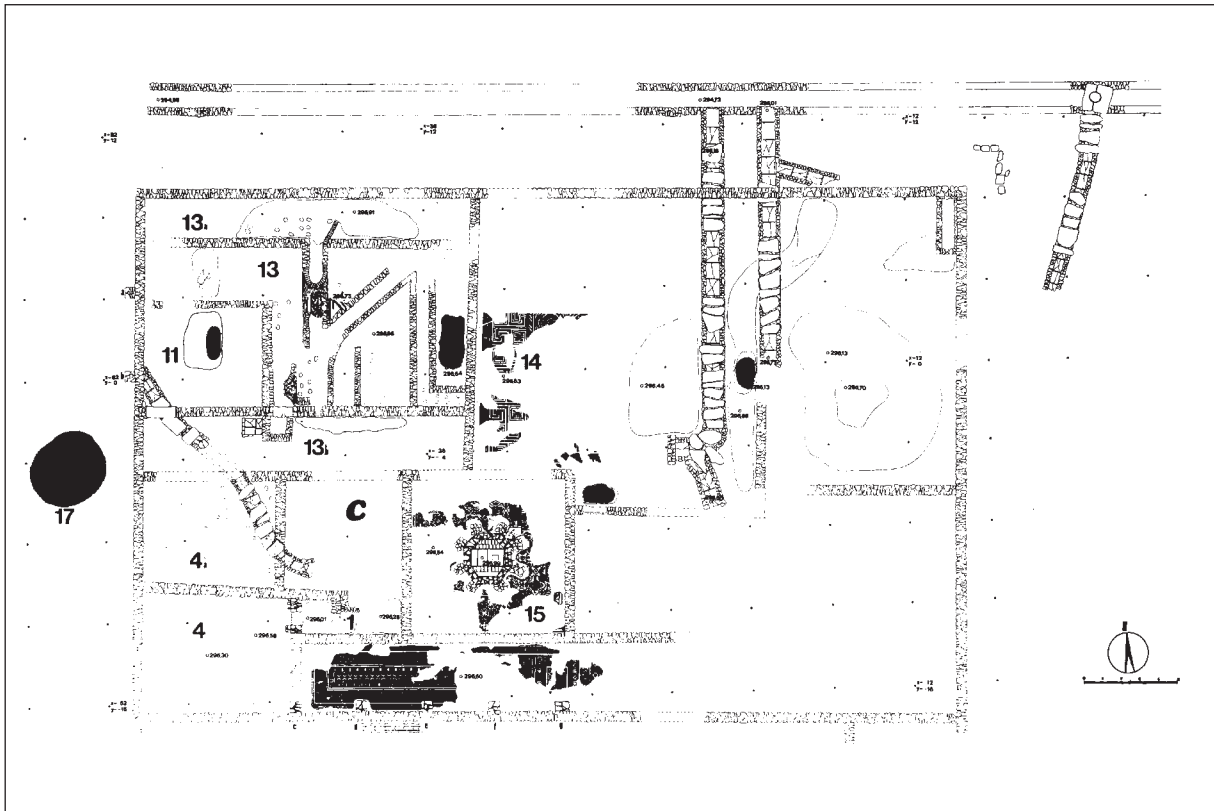


Fig. 2.15: Emona. Plan of the Early Christian centre (fourth construction phase) (Plesničar Gec 1983, Fig. 11).

SLOVENIA

The transformation and abandonment of Roman cities in Slovenia is most clearly illustrated on the example of **Emona (Ljubljana)** (Figs. 2.15–2.17, 2.248, 2.257). It formed part of the province *Venetia et Histria*, but its location east of the Alpine barrier walls resulted in a more rapid decline of the urban fabric. The extensive excavations conducted in recent decades have provided us with reliable evidence on the discontinuity of the city (Slabe 1975, 84–86; Plesničar Gec 1983, 29–32; ead. 1997, 366–368; ead. 2005). Numerous small finds including coins show that Emona had its last peak in the 4th and early 5th centuries. It developed within the perimeter of the Augustan city walls, which were reinforced in Late Antiquity and side entrances walled. In the second half of the 4th century, rooms were arranged in *Insula 32* of which the layout and mosaic decoration indicate the first Christian buildings (Djurić, B. 2005, 674–675). In the next phase, a baptistery and porticus with richly decorated mosaic floors and many donor's inscriptions were constructed. They are doubtlessly part of an episcopal centre that has as yet not been fully investigated. Its construction can reliably be dated to the first few decades of the 5th century, though it was very soon abandoned or

destroyed, most likely during the Hun incursion in 452 (Plesničar Gec 1983, 30–31; Kos 1983, 102–103). The city yielded no architecture that could reliably be set to the second half of the 5th century. The literature does mention poorly documented remains of modest dwellings and a rotunda, though the associated small finds published thus far do not allow a reliable dating of the building to a time after the mid-5th century (Plesničar Gec 1997, 364–368). Very rare objects from the second half of the 5th and the 6th century indicate a brief presence of individuals or small groups of people rather than continuous habitation to the late 6th century (Plesničar Gec, Sivec 1978, 61; Ciglenečki 1997, 192). The most convincing evidence of discontinuity is the destruction and abandonment of the Early Christian centre in the first half of the 5th century, which clearly shows that the clerics headed by the bishop, and indirectly also the predominantly Roman population left the city (Ciglenečki 2012, 464–466).

The cities in the south-eastern part of *Noricum Mediterraneum*, along the main road from Pannonia to Italy, shared a similar fate.

Celeia (Celje) (Figs. 2.18, 2.19) still shows diverse and intensive signs of life in the 4th century. In the middle of this century, mighty city walls were constructed with numerous towers (Lazar 2002, 91–92, 96–97; Novšak



Fig. 2.16: Emona. City walls, reinforced in Late Antiquity (2017).



Fig. 2.17: Emona. Excavation of Late Antique buildings in the south-western part of the city (1998).

2007, 30; Bausovac, Krempuš 2009, 44, 45; Bausovac, Krajšek 2020, 51–56). The significance of the city in Late Antiquity is reflected in a large Early Christian basilica boasting mosaic floors with many donor's inscriptions (Kolšek 1984, 342; Glaser 1997, 67). An octagonal baptistery was also unearthed, but at a considerable distance from the basilica, which allows for a possible second basilica located in between (Vogrin 1991). Both the baptistery and the basilica date to the late 4th or early 5th century. Similarly as in Emona, Celeia witnessed a

destruction and abandonment of its sacral buildings in the first half of the 5th century. Burials from the second half of the 4th and first half of the 5th century came to light in the immediate vicinity of the city centre. There are no known sealed contexts from later times that would suggest urban continuity. The only chronologically diagnostic items were found either in secondary position (Early Christian epitaph) or are without reliable findspot (several late coins and other small finds). The numerous bronze chandeliers in the shape of Christograms are

therefore all the more important finds, recovered on the nearby hilltop settlement on Vipota and brought there from the destroyed churches – they prove that the remaining inhabitants of the city in the second half of the 5th and the 6th centuries took refuge in remote and naturally well-protected settlements in the hilly hinterland of Celeia (Ciglenečki, Modrijan 2020).

The fate of the important Roman city of **Poetovio (Ptuj)** (Figs. 2.20, 2.21), located at an advantageous river crossing of the Drau/Drava, is well-known. The limited extent of the later habitation remains and the intensive rescue investigations in recent decades have brought a considerable amount of evidence on the city in Late Antiquity (overview in Horvat et al. 2003). It shows a gradually shrinking urban area with a shift and concentration of habitation at the foot and on top of both hills on the left riverbank (Saria 1939, 148; Mikl Curk 1978, 407; Horvat et al. 2020b, 51). A passage in Ammianus Marcellinus mentions that Constantius was captured in a palace outside the Poetovio city walls, which suggests the

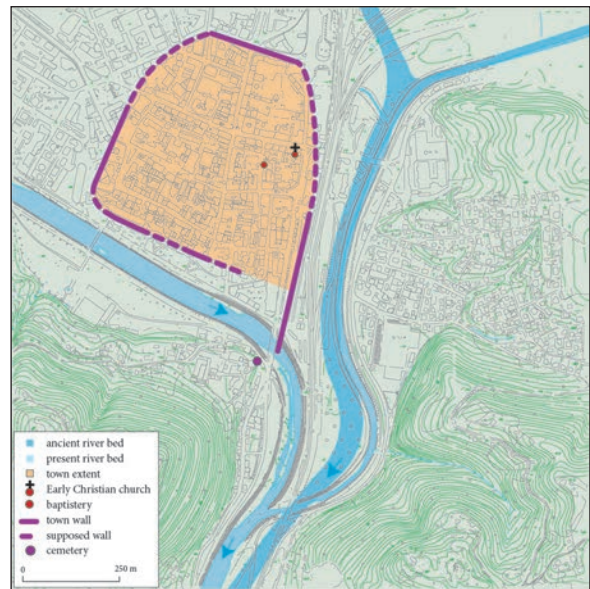


Fig. 2.18: Celeia. Plan of the Roman city (from Lazar 2002, Fig. 27).



Fig. 2.19: Celeia. Late Antique walls with the entry gates (from Krajšek, Žerič 2010).

city was walled in Late Antiquity. The numerous small finds of a late date belong primarily to the second half of the 4th and first third of the 5th century (Ciglenečki 1993). Several elements indicate the existence of Early Christian churches, which are not known in detail. Many cemeteries on both riverbanks reveal that parts of the city were already abandoned in the second half of the 4th century. The investigations conducted in Rabelčja vas, albeit not yet integrally published, revealed the

chronologically last group of graves dating to the middle or possibly even second half of the 5th century (Mikl Curk 2005, 246; Horvat, Dolenc Vičič 2010, 73). More is known on a burial likely of a Hun warrior, the only one of its kind in the area under discussion (Lubšina Tušek 2004, 76–78; Knific, Nabergoj 2017, 22–23). We also know that Priscus mentions Poetovio as the starting point of the diplomatic mission to the court of Attila in 449 (Šašel Kos 1994). The city was abandoned in the

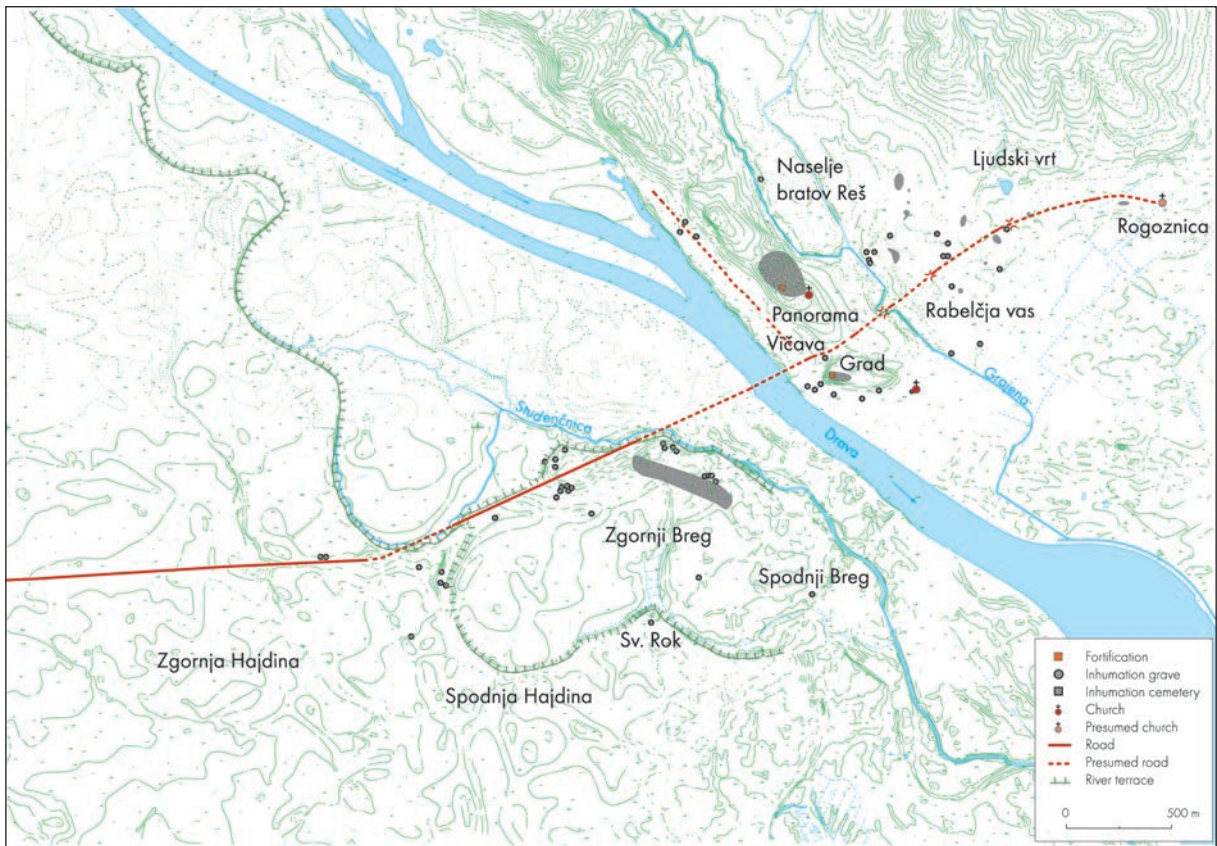


Fig. 2.20: Poetovio. Plan of the wider city area (Horvat et al. 2003, Fig. 4).



Fig. 2.21: Poetovio. Central part of Late Antique settlement on Grajski grič and Panorama, from the north-west (2020).

second half of the 5th and throughout the 6th century; the scarce small finds (mostly without reliable findspot data) can certainly not be taken as evidence of the city's existence and probably represent the traces of individual groups that occasionally protected the still important river crossing (Knific, Tomanič Jevremov 1996).

The fate of a lowland city is best illustrated on the example of **Neviodunum**, an unfortified city and harbour on the River Sava and on the most important road lead-

ing to Italy from the east. In analysing the small finds from the city, Peter Petru also tackled the ratio between the finds from different periods and established that, of the 1300 dated Roman items, 300 belonged to the 4th century, which was followed by a marked decrease with practically no finds from the 5th century (Petru, P., Petru, S. 1978). He only identified two or three items from the 5th century, which recent analyses have shown to be earlier as well (Petru, P., Petru, S. 1978, 362; Knific 1993, 521–542).



Fig. 2.22: Aquae Iasae. Thermal complex with remains of the Roman buildings (2011).

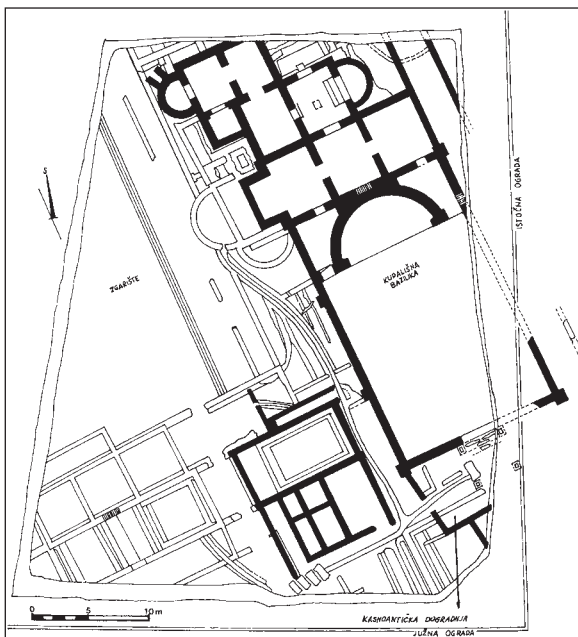


Fig. 2.23: Aquae Iasae. Plan of the basilica in the thermal baths, converted into the Early Christian church in the 4th century (Vikić-Belančić 1978, Fig. 1).

CROATIA

For the continental part of Croatia, the bath centre of an urban character called **Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice)** (Figs. 2.22–2.24) reveals most on the abandonment of cities. The systematic investigation here revealed the peak of construction activities in the Constantinian



Fig. 2.24: Aquae Iasae. Interior of the basilica (2011).

period, when the pool was completely renovated and a basilica built (Vikić-Belančić 1978, 590–591; Migotti 1997, 25–26). The remains of wall paintings and modifications of certain rooms (baptistry!) show that the basilica urbana was turned into a church towards the end of the 4th century. Both the architecture and the recovered small finds reliably date the abandonment of the buildings to the first half of the 5th century, which is to be expected given that the settlement on an exposed location was unfortified (Migotti 1997, 26; Kušan Špalj 2020).

The cities *Mursa* and *Cibalae*, both located in the strategically important hinterland of the *limes*, shared a similar fate. The colony **Mursa (Osijek)** is poorly known (Buzov 2010, 142–143; Marin 2018). It was walled in the Roman period, but we lack archaeological evidence of its continuity in the 5th century.

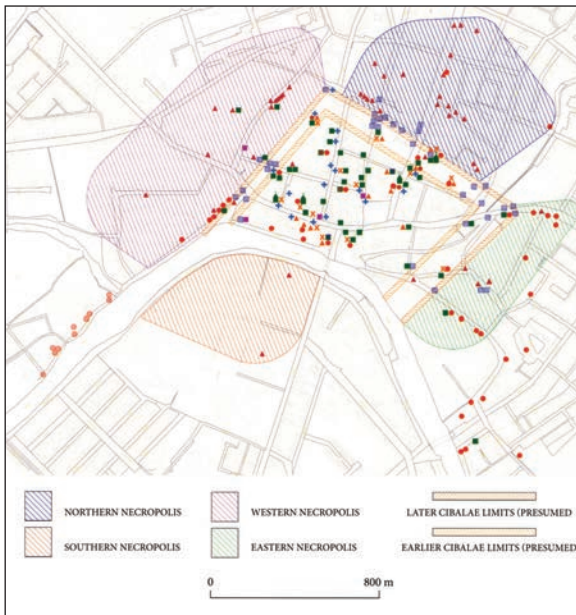


Fig. 2.25: Cibalae. Plan of the Late Antique city and necropoleis (from Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2016, Fig. 1).

Much more is known on the colony **Cibalae (Vinkovci)** (Fig. 2.25). Similarly as most other cities, it reached its peak in the 4th century, when many new buildings were constructed (overview in Iskra-Janošić 2004; Gračanin, Rapan Papeša 2011). The city was of a great strategic significance as it stood on an important crossroads in the immediate vicinity of the limes. It was here that Constantius II set up camp in 351, during his conflicts with Magnentius. Cibalae was also the birthplace of the Emperors Valentinian and Valens and the city's prosperity in the second half of the 4th century can therefore also be due to imperial munificence. What remains open is the question of the city's defensive installations. The existence of earthwork ramparts, which earlier researchers posited, seems questionable and city walls have not been detected, which led some to suggest the surrounding marshland offered sufficient protection (cf. Buzov 2010, 141; Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2016, 149). A *horreum* was built in the 4th century and spolia from the capitolium were used in its construction. A basilica was presumably built in the second half of the 4th century, which shows no elements of an Early Christian church. At that time, the large baths still functioned in the city. The recently discovered rich hoard of silverware from the 4th century points to a high standard of the inhabitants (Vulić et al. 2017). Earlier researchers presumed that Cibalae was destroyed towards the end of the 4th century and the ruins later inhabited by the Gepidae (Iskra-Janošić 2004, 185). For some buildings, new investigations revealed the possibility of use at least in the first half of

the 5th century (Gračanin, Rapan Papeša 2011, 13–16; Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2016, 151–152). Rescue excavations have also noted the existence of houses reusing the still standing parts of Late Roman buildings and new walls built of clay-bonded stone. The other, more numerous type of dwellings were sunken houses, usually in small groups. Many pottery kilns were in use until the 4th century. In the 5th and 6th centuries, vessels with characteristic stamped and burnished decoration joined the previous forms. Anita Rapan Papeša and Danijela Roksandić thus posit a continued presence of a part of the Roman population in the 5th and 6th centuries, joined by immigrants. Small finds indicate that Cibalae were under the Gepid rule in the mid-6th century (Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2016, 151–159). The necropoleis outside the city were in use to the 5th century, while later burials came to light *intra muros* either individually or in small groups. The absence of city walls, public buildings and reliably identified church architecture, but also bishopric after the middle of the 5th century signify a degradation and downfall of the Roman city. On the other hand, the simple buildings and sunken houses point to a modest presence of the Roman population and more substantial numbers of immigrants. Together with the late burials *intra muros*, they show partial continuation of life, but do not support the claim that Cibalae still functioned as a city after the mid-5th century.

At Kamenica, a site outside the city of Cibalae and along the road to Sirmium, a walled Early Christian complex was found that is believed to have been built on the spot where Pollio, *primicerius lectorum*, was martyred. The results of the preliminary, mainly non-destructive surface surveys have suggested that the complex with a church, baptistery and tombs was created in the 4th century. Its duration has as yet not been established (Vulić 2016).

On the east coast of the Adriatic where most cities show a clear continuity, **Argyrunum (Starigrad na moru)** met with a different fate. It was an emporium built on a small peninsula and enclosed with a defensive wall (Abramić, Colnago 1909). Its interior is poorly investigated and much more is known of the associated cemetery. The latter has revealed that the city reached its zenith in the 2nd century, began declining in the 3rd and was abandoned in the 4th century (Fadić 1995). The reasons for such an early abandonment are unclear, neither do we know where its inhabitants retreated to. Some have suggested they moved to the fortification on Sv. Trojica near Tribanj, Šibuljina, some 6 km away (see Chapter 3.3).

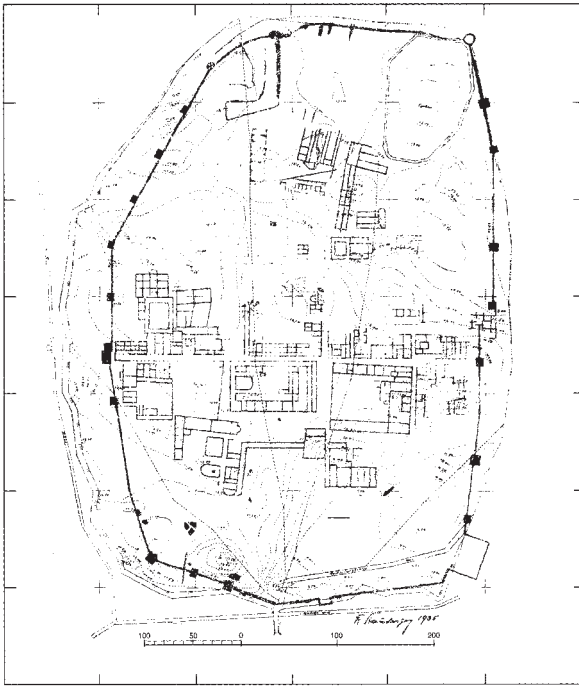


Fig. 2.26: Bassianae. City plan (Milin 2004, Fig. 4a).

2.3.2 EASTERN PART

In the eastern part of the Empire, much fewer cities were abandoned in the course of Late Antiquity.

SERBIA

In Serbia, the attribution of **Bassianae (Sremski Petrovci)** (Fig. 2.26) into this group of cities is thus uncertain as the earlier and poorly published excavations do not allow for more definite conclusion (overview in Milin 2004). The city was established on naturally raised ground and enclosed with mighty walls with towers. The urban layout shows a number of public buildings, as well as an Early Christian basilica (possibly even two?) roughly dated to the 4th to 6th centuries (Grbić 1936, 30–32; id. 1937, 3). With the exception of a possible church from the 5th and 6th centuries, the available archaeological evidence is insufficient to posit a late existence of the city, though some literary sources do speak in favour of continuity. Jordanes is one such source, mentioning that the city was besieged in the mid-460s, while Justinian's *Novella XI* from 535 states the city was under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima. It is also mentioned in Hierocles' *Synekdemos* and the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna (Milin 2004, 257). With the current state of research, the question of the city's continuity in the 5th and even more so the 6th

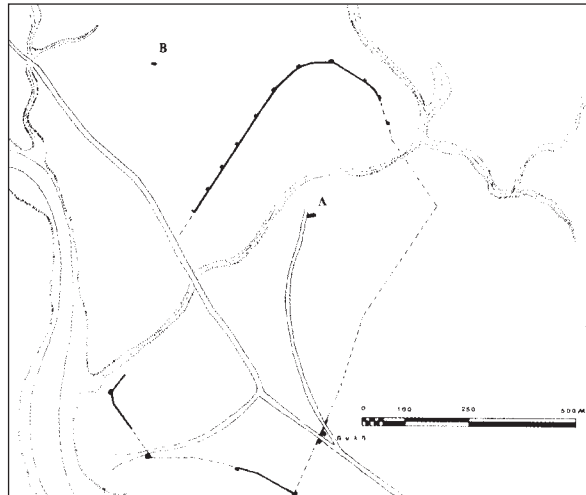


Fig. 2.27: Diocletianopolis (Argos Orestikon). City plan (Rizos 2017b, Fig. 11).

century is very much open; it is treated in the group of cities that declined before the end of Late Antiquity due to the lack of reliable archaeological evidence.

GREECE

The writings of Hierocles reveal that some cities in the southern Balkans still marked as *poleis* in the mid-3rd century lost their urban status in the early 6th century (Dunn 2004, 569).

The recently identified **Diocletianopolis (Argos Orestiko)** (Fig. 2.27) in Thessaly revealed the remains of several buildings and city walls enclosing a 45 ha large area (Karagiorgou 2001b, 150–156). The partly investigated city walls, measuring 2.4 m in thickness, incorporate rectangular towers combined with pentagonal ones in the corners and semicircular ones flanking the gates. A partly known three-aisled basilica is known in the city interior, two were found *extra muros*. Of the two investigated residential buildings, House B from the first half of the 4th century revealed that many small rooms were built into the ruins of the original building; the destruction of the latter cannot be precisely dated, though small finds indicate it occurred during the Ostrogothic incursion towards the end of the 5th century, possibly even earlier (Karagiorgou 2001b, 154, 156). Procopius informs us that, after the abandonment in 473–483, Justinian moved Diocletianopolis to the island on Lake Castoria (Karagiorgou 2001b, 150–156; Saradi 2006, 468).

The old and vast Hellenistic port of **Demetrias** (Figs. 2.28, 2.29), in the Pagasetic Gulf in the Aegean, witnessed extensive changes in Late Antiquity (Karagiorgou 2001a, 197–211). With its centre of gravity then at the north harbour, it was walled in the 4th century to enclose only a

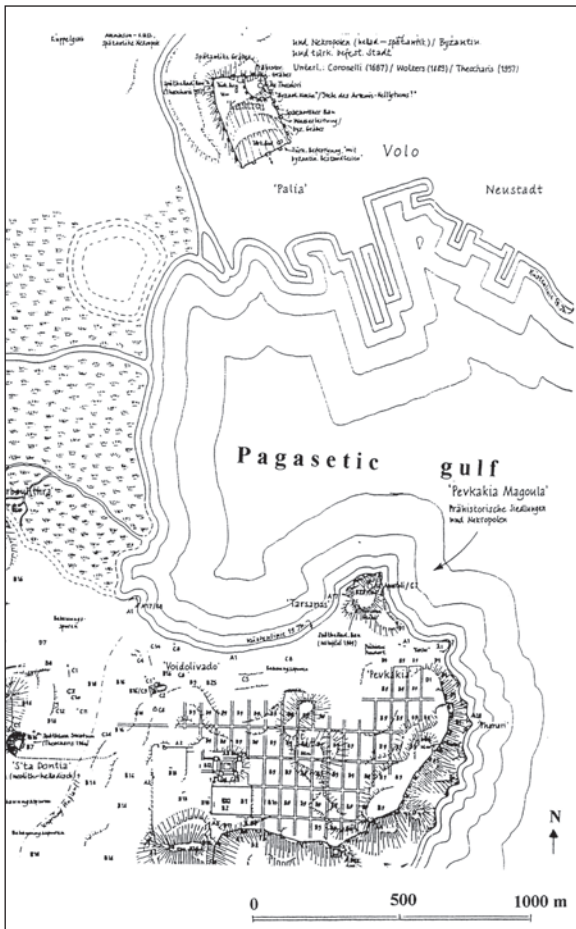


Fig. 2.28: Demetrias. Roman city and the fort of Iolkos (from Karagiorgou 2001a, Fig. 10a).



Fig. 2.29: Demetrias. In the foreground are the remains of Basilica of Damokratia (2004).

small portion of the former city. The walled part included a large Early Christian basilica (Basilica of Damokratia), built in the early 5th century and later renovated several times, as well as the luxury 'House of Damokratia' not far from it. A small residential area extended outside the walled city, at the southern harbour where a smaller ba-

silica was built in the late 4th century. The abandonment of Basilica of Damokratia in the second quarter of the 6th century proves that the northern city area was abandoned at this time. The city walls were no longer renovated in the 6th century and the remaining population moved to Iolkos, a hill some two kilometres away. The fort on the hill extended across 6 hectares and revealed a defensive wall and different buildings, including a basilica. It is believed to have been established soon after 482, which has been linked with the Ostrogothic incursion, while Justinian presumably refortified the hill and the new fort became an administrative and Christian centre (Karagiorgou 2001a, 203–210). In a smaller measure, life also continued in the settlement at the foot of the hill. Parts of the population are believed to have inhabited the lowland parts of the city and only sought refuge behind the walls of the fort in times of danger.

A similar situation has been observed in the case of *Pydna* (Poulter 1998; Saradi 2006, 388; Sodini 2007, 317), a city that the Goths seized in 479. This led to the transfer of the bishopric to Louloudies, a site discussed below as part of the group of newly-founded cities (see Chapter 2.5.2).

2.4 CITIES WITH CONTINUITY

Roman cities that persisted in variously altered forms to the end of the 6th, in places into the early 7th century and some even lasting to the present day, can be found across a large part of the area under discussion (Figs. 2.1, 2.1). Also included in this group are the cities abandoned for a lengthy period after the mid-5th century and later re-established in a more limited extent under Byzantine authorities. The lengthy interruption of their existence does bring them close to the cities abandoned in Antiquity, but the resettlement and partial reuse of the old architecture on the same spot in the 6th century, explicit mentions in literary sources and scarce archaeological remains nevertheless identify them as cities with continuity. We should bear in mind that they suffered a major break brought on by the Hun incursions in the 5th century, when cities such as Sirmium, Singidunum, Naissus and Serdica were heavily hit; this is particularly apparent in the end of the bishoprics in these cities. Bishops are again mentioned there later: in Serdica already in 458, Naissus in 516, Sirmium in 567/568 and Singidunum in 579. Only the last reports of bishops in the years between 580 and 615 indicate the end of the ecclesiastical organisation and abandonment of cities (Bratož 2011a, 228–229).

For these cities with a long architectural tradition, the presentation below will only briefly mention the important constructions and changes in the 4th and first half of the 5th century and rather focus on the period after the mid-5th century and the altered structures of



Fig. 2.30: Ravenna. Front of the Late Antique palace (2009).

that time. The emphasis is on the characteristics that came to light in the last decades during the systematic, as well as the more numerous rescue investigations. These afford an increasingly realistic insight into the defensive, sacral and residential architecture, into the chronology and the altered economic and social circumstances.

2.4.1 WESTERN PART

ITALY

The two capitals of Late Antiquity need no special attention, though we should begin this discussion by mentioning **Ravenna** (Fig. 2.30), a capital and its architecture that are symptomatic of the general shifts in settlement (overview in Cirelli 2008). With the exceptional achievements of Late Antique architecture, it indicates all the changes observable in more modest settings and on a smaller scale in other cities and settlements. The clearly identifiable construction and renovation phases corroborated in the literary sources closely mirror the changes in the settlement pattern across the area under discussion in the 5th and 6th centuries. The character and appearance of Ravenna changed fundamentally in the beginning of the 5th century (402), when the previously small Roman town became the glittering capital of the western world (Brogiolo 2011a, 151). The transfer of the Western Roman court to Ravenna effectively illustrates the deteriorating conditions of the day, as has already been discussed in connection with the cities of the first group, but is even more evident in the fortifications in the countryside (see *Chapter 3.3.2*).

These changes occurred slightly later at the heart of the empire, which is understandable given the protection of Italy's north-eastern flank with barrier walls (*Claustra*) in the 4th century; even this protection proved insufficient towards the end of the century. Alongside other defensive measures (primarily a variety of newly-formed forts and either construction or renovation of city walls) implemented across the whole of northern Italy and eastern Alps, the Romans were forced to find a new and naturally well-protected location in the marshes of the Po Delta. Via canals, the site was well-connected with the Adriatic Sea and the imperial fleet based there. The next major shift that mainly affected the west half of the Empire was the Ostrogothic state, with Gothic troops settling the well-defended earlier forts and cities. Their presence in Ravenna can be observed in the magnificent new constructions (Sodini 1995, 165–166; Baldini Lippolis 2001, 251–253). This substantial transformation of the city is rounded off by the renovation and embellishment under Justinian, which is particularly marked by the construction and adaptation of churches. Recent intensive investigations in Ravenna also explore the different residential and economic parts of the city that gradually shed light on these aspects of the city and its harbour at Classe (Cirelli 2010, 244–253).

In another north Italian city, in **Brixia (Brescia)** (Fig. 2.31) modern excavations under the leadership of Gian Pietro Brogiolo revealed the characteristic signs of transformation in a poorly known segment of late urbanism and housing (Brogiolo 1988; id. 1999). In Late Antiquity, the city continued to develop within the confines of the Augustan city walls, though with the addition of another, previously undefended part that was

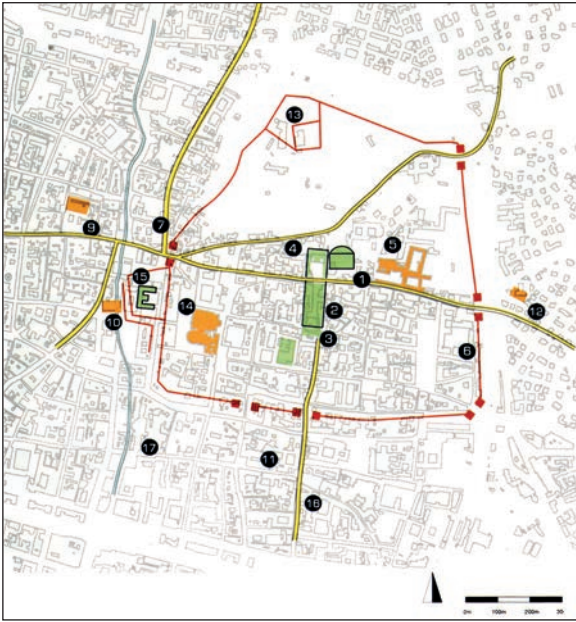


Fig. 2.31: Brixia. City plan (Brogiolo 2011a, Fig. 16).

now enclosed with double walls; Brogiolo posits this was a *proteichisma* (Brogiolo 2011a, 96–97). A cathedral and ducal complex presumably stood in the south-western part of the city, but not much is known of them.

The public buildings appear to have been unaltered at least until the late 4th century, followed by destruction, spoliation and construction of modest dwellings. The capitolium thus seems to have been abandoned by the end of the 4th century and remained abandoned for a century to come, after which there appeared the first traces of modest dwellings. The arrival of the Langobards brings a large-scale destruction of buildings in this area, as well as the installation of two pottery kilns and a house (Brogiolo 2011a, 58, Fig. 20).

The degradation of the city is primarily reflected in the housing, with subdividing of the abandoned *domus* and a considerably lower living standards. Near the monastery of S. Giulia, a series of dwellings from the second half of the 5th to the 7th century came to light in the area of five *domus*. The primitive buildings were partly built into the earlier walls, partly sunken into the ground or built of wood on drystone foundations (Brogiolo 1999; id. 2011a, 165). An interesting example is that of a large and lavish Augustan *domus* that for the most part continued unaltered to the first half of the 5th century, after which it witnessed a radical change of its interior with postholes dug through the mosaic floors, hearths arranged on top of the mosaics, the rooms subdivided and so forth. The smaller rooms may be seen as small family dwellings. The arrival of the Langobards brought changes such as the ruins of the old walls reused to make dwellings with the addition of walls made of wood or clay-bonded stone. The empty spaces between

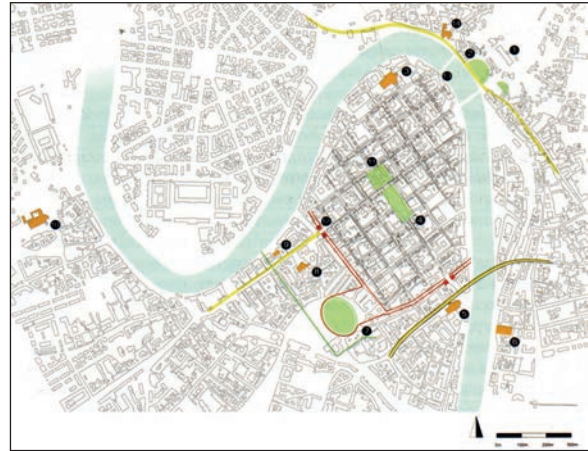


Fig. 2.32: Verona. City plan (Brogiolo 2011a, Fig. 53).



Fig. 2.33: Verona. Hill San Pietro above the River Adige (2016).

the houses served as places to deposit refuse or bury the dead. Surprisingly, these dwellings revealed a fair amount of imported pottery.

At Piazza Duomo, a *domus* was abandoned in the 5th century and wooden huts built into it, in the Langobard era it was used as burial grounds (Rossi 2003, 33–34).

The walls of *domus* at Via Alberto Mario were razed to the ground and simple residential buildings of wood were constructed at the same place. In the Ostrogothic period, a large two-room building was erected with poorly constructed walls and a wooden superstructure, which suffered a devastating fire in the 6th century that led to the area being abandoned (Brogiolo 1988).

Research at several sites has revealed habitation continuity into the following centuries.

Verona (Figs. 2.32, 2.33), the capital of the Ostrogothic King Theoderic and the Langobard King Alboin, is well-known through different literary sources, medieval depictions (*Iconographia Rateriana*) and archaeological evidence, and shows several characteristic signs of Late

Antique transformation (Cavaliere Manasse, Bruno 2003; Brogiolo 2011b, 136–139). The city walls, dated with the help of an inscription to the Gallienic times, were reinforced under Theoderic with a new outer wall of reused material and included an amphitheatre in the south, while on the north side an imperial palace was built on the hill San Pietro, on the opposite bank of the River Adige (Brogiolo 2011a, 96). The forum was already abandoned towards the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century and a wooden building erected on it in the 6th century that burnt down in the fire of 589/590, as Paul the Deacon relates. On that occasion, the forum was reportedly covered by an up to 2-m-thick layer of dark earth used at least in part for gardens. The city also revealed houses only built under the Ostrogoths and in use to the 7th century, as well as a *domus* renovated in the early 5th century and then gradually abandoned. The excavations at Via Dante unearthed a surprising situation, with partly maintained street-fronts, behind which were humble dwellings and gardens (Wickham 2005, 648). Of church architecture, archaeological investigations revealed an episcopal complex, as well as martyrial and cemeterial churches *extra muros*. Single or small groups of burials have been found within the city, existing alongside contemporary cemeteries outside the city walls. Evidence thus shows the city at the end of Antiquity boasted mighty city walls, several imposing church buildings, rare *domus* and different habitation cores associated with small burial grounds and between them empty spaces with gardens or orchards.

Tridentum (Trento) (Figs. 2.34, 2.35) and its transformation is poorly known as the now densely inhabited area of the former Roman city offers few possibilities for investigation (Ciurletti 2003; Bassi, Cavada 2013). In the second half of the 3rd or early 4th century, the old city walls of a Late Republican date were reinforced to reach the thickness of 3 m and include an amphitheatre in front of the walls. The city presumably had *horrea* for supplying the army on the Danube. In the second half of the 4th century, a church was constructed in the area of the forum. At the same time, a cemeterial church was erected in the vicinity of the Verona Gates that received the relics of St Vigilius already around 400. With regards to the living standard, the city shows similar signs of degradation as others, with individual houses and parts of the city abandoned, as well as new and poorly-built dwellings constructed. The former *domus* now hosted small primitive huts, of which postholes remain, as well as hearths set up on the mosaic floors and new floors made of an inferior quality. We should also mention small groups or single burials in the city centre. A particularly important source for understanding the Late Antique city is Cassiodorus, who reports of Theoderic's edict that urges the inhabitants of Tridentum to move to the nearby hill Doss Trento. It is unclear to what measure this migration took place, but the double church on the hill and the thick cultural layer on the vast rocky

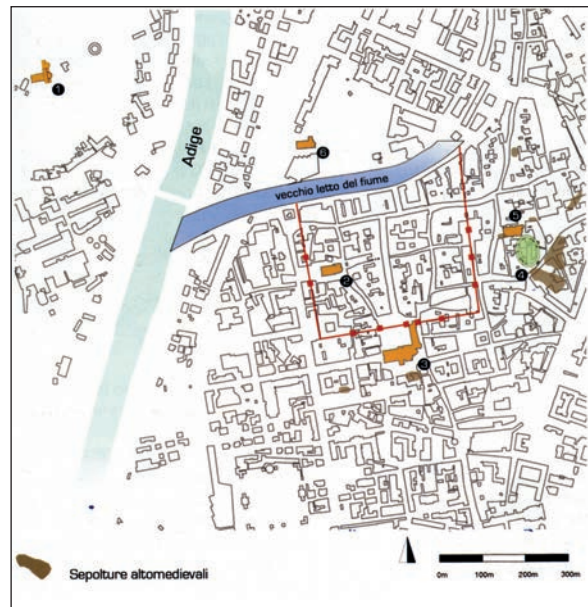


Fig. 2.34: Tridentum. City plan (Brogiolo 2011a, Fig. 32).



Fig. 2.35: Tridentum. Hill Doss Trento from the south-east (1987).

plateau above the river allow the conclusion that at least part of the population occasionally retreated there (Bierbrauer 1985, 497–498; Cavada 2019). In addition, recent research notes that the city area of Piedicastello, protected with walls and located between Doss Trento and the River Adige, was more intensely inhabited in the 6th century (Pisu 2019). Given the exposed strategic location of the city in the narrow part of the Adige valley and along a major Roman road, we should also expect an occasional increased presence of the army; with this in mind, the habitation traces on both sides of the river are understandable, albeit not fully explained.

Following Diocletian's reforms, **Aquileia** (Figs. 2.36–2.39, 2.254) became the capital of the province Venetia et Histria. It was a major administrative, economic and ecclesiastical centre, as well as the main trading post for supplying the army deployed to the Danube

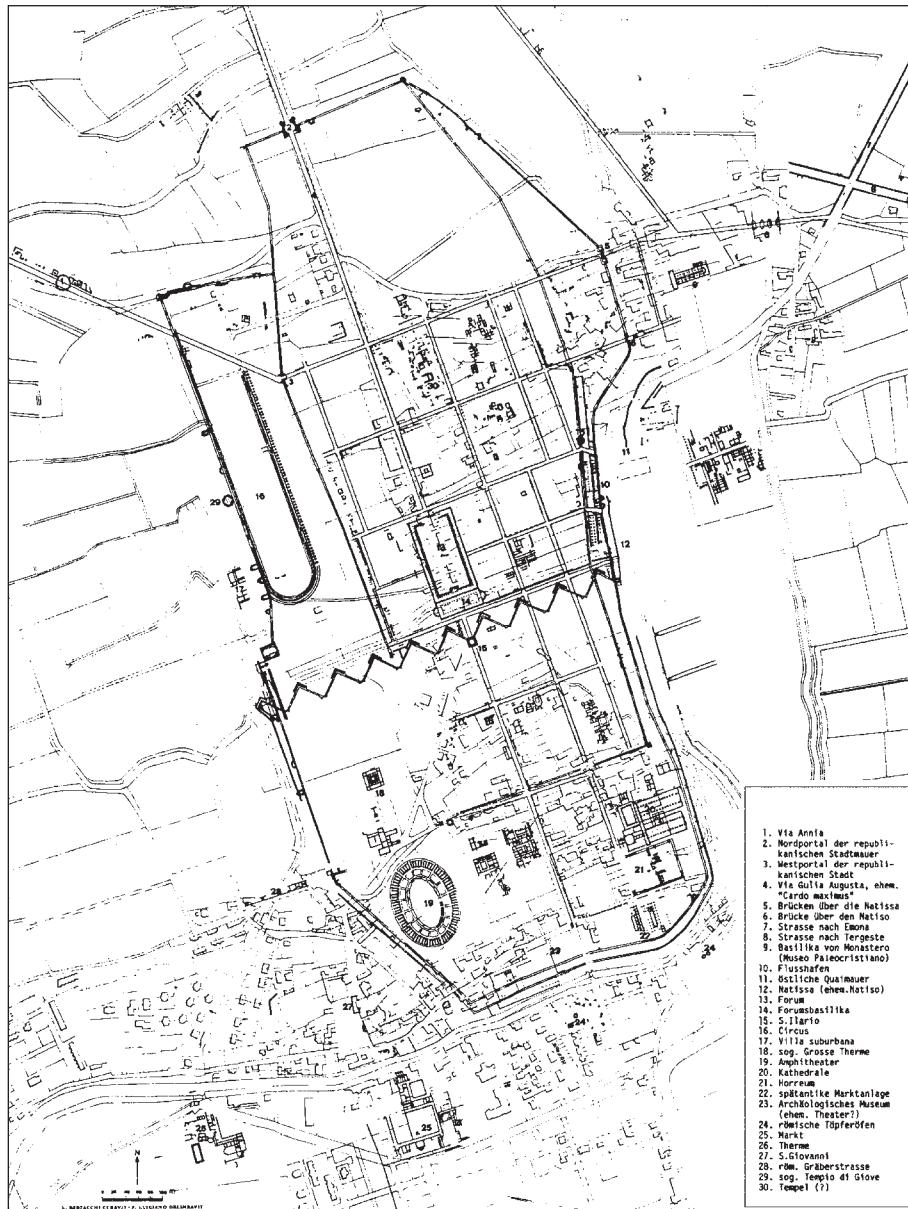


Fig. 2.36: Aquileia. City plan (Jäggi 1990, Fig. 1)



Fig. 2.37: Aquileia. Late Antique walls in the harbour (2003).



Fig. 2.38: Aquileia. Remains of the domus in the city centre (2010).



Fig. 2.39: Aquileia. Mosaic and remains of the *domus* in Fondo Cossar (1997).

Basin (overview in Jäggi 1990; Cantino Wataghin 2004; Sotinel 2005). The location along the main road leading to the heart of Italy from the east, not far behind the Alpine barriers, dictated the changes in its defensive installations and urban fabric. The sieges, numerous stops of army troops in the city, barbarian incursions, as well as lively religious and political activities of the Aquileian church coupled with the changed socio-economic and administrative conditions greatly influenced the transformation of the city. Its fate and all its alterations echoed across wide areas, particularly in the more exposed parts to the northeast. The historic sources make the reasons for the fate of the city in Late Antiquity clear. They also reveal a gradual migration of the population and finally, in the second half of the 6th century, the transfer of its main administrative and church functions to Grado (overview in Bratož 2000; Cuscito 2001; Sotinel 2005). Archaeological evidence reveals the reinforcement of the city walls, the shrinking settlement area and the reduction of most public buildings (Jäggi 1990; Bonetto 2004; Villa 2004; Cantino Wataghin 2004). A city that was rich and enjoyed its full extent and heavy fortifications even in the late 4th century, witnessed a sharp break in the

mid-5th century; this break is visible in the numerous reliably dated layers of burnt debris that have been associated with Attila's campaigns in Italy. After this time, an effective defensive wall of a demanding construction was built that reduced the urban area. The wall was in the shape of a zigzag line with the tips reinforced with small towers. Recent investigations show this wall dates to the 6th century and is very similar to Justinian's city walls in Durostorum (Silistra) (Groh, S. 2012; Atanasov 2013). Outside the reduced urban area, only stray finds have come to light that represent scarce habitation traces (Villa 2004, 614).

In addition to other functions, Aquileia was also the most prominent centre of Christianity in this part of the Empire, boasting the earliest episcopal complex. The imposing and through its transformations also characteristic complex aptly illustrates the development and main phases of Early Christian architecture from the 310 onwards. It is joined by several suburban churches that include two large ones from the 5th century, namely the basilica at Fondo Tullio del Beligna and the basilica at Monastero. In the 4th century, a large double *horreum* was erected south of the episcopal basilica, but fell into disuse in the mid-5th century. Presumably dating beyond this chronological boundary are three commercial buildings connected with the River Natisone and arranged round a court (Marano 2012, 579). As for the public buildings, new high-quality floors were installed in the area of the large baths sometime between the 5th and the 6th century (Marano 2011, 177). Several prestigious *domus* were also constructed in the city, most often with large reception halls that were fitted with apses in the 4th and continued to be inhabited in the 5th century, some were even renovated in the late 5th century (mosaic in the Domus at Fondo Cossar) (Sodini 1995, 167; Baldini Lipolis 2001, 144). A large number of these houses was abandoned, with smaller and more modest subdivided rooms arranged within them that revealed hearths and postholes, some even traces of artisanal activities. This subdivision was mostly investigated during the early excavations, and can therefore not be precisely dated (Marano 2011, 177). After the mid-5th century, a large part of the population moved to the better fortified south part, while workshops and simple huts appeared in the north part. In the second half of the 5th and the 6th century, Aquileia was a typical fortified Late Antique city with grand church complexes, rare maintained *domus* and predominant modest and primitive architecture with signs of a pronounced ruralisation of the remaining urban area (Villa 2004, 561–567). The downfall of Aquileia was in a large measure brought about by the decline in trading and its intermediary role in the distribution of goods, which is also reflected in the weakening river harbour. Concurrently with the shrinking urban core of Aquileia, there was a gradual rise of a settlement some 10 km away called *castrum Gradense* (Grado), established on an island in the lagoon. Its name



Fig. 2.40: Forum Iulii. On the eastern and southern sides the city was protected with the River Natissone (2015).



Fig. 2.41: Forum Iulii. City plan (Vitri et al. 2006, Fig. 1).

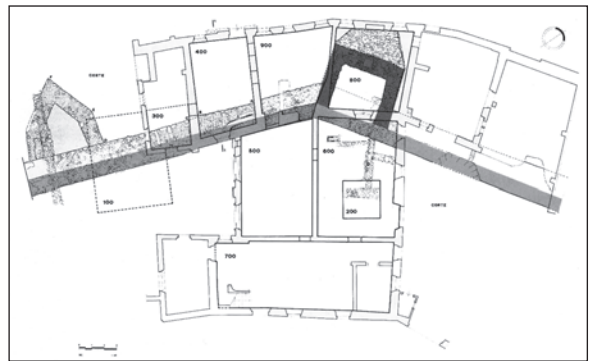


Fig. 2.42: Forum Iulii. Part of the walls with a proteichisma and two towers (Bonetto, Villa 2003, Fig. 1).

alone is symptomatic of a different type of settlement, which also received the metropolitan see in the second half of the 6th century (Mirabella Roberti 1974–1975; Tavano 1976; Cuscito 2001).

Located not far from Aquileia is **Forum Iulii (Cividale)** (Figs 2.40–2.42), which contrary to Aquileia significantly gained in importance in the 5th and 6th centuries due to its strategic significance and advantageous defensive location (Brogiolo 2010, 71–72; Marano 2011, 180–182). In the 6th century, its walls were reinforced with proteichisma and enlarged pentagonal towers (Bonetto, Villa 2003; Vitri et al. 2006). The remains of a lavish *domus* with an apsidal hall were partially investigated at Piazza Paolo Diacono that was presumably built in the second half of the 5th century in the area where the forum is believed to have stood. The importance of this house is underscored by a rich Langobard burial



Fig. 2.43: Tergeste. Roman remains and Late Antique basilica on the hill of San Giusto (2014).

from the 7th century. Partial traces of other *domus* also came to light at other sites. The octagonal baptistery indicates that an Early Christian church stood where the cathedral currently stands. The continuity and a greatly increased importance of the city in the Langobard era, when it became one of the centres of the Langobard state, is reflected in the numerous and rich cemeteries located in different suburban areas.

The city of **Tergeste (Trieste)** (Fig. 2.43) in the 4th century spread across the slope and summit of the hill San Giusto fortified with a defensive wall (Maselli Scotti 1990; Marano 2011, 183). In the time of the Byzantine reconquista, the summit was turned into a fort enclosed with a wall of reused stones and reinforced with pentagonal towers. In the place of the capitolium, the basilica of St Justus was constructed in the first half or middle of the 5th century, and was later remodelled. Traces of oil and wine production show that life also continued, albeit in a limited degree, at the foot of the hill. The cemeterial basilica from the first half of the 5th century at Via Madonna del Mare is well-known, located in a suburban area. It was renovated and decorated in the mid-6th century, its colourful mosaic has numerous donor's inscriptions mentioning a variety of functions of a well-organised church community from the 6th century (Caillet 1993, 270–271).

AUSTRIA

The only city in both Norican provinces that exhibits signs of some continuity to the end of the 6th century is **Teurnia** (Figs. 2.44–2.46) (Egger 1914; Glaser



Fig. 2.44: Teurnia from the east (2014).

1992, 39–43, 81–123; id. 2002, 141–143; Ladstätter 2002, 319–320; Dolenz et al. 2016). Its location on top of a naturally well-protected hill above the Drau/Drava enabled a continued existence of the city on the same spot that, from the second half of the 3rd century onwards, also gradually welcomed the inhabitants previously living on the slopes below. Eugippius refers to the city as *metropolis Norici* (Vita Sancti Severini 21, 2). It was abandoned in the Middle Ages, which allowed for a good preservation of its remains. Its excavations, however, were conducted in the early 20th century and their poor documentation does not enable a reliable dating of the city's individual elements.

The urban settlement extending over 10 ha was most likely enclosed with thick walls already in the 4th century. The walls later received additions that

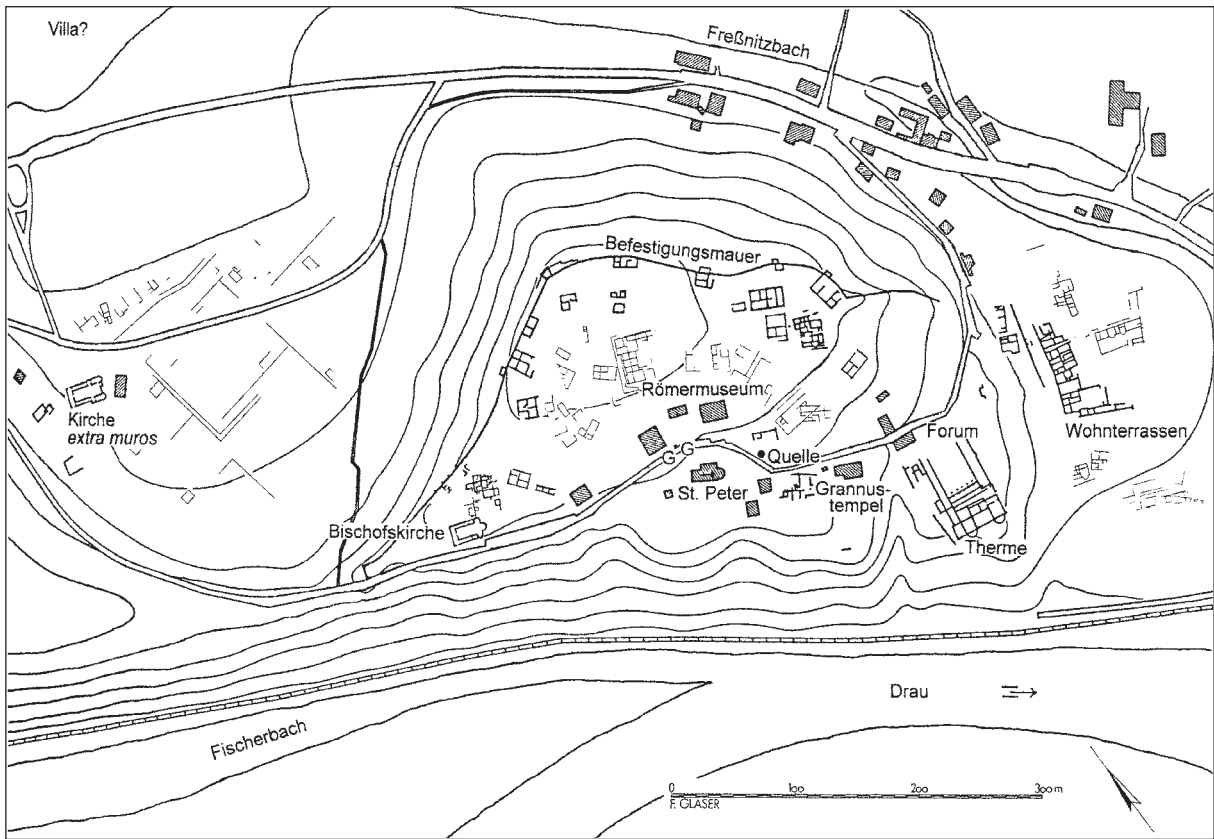


Fig. 2.45: Teurnia. Plan of the Late Antique city (Glaser 2014, Fig. 5).

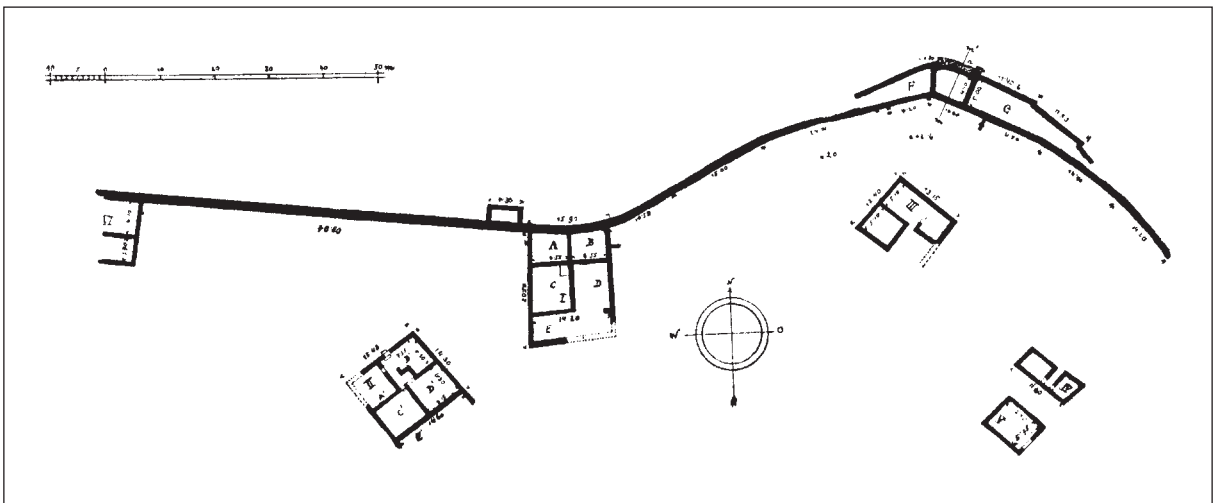


Fig. 2.46: Teurnia. Plan of a part of the defensive walls with a proteichisma and Late Antique buildings in the interior of the settlement (Egger 1914, Fig. 12).

included defensive towers and a heavily fortified entrance. Egger's plan shows that the outer walls were reinforced with a proteichisma in the exposed part of the city. Such reinforcement is fully understandable as part of Justinian's protection of one of the main

routes leading to Italy from the north, which led past the city and is corroborated by the nearby fort at Duel (Ciglenečki 2012, 462).

An Early Christian episcopal church was constructed in the 5th century and extensively renovated

after a fire in the first half of the 6th century (Glaser 1997, 133). Right next to it a *xenodocheion* (*hospitium*) was found, which is the first example of a public building with such a function in the eastern Alpine area (Glaser 1992, 93–103, 107–112). Different fragments of Early Christian church furnishings indicate the presence of at least two other sacral buildings (Glaser 2015, 14–18; Dolenz et al. 2016, 116–117). A cemeterial church lies outside the settlement (Egger 1916, 12–55). The settlement interior revealed several independent two- or three-room houses of a Late Antique date (Egger 1916, 55–56). Of these, more is known of the large house with an apse and heating canals, which was a modest urban villa (Glaser 1992, 107–112; Ramstetter 2019). Different renovations of earlier buildings have also been recorded in the vicinity of the forum (Eitler 2017, 94–102). The distribution of buildings in the late phase of the settlement does not indicate a planned urban layout. Numerous small finds, as well as a partially excavated cemetery prove that life in Teurnia lasted to the late 6th century (Piccottini 1976; Glaser 1997, 140–141).

CROATIA

In the Pannonian part of modern-day Croatia, there is a single identifiable city with continuity, namely **Siscia (Sisak)** (Fig. 2.47), the Late Antique capital of the province Savia. The completely built-up modern city offers archaeological and literary evidence that suggests continuity to the end of the 6th century (Gračanin, Bilogrivić 2016, 116–117). It was strategically located at the junction of several major communications, at the confluence of the Rivers Kupa and Sava and hence naturally well-protected. Siscia was an important starting point for the nearby mines of metal ores in present-day north-western Bosnia. After Diocletian's division, it became the seat of the province Pannonia Savia and enjoyed a particularly prominent role in the 4th and first third of the 5th century. Sources mention different high administrative and army officials, as well as an imperial mint and a unit of the Danubian fleet stationed here. In the 6th century, Cassiodorus mentions *curiales* heading civil administration and a Gothic *comes* governing the city. For a brief period, there was also a mint of Ostrogothic coins operational in the city (Demo 1994, 134–136). Two bishops are mentioned for the first half of the 6th century (Bratož 2011a, 241). Recent investigations and the recovered small finds offer only a limited insight into the constructions and development of the Late Antique city (Simoni 1989; Migotti 1994, 47–48; Lolić 2003, 143–144). The course of the city walls is only outlined. There are no reliably data on the Early Christian architecture. Two apsidal buildings are mentioned, which were destroyed dur-

ing construction work without any documentation. According to Branka Migotti, the most likely location of the episcopal basilica is in the southeast corner of the city, where Early Christian sarcophagi came to light (Migotti 1994, 47). Late Antique architecture is poorly known, the remains of buildings from this period were only sporadically found, but even these do not appear to form larger complexes. Baths were still active in the 4th century, as was a *horreum*. There are abundant small finds from the 4th and even the first third of the 5th century, whereas the finds from the second half of the 5th century are rather rare. The numbers again rise in the first half of the 6th century, when Roman artefacts are joined by those of typically Gothic, Byzantine and also Langobard costumes (Simoni 1989). The second half of the 6th century is again poorly represented and it would appear that Siscia already lost its urban character in this time.

In contrast, urban continuity is strongly felt on the east coast of the Adriatic. Although marked with lowered urban standards in comparison with earlier times, it did boast new constructions in defensive, residential and particularly sacral spheres.

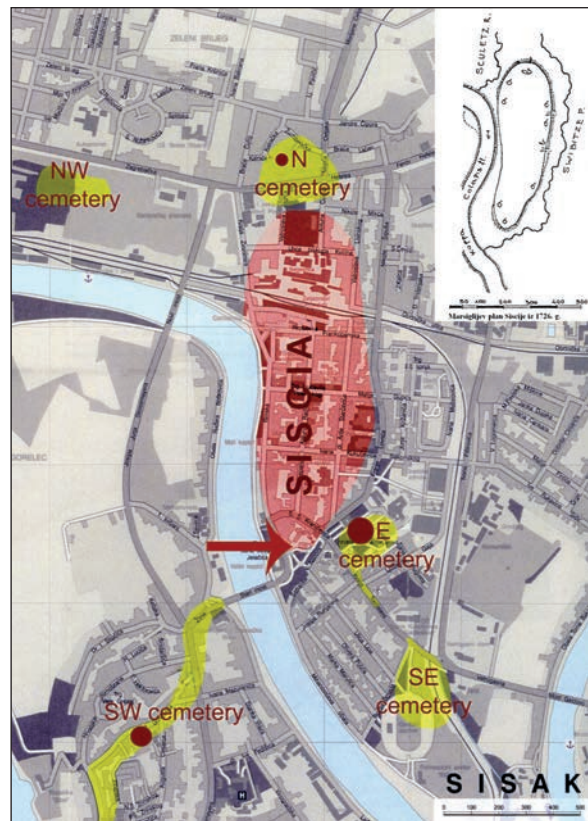


Fig. 2.47: Siscia. City plan (Migotti 2015, Fig. 13).



Fig. 2.48: Parentium. Basilica and episcopium from the north-east (2010).



Fig. 2.49: Parentium. Interior of the episcopium (2010).

Parentium (Poreč) (Figs. 2.48, 2.49, 2.255) is a city with a strong habitation continuity, established on a peninsula that offers excellent natural protection. The long centuries of later occupation are also the reason for a lack of elements to shed more light on the city in Late Antiquity. We know of its extent and part of the city walls, layout of communications and three Early Christian churches (Matejčić 2007).

Exceptional in several aspects is the episcopal complex with a double church and an episcopium. Research in the current cathedral has revealed a development from a simple church complex built (most likely) in the late 4th century, to a double, 'pre-Euphrasian' church of the mid-5th century and finally the Euphrasian basilica of the mid-6th century, which ranks among the most beautifully decorated churches of the Justinian period

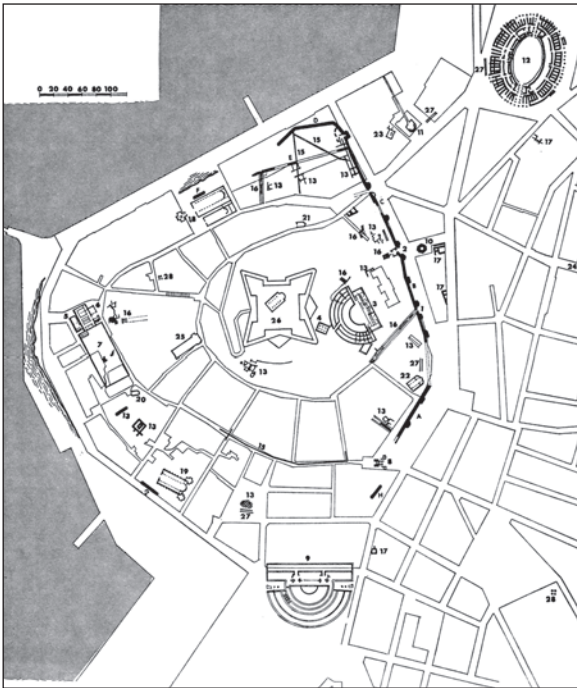


Fig. 2.50: Pola. City plan (Marušić 1967, Fig. 1).



Fig. 2.51: Pola. City walls and defensive towers by the gates.



Fig. 2.52: Pola. Remains of Early Christian church of Maria Formosa with a fully preserved chapel (2014).

(Matejčić 2014). The completely preserved episcopal palace is an excellent example of prestigious housing, the construction of which has also been posited in the time of Bishop Euphrasius (Matejčić, Chevalier 2012). Its ground floor has a large central hall surrounded by smaller utilitarian rooms, while the first storey boasts an *aula palatina* with an apse and a triumphal arch in the shape of a tribelon. The building represents completely preserved housing of the elite from the mid-6th century, whose layout of rooms, multi-storeyed construction and decoration reveals in details the appearance of the last prestigious buildings of Antiquity.

The colony **Pola (Pula)** (Figs. 2.50–2.52) gained in significance in Late Antiquity due to its exceptional geographic and strategic location at the tip of the Istrian Peninsula on the navigable route to Ravenna. In this time, it witnessed changes visible primarily in the numerous newly-built churches (Marušić 1967, 9–11, 22–26; Matijašić, Buršić Matijašić 1996). As a prominent stronghold on the navigable route along the coast and a point of quickest crossing of the Adriatic, the city also served as a maritime base for the Byzantine conquest of Ravenna. In the 5th/6th century, the Late Republican city walls with defensive towers were renovated and added a new exterior facing. Early excavations unearthed three round towers, which were later made polygonal along the exterior (Starac, A. 2001, 65). A defensive structure built of spolia was found on the interior side at the Gate of Hercules that presumably supported an earthwork rampart. A large episcopal centre was built in the 4th/5th century. The imposing, lavishly decorated church of Maria Formosa was constructed in the middle of the 6th century, on the order of Bishop Maximianus of Ravenna, who was born in nearby Veštar (Vistar). In addition to the churches inside the fortified area, there are also numerous extramural churches, both in the immediate vicinity and farther away (Marušić 1967, 11, 15–16, 23–26). Recent rescue investigations have revealed a large part of the city's interior, known as St Theodore's quarter (Starac, A.

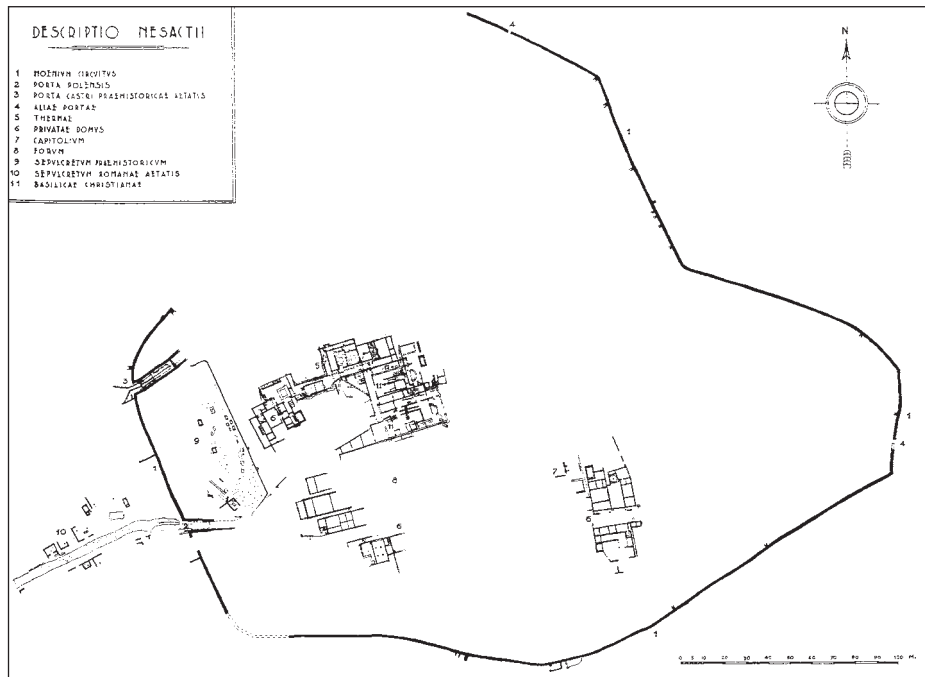


Fig. 2.53: Nesactium. City plan (Rosada 1999, Fig. 20).



Fig. 2.54: Nesactium. Ruins of the double Early Christian church (2011).

2009), with numerous constructions dating from the beginnings of the Roman city to the modern period. In Late Antiquity, the area hosted a luxury *domus* and public baths in the vicinity of a temple. The *domus*, extensively renovated already in the early 2nd century, was destroyed together with the baths in a fire in the second half of the 5th century. Soon afterwards, a small church of St Lucia was built in the area of the destroyed baths and next to

it a modest building on flimsy foundations. Part of the abandoned space yielded traces of economic activities including oil presses. Numerous archaeological finds support the continuity of this part of the city throughout the 5th and to the 7th century.

The small Roman city of **Nesactium** (Figs. 2.53, 2.54), located on the spot of the former important hill-fort of the Histri, later transformed into a typical Late

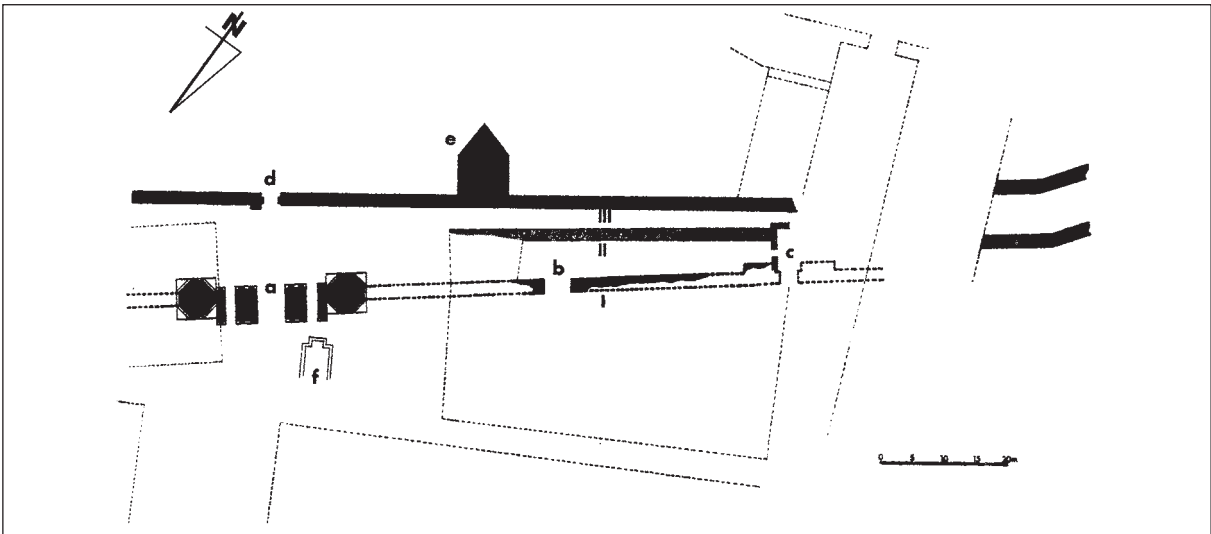


Fig. 2.55: Iader. Plan of the walls on the southwestern part of the city with Late Antique proteichisma and the gates (marked with number II) (Suić 2003, Fig. 61).



Fig. 2.56: Iader. Remains of the forum and basilica (2012).

Antique city with reliable evidence of life in the 5th and 6th centuries (Rosada 1999). Towards the end of the 4th century, it was enclosed with walls, 1.6 m thick, that further increased its defences on a naturally well-protected location. A protruding rectangular tower was unearthed in one part of the walls. In addition to small finds, the chronology and character of the city is revealed by the well-researched double Early Christian church with a baptistery, which was built in the 5th century at the edge of the Roman forum and remained in use to the end of the 6th century. Nesactium is thus a typical example of a prehistoric hillfort that was an important local centre also in the Roman and Late Antique periods and was finally abandoned at the end of Antiquity.

The major part of **Iader (Zadar)** (Figs. 2.55, 2.56) boasts a location on a naturally well-protected peninsula, in the central part of the navigable route along the east Adriatic. Along the exterior of the city walls from the Augustan period, where access from land was easiest, an equally thick proteichisma was built in Late Antiquity, the previously wide entry gate was closed and only a narrow passage left (Suić 1976b). Extensive traces of Early Christian buildings from the 5th and 6th centuries came to light here, which largely respected the earlier urban layout (Suić 1976a, 246; id. 1981; id. 2003, 350, 367; Uglešić 2002, 11–33). Standing out is the church complex from the late 4th century, sited at the edge of the Roman forum. The city also hosted numerous small intramural churches of the 5th and 6th centuries. Wine and oil presses in the urban centre are evidence of a heavy ruralisation of the city (Suić 1976a, 248).

Early Byzantine reinforcement of defensive walls with a proteichisma can also be observed in two smaller cities, namely Asseria and Varvaria in the hinterland



Fig. 2.57: Asseria with well-fortified western walls (2020).



Fig. 2.58: Asseria. South-western corner of city walls with a tower and a proteichisma (2004).



Fig. 2.59: Varvaria. City walls reinforced in Late Antiquity (2020).

of Zadar, both of which revealed extensive reparations of earlier walls. They aptly illustrate the construction efforts during Justinian's reconquista in cities and – as we shall see below – even more frequently in countryside forts.

Not much is known of the interior of **Asseria (Podgrađe)** (Figs. 2.57, 2.58, 2.251), a Roman city established on the spot of an old Liburnian settlement. Early investigations focused on the remains from the 1st and 2nd centuries. The city's last peak presumably dates to the times of Diocletian and Constantine (Liebl, Wilberg 1908). The modern, large-scale systematic excavations have revealed a typical Early Byzantine fortification of the city walls (Fadić 2001, 78–79). The old Roman walls, then (and even today!) still excellently preserved, were cleverly adapted by reinforcing the exterior with tow-

ers and buttresses, and adding a drystone proteichisma that incorporates numerous spolia and traces the main walls at a distance of up to 10 m. The proteichisma can be attributed to the Justinian period, as is the case in numerous forts along the eastern Adriatic navigable route that are discussed below. A tomb from the first half of the 6th century located along the city walls and covered by one of the buttresses supports a Justinian dating. In the city interior, the foundations of an Early Christian church with an apse came to light in what remained of the forum. The furnishing remains of another sacral building, presumably of a cemeterial nature, were found outside the city walls (Uglešić 2002, 65–66). The extensive reinforcement of defensive installations in the Justinian period raises the possibility of strong garrisons stationed here; we may even posit the influx of people from surrounding areas.

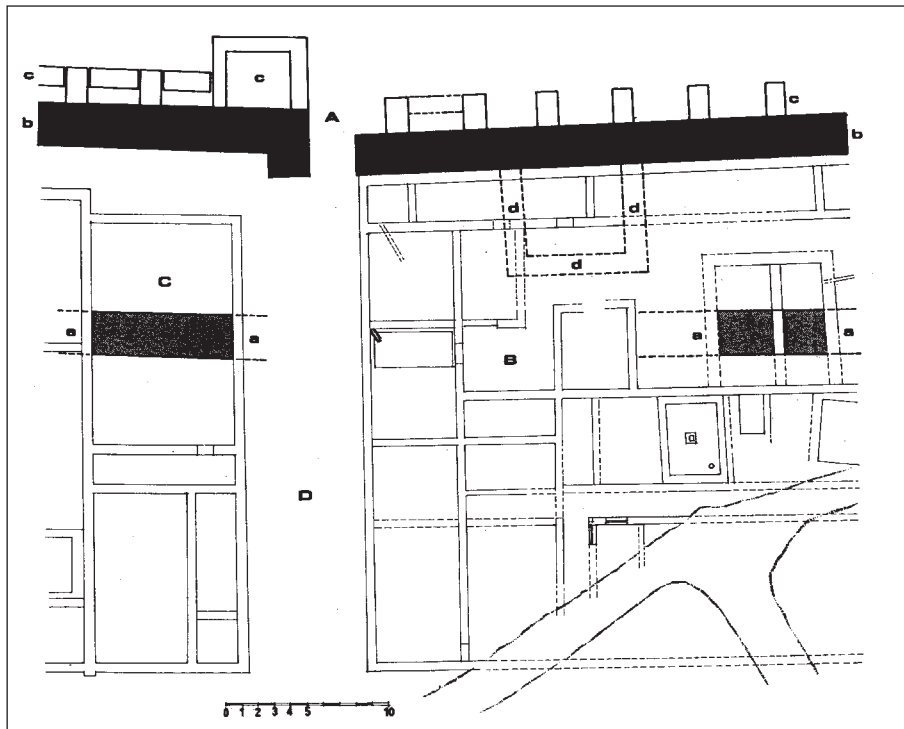


Fig. 2.60: Varvaria. Late Antique city walls on the south-western part (Suić 2003, Fig. 5).



Fig. 2.61: Varvaria. Hill with the city from the south (2006).

A similar transformation of an old prehistoric centre and Roman municipium has been observed at **Varvaria (Bribirska glavica)** (Figs. 2.59–2.61). The additions to the Tiberian city walls are less characteristic, but also include thick buttresses and towers protecting entrance gates. The small finds and a coin of Justinian led Mate Suić to date this phase of the walls to the time of renovations following the victory against the

Ostrogoths in Dalmatia (Suić 1976a, 234; id. 1980, 40). Modern excavations conducted in the city interior have revealed an unusual church building – rotunda with eight apses – dated to the 6th century (Milošević A. 2017; Ghica et. al. 2019).

Municipium Riditarum (Danilo) (Figs. 2.62–2.64) lay on the major Roman road from Scardona to Salona in its first few centuries, while its Late Antiquity inhabitants



Fig. 2.62: Municipium Ridentarum. Hill Gradina from the south (2020).



Fig. 2.63: Municipium Ridentarum. Remains of Late Antique walls (2006).



Fig. 2.64: Municipium Ridentarum. Remains of a Late Antique building cut into the bedrock (2006).

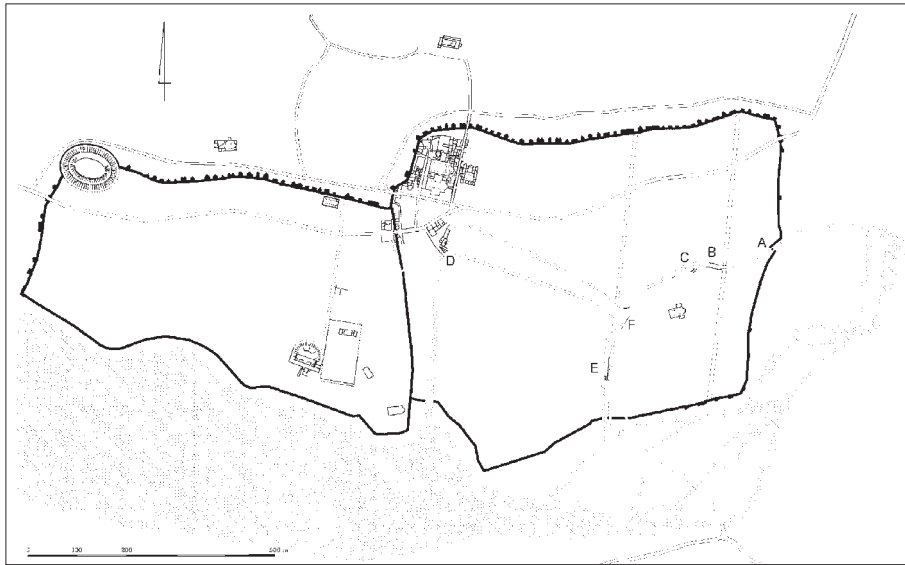


Fig. 2.65: Salona. City plan (Jeličić-Radonić 2006, Fig. 9).

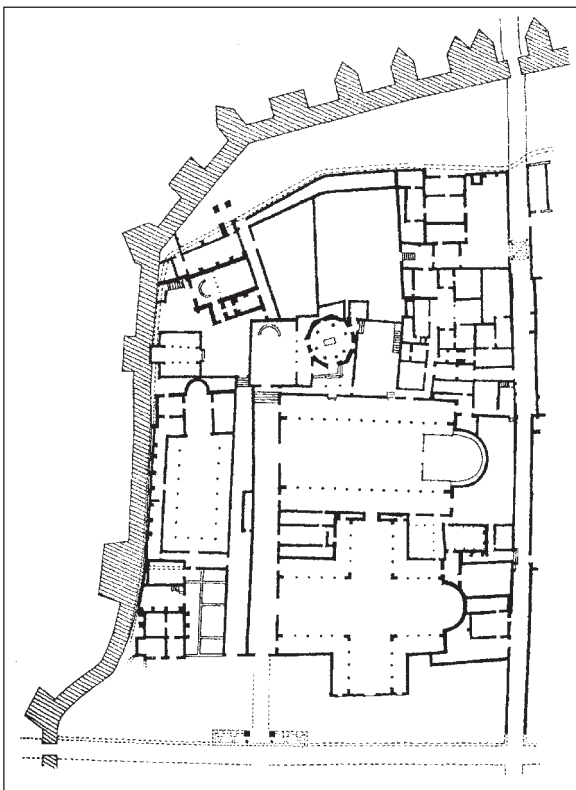


Fig. 2.66: Salona. Episcopal complex and well-fortified walls in the northern part of the city (Chevalier, Mardešić 2006, Fig. 6).



Fig. 2.67: Salona. Defensive walls with a tower (2021).

moved to the hill Gradina above the city. The latter is the site of a prehistoric hillfort that today hosts the remains of Late Antique buttressed walls (acropolis, fort?). The slope below has the remains of roughly fifty houses built in the drystone technique and sunken into the bedrock

(Zaninović 1978, 17–29; Suić 2003, 114; Brajković et al. 2013; Ciglenečki 2020, 263–264). Adding to the appearance of an agglomeration on the hill is a system of several cisterns and a stairway hewn into the bedrock. The limited investigations prevent a more definite description of the Late Antique city. Neither is its status clear; it is possibly merely a settlement with a fort, devoid of urban features. Coins and other small finds confirm its existence into the 6th century. An Early Christian church has been investigated below, at the Šematorij site within the old city. It is as yet not possible to date the phases of abandonment of the old city or explain the relationship between both parts; it is also not possible to exclude the possibility of their simultaneous existence.

In the area under discussion, a city that was particularly important in Late Antiquity is **Salona (Solin)** (Figs. 2.65–2.70), a colony that increased in size during the Tetrarchy to encompass an *urbs orientalis*, and persisted



Fig. 2.68: Salona. Episcopal complex in *Urbs orientalis* (2021).



Fig. 2.69: Salona. Manastirine from the west (2021).

in this extent to the early 7th century (surface of ca 50 ha?). As the capital of the province Dalmatia, it witnessed reparations of its defensive walls and lively construction activities reflected in numerous Early Christian churches both in and outside the city walls (cf. Marin 1994; Suić 2003, 365; Marin 2006). It represents one of the greatest Early Christian centres of the Balkans that also ranks among the best researched of its kind across the Empire. Salona was positioned so that several branches of the River Jadro ran through the eastern part of the city, supplying water and affording additional protection.

Much research has been dedicated to Salona's defensive features, particularly those in the exposed northern part (Jeličić-Radonić 1998, 30–32). It has shown gradual addition of new towers and different reparations of the

thick defensive walls erected under Marcus Aurelius. An extensive renovation of the city walls occurred under Theodosius II, when epigraphic evidence reveals the renovation of all the towers and probably also individual sections of the walls. A particularly valuable source for our understanding of the fortifications in Salona is Procopius, who mentions that the walls were fortified during the Gothic War (*De bello Gothico* V, 7.9 and 7.26–31). Archaeological research has confirmed reparations of the city walls with towers, as well as a wide ditch dug in front of the walls in this period. The multitude of amphorae from the 5th/6th centuries filling the core of the city walls clearly shows the haste of the reparations.

From the 4th to the late 6th century, the centre of the city was at the episcopal complex with a double church,



Fig. 2.70: Salona. Remains of the so-called 'Five Bridges'. (2021)

large baptistery and episcopal palace. The city boasted other intramural churches, as well as large cemeterial complexes at Manastirine, Marusinac and Kapljuč. This exceptional church architecture clearly mirrors the introduction and significance of Christianity in the province.

Much less is known of the housing in Salona, as the whole first hundred years of archaeological investigations were focused on the Early Christian buildings. Recently, small parts have been investigated in the city interior (Chevalier, Mardešić 2006) that revealed abandoned parts of the city and a ruralisation of the urban area (e.g. torcular for pressing grapes found at the edge of the forum). Sparser habitation is posited in the eastern part of the city that holds several branches of the Jadro. There are even known examples of burials *intra muros*. The remains of luxury architecture with mosaic floors indicates habitation cores in the interior of the fortified city, similar to those observed in other cities.

Coins and other small finds prove that Salona was gradually abandoned and the hoard buried in 639 indicates its final abandonment (Marović 1984, 298). The city revealed no traces of a violent destruction. It rapidly declined in the final decades of its existence, the inhabitants left and most of the remaining population emigrated to the Palace of Diocletian, some 5 km away.

The old Greek city on the island of Hvar, **Pharia (Stari grad)** (Fig. 2.71), is an example of a city on an island that enjoyed the status of a municipium in the Roman period (Katić 2003, 453–454). In Late Antiquity, defensive walls were constructed on the north side that decreased the size of the former city by half; according to Miroslav Katić, this represents the only example of a reduced urban fabric on the Dalmatian coast. The interior revealed a

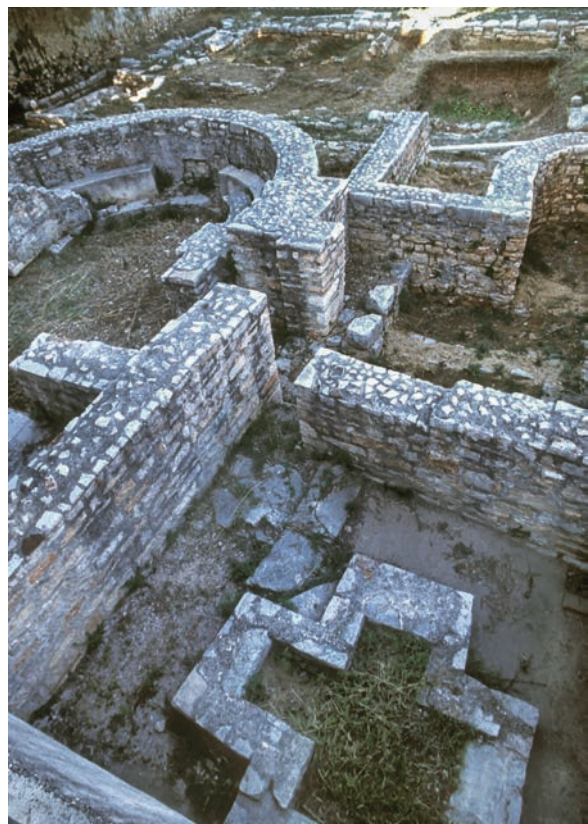


Fig. 2.71: Pharia. Remains of double church with baptistery (2005).

double church with a baptistery decorated with mosaics and wall paintings that represented the cult centre of the Late Antique city (Jeličić-Radonić 1994, 18–87).

2.4.2 EASTERN PART

SERBIA

Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica) (Figs. 2.72–2.75), one of the most important Late Antique cities in the Empire, underwent a particularly characteristic transformation and fate that is paradigmatic of a large part of the area under discussion (Popović, V. 1982, 549; Jeremić, M. 2006; Mirković 2011; Milinković 2015, 111–120; Heinrich-Tamáska 2015, 58–66; Popović, I. 2017). Under Diocletian, it became the capital of the new province Pannonia Secunda and of the Pannonian diocese. Several emperors resided in the imperial palace, the city boasted a major mint, as well as a manufacture of weapons and a state weaving mill. Christianity became prominent here very early on, bishops are mentioned all to 441, in the middle of the 4th century it was even considered the centre of Arianism.

The city was protected with the River Sava in the south and marshes in the north; it received defensive walls in the 3rd century. Its geostrategic location and

new administrative functions brought exceptional development in the 4th century with a hive of construction activities that produced a palace, hippodrome, *horreum*, large urban villas and several baths (Popović, V. 1982; Jeremić, M. 2006; Popović, I. 2008; Heinrich-Tamáska 2015). Martyrial churches were constructed in the 4th century in the suburbs, in the early 5th century an Early Christian church in the centre of the city (Mirković 2011, 87–90).

It was Vladislav Popović who conducted the fundamental research that illuminates the continuity of the city in Late Antiquity (primarily Popović, V. 1982, also collected papers in Popović, V. 2004). He established that a church was constructed on a levelled layer of debris towards the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century, following a barbarian attack. A small necropolis dating to the first half of the 5th century was created around this church. Nothing reliable is known on the existence of the church after this time, particularly after the Hun incursion in the mid-5th century. Shabby buildings were unearthed in its vicinity, made of debris material and bound by clay; Popović allows for the possibility that



Fig. 2.72: Sirmium. City plan (Jeremić, M. 2006, Fig. 7).

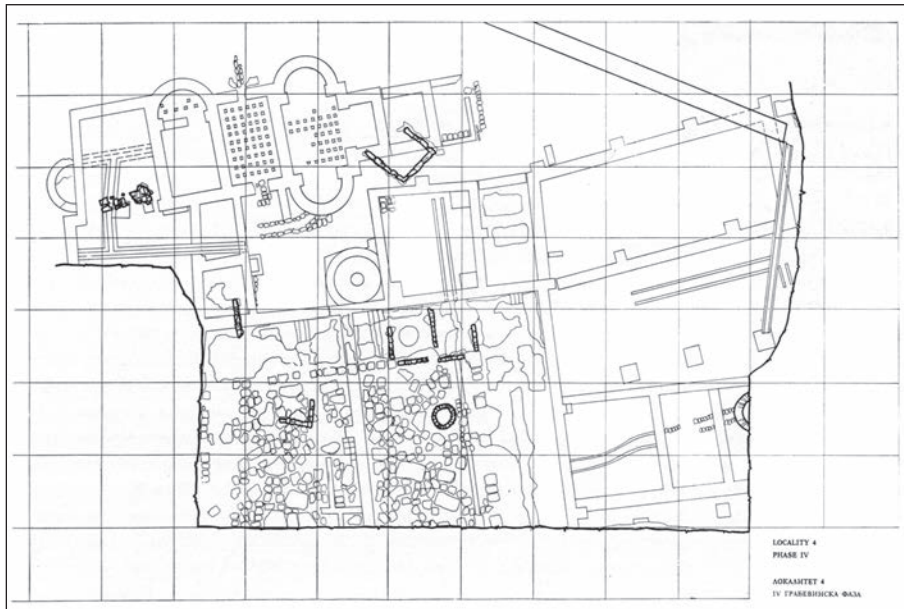


Fig. 2.73: Sirmium. Traces of later additions to the Roman villa with baths (Popović, V. 1982, Fig. 9).



Fig. 2.74: Sirmium. Late Antique buildings (2016).

some better constructed earlier buildings remained in use up to the Hun attack.

After the mid-5th century, during the presence of the Ostrogoths and Gepidae, the urban area was reduced to the southernmost part along the Sava. Earlier architecture had already been destroyed by this time and was uninhabited. Cores of habitation formed in the open spaces that were associated with contemporary cemeteries. Dating

to this time are modest huts constructed in the courts of an urban villa and the lavish building interpreted as the imperial palace from the 4th century. The huts were made of light materials or brick fragments bonded with clay.

The only complete residential complex was that created in the 6th century inside the hippodrome. These modest dwellings had rectangular hearths and presumably lasted from the late 4th century to the end of the



Fig. 2.75: Sirmium. Remains of the Late Antique palace (2016).

city's existence. Recent research has brought to light several new primitive buildings, among them also a large building with baths from the 6th century, which reveals the hippodrome as an especially protected habitation core (Jeremić, M. 2006, 146; Heinrich-Tamáska 2015, 65; Milinković 2015, 117–118).

The utterly reduced and impoverished settlement of the 5th and 6th centuries is in stark contrast with the former splendour of the city. Even more than elsewhere, this situation raises the question of whether it is at all possible to speak of urban agglomerations in this time. The question of the church organisation and the ratio between the Roman and non-Roman population remains open. What is certain is that Sirmium of the 6th century was only a pale reflection of its former glory as an imperial capital and was only composed of small habitation cores, with a strong non-Roman component in its population.

As for many other cities, the current state of research does not allow a confirmation that **Singidunum (Beograd)** (Fig. 2.76), a city at the confluence of the Danube and the Sava, was continually inhabited to the end of the 6th century or whether a previously completely abandoned city was modestly re-inhabited in the Justinian period (Milinković 2015, 120–126). Archaeological evidence indicates a long hiatus following the Hun incursion, which is partially filled by the small cemeteries showing the presence of groups of foreigners (Ivanišević, Kazanski 2002). Presumably dating to the Justinian period are the remains of a *horreum* within the former legionary fortress, while scarce traces of a small settlement from the 6th cen-



Fig. 2.76: Singidunum. City plan (Milinković 2015, Fig. 76).

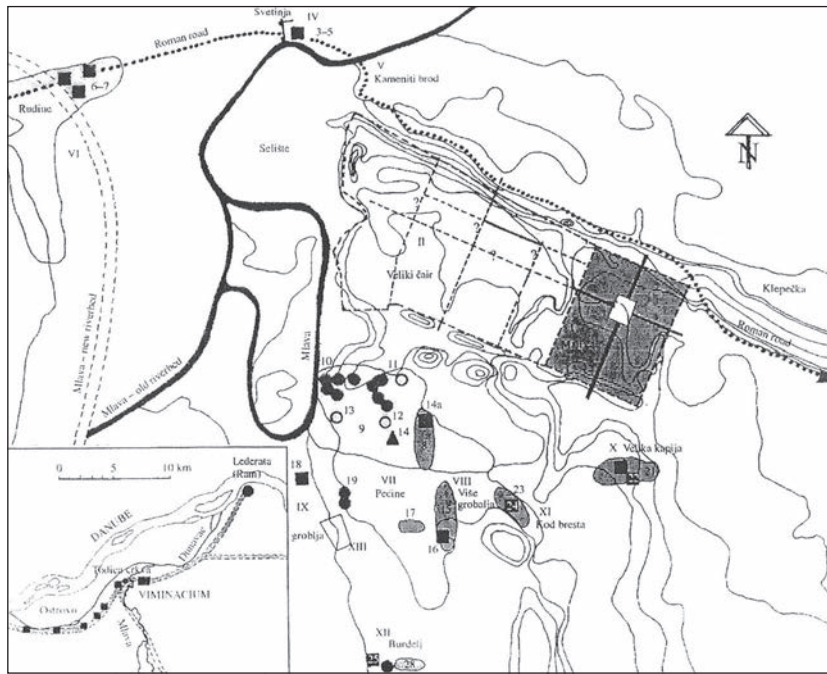


Fig. 2.77: Viminacium. City plan (from Milošević, G. 2002, Fig. 4).

tury came to light along the Danube outside the fortress. Mihailo Milinković observed that habitation continued sporadically after the Hun incursion, but that it was not possible to speak of urban continuity. Singidunum then resembled a partially destroyed fort that hosted groups of rural inhabitants (Milinković 2015, 125). In contrast, Procopius reports that Singidunum with its Justinian walls became ‘a very important city’, which is indirectly confirmed by the mention of a bishop from the 6th century (Claude 1969, 200; Bratož 2011a, 228).

A disparity between the accounts in literary sources and the unearthed archaeological remains is particularly noticeable in the case of **Viminacium (Kostolac)** (Fig. 2.77), hence it is only conditionally included in the group of cities with continuity. Sources mention *Viminakion* on a large island in the Danube (Milinković 2015, 126–136; Ivanišević 2016, 91–92). The main and also largest city of Upper Moesia underwent major settlement changes already in the first half of the 5th century. The last habitation layer only yielded the remains of poorly built houses with walls constructed of reused stones bound by clay. There are no archaeological traces postdating the Hun incursions and only few from the 6th century.

Procopius reports that Justinian renovated the torn-down Viminacium, suggesting that we could expect significant archaeological remains from this time. These have as yet not been found, raising the possibility that the small settlement of simple huts established on the river peninsula at the Svetinja site and protected by thick defensive walls could represent part of these Justinian renovations. Such a hypothesis is questionable, however,

as the newly-established post resembles a small fortified settlement or refuge rather than continuation of the former city (Popović, M. 1988; Milinković 2015, 126–136). This settlement is interpreted as a military post established in the time of Justinian and later also settled with *foederati*. Considering that the late sources mention the location of the new city on an island of the Danube, the problem of the city’s continuity into the 6th century, from which bishops are also mentioned, remains open.

The importance of **Naissus (Niš)** lies in its location along the main road leading from the west to Constantinople, on a major crossroads (Milinković 2015, 137; Ivanišević 2016, 93–94; Jeremić, Čerškov 2021). As the birthplace of the Emperor Constantine, it gained in significance in Late Antiquity and witnessed numerous prestigious houses constructed in the suburban Mediana. In a very vivid account, Priscus reports that the Huns captured Nais in 441 or 447 and razed it to the ground. In 473, the Goths headed by King Theodimer and Prince Theoderic set up temporary base here. Procopius mentions the city in connection with Justinian’s renovations that also included the former residential quarters in Mediana. Several bishops are known from this city. There is almost no archaeological evidence on the city and its structure, though there is mention of a part of defensive walls and other small finds of unreliable date. In contrast, the associated cemeteries do confirm continuation, particularly the one at Jagodin Mala that points to a Roman population. The cemetery revealed numerous graves, 65 beautifully decorated Early Christian tombs and five churches.

MONTENEGRO

One of the most prominent cities in Dalmatia, **Doclea (Podgorica)** (Figs. 2.78–2.80), came under the province Praevalis following Diocletian's reorganisation. This Late Antique city is poorly known; sources from the 5th and early 7th centuries mention bishops. It was located at an important junction of Roman roads and at the confluence of the Rivers Zeta, Morača and Širaliđa, hence naturally excellently protected from three sides. It was additionally protected with 2–2.3 m thick defensive walls reinforced with towers on the most easily accessible, eastern side. The most important public buildings were already excavated in the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, but the excavation records do not allow for a reliable assessment of the city in Late Antiquity (Sticotti 1913; Mijović Kovačević 1975; Geli-chi et al. 2012; Tufi 2012). The archaeological remains include two Early Christian basilicas (double church) that were presumably part of an episcopal palace. They have been dated to the 5th and 6th centuries, renovated under Justinian and abandoned in the face of Avaro-Slavic incursions in the early 7th century. Of interest is their location in the centre of the eastern part of the city, away from the main public buildings of the pre-Christian era, 200 m from the forum. We may posit other contemporary buildings in the eastern part, similarly as in the *urbs orientalis* in Salona, but the area has as yet not been investigated. Two necropoleis are known, the later of which is dated to the 2nd to 5th centuries.

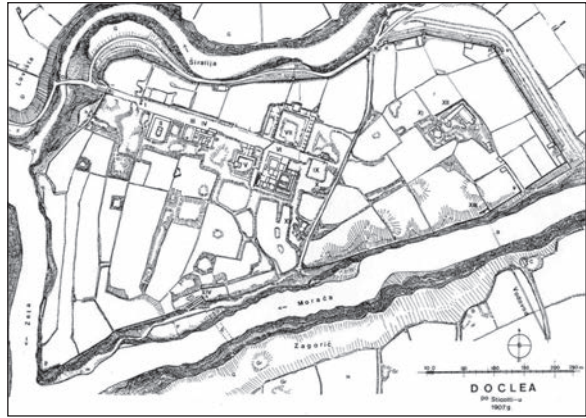


Fig. 2.78: Doclea. City plan (from Sticotti 1913, Plan).



Fig. 2.79: Doclea. Remains of the buildings in the forum (2009).



Fig. 2.80: Doclea. City walls preserved to a substantial height (2009).

KOSOVO

Ulpiana (Iustiniana Secunda) (Gračanica) (Fig. 2.81) went through an interesting transformation in Late Antiquity (Parović-Pešikan 1981; ead. 1989; Teichner 2015a; id. 2015b). The Roman city, which was the centre of a mining region, was established at Gradina. Early excavations here unearthed part of the city walls and the north entrance gates, as well as an Early Christian basilica in its vicinity. The Late Antique remains show three phases. The first was a renovation that took place towards the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th century following a large fire and destruction of the city. The next renovation is believed to have occurred towards the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century. The last phase is dated to the 6th century and shows a partial abandonment of the city and a destruction of the entrance during the earthquake in 518; in this time, a variety of artisanal facilities was set up in the abandoned buildings, also found was a small group of graves (Parović-Pešikan 1989, 118–120).

The recent German-Kosovar investigations that applied modern methods of prospection produced a great amount of data that shed new light on the Late Antique remains. In the city interior, on a surface of

roughly 36 ha, archaeologists found traces of a rectilinear street grid with a differing orientation of buildings that suggests at least two construction phases. The large two-aisled building may be a basilica in the forum, while an episcopal centre may have existed next to a polyconchal baptistery.

Another fortified area was discovered in the immediate vicinity of the original city, at the Bedem site. It covers the surface of only 16.5 ha and was enclosed with a 3 m thick wall reinforced with semicircular and pentagonal towers (Teichner 2015a). Its interior revealed a building with a triconch, a *horreum* and other simple rectangular buildings. Considering the note of Procopius, who mentions the renovation of Ulpiana after an earthquake and Gothic Wars, as well as renaming to *Iustiniana Secunda*, the remains at Bedem may represent the Early Byzantine city. However, parts of the old city (Gradina) continued to function in this period; the presumably martyrial basilica was enclosed with a wall with towers (*quadriburgium*) (Teichner 2015b). If Dietrich Claude wrote in 1969 that only the construction of defensive walls speaks in favour of changing the name to *Iustiniana Secunda* (Claude 1969, 203), the recent investigations entirely corroborate Procopius' note.

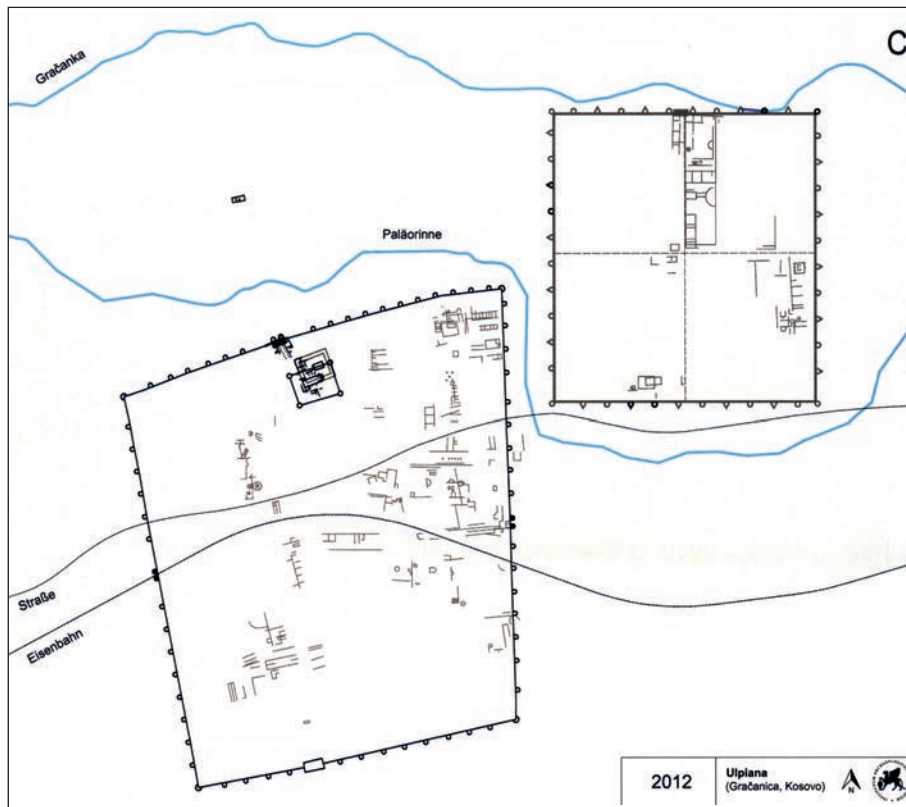


Fig. 2.81: Ulpiana. City plan (Teichner 2018, Fig. 1).

BULGARIA

Bulgaria – as a part of Byzantine territory – offers an excellent insights into the continuity of cities which received strong support from Byzantine central authorities. The numerous investigations in these cities also allow us to identify their basic Late Antique elements.

Serdica (Sofia) (Figs. 2.82–2.84), the capital of the province Dacia Mediterranea, lay on the most important land route connecting East and West of the Empire. In Late Antiquity, it witnessed two major transformations. The first one occurred in the Tetrarchic or Constantinian period, when the city was enlarged from 18 to 84 ha and enclosed with new walls (Dintchev 1999, 42–43; Fingarova 2015; Dintchev 2021a, 239–240). The size of its new part with as many as eight *horrea* suggest it was a strong military base and supply centre (Rizos 2017b, 24–25). It also went down in history as the place of an important ecclesiastical council in 342/343.

The main public buildings were concentrated in the southern part and included a bouleterion, in its immediate vicinity also baths or, in the opinion of some, the

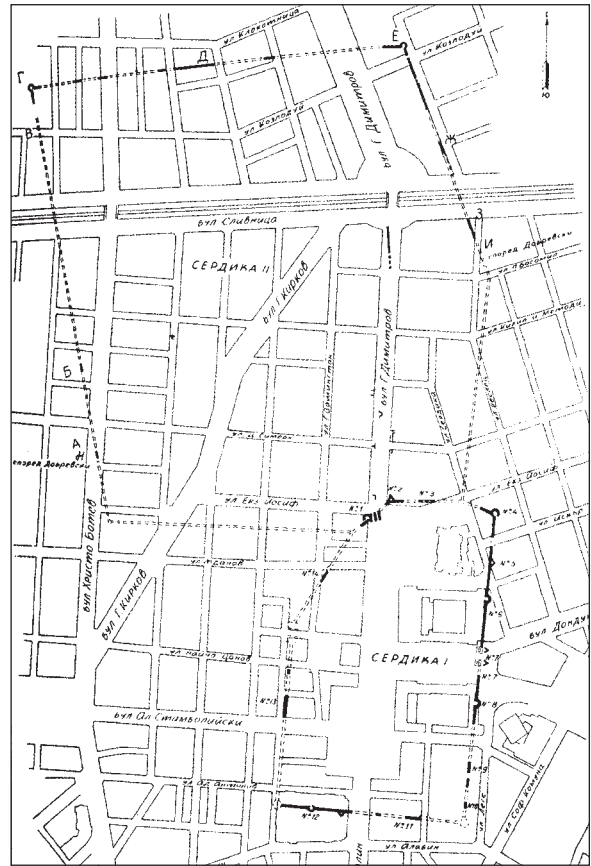


Fig. 2.82: Serdica. City plan (4th century)
(Rizos 2017b, Fig. 5)



Fig. 2.83: Serdica. Baths and Rotunda of St George (2012).

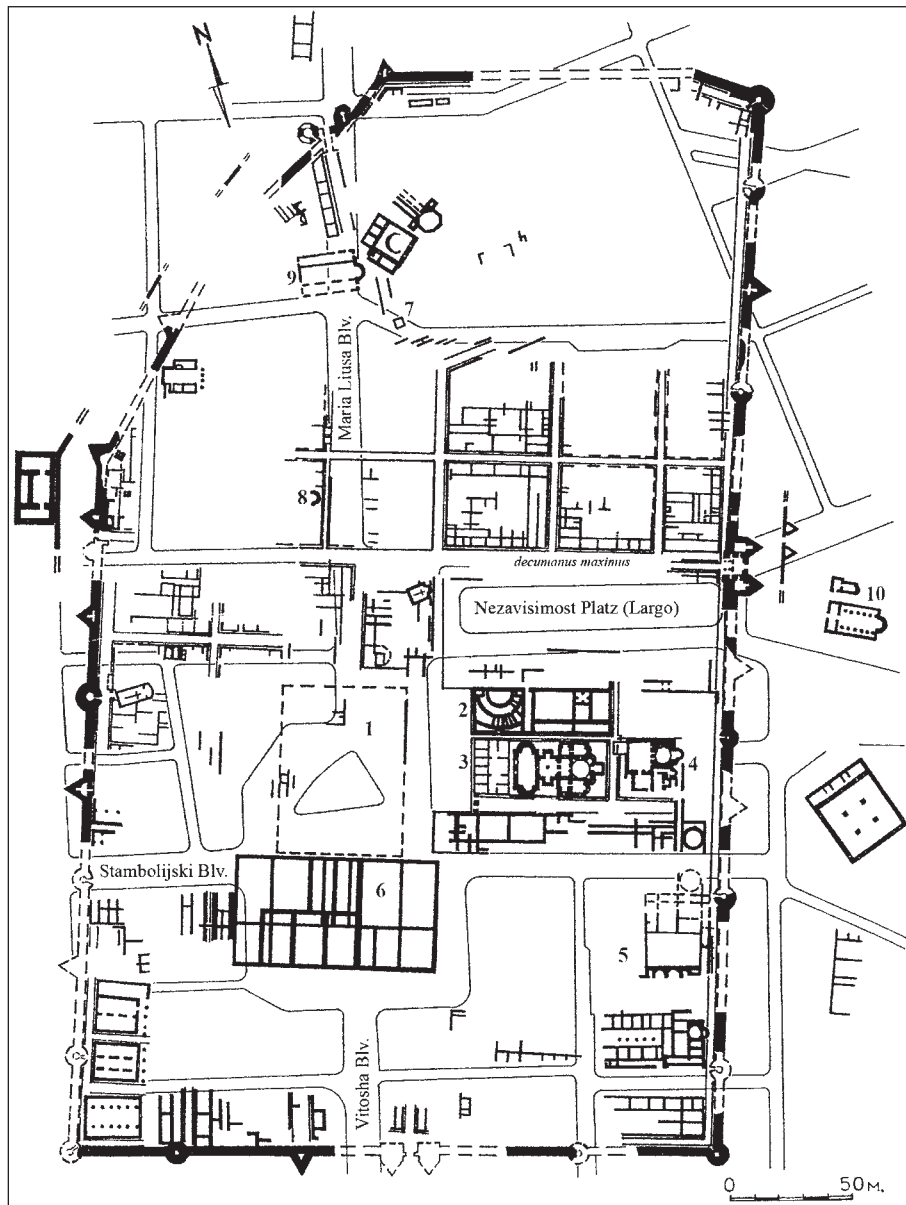


Fig. 2.84: Serdica. City plan (6th century) (Fingarova 2015, Fig. 2).

palace of Constantine, as well as part of prestige housing (Ćurčić 2010, 51, 64). In the northern part, there were springs of mineral water and the remains of baths, as well as different houses that included three spacious peristyle *domus*. Also found was a great apse, which has been interpreted as the remains of an episcopal basilica, and further north a three-aisled basilica constructed on the foundations of an earlier *domus* located in proximity to the mineral springs.

In the middle of the 5th century at the latest, the city again shrunk to its original size. The thoroughly renovated city walls are dated to the Justinian period, reinforced with triangular and pentagonal towers, as well as a proteichisma unearthed in some places (Fin-

garova 2015, 112). After the mid-5th century, two large churches were built right next to the old city centre, as well as two Early Christian basilicas *extra muros*, in the eastern cemeterial area. Of particular interest is one of the rare epigraphic monuments, which relates a concern for the city in the late period and reveals that the local bishop had the city aqueduct renovated as late as 580.

An important city, *Novae (Svištov)* (Figs. 2.85–2.87) was also located on an exposed part of the limes in Lower Moesia. It grew on the spot of a legionary fortress and witnessed numerous changes in Late Antiquity that have been well-documented during the long Polish-Bulgarian investigations (Čičikova 1994; Poulter 1994; Biernacki 2005; id. 2013; Dintchev 2008,

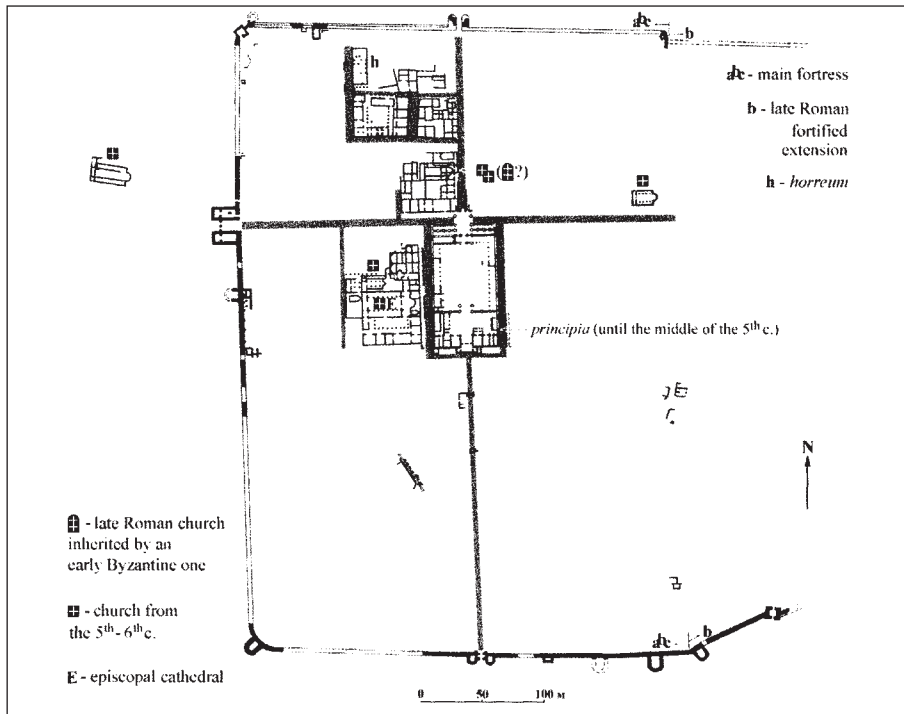


Fig. 2.85: Novae. City plan (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 7).



Fig. 2.86: Novae. Episcopal complex (2012).

407, 409–412). The heavily defended fortress from the 1st century extended over 18 ha and was associated with adjacent *canabae*, 2.5 km further east also a *vicus* that was given the status of a *municipium* in the early 3rd century. Following a Gothic raid in the second half of the 3rd century, when houses outside the fortress were destroyed, numerous inhabitants sought refuge within

the walls. This led to an extension of 10 ha in the east (Novae II); this extension initially only served as a refuge and gradually came to host civilian population. The refugees were first housed in the vacated *valetudinarium*. Later, part of the old city was intended for civilian use. Modest buildings were constructed nearby and used as workshops. This first civilian settlement was inhabited



Fig. 2.87: Novae. Remains of the *valetudinarium* (2012).

to the opening decades of the 4th century, when it was destroyed in a fire. An urban villa was erected here in the mid-4th century. Both parts of the city joined together during the 4th century, a forum was built and other civilian architecture. Research shows that the *principium* was only destroyed in the middle of the 5th century. The development of the city was brought to a halt by the Gothic Wars in 376–382 and later by Hun incursions.

After the victory over the Huns, the city prospered into the Justinian period. The earliest mention of a bishop of Novae dates to the transition from the 5th to the 6th century. A large episcopal complex grew at the edge of the former forum and comprised several interconnected buildings: a large and a small basilica, episcopium, baptistery and auxiliary buildings. The complex stood on the spot of the legionary baths torn down in 376–382, hence the construction of the complex has been dated to the first quarter of the 5th century. As many as five renovations of the basilica have been established, the last one in the third quarter of the 6th century (Biernacki 2005).

The Late Antique transformation of **Nicopolis ad Istrum (Nikiup)** (Figs. 2.88–2.90) is well-known (Poulter 1995; id. 2007c, 51–82). Most of the old city, located in the hinterland of the Danube limes, was destroyed around 447. In the second half of the 5th century, strong defensive walls with protruding rectangular towers were constructed in the naturally most protected part. The 5.74 ha large interior revealed two Early Christian churches and large, well-constructed buildings that Andrew Poulter presumes to have been army barracks and storehouses. This strongly



Fig. 2.88: Nicopolis ad Istrum. City plan (Poulter 2007c, Fig. 1).

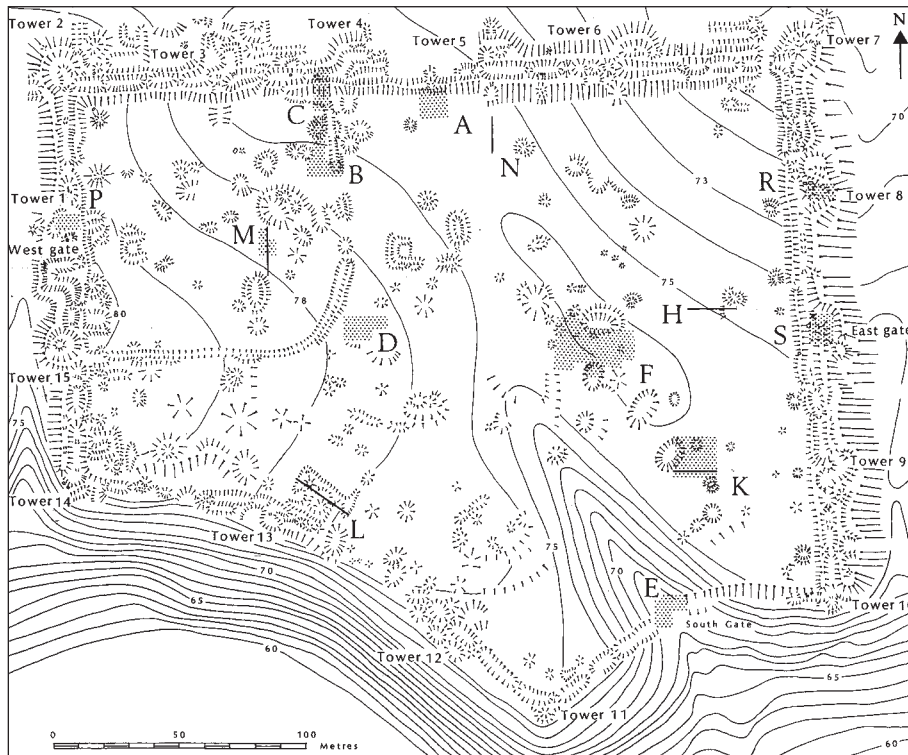


Fig. 2.89: Nicopolis ad Istrum. Plan of the Early Byzantine city (Poulter 2007c, Fig. 10).



Fig. 2.90: Nicopolis ad Istrum. Ruins of the forum (2012).

defended and well-built part of the city is believed to only have hosted the church elite and the army, possibly also storehouses for the imperial army. The empty space in the interior was presumably intended for temporary army unit, as a civilian refuge or even

as gardens. Ventzislav Dintchev notes the prospect of wooden buildings standing in the areas where geophysical surveys detected no masonry buildings. He also allows for the possibility that the centre of ecclesiastical organisation moved from Nicopolis to

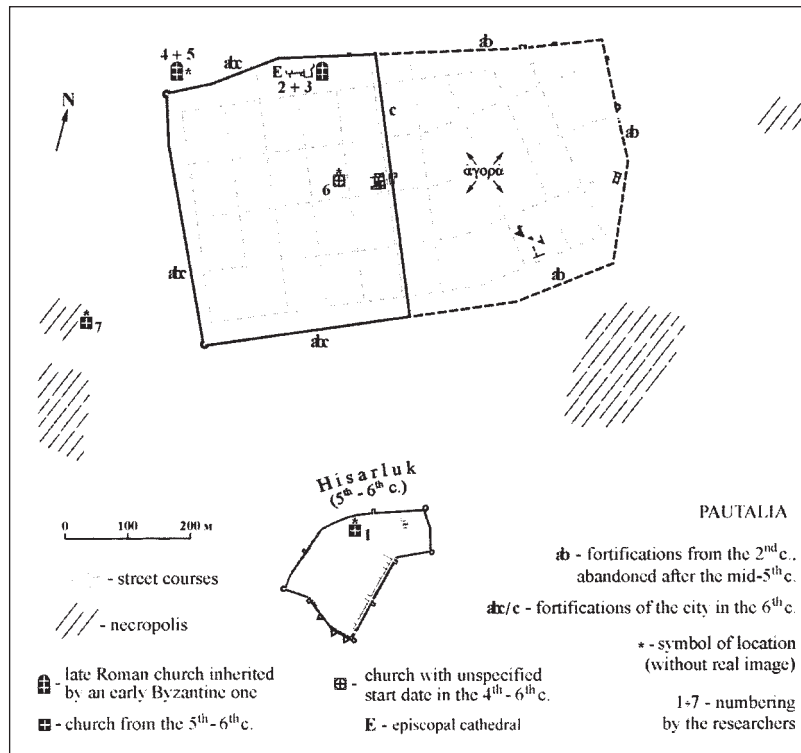


Fig. 2.91: Pautalia. City plan (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 6).

present-day Carevec, presumed Zikideva (see *Chapter 2.5*) (Dintchev 1997, 100–103).

The data available on **Durostorum (Silistra)** in Late Antiquity are insufficient to allow a comprehensive reconstruction. Recent work did investigate the defensive walls of the Byzantine fort constructed immediately next to the Danube, which only protected a small part (ca 5 ha) of the formerly large city (Atanasov 2013). The Justinian walls are of a complex construction, built in a zigzag line with additional reinforcement of the triangular tips. This feature is closely paralleled with the walls of Aquileia.

The large (29 ha) Roman city of **Pautalia (Kjusstendil)** (Fig. 2.91) was already fortified under Marcus Aurelius. In Late Antiquity, new city walls were built that considerably reduced its size (Dintchev 1999, 46). Several churches were also constructed, with some of the earlier buildings exhibiting Late Antique modifications. A 2.1 ha large fort was built on the nearby Hisarluka hill already towards the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century. A passage in Procopius suggests that this fort on elevated ground was refortified and built-up in the 6th century (Kirilov 2006b, 68).

Philippopolis (Plovdiv) (Fig. 2.92) is one of the largest cities in the area under discussion (ca 80 ha) and the capital of the province Thracia (Topalilov 2012). In this city of continuity, the elements of particular interest

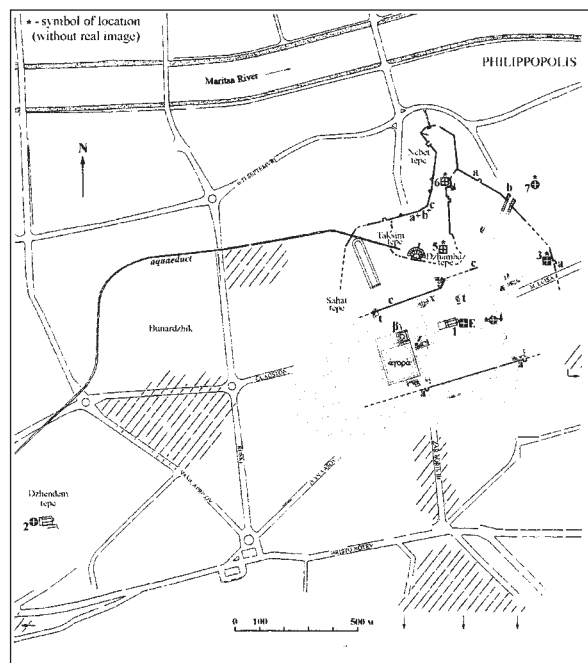


Fig. 2.92: Philippopolis. City plan (from Dintchev 2018, Fig. 2).

first and foremost include the strong city walls (Dintchev 2021a, 242–244). In the second quarter of the 6th century, the walled area was limited to the acropolis that extended across three elevations and their slopes. Even the episcopal basilica alongside numerous other buildings of the old city in the lowland remained outside the new walls. Among the Late Antique buildings, we should mention the lavish villas from the late 3rd or the 4th century with magnificent mosaics, which were inhabited to the end of the 6th century (Valeva 2011, 28–41).

An unusual example of a reduced city area in the Early Byzantine period can be observed in **Deultum (Debelt)** (Fig. 2.93) (Vagalinski 2008; id. 2018). In the north, its Late Roman city walls with a tower were constructed on top of the ruins of earlier Roman buildings; the walls were finished prior to 383 and renovated in the Early Byzantine period, more precisely in the last third of the 5th or beginning of the 6th century. At this time, the city was radically narrowed to an elongated rectangle that, for defensive purposes, reached to the terrace in the north and encompassed the river harbour in the south that enabled communication with the Black Sea. After a fire in the early 6th century, the north walls were repaired and masonry buildings added that leaned onto the walls. The city was destroyed soon after 574 (Vagalinski 2018, 87).

The city of **Mesembria (Nesebar)** (Figs. 2.94–2.96, 2.256) stood on the coast of the Black Sea, on an excellently protected peninsula (Velkov 1988, 223; Dintchev 2016, 313; Preshlenov 2012; id. 2018). Already in Hellenistic times, it had strong walls in the part that offered easiest access. New walls were constructed in the time of Marcus Aurelius. In the second half of the 5th cen-

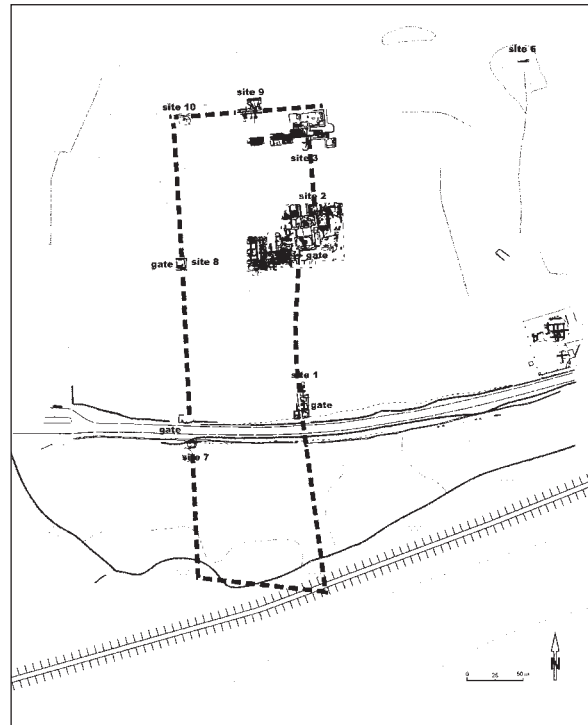


Fig. 2.93: Deultum. City plan (from Vagalinski 2018, Fig. 2).

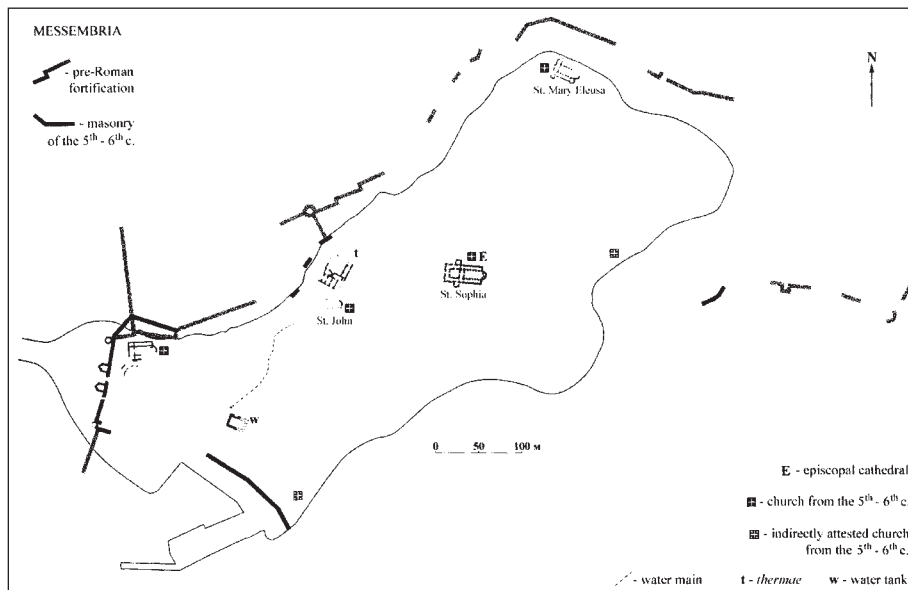


Fig. 2.94: Mesembria. City plan (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 12).



Fig. 2.95: Mesembria. City walls on the western side (2012).



Fig. 2.96: Mesembria. Church of St Sophia (2012).

tury, thick walls were constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique on top of the destroyed walls and reinforced at either end with a round tower. The entrance was also renovated and fortified with a pair of pentagonal towers erected on the spot of earlier Roman rectangular towers. Traces of the city walls also came to light in other parts of the city. The earlier creation of the walls is probably

the reason for Procopius not mentioning the city among Justinian constructions. The interior revealed three better preserved large Early Christian basilicas and the remains of two other basilicas. The large baths from the 6th century together with an oval square and the remains of a street grid show that life and a high living standard persisted in the city.

ROMANIA

Following a Gothic destruction in the mid-3rd century, the city of **Histria** (Fig. 2.97) in the Danube Delta was renovated, but reduced from 30 to mere 7 ha and reinforced with strong city walls (Angelescu et al. 2017). The walls date to the late 3rd or early 4th century and girdled the entire acropolis of the former city. It underwent several repairs and renovations, both under Anastasius and later in the 6th century. The readily accessible west side was additionally fortified with towers. In the 6th century, the earlier Hellenistic walls on the west side were renovated and now represented a proteichisma that also served as shelter for refugees and their herds. The city had three basilicas and another one *extra muros* (Achim 2012). Unearthed under the central, episcopal church that stands out in size and décor was its predecessor datable between the last quarter of the 4th and the early 6th century. Located at the city walls, near the 'Parvan basilica', archaeologists were able to date the first church to the time of Anastasius and its enlargement to the first half of the 6th century (Angelescu et al. 2017, 149). In the 6th century, several *domus* were constructed on the east side that include one with an apsed audience hall. These are characteristic houses with rooms arranged around a central court. Similar houses came to light in the southwest, where baths were abandoned

towards the end of the 4th century and turned into a private villa (Sodini 1997, 451–453). Part of the city in the west appears to have hosted economic activities (*horreum*, smithies, bakeries). In the last quarter of the 6th or even first decade of the 7th century, the well-constructed *domus* show minor subdivisoning (Munteanu 2011).

ALBANIA

Scodra (Shkodër) (Figs. 2.98–2.100), the capital of the province Praevalitana, is poorly known, but there are some elements that offer an insight into its appearance between the 4th and the 6th centuries (Hoxha 2003; Sodini 2007, 319; Dintchev 2021a, 237). It encompassed the acropolis on a large and naturally excellently protected Rosafa hill and the city in the lowland below that had rivers protecting it on two sides. Between the rivers was a transverse wall, 2.1–2.4 m thick and reinforced with wooden beams, dating to the early 5th century. The next thick cultural layer after this time indicates a renovation of the city walls in the Justinian period, which is corroborated by the note of Procopius that Justinian renovated the city. This renovation can be identified in the addition to the earlier walls, which took the form of 2.1 m thick walls of a poorer construction and bound by firm mortar. Semi-oval towers were leaned on these

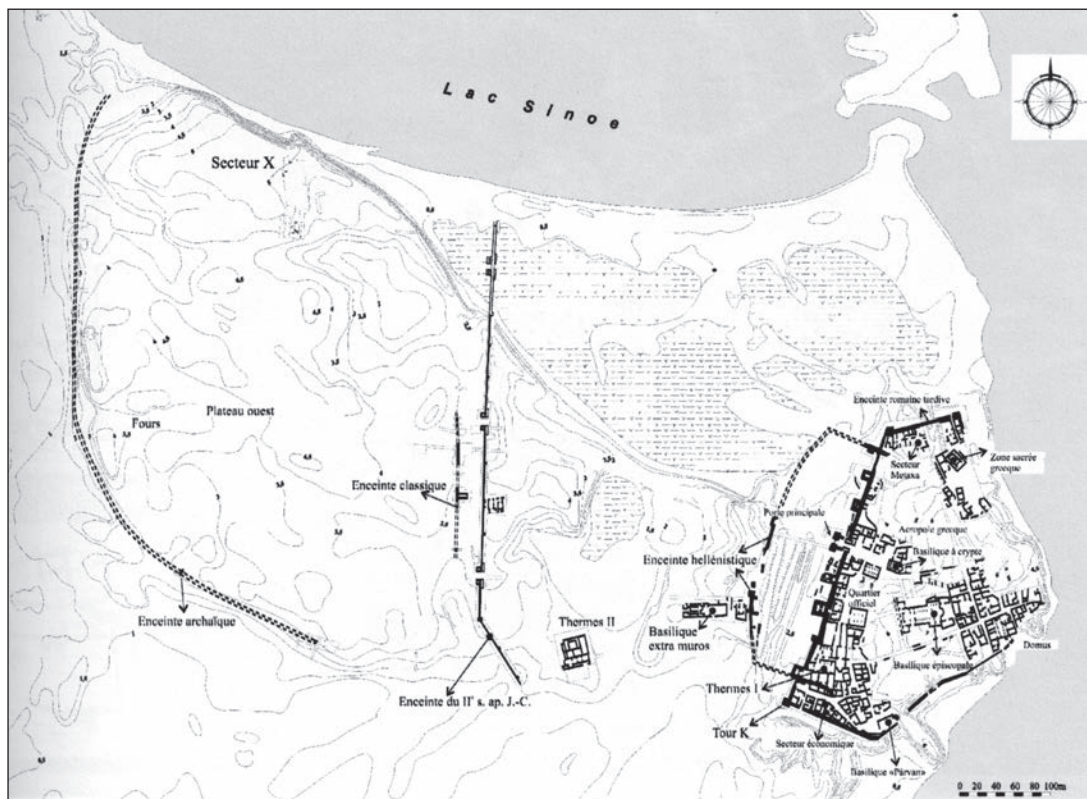


Fig. 2.97: Histria. City plan (Achim 2012, Fig. 2).

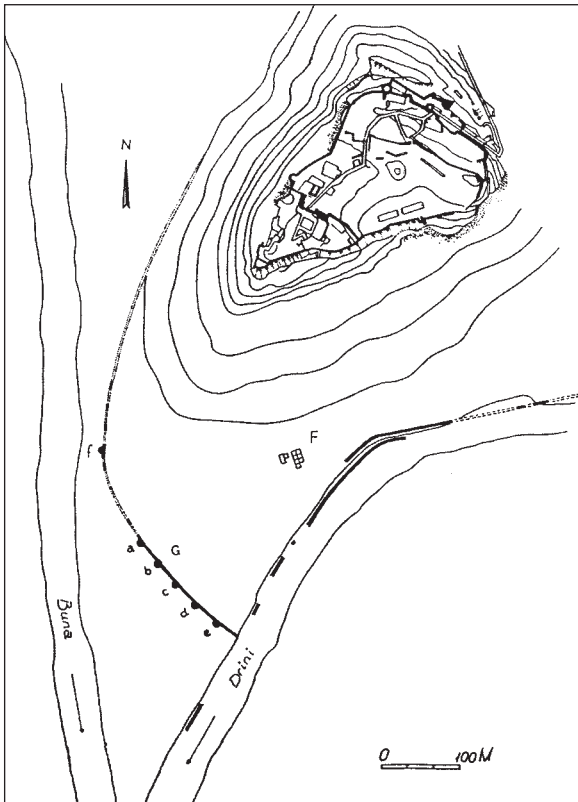


Fig. 2.98: Scodra. City plan (Hoxha 2003, Fig. 22).



Fig. 2.99: Scodra. Hill Rosafa with the acropolis (2009).

walls from the exterior that were constructed either contemporaneously or only slightly afterwards. In the east, an earlier flood wall was presumably reused as a proteichisma in the 6th century. The interior revealed simple houses erected close to one another, indicating a densely built-up interior, as well as buildings of a better construction and the remains of mosaics dated to the 4th and early 5th centuries. The latter had firm concrete floors, on top of which a thick layer of burnt debris was found that held numerous coins and other small finds



Fig. 2.100: Scodra. Lower city at the confluence of Rivers Drim and Buna (2009).



Fig. 2.101: Lissus. Remains of lower part of the city from the south-west with the acropolis at the background (2009).



Fig. 2.102: Lissus. The entrance to the lower part of the city is protected by towers (2009).

indicating a fire in the early 5th century. The later cultural layers inside the buildings prove intensive life in them throughout the 6th and in the early 7th century.

Municipium **Lissus (Lezhë)** (Figs. 2.101, 2.102) witnessed substantial changes towards the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th century (Anamali 1993, 455–456; Hoxha 2014). It disintegrated into two sharply divided parts: the lower city near the river and the upper city in the former acropolis where sections of Late Antique walls prove occasional use also in the 6th century (Hoxha 2014, 513). In the lower part, the old Hellenistic walls were partly reused and partly extended so as to

obtain a 260 × 60 m large protected area in the lowland at the foot of the hill. The walled area was well-protected in the west, north and partly south with the River Drin. The Late Antique walls incorporate reused stones in some parts and have interior pilasters in the distance of 5 m. Procopius does not mention the city among the forts that Justinian renovated. Literary sources reveal that the city held an episcopal see, which may be identified in the large church complex under the church of St Nicholas (Skenderbeg Tomb), of which parts of the atrium and the baptistry have been unearthed (Hoxha 2014, 517–518). Outside the walls of the lower part,

traces of adaptation were observed in the rooms of the former baths; a Christian cult place was set up in the first half of the 5th century, but soon abandoned (Lehner 2004, 10–11). A large three-aisled basilica stood outside the walls, on the other side of the river.

Dyrrachium (Durrës) (Figs. 2.103–2.106), the terminus of Via Egnatia and the birth place of the Emperor Anastasius, is densely built-up in the modern period and thus offers few elements for the reconstruction of its Late Antique appearance (Hoti 1996; Chevalier 2015, 229). There are certain incongruences in the dating of the Late Antique walls, clearly visible in certain places, but most authors agree that brick stamps indicate construction under Anastasius (Karaiskaj, Baçe 1975, 29–31; Karaiskaj 1998, 868; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 702–703). The walls were built of brick and reinforced with towers that include those of a characteristic pentagonal form. Jean-Pierre Sodini posits the city enjoyed a triple line of defence, similarly as Caričin grad (Sodini 2007, 318–319). Standing out among the Late Antique constructions in the interior is a building decorated with Proconnesus marble and initially interpreted as a *macellum* (Hoti 1996, 176–177), whereas recent research rather suggests a forum (Hoti et al. 2008). The strong Christian character of the city is reflected in different decorative elements of church architecture, as well as in an Early Christian chapel surviving within the amphitheatre. Local martyrs are depicted in the mosaics dated to the 6th to 8th centuries (Neri et al. 2017).

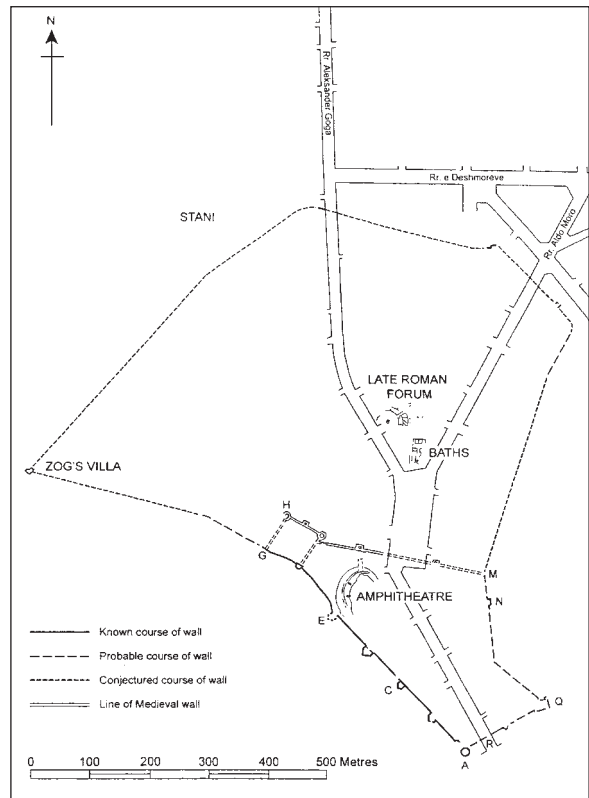


Fig. 2.103: Dyrrachium. City plan (Hoti et al. 2008, Fig. 1).



Fig. 2.104: Dyrrachium. Early Byzantine city walls (2009).



Fig. 2.105: Dyrrachium. Remains of the forum (2009).



Fig. 2.106: Dyrrachium. Amphitheatre with the Early Christian chapel in the foreground (2009).

The city of **Byllis** (Figs. 2.107–2.111) on a naturally well-protected high plateau shows strong traces of Late Antique transformation (Chevalier, Beaudry 2018). The old Hellenistic walls were extensively renovated and bound with mortar in the early 5th century. Under Justinian, the city was renovated, which is corroborated in as many as four inscriptions (Feissel 1988; id. 2000, 92). These relate that the architect, Victorinos, radically reduced the city from 30 to 11 ha and constructed new walls on the most easily defensible ridge on top of the hill; we may in fact only speak of a fortified acropolis (Anamali 1993, 451–455). The up to 2.2 m thick walls incorporated a mass of reused stones and were reinforced with six protruding three-storeyed and rectangular towers. It seems, however, that at least part of the old city outside the walls remained inhabited even after this reduction. From the 5th century onwards, there were five churches in the city, two of which remained outside the defended area after the construction of the new walls in the 6th century (Raynaud et al. 2003). Not much is known of the housing; research was conducted in the episcopal palace at the central basilica that boasts prestigious spaces and many rooms intended for economic activities. A particular feature are public baths, the construction of which has been dated with the help of an inscription to the middle of the 6th century (Feissel 2000, 92; Chevalier 2015, 232).

More extensive investigations have been conducted in **Buthroton (Butrint)** (Figs. 2.112–2.115), where several characteristic features of the Late Antique city can be observed alongside the earlier architecture from the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Bowden 2003, 85–88; Sodini 2007, 318). In Late Antiquity, the naturally well-protected city on a peninsula witnessed the renovation of its Hellenistic walls that has recently been dated to

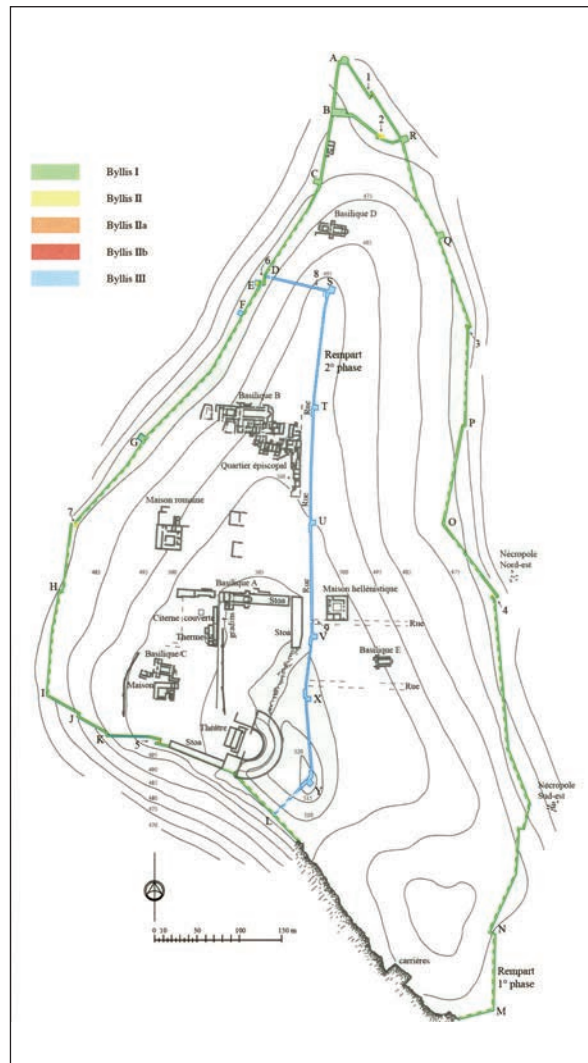


Fig. 2.107: Byllis. City plan (Chevalier 2015, Fig. 6).



Fig. 2.108: Byllis. Episcopal complex (2009).



Fig. 2.109: Byllis. Victorinos' walls (2009).



Fig. 2.110: Byllis. Victorinos' walls with a tower (2009.)



Fig. 2.111: Byllis. Baths (2009).

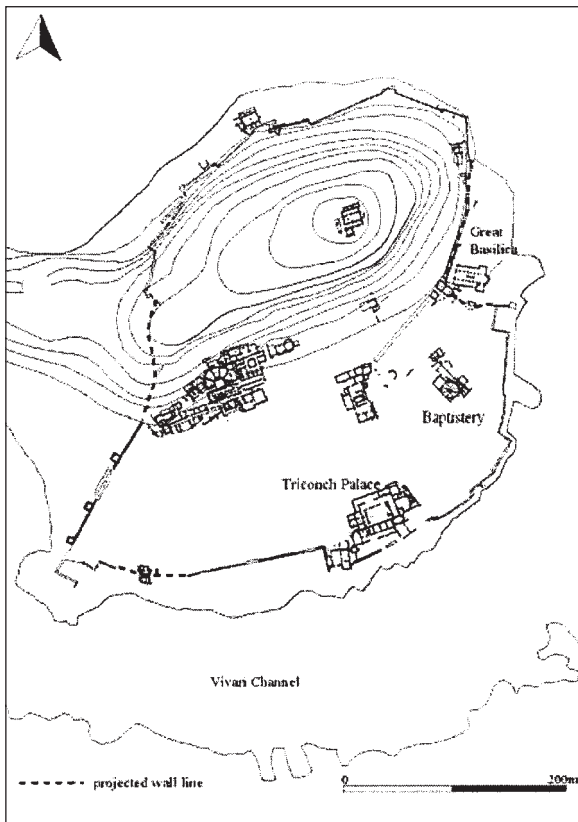


Fig. 2.112: Buthroton. City plan (Bowden, Mitchel 2007, Fig. 1).



Fig. 2.113: Buthroton. Triconch Palace from the west (2009).



around 525 (Greenslade 2019, 197). Two Early Christian churches are known, one on the acropolis and the other, larger one in the lower part of the city. The latter is well-preserved and boasts a large baptistry from the 6th century decorated with figural mosaics. The systematic investigations of the Triconch Palace have afforded a detailed insight into the development and decline of a Late Antique *domus* (Bowden, Mitchell 2007). They revealed that a peristil was added to the original Roman house around 400. Between 420 and 440, the *domus* was added a large three-apsed triconch that opened onto the peristil. It has been presumed that the renovation works were not concluded due to water flooding the building on several occasions. No major activities have been observed in the second half of the 5th century. Postholes suggest subdivisoning in the first half of the 6th century, while a staircase shows that at least part of the building had an upper storey. Fishermen used the other parts for cleaning shellfish. In the second half of the 6th and in the 7th century, the south wing was used for artisanal activities, the rest for burial. Another group of buildings was researched west of the *domus*; from the late 3rd to the early 5th century, this group witnessed several modifications and extensions that created masonry rooms surrounding a rectangular court. The group was presumably intended for commercial activities with living quarters in the upper storey. Traces of activity cease here in the second half of the 5th century; renovation ensued towards the end of the 6th century. A two-storey building was erected in the corner of the city walls. The area of the former palace was abandoned in the mid-7th century.

The research in the Vrina Plain has provided important new data on the Late Antique habitation in the city. In the western suburbia, a large *domus* was built in the second half of the 3rd century (Greenslade 2019). It was temporarily abandoned towards the end of the 4th century, again inhabited in the early 5th and abandoned in the second third of the 5th century. In the early 6th century, a large apsidal basilica and small baths were built in a part of the *domus*, while the rest was transformed into small dwellings and workshops. This complex of buildings persisted to the end of the 6th century, when it was completely abandoned, most likely following a fire.

NORTH MACEDONIA

The city of **Scupi (Skopje)** (Figs. 2.116, 2.117) was long considered largely abandoned after the earthquake in 518. Ivan Mikulčić only mentioned an Early Byzantine village and the flight of the population to the fort

Fig. 2.114: Buthroton. Triconch Palace from the east (2009).



Fig. 2.115: Buthroton. Interior of the Early Christian church (2009).

on Markova kula (Mikulčić 1982a, 47–48); this was repeated by other authors (e.g. Saradi 2006, 467; Sodini 2007, 331). The extensive systematic investigations in recent years, however, have brought to light numerous remains from the time after the earthquake that offer more reliable evidence of Late Antique continuity (Jovanova 2015a; ead. 2015b; Ončevska Todorovska 2017; Jovanova, Ončevska Todorovska 2018). The significance of Scupi is reflected in two visits of the Emperor Theodosius I and the presence of an army unit, the *pseudo comitatenses Scupenses*, mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* (Jovanova 2015b, 238–242).

The remains of the early phase of *colonia Scupi* are poorly known, with investigations primarily unearthing evidence of disruption in the urban development (layers of burnt debris, ruins) from the late 3rd century.

The city gained in significance when it became the metropolis of the newly-founded province Dardania following Diocletian's division. In the 4th century, it witnessed new constructions (civil basilica, *horreum*, urban villa) and renovations (large baths, *domus* under the southeastern city walls).

The earlier city walls are not well-known; they presumably existed to the late 4th or even the mid-5th century and had a prestigious rather than a defensive character. The city was then enclosed with thick walls, constructed in part of *spolia* (th. 3.5 m), that markedly decreased the size of the city; in the east they were erected on top of earlier housing (*domus*). The walls also had a semicircular tower with 2.6 m thick walls.

Research in the central part of the city, on the west side of a *cardo* (presumably *cardo maximus*) has

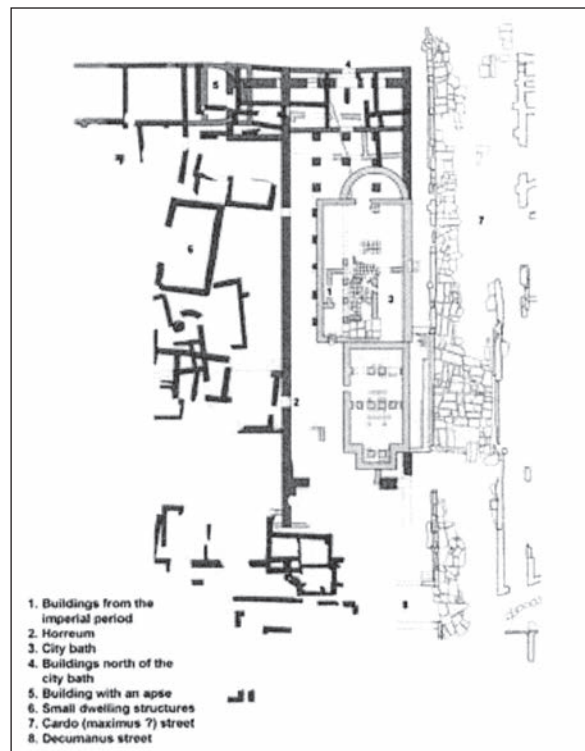


Fig. 2.116: Scupi. Plan of late buildings by the *cardo* (Jovanova 2015b, Fig. 18).

revealed several construction phases. A large *horreum* of the 3rd and 4th centuries was built on top of an as yet unidentified earlier building and was in turn covered towards the end of the 4th century by the city baths



Fig. 2.117: Scupi. *Cardo* and the adjacent buildings from the north-east (2013).

that remained in operation into the 6th century. In the south, the civil basilica was erected in the 4th century on the ruins of buildings from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. After destruction towards the end of the 3rd century, a peristyle *domus* in the eastern part was renovated and enlarged, remaining inhabited into the second half of the 4th century. A major break has been observed towards the end of the 4th century, when the theatre, *horreum* and the peristyle *domus* were abandoned. This was soon followed by another expansion (renovation of the baths, civil basilica and construction of new city baths).

On the east side of the *cardo*, large baths existed from the 2nd to the 5th century. In the 6th century, a large three-aisled Early Christian basilica with three apses, atrium and court was constructed in the south part of the former baths (Ončevska Todorovska 2018). A large basilica with a baptistery came to light in the north of the city that functioned in the late 5th and throughout the 6th century, constructed in part on a luxury building from the 4th century.

After the abandonment of the public buildings on both sides of the *cardo*, their ruins were subdivided into simple dwellings and workshops. The destroyed and abandoned parts of the *horreum* also saw reuse in the 6th century; it revealed two phases of interconnected primitive dwellings (Jovanova 2015a, 33–34). Buildings were still well-constructed, with some walls erected in combination of courses of stones and horizontally laid bricks, though already clay-bonded; there is also mention of brick roofs.

Traces of Late Antique buildings and a group of burials also came to light in several places inside the theatre (Ončevska Todorovska 2017). Based on numerous small finds, the dwellings have been reliably dated from the late 5th to the initial decades of the 7th century and exhibit two construction phases. The first

one is marked by a fairly planned positioning of different buildings, while buildings in the second phase show a haphazard distribution in proximity and across earlier buildings. The walls of the first-phase buildings are still fairly well-built of rubble and brick fragments partly arranged in lines, the walls are mostly bound by clay and only rarely mortar. The walls of the second phase are less carefully constructed, slightly thinner and associated with postholes. In addition to hearths, several refuse and storage pits were also unearthed in and next to houses.

These recent investigations importantly contribute to the earlier knowledge that relied on the writings of Marcellinus Comes, who reported that an earthquake in 518 completely destroyed the city. It would seem that the city recovered and persisted to the end of the 6th and presumably into the initial decades of the 7th century. Evidence of this primarily comes from the large city basilica, the late phase of the city baths and numerous simple dwellings incorporated into older houses that have been recorded in all the investigated parts of the city. All new constructions and renovations respected the existing street grid; the research of the *cardo* has shown numerous repairs and additions spanning from the late 3rd to the late 6th century. We can see a well-fortified, but impoverished and ruralised provincial centre, the urban landscape of which was dominated by at least two large churches and, for some time, also the city baths, while a multitude of small and poorly built houses and workshops developed in the ruins of other, once grand buildings.

Late Antiquity was an important period for another city of North Macedonia, namely municipium **Stobi** (Figs. 2.118–2.122, 2.253). The long years of research have offered a fairly reliable insight into its structure and chronology, although we are still missing the publications of several important buildings and recent investi-

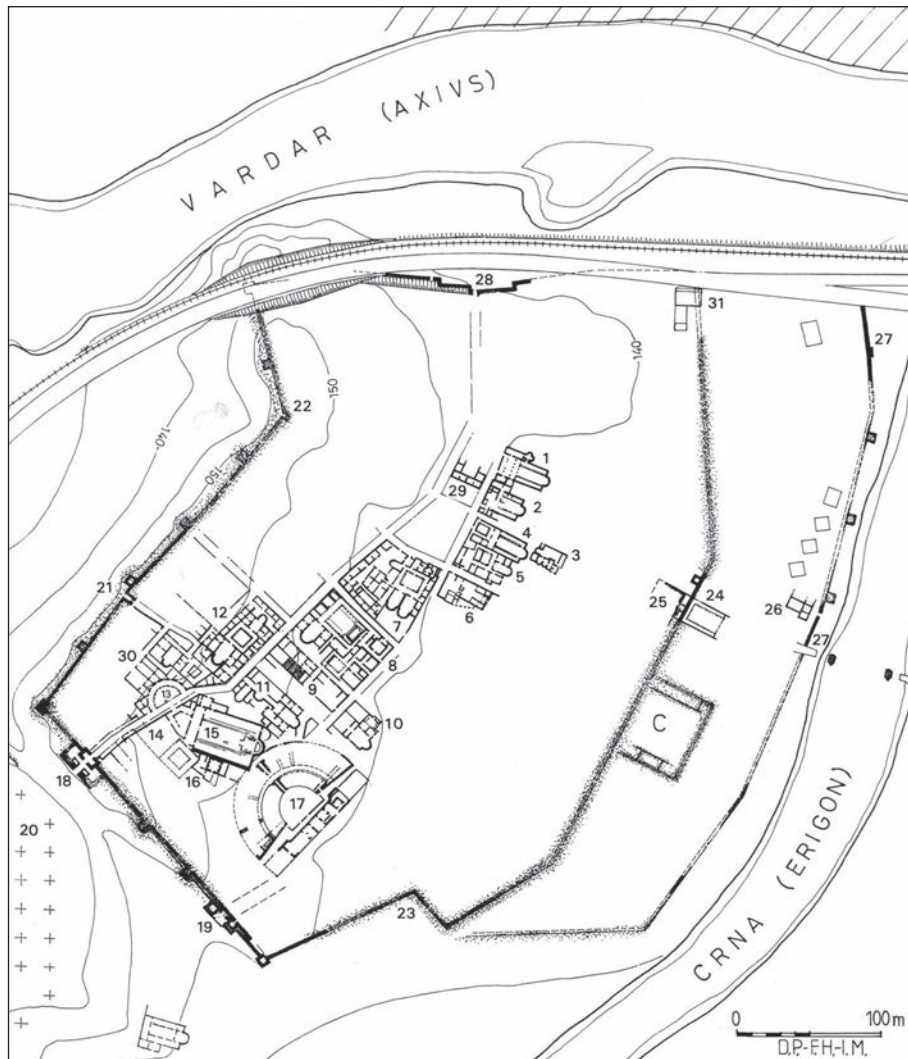


Fig. 2.118: Stobi. City plan (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 337).

gations (Wiseman 1984; Mikulčić 2003; Talevski 2018). The city has an excellent strategic location at the junction of two major roads and at the edge of a fertile plain, on a naturally protected terrace above the confluence of the Rivers Crna reka and Vardar that protect the city on three sides. In the Roman period, the city walls enclosed a ca 20 ha large area. Its interior revealed several public buildings such as a theatre, baths, synagogue and several private villas. After a devastation in the late 3rd century, the city was extensively renovated. To counteract flooding, the city walls in the east were transferred deep into the interior, which reduced the city to 14 ha. In the west, city walls were renovated with protruding rectangular towers and well-fortified double gates in the Valentinian period. Irregularly shaped insulae were arranged along both main streets that followed the configuration of the terrain. Investigations revealed five Early Christian churches *intra muros* and three *extra muros*, as well as a synagogue, three baths and seven *domus*. The episcopal

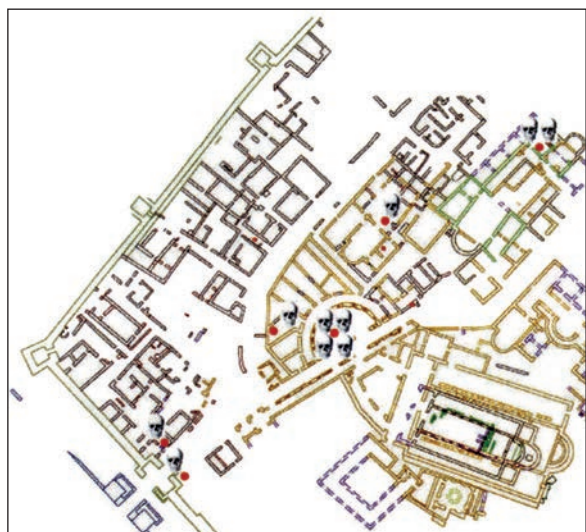


Fig. 2.119: Stobi. Plan of Late Antique buildings in the southwestern part of the city (from Talevski 2018, Fig. on p. 432).



Fig. 2.120: Stobi. Remains of Late Antique buildings (2013).



Fig. 2.121: Stobi. Palace of Theodosius (2013).

basilica was erected along Via Sacra close to the entrance into the city, partly on top of the ruins of the theatre; the first church was built there in the second half of the 4th century, followed in the first half of the 5th century by a large three-aisled basilica with an atrium constructed on considerably raised ground. Other churches date to the 5th/6th centuries (Aleksova 1997, 111–152).

The investigations paid particular attention to the architecture of the rich peristyle *domus* (Mikulčić 1999, 249–253; Baldini Lippolis 2001, 298–302; Gerasimovska 2012, 108–110). They were constructed in the late 3rd or

early 4th century and primarily used as luxury homes to the end of the 4th, some possibly into the first half of the 5th century as suggested by the renovations of mosaic floors in some of them. After being abandoned, they hosted simple dwellings with walls without mortar that predominated in the second half of the 5th and throughout the 6th century. Standing out among the villas in size and decoration is the House of Parthenius, also known as the Palace of Theodosius, which also revealed a collection of sculptures arranged in niches around a fountain (Nikoloska 2015).



Fig. 2:122: Stobi. Ruins from the east (2013).

Of particular importance for understanding the late habitation in the former *domus* are the systematic investigations of Domus Fullonica (Mikulčić 1982b, 536). This large house reached its greatest extent and importance even prior to the mid-4th century, when deep apses were added to both triclinia. The abandonment of the *domus* can more precisely be dated to the late reign of Theodosius I, when four new families created new housing units of coarse clay-bonded walls and an ironworking workshop in the court. This phase, reliably dated with coins and other artefacts, lasted roughly to the mid-5th century. Mikulčić links its end with the Hun raid of 447, as the burnt debris layer held numerous coins from the first half of the 5th century, trilobate arrowheads and the remains of a reflex bow (Mikulčić 1982b, 537). After the destruction of the mid-5th century, most of the former *domus* remained unused, only small huts with clay-bonded walls were found in two of its corners. Several ground surfaces in their interior prove that the huts were repaired. A similar situation has been recorded in other urban villas as well. We may surmise the influx of people from the countryside who abandoned their old homes to seek shelter inside a better protected city and continued, at least in part, to practise crop cultivation and animal husbandry (Mikulčić 1982b, 536; id. 1999, 253). Of the *domus*, only the Houses of Peristerius and Polyharmus saw continuation, albeit in a more rustic form. They may be seen as the living quarters of priests and state officials (Gerasimovska 2012, 110; ead. 2015, 262). Buildings in the vicinity of the western necropolis, dating from the 4th to the 6th century, shows a shift of the population from areas around Stobi close to within the city walls (Gerasimovska 2012, 110); the extensive

investigations shed light on this very last habitation phase (Gerasimovska 2012, 109; Talevski 2018). Modest dwellings also came to light in the area of the theatre, where they were presumably built in the early 5th century (Wiseman 1984, 295, 303). The housing thus exhibits an omnipresent disintegration of earlier buildings and the appearance of considerably simpler dwellings, on the one side, and the renovation of the episcopal church with lavish decoration, on the other. Traces of habitation in the city cease towards the end of the 6th century (Talevski 2018, 430–438).

Recent research has revealed **Lychnidos (Ohrid)** (Figs. 2.123–2.125) as another city of an important status in Late Antiquity (Mikulčić 1999, 101–106; id. 2002, 476–479). Enjoying a well-protected location on a hill and slopes above Lake Ohrid, it was an important stop on the Via Egnatia. The course of its Late Antique defensive walls has not been fully established, though we do know of some parts constructed in the 5th century, as well as the sections where the earlier walls were merely repaired (Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2009, 28). The size of the city has been estimated at 40 ha. There is a concentration of Late Antique architecture on the west summit, where the acropolis and the church buildings at the Plaošnik (Imaret) site were especially fortified.

Most is known on the Early Christian architecture, with the quality of construction and rich interior furnishings speaking of the contemporary importance of the city (overview in Aleksova 1997, 203–222; Mikulčić 2002, 476–479; Malenko 2008). Standing out in its architecture and beauty of mosaics is the basilica with a polyconchal plan from the late 5th century, which was constructed on an earlier cult place (Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1975; Aleksova 1997, 210–216). The in-

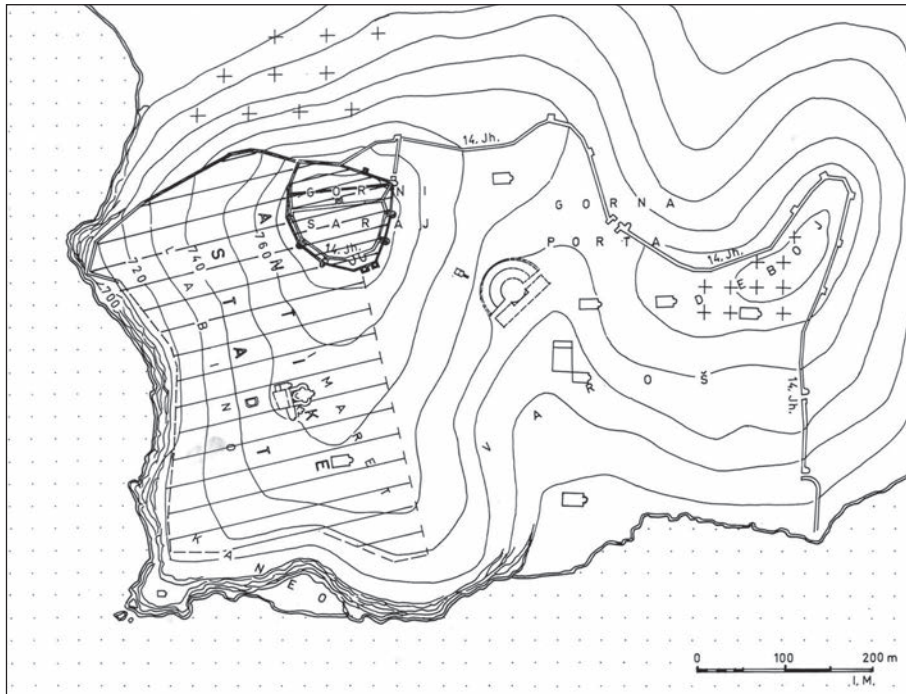


Fig. 2.123: Lychnidos. City plan (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 395).



Fig. 2.124: Lychnidos. Slope of the city with the acropolis and theatre in the foreground on the right (2013).

tensive excavations of recent years have also unearthed a large longitudinal three-aisled basilica with an atrium and baptistery, which dominates the southern part of the Plaošnik (Imaret) hill (Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2009, 29–36). The remains of at least five contemporary intramural churches were found during the rescue investigations in the modern-day city, in the saddle between the two elevations and on the slopes of the east Devoj

hill. Large Early Christian buildings were also found in immediate proximity to the city.

Less is known of the residential architecture. We only know of the remains of small buildings found inside the partially investigated Roman theatre, similarly as in Heracleia, Stobi and Scupi. In Late Antiquity (dating to the Justinian period is particularly mentioned), it is believed to have hosted numerous new buildings as part



Fig. 2.125: Lychnidos. Atrium of the large church at the Plaošnik hill (2013).

of a settlement that persisted in the medieval and post-medieval periods (Malenko 2008, 478–482).

Our knowledge mainly relies on the rich Early Christian architecture on the acropolis, though the distribution of the churches indicates habitations clusters in the wider area of the urban agglomeration where – similarly as in other cities – modest dwellings and economic facilities predominated.

Much more varied and better documented is the appearance of the small (ca 9 ha), but rich and well-researched city of **Heracleia Lyncestis (Bitola)** (Figs. 126–2.130) (Mikulčić 1999, 326–332; id. 2002, 263–268). It lay on the important Via Egnatia in the province Macedonia I and encompassed the acropolis, as well as the slopes and plain along the Siva voda stream. The course of the up to 2.5 m thick city walls has been reconstructed and several protruding rectangular towers excavated. The city walls are believed to have been first renovated in the early 4th century, in the lowland there are also observable reparations and additions from the Early Byzantine period (protruding semicircular tower). In the late 5th/mid-6th century, a new defensive wall was built in the east side that reduced the urban area to 5 ha and gave the city plan a pentagonal shape.

A sacral complex was created below the theatre in the main lowland part. A large episcopal basilica was built towards the end of the 5th and a smaller one next to it in the 6th century, both fitted with mosaics of very high quality (Aleksova 1997, 235–242). They were joined in the west by an episcopal palace, where mosaics were gradually being fitted from the early 6th century to the 560/570s (Cvetković-Tomašević 2008). The church architecture in the city further comprises Basilica D,



Fig. 2.126: Heracleia Lyncestis. Plan of the buildings from the 6th century in the theatre (Popović, V. 1982, Fig. 16).

constructed *extra muros* east of the city probably in the Justinian period, and associated with a necropolis (Maneva 1989; ead. 2008). The different elements of Early Christian church furnishings indicate the existence of other, as yet undiscovered churches.

In contrast with the imposing church buildings of the 5th and 6th centuries, there is modest housing that has been increasingly identified in recent investigations. Throughout the 4th century, small houses were being built into a Roman porticus and a marble statue of a dignitary reused in its construction (Mikulčić 1999,

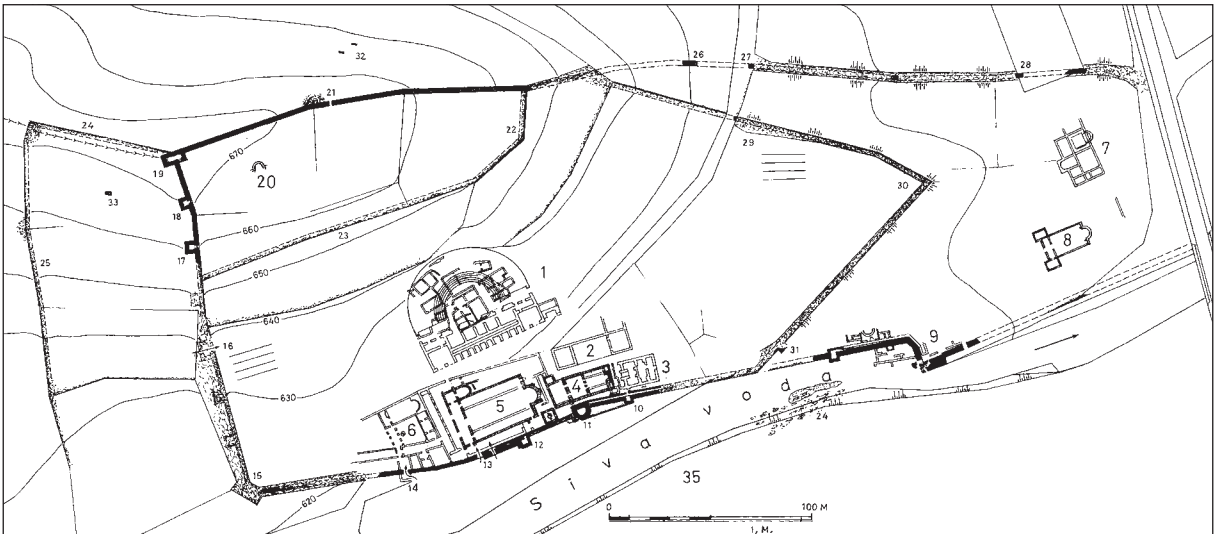


Fig. 2.127: Heracleia Lyncestis. City plan (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 157).



Fig. 2.128: Heracleia Lyncestis. City from the south-east. Defensive walls in the foreground, acropolis and theatre in the background (2013).



Fig. 2.129: Heracleia Lyncestis. Late Antique and Early Medieval buildings on the slope under the former theatre (2013).



Fig. 2.130: Heracleia Lyncestis. Decorated fountain from the 6th century (2013).

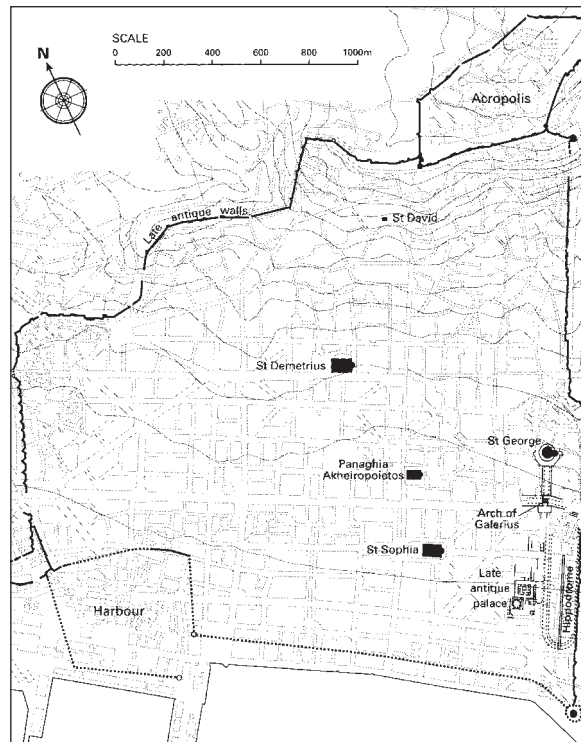


Fig. 2.131: Thessaloniki. City plan (Whitby 2000, Fig. 22).

255; id. 2002, 268). Earlier buildings of clay-bonded walls were also found under the floors of the large Early Christian basilica from the late 5th century (Popović, V. 1982, 562; Gerasimovska 2010, 123).

The complex of poorly constructed buildings within the former theatre has been more comprehensively identified (Janakievski 2001); they were constructions of clay-bonded stone. They represent a small housing unit created in the second half of the 6th century on a thick layer of levelled debris belonging to the abandoned theatre. Small dwellings were arranged around a slightly larger central building. Recent research has shown that such late buildings were made not only in the theatre, but also in the area between the theatre and the episcopium, as well as higher up on the slope of the acropolis and in the eastern suburbs. The trial trenching on two terraces next to the northern city walls revealed buildings of a residential and economic nature, their walls bound by clay or a very small amount of mortar. All this indicates dense settlement in the last period of Antiquity, which in part continued into the Middle Ages (Gorčievska, Nasuh 1997–1999; Todorovski 2010; Gerasimovska 2010, 123–124). Contemporaneously with this modest housing, a beautifully decorated fountain was set up next to the theatre. The inscription on this fountain reveals it was built on the request of Bishop John to honour 35 years of reign of the Emperor Justinian in 561 (Đidrova et al. 2011; Mihajlovski, Rospendovski 2011, 417).

GREECE

Thessaloniki (Figs. 2.131–2.135) is a city that gained in importance in Late Antiquity; it first became the capital of the province Macedonia and in the early 4th century also hosted the imperial residence. Following the Hun conquest of Sirmium, it became the seat of the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum. Its significance was not diminished even after the seat moved to Justiniana Prima. The greatness of the city is reflected in the mighty ruins of the city walls, the Early Christian churches and the imperial palace, while archaeological excavations continuously illuminate other settlement details (Curta 2001b, 136–138; Ćurčić 2010, 19–22).

The most clearly visible element of Late Antique Thessaloniki is the several kilometres long city walls that enclosed a vast space of 260 ha. The Hellenistic walls were presumably first renovated in the mid-3rd century using the *opus mixtum* technique, after which they witnessed several repairs and additions. Opinions on these additions vary, but most scholars agree they took place in the early 4th century and there is general consensus that complete renovation took place in the first half of the 5th century (Crow 2001; Dunn 2002, 709; Sodini 2007, 318; Rizos 2011; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 698–699). The Arch of Galerius, part of an imposing tetrapylon, partially excavated remains of the imperial palace south of *cardo maximus* and impressive rotundas



Fig. 2.132: Thessaloniki. City walls (2013).



Fig. 2.133: Thessaloniki. Remains of tetrapylon, rotunda in the background (2013).



Fig. 2.134: Thessaloniki. Imperial palace (2013).



Fig. 2.135: Thessaloniki. Agora (2013).

to the north afford a glimpse into the wealth of the Late Antique city. A church with a baptistery and funerary chapels was built into the rotunda that once formed part of the Palace of Galerius; a similar alteration regards the octagonal triclinium, which was transformed into a mausoleum with added chapels (Rizos 2012, 333).

Literary sources relate the existence of different public buildings such as baths, theatre, hippodrome and *praetorium* in the 6th century. Housing is poorly known, with individual elements only coming to light

in rescue excavations. In the early 5th century, the agora was abandoned and changed its function similarly as in most other Late Antique cities (archaeologists unearthed pottery kilns). Shops were found around it, which persisted with certain repairs into the 6th century. Also unearthed were twelve houses with apsidal terminals and peristyles. One of these revealed two phases, one in the late 4th and the other in the early 5th century. In the 6th century, they witnessed the usual subdivision with walls of inferior quality (Sodini 2007, 327).

The city of **Amphipolis** (Fig. 2.136), located on the Via Egnatia, shows an interesting, but rather incomplete Late Antique picture. The old Greek city spread across a wide area and was protected on two sides by a river and also had extensive city walls. The naturally most protected elevation held the acropolis, where several different and lavishly decorated Early Christian basilicas were built in Late Antiquity. The acropolis was enclosed with defensive walls in the 6th century; these walls only protected a small part of the city, primarily the area with church buildings (Sodini 2007, 320). The acropolis was later further reduced with a transverse wall. Intensive surveys in the immediate vicinity of the acropolis have revealed six sites with small concentrations of Late Antique habitation traces outside the acropolis walls (Dunn 2004, 543). We may surmise that, in times of danger, the people living in these unfortified settlements retreated to the acropolis that provided physical, as well as spiritual shelter.

The city of **Philippi** (Fig. 2.137–2.139) had a different development, retaining the large surface of protected area into Late Antiquity. The earlier, presumably Hellenistic walls were renovated in the late 3rd or early 4th century, while a *proteichisma* was added in the flatland below in the second half of the 5th or the early 6th century (Provost 2001; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 699–700). The 70 ha of fortified surface stands out in comparison with most other cities, which witnessed a reduction of the defended area; this was particularly apparent in neighbouring Amphipolis.

The street grid with *insulae* continued into Late Antiquity and more prominent changes are only visible in the monumental newly-built churches in the centre. Standing out is an octagon (Basilica D) with an episcopal palace and rooms for pilgrims who arrived to the city in connection with the visit of St Paul. The octagon was constructed in 340 in the place dedicated to his memory. Large Basilica A and Basilica B flanked the forum on the north and south, symbolically embracing it. The complex as a whole gave the impression of a great pilgrimage centre. The churches occupied spaces formerly of a different use and partly even encroached on streets (Saradi 2006, 393–395; Sodini 2007, 327–328). The research in some *insulae* and the theatre has shown that houses were already abandoned in the second half of the 4th century and a variety of workshops was set up in them. One building in the southwestern part of the city was torn down towards the end of the 4th, subdivided in the 5th and reused as modest dwellings that persisted to the early 7th century. All these changes point to a transformation of the urban core similar to those observed in the cities of nearby North Macedonia.

In **Dion** (Fig. 2.140–2.142), the Hellenistic city walls in the *opus mixtum* technique were presumably already renovated in the middle of the 3rd century. More substantial changes in the fortifications are noticeable



Fig. 2.136: Amphipolis. City walls (2002).

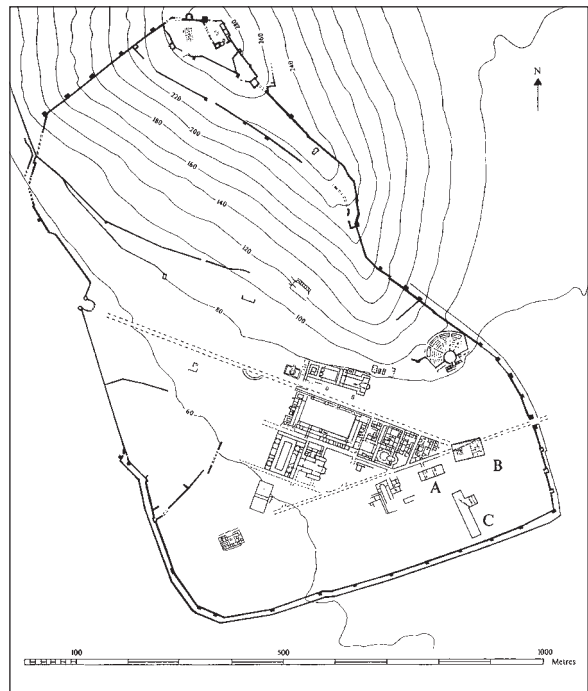


Fig. 2.137: Philippi. City plan (from Poulter 1998, Fig. 1).



Fig. 2.138: Philippi. City walls with a proteichisma (2002).



Fig. 2.139: Philippi. Late Antique buildings (2002).

towards the end of the 4th century, when the former urban area was reduced from 37 to ca 16 ha with the construction of new, thinner and less well-built city walls. Opinions differ as to the dating of these changes (Mentzos 2002, 333; Sodini 2007, 319, 320; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 700–701). The fortified urban area still included important public buildings that reveal a considerably prosperous city in the 4th and 5th centuries. Towards the end of the 4th century, the first church was constructed in the vicinity of the agora (Basilica A). After an earthquake, earth was deposited here and another

church built in the mid-5th century (Basilica B). The large basilica just behind the city walls, of a cemeterial nature, was constructed roughly at the same time (Mentzos 2002, 334). Among public buildings, Čurčić particularly mentions a large dodecagonal building at the junction of the main streets, which he interprets as a church building and dates to the 5th century (Čurčić 2010, 134).

The capital of the province Epirus Vetus, **Nicopolis (Nikopolis)** (Figs. 2.143–2.146, 2.259), was greatly reduced in Late Antiquity when thick walls were con-



Fig. 2.140: Dion. Late Antique walls incorporated spolia (2013).



Fig. 2.141: Dion. Early Christian basilica (2013).



Fig. 2.142: Dion. Remains of a wealthy *domus* (2013).

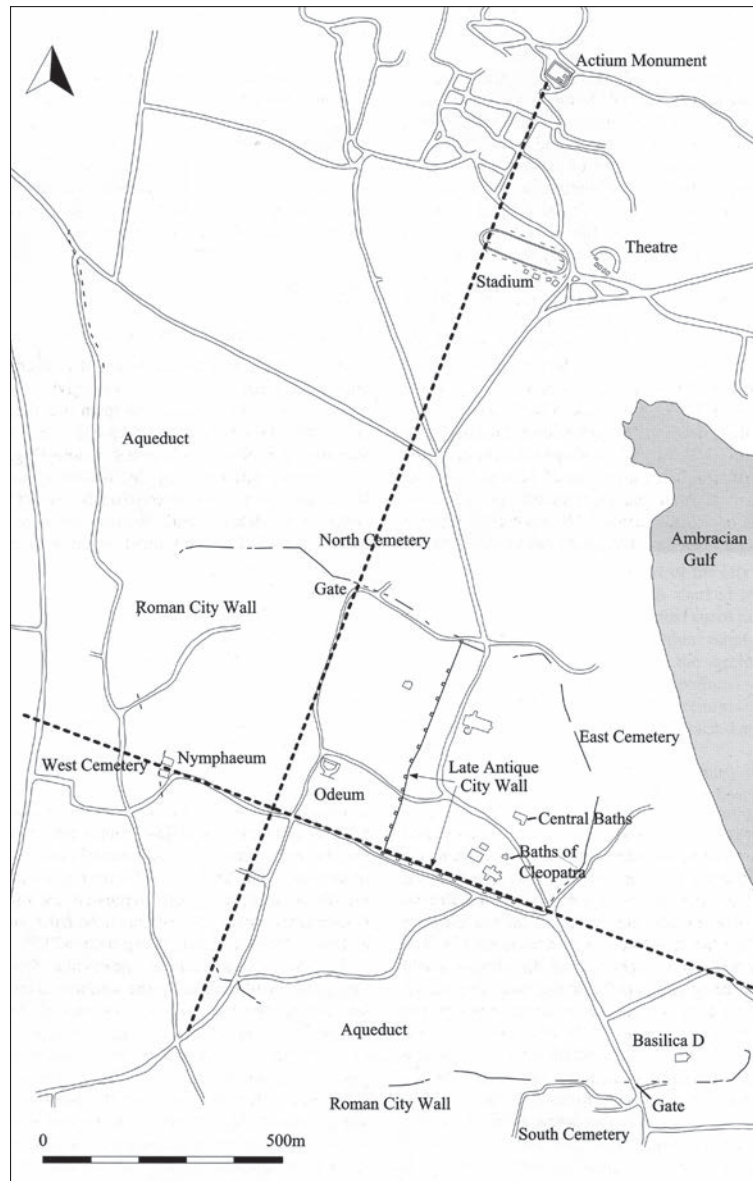


Fig. 2.143: Nicopolis. City plan (Bowden 2007, Fig. 11.1).

structed that placed the core of the Late Antique city in the northeast corner of the earlier Augustan walls (Bowden 2003, 89; Sodini 2007, 320; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 701–702). The new walls were constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique with a mass reuse of stones. Scholars agree that these walls were constructed towards the end of the 5th century. The densely spaced towers are still well-preserved today, they are rectangular with round ones in the corners, the west entrance is flanked with horseshoe-shaped towers. Several important and beautifully decorated churches were erected inside the fortified area. These largely respected the street grid of the earlier city. Mentioned among the significant residential buildings is the ‘episcopium’, originally a *domus* that was enlarged and modified in Late Antiquity and furnished with high-quality mosaics and marble

sculpture. A similar building may have stood near Basilica B. Another *domus* with a large apsidal hall lies near the ‘nymphaeum’ (Bowden 2003, 50–51). A series of small, mostly single-room dwellings was found on the interior side of the southern walls that show an inferior construction and measure roughly 5 × 5 m. Their clay-bonded stone walls commonly incorporated spolia. They were presumably in use from the construction of the city walls towards the end of the 5th to the 8th century (Bowden 2003, 166). In the letter of Saint Gregory the Great, Nicopolis is described as the third largest city of Illyricum, which suggests that the well-fortified core only represent part of the Late Antique city. This is corroborated by two villas from the 5th/6th century found outside the city walls. The fortified Late Antique part thus far revealed no groups of burials.



Fig. 2.144: Nicopolis. Episcopal church from the south (2002).



Fig. 2.145: Nicopolis. City walls with towers (2002).



Fig. 2.146: Nicopolis. Well-preserved city wall from the south (2002).



Fig. 2.148: Thebes. Episcopal church (2002).



Fig. 2.149: Thebes. Church by the walls (2002).

research thus far shows a medium-sized fortified Late Antique city with rich Early Christian architecture and vast unfortified suburbs.

In Boeotia, systematic field surveys and geophysical measurements have been conducted in two cities (Bintliff 2012, 361–362). **Thespiae** revealed city walls constructed of spolia in the 4th or early 5th century, enclosing a 12 ha large area inside a much larger city from the Classical era. To the east outside the walls was a fairly large settlement with several small churches. Extramural settlements with associated cemeteries also came to light on several other sides of the city.

Tanagra revealed Late Antique activities inside the city and an intensive use of the surrounding countryside (Bintliff 2007, 664–665). The old city walls were renovated in this period. The city plan shows substantial changes to the Classical grid of streets and insulae, with baths and churches constructed on top of earlier public buildings and insulae. At a distance of two kilometres from the city, a large settlement (Aghios Constantinos) was fortified that was to serve as a satellite settlement and may even have replaced it due to its superior defences and shorter defensive walls.

Athens (Figs. 2.150–2.154, 2.258) witnessed sweeping changes in Late Antiquity that included a marked reduction of the defended area. The post-Herulian walls only enclosed the acropolis and part of the slope with the Roman forum and Hadrian’s Library, though numerous Late Antique buildings were constructed both inside and outside the walls, most numerous on the Classical agora (Saradi 2006, 238–239; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 707–709, Tsoniotis 2016). The new Early Christian churches were most frequently built on the spot of earlier pre-Christian temples from the second half of the 5th century onwards. The late private buildings are also well-known. On the agora, parts of the city infrastructure and private buildings began to be renovated already in the second half of the 4th century. A large private residence or Palace of the Giants was probably constructed around 421,

which was a complex of buildings with peristyle courts and defensive walls; Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II has been identified as its owner (Ćurčić 2010, 119–123). The building was already abandoned around 530 and turned into a monastery. Other private villas were erected in its vicinity and below Aeropagus that have as yet not been comprehensively investigated (overview in Sodini 1984, 344–354; id. 1997, 463–465). Several *domus* date to the 5th and 6th centuries and exhibit a high standard of living. The House of Sculptures, for example, had new baths added in the first half of the 6th century. Alongside these high-quality private buildings, the agora hosted shops and workshops. A rapid ruralisation occurred as early as the mid-6th century, which is corroborated by water mills and olive presses, followed towards the end of the 6th century by a fast decline of the urban area.



Fig. 2.150: Athens. Agora from the west (2007).



Fig. 2.151: Athens. Remains of the post-Herulian walls (2011).

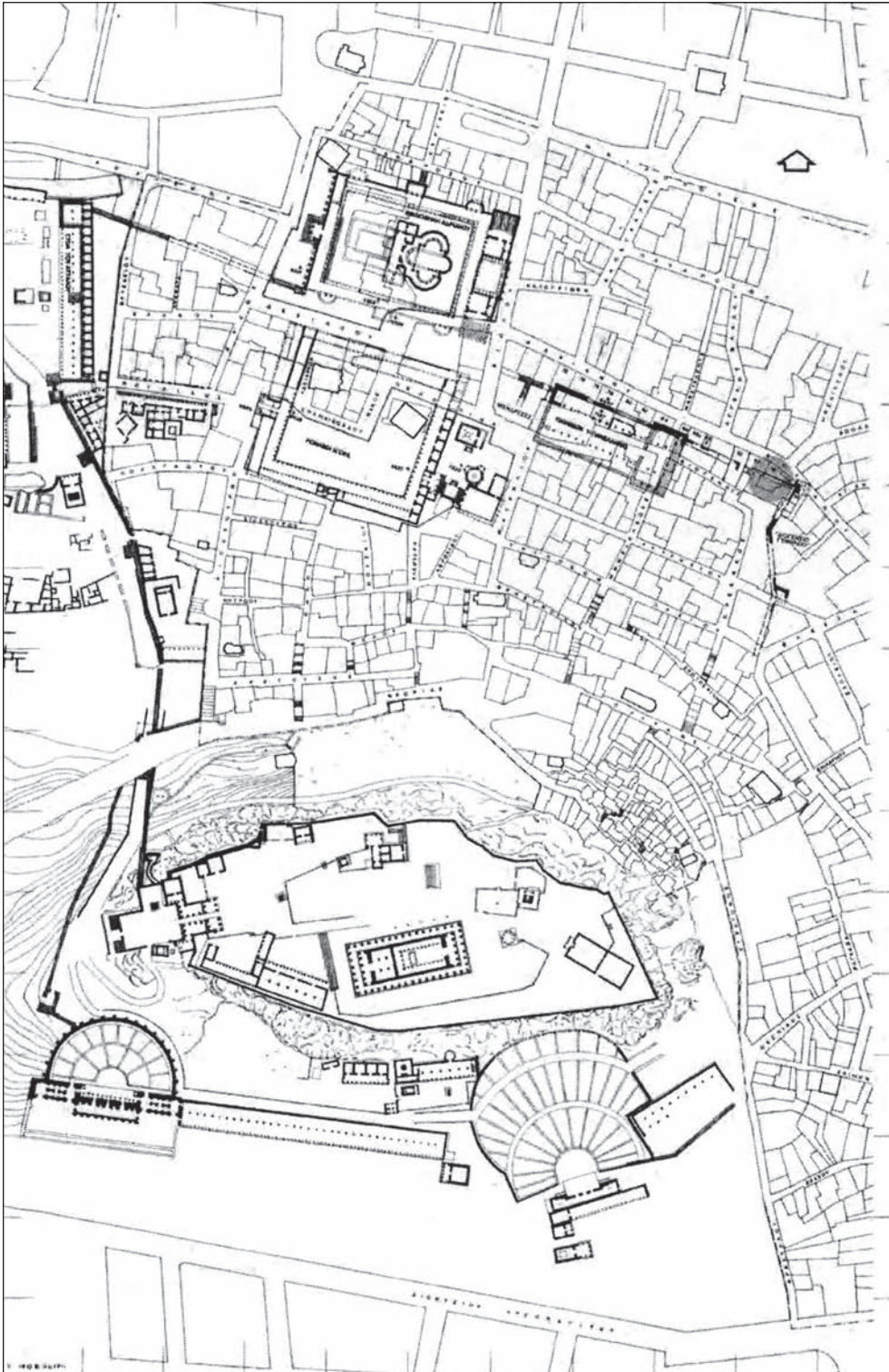


Fig. 2.152: Athens. Plan of the city inside the post-Herulian walls (Tsoniotis 2016, Fig. 1).

Corinth (Fig. 2.155), a city advantageously sited on a well-protected peninsula, developed a unique appearance in Late Antiquity. This is clear from the research that shows the city existed to the end of the 6th century, after which there was a partial shift to the naturally

fortified Acrocorinth, on the one hand, and a gradual decline of the city and its fragmentation, on the other (Robertson Brown 2018). Numerous investigations notwithstanding, many questions regarding the Late Antique topography of the city remain open. Even the

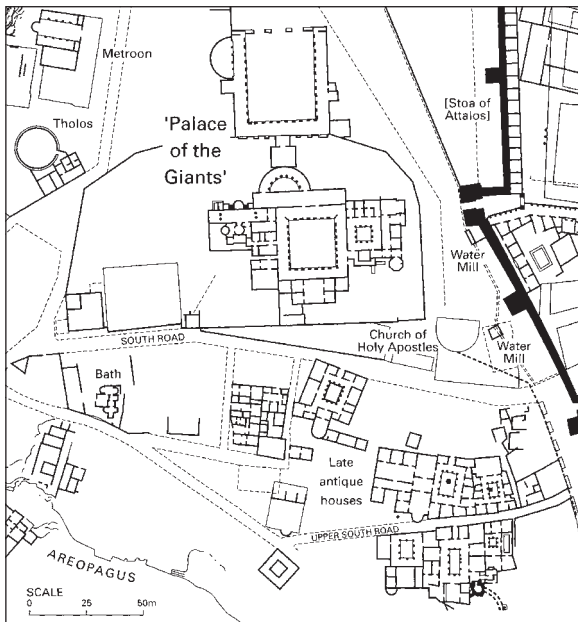


Fig. 2.153: Athens. Plan of the agora (Sodini 1997, Fig. 45).



Fig. 2.154: Athens. Facade of the Palace of the Giants (2011).

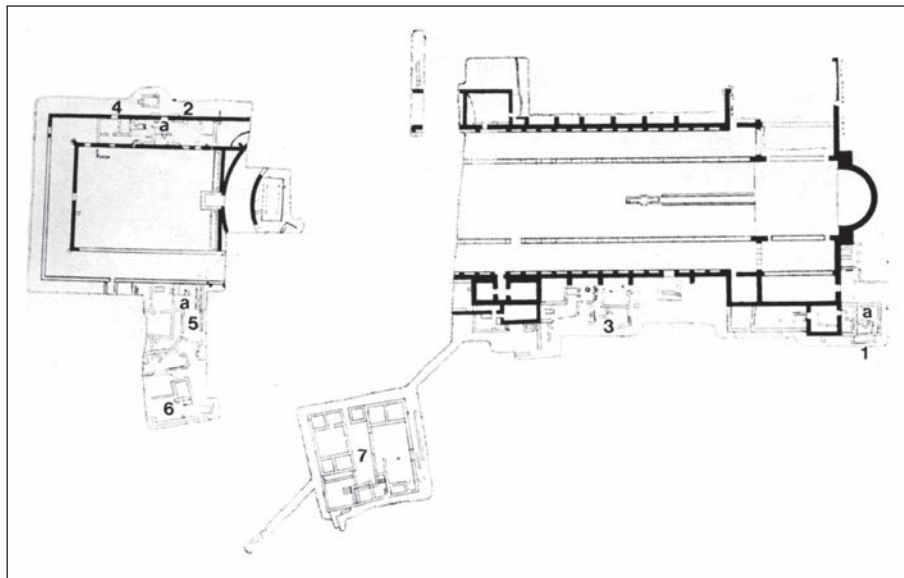


Fig. 2.155: Corinth. Plan of Late Antique buildings in the area of basilica of Hagios Leonidas (Sodini 1984, Fig. 24).

course of the Late Antique city walls is problematic, presumably only built around 400 and enclosing a third of the former city (Ćurčić 2010, 126; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 701). Many important public institutions, as well as the agora, remained outside the walls. Evidence shows a similar picture as in most other cities with continuity in that the 5th century brought an abandonment of public buildings, a gradual reuse of abandoned buildings for small and modest dwellings and workshops, as well as small groups of burials appearing within the former city. Certain large private houses do persist, however, such as

one fitted with a bathroom in the 6th century, as well as a long building from the mid-6th century (Sodini 1984, 394; Warner Slane, Sanders 2005).

Habitation cores appear at several locations within the large former city. The most important one was that in the Lechaion port, where Hagios Leonidas, one of the largest Early Christian basilicas was built. Alongside other known or surmised basilicas, Hagios Leonidas underscores the Early Christian significance of the city that hosted a large Christian community already in Apostolic Age. Simple and irregularly arranged houses



Fig. 2.156: Gortyn. Praetorium (2020).



Fig. 2.157: Gortyn. Odeon below the acropolis (2020).

began to be erected in the area of this basilica soon after the mid-6th century (Sodini 1984, 370–373; Warner Slane, Sanders 2005). The construction technique and small finds reveal it as a completely rural settlement. In contrast with most other cities, Corinth witnessed strong continuation in the 7th century.

Gortyn (Gortyna) (Figs. 2.156, 2.157), a well-researched large city on Crete shows all the Late Antique elements characteristic of a major island city and provides an opportunity of comparison with cities on the continent (Di Vita 2010). The acropolis is poorly known, but we know that an Early Christian church was constructed there. The defensive walls around the acropolis have not been reliably dated and may even be slightly later. What is certain is that the whole city was not enclosed with walls in Late Antiquity. Several churches stood in the city, predominantly built between the 4th and the 6th century; the buildings of the Justinian renovation stands out in size and decoration.

The Praetorium is the most complex and best-investigated building that represents important administrative architecture from the late 4th century (Sodini 1984, 343–344). After the earthquake of 365 had destroyed the Hellenistic architecture later used as a large Roman bath complex, the building was extensively renovated under governor Dositheus. Roman baths were still in operation, while a basilica was constructed in another part that functioned as a court of justice. A large part of earlier rooms was abandoned. Housing was later arranged in the wider area of the complex, the baths were abandoned by the 6th century. The basilica was renovated after the earthquake of 618 and continued to have an administrative function for some time.

Italian researchers focused their attention on the dwellings in the Quarter of Pythion (Baldini Lippolis 2001, 208; Zanini 2009). After a devastating earthquake (presumably in 365), an area of Late Antique housing developed there in the second half of the 5th century that represented the main residential quarter. Another major renovation was detected in the 6th century and the complex was only abandoned in the 8th century. Researchers observed all the features of late urban construction including buildings of inferior quality built into earlier architecture, subdivisions and the appearance of different workshops. In other areas as well, there is visible degradation of earlier public buildings that now hosted simple dwellings. Such dwellings and agricultural tools indicate an influx of people from the countryside who took advantage of the urban infrastructure and existing buildings.

TURKEY

At the eastern end of the area under discussion, in the province Europa in modern-day Turkey, most traces of settlement continuity come from two coastal cities. One is the old Greek colony of Perinthus, in the southern part of Europa at the Sea of Marmara, that in the 3rd century changed its name to **Heracleia**. The city was located close to the junction of two most important westwards routes (Via Egnatia and a military road through the Danube Basin) and enjoyed a naturally excellently protected location on a peninsula; in Antiquity, it was also separated from the mainland by an isthmus. It had strong double walls (Crow 2002, 342–343; Dintchev 2021b, 245–246). The outer walls were reinforced with U-shaped towers and located in the lowland part of the city. The stamped bricks show it is attributable to the first half of the 5th century. The inner walls, which protected a vast acropolis, were built of brick. Surviving of these walls are two pentagonal towers that suggest the walls were constructed under Justinian. A large Early Christian basilica stood at the outer walls in the lower part, which indicates this part of the city was still inhabited in the 6th century (Crow 2002, 343). The later inner walls encircling the acropolis certainly show a compromised security of the 6th century in the immediate vicinity of the Byzantine capital. Other elements of the city are not known; Procopius mentions a palace and an aqueduct.

The city of **Salemydessos-Medeia (Midye or Kujukoy)**, on the coast of the Black Sea, also took advantage of its convenient location on a raised plateau above a well-protected sea port. Not much is known of other Late Antique remains, while the city walls were thick and partly still survive on the accessible west side (Crow 2002, 345). Literature mentions rectangular towers and the remains of a large pentagonal tower at the entrance. The walls were not investigated to the degree that enables a more precise dating of the different Late Antique phases.

To conclude the discussion of the cities of this group, we should mention **Constantinople (İstanbul)**, a metropolis of the ancient world and the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Its monuments and its continuity from a Greek to Roman city and further on to the Byzantine capital on the border between two continents certainly reach beyond the scope of this discussion (overview in Čurčić 2010, 54–58, 77–100, 187–203). Of the characteristic Late Antique elements that created the magnificent capital, we should mention first and foremost the land wall constructed in the early 5th century, the design and efficiency of which became the role model for many other cities across the Empire. The main wall had numerous towers and forts, as well as a *proteichisma* that appears in cities and large forts as a characteristic element of defence already during the second half of the 5th century and spreads far westwards in the time of Justinian.



Fig. 2.158: Sabiona. Hill from the south (1989).

2.5 CITIES NEWLY-FOUNDED IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The section below discusses the urban formations established anew in Late Antiquity that constitute a varied group and differ in many aspects from the earlier Roman cities. Some were founded completely *ex novo*, for example Caričin grad, others developed in the places of earlier settlements of a different, non-urban character. Their diversity and the different local factors influencing their creation are a frequent cause of unease in classifying a city into this group. It is a group that most poignantly raises the methodological question of what constitutes a Late Antique city; this issue has in part already been tackled in the introduction and is discussed in greater deal at the end of this chapter.

In addition to settlements with several urban characteristics, this group includes sites, for which archaeological evidence, size and sometimes literary evidence indicate important agglomerations or merely episcopal centres. They represented religious and administrative centres of individual territories associated with several small contemporary settlements.

The newly-founded cities occur in greater numbers in limited periods, primarily from the late 3rd to the first third of the 4th, as well as in the 6th century, as is presented in more detail in the interpretative part and the diachronic overview of the emergence and abandonment of cities. First, however, the cities are presented in a geographical order.

2.5.1 WESTERN PART

ITALY

Literary sources for the 6th century relate that several episcopal sees were transferred to small and largely naturally protected locations, the features of which hardly speak of a city. At the northwestern edge of the area under discussion, in the province Raetia II, **Sabiona (Chiusa/Klausen)** (Fig. 2.158) is one example of a modest newly-formed episcopal see. The research conducted thus far does not allow reliable interpretations of the settlement and its defensive elements, archaeologists have only been able to confirm a prominent ecclesiastical centre and scarce traces of a small settlement. North of the modern-day city, a dominant rocky hill rises high above the valley and the confluence of the Rivers Isarco and Tinne. It is naturally excellently protected with precipitous slopes on three sides and can only be accessed from the south. Because of its excellent defensive location, the hill was inhabited in several earlier periods, in the Roman period the Via Claudia led past it. The long systematic excavations and trial trenching campaigns have established that the hill was only partly occupied in Late Antiquity (Berg 1985, 89–97; Bierbrauer, Notdurfter 2015; Kuhnen 2020). Modest remains of buildings from the 4th to the first half of the 6th century have come to light near the present-day Marian church, while a large Early Christian church was constructed around 400 slightly lower down the slope, which is associated with a vast cemetery spanning from the 5th to the 8th century. There is no evidence of a settlement existing throughout the 6th century and beyond, but we do have habitation



Fig. 2.159: Castrum Gradense. City plan (Brogiolo 2011a, 51).



Fig. 2.160: Castrum Gradense. Church of Santa Eufemia (1991).

remains around the church on the slope, as well as the remains of a building probably used for artisanal activities. Also not entirely clear is the dating of the second presumed Early Christian church on the top of the hill (Glaser 1997, 152–154). Literary sources mention the episcopal see here from the mid-6th century onwards.

The most characteristic example and one also well-documented in literary sources is the transfer of the episcopal see from endangered Aquileia to **Castrum Gradense (Grado)**, a small fort in the Grado Lagoon (Figs. 2.159, 2.160) the name of which is indicative of the significant change in the perception of the newly-formed settlement (Cuscito 2001; Bierbrauer 2004). Recently, its foundation has been set to the mid-6th century (Brogiolo, Cagnana 2005, 103–106; Marano 2012, 583). The naturally well-protected island was inhabited even before. Two churches were built there in the late 4th or early

5th century, which were soon joined by a third one. The defensive walls, which protected a 3 ha large interior, and new church buildings and additions are believed to have taken place during the 6th century, most likely after the Gothic Wars, when Grado also became an important port (Brogiolo 2011a, 128–129).

AUSTRIA

The size, the existence of an ecclesiastical centre and the mention of an episcopal see in the area of Aguntum suggest that the fortified settlement on **Kirchbichl near Lavant** (Figs. 2.161, 2.162) can also be identified as a newly-founded settlement. It lies on the south side of the River Drau/Drava, roughly 4 km from the Roman city of Aguntum. The hill has an excellent defensive loca-

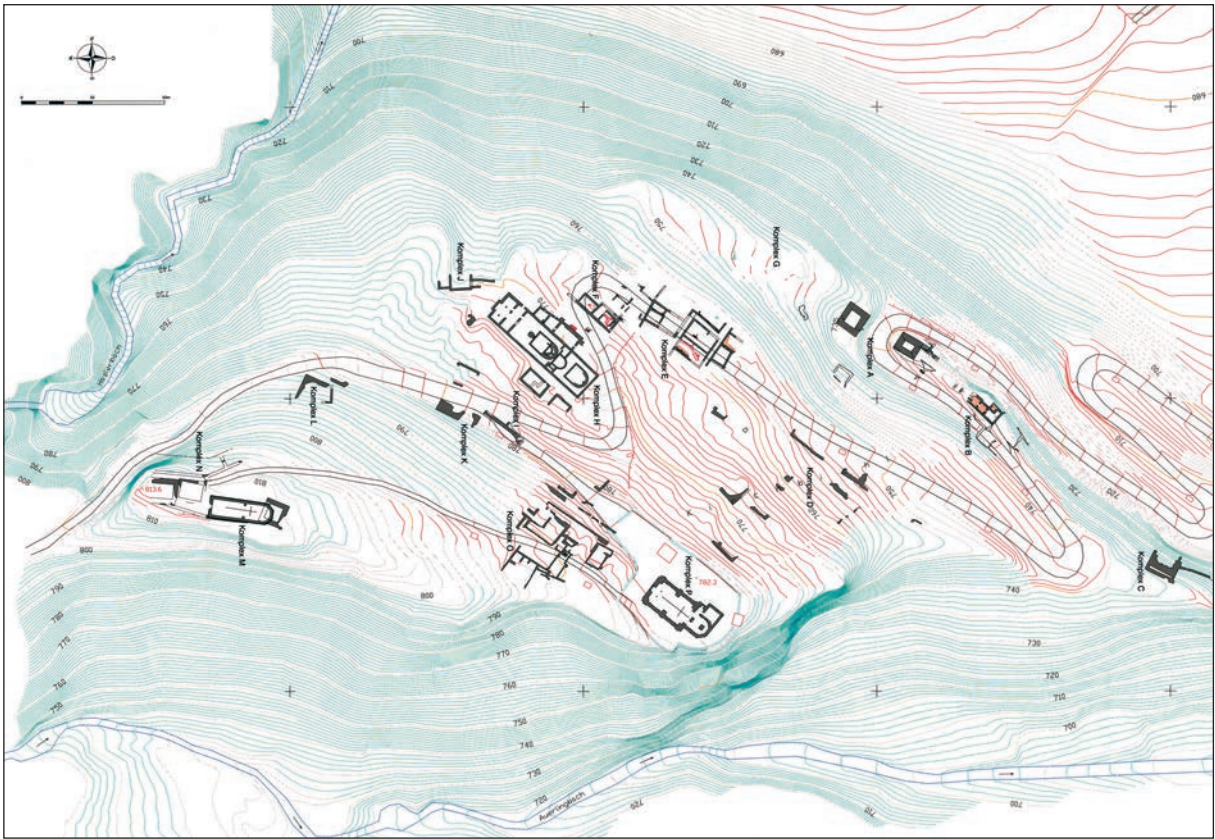


Fig. 2.161: Kirchbichl near Lavant. Plan of the settlement (Grabherr, Kainrath 2011, Fig. 3).



Fig. 2.162: Kirchbichl near Lavant. Double church from the south-east (2003).

tion with high precipitous slopes in the south and very steep slopes on all other sides. The settlement covers a surface of 350×150 m. The first systematic excavations were already conducted in 1948–1956, while occasional rescue investigations have been taking place in recent times (Grabherr, Kainrath 2011). The defensive walls,

which the first explorations presumed to have protected the settlement in the north side of easiest access, have not been confirmed in the recent investigations; it is possible that the steep slopes provided sufficient protection. The towers at the presumed entrance may also not be chronologically linked to this settlement. Found beneath

the east tower was part of a building with a hypocaust and several phases observable above the hypocaust. The steep slope to the east of here revealed a long building with several rooms that partly closed the access to the interior of the settlement.

An Early Christian church with a baptistery and extensions, or ‘episcopal church’ as the first excavator Miltner described it, stood in the middle of the slope on a long terrace (Grabherr, Kainrath 2011, 23). In its vicinity on the north side, a complex of several rooms came to light, including those fitted with heating, which appears to be the most prominent living quarters within the settlement. Another church was found at the south edge of the settlement and also associated with a residential complex, which is not known in detail. The entire slope has revealed densely spaced traces of only partially known buildings. The numerous coins and other small finds (coarseware and imported pottery, glass, different metal and bone artefacts) indicate the settlement existed from the mid-3rd to the late 6th century, though a detailed chronology of the buildings and cultural layers is hindered by their position on the slope and hence marked erosion, but also by the incomplete data of the early excavations. Venantius Fortunatus, who visited Aguntum in 565, mentioned it was located on a high hill – this certainly corresponds with the remains of the vast settlement on Kirchbichl.

HUNGARY

Large fortifications of Late Antiquity represent a settlement *novum* in the vast Pannonian expanses of western Hungary, for which it is difficult to distinguish between semi-urban centres, fortified settlements or army posts (overview of the functional and chronological identifications in Heinrich-Tamáška 2011b). The size, heavy defences, as well as numerous and varied buildings in the interior show that some of them can be seen as newly-founded cities (cf. Rizos 2017b, 26–27). Such examples are the fortifications at Fenékpuszta, Környe, Ságvár and Alsóhetény, which are similar to each other in their lowland location close to water and even more so in the architecture, both the defensive installations and the buildings in the interior (Tóth 2000; Heinrich-Tamáška 2015). The group further includes Gorsium – Tác, where strong walls and interior buildings completely altered its character. These settlements are most frequently marked as ‘inner fortresses’, which emphasises their location in the hinterland of the Danube limes. Most are irregularly rectangular in plan and cover a surface of 7 to 21 ha. The form of the defensive towers reveals at least two construction phases: the first one in the second third of the 4th century and the second one in the Valentinian period. Their interiors revealed main buildings that resemble villas, in several cases also

horrea, outbuildings, stables and baths. Most authors agree that their construction was a military project with economic considerations, as they also served as supply centres for the army or its mobile units (*comitatenses*). Having said that, the plans and small finds of the buildings in the interior speak of a civilian population. After the province Valeria was relinquished to the Huns in the 430s, all except Keszthely-Fenékpuszta were abandoned.

A good and well-investigated example is **Keszthely-Fenékpuszta** (Figs. 2.163–2.165) (Müller 1988; Christie 2007, 558–560; Heinrich-Tamáška, Müller 2009; Heinrich-Tamáška 2011b; ead. 2015, 48–58; Visy 2018). This large Late Antique fortification with ca 15 ha of interior surface lay on a peninsula of Lake Balaton that was well-protected with the lake and marshes. A 2.4–2.6 m thick defensive wall was constructed here in the second third of the 4th century that enclosed a 377 × 358 m large area. The wall had four fortified entrances reinforced with interior propugnacula, as well as 44 round protruding towers. In the north, a defensive ditch was found and another rampart with a ditch was set up 760 m in front of the fortification spanning the whole width of the peninsula and thus additionally defending the access to the settlement. Two roads led through the fortification and a tetrapylon was erected above their junction. The interior revealed 29 buildings, which were excavated at least in part; geophysical surveys indicate the existence of many more. They comprise different forms, spanning from very simple, single-room buildings to villa-like complexes with a peristyle or a corridor, as well as a *horreum*, baths and an Early Christian church. The fortification revealed several different phases and the dating of the buildings and their renovations has not yet been fully explained.

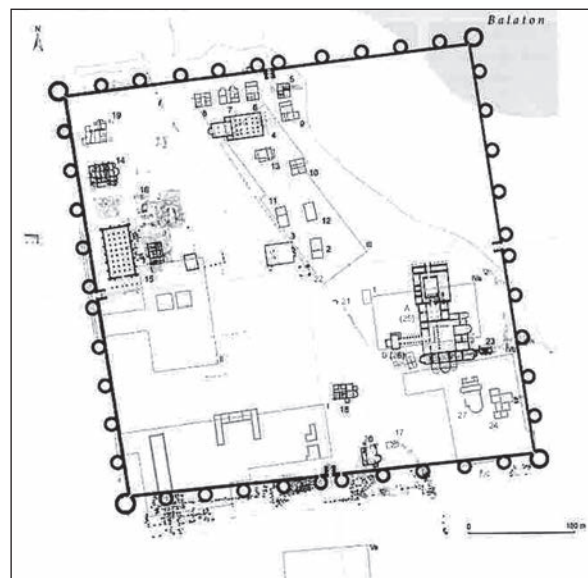


Fig. 2.163: Keszthely-Fenékpuszta. Plan of the fortification (Heinrich-Tamáška 2017, Fig. 2c–d).



Fig. 2.164: Keszthely-Fenékpuszta. Remains of the entrance gates (2003).



Fig. 2.165: Keszthely-Fenékpuszta. *Horreum* (2003).

There are persisting differences of opinion regarding the function of individual buildings; the identification of the presumed *principium* and *praetorium* is still disputed. Recent research indicates that most buildings had masonry foundations, while the superstructure used a combination of bricks and wooden beams, which researchers have associated with the numerous traces of fires. The fortification

thus appears as a complex of military architecture with a strong civilian presence. The necropoleis unearthed thus far largely correspond with the chronology of the settlement, which persisted to the middle of the 5th century when it was torn down. It was renovated most likely in the Ostrogothic times, the extant houses modified and numerous sunken and other modest buildings added. A

continuity of the settlement throughout the 6th and partly into the early 7th century can be surmised from the burials, small finds and an Early Christian church. Florin Curta presumes that a bishopric existed here in the 6th century (Curta 2001b, 58).

Less is known of the fortification at **Alsóhetény** (Fig. 2.166) (Mulvin 2002, 73–74; Tóth 2009, 34, 36). It is comparable in size with Fenékpuszta and its interior also indicates similar buildings.

The smaller fortification at **Ságvár** has three large *horrea*, which underscore the role of the site as an army supply base (Mulvin 2002, 101–102).

Also sufficiently revealing is the small ‘inner fortress’ at **Környe** (Szabó, Heinrich-Tamáská 2011). The fortified area extended across roughly 7 ha and its architecture shows a fortification of the Valentinian phase characterised by round towers. The fortification was constructed on top of an up to 1 m thick levelled layer that contains the remains of the civil settlement from the Principate, which the coin finds suggest was destroyed in the time of Gallienus. Parallel with Keszthely-Fenékpuszta, its construction has been dated to the second third of the 4th century.

After a devastation in the 260s, the city of **Gorsium** witnessed renewed prosperity in the Tetrarchic times, when it was renovated and renamed **Herculia** (Figs. 2.167–2.169) (Fitz 1976; id. 2004); we can even speak of the establishment of a new city. Its central part was enclosed with thick walls reinforced with rectangular

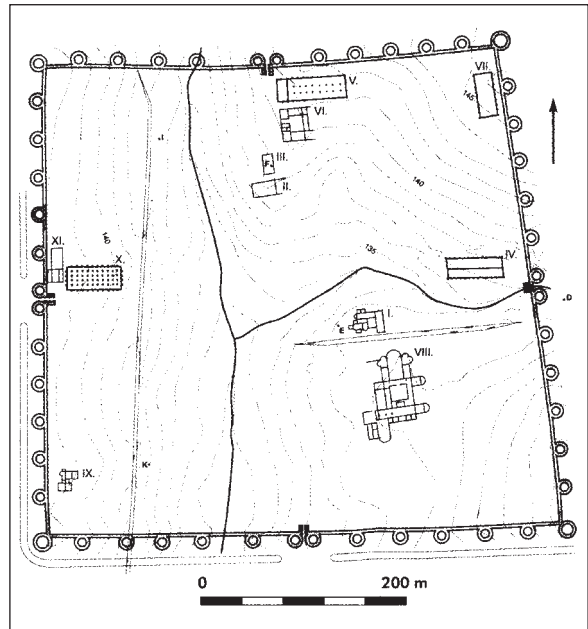


Fig. 2.166: Alsóhetény. Plan of the fortification (Rizos 2017b, Fig. 6).

towers and fan-shaped ones in the corners. The interior thus far mainly revealed public buildings including a large palace in the northwest, which presumably served as the residence of the governor of Valeria. Two buildings with apses in the north have been interpreted as churches,



Fig. 2.167: Gorsium (Herculia). Remains of the Late Antique palace (2011).

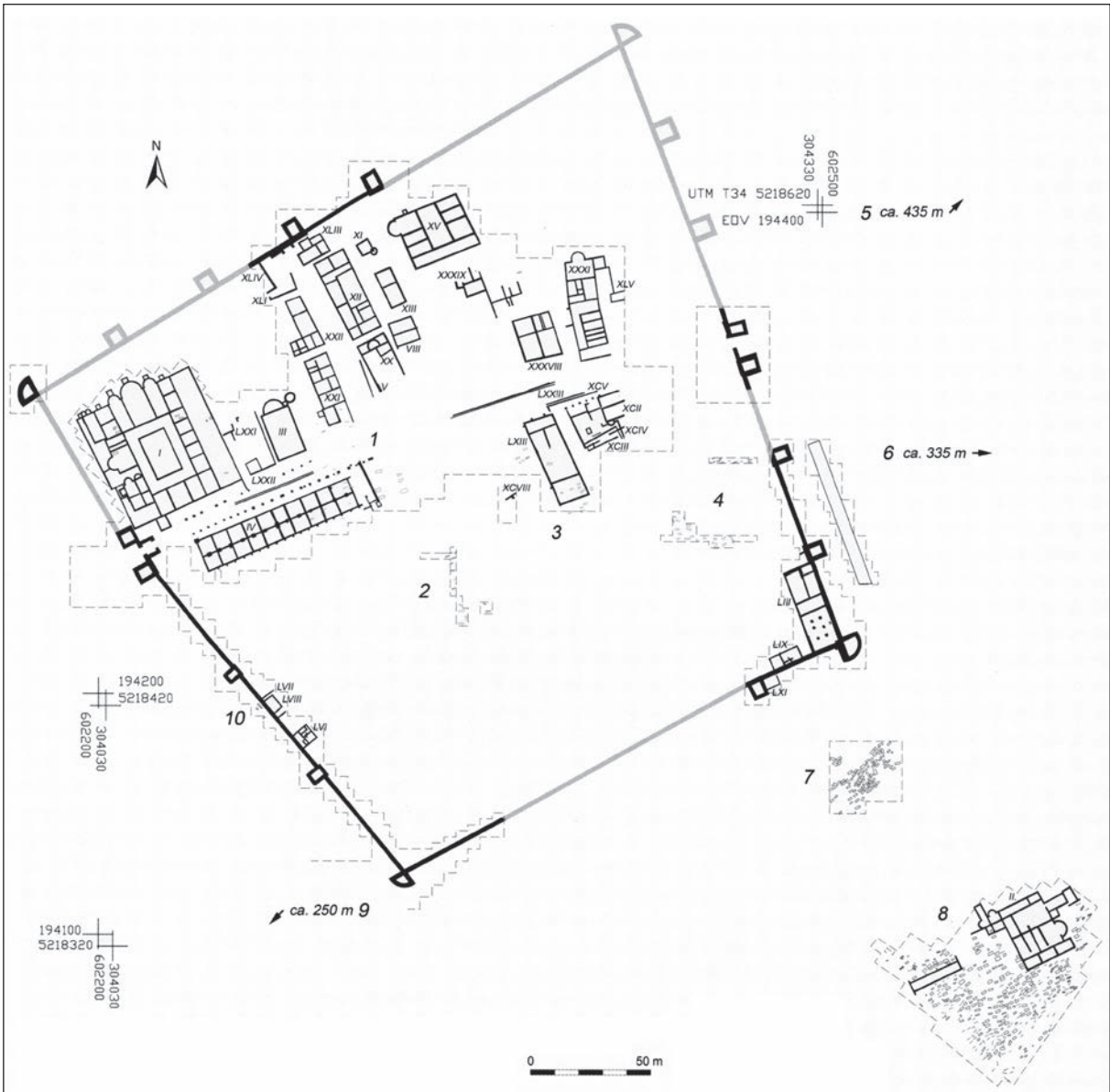


Fig. 2.168: Gorsium (Herculia). City plan (from Fitz 2004, Fig. 7).



Fig. 2.169: Gorsium (Herculia). Remains of the fan-shaped tower in the southwestern corner (2011).



Fig. 2.170: Carnium. Plateau of the large Late Antique settlement from the west (2003).



Fig. 2.171: Carnium. Partly excavated city walls with a tower (2003).

though their sacral function cannot be confirmed (Heinrich-Tamáška 2012, 229). The buildings and small finds from the 4th century show a time of prosperity for the city that only faded after 378, when clay-bonded houses of an inferior quality began to be built. Jenó Fitz presumes these were the dwellings of the suburban population who sought shelter in the protected interior and used all the free spaces to create modest dwellings by using the debris material (Fitz 2004, 42). The palace was turned into artisanal facilities in the first half of the 5th century (Müller 2000, 244). The last phase of the city's existence is corroborated by the adjacent cemetery, where the last reliably dated burials belong to the 430s. After the mid-5th century there are no more observable traces of intense habitation in the city interior, only individual barbarian graves (Heinrich-Tamáška 2012, 229).

SLOVENIA

Continental Slovenia revealed many fortified settlements from Late Antiquity, of which the significance and size only allow **Carnium (Kranj)** (Figs. 2.170, 2.171) to be included in the category of newly-formed cities. Its exceptional strategic location at the junction of several roads and pathways, on a naturally excellently protected high terrace enabled the formation of the largest fortified Late Antique settlement in Slovenia (ca 10 ha). Its existence has long been surmised on the basis of the rich finds from the V Lajhu and Križišče Iskra cemeteries (Stare 1980; Vinski 1980; Sagadin 1988; Knific 2005). In the last few decades, investigations have also offered an insight into the defences and habitations of the settlement (Sagadin 1991; id. 1998, 715–717; id. 2004; Ciglenečki 2005, 265–267; Sagadin 2008, 176–178; Urankar 2021).



Fig. 2.172: Capris. Plan of the Late Antique remains in Kapucinski vrt (from Cunja 1996, App. 3).

The roughly 250×90 m large plateau at the confluence of the Rivers Sava and Kokra provided an effectively defensible spot additionally fortified with walls and towers. High-quality masonry buildings were constructed next to the interior face of the walls, while wooden buildings predominate in most other parts of the city (Sagadin 2020, 208–210). The recovered artefacts include those that indicate different workshops, presumably including glassworks. The remains of a large Early Christian church with an octagonal baptistery were found under the present-day parish church. The central place of Carnium in a wider region is indirectly also perceptible through the smaller Late Antique settlements in the surrounding area (Puštal above Trnje, Hom above Sora, Sv. Lovrenc and Gradišče above Bašelj, Sv. Jakob above Potoče, Štefanja gora), which enclose in an arch the plain in the middle of which Kranj is nestled (Fig. 2.263). Indirect confirmation of the archaeological evidence can be found in the writings of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna, whose *Cosmography* mentions the land of Carneola and in it *castel Carnium* that is mentioned first.

In northwestern Istria, the Late Antique agglomeration **Capris / insula Capritana (Koper)** was established on an island close to the coast (Figs. 2.172, 2.173), for which sources mention the presence of a bishop in the

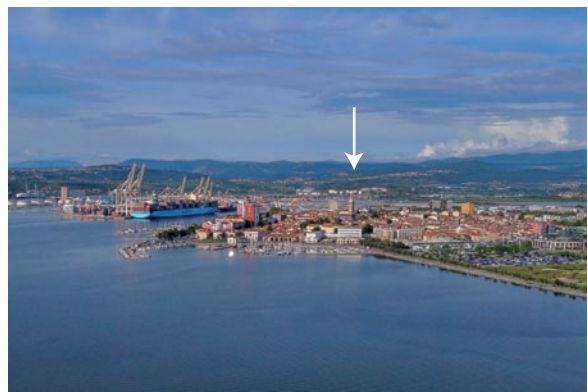


Fig. 2.173: Capris, south view (2020).

6th century (Šašel 1974, 452–454; Bratož 2001). Jaroslav Šašel presumed that the city in the 5th/6th centuries welcomed a large number of refugees from Pannonia and was centred around the fortification called *Justinopolis* located on the highest point of the island. The rescue investigations of 1986–1987 systematically unearthed a large part of this city with architectural remains and numerous small finds (Cunja 1996). The architectural remains comprise one large building and the walls of

several others that continued beyond the excavation area. Results show that the island was first more intensely inhabited in the Late Roman period, practically *ex novo*, with the small finds also indicating the possible existence of an army post (Cunja 1996, 130). An even more intensive settlement has been established for the 5th and 6th centuries that continued into the Middle Ages (Cunja 1996, 130). Earlier masonry structures have been found under the current cathedral of Koper that can as yet not be positively identified as an Early Christian basilica (Župančič et al. 2007; Hofman, Župančič 2008).

CROATIA

In the Croatian part of Istria, the establishment of three new bishoprics (Pedena, Neapolis and Cissa) was noted for the 6th century, though they have not been reliably identified (Bratož 1992, 301–302). The Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna also mentions **civitas Siparis** (Figs. 2.174–2.176). Its identification is not disputed, located on the long and narrow peninsula near Umag that becomes an island during tide; the small finds show its existence over a long period of Antiquity to the 9th century (Marušić 1975, 338–340; Milošević Zakić 2019). Excavations in the exposed part where access is easiest have revealed a heavily fortified entrance with a pentagonal tower. A cistern was found in its interior, while the tower was associated with thick defensive walls on both sides. The peninsula also revealed different buildings arranged on both sides of the narrow central street. The small finds show that habitation was most intense in the second half of the 6th and first half of the 7th century, with the dating to the 6th century corroborated by the

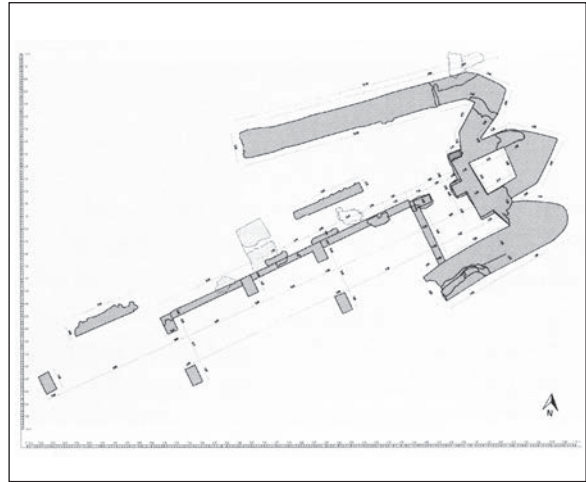


Fig. 2.174: Siparis. Plan of the eastern part of the city (Milošević Zakić 2019, Fig. 4).



Fig. 2.175: Siparis. Peninsula with Late Antique remains (2010).



Fig. 2.176: Siparis. Remains of the tower on the approachable part of peninsula (2010).



Fig. 2.177: Bosar. Peninsula Sokol with Vela Luka and Mala Luka (2018).



Fig. 2.178: Bosar. Double church with a narthex, preserved at a considerable height, the fortification of Korintija in the background (2018).



Fig. 2.179: Bosar. The central part of the ruins lies at the bottom of the Mala Luka, a narrower strip is visible along the eastern coast (2018).

construction of the pentagonal tower (Milošević Zakić 2019, 218–219).

Large, unfortified, but well-constructed settlements are very rare. An exceptional example and one that deserves particular attention is **Bosar near Baška** (Figs. 2.177–2.179, 2.264) on the island of Krk (Faber 1988, 123–126; Tomičić 1988, 148–151; id. 1990; Šiljeg 2008). It has been poorly investigated, but the excellent preservation and remains visible on the surface allow a reconstruction of the last large Early Byzantine settlement in the eastern Adriatic. It is a veritable time capsule, as it was not inhabited neither before nor after. Together with the fort of Korintija, which rises above, it offers a comprehensive picture of an Early Byzantine post with several functions that survived exceptionally well due to its remoteness and mild climate. Most of the buildings are still buried under heaps of rubble and investigations would certainly offer an excellent insight into the life and function of an Early Byzantine settlement far in the west. It lies in the southern part of the island of Krk, where two harbours (Mala Luka and Vela Luka) are nestled at the root of the Sokol peninsula. In Mala Luka, in an area called Bosar, lie the remains of tens of masonry buildings in different conditions of preservation and visibility that already attracted attention in the 18th century (Fortis 1774, 283–284). The core of this settlement was located at the bottom of the bay that measures ca 150 × 100 m. Three church buildings stand out. The largest is a basilica measuring 30 × 12 m in plan and oriented towards the east that survives in tall ruins in the southwest of the settlement area and has already been identified during field surveys (Ciglenečki 1987a, 104, Fig. 153). Two smaller sacral buildings are visible in the east and north sides of the main part. Trial trenching has been conducted in the east church with a triconchal terminal (Šiljeg 2008, 84–85). Most of the residential buildings in this area are hidden beneath piles of debris, only in some places can we observe the remains of mortar-bound walls. In spite of a lack of investigations, the orientation and outlines of individual buildings indicate a settlement with differently designed houses. This main part of the settlement is associated with a roughly 20–50 m wide strip of buildings, more than 200 m long, with well-visible foundations along the north part of the bay. Roughly in the centre of this strip is a large walled area, named 'Klošter' in the earlier literature. Aleksandra Faber described it as a courtyard complex surrounded by buildings, while Željko Tomičić sees an fort at the entrance to the settlement (Faber 1988, 124; Tomičić 1990, 35). Bartul Šiljeg saw the dressed good-quality stones and a wall with pilasters on the better-preserved south side as evidence of a church (Šiljeg 2008, 86). A more detailed examination of aerial photographs and of the architecture on the ground revealed it was a double church with a narthex, of which the facade with pilasters survive. The church was built

above a part of a large rectangular defensive wall, the function of which has as yet not been fully explained. Leaning on the church complex from the south are the residential remains that reach to the coast. These may be in direct connections with the church (monastery?). To the north of here, the remains of less well-constructed drystone buildings are visible in plan along the coast, which Tomičić presumed to be the dwellings of the autochthonous population (Tomičić 1990, 35).

The small finds mentioned in earlier reports, consisting of gold coins of which only one of Justinian has been identified, as well as numerous shards of amphorae and glass goblets, date this settlement to the 6th century. The field surveys also yielded traces of a glassworks (Šiljeg 2008, 85–86). The existence of a vast complex settlement with at least four churches was closely tied with the maritime route, which is clear from the amphora shards and the difficult communication lines with the rest of the island as a result of the undulating rocky terrain in the hinterland. The small patch of fertile plain in immediate proximity could provide modest subsistence, but it would appear that trading, as well as a port sheltered from winds and hostile views was more prominent in that sense. The fortification Korintija on the hill above the settlement, which is an excellent addition to the unprotected residential complex, is presented below among the fortified newly-founded settlements (see *Chapter 3.3*).

The **Palace of Diocletian in Split** (Figs. 2.180–2.184, 2.250) is an impressive example of a fortified imperial villa later transformed into a city, and it is certainly one of the most significant monuments from Late Antiquity. The palace needs no description here, we only offer a selection of the vast literature that presents, interprets and attempts to reconstruct it (Adam 1764; Niemann 1910; Hébrard, Zeiller 1912; Wilkes 1993; Marasović 1994; McKay 1998; Belamarić 2003; Čurčić 2010, 33–38; Piplović 2016). The fortified complex from the early 4th century combines the features of an army camp and a luxury imperial residence, but also indicates the difficulties of the following centuries when this part of the Empire was turned into a fortified landscape. Irregularly rectangular in plan, it is oriented with the south side towards the sea and measures 216 × 175 and 180 m. With the surface of 3 ha, it was the size of a small city, the layout of which reflects all the qualities of Roman urbanism (Suić 2003, 358–360; Čurčić 2010, 26–29). It has a rectilinear grid of streets with the residential part clearly separate from the private part reserved for the emperor and his retinue. The monumental, 2.10 m thick walls were reinforced with sixteen rectangular and square protruding towers placed at the corners and along the sides. Three main entrances were flanked with octagonal towers additionally fortified with propugnacula in the interior.

The two main communications crossing the palace perpendicularly to one another are reminiscent of the di-

vision of army camps and the orthogonal urban design. It is presumed that the northern part housed the army and servants. A peristyle forms the centre and leads to the temples and the imperial residence. The recent investigations in the underground level of the palace revealed the layout of the emperor's private quarters. The different architectural elements and surviving decoration shows a number of elements of Eastern architecture. Joško Belamarić hypothesises that the *gynaecium* mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* (Occ. XI) represents a component of the palace's original design (Belamarić 2003); most other authors set its creation to a time after the death of Diocletian.

At an undefined time during Late Antiquity, the palace transformed into a small urban settlement that inherited the layout with a rectilinear grid of streets and a separation between the official, cult and residential areas. The densely inhabited modern-day city prevents us from understanding the development of the palace after the death of Diocletian. For a while, it certainly hosted local dignitaries, possibly even the Emperor Julius Nepos who fled Italy. In the southern part, there were radical alterations interpolating buildings into previously empty spaces. Archaeologists have been able to confirm the existence of two large baths that were fitted into the rooms of the already existing buildings in the palace's south part after Diocletian's death (Piplović 2016, 276). Their creation can be brought into connection with the numerous springs of sulphurous and mineral water in the area of the palace and its immediate vicinity. Their abandonment has been dated to the 5th century. The area of the former palace was continuously inhabited and the pottery finds show lively trading in Late Antiquity (Dvoržak Schrunck 1989). The gradual influx of people from both Salona and the hinterland, who sought shelter behind the well-preserved walls, resulted in the development of a small city with excess openings walled and public areas transformed. The *cardo* and *decumanus* remained the main axes of the newly-formed city and guided further growth (Suić 1976a, 238–240). Not much is known of the residential architecture, while the remains from the 5th and 6th centuries include different elements of Early Christian churches that exhibit a transformation from Roman cult places and a strong presence of a Christian population. The Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna mentions it as *civitas* (Cosm. IV. 16, V. 14).

The urban agglomeration **Lisina (Hvar)** on the island of Hvar also gradually developed in the 5th and 6th centuries (Katić 2003, 453–454). In addition to the remains of housing and defensive walls, archaeological investigations unearthed huge amounts of imported goods and mention traces of Early Christian churches. As a safe port, it also played an important role in the Gothic Wars; Procopius mentions it as the spot where the Byzantine fleet gathered before attacking Salona.

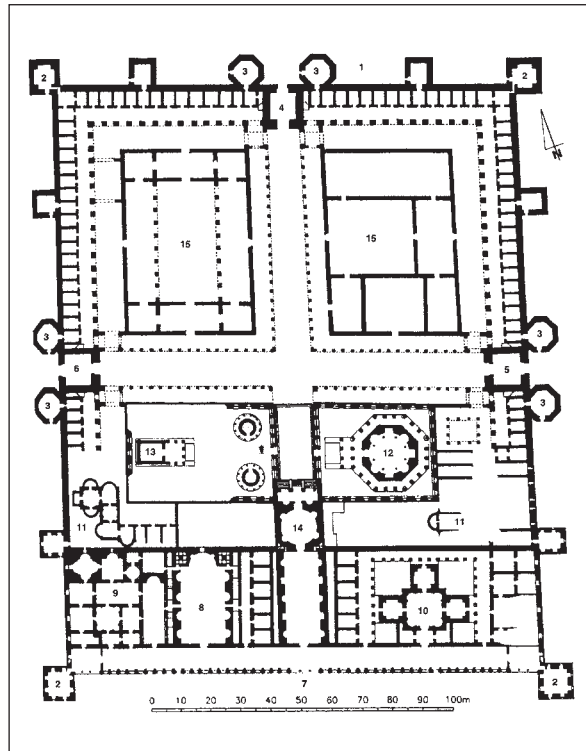


Fig. 2.180: Split. City plan. (Suić 2003, Fig. 180)



Fig. 2.181: Split. *Porta argentea* in eastern walls (2017).



Fig. 2.182: Split. The present appearance of the west front of the Palace of Diocletian (2017).



Fig. 2.183: Split. City walls, preserved at a considerable height, and a tower in the south-western part of the palace (2017).



Fig. 2.184: Split. Peristil of the Palace of Diocletian (2017).

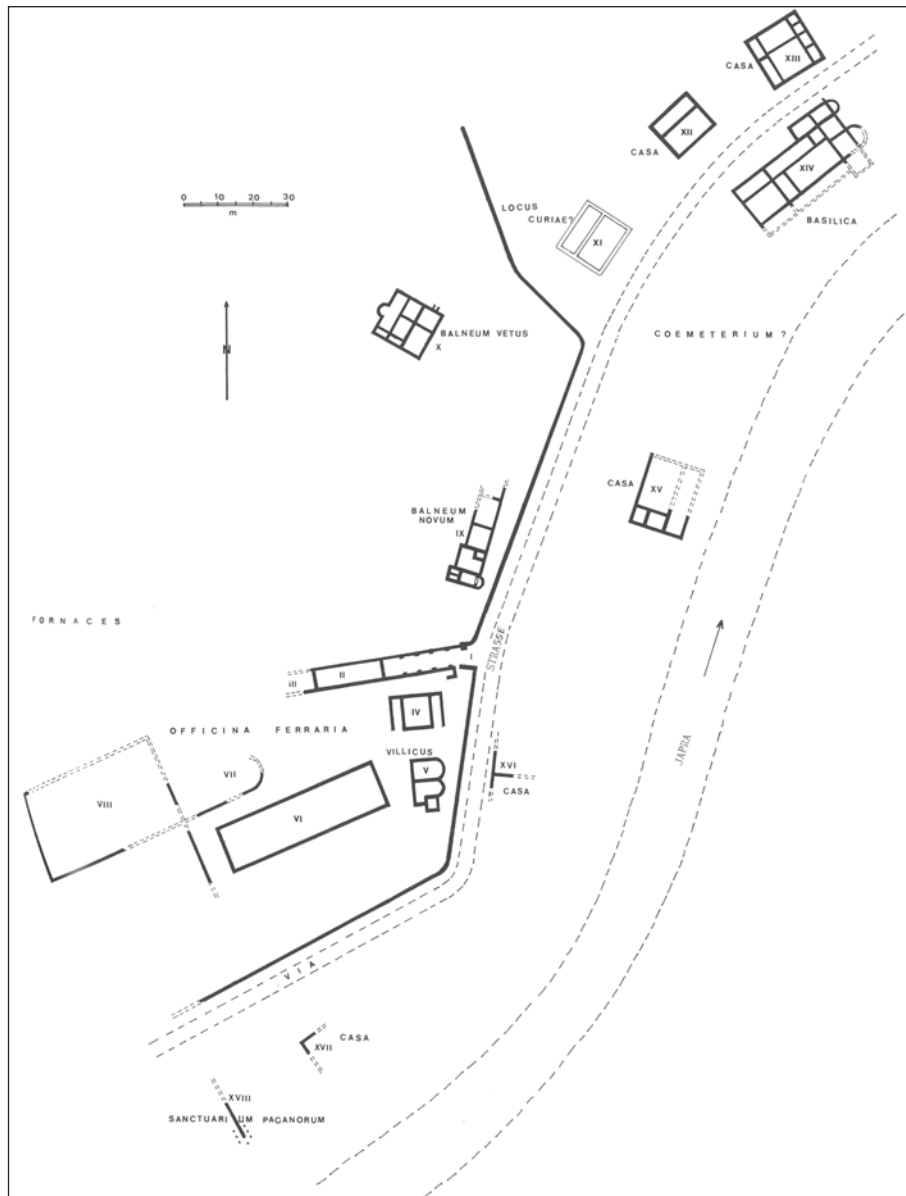


Fig. 2.185: Blagaj. Plan of the settlement and the metallurgic complex (Basler 1993, Fig. 1).

BOSNIA

Đuro Basler identified **Blagaj** (Figs. 2.185, 2.186) in the valley of the River Japra as the only urban settlement of Late Antiquity in Bosnia (Basler 1972, 37, 67–70; id. 1977; id. 1993, 21–22). The rescue investigations conducted in the 1960s in the Japra valley succeeded in salvaging several buildings. It was the site of iron ore extraction and ironworking ever since the beginning of Roman domination. Excavations revealed several construction phases that could not be sufficiently clearly identified due to the heavily damaged remains. The site is classified into the group of settlements newly-founded in Late Antiquity based on the observation that the

buildings from the 6th century predominantly stood on the completely destroyed remains of a settlement from the 1st to 3rd and possibly the 4th century, preventing us to speak of continuity. Basler dates the resettlement and renewed metallurgic activities possibly as early as the time of the Ostrogothic occupation, but certainly throughout the 6th century.

The building remains can be divided in two parts, namely habitation remains at Crkvina and Bare in the northeast and metallurgic remains to the south at Majdanište. More is known of the former, chronologically reliably identified by the large Early Christian basilica with an atrium, mosaics and decorated interior furnishings. Two large contemporary houses were con-

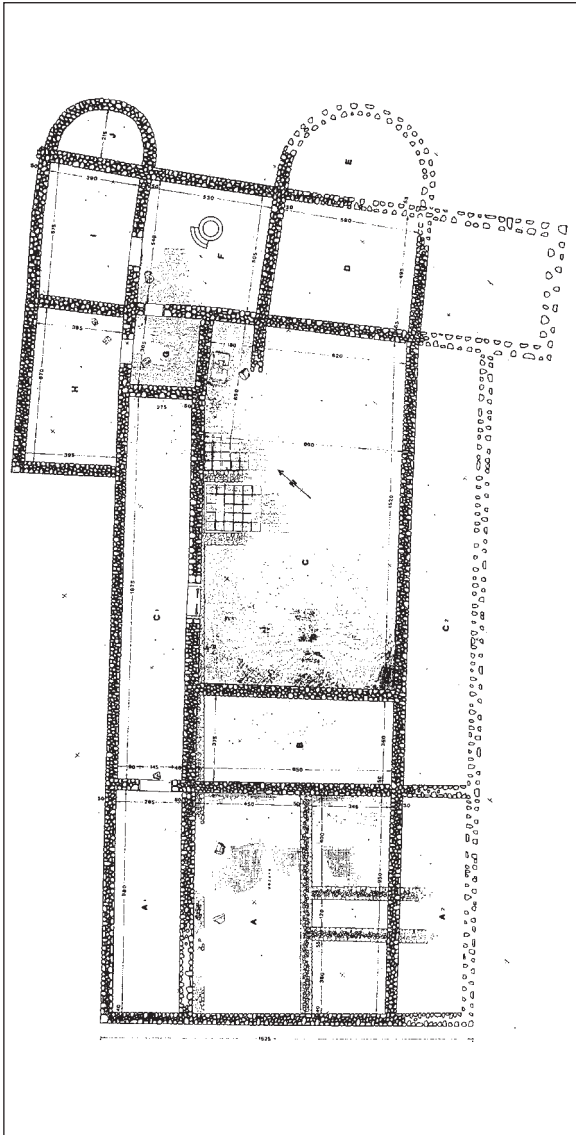


Fig. 2.186: Blagaj. Plan of the Early Christian church (Basler 1993, Fig. 30)

structed of spolia on the spot of earlier buildings and parallel with the basilica, but on the other side of the Roman road (Basler 1977; Busuladžić 2011, 165–166).

The metallurgic part was enclosed with a tall wall most likely from the 3rd century onwards. It is here that we may observe new constructions and additions to earlier buildings. The whole complex together with the remains of contemporary cemeteries shows a revival of metallurgic activities and construction of the settlement in the 6th century.

2.5.2. EASTERN PART

SERBIA

The significance of bishops in a Late Antique city is well illustrated in three epigraphic monuments found in the eastern part of the area under discussion. The most telling is certainly the inscription mentioning the construction of a large episcopal residence (fortified settlement, villa?) from the time of Justinian that came to light at **Izbičanj** near **Prijepolje**, at the eastern border of the province Dalmatia (cf. Stričević 1961, 181–182; Suić 1976a, 249–250; id. 2003, 373; Dagron 1984, 16, Note 71; Ćurčić 2010, 216). The inscription in verses was engraved on a 2 m long stone monument and records the construction of a city, fortified settlement or villa on the initiative of Bishop Stefanus and (probably) financed by the Church. It relates the defensive walls, sanctuaries, residential buildings, fountains, baths and stables as component parts of such a centre. Some identified a Late Antique villa in this description, but the time of construction and the mountainous terrain far in the hinterland of the Adriatic coast make this unlikely. It is rather similar to some of the fortified hilltop settlements that revealed prominent church complexes such as Hemmaberg, Kučar near Podzemelj or the lowland site at Louloudies near Katerini. The inscription stone was found in secondary position, though its weight suggests it could not have been brought from afar. A potential original location may be the rocky elevation of Kovingrad, some 2 km away, which holds the remains of a medieval fort and a terraced slope just above the River Lim that has as yet not seen archaeological investigations. Its location is typical of Early Byzantine fortified settlements. If such an identification were correct, investigations would enable a comparison between the Late Antique poetic description of a manor and the reality of a modest fortified hilltop settlement that hosted a bishop.

The systematic research of recent decades has shown that the large Late Antique complex on **Gradina on Jelica** (Figs. 2.187, 2.188) also ranks among the group of newly-founded cities (Milinković 1995; id. 2002; id. 2015, 143–190; id. 2020). It is a complex fortified settlement built on the summit and slopes of an 846 m high hill. The results gained thus far reveal a fortified acropolis with several important buildings and flanked to the north and south by a walled area that has only been partially investigated. Three Early Christian churches were located to the west outside the fortified settlement. Earlier data suggest that this part was also fortified. The walls that enclose all three parts of the settlement are of a different width in different sections, measuring from 0.96 to 1.65 m. The exposed part of the acropolis and the southern part of the settlement have revealed three protruding defensive towers of irregular shapes. The acropolis, girdled with its own walls protect-



Fig. 2.187: Jelica. Plan of the fortified settlement (Milinković 2010, Fig. 7).

ing a surface of 1.25 ha, hosted a simple Early Christian basilica at the top accompanied by several houses of a solid construction of mortar-bound stone rubble. These were fitted with window panes and contained a cultural layer that held copious amounts of amphorae and imported pottery. Standing out among the buildings is a large multi-room edifice of a prestigious appearance, the finds from which include a figural column capital. Mihailo Milinković allows for the possibility this was the residence of a bishop (Milinković 2015, 155). Other buildings were living quarters, one held a workshop for metal working. The south walled area was roughly 1.28 ha large and only partly investigated, but revealed scarce remains of less well-built houses predominantly of clay-bonded walls. The roughly 3.3 ha large north walled area revealed a beautifully furnished church with side rooms and a large house in its vicinity. Leaning on the exterior of the acropolis walls was a large building with several rooms in at least two storeys, of which some were used for storage. It revealed rich finds that include items indicating the presence of barbarian newcomers. The unfortified west part held two more



Fig. 2.188: Jelica. Plan of the upper part of the settlement (Milinković 2010, Fig. 9)

churches with individual graves, and a small cemeterial church at the far west surrounded by more than thirty graves. The construction of the settlement in the remote mountainous area is dated to the Justinian period and its end, indicated by strong traces of fire established in most buildings, to the late 6th or early 7th century. Some artefacts may suggest limited habitation at the site in the 4th/5th centuries (Milinković 2010, 284).

Only slightly later than the Palace of Diocletian was another mighty fortified palace, namely **Romuliana (Gamzigrad)** (Figs 2.189, 2.190), constructed by the Tetrarch Galerius, which also shows elements of a city newly-founded in Late Antiquity (Srežović, Vasić 1994; Ćurčić 2010, 139; Bülow 2011b). In contrast with the continuously inhabited Diocletian's Palace, Romuliana was completely abandoned after the 11th century, which allows modern researchers to thoroughly investigate its basic features and chronology. The remains of a partially investigated early defensive walls measuring 200 × 180 m point to an fort presumably dating to the last quarter of the 3rd century. Under Galerius, considerably thicker walls were built that enclosed a 234 × 195 m large area. These walls were 3.6 m thick and reinforced with twelve polygonal protruding towers, the largest one positioned in the corners and measuring an impressive 26 m in diameter. We should emphasise that the walls were not merely defensive in nature, but primarily had the function of manifesting the power of the emperor and of the Tetrarchic order of the Empire. A road divided the interior to the north and south halves. The north part held official buildings, lavishly furnished villas with peristyles and audience halls, as well as a small temple. The south part had a large temple and baths, as well as other public buildings that have as yet not been clearly identified with the exception of a likely *horreum*. This magnificent residential-memorial complex was finally identified in 1984 with the discovery of the inscription *Felix Romuliana*. For the purposes of our discussion, we should focus on its transformation into a fortified settlement with certain urban features (Popović, V. 1982, 555–556; Petković 2011; Milinković 2015, 249–257). The palace with its high and thick walls was gradually and pragmatically used as a well-protected settlement that hosted a prominent ecclesiastical centre, an array of workshops and fairly simple housing characteristic of both former cities and many newly-founded fortified hilltop settlements. Recent investigations revealed a clear division into two post-palatial phases. The first one, dating from the last quarter of the 4th to the mid-5th century or just beyond, revealed traces of smithing furnaces, workshops for dying textile, glassworks, the baths were still partly in operation, people were living in the towers. The first church was built in this phase – Basilica I located in the west part of the palace. The fort also hosted a cavalry unit. The next phase, dating from the late 5th to the early 7th century, witnessed an increased number

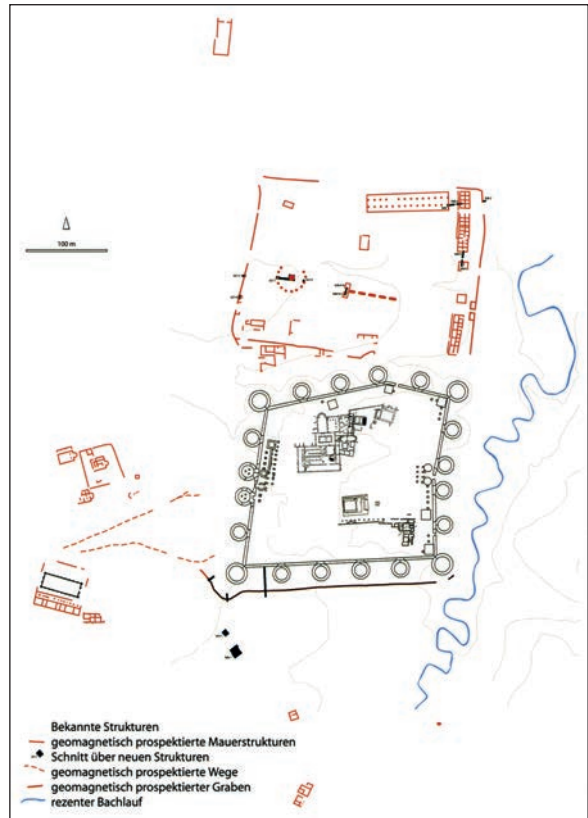


Fig. 2.189: Romuliana. Plan of the settlement. Newly discovered buildings in the vicinity of the palace (Bulow 2011b, Fig. 3a).

of simple dwellings that existed alongside storehouses and workshops, Basilica I was replaced by a considerably larger Basilica II with a sizeable baptistery, and another church was constructed, possibly even a third one.

The varied small finds show that this Late Antique settlement was economically self-sufficient, but heavily ruralised, mostly inhabited by autochthonous population with a barbarian presence. In addition to numerous buildings visible on the surface and partly also excavated, geophysical surveys revealed others outside the walls, in the immediate vicinity of the palace. These include the complex of three churches dating from the 4th to the 6th century corroborated during trial trenching (Milinković 2015, 251–257), as well as a rectangular walled area with large elongated buildings, the function and chronology of which have as yet not been explained (Bülow 2011, 162, Fig. 8). There are different interpretations regarding the nature and significance of the former imperial palace in the 5th and 6th centuries, ranging from fortified village to urban settlement. Gerda von Bülow ties the location with the numerous rich metal deposits in the region and the good lines of communication (Bülow 2011, 159–160). Considering the concentration and size of the churches, Slobodan Ćurčić sees the closest analogy in the episcopal centre at Louloudies and

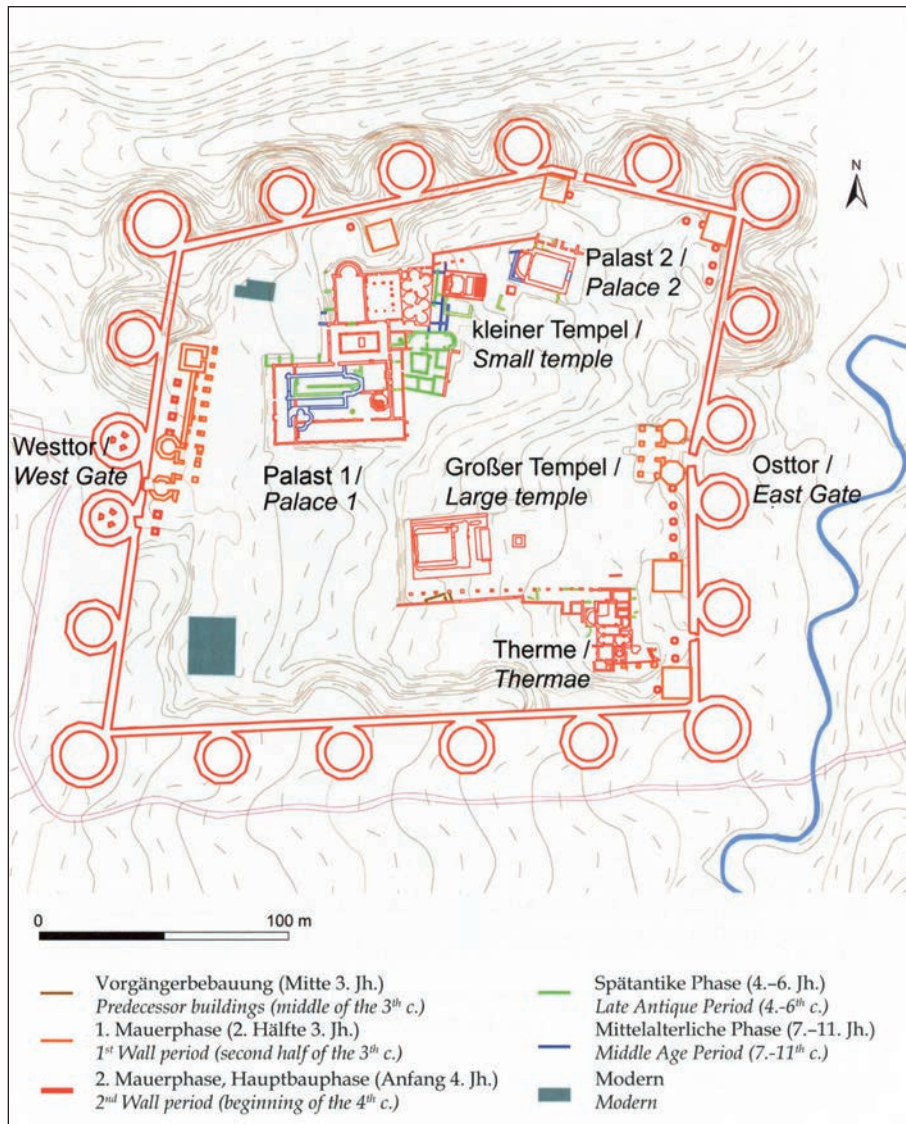


Fig. 2.190: Romuliana. Plan of the settlement (Büllo 2011b, Fig. 8).

presumes an episcopal centre at Romuliana as well (Ćurčić 2010, 139). Having said that, the defence of this settlement exposed on a gentle slope required a considerable number of people in spite of its mighty walls, which means a fairly densely inhabited interior and immediate proximity.

A newly-founded and reliably-dated city that deserves special attention is **Caričin grad** (Figs. 2.191–2.196, 2.252, 2.262, 3.306), which is increasingly convincingly identified as **Justiniana Prima**. The long years of international systematic investigations have been unveiling this Byzantine city that exhibits all the characteristics of contemporary construction, as well as the rapid decline of the urban fabric. More than a century of investigations has provided a good insight into its history and development (Kondić, Popović 1977; Duval 1996; Bavant, Ivanišević 2003; Bavant

2007; Ivanišević 2016; Ivanišević et al. 2019). Recent research that applied numerous modern approaches has been able to provide a comprehensive picture of the settlement's centre, but also suburbs, fortifications, housing of inferior quality, aqueduct and smaller forts associated with the city (Ivanišević 2011; Ivanišević, Stamenković 2013; Ivanišević et al. 2016b; Ivanišević 2017; Ivanišević et al. 2019). It importantly contributes to our understanding of the history of Byzantine urbanism.

Caričin grad lies on a plateau slightly raised above the Rivers Caričinska reka and Svinjarička reka, in an area removed from the main roads, and is fully adapted to the terrain. The centre, extending over roughly 8 ha, was protected with a strong, 2.2–2.8 m thick walls built in the *opus mixtum* technique. It was additionally fortified with numerous protruding rectangular towers

and a pair of impressive pentagonal towers flanking the entrance to the upper city. These walls were associated with thinner walls of an inferior quality and without defensive towers that enclosed four suburbs. In the south, investigations established palisades and two deep ditches, in the east an artificial lake with a dam (also used as a bridge) surviving in the length of 70 m. The city and its suburbs extend across ca 20 ha.

The walls of the city divided it into three structurally and functionally different parts: the Acropolis, the Upper city and the Lower city. The Acropolis was located on the highest, north part of the hill, protected with walls and towers, and held an episcopal church with baptistery and a large three-part prestigious building in the north (presumably the episcopal palace), as well as a small residential building in the south near the baptistery. The Upper city extended across the gentle slopes below the acropolis. Its main porticated streets boasted public buildings: three churches, a large administrative building (*principia*) and *horreum*, as well as a richly decorated 'villa urbana'. A round square

with an imperial statue at the centre and surrounded by shops stood at the junction of the main lines of communication. New research shows that the areas previously believed to have been uninhabited were actually filled with housing radially arranged along the north slope below the acropolis. The Lower city held a series of churches, as well as a large cistern and small baths, while the remaining space was taken up by houses with atria, extensions and courts; geophysical surveys also revealed numerous other, smaller houses. The housing in this area was built using a fairly simple technique with walls bound by clay or timber framework filled with cob and displaying several construction phases. The city was surrounded by suburbs. In them, the only public buildings were baths and a hospice at the entrance to the lower city. Monasteries are presumed to have stood in the southern suburbs and on several, more remote locations. Geophysical surveys in the suburbs also revealed numerous houses joined into small units, to the west below the town also different workshops lining the river.



Fig. 2.191: Caričin grad. Plateau of the Acropolis (2012).



Fig. 2.192: Caričin grad. View from the Acropolis to Upper city and Lower city (2012).

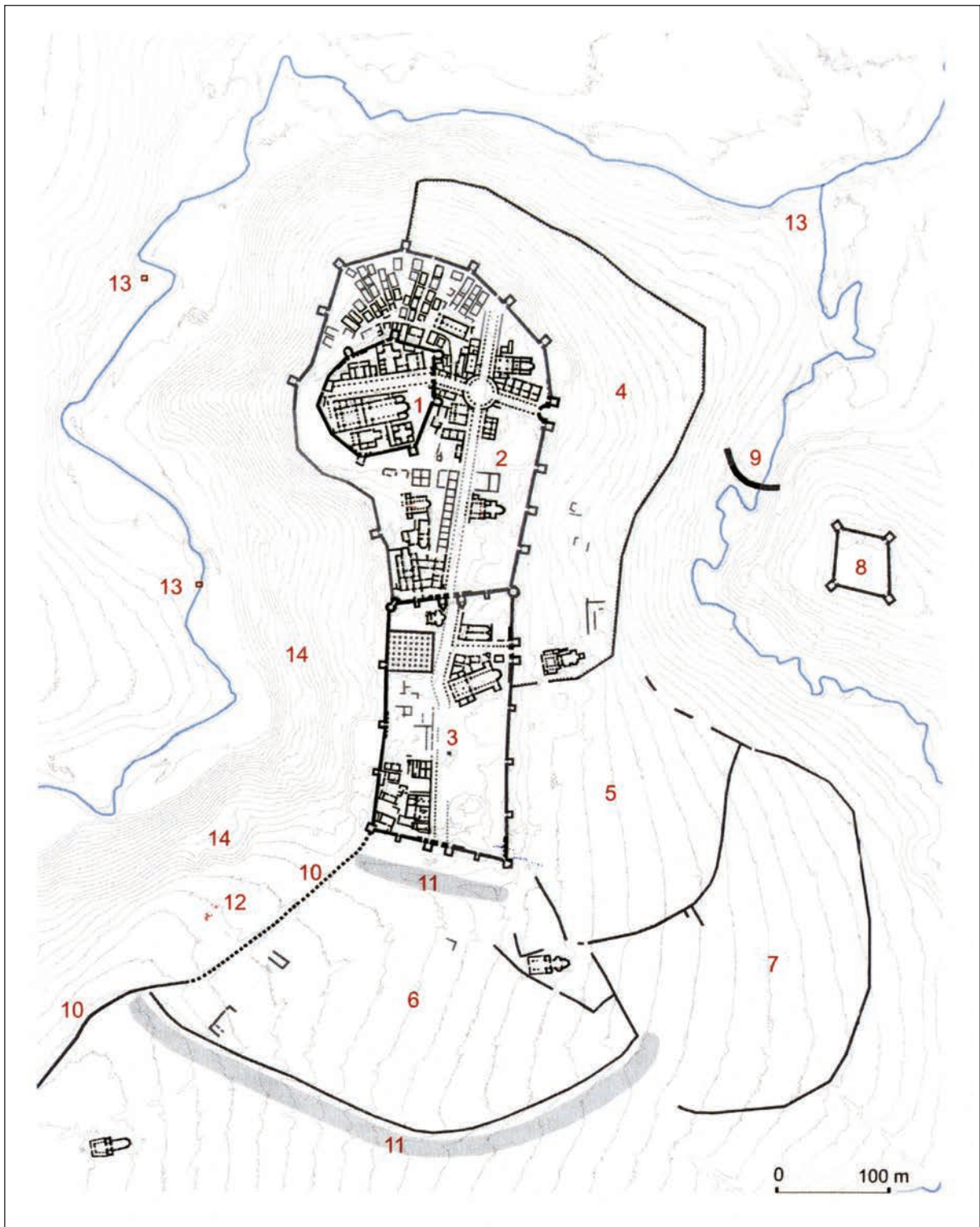


FIG. 2. – Plan de Caričin Grad

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Acropole | 6. Faubourg sud | 11 Fossé |
| 2. Ville haute | 7 Faubourg sud-est | 12. Cimetière |
| 3 Ville basse | 8. Forteresse de Saint-Élie | 13 Four |
| 4. Faubourg nord-est | 9 Barrage | 14. Carrière. |
| 5 Faubourg est | 10. Aqueduc | |

Fig. 2.193: Caričin grad. City plan (Ivanišević 2017, Fig. 2)



Fig. 2.194: Caričin grad. Plan of the northern slope of the Upper city (Ivanišević et al. 2016b, Fig. 8)



Fig. 2.195: Caričin grad. Baths outside the walls on the eastern side (2012).



Fig.2.196: Caričin grad. Ruins of the modest dwellings, leaned against the northern walls of the Acropolis (2012).

The city was constructed according to a uniform concept with elements of classic urban design visible primarily in the two main axes joining in a forum, public buildings, a 20 km long aqueduct and a sewage system. It clearly displays all three main functions: ecclesiastical, administrative and military. The high number of churches in the city, the suburbs and in the immediate vicinity raise the possibility of a pilgrimage destination; the importance of the Church is also reflected in the observed monasteries. Of all the newly-founded contemporary sites, Caričin grad boasts the most elements reminiscent of a classical city, which indirectly reveals its important administrative and ecclesiastical role (finds of seals and bullae) in the hierarchy of the last of the Late Antique cities. The monumental architecture of a uniform and complex design indirectly points to imperial patronage. There are very different opinions as to whether the archaeological evidence from Caričin grad reflects the enthusiastic, undoubtedly embellished description of Procopius (cf. Poulter 2007b, 20; Whittow 2007, 377). Recent investigations have revealed many of the urban features mentioned by Procopius that were previously either not investigated or not identified (Ivanišević 2016) and increasingly accurately illustrate the note in

Novel XI that speaks of the seat of the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum being transferred from Thessaloniki to Justiniana Prima and also of the episcopal see being transferred to a city built in the vicinity of the birthplace of the Emperor Justinian.

The architecture of the city shows great diversity, which is characteristic of other newly-founded cities as well. All the important public buildings, churches and defensive walls were constructed in *opus mixtum*. The largest portion of housing was constructed of clay-bonded walls of inferior quality, of unfired brick or even a timber-framed construction. In the second half of the 6th century, there is a rapid construction of small dwellings in the empty spaces between public buildings, while the material culture reflects a strong ruralisation. The density of the buildings was so great that some were even leaned against the walls enclosing the Acropolis and thereby undermined its defensive function. Towards the end of the 6th century, urban life began to decline and the settlement was being abandoned, only some houses were renovated using spolia. The last modest dwellings with hearths date to the beginning of the 7th century. The city was finally abandoned in the first few decades of the 7th century.

BULGARIA

The greatest number of settlements with structural elements and literary references that allow us to identify them as newly-founded Late Antique cities comes from present-day Bulgaria. This is largely due to the dangers this area faced, but also to the efforts of Byzantium to use its imperial power to protect the areas on the doorstep of Constantinople.

The fortified settlement at **Anasamus** or **Aseumus** (Fig. 2.197) is marked as a city in ancient literary sources (Torbatov 2016). It was founded at a strategic location at the confluence of the Rivers Osam and Danube, in immediate proximity to a Roman roadside station. A Roman garrison, mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum*, was stationed here in the second half of the 4th century. After the mid-5th century, it presumably lost its military significance and gradually changed into a densely populated settlement. Literary sources describe it as a stronghold that still hosted well-trained soldiers and one that resisted the Huns. In the second half of the 6th century, Aseumus was a flourishing city with all the features of urban life. It is the location of the well-known event from 594, when its city folk rebelled against Peter's campaign and did not allow the departure of their city troops. Sergey Torbatov convincingly locates the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Aseumus to Osamsko kale, a rocky elevation rising 70 m above the plain and the River Osam. The remains here have not been investigated in detail, we only have field observations. The walled area on the top of the hill is just over 1.15 ha large and divided with walls into three different parts of unknown dating. Torbatov states that the complete length of the defensive walls measures roughly 470 m and also mentions a *proteichisma*. Based on literary sources, he posits the Late Roman fort was already constructed in the first few

decades of the 4th century, when it likely only covered the upper two terraces, i.e. 0.4 ha. The enlargement presumably came about when the fort transformed into a fortified settlement after the collapse of the Late Roman military organisation on the Lower Danube in the late 4th to early 5th century. Among small finds he mentions *dolia*, diverse pottery and coins from the 4th to 6th centuries. The date of abandonment is unknown.

Located east of the city *Novae* and on the *limes* was the fort **Iatrus (Krivina)** (Figs. 2.198–2.201), marked as *polis* in the late literary sources, which had a fully military nature in the beginning (Bülow 1995a–c; Bülow et al. 2007; Bülow, Wachtel 2015). It lies close to the confluence of the Rivers Yantra and Danube, on a well-protected natural terrace additionally secured by the river. The long years of systematic excavations conducted by a team of German and Bulgarian archaeologists have revealed five habitation phases. These uncover the establishment and decline of the army fort, as well as its transformation into a large fortified village or small city that continued to be of great military importance. Its archaeological record illustrates well the fate of the forts along the *Moesian limes*, which were exposed to incessant barbarian threats and incursions during Late Antiquity. The fort was constructed in the early 4th century and enclosed with massive, up to 3.5 m thick walls with numerous protruding U-shaped towers combined with fan-shaped ones in the corners. The walls traced the configuration of the terrain and are therefore irregular in plan. The incomplete preservation only allows an estimate of the protected interior – roughly 3 ha. A single entrance has thus far been established, which was reinforced with a pair of externally protruding towers and a *propugnaculum* in the interior. The main road led from the main entrance to the *principium* and was lined with different buildings for the garrison, as well as shops, workshops and other

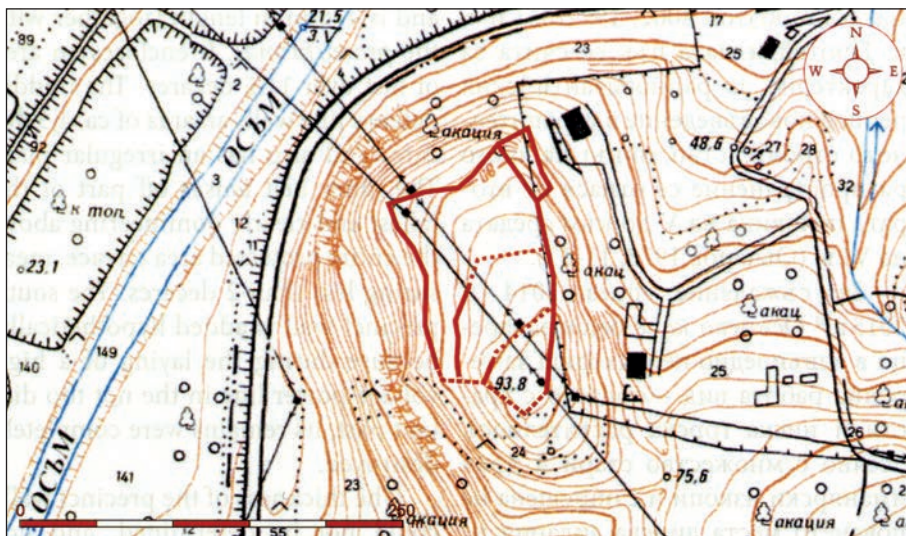


Fig. 2.197: Anasamus. Plan of the fortified settlement (Torbatov 2021, Fig. 46).

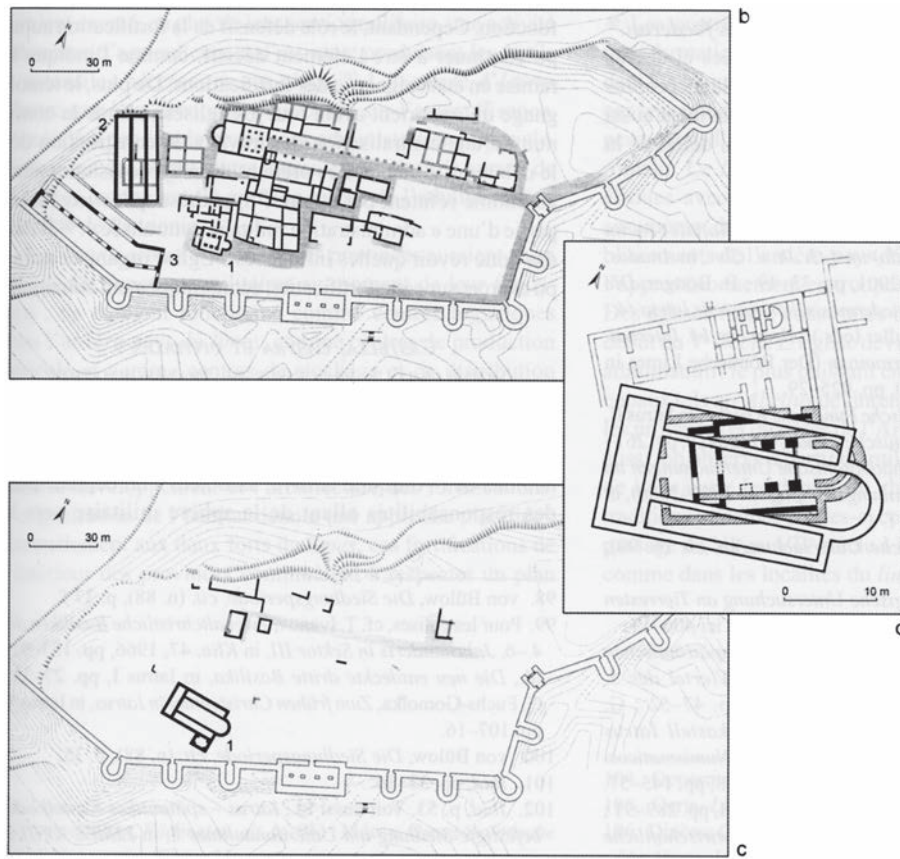


Fig. 2.198: Iatrus. Plan of the two phases of the fort and the fortified settlement: b – around 400, c – mid-6th century (Heinrich-Tamáška 2017, Fig. 5b–d).



Fig. 2.199: Iatrus. Low terrace with ruins of the city and its walls (2012).

buildings. A fairly large *praetorium* and two small private baths were built slightly later. Towards the end of the 4th and in the first half of the 5th century, both the *principium* and *praetorium* were already partly in ruins and used for

workshops. Other buildings were also transformed and received more modestly built dwellings of clay-bonded stones. The new buildings no longer adhered to the former use of space within the fort and were haphazardly distrib-



Fig. 2.200: Iatrus. Remains of the Early Christian church (2012).



Fig. 2.201: Iatrus. Remains of the *praetorium* (2012).

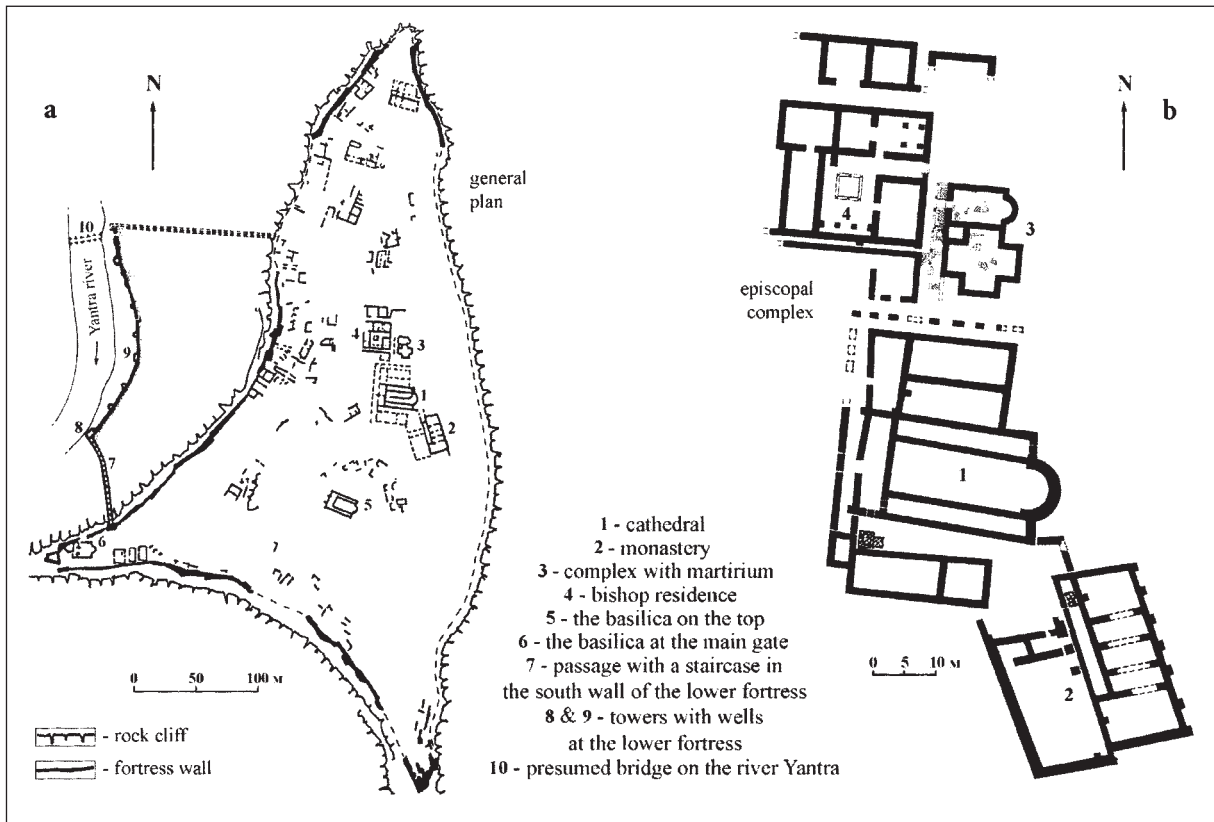


Fig. 2.202: Carevec. City plan (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 15).

uted in the interior. There is a marked ruralisation of the fort that has been linked with the presumed presence of *foederati*. The construction of two large *horrea* and the first church also dates to this time. A thick layer of burnt debris and ruins indicates that the Huns burnt the fort in the middle of the 5th century, and it was abandoned for several decades. Limited habitation is again perceptible in the late 5th or early 6th century, in the shape of simple buildings erected within earlier edifices, but also a new and larger church constructed on top of the earlier one. After a second fire in the first half of the 6th century, Justin-

ian renovated the strategically significant fort; the scarce habitation traces show simple dwellings erected within the remains of earlier buildings. The church was again renovated and enlarged; this and the heavy defensive installations to some degree justify the identification of the fort as a city. In this form, the settlement persisted to the end of the 6th century.

The Late Antique city at Carevec (Veliko Tarnovo), presumed *Zikideva* (Figs. 2.202–2.205) was established on a naturally exceptionally well-protected location on a high rocky plateau surrounded by the meanders of the



Fig. 2.203: Carevec. View from the top of the city towards the entrance in the west (2012).



Fig. 2.204: Carevec. Walls and ruins of the buildings on the western side of the city (2012).



Fig. 2.205: Carevec. Episcopal complex from the south (2012).

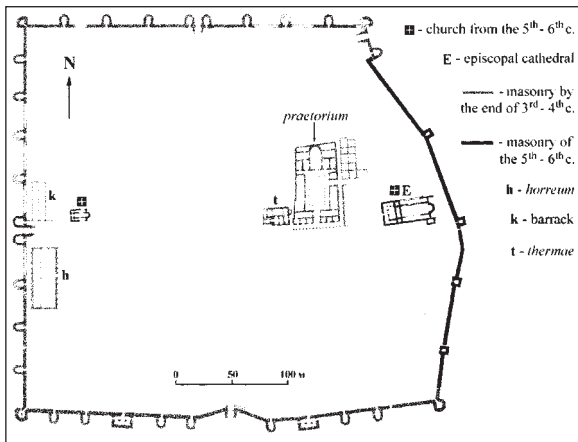


Fig. 2.206: Abritus. City plan (Heinrich-Tamáška 2017, Fig. 10).



Fig. 2.207: Abritus. Walls on the west and apsidal terminal of the church (2012).



Fig. 2.208: Abritus. View of the *praetorium* from the north (2012).



Fig. 2.209: Abritus. Heavily fortified entrance on the north (2012).

River Yantra (Dintchev 1997; id. 2018; Kirilov 2006b, 70–72). The transformation of a small settlement into a city has been dated to the late 5th or early 6th century, when defensive walls were erected, as were the first public and numerous private buildings. Its final appearance was created in the middle of the 6th century. The northernmost part, which was naturally best protected, hosted the houses of the wealthy inhabitants, while other parts mainly revealed simple buildings with one or two rooms. Standing out is a church complex comprising a basilica, episcopal palace and monastery. The city interior revealed two other churches, one of them on top of the fortified hill and the other close to the entrance. Army barracks are mentioned along the defensive walls. It would appear that the city also had its suburbs – traces of dwellings came to light on the slopes of the hill and on the adjacent hills of Devin grad and Trapesitsa. The fortified city proper presumably measured 15 ha, while the whole inhabited area extended across some 30 ha. This well-protected settlement is believed to have replaced the abandoned Nicopolis ad Istrum and has been identified as Zikideva, a city mentioned by Procopius.

Late Antique literary sources mention the fortress **Abritus (Razgrad)** as a city and episcopal centre (Figs. 2.206–2.209). The interior enclosed within thick walls and sited on a relatively high elevation has revealed several buildings of a public nature (Ivanov, T. 1980; Radoslavova 2011; Carrie, Moreau 2015). The walls are well-known, 2.7 m thick, reinforced with 35 towers and constructed in the early 4th century. They encircled a 15 ha large area and had four entrances, two of which with propugnacula. In the early 4th century, four large buildings stood in the east side of the interior and were torn down in the second half of the same century. Towards the end of the century, a large residential complex with a peristyle court was constructed on top of their foundations and persisted to the late 6th century. Another large house was found next to it, as well as smaller houses and different workshops. Two large edifices stood at the western walls, of which only the *horreum* has been positively identified. A large three-aisled basilica was erected in the 5th century, under Justinian also a smaller three-aisled church at the western walls. The baths from the 4th/5th centuries were also changed into a



Fig. 2.210: Shoumen. City plan (Dintchev 2007, Fig. 10)

sacral building. The abandoned *horreum* and its vicinity revealed simple dwellings with clay-bonded walls dating to the 5th and 6th centuries. The inhabited interior shows the city's continuity at least to the end of the 6th century.

The large and completely built-up fortified settlement above the city of **Shoumen** (Figs. 2.210–2.212, 2.265) lies on an impressive rocky elevation and is thus naturally well-protected on three sides (Antonova 1978; ead.1981; Dintchev 1997, 48; id. 2007, 490; Ćurčić 2010, 214). Roughly in the mid-3rd century, a new settlement presumably grew on a previously inhabited spot. Habitation intensified in Late Antiquity and the settlement spread across 2 ha. In the more readily accessible part it was protected with an initially thin and later, in the Early Byzantine phase, thicker walls with numerous pentagonal



Fig. 2.211: Shoumen. Densely inhabited interior of the fortified settlement (2012).



Fig. 2.212: Shoumen. Part of the settlement with the church in the foreground (2012).

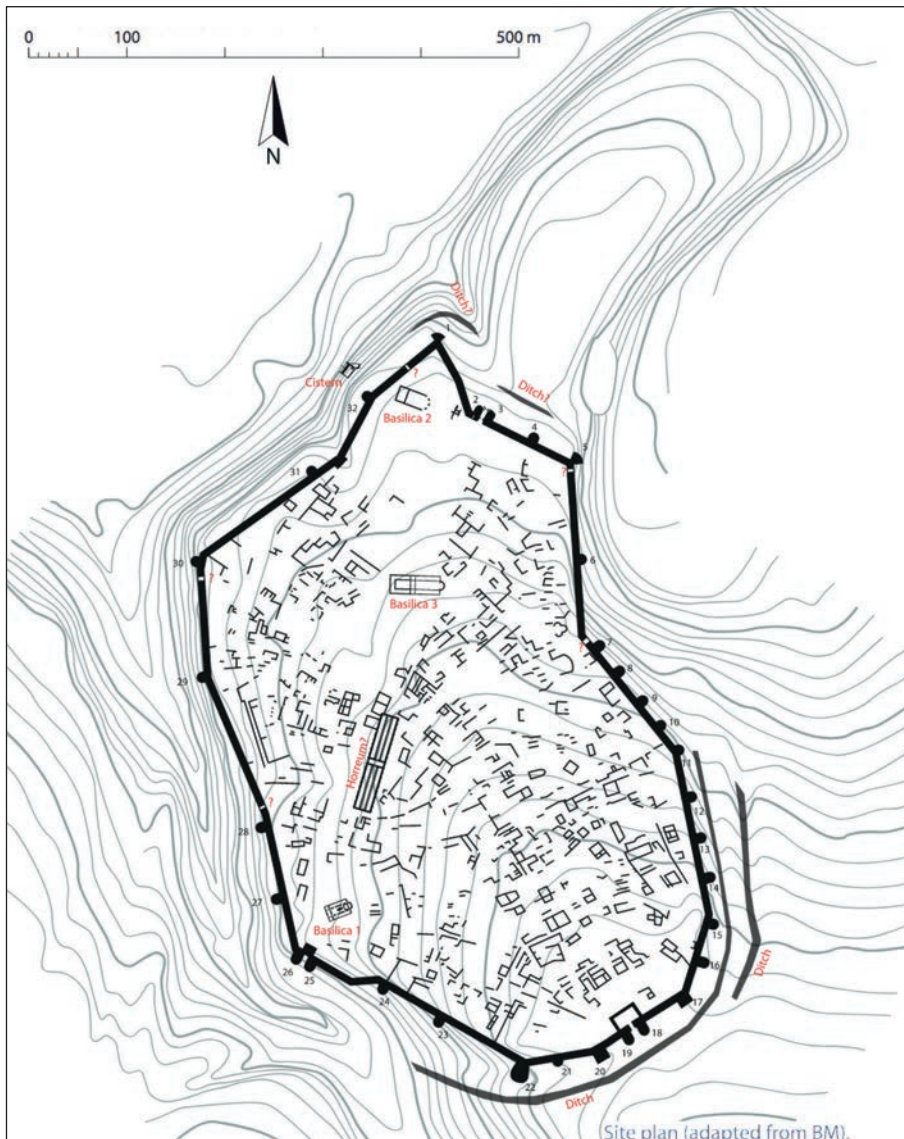


Fig. 2.213: Zaldapa. City plan (from Moreau, Baudry 2021, Fig. 2).

and semicircular towers. The densely built-up interior had many narrow streets lined with long multi-room buildings. The interior also revealed a large three-aisled church and another one outside the defensive walls. Both underline the significance of the well-organised large settlement and its central position within the region.

Zaldapa (Fig. 2.213) has only been investigated in a limited extent, but the small-scale research and satellite images nevertheless offer an interesting insight into the structure of the newly-founded city from the 4th century (Torbatov 2000; Beaudry et al. 2018; Dintchev 2018, Fig. 9). Most buildings inside the 25 ha large city have not been investigated, though the absence of later habitation has enabled the size and distribution of the buildings to be clearly visible. The military architecture in the interior did not play a major role and was likely limited to towers

and individual buildings in the exposed parts of the city. Early reports mention a large public edifice (*horreum*?) and an Early Christian basilica, new research has additionally revealed two other Early Christian basilicas. The buildings detected on the surface do not allow conclusions to be drawn, as neither their chronology nor function are clear, but they do offer a good insight into the spontaneous urbanism of the final centuries of Antiquity. The lines of communications are not arranged in an orthogonal grid, some empty spaces may represent small squares (particularly those on both sides of Basilica 3). Most edifices can be interpreted as small one- or two-room buildings, akin to those predominating in the contemporary fortified hilltop settlements. The city that is also mentioned in Hierocles' *Synekdemos* was abandoned in the late 6th/early 7th century.

The settlement of **Acrae (Cape Kaliakra)** (Figs. 2.214, 2.215) gradually developed into a city during the 5th century (Dintchev 1999, 50; id. 2009, 426–429). It lies on a naturally excellently protected peninsula on the coast of the Black Sea that was protected with three

walls on the only accessible side. The last of the walls dates to the second half of the 4th century and enabled a considerable enlargement of the settlement.

The city most frequently cited as a new construction from the time of Diocletian is the mighty fortress



Fig. 2.214: Acrae. Walls with a tower (2012).



Fig. 2.215 Acrae. View of the easternmost part of the city on the peninsula (2012).



Fig. 2.216: Hissar. City plan. (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 11).



Fig. 2.217: Hissar. Walls on the western side of the city (2012).



Fig. 2.218: Hissar. Well-preserved entrance in the southern walls (2012).



Fig. 2.219: Hissar. Ruins of the urban villa (2012).

of **Hissar (Hisarya)** (Figs. 2.216–2.219, 2.249), which was presumably named **Diocletianopolis** after the emperor (Madzharov 2012; Rizos 2017b, 28–29; Dintchev 2018, 359). It lies on an important road leading across the Stara planina mountain range and is believed to have been established for the local thermal springs. The different design and different role of the Late Antique city is clearly perceptible in the visible military and civilian elements. Particular attention was paid to the imposing defensive walls that still mark the city today and enclose an area of 30 ha. It presumably dates to the Diocletianic times, but later witnessed several additions and modifications. The walls are 2.5 to 3.5 m thick and up to 12 m high. Constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique, they incorporate numerous protruding rectangular towers, as well as fan-shaped ones in the corners. A *proteichisma* protected the city on the most exposed, north side. As many as nine Early Christian churches were constructed in and around the city

between the 4th and the 6th century. The city interior revealed traces of a wide avenue connecting the south and north entrances with a tetrapylon in the centre. Investigations explored two large peristyle houses and public baths (Kirilov 2006a, 76). The remains of army barracks along the southern walls show a strong military presence.

Hierocles also mentioned the city of **Tzoides**, which has been identified in the large fortified post at the edge of the modern-day city of **Sliven** (Dintchev 1999, 54–55; Rizos 2013, 685; Borisov, Coičev 2019) (Figs. 2.220, 2.221). It has strong defensive walls of a roughly rectangular layout and enclosing an area of 4.5 ha on a small elevation above the modern-day city. It was presumably fortified in the early 4th century. The interior held a large Early Christian basilica and many houses and workshops along the walls. A long *horreum* appears to have stood in the southwest corner and there is also mention of extensive suburbs with a church.



Fig. 2.220: Sliven (Tzoides). Church on the highest point of the plateau (2012).



Fig. 2.221: Sliven (Tzoides). Densely distributed houses along the north walls (2012).



Fig. 2.222: Cabyle. Walls and baths in the north-west corner of the city (2012).



Fig. 2.223: Cabyle. Large Early Christian church with the acropolis in the background (2012).

On the spot of an earlier Thracian settlement and Roman camp, a city was founded at **Cabyle near Yambol** (Figs. 2.222, 2.223) that literary sources relate held an episcopal see already in the middle of the 4th century (Dintchev 2000, 75–77; Kirilov 2006b, 40–41). Archaeological finds indicate times of prosperity in the late 3rd and first half of the 4th century. The camp on the Hissarluka hill was then transformed into a settlement covering a surface of 3 ha, while two basilicas, a *horreum*, baths and other buildings grew outside this area. The question that is still largely open pertains to its fortifications. In the 5th and 6th centuries, two Early Christian churches were constructed, as well as numerous small and poorly built houses in the ruins of earlier buildings, both within the fort and in the ruins of the *horreum* and baths. According to Dintchev, Cabyle did not become a proper city in Late Antiquity; it was an important local centre to the early 7th century he marks as a semi-urban fortified settlement.

ROMANIA

The province of Scythia, now in Romania, holds several important newly-founded cities that show a strong military presence alongside their civilian role. The fortress **Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi)** (Fig. 2.224) was constructed in 315/317 (Poulter 1998, 331; id. 2007b, 35; Saradi 2006, 291; Ćurčić 2010, 49; Poulter 2010, 25–27; Rizos 2017b, 27). It is marked by strong defensive walls with numerous U-shaped towers enclosing a considerably large surface of 10.5 ha. Alongside other archaeological evidence, the founding inscription is of particular importance that mentions both a military and civilian compo-

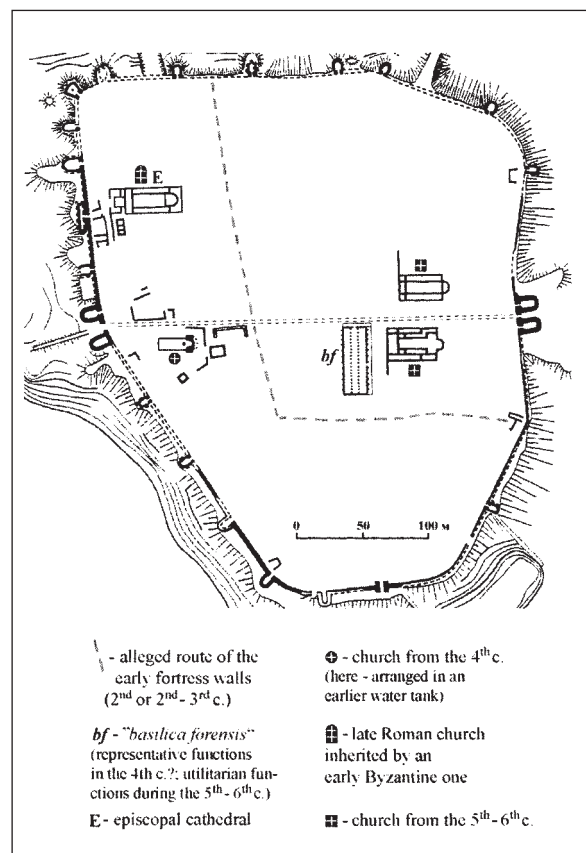


Fig. 2.224: Tropaeum Traiani. City plan (Dintchev 2018, Fig. 6).

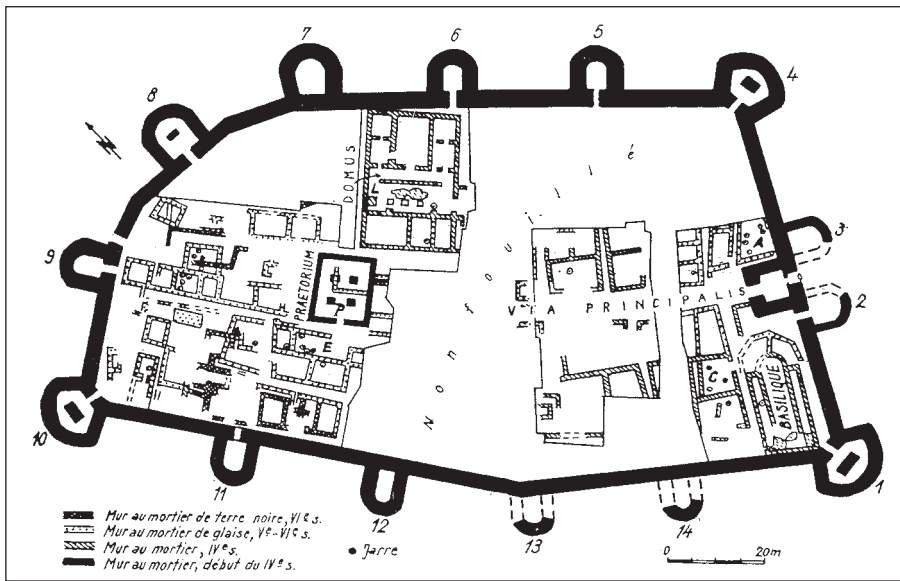


Fig. 2.225: Dinogetia. City plan (Döhle 1995, Fig. 7).

ment. A large *horreum* was built in the city centre, at the junction of both main streets, other public buildings are missing. Already in the early 5th century, private buildings presumably encroached on streets and portici. Four Early Christian basilicas, constructed towards the 5th and in the 6th century, underline the city's civilian nature.

Dinogetia (Fig. 2.225) is another excellent example of a newly-founded small city with a double nature in the exposed part of the Empire: it was an important military post and a settlement of civilians (Popović, V. 1982, 557–559; Barnea 1986; Torbatov 1999; Dintchev 2006, 14, 16; Ćurčić 2010, 29). Under Diocletian, a fort measuring 1 ha in size was constructed on a small elevation on an island above a tributary of the Danube, in the northeasternmost part of the Danube limes. It is particularly marked by strong, 3 m thick walls with fourteen characteristics horseshoe- and fan-shaped towers, a heavily fortified entrance with a *propugnaculum* and a naturally protected location on an island. In addition to the presumed *praetorium* (*burgus*?) and a large private villa (presumed home of the commander?), a three-aisled basilica was also constructed already in the 4th or 5th century that was later twice renovated and enlarged. In the second half of the 5th century, the interior of the fort was filled with housing. The fort was destroyed in the mid-6th century, the Byzantines renovated it and constructed simple dwellings with clay-bonded stone walls. It was abandoned during the Avaro-Slavic incursions.

A similar example of a military – civilian settlement is **Troesmis (Turcoaia, Igliza)** (Poulter (ed.) 2007a). At the transition from the 3rd to the 4th century, the legionary fortress here was moved from the area between two plateaus to the east plateau. Its walls with U- and fan-shaped towers girdle a surface of 2.2 ha. The interior

holds numerous buildings including a large basilica built into the former *principia*.

ALBANIA

A fortress also transformed into a city at **Kalaja** near **Grazhdani** (Fig. 2.226) (Baçe 1976, 70; Bunguri 2007; Rizos 2017b, 31). The city formed at a strategically important site and was intended to control the communications below. It lies on slightly inclined terrain and extends across 34 ha. The defensive walls in *opus mixtum* trace the configuration of the terrain and were reinforced with forty protruding rectangular and U-shaped towers. The interior has been poorly investigated and the duration of the city cannot reliably be determined.

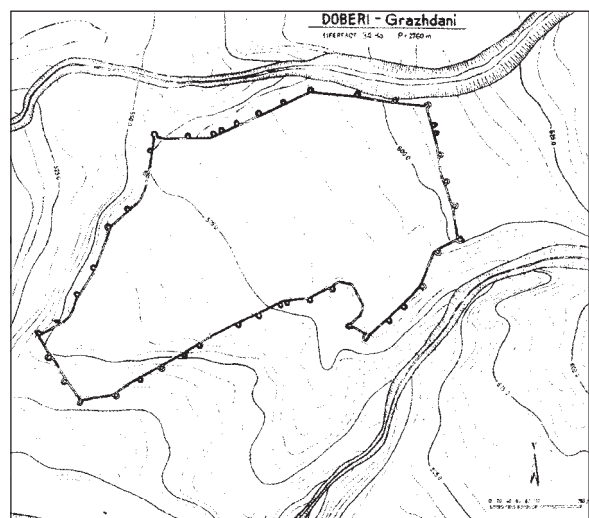


Fig. 2.226: Kalaja. City plan (Rizos 2017b, Fig. 13)

A better known example of a fort-to-city transformation is **Scampis (Elbasan)** (Fig. 2.227) (Karaiskaj 1972; Amore et al. 2005, 348–351; Hobdari, Cerova 2014). The excellently preserved and strong defensive walls are the remains of a large rectangular fortress measuring 308×348 m, through which led the important Balkan communication of Via Egnatia. The walls were reinforced with 26 towers, fan-shaped in the corners and roughly U-shaped elsewhere. The beginning of the fortress has been set to the first half of the 4th century and the renovation observable in the walls from the mid-5th century to the beginning of Justinian's rule. It is believed to have been abandoned in the 6th century. In the late 4th and early 5th centuries, *pseudocomitatenses Scampenses* were stationed here, after which the fortress is believed to have gradually transformed into a city. In the interior, an Early Christian church was found near the southeast corner. Two other basilicas with numerous fragments of interior furnishings came to light *extra muros*. For 458, a bishop is mentioned in this city that is identified as such in Hierocles' *Synekdemos* and presumably also in Procopius.

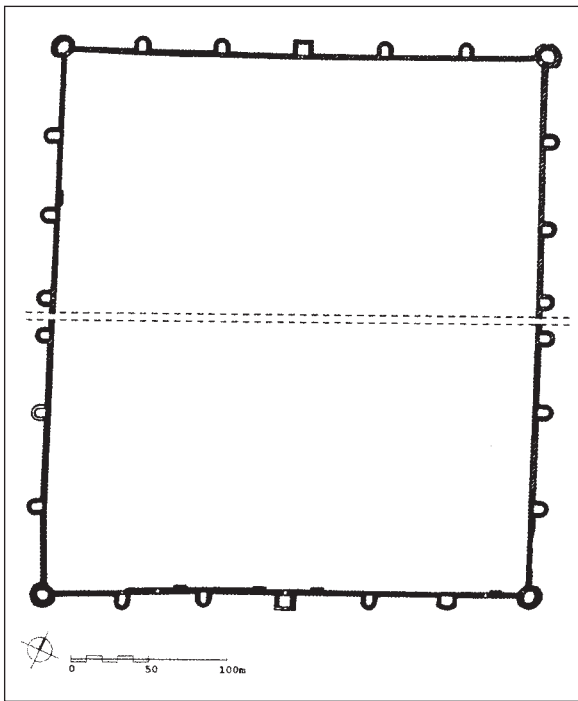


Fig. 2.227: Scampis. City plan (Rizos 2017b, Fig. 14).

NORTH MACEDONIA

Several fortifications of a size and elements indicative of an urban settlement have been found in North Macedonia, a country rich in settlement remains and also archaeological-topographic investigations. We should particularly mention four fortified settlements that certainly fall into the group of newly-formed cities. Other sites, also large but less well-known, will be discussed among the countryside settlements (see Chapter 3).

The settlement on **Davina, Kula** in the vicinity of **Čučer** (Figs. 2.228–2.229) was constructed above the valley that held the road from Scupi to Ulpiana, just before it entered the Kačanik Gorge (Mikulčić 1982a,

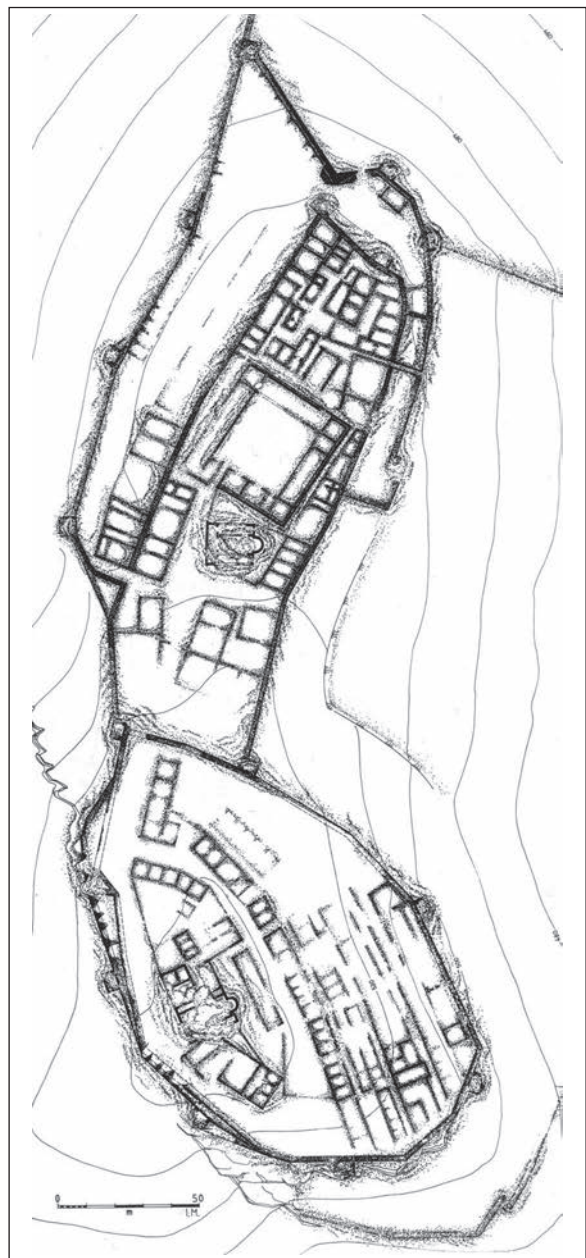


Fig. 2.228: Čučer (Davina, Kula). City plan (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 45)



Fig. 2.229: Čučer (Davina, Kula). Settlement from the east (2013).

107–116; id. 2002, 101, 153–158; Lilčić 2004, 180–181; Ćurčić 2010, 182). Ivan Mikulčić distinguishes between two parts of the settlement. The earliest is the acropolis on the highest part of the hill that held a Late Roman fort (size 185 × 110 m). On a slightly lower terrace below is the presumably civilian settlement measuring 260 × 110 m. The settlement is encircled with walls with towers and a proteichisma, it presumably has a forum in the centre. Both parts have a three-aisled church and differently-sized housing. This reveals a uniform urban design from the 6th century. Below the walls is a 4–5 ha large unfortified contemporary settlement, in its vicinity also five Early Christian churches. Mikulčić interprets the highest part of the post as a Late Roman fort that later expanded and grew into a settlement, in the 6th century then into a small city with an ecclesiastical centre.

Viktor Lilčić, who excavated the upper church, sees the numerous finds from the 3rd century as evidence of the first fort constructed on the hill already in the second half of the 3rd century (Lilčić 2004, 180).

The low, but naturally well-protected hill of **Taor** (Figs. 2.230–2.232) just above the fertile plain and the River Vardar holds the remains of a large, densely inhabited and fortified settlement. As early as the second half of the 19th century, Artur Evans hypothesised that the phonetic similarity of this site and the adjacent site of Bader suggest it can be identified with Tauresium, the birthplace of Justinian located close to the Bederiana fort. The topographic and surface surveys began in the 20th century (overview in Mikulčić 1982a, 103–106), while modern systematic investigations have been taking place over the last two decades (Ristov 2012; id. 2019).

The site has three prominent parts: central plateau, acropolis on the south side, as well as a large habitation terrace and another one below it on the north (Mikulčić 2002, 187–189). Recent systematic excavations focused on the settlement's central part and trial trenches also partly investigated the surrounding area and the area below the settlement (Ristov 2019, 89). All this offers a good insight into the simple urban-rural unit that was most intensively inhabited in the 6th century and the many small finds from which tell of the everyday life (Ristov 2012; id. 2019).

The central part of the settlement and the acropolis are girdled with 1.6 m thick walls reinforced with several towers. The most important and also largest was the tower – bastion in the south where the settlement was most readily accessible. This rectangular tower was supported on two sides by additional walls and the in-



Fig. 2.230: Taor. Excavated buildings in the north-eastern part of the settlement (2009).

terior probably filled with stones. Access on this side was additionally protected with a deep ditch. Other towers were also rectangular and protruding, only the one on the west side was constructed from the interior side. The settlement thus far revealed fifteen densely spaced buildings. Of these, a large public building in the northeast corner stands out, showing a high quality of construction and composed of two units separated by a colonnade. Its walls of stone and brick were bound by mortar and the building was decorated with marble columns with capitals, before and the facade partly ornamented with bricks; it as well has a spacious atrium. There are also simple rectangular houses, most often with two rooms, of an inferior construction and clay-bonded walls. The suburbs were populated as well, but subsequent agricultural activity there destroyed the architectural remains. The buildings known thus far suggest the existence of a ruralised urban settlement that had its own aqueduct and sewage system, differentiated public and private

architecture and strong defensive walls. A church has as yet not been found, but a Christian nature of the settlement is reflected in numerous small finds with a Christian symbolism. Also numerous are the finds of *militaria*, which indicate a military nature of the site already in the 3rd and 4th, even more so in the 6th century.

The site was occasionally inhabited already in earlier periods, with the first reliably identified artefacts indicating a military post as early as the 3rd century (Ristov 2019, 50–52). More intensive habitation appears to date from the second half of the 4th century onwards, when a large portion of the buildings on the hill was constructed. Kiro Ristov emphasises that the defensive walls with towers were only erected in the 6th century, presumably after the devastating earthquake of 518. The defence of the settlement prior to this time is unknown. The small finds of both civilian and military nature and particularly the hundreds of coins indicate that habita-

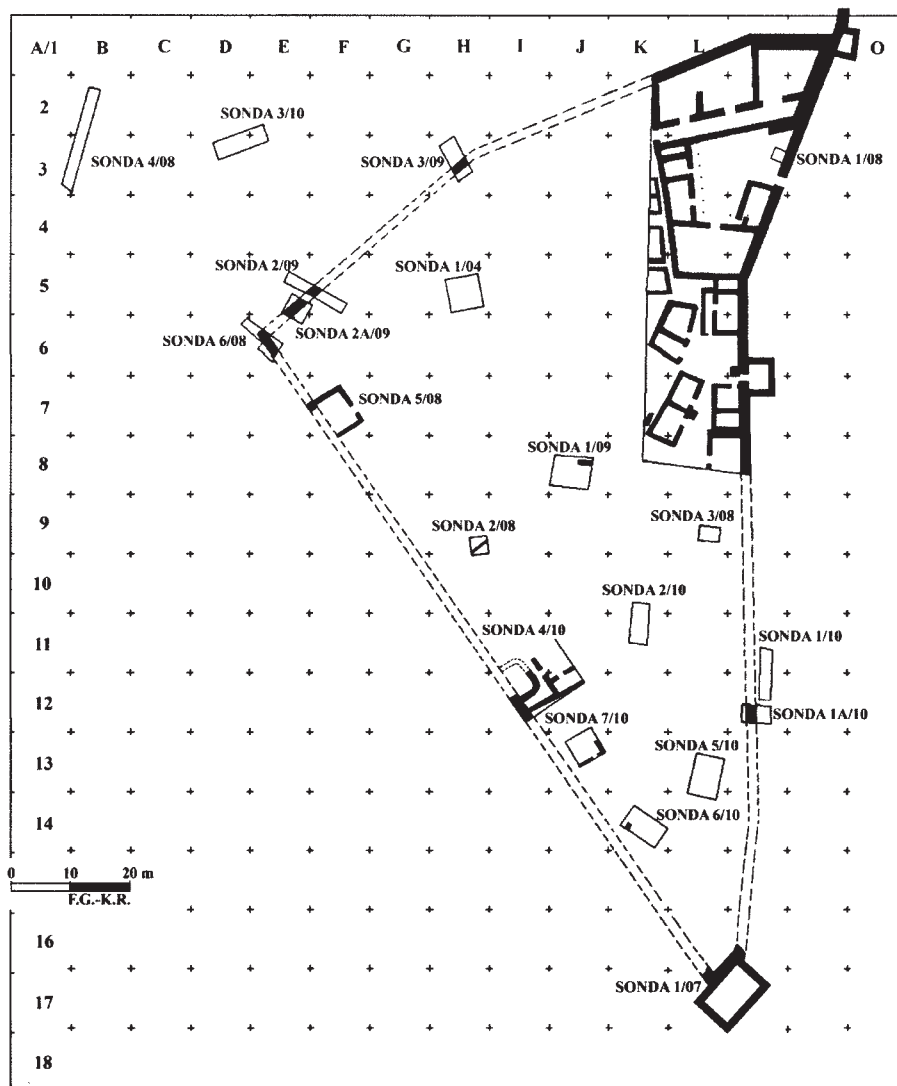


Fig. 2.231: Taor. City plan (Ristov 2019, Fig. 12).



Fig. 2.232: Taor. Southern edge of the settlement (2004).

tion was at its peak here throughout the 6th century or possibly slightly earlier (Ristov 2019, 258–262).

A large and unusually fortified settlement was detected at **Golemo Gradište** near **Konjuh** (Figs. 2.233, 2.234) that shows compelling urban features of cities newly-founded in the 6th century. This complex site has a long rocky ridge at the centre that rises some hundred metres above the surroundings and is flanked north and south by terraced slopes. The north terrace is larger and more suitable for habitation, and has in part already been investigated. The whole complex is protected with defensive walls with towers and the River Kriva offers additional protection in the north (Mikulčić 2002, 128–133; Snively 2002; ead. 2011; Snively, Sanev 2013).

The systematic investigations in the last two decades have provided details of the residential and church architecture, as well as a reliable chronology of the site. Trial trenching on the acropolis has shown a densely inhabited area and small buildings sunken into the bedrock with rock-cut-foundations for the wooden superstructure. Also found was a large masonry building with three rooms, an apse and mosaic floors, which was presumably of a residential or administrative function (Snively, Sanev 2013, 158–159).

A large Early Christian basilica with three aisles and a narthex stood in the centre of the north terrace. Its rich furnishings date it to the 6th century (most likely its middle) and its central position suggests it was the main church and likely the episcopal see (Snively 2011, 197). The north terrace also revealed several houses, shops and workshops. The most prestigious house was the ‘north residence’ directly below the basilica,

which has been interpreted as an episcopium. It had an interior courtyard with colonnade (Snively, Sanev 2013, 160–167).

A ‘south residential complex’ came to light on the highest part of the north terrace; it is a cluster of several rooms of irregular plan in which excavators see several buildings that have one to three rooms and some even an upper storey. The rooms held numerous pithoi. Two phases have been established, both dating to the 6th century. Identified as a particular feature was an irregularly shaped city block defined by streets (Sanev et al. 2012). The walls of these houses were clay-bonded, only the ‘north residence’ shows a higher quality of construction with the walls, albeit still clay-bonded, of more precisely made faces and decorated with brick courses.

Outside the walls, a church in the shape of a rotunda was already found before World War II. With its centralised form, it is an important addition to the church architecture in the wider area (Snively 2011, 195–197).

Caroline Snively posits that the city on the north terrace already began in the second half of the 5th century and witnessed substantial additions in the Justinian period, more precisely in the second quarter of the 6th century, when the fort on the acropolis with numerous sunken buildings and defensive walls around the whole settlement is believed to have been constructed (Snively 2011, 188). She also observes that Golemo Gradište is the first example of cities such as are only known in greater number in the 6th century, when semi-urban settlements were being constructed on naturally well-protected locations (Snively 2008).

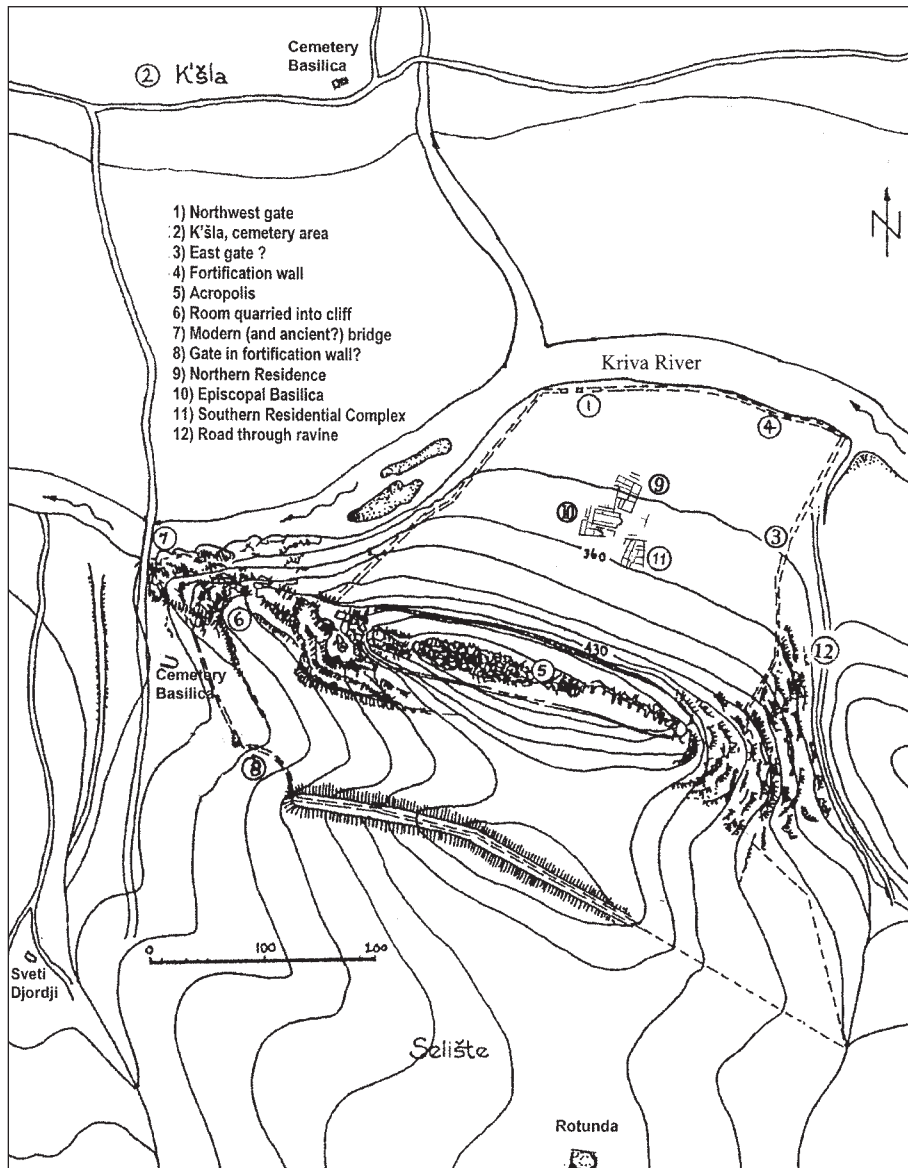


Fig. 2.233: Konjuh (Golemo gradište). City plan (Snively 2017, Fig. 11).

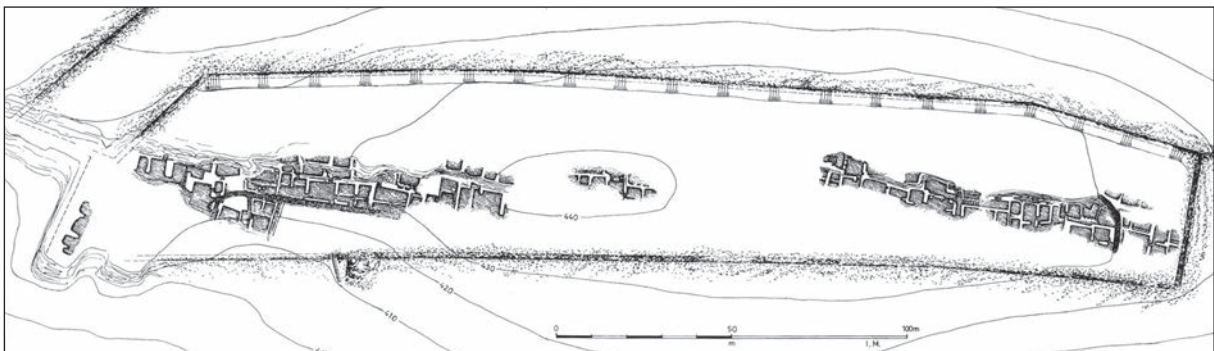


Fig. 2.234: Konjuh (Golemo gradište). Plan of the acropolis (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 22).

The city of **Bargala (Kozjak)** (Figs. 2.235–2.238, 2.261) was established on a major road leading to Thessaloniki from the north (Aleksova 1997, 155–166; Mikulčić 1999, 262–264; id. 2002, 391–396; Beldedovski, Nacev 2006; Nacev 2016; Nacev, Atanasova 2017). The fortress was likely already founded in the early 4th century, while the inscription from 371 that celebrates the construction of city gates points to a civilian city. The city of a trapezoidal, 4.7 ha large interior heavily fortified with walls and towers lies on a gentle slope above the River Bregalnica. It boasts numerous rectangular towers

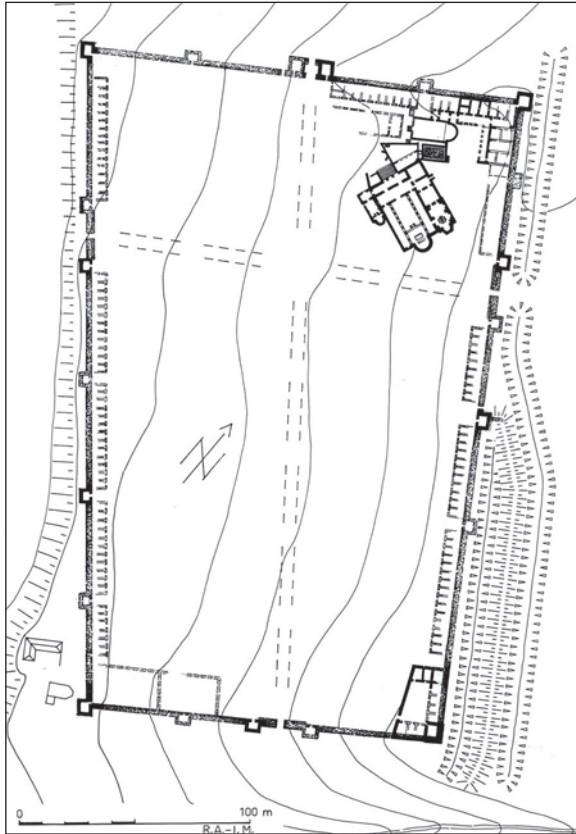


Fig. 2.235: Bargala (Kozjak). City plan (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 298).



Fig. 2.236: Bargala (Kozjak). Episcopal complex (2013).

and four fortified entrances. In the east, it is additionally protected with a *proteichisma* and a ditch, but also an exterior *propugnaculum* at the entrance gates. The remains of an episcopal basilica were found in the north-east corner of the city that dates to the late 4th century and is associated with a baptistery, it was also renovated in the 5th century. A bishopric in Bargala is confirmed in literary sources, while the church itself revealed a column capital bearing the name of Bishop Hermias. Leaning to its south aisle is a smaller and later church built of reused stones, presumably medieval in date. Near the basilica was a large cistern and a presumed episcopal palace with a spacious apsidal reception hall and several smaller residential rooms. Baths and economic facilities (granary, wine presses and furnaces) have been found between the presumed episcopium and the defensive walls. Some partially investigated buildings were leaned against the defensive walls, others are presumed in the central part of the largely uninvestigated interior. The remains of a small three-aisled basilica, named 'city basilica', were excavated at Via Principalis, while a large three-aisled basilica with Late Antique burials came to light *extra muros*, in the vicinity of the main entrance.



Fig. 2.237: Bargala (Kozjak). Residential and economic facilities in the northern corner of the city (2013).



Fig. 2.238: Bargala (Kozjak). Entrance with *propugnaculum* at the north-western walls (2013).

Archaeologically clearly identifiable is a small city founded on a low elevation called **Kale, Gradište** in the southwestern part of **Vinica** (Figs. 2.239–2.242) (Mikulčić 2002, 256–260; Balabanov 2011; Dimitrova 2012, 91–105). Already in Hellenistic times, this spot hosted a settlement with a temple and drystone walls that enclosed a roughly 3.5 ha large area. The different and not always consistent information in literature reveals that a fort stood on the highest part in the 4th century (according to Balabanov already in the mid-2nd century) girdled with 1.1 m thick walls with towers and a 2.5 ha large interior; not much is known of this fort. In the time of Justinian and his *renovatio imperii Romanorum*, it was renovated and added 1.5 m thick defensive walls with new towers along the exterior. The settlement was also protected with a wide ditch on the side of easiest access, while the old Hellenistic walls encircling the Early Byzantine acropolis from three sides were used as a proteichisma.

An Early Christian basilica was erected in the upper part of the interior and another, small church with a baptistery beside it. Investigations in immediate proximity revealed a large edifice with numerous sunken dolia for grain, as well as a complex of rooms of a residential nature. The proximity to the two churches, the layout of the complex, the hypocaust and the clay relief ‘icons’ have led authors to suggest this was the seat of ecclesiastical administration (episcopium?) (Manaskova, Angelovski 2017). In addition to these buildings on the highest, south part of the settlement, investigations in recent decades unearthed numerous others that indicate the walled area was densely built-up. The houses in the prestigious part show a high-quality construction with mortar-bound walls, while the lower north part appears to host a complex of different, densely spaced and poorly built houses with clay-bonded walls; these contain numerous sunken dolia and storage pits. Directly below the settlement is the outlines of 4–5 ha large



Fig. 2.239: Vinica (Kale, Gradište). Panoramic view of the settlement from the east (2013).

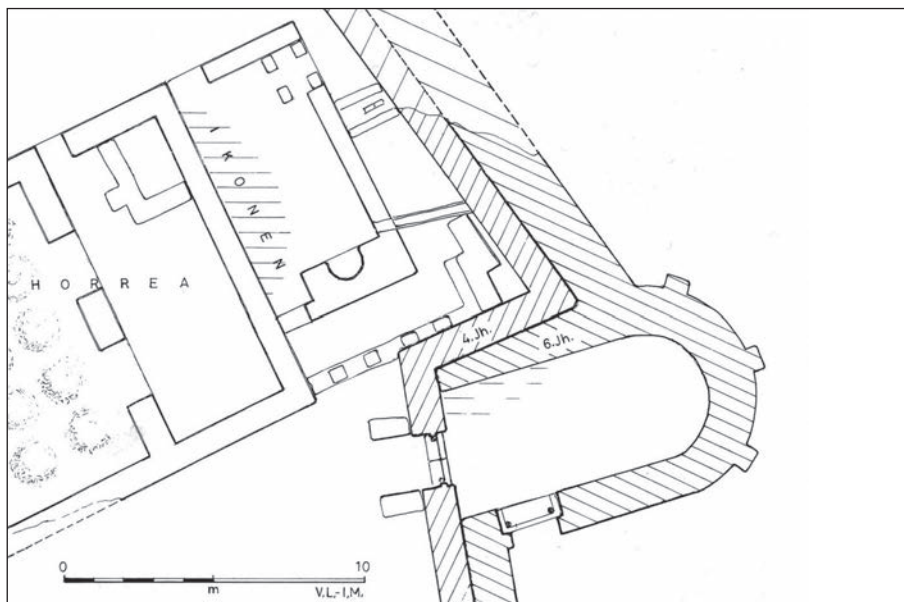


Fig. 2.240: Vinica (Kale, Gradište). Plan of a section of the city walls with a tower and presumed episcopium (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 148).



Fig. 2.241: Vinica (Kale, Gradište). Northern part of the settlement with churches in the foreground (2009).



Fig. 2.242: Vinica (Kale, Gradište). Main communication with neatly distributed buildings in the south part of the city (2013).

suburbs with an Early Christian church. Another, but unprotected Late Antique settlement has been discovered 1.5 km away that also revealed traces of a church.

Most activities connected with the excavations at Kale were directed towards interpreting the numerous, but functionally unusual clay relief tablets ('icons'), whereas very little is known of the housing and the contexts enabling a reliable interpretation of the archaeological remains. It is thus challenging to write of the development the city witnessed between the 4th and the 6th century. The concentration of coins from the sec-

ond half of the 4th and the 6th century indicates a gradual development from an fort to an urban agglomeration at least in the early 6th century. The urban character of the settlement is perceptible in the uniform concept behind the distribution of buildings with churches, a cistern, granary and military edifices in the top part, as well as a small rectangular and paved open space (presumably forum), a straight street leading across the centre of the settlement, aqueduct and sewage system. The beautifully decorated basilica in the city and numerous others in immediate proximity may indicate an episcopal see

(Dimitrova 2012, 261). The newly-founded agglomeration can be interpreted as one of the last urban centres of Antiquity in the rich and fertile valley of the River Bregalnica, in the vicinity of important mining regions.

The cities newly-built on the remains of earlier settlements and forts may include the fort of **Castra Nicea (Dolenci)** located at the **Kale** site below the mountain pass of Diavato, at an altitude of 820 m (Fig. 2.243). It lies on the Via Egnatia and is referred to as a *civitas* in *Synekdemos* (639, 3) (Mikulčić 2002, 53, 271–273; Ćurčić 2010, 47). The ruins of a 122 × 125 m large army fort enclosed within 2.5 m thick walls are clearly visible on the ground. The walls had round towers in the corners and U-shaped ones in between. Two entrances are visible, in the centre also traces of a large edifice with the remains of mosaic floors, presumably belonging to a basilica. Above it were the remains of modest dwellings with sunken dolia. A roughly 3 ha large Late Antique settlement with a church and mosaic floors has been detected east of the fort, slightly further away another Early Christian basilica. The fort was transformed into a city in the 5th/6th century and presumably received its own bishop (Mikulčić 2002, 272).

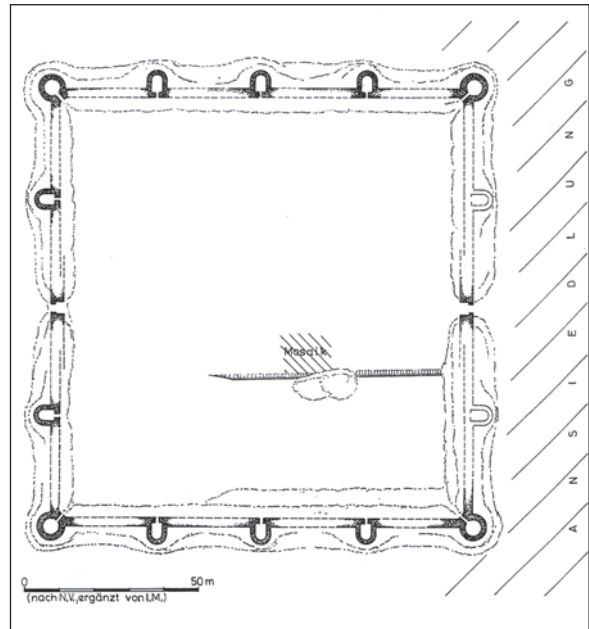


Fig. 2.243: Castra Nicea (Dolenci). Plan of the fort (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 165).

GREECE

There is little archaeological evidence on the newly-formed urban settlements in Greece, while more information on the topic can be gained from literary sources. Archibald Dunn notes that Hierocles mentions cities in northeastern Greece in places that only hold the remains of differently-sized fortified settlements (Dunn 2002, 707). Procopius reports that Justinian transferred the city of **Diocletianopolis** to a small island in Lake

Castoria. Today, this naturally excellently protected island shows no archaeological traces that could be linked to the Justinian period (Karagiorgou 2001b, 57–161).

Much better investigated is the unusual example of a newly-founded city of **Louloudies near Katerini** (Figs. 2.244, 2.245, 2.247), where rescue excavations revealed a 90 × 80 m large *quadriburgium* (Poulter, Marki 1998; Saradi 2006, 388–390, 467–468; Sodini 2007, 317). It



Fig. 2.244: Louloudies. Fortified episcopal centre from the south-west (2002).

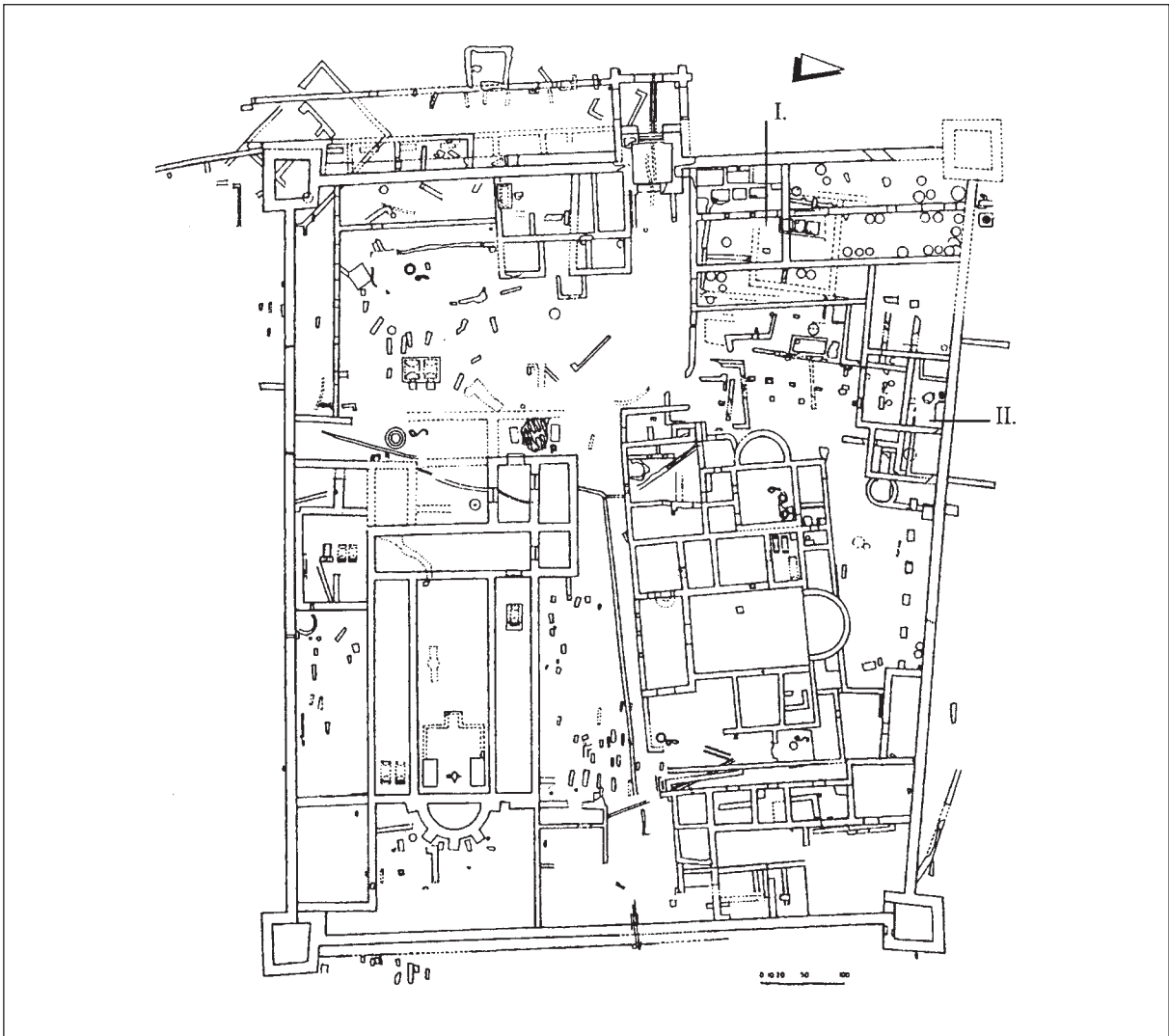


Fig. 2.245: Louloudies. Plan of the fortified ecclesiastical centre (Saradi 2006, Fig. 41).

lies 6 km south of ancient Pydna, on a plain close to the coast. Its well-defended interior revealed a large Early Christian church, parallel to it a presumed episcopal palace and along the defensive walls other auxiliary buildings and army barracks. It is suggested that it can be identified as an episcopal see, created roughly in 480 after the Emperor Zeno had surrendered the city of Pydna to the Goths in 479. Under Justinian, the basilica and episcopium were enlarged and economic

facilities constructed. After the earthquake in the mid-6th century, the ecclesiastical centre was abandoned, while artisanal activities continued in the fort. Understanding the functioning of the city must also take into account the 4 ha large fort located mere 150 m away, which was observed during the intensive surveys and electromagnetic measurements and dated using the recovered pottery to the 6th, possibly even the early 7th century (Poulter 1998, 343).

2.6 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON LATE ANTIQUE CITIES

The overview of the characteristic Late Antique cities has revealed great differences between them, but also the different ways in which they were transformed in different geographic settings and phases of Late Antiquity. Some underwent changes within their original design, others reduced in size, still others were moved partially or completely to better protected locations. The cities that developed more intensely in Late Antiquity were those that went on to become provincial centres, but also those located on major land and maritime routes – i.e., those with a prominent imperial support; this is particularly apparent in the eastern half of the Empire and is reflected in a number of important buildings.

In the western half of the area under discussion, there is a marked disparity between the cities in Italy and on the eastern Adriatic coast, on the one side, and the cities in the interior, on the other. The former do show extensive degradation of housing, but also a persisting presence of high-quality architecture in churches and elite housing. This has been observed from Ravenna, Brescia, Verona and even greatly reduced Aquileia to the large cities of the eastern Adriatic such as Parentium, Pola, Iader and Salona. The continental cities, on the other side, exhibit a rapid decline and abandonment with only some provincial centres that indicate (Teurnia) or allow us to expect (Siscia) prominent buildings erected even in the 5th and 6th centuries.

The reasons for the decline or transformation of cities have been tackled by a number of authors who provided a complex explanation of the underlying political, economic and social changes coupled with the increasing role of Christianity. In the area under discussion, this process was greatly accelerated by numerous incursions that frequently had disastrous consequences.

2.6.1 TRANSFORMATION OF LATE ANTIQUE CITIES

This is a phenomenon observable in all parts of the Roman Empire, but changes were particularly radical between Ravenna and Constantinople. The major changes include a shift of the urban population – both temporary and permanent – to new and naturally better protected locations, as well as a reduction of the urban area. Shifts are characteristic of the cities that were abandoned and partly also of those with continuity, while reduction affected the cities with continuity and is discussed in connection with this group.

The gradual abandonment of old city centres is associated with shifts of the population to nearby locations that offered better natural or man-made protection. From the late 4th century onwards, the inhabitants of the civilian towns that grew next to former legionary fortresses in Lauriacum, Carnuntum and Aquincum gradually moved to the fortresses that had, at least partially, been abandoned by then. There they built simple dwellings, in Lauriacum also a church. The fortress in Aquincum was enlarged and shifted to a better protected part near the Danube. Castellum Favianis was also greatly expanded, to host the refugees from the neighbouring areas who sought shelter in the urban settlement.

Where there was a suitable hilltop location in the vicinity, this shift already began in the last third of the 3rd century in a limited measure and more intensely from the late 4th century onwards. An example of such a migration was already noted in the early 20th century for Virunum; Rudolf Egger wrote in 1916 that the remains of two churches on the adjacent, only 40 m high fortified hill of Grazerkogel (*Fig. 2.246*) should be identified as the shelter of the bishop and the inhabitants of the lowland city (Egger 1916, 105–109). The poorly investigated



Fig. 2.246: Virunum, Grazerkogel. Hill from the south-west (2016).



Fig. 2.247: Louloudies. Fortified ecclesiastical centre from the north-west (2002).

Grazerkogel does not allow us to verify this hypothesis, but the Early Christian churches and the habitation area enclosed with massive walls doubtlessly hosted the Virunum bishop at least for a short while. In addition to this fortified location closest to Virunum, other potential shelters located at a greater distance include Ulrichsberg, possibly even the major Christian centre on Hemmaberg.

Similar shifts to adjacent hilltop fortifications have also been recorded for Iulium Carnicum and Aguntum. The inhabitants of the former presumably moved to an elevation above the city that has not yet been investigated with the exception of the church. In the case of Aguntum, the migration may have been to Kirchbichl, the site of a large Late Antique settlement near Lavant, though there are also other possible shelters, but these so far only revealed churches from the 5th/6th century (Walde 2002, 160–161). The population of Iuvavum presumably moved to a hilltop location just above the city, a site that is poorly known due to the large medieval castle now occupying the spot; it is possible that the church mentioned in Eugippius may refer to one that stood on this very hill (Ladstätter 2002, 313–314; Kovacsovics 2002, 199).

Most cities on the eastern coast of the Adriatic had a continued existence, but there are some exceptions. An example of a city abandoned before the end of Late Antiquity is Argyruntum. The reasons for its abandonment are unclear. It has been presumed that the *civitas Argerunto* mentioned in the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna refers to the hilltop settlement on Tribanj, Šibuljina, several kilometres away (see *Chapter 3.3*) (Dubolnić 2007,

41), though a complete lack of investigations at the site does not allow us to confirm this hypothesis.

Population shifts occurred later in the cities in the south, primarily Greece, compared with those in the western part. After the arrival of the Goths in Pydna, which took place in 479, a new episcopal see is believed to have been established in Louloudies (Fig. 2.247). The old Diocletianopolis was abandoned and its inhabitants moved to the island of Castoria only under Justinian (Karagiorgou 2001b). The city of Demetrias was abandoned in the same period and its administrative functions and inhabitants relocated to the Iolkos hill (Karagiorgou 2001a).

There are also several examples where most inhabitants moved either to the periphery or to a safer location farther away and some population persisted in the old fortified city centres. Particularly well-known is the migration from the endangered Aquileia to the insular Castrum Gradense. More precisely, the strongly reduced Aquileia fortified with Byzantine defensive walls persisted into the 6th century, while a new fortified centre of limited accessibility gradually developed in the nearby lagoon that also welcomed the head of the Church towards the end of the 6th century (Mirabella Roberti 1974–1975; Tavano 1976; Cuscito 2001).

Late Antique habitation traces in Tridentum came to light both in the city, on the rocky elevation of Doss Trento and in the fortified area at Piedicastello below it (Bierbrauer 1985, 497–498; Cavada 2019). Without systematic investigations, it is not possible to establish in which periods of the three habitation areas were



Fig. 2.248: Emona. Walled up gates in the southern part of the Roman walls (2018).

intensely inhabited. The advice that Theoderic gave to the cityzens, that they should seek shelter on Verucca (interpreted as present-day Doss Trento) in times of danger, certainly points to a shift to the more easily defensible hill – this is confirmed by archaeological evidence. Because of its location on one of the major arteries, the city must have come under threat on several occasions. For the same reason, we may also expect that substantial army units were stationed here.

In Nicopolis ad Istrum, a small fortified complex was created at the edge of the former Roman city in the second half of the 5th century, on a naturally most protected spot. Of building remains, it only revealed a church and another large building thus far; other buildings may have been made of wood. The limited investigations do not allow for an estimate of the share of the population that remained in the old city. It has been presumed, however, that it was mainly the ecclesiastical and administrative elites, as well as the army who sought shelter here (Poulter 2007c, 78–79).

The population of Tanagra is believed to have fled to the fortification of Aghios Constantinos (Bintliff 2007, 664–665). The lack of investigations at this site prevents us from drawing any conclusions with regard to the migration, but we can presume a fate similar to that described for the cities above.

The comparison of these short-distance population shifts clearly shows the greater endangerment of the western part that can largely be attributed to barbarian incursions across the limes towards Italy. In the eastern part, such shifts are sooner an exception than a rule, which can be associated with a lower degree of threat, but also greater imperial support.

2.6.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF LATE ANTIQUE CITIES

DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES

The Roman cities not protected with defensive walls were abandoned soon after the 4th century (e.g. Virunum, Sopianae, Nevioudunum, Andautonia), with exceptions in remote areas such as Gortyn on the island of Crete. There are, in contrast, also rare new unfortified agglomerations established in this time that can be linked to the presence of a new authority, either Ostrogothic or Byzantine. Examples of these are Blagaj in the valley of the Japra, in Bosnia, and Bosar on the island of Krk.

Several previously unfortified cities were enclosed with defensive walls in Late Antiquity (Verona, Teurnia, Gorsium, Celeia, Nesactium, Carevec, Abritus, Dyrachium, Taor, Heracleia/Perinthus). Most commonly, however, the already existing walls were renovated. The renovation work included a variety of repairs, the previously numerous openings, mainly gates, were now walled up (Iader, Emona, Fig. 2.248), the walls were raised and made thicker (Pola, Scodra, Lissus, Vinica), towers added (Forum Julii, Asseria, Salona, Serdica, Mesembria, Scodra, Thebes). The work was carried out at different times, from the second half of the 3rd century onwards, and in all three groups of cities.

New towers were built into the existing city walls that were of a shape better suited to new weapons. Alongside the old round and rectangular towers, fan- and U-shaped forms (Hissar; Fig. 2.249) appeared in the late 3rd and early 4th century, joined by particularly characteristic



Fig. 2.249: Hissar. City walls with a fan-shaped tower in the corner (2012).



Fig. 2.250: Split, Palace of Diocletian. *Propugnaculum* at the north entrance gates (Porta Aurea) (2017).

triangular and pentagonal towers towards the end of the 5th and the 6th century. Entrances were heavily reinforced and protected with different towers, with pentagonal towers most common in these spots in the 6th century. Frequently, entrances were also added propugnacula in the interior (Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, Split (Fig. 2.250), Iatrus, Dinogetia) or the exterior (Bargala).

Particularly common and well-known are the defensive wall reinforcements that the eastern cities made in the 6th century. As only a considerable number of inhabitants was able to defend the extensive walls, these reinforcements indicate an influx of people from

adjacent areas. It would appear that the cities thus fortified also served as temporary camps for large army units; several cities revealed army barracks on the interior side of the walls, but they have only rarely been more extensively investigated (cf. Hissar, Tzoides, Bargala).

The defences of some cities, particularly in places of easier access, included deep ditches (cf. Caričin grad, Zaldapa, Vinica, Taor, Bargala) and earthwork ramparts (cf. Keszthely-Fenekpuszta).

After its introduction in Constantinople, *proteichisma* as an important element of the Byzantine defensive technique quickly spread across the Byzantine



Fig. 2.251: Asseria. Late Antique tower with a proteichisma (2004).



Fig. 2.252: Caričin grad. Episcopal basilica (2012).

Empire from the 5th century onwards (Ovčarov 1973; Lawrence 1983, 185–186). It was frequent in the eastern part (cf. Hissar, Bargala, Vinica, Philippi), whereas in the west it only made its appearance after the Justinian reconquista (Ciglencečki 2003a, 269–272). It has been established in Brixia, Asseria (Fig. 2.251), Iader, it is clearly identifiable in Forum Iulii and presumed in Teurnia. It is an element of defence often ignored as it was long unknown in the west.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Construction of churches flourished in the cities of all three groups. It lasted from the first church buildings in Aquileia in the 310s, to the slightly more numerous churches in the second half of the 4th century and the intensive construction in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. The development of church architecture was then interrupted across wide areas of the western part and



Fig. 2.253: Stobi. Semicircular square in front of the episcopal basilica (2013).

there are no known churches built in the continental part after the mid-5th century with the exception of Teurnia. Church architecture is all the more present in northern Italy, along the eastern Adriatic coast and in the whole eastern part, both in the group of cities with continuity and those newly-founded in Late Antiquity. Here, the peak of church building comes in the second half of the 5th and even more so the 6th century, under Justinian. These churches are evidence that the technical know-how and great skills of a variety of masters continued into the second half of the 6th century. The episcopal sees, composed of a complex of basilicas with baptistery and episcopium, are sometimes associated with small squares that become the new city centre (cf. Caričin grad (Fig. 2.252), Stobi (Fig. 2.253), Vinica). In addition to the main church buildings, there is a variety of martyrial and cemeterial churches in the suburbs that are surrounded by residential buildings.

URBANISM AND HOUSING

The features of urban transformation can best be observed in the large cities with continuity. Alongside a proliferation of church architecture, a prominent feature is also the numerous high-quality and even luxury *domus* that witnessed a revival after the crisis in the 3rd century and continued even into the first half of the 5th century. Many of these houses were built anew, though often the already existing houses were enlarged and embellished, added new apsidal halls (e.g. Aquileia, Fig. 2.254). After the mid-5th century, luxury *domus*, episcopal palaces and individual administrative or military edifices were still being constructed, but this was mainly limited to major centres, coastal areas and islands. In Pola, the *domus* in

the Quarter of St Theodor persisted into the second half of the 5th century, as did the *domus* in Stobi that were largely already modified. Such houses were very rare in the 6th century and only documented in some major centres (e.g. Philippopolis, Histria, Thessaloniki, Athens) and on the islands. The Palace of the Giants on Athenian agora was erected in the first half of the 5th century and converted into a monastery already in the first half of the 6th century. The last known peristyle houses in Argos were presumably constructed around 530 (Sodini 1984, 354–356; Liebeschuetz 2001, 370). In addition to the rare examples of town houses in the 6th century, several episcopal palaces were built at this time that show a high quality of construction and rich decoration (especially Parentium (Fig. 2.255), Salona, Caričin grad, Carevec, Byllis, Stobi, Heracleia Lyncestis, Bargala, presumed episcopia in Vinica, Konjuh and Thebes).

Public baths were predominantly abandoned after the 4th century, though some were still constructed in the 6th century (e.g. Mesembria, Fig. 2.256), Byllis, Scupi, Bargala). Also in the 6th century, the construction of small private baths has been recorded in some cities (Athens, Buthroton, settlement in Sirmium's hippodrome).

Degradation of housing began in the second half of the 4th century and escalated in later times. Subdivisioning proliferated, with the large houses incorporating a wide array of simple dwellings. The latter either reused the shell of the old house or were built completely anew. The interiors of the partially dilapidated houses suffered improvised interventions, subdivisioning into smaller units and changes of function (artisanal activities, ruralisation). Residential quarters began losing their orthogonal layout, insulae were no longer maintained and gradually disintegrated. A particular feature is the



Fig. 2.254: Aquileia. Late Antique apsidal hall (1979).



Fig. 2.255: Parentium. Ground floor rooms in the episcopium (2010).



Fig. 2.256: Mesembria. Baths from the 6th century (2012).

compaction of houses and economic facilities into smaller units separated from one another with empty spaces – a feature known in literature as ‘island city’ or *città a isole*. These residential units were frequently associated with small groups of intramural burials. The building remains inside former theatres and hippodromes may be seen as a variant of such compaction, as has already been presented in detail in the group of cities with continuity (see *Chapter 2.4*). Refuse began piling up in the empty spaces of the abandoned city areas, in some cases these empty spaces were also used for agricultural purposes. This reveals a frequently fully haphazard transformation.

The construction technique used to build the new dwellings was of a low quality, often completely improvised. Drystone construction predominated, using clay and only rarely mortar as bonding material. Spoliation of earlier buildings was common. There was an increasing use of timber, most frequently in combination with dry-stone, some cities also reveal semi-sunken houses inside earlier buildings. However, the late dwellings built into earlier ones are not always of inferior quality and purely utilitarian; in Scupi, for example, clay-bonded walls were unearthed that were embellished with alternating courses of stone and brick, i.e. the rustic *opus mixtum*.

In Teurnia, one of the rare continental cities with continuity, several buildings in the old city area (primarily the forum) were modified and new buildings constructed within them. At the same time, simple two- or three-room masonry buildings were put up in the previously uninhabited part of the plateau such as were characteristic of fortified settlements. It is an example of the ‘urbanism’ of small cities with the combination of modified earlier buildings and new constructions that is devoid of a pre-conceived plan and rather incorporates buildings without a detectable order.

A similarly haphazard construction can also be observed in the intensely populated, but much larger newly-founded city of Zaldapa, where small modest buildings no longer display the regular layout of the former cities.

Streets were partly maintained, in places encroached on by different new buildings. A fairly isolated example is Scupi, where research has shown regular repairs of the *cardo* to the late 6th century.

The process of urban fabric transformation proceeded at a different pace in different areas and cities. These changes are hardly noticeable in the cities abandoned before the end of Late Antiquity, while they signified a fundamental change in the appearance of cities with continuity. The influx of people from the countryside has been observed in most cities and ruralisation was corroborated by the numerous economic facilities, such as oil and wine presses, mills, pens for domestic animals, as well as the presence of agricultural tools, in city centres (cf. Suić 1976a, 248; Popović, V. 1982, 565). In the more endangered Stobi, this has already been

observed for the 4th and 5th centuries (Mikulčić 1982b, 536–537; Gerasimovska 2012, 110), at Gortyn on the remote Crete only in the second half of the 6th century (Zanini 2009, 118–119).

With the alterations presented above, the Late Antique cities lost the characteristics of the classic cities though retaining the earlier urban layout. Their largely degraded interiors took a variety of forms with an emphasis on church buildings accompanied by rare high-quality constructions primarily intended for the ecclesiastical and administrative apparatus. Many cities had army barracks along the city walls. Predominantly, however, the city interiors hosted a myriad of simple dwellings that partially reused earlier buildings and elsewhere created a new, but modest and unpretentious architecture.

2.6.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS OF LATE ANTIQUE CITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM

CITIES ABANDONED BEFORE THE END OF LATE ANTIQUITY

The cities of this group largely respected the traditions of Roman urbanism and architecture. The noteworthy changes include housing degradation, in some places subdividing with dwellings of inferior quality built into earlier buildings, partial abandonment of public areas and minor reparations of city walls. From the late 4th century onwards, a small number of cities hosted the first Christian buildings, but these were soon abandoned or destroyed.

In the western part of the area under discussion, abandonment of cities occurred at different times and depended on local factors. There are certain differences between cities in the eastern Alps and those in Pannonia, with the naturally protected locations away from major communications most frequently allowing a prolonged existence. The more exposed and unfortified small cities along the fringes of the Pannonian Plain, such as Mursella (Szőnyi 2004), Salla (Redő 2003, 211), Flavia Solva (Hudeczek 2002, 210–211), Nevioudunum (Djurić, B. 1976, 566; Lovenjak 2003, 96) and Andautonia (Nemeth-Ehrlich, Kušan Špalj 2003, 125), already ceased to exist towards the end of the 4th century. Significantly, these cities revealed no traces of Early Christian architecture. In the much less exposed western fringes, habitation remains and large church buildings in Iulium Carnicum and Aguntum date even after the mid-5th century (Corazza et al. 2001, 245–247; Sossau 2018).

The most severely afflicted were the Norican and Pannonian cities located on the major roads towards Italy, none of which (with the exception of Teurnia and Siscia) show clear indications of urban continuity after



Fig. 2.257: Emona. Ecclesiastical centre from the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries (2011).

the mid-5th century. This illustrates the great impact of the incursions from behind the limes to areas immediately before the gates of Italy.

A great majority of cities was gradually abandoned during the first half of the 5th century, whereas the time of the Hun raids in the middle of the 5th century represents the upper limit of existence for the cities that survived in a limited capacity. This period of abandonment is clearly mirrored in the destroyed Early Christian churches, which indirectly indicate the date at which most cities were abandoned. In Emona (Fig. 2.257), for instance, the ecclesiastical centre was presumably constructed in the 420s and abandoned even before the mid-5th century, possibly already in the 430s (Kos 1983, 102–103). The shift from cities to nearby hilltop settlements is also corroborated by the hoard of large bronze Christograms found on the naturally well-protected settlement on Vipota above Pečovnik, which could only be brought there by the refugees fleeing the nearby Celeia (Ciglencečki, Modrijan 2020).

Literary sources indicate that some cities persisted into the second half of the 5th and the 6th century, but this has as yet not been archaeologically confirmed. A typical example is the archaeologically poorly-known city of Bassianae, which is mentioned in as many as four different Late Antique sources. It would appear that these texts often provide pretentious accounts of cities that only existed as the ruins of former buildings. The bishops mentioned in these texts also moved episcopal sees to safer locations, but retained their old titles. Such incongruities between literary and archaeological evidence show that further investigations of the urban structures and reliable material evidence is needed

before drawing conclusions as to their continuity to the late 6th century.

CITIES WITH CONTINUITY

The most numerous and also the best-known group comprises the cities that kept some of the traditional achievements of classic urbanism while at the same time undergoing gradual change. These changes are predominantly visible in the disintegration and ruralisation of the urban fabric, which became particularly intense after the mid-5th century. There were also new constructions, as is clear from several buildings reliably dated to this time, as well as from the two inscriptions from Serdica and Heracleia that mention the construction of an aqueduct and a fountain in the second half of the 6th century.

This group includes cities for which continuity is not without reservations, as they were largely abandoned in the second half of the 5th and reactivated in the 6th century. An example in Italy is Opitergium (Oderzo), which lost in significance in Late Antiquity, but was fortified anew under the Byzantine rule (Brogiolo 2011a, 105). A similar observation holds true of Singidunum, which Procopius mentions as a city of great importance, while archaeological remains are scarce. After destruction by the Huns, Naissus was completely desolate for a while with insignificant archaeological traces, though it is still considered a city in literary sources (Milinković 2015, 136–137). The difficulty in such interpretations is twofold; on the one hand, we cannot be certain what the ancient authors had in mind when writing of a city



Fig. 2.258: Athens. Post-Herulian walls under the acropolis (2011).

and, on the other hand, these cities are currently built-up and their research insufficient to reliably prove (non-) existence in this period. Even in the case of Viminacium, which was not built up in later times, we can observe that the city was deserted and presumably continued (?) in the modest settlement on the Svetinja peninsula, which rather ranks among the abandoned cities.

An important change in the group of cities with continuity is the reduction of the urban area. Alongside the above-mentioned shifts of population to other locations, reduction is a reliable indication of the radical interventions in the urban fabric. It is the consequence of the dangers cities faced and the gradual depopulation (overview in Kirilov 2007; Sodini 2007, 320).

Reduction occurred at different times in different areas. First signs are already observable in the second half of the 3rd century. In Stobi, it came about presumably due to floods in the part along the river. In Athens (Fig. 2.258), the Herulian sack of 267 led to the construction of new city walls that greatly reduced the urban area. Histria was also reduced in the second half of the 3rd century.

The next prominent wave of urban reduction came in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. It is most apparent in the Albanian cities of Scodra and Lissus, as well as in the Greek Dion, Thespieae and Corinth.

Another wave dates to the second half and especially the late 5th century. In this time, Sirmium shrunk to the better protected part at the River Sava, although there is no evidence of the city walls that would delimit the reduced extent of the city. Defensive walls that contracted the urban area were reliably established in Nicopolis in Epirus (Fig. 2.259), Dyrrachium, Scupi, Heracleia Lyncestis and Deultum.

The final major reductions occurred in the 6th century, under Justinian, when small parts of some cities were protected with massive walls. Reliably dated walls with characteristic towers from this period are known in Aquileia, Tergeste, Philippopolis, Durostorum, Amphipolis and Heracleia/Perinthus. This group may also include Ulpiana, even though it did not witness a proper reduction. Under Justinian, a new fortified city was constructed here that was located next to the larger, earlier one and was named after the emperor as *Iustiniانا Secunda*. In spite of the new construction, several buildings remained in use in the old city.

The defensive walls of the reduced cities incorporated large public buildings of an earlier date. An example of this is the theatre in Sparta (Fig. 2.260) that was incorporated in the defences of the acropolis (Lawrence 1983, 180; Saradi 2006, 323).

There are also examples of cities where insufficient research does not allow us to either reliably confirm (Lychnidos) or more precisely date (Pharia, Pautalia, Gortyn) the reduction.

Not much is known of the habitation remains outside the reduced cities. These remains were certainly less prestigious and include modest dwellings and workshops (in Aquileia, Nicopolis in Epirus, Amphipolis, Athens, Thessalian Thebes and others). In times of danger, the people living in the surroundings sought shelter in the fortified area, which could not even be successfully defended without these people. Particularly for the eastern and southern parts of the area under discussion, there appears to have been intensive life outside the reduced urban area (for example the lavish *domus* in Philippopolis, Nicopolis in Epirus, Thessalian Thebes,



Fig. 2.259: Nicopolis in Epirus. Late Antique walls with towers (2002).



Fig. 2.260: Sparta. A theatre included in the reduced urban area (2002).

Athens), which suggests there was less need for taking shelter within protected areas as in the western parts.

There are also rare cases when the opposite has been observed, namely an enlargement of the walled urban area. The city of Verona, for example, was enlarged under the Ostrogothic administration and incorporated an amphitheatre in the south and a palace on the hill on the other bank of the Adige. In Brixia as well, a small fortified part was added to the earlier walled area. The walls in Tridentum now included an amphitheatre that was previously located outside the city, as well as the area of Piedicastello on the opposite bank of the river.

In Serdica, the city was substantially enlarged in the 4th century, but soon reduced again to its former extent. The enlargement of Novae was of a longer duration; the enlarged area first hosted refugees and later gradually became permanently inhabited.

Predominantly in the 6th century, in some places possibly even slightly earlier, we can observe a concentration of modest dwellings within theatres and hippodromes. The best investigated example of this is in Heracleia Lyncestis, which appears to have hosted a small organised community or ‘micro settlement’ (Janakievski 2001). Also well investigated is such a

community in another Macedonian city, in Scupi, where two construction phases have been discerned. The 6th-century buildings in the hippodrome of Sirmium also represent a residential unit that included in its centre a large building with baths. Less is known of such complexes in Stobi and Ohrid. Further examples are also mentioned in Messenia (Saradi 2006, 321).

These appear to be the last attempts at organised habitation in cities, which have parallels elsewhere in the Empire, for example in Carthage, Leptis Magna and Valencia (Quiroga 2016, 80). It is conceivable that it was the strong and partially surviving walls of these former buildings that offered a protected environment for human habitations while at the same time enabling effective defence in times of danger.

NEWLY-FOUNDED CITIES

This is the most complex and problematic group of cities that brought about, because of the late date and difficult circumstances, a complete change in the concept of a city. Selecting the criteria that justify the identification of the last urban settlements was hardest for this very group. As mentioned in the introduction, there is no general consensus on the criteria and the urban character has to be assessed for each settlement separately.

The newly-formed cities range from those confirmed by epigraphic evidence to large central settlements with the last signs of an urban character. Newly-founded cities differ from those of other groups in function and appearance, consequently also interior structure. In recent times, these cities have received much attention because they are a *novum* in the settlement pattern and also generate discussion on which settlements can be identified as cities.

In newly-founded cities, the classic city transformed into a fortified settlement with an ecclesiastical centre, a small army garrison (possibly only urban militia) and several functions that constitute a central settlement. Literature has already marked this process as a transition from *polis* to *kastron* (overview in Dunn 1994), which corresponds with reality in a great measure.

We should distinguish between two subgroups of newly-founded cities that differ in the date of their beginning, the function, location and appearance. The first subgroup is earlier and consists of cities – fortresses, the other comprises the newly-founded cities of the 5th and 6th centuries.

Cities – fortresses from the late 3rd and early 4th centuries

Cities – fortresses were set anew in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. They were established on the incentive and with the help of imperial authorities primarily in the area of the limes and its hinterland, individually also at important strategic locations further inland. To a certain degree, they still have a regular layout, they are sited on slightly raised ground or at a river confluence and show more commonalities with earlier cities in comparison with the cities established later. They boast strong city walls with fan- or U-shaped towers. Their interiors lack monumental public buildings and the organisation of space no longer traces an orthogonal street grid.

Their character has long been known and they are frequently discussed in literature (overview in Rizos 2017b). The inscription from Tropaeum Traiani, dated AD 314, clearly relates a combination of a fortress and a civilian settlement. They are most common in the provinces Lower Moesia and Scythia. Their limited size raises the question of whether part of the inhabitants lived in the surrounding area and only sought shelter behind city walls in times of danger. Efthymios Rizos believes the main reason for establishing these cities was to serve as a support to the authority and defence, rather than a rich backdrop for the imperial ceremonial (Rizos 2017b, 20, 25).

This subgroup may also include the inner fortifications in Pannonia, which have been discussed under different terms – either as military posts, cities, supply centres and so forth (overview in Heinrich-Tamáška 2011a; Rizos 2017b, 25–27). Their fortifications, structure of buildings in the interior and size indicate a combination of functions; as such, these cities are characteristic representatives of the new concept of a Late Antique city.

Slobodan Ćurčić, who also notes that new cities in the Balkans already formed in the early 4th century, includes the enigmatic category of miniature cities such as Split and Romuliana in this subgroup (Ćurčić 2010, 23), although these two cities attained the city status at a later date. In the former imperial palace of Romuliana, a strong civilian character coupled with a military presence can only be felt towards the end of the 4th century. At that time, the fortress of Iatrus was transformed into a civilian-military settlement. Its architecture is similar to the contemporary dwellings in the classic cities. The subgroup further includes Ságvár in Hungary, where the shape of the towers points to the establishment in the second half of the 4th century, as well as Bargala in North Macedonia (Fig. 2.261), where the inscription dated to 371 reveals that the army camp was already transformed into an urban settlement. In North Macedonia, the fortress Dolenci (Kale) is another similar example of transformation from army camp to city. The site is not



Fig. 2.261: Bargala. Walls and buildings in the north-eastern corner of the city (2013).

sufficiently known and we must allow for the possibility that this transformation occurred at a slightly later date. What is certain is that the churches *intra* and *extra muros* point to the altered nature of the fortress.

Cities newly-founded in the second half of the 5th and in the 6th century

The discussion above revealed that, in spite of their altered appearance, the cities from the early part of Late Antiquity were still clearly recognisable and their status corroborated by epigraphic evidence. Much more challenging is the identification of cities newly-founded after the mid-5th and especially in the 6th century.

A number of fortified and naturally well-protected settlements was established in this period that hosted the endangered civilian population. Some of these were large and had residential, as well as modest administrative, military and especially church buildings, all of which speaks of an urban character. These cities lack the attributes characteristic of the former cities and are primarily distinguished from the contemporary settlements in the vicinity by their size and dominant location.

Only rare have been investigated well enough to allow us to verify the criteria listed above. The first criterion is size. Most authors estimate that the settlements covering a surface of more than 2–3 ha represent major settlement centres that stand out from those measuring 0.5–1.5 ha on average. Having said that, we should not forget several smaller fortified settlements with suburbs or smaller settlements in their vicinity, the inhabitants of which occasionally sought shelter in the centres. In

literature, these suburbs are only rarely mentioned as parts of the newly-founded settlements and are poorly known. Geophysical investigations have revealed them at Caričin grad, Romuliana, Louloudies and elsewhere. Even before these, field surveys and trial trenching have detected several such instances in North Macedonia: at Čučer (Davina), Taor and Vinica (Kale). More knowledge on the modest residential and economic architecture in these border areas will allow us to gain a more complete picture of the cities.

The final forms of newly-founded cities have all the defensive elements used in Late Antiquity, namely walls with towers, *proteichisma*, ditches and earthwork ramparts. Their interiors are dominated by the church complex or a large church with a baptistery, while there are often additional churches in other parts of the cities and outside the city walls. They hold extremely rare public buildings, but a multitude of simple dwellings, the size and layout of which indicates social stratification.

These cities were inhabited by large organised communities with local autonomy who performed religious and administrative functions. Also present were small units of the army or local militia. The population was largely self-sufficient. Additional criteria for an identification as a city are the social differentiation of the inhabitants, different crafts and commerce. Alongside a central position within a region, the presence of the ecclesiastical apparatus appears to be another indication of a late urban character.

Particularly numerous are the examples of such cities in the most intensely investigated North Macedonia. Ivan Mikulčić used passages in ancient texts to term these agglomerations as *oppida* and *oppidula*,



Fig. 2.262: Caričin grad. Lower city in the foreground, Upper city with the Acropolis in the background. View from the south (2012).

which presumably replaced the abandoned Roman cities and were seen as small Byzantine cities (Mikulčić 2002, 269–271). He mentions citadels among their basic features, which were separate from the lower city as the presumed autonomous area of an army garrison. Their interior also hosted churches and even remains of other public buildings. Some cities revealed traces of a street grid and urban layout. These settlements played a primary role in the defence of the area, they were the seats of the local administration and the last remains of artisans and merchants at the end of Antiquity. They include Čučer (Davina), Vodno, Kalata near Kamenica and others. The best example is Čučer (Davina), the layout of which includes a city square, church complexes, communications and suburbs (Mikulčić 2002, 101).

The fortress of Vodno is less likely ascribable to this category, though it seems the very settlement that Mikulčić used to define the appearance of such cities. What seems problematic is the absence of a church on the acropolis; neither has a church been found in the lower part of the fortress. It is certainly a post of several functions, but its heavy fortifications suggest a primarily military function, possibly also serving as a refuge.

The tendency for establishing new cities is particularly pronounced in the 6th century. Literary sources reveal the request of the metropolitan of Salona for dividing the bishopric of Salona expressed on the synods in the 530s. This can be understood as a desire for

establishing smaller cities and central settlements that could be more easily managed (Suić 1976a, 242; Bratož 2011a, 224–225).

In the Alpine area, such a city can be seen in Sabiona, though this is a problematic site in many respects and one that lacks several basic identification elements. Literary sources clearly mention it held an episcopal see, while investigations thus far yielded very scarce settlement remains. In the mentions of bishops, this site is similar to *frourio Meridio*, located near the city of Aque on the Danube and only known from literary sources. It also received a bishop in the 6th century, but the site itself has as yet not been reliably identified (Janković 1981, 52). It would appear that cities of the 6th century were no longer identified by an episcopal see as was the case for the 5th century (Dagron 1984, 8).

In Late Antiquity, there are other instances of episcopal sees transferred to better protected locations (cf. Berg 1985, 90; Bratož 2009, 39–43). These locations have not been reliably recognised, which is additional evidence to look for them in the heavily transformed centres of settlement closely comparable with large fortified hilltop settlements (presented below). Rajko Bratož observes that ephemeral episcopal sees were not exceptional in the declining period of Antiquity regardless of the fact that such sees were not permitted or hindered in the ecclesiastical legislation (Bratož 2009, 39). In Dalmatia, there was little success in locating the



Fig. 2.263: Map of Late Antique sites surrounding Carnium.

episcopal sees mentioned in the records of the synods held in Salona, there were only theoretical attempts not confirmed by archaeological investigations (cf. Škegro 2008; Periša 2009; Bratož 2009, 27–43). This only corroborates the altered appearance of the last episcopal sees, which were devoid of external characteristics that would enable at least a rough identification.

The investigations of Caričin grad (presumed Iustiniana Prima), a city of exceptional status, shed light on the newly-founded cities and indirectly also allow us to identify other similar religious-administrative urban formations. In its concept, Caričin grad was divided into functionally clearly separate parts (Acropolis, Upper and Lower city, different suburbs; Fig. 2.262) and thus certainly represents a model imperial design. The city in its initial phase was a capital with a strong ecclesiastical and administrative apparatus, but it soon ruralised in the face of the massive influx of people from the countryside, with the small finds from the second half of the 6th and the early 7th century showing an increasingly autarchic character (Ivanišević 2017, 103–108). Caričin grad is the only city newly-founded in the late period to exhibit substantial remains of classic urbanism, though its exceptional status paradoxically makes it an atypical representative of this subgroup of cities. The latter makes it impossible to compare it with other urban formations of a more modest design and a character that is more rural from the onset.

Some of the elements known from Caričin grad – primarily the square (forum?) and regularly distributed buildings on the Acropolis and in the Lower city – are also detectable in the poorly investigated Čučer (Davina). Individual urbanistic elements, such as an aqueduct, sewage system, main axis, important edifices and suburbs, are also visible in Vinica and Taor.

Sufficiently convincing are the elements indicating an urban nature of Gradina on Jelica. In addition to its size, five churches and three habitation areas separated by walls, these elements comprise several large and well-built edifices, the absence of ruralisation and disintegration of the settlement, as well as the paucity of poorly-constructed buildings (Milinković 2015, 188–189).

Alongside the above-mentioned newly-formed settlements of a fairly readily identifiable urban character, there is a series of other settlements that could also be ascribed an urban character considering the lower standards of cities in Late Antiquity. They are of a considerable size, but only show individual urban elements. An example in the western part is the fortified settlement of Carnium (Kranj) which undoubtedly had a central role, but the continuous later habitation of the spot hinders an assessment of its urban character. Not much is known of the organisation of space in the interior, though the settlement on an elongated plateau seems to have been organised similarly as the modern-day city, i.e. along a main longitudinal communication



Fig. 2.264: Bosar. Unfortified settlement from the 6th century from the south-east (2016).

with transverse streets leading off of it, with a church and a large baptistery in the centre. The size and distribution of the numerous smaller fortifications along the edge of the plain that holds the city indicate that Carnium was their administrative and ecclesiastical centre. The smaller, roughly 1 ha large settlements are located at Gradišće and Sv. Lovrenc above Bašelj, Sv. Jakob above Potoče, Puštal above Trnje, Hom above Sora, Štefanja gora and Gradišće above Pivka pri Naklem (Fig. 2.263). None has as yet revealed a church, although they could be presumed to have existed in the larger settlements. Also dating to Late Antiquity are the poorly known lowland sites located at nearby Britof and Mengeš (Milavec 2020, 160).

Standing out among the presented newly-founded cities are Bosar on the island of Krk (Fig. 2.264) and Blagaj in the Japra Valley, which are the only known large unfortified settlements that display some urban elements. They indicate the possibility that such settlements existed in other areas as well, primarily in areas removed from the main communications. Their existence is thus far only indicated by large church buildings. An example of the latter is the large and beautifully decorated basilica in Zenica, where Đuro Basler presumed a central settlement in the place of the earlier municipium Bistue (Basler 1972, 126–127). Similar observations have been made for most Late Antique settlements in areas intensely populated in later

times, where archaeological traces with the exception of churches are all but imperceptible.

In Bulgaria, the city of Shoumen (Fig. 2.265) also corresponds with the notion of a Late Antique city, holding a large number of densely spaced buildings and heavily reinforced defensive walls. A multitude of buildings, several churches and strong defensive elements point to a semi-urban character (a miniature Late Antique ‘city’ as the author termed it) of the Late Antique settlement on Golemanovo Kale, which is reliably attributable to the Justinian period (Ćurčić 2010, 215); it is discussed in the group of fortified settlements because of its small size.

In interpreting newly-founded cities, some authors rely on the well-investigated Nicopolis ad Istrum (cf. Saradi 2006, 467; Whittow 2007, 387; Snively 2009, 41). Only administrative and church buildings are known here and it would appear that it is an exception rather than a model Late Antique city. Given the absence of housing in the interior, it is also not certain whether we know enough of the city.

The description of the as yet unidentified episcopal see on the inscription from Izbičanj is in many respects similar to the description of the estate and villa of Sidonius Apollinaris in Avitacum, as well as the description that Venantius Fortunatus provides of the palace of Nicetius along the River Mosel (Egger 1940; McKay 1998, 186). The high expectations created by the poetically embellished descriptions are certainly to blame that their remains



Fig. 2.265: Shoumen. Entrance and walls with towers in the north-western part of the city (2012).

have not yet been archaeologically detected. At Izbičanj, we may therefore only expect a large fortified settlement with parallels in Sabiona, Kirchbichl, Louloudies and *frourio Meridio* mentioned in literary sources.

Finally, we must also mention a large number of 'cities' established in the second half of the 6th century. These are the last, utterly degraded and impoverished urban agglomerations mainly located on the coast and the islands that offered better defensive possibilities and a maritime supply. Many were also established on the Adriatic coast, but the lack of research does not allow us to reliably attribute them to this group (Suić 1976a, 235–238, 241–242; Katić 2003, 524–526; Saradi 2006, 464–470); the already mentioned examples are Capris, Sipar and Lisina, but possibly also Dubrovnik, Budva and others that have revealed insufficient evidence for a detailed identification.

Many of the *civitates* mentioned by the late authors are not cities proper, as they are fortified settlements minor in size and significance. The use of the term *civitates* for Late Antiquity thus suggests a myriad of

different agglomerations, for which only systematic investigations would allow the final urban characteristics to be identified.

For the Peloponnese, Chronicle of Monemvasia reports that the inhabitants migrated to Italy, Sicily, islands along the coast and the isolated refugium of Monemvasia, on which a bishopric was established (Whitby 2000, 727; Veikou 2012, 184–186).

In the western part of the Empire as well, the *civitates* that the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna mentions in the continental part are frequently small fortified settlements. It would appear that they can be perceived as miniature cities; this is the term I used for the Late Antique fortified hilltop settlements in the eastern Alpine area that had an ecclesiastical centre and densely spaced housing inside strong fortification walls (Ciglenečki 1987a, 114).

In the late 6th or early 7th century, a large part of the area under discussion witnessed a rapid decline of cities, with partial continuity of urban structures only observable in some coastal cities, in Ravenna, Constantinople and Thessaloniki, as well as in several cities of northern Italy.

3. SETTLEMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

3.1 MAJOR SETTLEMENT CHANGES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

In the area under discussion, the the Late Antique countryside settlement is one of great complexity, similarly to that of cities but with even more radical changes, as already noted in the introduction (see *Chapter 1*). Most of the settlement forms from the Roman period (villas, *vici*, roadside stations and others) continued into the initial part of Late Antiquity; most persisted to the first half of the 4th, many to the second half of the 4th century and only rare ones survived to a later time. A substantial break came in the middle third of the 5th century, when most of the unfortified lowland settlements were abandoned. People ever more frequently sought shelter in remote areas and naturally well-protected locations. At first, these locations only served as refuges in the face of unstable circumstances, but many later turned into permanent settlements. This process of settlement shifts began to be felt in the last third of the 3rd, it intensified in the second half of the 4th and lasted to the end of the 6th century.

The vast body of countryside settlements can reasonably be divided into two groups:

- Settlements with continuity from the Roman period (Figs. 3.1, 3.26). Most survived to the mid-5th century, in rare cases also beyond.
- Settlements established in Late Antiquity. These comprise rare unfortified settlements and predominant fortifications, the latter representing the most prominent habitation form.

For a long time, not much was known on the settlement of the countryside. It was discussed in several regional overviews, but completely absent in synthetic works with the exception of Roman villas. Many authors noted this shortcoming. The knowledge only really began advancing from the 1970s onwards through the numerous modern rescue excavations (primarily in advance of motorway construction) and intensive field surveys in the lowland and in remote areas primarily through extensive surveys that revealed a multitude of fortifications.

The difficulties and open questions associated with the research of the Late Antique countryside are briefly presented in the introduction (see *Chapter 1*). Of these, we should again emphasise the endangerment of settlement remains in lowland areas, which are highly exposed to damage or destruction through agricultural or construction activities. Modern investigation techniques (primarily geophysical investigation and aerial photography) have been used in many areas, but the poor preservation of sites often prevents a reliable identification of the remains as a villa, settlement, farmstead, individual farm buildings or other.

The situation is different for the newly-founded fortifications, located on naturally protected elevations and often with well-preserved remains, which make them more readily identifiable and consequently better known. Here, field surveys and the use of new techniques (primarily LiDAR or surface laser scanning and aerial photography) frequently offer an insight into the structure of the sites even without major interventions into the subsoil.

3.2 SETTLEMENTS WITH CONTINUITY

Contemporaneously with last peak of cities in the 4th century, prosperity is also observable in the countryside. The area under discussion also witnessed densification of estates and consequently fewer but larger villas (Thomas 1964, 389; Henning 1987, 34; Dintchev 1997, 125; Mulvin 2002, 23).

This chapter presents a selection of characteristic settlements that already existed in the Roman period and continued to develop in Late Antiquity. The selection includes settlements that changed their function at the end of the Roman period and transformed into a different type, i.e. one of an economic or even religious nature.

Roman villas are the best known form of countryside settlement, discussed in regional (see Thomas 1964; Vasić 1970; Dintchev 1997; Begović, Schrunck 2001; Marensi 2001; Busuladžić 2011; Kastler et al. 2017) and wider over-



- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Castel Antico | 15 Slovenska Bistrica | 29 Vižula | 43 Crkvina near Otres |
| 2 Castelletto di Brenzone | 16 Blagovica | 30 Poje in Njivice | 44 Bisko near Knin |
| 3 Nuvolento near Pieve | 17 Trojane (Atrans) | 31 Cickini near Sršiči | 45 Crkvina near Halapić |
| 4 Manerba del Garda | 18 Grobelce | 32 Martinščica | 46 Grušine |
| 5 Borgo Regio in Desenzano | 19 Nauportus (Vrhnika) | 33 Drenje near Zaprešič | 47 Strupnić near Livno |
| 6 S. Pietro in Cariano | 20 Ulaka | 34 Donja Glavnica | 48 Proložac Donji |
| 7 Sovizzo | 21 Školarice | 35 Virovitica, Kiškoriya South | 49 Lovrečina Bay |
| 8 Loig near Salzburg | 22 Predloka | 36 Kövágószőlős | 50 Novo Selo Bunje |
| 9 Immurium (Moosham) | 23 Červar, Porat | 37 Ivandvor | 51 Proboj near Ljubuški |
| 10 Bruckneudorf | 24 Vrsar | 38 Ograja in Putovići | 52 Sv. Klement near Hvar |
| 11 Tatárszálláson | 25 Barbariga | 39 Debelo Brdo in Sarajevo | 53 Ubli |
| 12 Csúcshegy | 26 Dragonera Jug | 40 Ilidža in Sarajevo | 54 Višiči near Čapljina |
| 13 Balácapuszta | 27 Veliki Brijun | 41 Mušiči near Višegrad | 55 Dračeva strana near Bileća |
| 14 Stari trg (Colatio) | 28 Stancija Peličeti | 42 Muline | 56 Panik near Bileća |
| | | | 57 Bihovo near Trebinje |

Fig. 3.1: Countryside settlements that continued from the Roman period, western part, discussed in the book.

views (Henning 1987; Mulvin 2002). It is often difficult to identify the time when the continuity of Roman villas ceases and the time when a completely new and (largely) different use begins. Therefore, the discussion below takes into account the continuity both of the original building and of the spot of the original building that was later

resettled. Without meticulous excavation, it is not easy to distinguish between the two; the discussion thus includes the buildings for which archaeological evidence suggests an uninterrupted existence in an unaltered function and those that (possibly with a minor chronological hiatus) occur within the earlier buildings.

The term ‘villa’ is used here for a wide formal array of countryside settlement and the term ‘*villa rustica*’ is only reserved for the sites clearly identified as such in publications. The book also discusses a few cases of poorly identifiable buildings or farmsteads, as well as settlements such as *vici* and roadside stations. In addition to these, the countryside was dotted with a large number of settlements of timber or semi-sunken buildings, but they have only rarely been examined and presented in detail; some are known to have combined masonry and timber architecture. Such remains have been coming to light in recent rescue excavations, which revealed individual small buildings and larger settlements constructed of less durable material (cf. Jelinčić Vučković 2015; Horvat et al. 2020a).

An important subject with regard to villas is their fortification, which is a feature that investigations often indicated, but almost never confirmed. The walls enclosing most farmhouses appear to be delimiting the habitation and production areas rather than serving a defensive purpose. For Pannonia, Edith Thomas (1964, 389–390; 1980, 312–317) presumes a general practice of villa fortification already from Aurelian period onwards. It is believed that villas also served as refuges for the farmers from the surrounding areas. However, most of the detected walls did not enclose the villas in their entirety and, moreover, most villas lie on naturally poorly protected locations (most frequently terraces and gentle slopes). Fortifications on such locations only provided protection against animals and small robber bands; they would less likely be successful against barbarian incursions.

Research in Pannonia, the eastern Alps and the interior of the Balkan Peninsula has pointed to an extensive abandonment of villas and other forms of lowland settlement already towards the end of the 4th century. Only rare cases persisted into the first half of the 5th century or beyond (Thomas 1964, 395–398; Henning 1987, 35; Dintchev 1997; Mulvin 2002, 42; Milinković 2008, 545; Begović Dvoržak et al. 2020). Most lowland settlements in Serbia came to an end in the late 4th or first half of the 5th century (Milinković 2007, 162), those in Bulgaria were presumably deserted until 450 (Dintchev 1997, 205). In Greece, most villas were already abandoned in the 4th century, while some were reoccupied in the 6th century (Curta 2014, 39).

3.2.1 WESTERN PART

ITALY

The systematic work conducted in Italy over the recent decades has produced a wealth of data that illuminate the fate of villas in Late Antiquity and partly even later (cf. Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014, 233). Researchers have observed that both the evolution of villas and their end

were highly standardised across the Empire and that the transformation of villas already began in the 3rd century. Initially, changes are primarily visible in the function of individual rooms, which became production units, whereas from the 5th century onwards villas show decrease of habitation and beginning of artisanal activities. Gian Pietro Brogiolo dates the end of the villas around Lake Garda from the late 5th to the late 6th century, noting a degradation of earlier buildings and subdividing with simple constructions, as well as the villa interiors used for burial (Brogiolo 1997, 300).

Traces of a villa from the 1st and 2nd centuries came to light at **Nuolento near Pieve**. The brief reports reveal the villa was extensively renovated on several occasions and torn down in the 4th century (De Franceschini 1998, 109–111). On top of levelled ruins, small rooms with hearths were constructed of wood in a phase dated to the 5th/6th centuries (Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014, 234).

A specific example is the villa at **Castelletto di Brenzone** (Fig. 3.2), on the east coast of Lake Garda, where one of the buildings revealed layers from the 6th and 7th centuries (Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014, 234). These show a radical change of the interior that only contained traces of economic and artisanal activities; this is certainly a case of new use rather than continued habitation.

The large and lavish villa at **Borgo Regio in Desenzano** was completely renovated in the first half of the 4th century (De Franceschini 1998, 147–151). Architecturally, the renovated villa is marked by baths and a hall with a triconch terminal, which had rich polychrome mosaic floors and wall paintings. The last repairs of the villa date to the late 4th or early 5th century.

Manerba del Garda yielded the remains of a small villa that persisted to the 4th/5th centuries (Brogiolo 1997, 307; De Franceschini 1998, 155–156). In Late Antiquity, a small apsed church dedicated to St Syrus was constructed on top of its ruins in the east part.

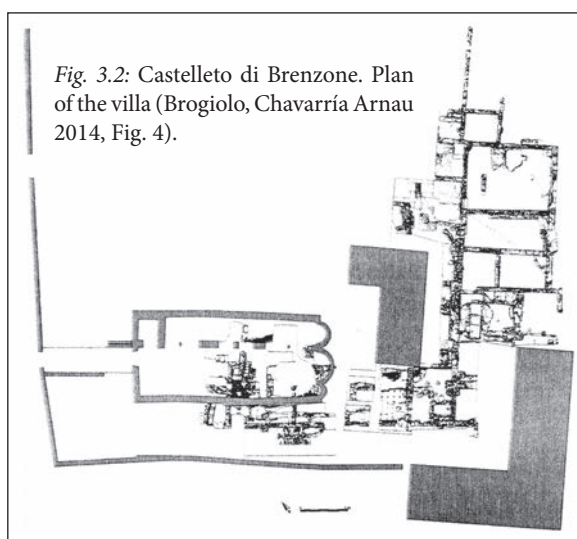


Fig. 3.2: Castelletto di Brenzone. Plan of the villa (Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014, Fig. 4).



Fig. 3.3: Castel Antico. Plan of the settlement (Brogiolo 2018, Fig. 3).

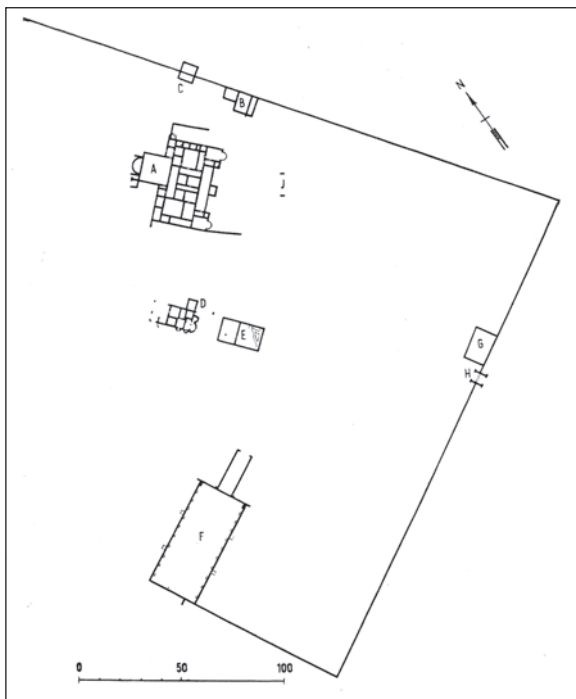


Fig. 3.4: Bruckneudorf (Parndorf). Plan of the villa (Thomas 1964, Fig. 99).

Two simple buildings, dated between the 4th and the 7th century, were constructed on the other side of the villa.

The villa at **S. Pietro in Cariano**, already built in the 1st century, witnessed its last phase with primitive buildings at the transition from the 5th to the 6th century (De Franceschini 1998, 175–177).

Part of a settlement with simple and predominantly single-room houses came to light at **Castel Antico** (Fig. 3.3), on the south side of Lake Idro (Brogiolo 2018, 137). The settlement was presumably inhabited from the 1st to the 5th/6th century and comprised two types of houses. The first was sunken houses with drystone walls, the other masonry houses with tiled roofs.

Only the economic part of the villa at **Ponte Lambro** has thus far been investigated (Airoldi et al. 2016). After being abandoned around the mid-3rd century, some of the rooms were reinhabited in the 4th–6th century; timber buildings were constructed on top of the ruins and fitted with hearths and two water cisterns.

The rectangular multi-room building at **Sovizzo** was erected in the 1st and remained in use to the 5th century (De Franceschini 1998, 221–222). In its last phase, the rooms were rearranged and changed in function by adding ironworking facilities.

AUSTRIA

The large palatial villa at **Loig near Salzburg** was mostly excavated already two centuries ago, but it is the recent investigations that provided sufficient evidence to interpret its function, the use of individual rooms and its gradual development from the 1st to the late 4th century (Ladstätter 2002, 325; Winckler 2012, 255; Gruber 2017). The villa is one of the largest north of the Alps. It is divided into several parts that comprise the prestigious, economic and garden areas. The main part is the residence fitted with hypocausts and mosaics; it even incorporates a *horreum*. The villa had four construction phases, the last two attributable to Late Antiquity. From the Severan to the Constantinian period, the villa witnessed numerous modifications and repairs, as well as the installation of precious mosaics. It is at this time that it reached its maximum extent of 339 x 256 m, covering an 8.98 ha large surface. It is also a time of increased activity of the numerous workshops operating inside the villa. The numismatic analysis, interestingly, revealed a diminished use of the central part of the villa after the Severan period and a long hiatus, which has been linked with the instabilities brought about by Germanic incursions in the third quarter of the 3rd century. For the last, fourth phase dated from Constantine to the late 4th century, coins again show an even distribution across the whole of the villa. The last peak of prosperity is visible in the renovations of individual rooms and the installation of mosaics. The



Fig. 3.5: Bruckneudorf (Parndorf). Central residential building from the north-east (2009).



Fig. 3.6: Bruckneudorf (Parndorf). Apsidal hall from the north (2009).

villa was then abandoned and stray finds indicate occasional habitation to the mid-5th century.

The villa complex at **Bruckneudorf (Parndorf)** (Figs. 3.4–3.6) enjoys a long history of research (Thomas 1964, 177–192; Ladstätter 2002, 323; Zabehlicky 2011). A timber building under the residential part of the villa was already constructed in the 1st, while the first masonry building there appeared in the 2nd century. This was followed by several minor additions. The villa was extensively renovated (presumably following an earthquake) after 355, when a large apsed hall was constructed and rooms decorated with high-quality mosaics. After this renovation, the villa may be marked as a palace that housed a high-ranking military or administration official. It persisted into the 5th century. Considering the enormous *granarium* and the location near the limes, it presumably served as a supply base for the army stationed at Carnuntum.

The roadside station of **Immurium (Moosham)** has been extensively investigated, as was the associated settlement interpreted as a *vicus* (Gassner et al. 2002, 143–144; Groh, Lindinger 2008). The settlement was located at a major crossroads and inhabited from the 1st

to the 4th century. Spread across an estimated surface of 3 ha, it held masonry houses and the roadside station proper, as well as baths and a mithraeum.

HUNGARY

The villas in Hungary are well-known and discussed in numerous studies (cf. Thomas, 1964, Bíró 1974; Mulvin 2002). Of the latter, we should mention the pioneering work by Edith Thomas, who collected the vast body of evidence, identified the types of villas and their function (Thomas 1964). She also considered the Hungarian ‘inner fortresses’, which differ from the Late Antique villas in their impressive defences (not present in villas) and a different function; in this book, the ‘inner fortresses’ are discussed in the chapter on newly-founded cities (see *Chapter 2.5*).

A large and luxuriously decorated villa came to light at **Balácapuszta** (Fig. 3.7) (Thomas 1964, 73–107; Mulvin 2002, 75–76). It is a complex of fifteen edifices enclosed with a wall. At its heart is the main residence with an apsidal hall. Also identifiable are baths and a *horreum*, while the rest are smaller living quarters and economic facilities. The villa and its perimeter wall were mostly constructed in the 2nd and partially renovated after the 3rd century, the latter focusing on the main residential building. The villa was abandoned in the late 4th century, though there are modest and chronologically undiagnostic habitation traces from later times.

Only two buildings, dated from the 2nd to the 4th century, are known of the villa at **Csúcshegy**, in the vicinity of Aquincum (Thomas 1964, 216–227; Mulvin 2002, 77). One is a large rectangular residential building with several heated rooms and a decorated apse, but without a peristyle. Next to it is a small, incompletely known building with an apse that presumably held a bathroom.

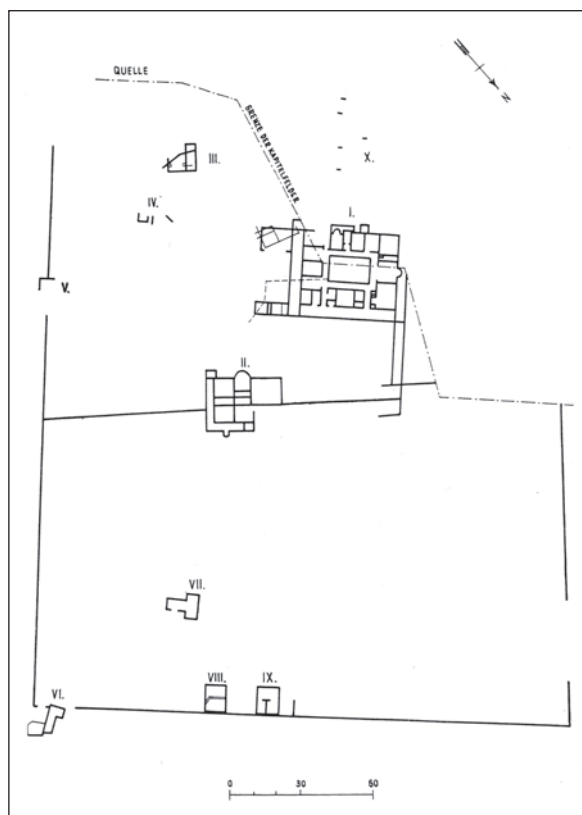


Fig. 3.7: Balácapuzsta. Plan of the villa (Thomas 1964, Fig. 40).

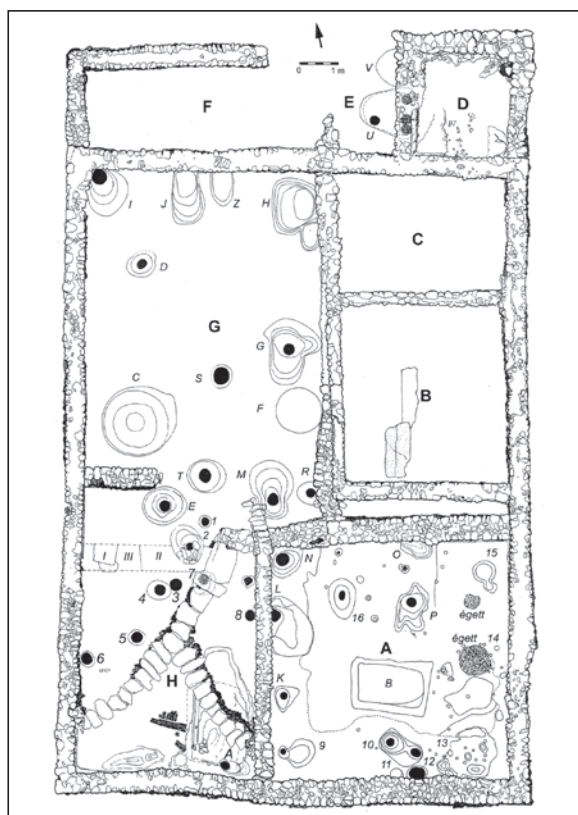


Fig. 3.8: Tatárszálláson. Plan of a Late Roman building of the roadside station (from Kelemen 2014, Fig. 1).

The building at **Kővágószőlős**, in the vicinity of Pécs (Sopianae), had the appearance of a fortified farmhouse (Mulvin 2002, 88–89). The large rectangular residential building with a peristyle had a pair of semi-circular towers on the front. Small baths leaned onto it in the east, in the west the building was associated with a porticus. It was presumably already constructed in the 2nd century, renovated in the 3rd and survived into the 4th century. A chapel with three apses and a mausoleum inside a crypt was erected in the immediate vicinity of the main building.

The Late Roman building at **Tatárszálláson** (Fig. 3.8), along the Roman road between Aquincum and Brigetio, formed part of a small roadside station (Kelemen 2014). The spot was initially occupied by a timber building that burnt down in 260/270. In the first third of the 4th century, a 20.6 x 12.4 m large masonry building was erected, composed of two habitation rooms and an L-shaped court. The building was modified in the Valentinian period, added new rooms and fitted with a late form of central heating. The coins and other small finds reliably date the masonry building up to the early 5th century. Its end came in a fire shortly afterwards. The stamped bricks indicate that the building was erected and maintained by the army and that it functioned as *mutatio*.

SLOVENIA

Early excavations in Slovenia revealed numerous Roman villas, but their remains are for the most part poorly published and do not provide clear evidence of continuity into Late Antiquity. In addition to these, recent investigations in the countryside brought to light small settlements and roadside stations that have been more extensively researched and more precisely dated (cf. Horvat et al. 2020a).

The *vicus* in **Nauportus (Vrhnika)** developed on the road from Emona to Aquileia and measured roughly 600 m in length and 200 m in width. It was continually inhabited from the 1st century onwards. In the 4th century, the settlement was joined by a pentagonal army fort positioned at the beginning of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system (Horvat 2020). The systematic investigations inside the *vicus* have revealed building remains in three areas. The recovered coins and other small finds prove that the settlement and the fort existed to the late 4th, in a small measure even the early 5th century.

The rescue investigations at **Blagovica** (Fig. 3.9) unearthed parts of a settlement that measured roughly 300 m in length (Plestenjak 2020). Large masonry buildings lined the major Roman road from Emona

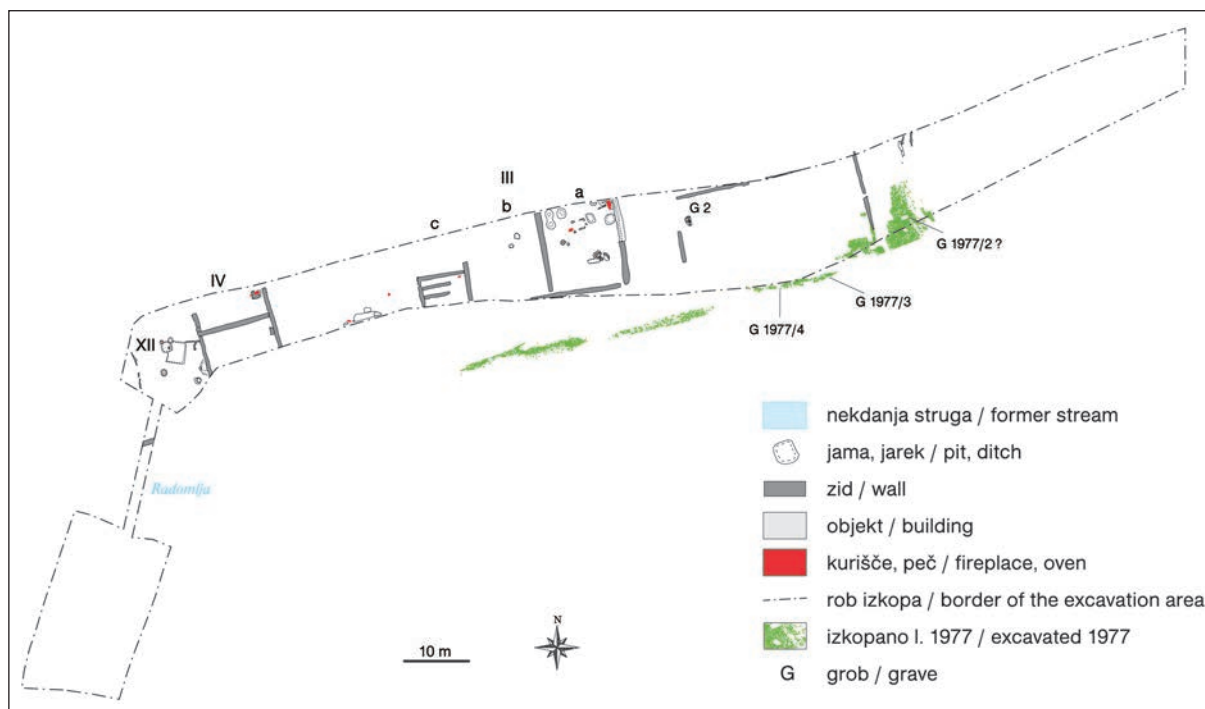


Fig. 3.9: Blagovica. Plan of the 4th (last) phase of the settlement (Plestenjak 2020, Fig. 12).

to Celeia and were used, with several modifications, from the 1st to the second half of the 4th century. The settlement is presumably the roadside station of *Ad Publicanos*.

Slightly further east, the remains of a customs post were partially investigated on the pass of **Trojane (Atrans)**, the border between Italy and Noricum, which was inhabited throughout the 4th century (Železnikar, Visočnik 2020).

Traces of a large settlement and postal station were investigated in **Stari trg near Slovenj Gradec (Colatio)**, on the Roman road from Celeia to Virunum, which were in use to the early 5th century (Djura Jelenko 2020).

Six buildings of the settlement in **Slovenska Bistrica** lined the Roman road from Celeia to Poetovio at the spot where a minor road forked off to lead towards the Pohorje Hills. The initially timber buildings from the 1st and 2nd centuries were replaced in the 3rd and 4th centuries by large masonry ones. The size and structure suggest that the settlement was associated with transport and storage of goods (Strmčnik Gulič 2020).

The remains of two villas, lying 1.5 km apart, were partially investigated in the area of Šmarje pri Jelšah (Lorger 1936; Thomas 1964, 344–351; Mulvin 2002, 102–103). The larger of the two was located at the **Grobelce** site (Fig. 3.10) and ranks, with a surface of ca 3.5 ha, among large villa complexes dating between the 1st and 4th century. It revealed a small dwelling, richly decorated baths and a large two-room building pre-

sumably used for cult purposes. Investigations did not establish the main housing area, but did reveal part of a large building of an unidentified economic function. The strong walls enclosing the complex indicate the

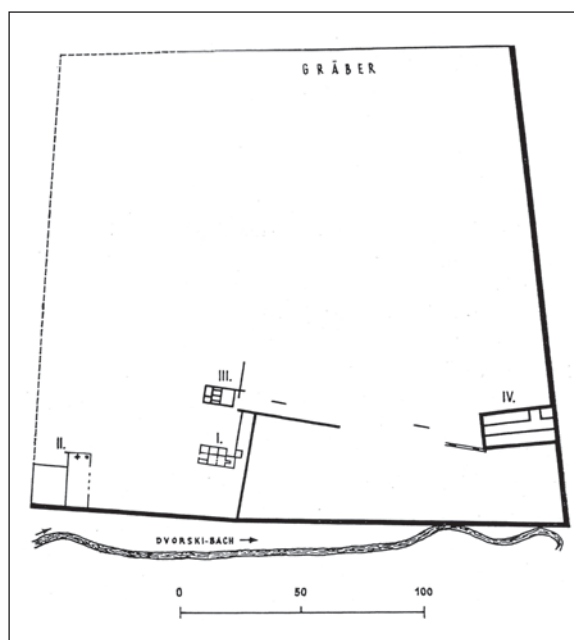


Fig. 3.10: Grobelce near Šmarje pri Jelšah. Plan of the villa (Thomas 1964, Fig. 167).



Fig. 3.11: Školarice near Ankaran. *Pars rustica* of the villa, view from the east (2002).

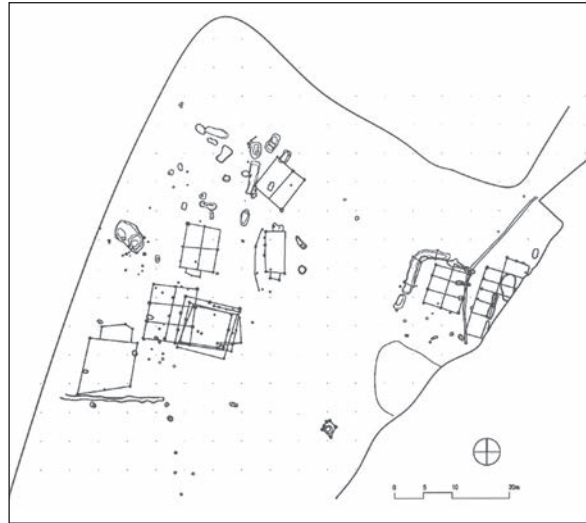


Fig. 3.12: Virovitica, Kiškorija South. Plan of a part of the settlement (Jelinčić Vučković 2015, Fig. 7).

possibility that people from the vicinity sought shelter here in times of danger.

A settlement developed in the large prehistoric hillfort on **Ulaka** already in the 1st century. It comprised buildings arranged in concentric rows around the main open area (Gaspari 2020). The buildings had stone foundations and a timber superstructure. The settlement developed continually with its last peak in the second half of the 4th century, though some artefacts also speak of life in the 5th century.

The rescue investigations at **Školarice** near Ankaran (Fig. 3.11) brought to light large parts of an architectural complex (Žerjal, Novšak 2020). It is a large villa, complete with *pars urbana* and *pars rustica*, located at a major junction of land and maritime routes. Only the baths were found of the *pars urbana*, while the *pars rustica* comprised areas for the production of olive oil and a large storage house. The villa was created in its greatest extent already in the 1st century and persisted with minor modifications to the mid-5th century, when it was abandoned following a fire.

A vast farmhouse was constructed in the 1st or 2nd century at **Predloka** and renovated in the 4th or 5th century (Boltin Tome 1986). The renovation work encompassed restoring and raising the semicircular apse of the large reception hall with a wall in the *opus spicatum* technique. Coins (solidus of Justinian) and other small finds show that the villa was inhabited to the late 6th century. The associated cemetery dates to the 6th century.

CROATIA

Roman villas in the Pannonian part of Croatia are rare and poorly known. The excavations in advance of motorway construction did, however, unearth previously unknown settlements with simple timber buildings spread across large areas, which have been predominantly identified as *vici* or settlements.

At **Drenje** near Zaprešić, the central building of a farmhouse with outbuildings has been found, dated to the 1st–4th centuries (Leleković, Rendić Miočević 2012, 281).

The integrally investigated villa at **Donja Glavnica** was constructed in the vicinity of a mineral spring and can broadly be dated between the 2nd and the 4th century (Sokol 1981, 178–184). It comprised thermal complex and living areas.

An example of a *vicus* was found at **Ivandvor**, in the suburbs of Đakovo (Leleković, Rendić Miočević 2012, 292–293, 300–301). It presumably extended across ca 20 ha and was composed of three groups of largely timber, in a small measure also brick buildings. Most of them had long rectangular rooms associated with different sunken buildings in the vicinity. The settlement has been dated from the late 2nd to the mid-4th century.

Similar to it is a large settlement complex at **Virovitica, Kiškorija South** (Fig. 3.12), predominantly composed of sunken timber houses and dated between the 2nd and the 5th century (Jelinčić Vučković 2015, 351–358). Individual units were composed of a hut or semi-sunken dwelling, work area and refuse pits. The architecture and small finds reveal a fully self-sufficient village built in a prehistoric tradition.

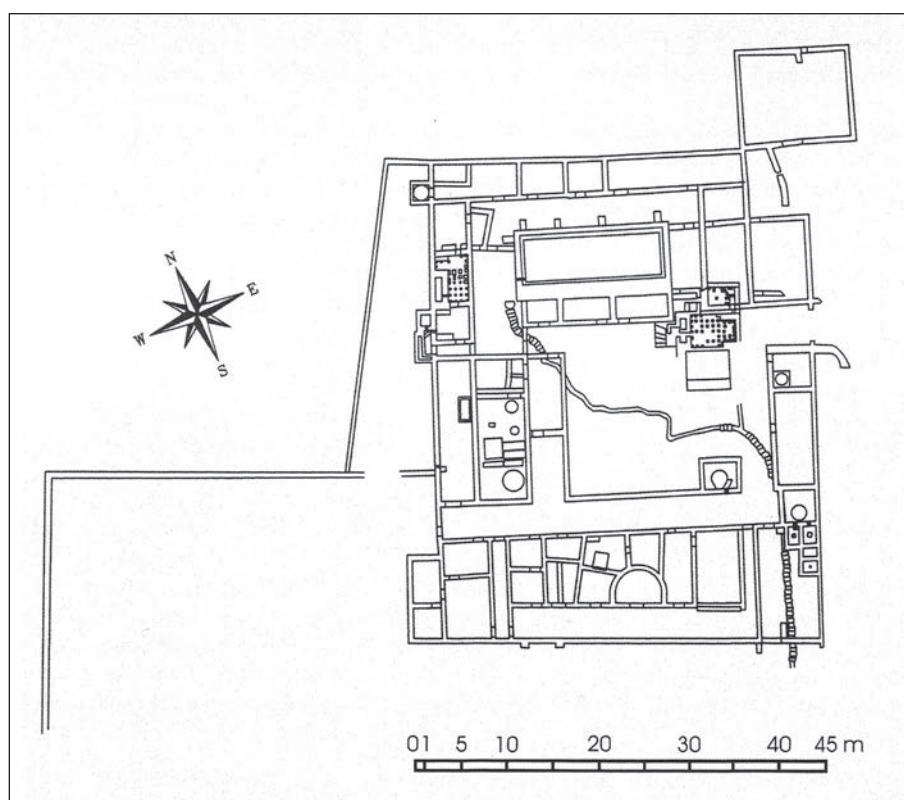


Fig. 3.13: Dragonera Jug. Plan of the villa (Starac, A. 2010, Fig. 89).

In Istria, numerous villas were continually inhabited (cf. Jurkić 1981; Matijašić 1988; id. 1998; Starac, A. 2010). In **Červar, Porat** near Poreč, a building was found that served for pottery production from the 1st century onwards, later also oil production (Džin, Girardi Jurkić 2005). Residential rooms, hypocaust and baths were added in the 3rd century, in the 4th century also a large apsidal hall. The 6th century witnessed gradual decline with a large part abandoned and only some rooms adapted, while hearths were set up on top of the former mortar floors towards the end of the 6th century.

A Roman villa at **Vrsar** was modified in the 4th century to incorporate an apsidal hall decorated with mosaics long interpreted as an Early Christian church. Recent investigations, however, have revealed that the latter was a Late Antique villa that only lost its original function in the 7th century, when an oil production facility was installed in its interior (Tassaux 2003, 383–390).

In the vicinity of a large peristyle villa at **Barbariga**, archaeologists found a production centre that is the largest one on the east coast of the Adriatic. The partly known complex hosted at least twelve pairs of oil presses in function simultaneously (Matijašić 1982, 58–59). The oil production plant was already created in the 1st century, underwent several modifications and decreased in size through centuries, but remained in operation at least to the late 6th century.

The residential-production complex at **Dragonera Jug** near Peroj (Fig. 3.13) is an excellently preserved Roman villa with Late Antique architecture that offers a good insight into the Late Antique renovations. It was continually inhabited from the 1st to the 7th century, when it was finally abandoned. It has been integrally investigated and also published (Starac, A. 2010). The complex has four wings, the south one being residential, as well as a large inner courtyard. Surviving above the first construction layer from the 1st–4th century are the remains of the Late Antique residential area from the 5th–7th century, when four rows of rooms were built connected by a corridor, as well as a prestigious apse in the central part.

Two Roman villas on the island of **Veliki Brijun** display characteristic signs of Late Antique transformation (Begović, Schrunk 2001, 159–162). One is a prestigious villa built in the **Verige Bay** (Fig. 3.14) in the 1st century; some of its luxury parts were abandoned in Late Antiquity and others transformed, primarily into storerooms, the baths into a Christian church. The other Roman villa, with a *fullonica* and located in the **Madona Bay** (Kastrum; see Chapter 3.3.2), was turned into a densely built-up settlement protected with strong defensive walls.

The vast **Vizula** Peninsula near Medulin holds the remains of buildings distributed on several terraces on all sides of the peninsula (Džin, Miholjek 2019). The



Fig. 3.14: Verige Bay at Veliki Brijun. Remains of the prestigious Roman villa (2003).

continuity of construction here spans several phases from the 1st to the 6th century. Particularly prominent is a lavishly decorated maritime villa from the 4th century. Also well-documented is the phase from the 6th and early 7th century, when earlier rooms were adapted and hearths set up on top of mosaic floors. The villa then lost its original character and was transformed into a modest settlement (Džin, Girardi Jurkić 2008).

In the interior of the Istrian Peninsula, a farmhouse has been integrally investigated at **Stancija Peličeti** (Džin 2006). It was enclosed with a wall, comprised both residential and production parts, and was inhabited from the 1st to the 6th century. In the third construction phase, dated from the 3rd to the 6th century, the existing rooms were subdivided with drystone walls, and three water cisterns and production-storage faculties were constructed. The villa of this phase offered markedly lower living standards and hosted an increased number of inhabitants.

The Roman villa at **Poje in Njivice**, on the island of Krk (Vodička Miholjek 2015) reached its peak in the 3rd century. In the 5th and 6th centuries, two rooms with walls of inferior quality and a slightly different orientation were constructed that disregarded earlier constructions. Some elements recovered in the vicinity indicate the existence of an Early Christian building

In **Cickini near Sršiči**, also on the island of Krk, a complex of buildings next to an Early Christian church with a baptistery was created through several modifications of a Roman villa (Starac, R. 2005). The villa was renovated during the 5th century and its corners reinforced with rectangular additions; the recovered small finds date to the late 4th and the 5th century. In the Early Byzantine period, parts of its porticus were subdivided with drystone walls to create a row of residential rooms. These were home to a poor population who stored liquids in the stone urns collected from a Roman cemetery.

The large Roman maritime villa at **Martinščica**, on the island of Cres, witnessed a variety of changes in Late Antiquity (Čaušević-Bully, Bully 2020, 279–281). These include a part turned into a reception hall with a large apse. As yet unexplained is its relation with the large Early Christian church built at the edge of the villa roughly in the 5th/6th century; the villa presumably belonged to the bishop from the nearby city of Osor (Apsorus).

Particularly important for our understanding of the settlement continuity in Dalmatia is the large farmhouse at **Muline** (Figs. 3.15–3.17), on the island of Ugljan (Suić 1960, Suić 1976a). Its remote location enabled an uninterrupted development. Mainly its production part has thus far been investigated, while trial trenching

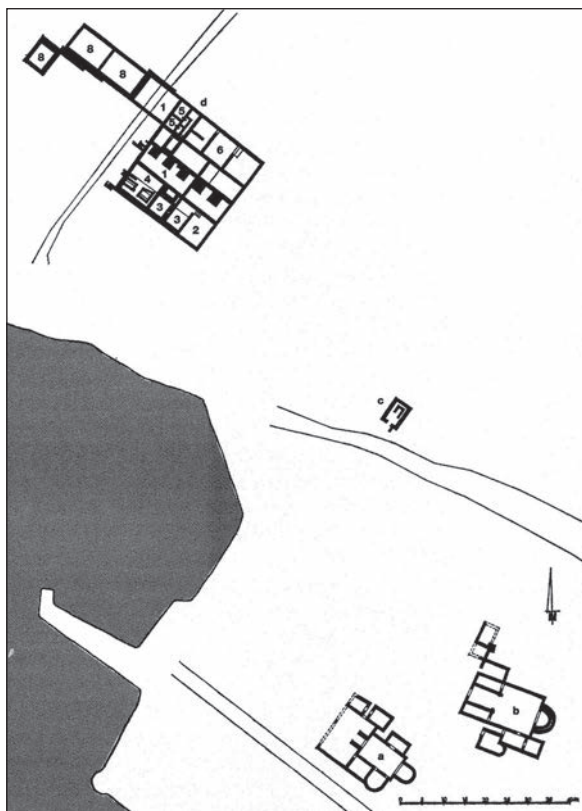


Fig. 3.15: Muline. Plan of the villa with a church and memoria (Begović, Schrunk 2001, Fig. 8).

and underwater remains indicate the existence of other buildings. Mate Suić briefly mentions several construction phases and a proliferation of production facilities from the beginning of the Roman period to the end of Antiquity. These were associated with the production of olive oil (room for storing olives, mill, press, oil tanks, cellar with storage pithoi), as well as water cisterns. The villa is particularly significant because of the Early Christian complex (*memoria*), built in immediate proximity in the second half of the 4th century and comprising several rooms and later additions, a basilica from the 5th century and a small mausoleum, the construction of which has been dated to the initial decades of the 5th century (Suić 1996, 660–665; Uglešić 2002, 86–92).

In the Dalmatian hinterland, the remains of a Roman villa were found at **Crkvina near Otres** that was renovated in the middle of the 4th century, though in a more modest form and with economic functions (Alajbeg et al. 2019). It persisted to the mid-6th century.

The site of **Bisko near Knin** revealed approximately ten small isolated buildings (Milošević, A. 1986). Three of these were partially or completely excavated. They were constructed in the 2nd or 3rd century, later renovated on several occasions and inhabited to the late 6th century. Found not far from them were the remains of



Fig. 3.16: Muline. Outbuildings from the north-west (2005).



Fig. 3.17: Muline. Memoria from the north (2005).

a large building (church?), a Late Antique tomb and burials from the 6th century (Milošević, A. 1989; id. 1998, 288–290).

The remains of a large Roman villa with a lavish residential part and small associated buildings came to light at **Grušine** and the nearby church of St Lawrence (sv. Lovre) near Šibenik (Laszlo Klemar, Zeman 2010, 150–153). It is believed that a rural agglomeration developed here in Late Antiquity that included an Early Christian church and several dispersed buildings.

The **Lovrečina Bay** on the island of Brač (Fig. 3.18) holds the remains of Roman outbuildings from the 2nd–3rd century, on top of which a building (presumably villa) developed in Late Antiquity and later an Early Romanesque church (Kovačić 2006a). Located in immediate proximity are the ruins of an Early Christian church and the associated cemetery (Fisković 1982; Begović, Schrunk 2001, 164).

Numerous and rich artefacts date the farmhouse at **Novo Selo Bunje** on the island of Brač from the 1st to the 6th century. Excavations are ongoing and only preliminary reports have thus far been published (Jelinčić Vučković et al. 2019), revealing residential and production parts with oil and wine presses, baths and in one room a sarcophagus. It seems to have been among



Fig. 3.18: Lovrečina. Position of the settlement (from the west) with church walls preserved to a great height in the foreground (2018).

the largest farmhouses on Brač, where a stonemason's workshop is also believed to have been in operation.

In the Dalmatian hinterland, the remains of a Roman and Late Antique settlement have been found at **Proložac Donji**, associated with an Early Christian church from the 5th/6th century, the latter with a clearly identifiable renovation phase in the 6th century. Rising above the settlement is the Kokića glavica hill that holds a prehistoric settlement refortified in the Justinian period (Gudelj 1998; id. 2000).

The maritime villa on the island of **Sv. Klement** near Hvar revealed parts of a building with corners subsequently strengthened with rectangular additions, the artefacts from which indicate a dating to the late 4th and the 5th century (Begović et al. 2012; Teichner, Ugarković, 2012).

The hidden and protected bay of **Ubli** on the island of Lastovo (Figs. 3.19, 3.20, 3.301) hosted a large set-

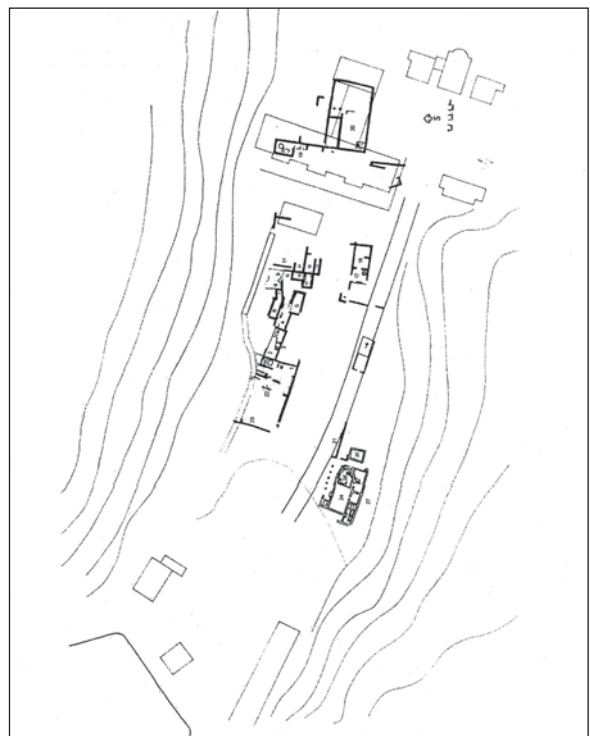


Fig. 3.19: Ubli. Plan of the settlement (Jeličić-Radonić 2001, Pl. 2).



Fig. 3.20: Ubli. Position of the settlement (from the west) with the church foundation in the foreground (2017).

tlement already in the Roman period (Jeličić-Radonić 2001; Begović, Schrunk 2001, 164). A series of houses and economic facilities lined the main communication and revealed different additions and modifications, in some places with the reuse of Roman stones. An Early Christian church was built there in the 6th century. The settlement was agrarian in nature and revealed several presses for oil and wine, as well as facilities associated with their processing and storage. The housing is poorly built; the remains of stairs in some indicate the existence of upper storeys. A single house, with painted walls, was found to have changed in function from residential to economic, though possibly only on the ground floor. Jasna Jeličić-Radonić presumes that the living quarters were located in the upper storey. The large quantities of amphorae and other ceramic containers for exporting wine and oil, possibly also grain, show the settlement reached its peak in Late Antiquity. The exact date of abandonment is not known, though the repairs to the church indicate it was in use over a long period, suggesting that the settlement was continually inhabited into the Early Middle Ages.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Very little is known of settlements with continuity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their existence can primarily be surmised from some Early Christian churches presumably built in the area of their ruins. Also poorly researched are the unfortified settlements near Late Antique forts that thus far revealed no elements other than churches (Fekeža 1998, 256–257). Some settlements do display continuous habitation from the Roman period into Late Antiquity.

The villa at **Ograja in Putovići** near Zenica (Fig. 3.21) has three phases with continuity from the 1st to the 6th century (Paškvalin 1980; id. 1990, 69). In the second phase, dated to the 4th century, the main hall was extended with an apse with a *piscina*, while the third phase (from the 4th to the 6th century) brought an end to the use of the pool and *praefurnium*. There were also minor changes in the interior of the villa; the pool was rather used as dwelling space for new inhabitants.

The Roman villa at **Debelo Brdo in Sarajevo** was situated below a fortified Late Antique settlement. Inside the villa, individual Ostrogothic artefacts were found; the existence of an Early Christian basilica is also very likely (Fekeža 1998, 255).

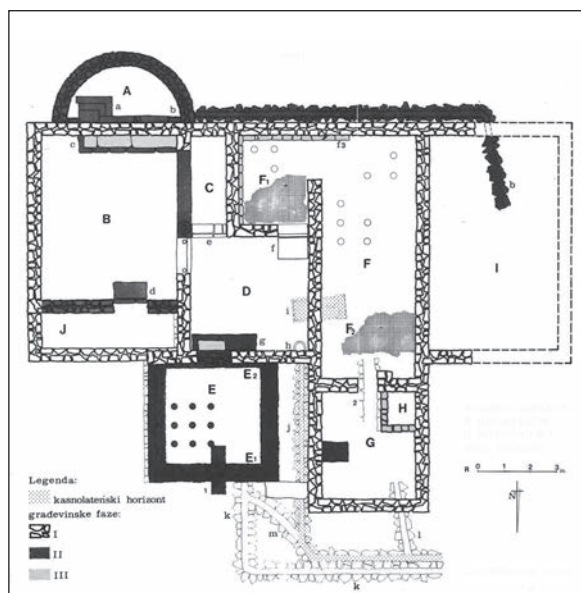


Fig. 3.21: Ograja in Putovići. Plan of the villa (Paškvalin 1990, Pl. 1).

The Roman settlement at **Iliđza in Sarajevo** revealed several buildings including a luxury peristyle villa with several modifications (Mulvin 2002, 86; Busuladžić 2011, 158). Three phases are mentioned, the last two dating to the 2nd–3rd centuries, when the villa was extended in the east. The buildings persisted to the 4th century. The complex was undoubtedly connected with the nearby thermal springs.

Two large residential buildings, one next to the other, were found at **Mušići near Višegrad** (Fig. 3.22) (Busuladžić 2011, 159). The recovered small finds broadly date them from the 2nd to the late 4th century.

Traces of a large Roman settlement that persisted into Late Antiquity came to light at **Crkvina near Halapić**, in Glamočko polje (Sergejevski 1942, 126–131). The settlement is primarily known for Roman stone monuments and coin finds, while Frane Bulić and Ejnar Dyggve also excavated parts of a large basilica they dated to the 6th century. Located just above the settlement is the Late Antique fort on Gradec, which has not yet been investigated.

The villa at **Strupnić near Livno** remains enigmatic in several respects (Bojanovski 1970, 508–509; Mulvin 2002, 104; Busuladžić 2011, 152; Turković, Zeman 2011). The poorly documented excavations do not allow a more precise dating and it is hence not known whether it is an earlier construction renovated in the 3rd or 4th century or one that was only created at that time. We primarily know the central residential part of the villa, while the remains of two other buildings served as outbuildings or economic facilities. It is dated to the mid-4th century. Ivo Bojanovski reasonably presumes a *mutatio* here, located at the point where the Roman road began its ascent across the high mountain pass of Čatrnja (Bojanovski 1974, 68–69).

The complex of buildings at **Proboj near Ljubuški** was constructed in the middle of the 2nd and destroyed in the second half of the 4th century (Busuladžić 2011, 151). The finds of tools, as well as the distribution and function of rooms point to a typical farmhouse.

The large luxury villa in **Višići near Čapljina** (Fig. 3.23) (Čremošnik 1965; Busuladžić 2011, 150) was built in the 1st and survived to the late 4th century. It boasts a large peristyle building with richly decorated rooms. Reports mention no later constructions or renovations, only a variety of workshops. A small group of burials from the 5th/6th centuries was dug into the ruinous remains of the villa and indicate a small settlement

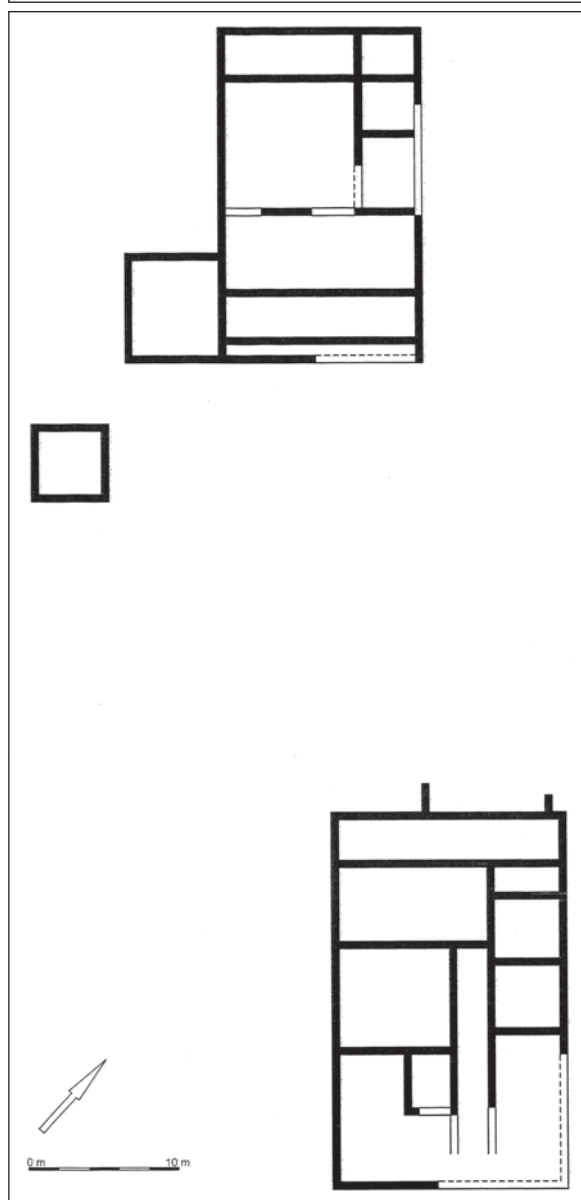


Fig. 3.22: Mušići near Višegrad. Plan of the villa (Busuladžić 2011, Pl. 19b).

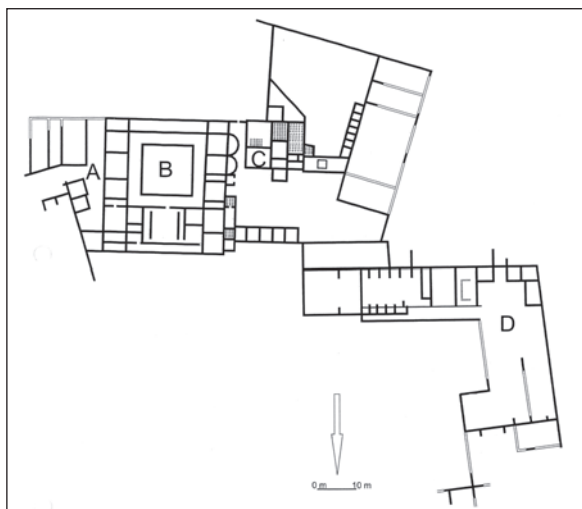


Fig. 3.23: Višiči near Čapljina. Plan of the villa (from Busulađić 2011, Pl. 2b).

existing in immediate proximity (Čremošnik 1965, 200; Mulvin 2002, 76).

One of the largest villas was unearthed at **Panik near Bileća** (Fig. 3.24) (Čremošnik 1976; Busulađić 2011, 154). Its central part with lavishly furnished rooms is composed of two buildings facing the river and connected via a porticus. This part is associated with other residential and economic spaces. The villa has been dated from the 2nd to the 4th century and presumably peaked in the late 3rd or early 4th century. It holds the mosaic with the depiction of Orpheus that is believed to have expressed the Christian identity of the owners in a time before Christianity became an officially recognised religion (Čremošnik 1974). In the 6th century, an Early Christian church was presumably built in the north part of the villa, succeeded later by a medieval church (Čremošnik 1974, 243).

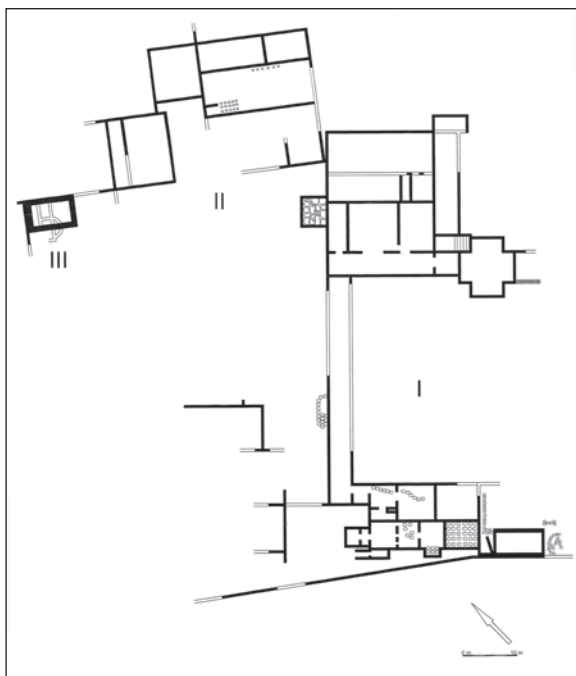


Fig. 3.24: Panik nar Bileća. Plan of the villa (Busulađić 2011, Pl. 11b).

Presumably associated with the luxury villa at Panik was the agrarian settlement at **Dračeva strana near Bileća** (Busulađić 2011, 156). It is a fairly compact group of four buildings constructed around a courtyard, as well as one building further away. Small finds show that it lasted from the 1st to the 4th century.

The small residential-production building at **Bi-hovo near Trebinje** (Fig. 3.25) has been broadly dated from the 2nd to the 4th century. An oil press or *torcular* was found in one of its rooms (Busulađić 2011, 153).

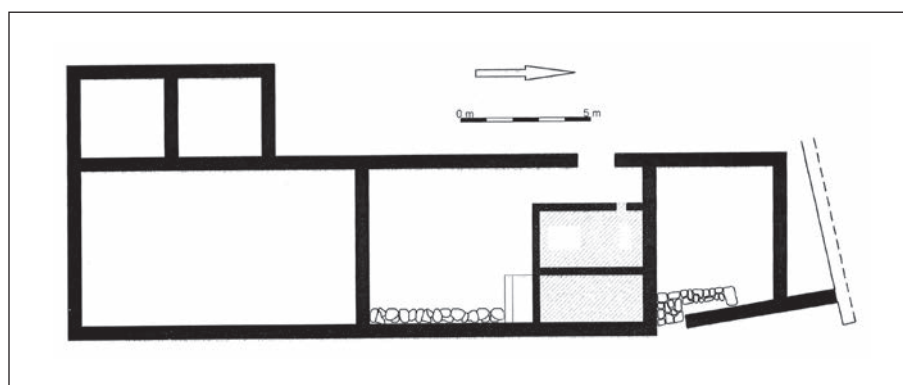


Fig. 3.25: Bihovo, Trebinje. Plan of the farmhouse (from Busulađić 2011, Pl. 10b).

3.2.2 EASTERN PART

SERBIA

A large roadside settlement lies at **Mala Kopašnica** near Leskovac. Excavations revealed a large outbuilding

(presumably *horreum*) and a building with a hypocaust, in the vicinity also an associated cemetery. It appears to have been an important production and distribution centre that supplied settlements in a wider area. It existed from the 2nd to at least the late 4th century (Stamenković 2013, 54, 148–157; Ivanišević et al. 2016b).



Fig. 3.26: Countryside settlements that continued from the Roman period, eastern part, discussed in the book.

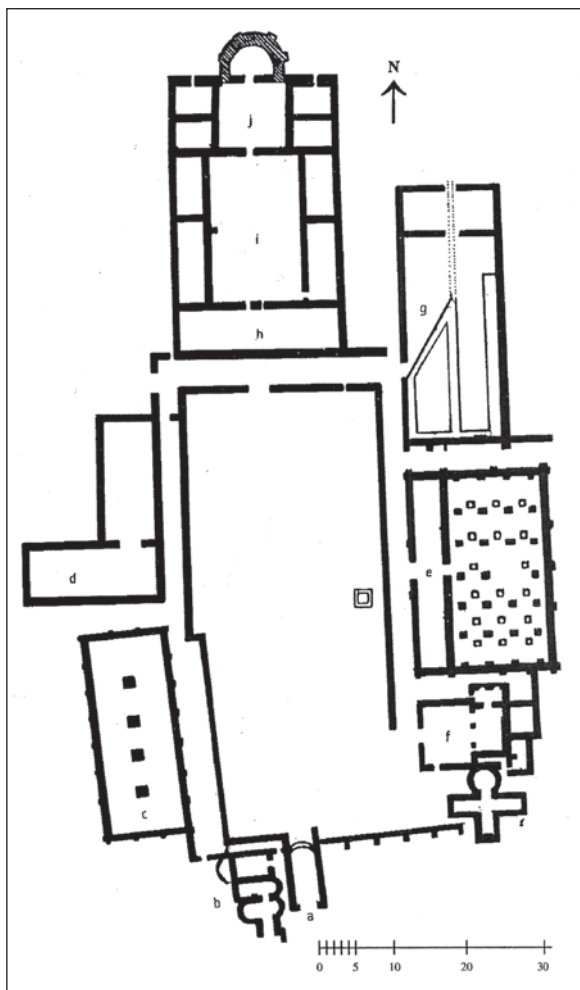


Fig. 3.27: Montana 1. Plan of the villa (Dintchev 1997, Fig. 45).

BULGARIA

Three large villas in the area of the city of **Montana** (Fig. 3.27) show a similar appearance and development; they are a complexes of houses and outbuildings already constructed in the 2nd century (Dintchev 1997, 32–41; Mulvin 2002, 95–97). They were torn down in the late 3rd century, then renovated and inhabited to the last third of the 4th century. In one of them, an Early Christian church was constructed in the late 4th or early 5th century on top of the ruins of the earlier villa. Remains of modest dwellings indicate life even after this date, but they no longer speak of the continuity of the villa, but rather of small rural settlements (Dintchev 1997, 34, 37, 40).

The systematic field surveys in the hinterland of **Nicopolis ad Istrum** have identified three hundred Roman to Early Byzantine sites (Poulter 2007c, 79–82). Most investigated sites revealed rectangular peristyle villas with small outbuildings that were the home of respective owners and their families. The greatest number

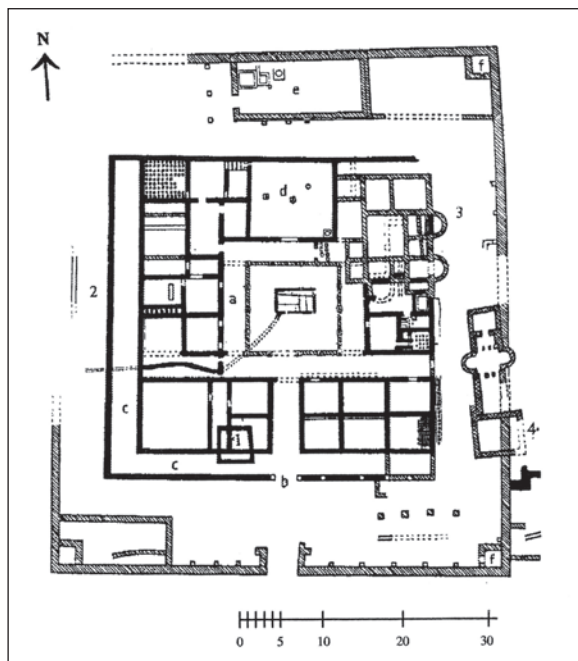


Fig. 3.28: Madara. Plan of the villa (from Mulvin 2002, Fig. 35).

of them came to light in the lowland part of the Rosica Valley. With the growing distance from Nicopolis, the villas show an increasingly irregular distribution, occur farther apart and are predominantly larger. Most are a cluster of houses at a distance of 500 m from the main building of the villa. All these settlements were abandoned towards the end of the 4th century.

The large villa at **Madara** (Figs. 3.28, 3.29, 3.316) was constructed in the second half of the 1st century and likely represented the centre of an imperial domain (Dintchev 1997, 74–79; id. 2008, 406; Mulvin 2002, 90–91). The large peristyle building was associated with other, mainly outbuildings. The central peristyle building was completely renovated in the late 3rd or early 4th century, when it was also enclosed with a strong wall. The destruction of this complex has been set to the time of the Gothic incursions in the last third of the 4th century. Subdivisioning and small finds show that the buildings were later at least partially reinhabited. The many uncertainties in the excavations and their publications hinder an interpretation of the remains of the last phase, but they do suggest a modest settlement rather than a large villa (Dintchev 1997, 77–79).

The remains of a large unfortified settlement were found at **Cherven breg**, below the Rila mountain range. It was created in the Roman period. An Early Christian church was constructed in its centre in the middle of the 4th century (Petrova 2019). Numismatic evidence reveals intense occupation from the 2nd to the last third of the 3rd century. Habitation traces cease for three or four decades following a fire associated with the Gothic



Fig. 3.29: Madara. Roman villa from the west with the Early Byzantine fort behind it (2012).

invasion in 270/275. The settlement was reinhabited in the first quarter of the 4th century and persisted all to its destruction in the 480s. Svetla Petrova presumes the settlement was the *vicus* of the army fort in the city of Germania.

Three villas constructed close to one another and known as **Chatalka near Stara Zagora** lie in the immediate vicinity of a river confluence that offered a good natural protection to two of the villas, namely Chatalka 1 and Chatalka 2 (Dintchev 1997, 60–67; Mulvin 2002, 77–79). All three were already built in the Early Roman period and numerous coins show they were still inhabited, at least partially, in the 5th century. Particularly interesting is Chatalka 1, which had its *pars urbana* on the naturally best protected part and was encircled with a 2 m thick wall. Chatalka 2 was completely economic in nature (*pars rustica*). The third villa is located at the nearby site of **Lambata** and was added a large apsidal residential building in the second half of the 3rd century. After it was abandoned or destroyed in the 370s, a modest dwelling was constructed in its ruins that was presumably inhabited to the mid-5th century (Dintchev 1997, 68–70). Traces of a contemporary settlement (*vicus*?) were found in the immediate vicinity of Chatalka 1 and 2 (Harizanov 2020, 109–110).

Located around **Skobelevo** is a settlement of at least twelve separate farmsteads spread across a 40 ha large area (Katsarova et al. 2018). The settlement developed continuously from the second half of the 1st to the 360s/370s. The largest farmstead was composed of simple buildings arranged around a walled courtyard. Other farmsteads were separate from each other and associated with fields. The inhabitants are believed to be the tenants

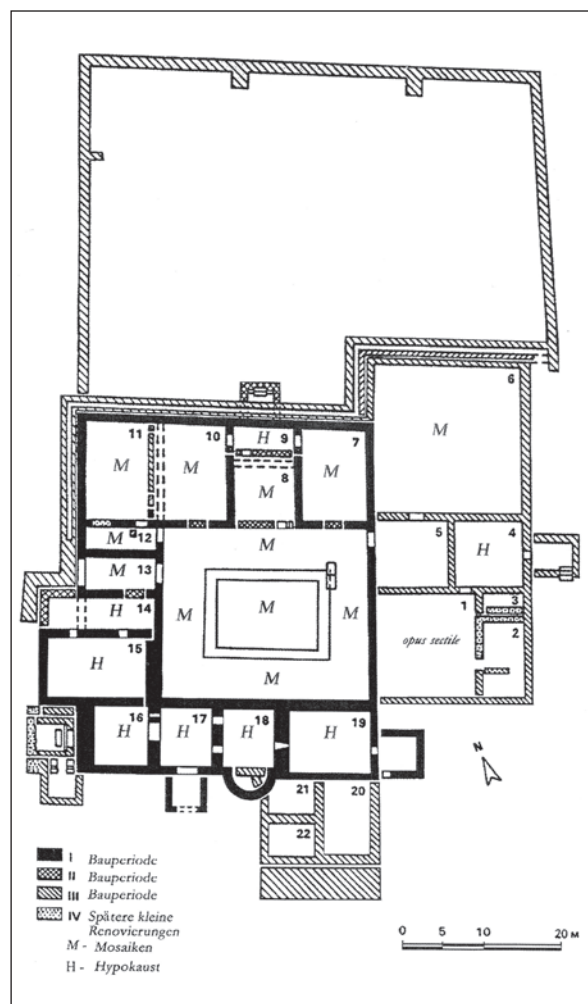


Fig. 3.30: Armira. Plan of the villa (Kabakchieva 2011, Fig. 2).

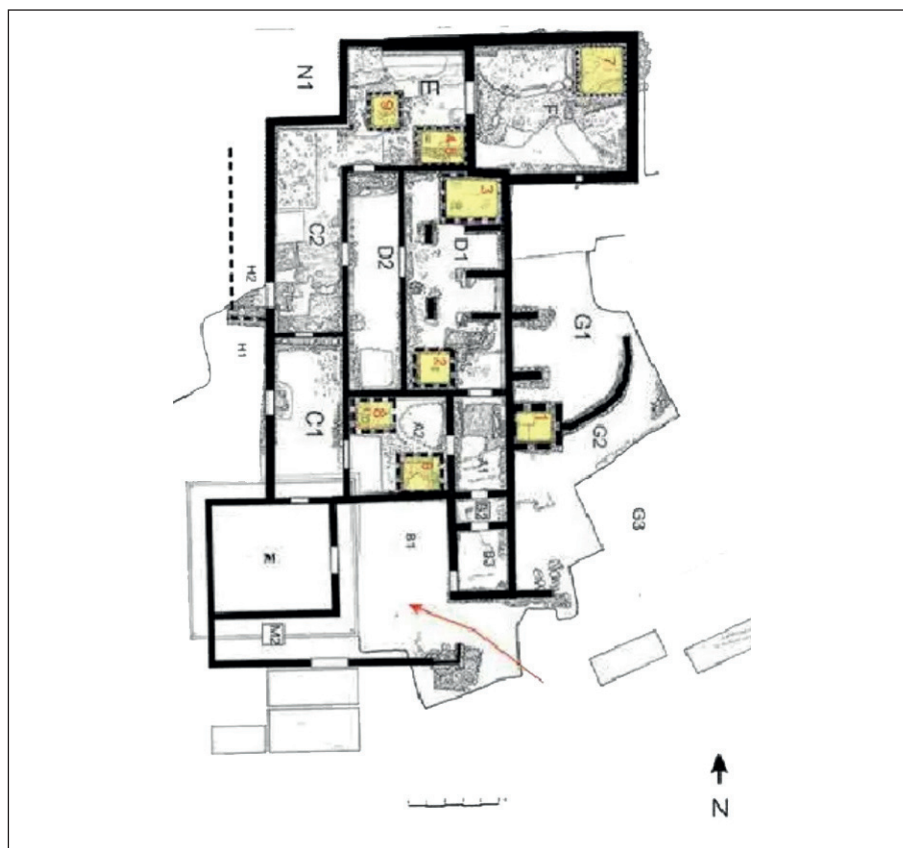


Fig. 3.31: Mirište, Petrovac. Plan of the villa (Zagarčanin 2014, Fig. 7).

of the estate belonging to a large, as yet undiscovered farmhouse. Geophysical surveys revealed four other settlements in the vicinity. One of these, spread across a ca 60 ha large surface, presumably encompassed fifteen farmsteads. They also include a large building complex that may be a farmhouse possibly associated with other, smaller farmsteads.

The Roman villa at **Armira near Ivailovgrad** (Fig. 3.30) is one of the extensively excavated and restored villas in Bulgaria (Kabakchieva 2011). It was already constructed in the 1st century and later renovated and enlarged on several occasions. Following the last extensive renovation in the early 3rd century, it remained unchanged to the first half of the 4th century when it witnessed minor subdivision and additions to the mosaic decoration. It is believed to have been destroyed in a fire after the Battle of Hadrianopolis that took place in 378. Only scarce habitation remains in a limited part of the building postdate this battle and even these cease towards the end of the 4th century, when thick layers of loam slid down the slope after an earthquake, covering the remains of the villa.

MONTENEGRO

The large Roman villa at **Mirište in Petrovac** (Fig. 3.31) initially had a fully residential character and was abandoned in the 4th century (Zagarčanin 2014). Soon afterwards, it was modified into a facility for the production of olive oil and likely also wine. The building was reinforced with thick buttresses and added another outbuilding. The numerous pithoi and amphorae reveal a complete transformation into a farmhouse. It is believed to have been in use from the 2nd to the early 7th century. The last phase, dating to the 6th century, reveals levelling of rooms and the use of materials of inferior quality.

The villa at **Podvrh-Crkvine**, at the foot of Martinička Gradina (see Chapter 3.3.2), has only been partially identified and documented, and is believed to have been a rural aristocratic abode. It also comprised an Early Christian church (Stevović 2014, 102).

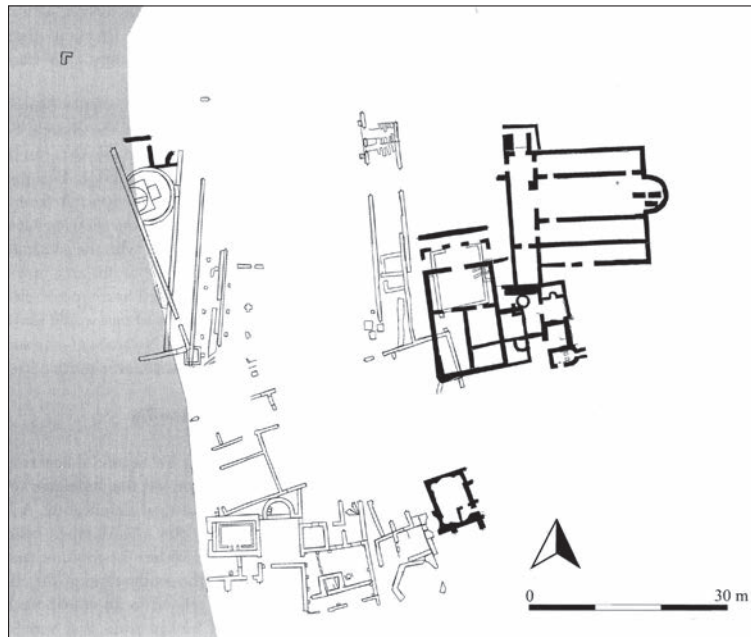


Fig. 3.32: Diaporit. Plan of the villa (Phase 7, c. 490) (Bowden, Përzhita 2014, Fig. 15).

ALBANIA

The large villa near **Diaporit** (Fig. 3.32), in immediate proximity to Butrint, is one of the rare systematically investigated villas in the area (Bowden, Përzhita 2014). It is sited on the terraces of Lake Butrint, on a major Roman road. The rich villa underwent several renovations and was abandoned as a luxury residence in the middle of the 3rd century. Next to the ruins of its buildings, a three-aisled basilica was constructed that reused the stone material from the villa, which indicates the villa was at least partially ruinous at this time. The church may roughly be dated to the late 5th century, when a pilgrimage centre with associated buildings was established here; the whole complex was abandoned in the mid-6th and only reactivated in the late 7th century. Located close to Diaporit is also a hilltop fort on Kalivo, which may have served as refuge in times of danger.

The intensive surveys in the hinterland of **Butrint** revealed several sites with an overlap of Roman and Late Antique remains, but none can be identified and dated with any precision (Bowden 2003, 67–68).

GREECE

There is a wealth of field survey data on the countryside constructions in Greece, but not much excavated remains, hence the settlement forms are generally not well-known. In his overview of the countryside in Greek Macedonia, Archibald Dunn notes unfortified country-

side settlements that presumably existed between the 2nd and the 6th century on the territory of Philippi. Unspecified Late Antique settlements were also discovered during the extensive surveys conducted in the Campania region (Dunn 2004, 539–542).

Several cases of well-preserved ruins in Epirus enable an insight into such countryside architecture. The villa at **Frangoklisia** shows clearly discernible buildings dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, while the surveys also yielded Late Antique pottery (Bowden 2003, 63–64). A closely similar situation has been observed in the Roman villa at **Strongyli**, with the small finds recovered during field surveys indicating continuity of the site (Bowden 2003, 64–65).

Considerable amounts of Roman and Late Antique finds were unearthed close to the settlement at **H. Thomas (Agios Thomas)**, north of Preveza, around the Early Christian church of St Minas. The site, measuring 225 × 110 m, appears to be a small settlement or a large villa (Bowden 2003, 70).

Most villas in Greece are believed to have already been abandoned in the 4th century. Those that show signs of life in the 6th century were likely reinhabited in Late Antiquity (Curta 2014, 37). In the 6th century, several villas were presumably still active around Corinth, in Argolis and in Messenia (Morrison, Sodini 2002). Florin Curta believes that Greece was a land of isolated single-family farmsteads, i.e. of a pattern not present elsewhere in the Balkans (Curta 2014, 39).

3.3 NEWLY-FOUNDED SETTLEMENTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The previous chapter shows that only rare settlements in the continental part survived the process of settlement disintegration, whereas those in better protected areas, primarily along the coast, continued in greater numbers. This was not a one-way process without interruptions. Observable in parallel from the last third of the 3rd century onwards are increasing attempts at local self-protection, but also state interventions that promoted the establishment of new settlements, most frequently in naturally well-protected locations. These new settlements form a particularly important part of the book, as they represent the most prominent settlement phenomenon in the part of the former Empire under discussion.

There were also other forms of dispersed settlement, primarily newly-constructed Roman villas, farmsteads and other unfortified settlements. The modest remains and the location in areas that often hinder successful intensive surveys are the reasons why these are not well-known. But even in areas where the favourable climatic, vegetation and habitation conditions allow intensive surveys, their remains are scarce (cf. Poulter 2007b, 41–46; Bintliff 2007) and only offer a partial and anything but general insight into the settlement patterns. This, more limited segment of Late Antique settlement will be presented first, before the fortifications.

The overview below aims to present all the diversity of the newly-established settlements. Their defences are emphasised as one of the most important elements; they show great variety and reveal the entire range of possibilities, from an effective use of the natural environment to the different elements such as defensive walls, protechismas, ditches, towers and combinations of these. The other important element, which often also explains the function of settlements, is buildings in the interior. These range from simple casemates as soldiers' accommodations to simple dwellings and private residences of a higher quality. There are few known public buildings; the most prominent among them are churches that often add another function to the forts and fortresses.

3.3.1 NEWLY-FOUNDED UNFORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS

This group (Figs. 3.33, 3.49) comprises villas, farmsteads and other forms of unfortified settlements mostly established in the second half of the 3rd or in the 4th century, very rare ones later. The group also includes walled Roman farmhouses, as their walls are considered as delimiting the residential-economic unit rather than as fortifications against enemy attack; such an interpretation is based on their location in the lowland or on a

slope that would not provide the conditions to withstand a major attack.

Villas are not a novelty of this period. With the exception of those of earlier origins and higher quality, they have a more modest design and are also poorly known, receiving limited attention on the part of archaeologists as their remains are less exposed and often poorly identifiable on the surface. It was therefore necessary to look even more carefully for the rare examples that would offer a more comprehensive insight into the settlement of the period. It is these modest traces that frequently and inconspicuously fall victim to the modern construction euphoria. Unfortunately, even the modern systematic rescue interventions (primarily in advance of motorway constructions) sometimes fail to detect these settlements, as they only rarely take place in the mountainous areas beyond the main valleys.

The text below tackles some of the more characteristic villas and other residential buildings constructed in the second half of the 3rd and the 4th century, which were abandoned towards the end of the 4th or in the first half of the 5th century at the latest. To this group with very few examples, we can add the extremely rare cases of unprotected dwellings that persisted or were even established after the mid-5th century. None of this continuing settlements reveal major changes in the architecture and will therefore only be discussed briefly.

WESTERN PART

Italy

The part of Italy discussed in this book (province of Venetia et Histria) revealed a great number of villas and other forms of countryside settlement, but most were already constructed in the Roman period and continued into Late Antiquity or display a succession of abandonment, modification and new construction on the same spot that is often difficult to date with any precision. With modifications, these villas have imposing dimensions and also a luxuriously furnished *pars urbana*. There are certain examples where available evidence (primarily coin finds) only shows a late phase, but this evidence originates from field surveys and brief rescue investigations that cannot conclusively prove their construction in the Late Roman period and not previously (cf. sites at Padenghe sul Garda 1, Maniago 11: De Franceschini 1998, 169, 326). The late modifications and extensions to villas have already been discussed in the chapter on the settlements with continuity from the Roman period (see *Chapter 3.2*). In areas protected by the Alpine barrier walls, some villas that have survived from the Roman period reach an imposing size and boast a highly luxurious *pars urbana*.



Fig. 3.33: Newly-founded unfortified settlements in the countryside from the western part, discussed in the book.

Despite the predominance of settlement forms that continue from the Roman period, there are several new constructions here as well. We should mention the remains at **Montorio**, where mosaics and perimeter walls with towers indicate the existence of a large Late Antique villa (De Franceschini 1998, 157–158). The other example is the villa at **Volpago**, dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries (De Franceschini 1998, 286–287).

Austria

There are several villas in Austria that were erected in Late Antiquity, located in the two newly-formed provinces of Noricum.

An example of a modest, but still well-built farmhouse was found at **Höflein** (Ladstätter 2002, 324). It

was constructed in the second half of the 4th century and partly persisted into the 5th century. Only the main residential building is known, the centre of which was a small heated hall with an apse and several side rooms. The associated economic facilities have not been investigated.

The small, but architecturally very complex peristyle villa from **Löffelbach** (Fig. 3.34) is an example of a prestigious new construction (Schrettle 2007, 262–264; Marko 2011; earlier interpretation in Mulvin 2002, 90). It is marked by a peristyle, as well as a large apsidal aula and several adjacent rooms of a polygonal plan. New interpretations show that it was built in the early 4th century, later witnessed only minor adaptations and was abandoned within the same century.

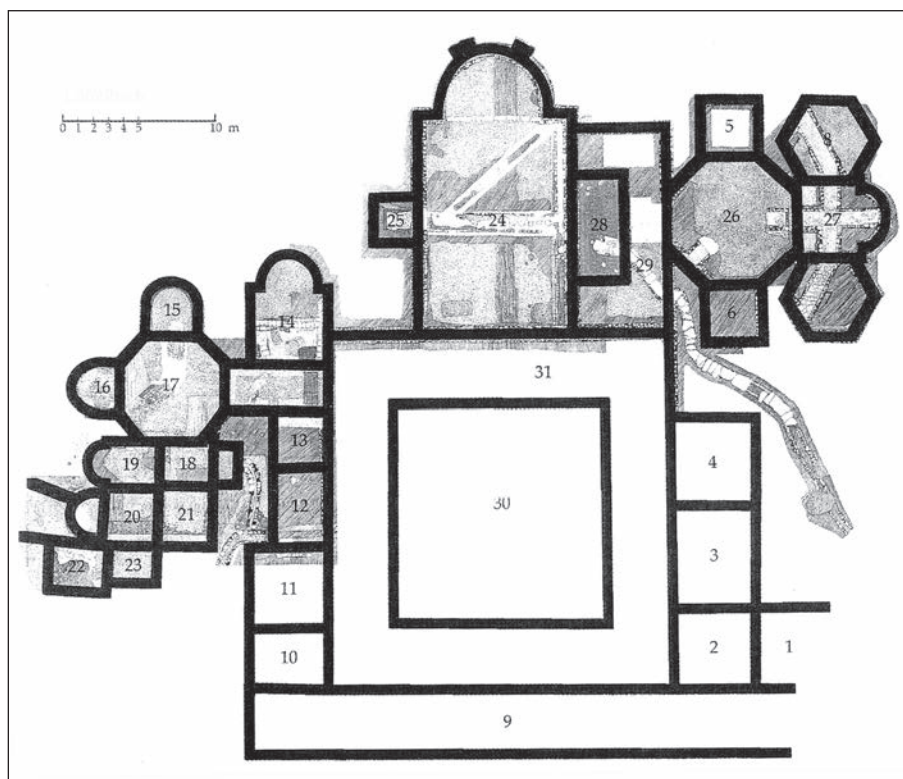


Fig. 3.34: Löffelbach. Plan of the villa (Marko 2011, Fig. 2).

Hungary

Villas were an important element of the Roman countryside economy in the fertile plains of Hungary and most had a continuous development into the Late Roman period. However, there are several examples that were built anew in the Late Roman period and, interestingly, display reliably identified Early Christian architecture. Distinguishing between the villas with continuity and those built anew is not always apparent and we are only able to identify few reliable examples.

One of these is the villa at **Hosszúhetény** (Fig. 3.35), in the vicinity of Sopianae (Pécs) (Thomas 1964, 35; Mulvin 2002, 85). Only the central residential building has been investigated, with a peristyle and a large apsidal hall. A particular feature is a pair of hexagonal towers that guard the entrance to the building. In plan, the villa is similar to that at Polače on the island of Mljet (see below). The wall paintings and the design with a protected entrance suggest a dating to the 4th century.

Also in proximity to Sopianae is the remains of a partially investigated peristyle villa at **Komló-Mecsekjános**, which has a large apsidal hall (Mulvin 2002, 88) that generally characterises villas built in the 4th century.

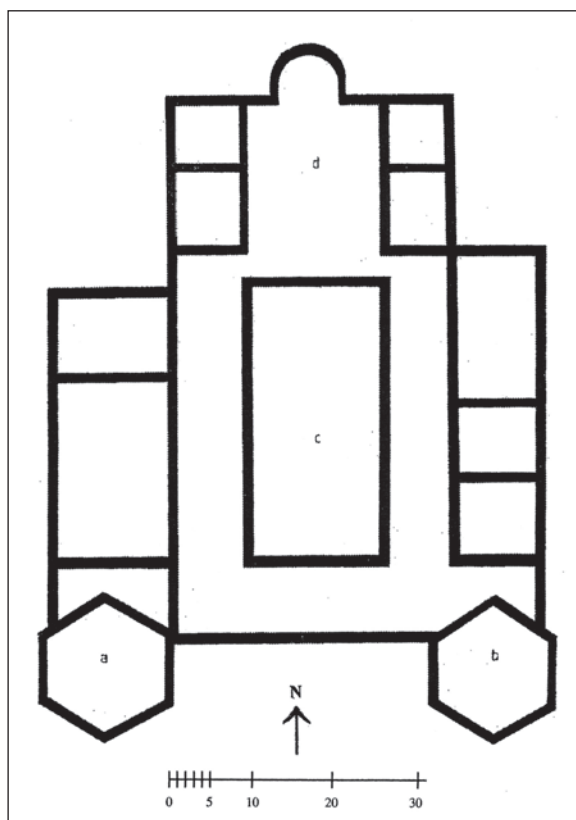


Fig. 3.35: Hosszúhetény. Plan of the villa (from Mulvin 2002, Fig. 22).

Fairly similar in plan is the villa in **Kékkút** at Lake Balaton (Thomas 1964, 54–55; Bíró 1974, 31; Mulvin 2002, 86–87). The chronology of the site is poorly known, but the partially investigated villa shows features characteristic of the late villa constructions. The main residential building has an elongated symmetric plan with a peristyle and small towers at the front. Two other buildings were found next to it, one with a large three-aisled Early Christian basilica with a narthex identified in plan; a bronze Christogram corroborates the Early Christian character of the complex.

The remains of a villa at **Szentkirályszabadja-Romkat** at Lake Balaton, are poorly known (Thomas 1964, 118–122; ead.1980, 292; Mulvin 2002, 104–105). The cluster of buildings indicates a villa with a *pars urbana* and a *pars rustica*. Its construction has been tentatively dated to the 3rd and its destruction to the 4th century. The scarce data from the excavations and a poor preservation of the villa, with only the outer walls surviving, do not allow a more detailed interpretation, though the long rectangular building protected with a pair of towers at the entrance can be seen as the main residential building.



Fig. 3.36: Radvanje. Plan of the villa (Strmčnik Gulič 1990, Fig. 10).

Slovenia

Several villas and smaller buildings were excavated in Slovenia that correspond with the usual layouts of contemporary countryside architecture. An integrally investigated villa is that at **Radvanje near Maribor** (Figs. 3.36, 3.37) (Strmčnik Gulič 1990, 139–143). This large villa was constructed in the second half of the 3rd century on the spot of earlier constructions of an unknown function. It measured 98 × 90 m and was enclosed with a 0.7 m thick wall, onto which most of the buildings leaned from the interior. A large residential building, with a hypocaust heating system in all rooms, stood in the northwest corner. This building was surrounded by a small court closed off by a long building with several rooms. The south corner held outbuildings, while other buildings were situated along the perimeter wall. Modest finds indicate the villa continued only in the first half of the 4th century.

Croatia

In Croatia, there are major differences between the countryside settlement in the continental, Pannonian part and that along the Adriatic. The countryside villas and other settlements in the former were abandoned after the end of the 4th century and no new ones have been detected. The coastline, in contrast, revealed a myriad of new constructions ranging from simple dwellings to palaces.



Fig. 3.37: Radvanje. Foundations of the villa in the foreground, prehistoric and Late Antique fortification Poštela in the background (1988).

Part of an unfortified Late Antique settlement came to light at **Rim near Roč**, in the continental part of the Istrian Peninsula (Marušić 1987). Its remains, damaged by arable farming, show a settlement with sacral and profane buildings. The former include a hall church from the 5th century with mosaics and architectural decoration, as well as an apse added at a later date. A small room beside the church holds the remains of a baptistery, which is presumably referred to in an inscription from the 6th century that speaks of embellishing a small church building (Marušić 1987, 237). West of the church was a residential building, attributable to the 4th and partly the 5th century, that was partially destroyed during the construction of the church. A *granarium* with a roof of brick tiles, dated from the 4th

to the 6th century, was found north of the church. It would appear these are the remains of a Late Roman settlement that persisted, with different modifications, to the late 6th century; this dating is corroborated by the Late Antique burials unearthed in the vicinity.

Excavations at the church of **St Chrysogonus in Glavotok near Milohnići**, on the island of Krk, revealed the remains of a multi-period site beginning in Late Antiquity (Janeš 2015). The earliest remains are of a rural complex. It comprises several buildings, of which a small square edifice survives best, while all others can only be surmised on the basis of the recovered floors. Also preserved is part of a modest wall that enclosed this rural unit. The small finds and radiocarbon analyses date the settlement to the 4th–6th centuries, with most finds belonging to the later part of this time frame.

The site at **Vučipolje near Dugopolje** yielded several habitation elements dating from the second half of the 4th to the 6th century (Borzić, Jadrić 2007). This site lies in the hinterland of Salona, at the junction of several Roman roads and at the edge of a fertile plain. It is presumed that a farmhouse existed here in the second half of the 4th century, which included a complex of cisterns with mosaic floors. After its abandonment in the 5th century, the toponym of Crkvina (meaning ‘church grounds’ in Croatian) and two masonry tombs indicate that an Early Christian church was built here. At the same time, inhabitants presumably dispersed, as several simultaneous agglomerations appeared at different sites in the vicinity and lasted into the 6th century. Most likely connected with this site is also the one at **Banjače**, some 500 m away, where two drystone buildings were unearthed, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries. Revealing no habitations traces, they are rather believed to have been primarily intended for storing foodstuffs and can certainly be seen as part of a larger settlement (Ožanić Roguljić et al. 2018).

The villa at **Miri near Ostrvica** (Figs. 3.38, 3.39) lies on a remote and fertile high plateau of Poljice near Omiš (Rapanić 1984). A complex of three buildings was unearthed here, of which only the ‘palace’ is known better, which is a 33 m long two-storeyed building with thick buttresses and a central hall. In the absence of systematic research, Željko Rapanić used parallels and the construction technique to date the building to the 5th or 6th century (for an earlier dating, see Turković 2011, 226). An important chronological indication of the life in this villa is the unusual and beautifully decorated church from the Justinian period, found in **Gata** roughly 2 km away (Jeličić-Radonić 1994). These elements define the Poljice plateau as a settlement area where, in addition to the ‘palace’, i. e. residence of a prominent dignitary, other settlement cores from the Late Antique period could be assumed.

The Late Antique villa at **Mirje (Mirine) near Postire** (Figs. 3.40, 3.41), on the island of Brač, is extremely well-preserved (Kovačić 2006b; ead. 2010;

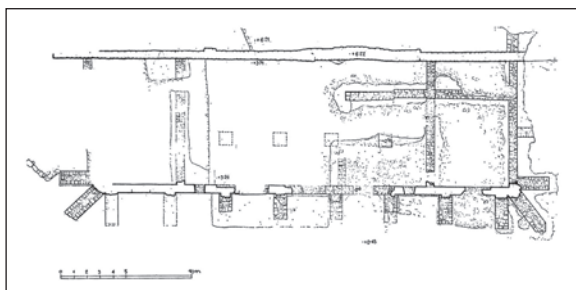


Fig. 3.38: Miri near Ostrvica. Plan of the villa (Rapanić 1984, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.39: Miri near Ostrvica. Remains of the villa from the north (1987).

Jeličić-Radonić 2015). The dilemma associated with this villa is whether we should see it as a fortified or an unfortified complex; it was built on higher, but still accessible and fairly flat ground and was visible from afar. It is encircled with a thin perimeter wall that does not seem to have had a primarily fortifying nature, but was rather intended to delimit the complex and protect it from wild animals and thieves. The numerous pieces of stone church furnishings initially led to it being interpreted as a monastery (Fisković 1982, 165, 202), while

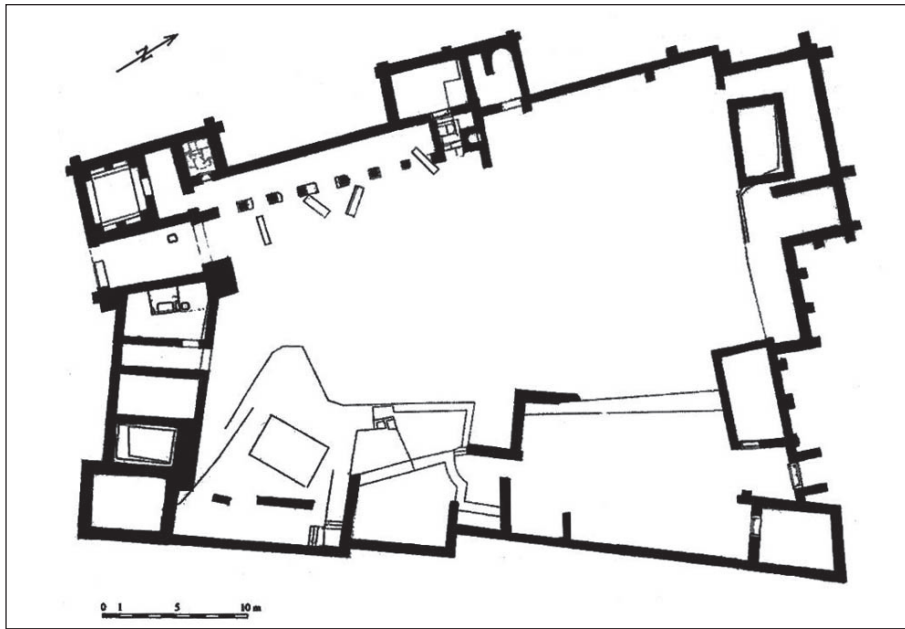


Fig. 3.40: Mirje near Postire. Plan of the villa (Kovačić 2010, Fig. on p. 27).



Fig. 3.41: Mirje near Postire. Remains of the villa from the south-east (2021).

rescue excavations indicated the residence of a wealthy landowner or manager of the Imperial quarry at nearby Škrip. The pieces of church furnishings may belong to an as yet undiscovered Early Christian church.

Holding a pride of place within the group of luxury residences is the 'palace' at **Polrač** (Figs. 3.42–3.44), on the island of Mljet (Suić 1976a, 240; Fisković 1999; Mulvin 2002, 101; Cambi 2002, 234–235; Suić 2003, 360; Turković 2011). It is a complex that combines the design of a large

and lavish Late Antique villa with a series of defensive elements. It was constructed on the north coast of the island, in a hidden bay sheltered from the winds. The residential part comprises a large apsed audience hall with adjoining rooms, which is partially fortified, most ostentatiously with a pair of sizeable polygonal towers that guard the main seaward entrance. The opinions on the villa's beginnings span from the early 4th to the 6th century. Early studies dated the construction to the second half of

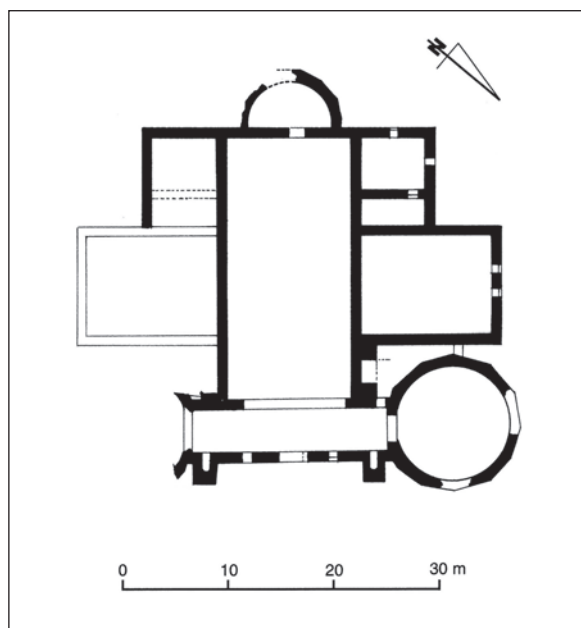


Fig. 3.42: Polače. Luxury Late Antique residence (from Fisković 1999, Fig. 7).



Fig. 3.43: Polače. Walls preserved to a great height from the eastern part of the villa (2005).



Fig. 3.44: Polače. Villa view from the west (2005).

the 5th century based on the literary sources mentioning a deed of gift with which Odoacer gave the island of Mljet to his *comes* Pierius. In contrast, the recent analyses of both towers and architectural parallels rather point to a luxury villa erected in the early 4th century (Turković 2011). Tin Turković proposes the Emperor Licinius as the person who commissioned the villa. The secondary walls in the interior indicate its further development. Standing next to the villa is a complex of buildings, of which most

is known on two Early Christian churches from the 5th and 6th centuries, as well as recently discovered baths with hypocaust heating and mosaic floors from the late 5th century. Located in the immediate vicinity, on a hill, is a small Late Antique fort that has not been investigated in detail and its relationship to the villa remains unclear. The bay was presumably a protected harbour for ships passing along this route, possibly even a winter base for the fleet (Fisković 1998, 275).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The remote valleys of Bosnia host several settlements of a late date. One is the three-room villa at **Založje near Bihać** (Fig. 3.45) that is similar to the villa from Rankovići (see below), only differing in an additional corridor around the building. Central heating canals were found in one of the rooms. The rare small finds date the building to Late Antiquity (Busuladžić 2011, 164). It was situated between two Early Christian churches (Čremošnik 1958; Basler 1972, 120).

A villa of a prestigious character is located at **Ljusina near Bosanska Krupa**, showing a design characteristic of late villas, with a large apsed hall (Čremošnik 1959; Mulvin 2002, 90; Busuladžić 2011, 104). The existence of an estate with economic facilities is posited in proximity. The villa is believed to have been built in the first half of the 4th and lasted to the early 5th century.

Surviving of the villa at **Brodac near Bijeljina** is primarily the part that incorporated a large room – workshop – and an apse of a similar, economic function, while the residential quarters were presumably located in the destroyed southern part. Small finds date the building largely to the 4th century (Busuladžić 2011, 166).

The modest building at **Mali Mošunj near Vitez** has been dated roughly from the second half of the 3rd to the second half of the 4th century (Busuladžić 2011, 160). Frequent reports of other finds in the vicinity suggest this was most likely part of a small settlement (Mulvin 2002, 92).

Complex residential architecture composed of three buildings with several heated and apsed rooms came to light at **Tišina near Zenica** (Fig. 3.46). Remains of timber architecture are mentioned in proximity (Busuladžić 2011, 161). The three buildings form a single luxurious complex fitted with mosaic floors and wall

paintings dated from the late 3rd to at least the mid-4th century. Two construction phases were established for one of the buildings. This villa is evidence that lavish architecture was constructed not only along the coast, but also in the interior of the province of Dalmatia.

Another villa of a late date was found at **Rankovići near Travnik** (Fig. 3.47) (Čremošnik 1955a, 122–132; Basler 1972, 45–46; Busuladžić 2011, 160). It includes a long rectangular building with three rooms that had a porticus lining one of the longer sides. Stairs indicate an upper storey. The pilaster capitals are formally similar to those found in sacral buildings across Bosnia and date the building at least to the 5th century or later. Another building stands in the vicinity; its apsidal design, hypocaust and praefurnium indicate baths. Traces of several unresearched buildings were also recorded on the slope of a nearby hill hosting an uninvestigated Late Antique fortification. These buildings point to a small Late Antique hamlet existing here, possibly associated with a refuge on the hill.

The building at **Stup near Sarajevo** is an example of simple rural architecture. A wooden partition wall divided the main room into two parts, one for dwelling and the other for economic activities. The floors were made of beaten loam. There was a small extension in the east. Small finds date its construction to around 300 (Busuladžić 2011, 159).

As many as three residential complexes were partly investigated at **Lisičići near Konjic** (Fig. 3.48), in a length of several hundred metres. Villa 1 was the most prestigious, decorated with wall paintings. Irma Čremošnik, who excavated the villa, sets it to the 3rd

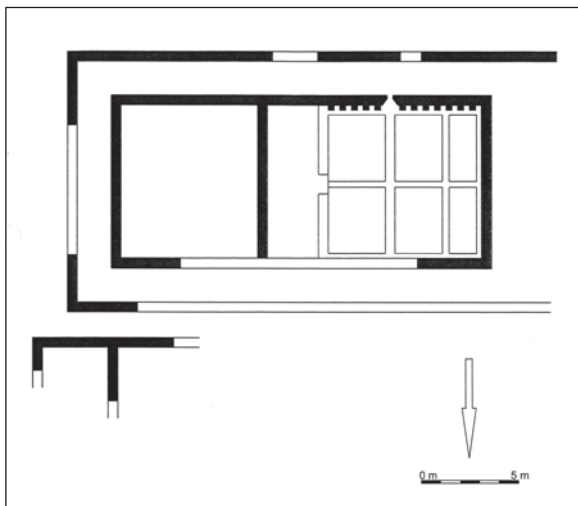


Fig. 3.45: Založje near Bihać. Plan of the villa (Busuladžić 2011, Fig. 27b).

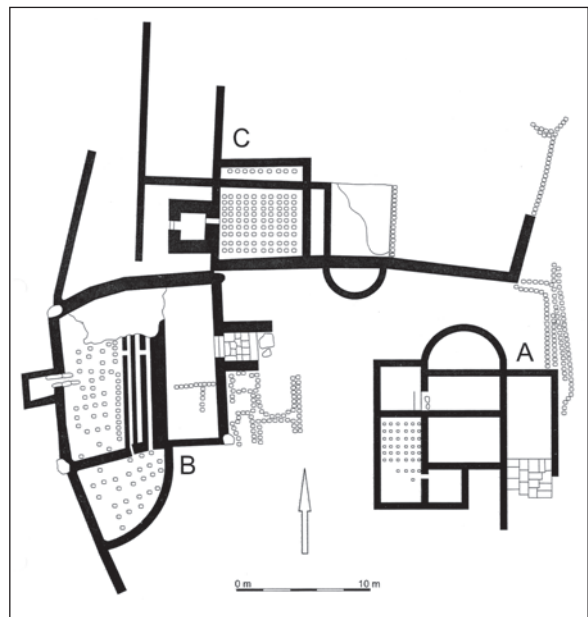


Fig. 3.46: Tišina near Zenica. Plan of the villa (Busuladžić 2011, Fig. 23b).

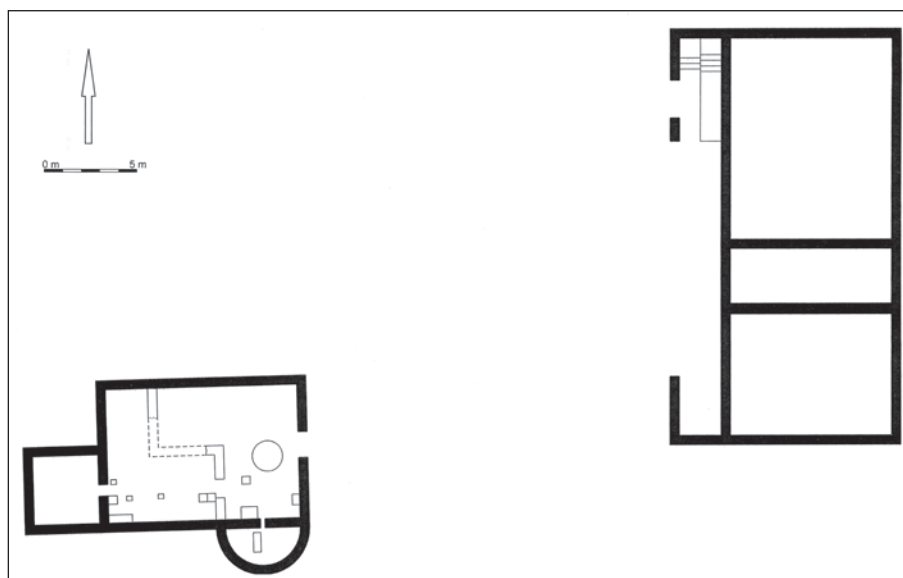


Fig. 3.47: Rankovići near Travnik. Plan of the villa (from Busuladžić 2011, Fig. 21b).

century. Coins and other small finds indicate that the other two villas (Nos. 2 and 3) date from the late 3rd to the late 4th century (Čremošnik 1957; Basler 1993, 23; Mulvin 2002, 89; Busuladžić 2011, 157–158). Surviving best is Villa 3, which had a simple multi-room residential building and a building of an economic function inside the walled area (Čremošnik 1957, 149–155). A child skeleton was found beside the southern walls enclosing Villa 2, buried with items that include a cross-shaped brooch datable to the 6th/7th century (Čremošnik 1957, 147–148).

The *domus* at **Skelani** (presumably forming part of municipium Malvesatum) is a well-researched building with mosaic floors and wall paintings broadly dated to the first half of the 4th century (Gavrilović Vitas, Popović 2015). Of a later date is a series of poorly-constructed and narrower walls that have not been more precisely dated. Two Early Christian churches were also found in the vicinity (Basler 1972, 113–115).

There are several other sites in Bosnia where we could posit either a continuation of Roman buildings into Late Antiquity or buildings constructed anew in this period. This is most apparent in the case of the Early Christian churches where reports mention the ruins of Roman buildings in the vicinity without giving any details; such are the examples at Crvenica in Duvanjsko polje, Prisoj near Duvno and at Šiprage (Basler 1972, 75, 112, 115). At Majdan near Mrkonjić Grad, the remains of an Early Christian church were excavated in the midst of the ruins of an uninvestigated Roman mining settlement, for which Basler presumes continuity, similarly as for Blagaj in the Japra valley (Basler 1972, 92).

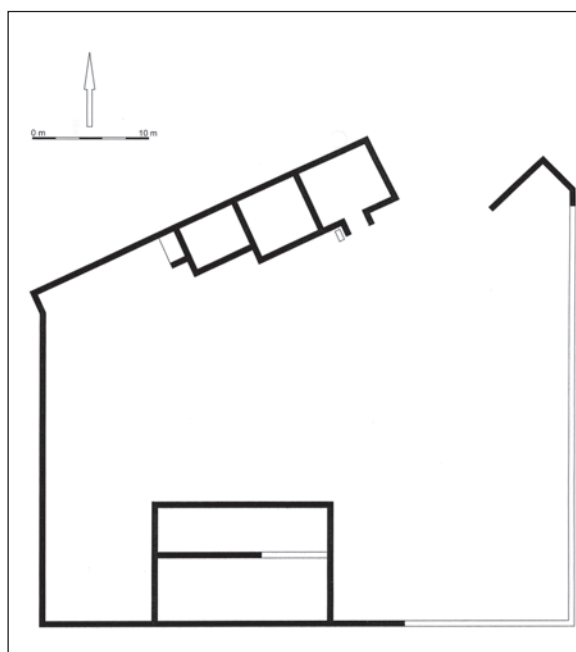


Fig. 3.48: Lisičići near Konjic. Plan of the Villa 3 (from Busuladžić 2011, Fig. 16b).

EASTERN PART

Serbia

The vast rescue investigations at **Davidovac - Gradište**, a site on the road connecting Naissus and Scupi, revealed the remains of a settlement (presumed

mansio) from the 4th century that is believed to have lasted to the mid-5th century (Petković 2016). There is also an associated cemetery nearby, while a Late Roman and Early Byzantine fort is posited above.

The Late Antique settlement of **Mediana**, the suburbs of Naissus, revealed a large complex of residential, prestigious and economic buildings (Mulvin 2002,



Fig. 3.49: Newly-founded unfortified settlements in the countryside from the eastern part, discussed in the book.

92–94; Milošević, G. 2011). The different component parts, such as a large prestigious peristyle villa, two small villas, traces of a *vicus*, a *horreum*, a water tower and army barracks indicate a residential – economic compound of great complexity. Researchers identified three main construction periods spanning from the first third of the 4th to the mid-5th century when the settlement was abandoned. It is interpreted as an imperial villa that hosted occasional visits of the emperors and their retinue between 330 and 378.

A special example is the settlement with a church below **Pančičev vrh (Pančić's Peak**, also Nebeske stolice), located at 1800 m asl (Tošić, Rašković, 2007, 34–39; Ivanišević 2016, 96). Just below the peak is an Early Christian basilica with a double apse, wall paintings and mosaic floors. It stands next to the ruins of buildings that small finds date to a time between the 3rd and the 6th century. Horizontal stratigraphy shows separate early (3rd and 4th centuries) and late parts, the latter dating to the 5th/6th centuries and incorporating the church. The buildings represent an Early Christian centre linked with adjacent settlements, which were mainly associated with the particularly rich ore deposits on this mountain.

Montenegro

The bay of **Kručē near Ulcinj** holds a partially investigated villa with mosaic floors (Mijović 1984–1985, 79–80). The brief publication relates that two large rooms and baths were investigated, though building traces were visible across a wider area. The mosaic floor, coins and other small finds date the villa to the 6th century or the Justinian period. Late Antique remains also came to light on the nearby island of Stari Ulcinj, which could have served as the refuge for the inhabitants of the villa.

Kosovo

The remains of a luxurious Late Antique villa were found at **Donje Nerodimlje** (Kovaljev 1990). The villa is poorly known, with only four rooms with mosaic floors investigated. The mosaic in the central part of the main hall represents the Seven Sages of Greece. A round pool was found in the centre of the reception hall, while the surviving stairs indicate an upper storey. The construction of the villa was initially dated to the 4th–5th century, though recent analyses show the mosaic was most likely made in the Justinian period (Djurić, S. 1994; Sodini 1997, 440). The lavish and high-quality interior furnishings of the rooms point to a villa or even palace belonging to a member of the elite.

Bulgaria

Research shows that a relatively large portion of the villas in the north-eastern and central northern parts of Bulgaria were abandoned in the mid-3rd century, though there are examples inhabited from the mid-3rd century to the 370s that Dintchev attributes to his Period C (Dintchev 1997, 123–125).

The villa near the city of **Pleven** (Fig. 3.50), near the Roman fortress of Storgosia, is believed to have been inhabited from the late 3rd/early 4th to the 6th century. It is a large complex of buildings of different functions. Standing out is an apsed building and a hexagonal tower that was probably added later, just before the 6th century. The items recovered from the tower include a hoard of 26 coins of Justinian I (Dintchev 1997, 94–95; Mulvin 2002, 100). Dintchev sees this large residential complex as an urban villa of a high administrative officer from Storgosia.

The large peristyle complex near **Kostinbrod** was built in the early 4th century. It was interpreted as an imperial residence or at least the home of the provincial governor of Dacia Mediterranea. A village presumably developed within it in the 5th century and a military fort towards the end of the 5th or in the 6th century (Dintchev 1997, 83–94).

The villa at **Obelija** (Fig. 3.51), in the vicinity of Serdica (Sofia), was built in the late 3rd and persisted to the mid-5th century (Dintchev 1997, 70–72; Mulvin 2002, 97–98). It had an enclosed courtyard plan, with residential parts surrounding the courtyard.

The villa at **Bela voda near Pernik** presumably dates from the late 3rd/early 4th to the 7th century (Dintchev 1997, 53–54; Mulvin 2002, 99–100). Dintchev writes that the unearthed remains belonged to a fortified central building of a villa that developed into a village after the second half of the 5th century.

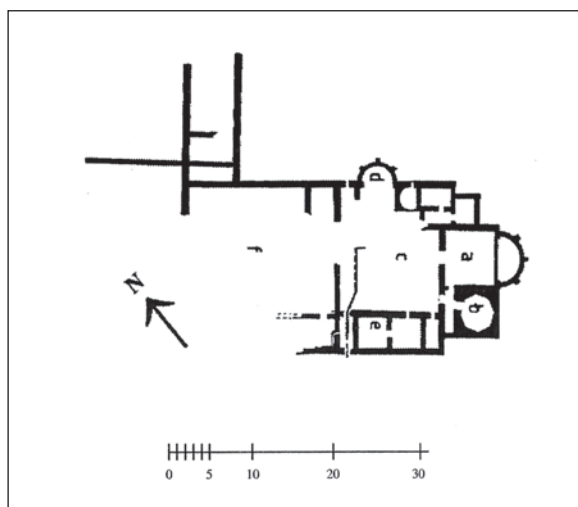


Fig. 3.50: Pleven. Plan of the villa (from Mulvin 2002, Fig. 54).

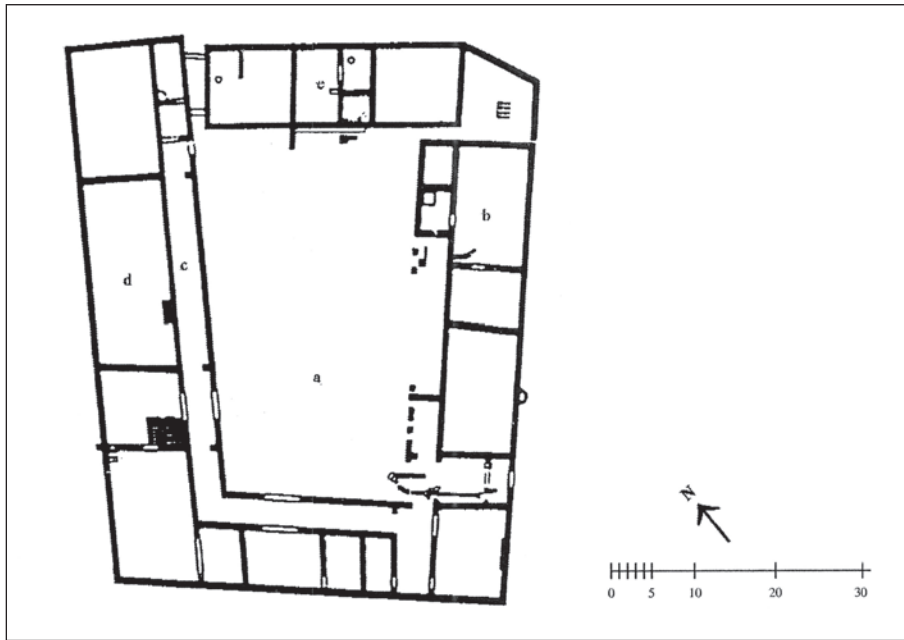


Fig. 3.51: Obelija. Plan of the villa (from Mulvin 2002, Fig. 49).

North Macedonia

The site of **Trpčeva Crkva near Dunja** (Fig. 3.52) revealed the remains of a large residential complex composed of living quarters and economic facilities (Kepeska, Kepeski 2006). The walls were built of clay-bonded stone and the building roofed with tegulae and imbrices. The rooms were arranged around the central paved court. The economic facilities held grain pithoi, later also two water basins. The complex is believed to have been constructed in the late 5th century and presumably persisted to the late 6th century. The remains of an Early Christian church and baptistery came to light nearby. Evidence indicates the unearthed remains at this site formed part of a small village.

The rescue investigations at **Pešterica near Prilep** unearthed a characteristic Roman villa, most likely built towards the end of the 3rd century and comprising residential, economic and thermal areas. Following a presumed fire in the mid-4th century, it was remodelled and subdivided with clay-bonded walls. The villa was destroyed most likely in the last third of the 4th century (Kepeski 2008).

Greece

The knowledge of the countryside settlement in Greece primarily comes from several systematic field surveys (overview in Bintliff 2012, 352–382). Some authors (Morisson, Sodini 2002, 177; Bintliff 2012, 359) posit that

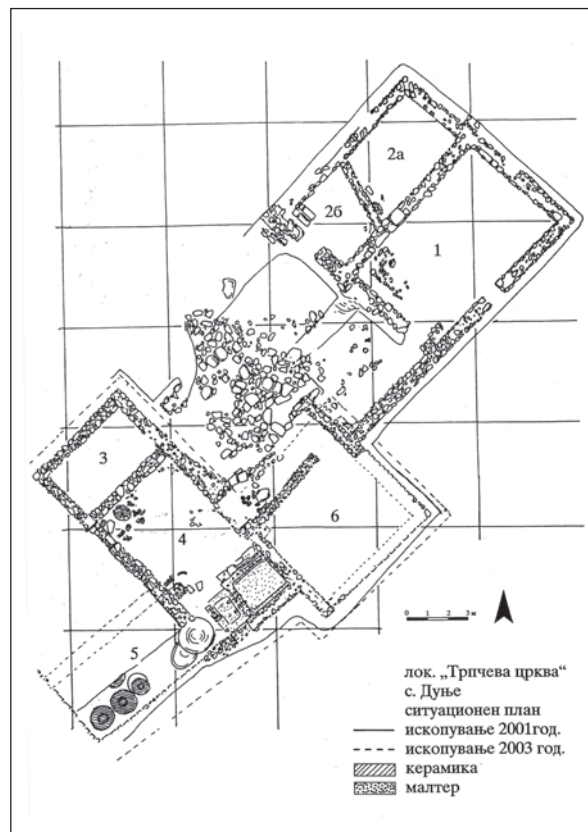


Fig. 3.52: Trpčeva Crkva near Dunja. Residential and production parts of the complex (Kepeska, Kepeski 2006, Fig. 3).

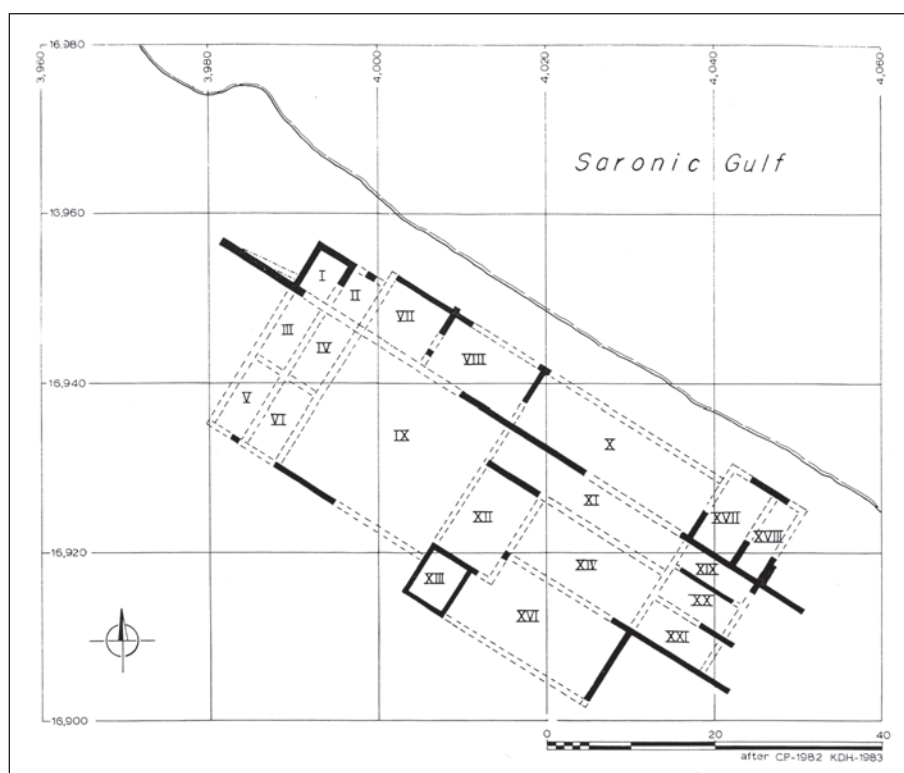


Fig. 3.53: Akra Sophia. Plan of the villa (Gregory 1985, Fig. 3).

individual villas persisted into the 6th century or were only constructed at that time, whereas Florin Curta sees in Greece merely a landscape of individual farmsteads and presumes that all the villas dated to the 6th century were actually constructed earlier and later reinhabited as small and modest habitation units (Curta 2014, 40). John Bintliff believes the villa landscape in Greece survived until the devastating Slavic incursions (Bintliff 2012, 358).

The intensive field surveys at **Akra Sophia** (Fig. 3.53), south of the Isthmus of Corinth, revealed the remains of a luxury villa from the Early Byzantine period (Gregory 1985; opposing view in Curta 2014, 38). The c. 80 × 35 m large edifice also held the remains of a mosaic from the 5th or 6th century. The recovered pottery and amphorae date to the mid-6th century, though the villa is believed to have persisted to the early 7th century. In its proximity, there were several sites with concentrations of small finds but almost without architectural remains; archaeologists only found two cisterns or wells. Timothy E. Gregory believes this was not a villa of an agrarian character, but rather a residence, possibly of a high official or rich shipowner from Corinth.

The intensive field surveys in the valley of **Berbtai** in Argolis unearthed a large villa with mosaic floors surrounded by a cluster of sites seen as worker accommodations and industrial areas (Bintliff 2012, 358).

The intensive survey in Boeotia has shown that rural settlements in the hinterland replaced **Thespieae** in its role of a city in the 6th century (Poulter 2007b, 41; Bintliff 2012, 357, 360).

A large number of Early Christian basilicas were detected in Greek Macedonia, without associated settlements in the vicinity. The distribution of these basilicas only makes sense in connection with as yet undetected unfortified and hilltop settlements (Dunn 2005, 274).

In the area of the *civitates* Pella and Europos, field surveys detected as many as nineteen rural settlements, of which five are believed to have been established in Late Antiquity (Dunn 2004, 542). The plain at Philippi also reportedly revealed at least six unfortified settlements associated with better-known Early Byzantine churches.

The research in Greece shows very lively countryside settlement, which is primarily due to its position deep in the south of the area under discussion that was less and later exposed to barbarian incursions. However, this settlement is mainly known through field surveys that do not enable more detailed conclusions as to the nature, size and duration of individual sites; these can only be gained through systematic excavations of the characteristic settlement units.

3.3.2 NEWLY-FOUNDED FORTIFICATIONS

In the face of numerous civil wars, the increasingly frequent incursions of peoples from beyond the borders and the inability of the central government to tackle these issues, people in Late Antiquity reacted by transforming their settlements and also resettling; this is a phenomenon observable across large parts of the areas under discussion. They gradually abandoned settlements in the lowland and along major roads to move to naturally protected elevations, most frequently in remote areas. Across a large part of the former empire, fortifications (particularly those on well-protected hills) are thus the most typical expression of the contemporary settlement pattern and most aptly illustrate the plight of the population. This category of Late Antique settlement is most numerous (*Figs. 3.54, 3.201*) and also best investigated, and comprises sites ranging from the very rare fortified palaces and small fortified villas to the more numerous military forts, some newly-founded 'cities' and by far the most numerous fortified hilltop settlements and refuges.

Fortifications are a highly diverse category as their form, size and often also interior layout is greatly adapted to the terrain. Each one is practically unique, in contrast to the earlier settlements in the countryside that come with a readily identifiable set of common features. This diversity is the cause of some difficulties for the researchers in identifying their basic functions, as a more detailed interpretation can only be given by performing a comprehensive analysis of the geographic setting, architectural remains, small finds, economic resources and other aspects. Research shows that some of these settlements began as early as the second half of the 3rd century and in some places persisted, with minor or major interruptions, to the late 6th century or even later. Interestingly, those in strategic or otherwise significant locations served not only as refuges and settlements, but also hosted garrisons of soldiers. Their great diversity in both time and geographic location is the root cause for a major part of the professional public poorly understanding their appearance, functions and chronology. Most of the syntheses of Late Antiquity (particularly those written from a historical standpoint) provide a generalised and simplified account, in which the fortifications – if at all mentioned – are presented as a generic type of hilltop settlements, which in reality only corresponds with a very limited segment of the known sites (cf. division in Wickham 2005, 479–480). The complexity of this issue, with a combination of different types of sites in different periods of time, is further exacerbated by confusing terminology (see *Chapter 1*).

Most of these fortified sites have seen only limited investigations, which hinders us in defining reliable criteria for their classification. We will therefore specifi-

cally tackle the question of whether the large and most significant sites should be seen either as newly-founded cities or merely large settlements that literary sources mark with different terms. This division is often arbitrary and some of them have already been discussed above, as newly-founded cities (such are the examples of both large imperial palaces and several large settlements with a series of urban elements). Their typological diversity and the definition of their function will be discussed in the closing part of this chapter, after the overview of the characteristic sites.

The dating of the fortified settlements is largely based on coins and other diagnostic artefacts. Related to this is the question of residuality, which is insufficiently considered in early literature and overemphasised in more recent publications, none of which is helpful. In recent studies, analyses of pottery (fine tableware, coarseware and transport vessels) allow us to enhance the previous dating and provide a more reliable dating of individual phases.

The discussion below will use examples of settlements to present the great diversity of the settlement forms, with the examples ranging from major and well-investigated to minor and poorly investigated sites with functionally and chronologically significant elements; settlements exhibiting already known patterns are not included.

WESTERN PART

Italy

In recent decades, research in northern Italy focused on identifying the role and significance of the fortified sites mainly located in the Alpine and sub-Alpine regions.

The southernmost examples are those around Lake Garda. Particularly complex is the settlement and defensive features of the slender **Sirmione** Peninsula (*Figs. 3.55, 3.56*), which reaches far into the lake that provided excellent natural protection (Roffia 1997, 141–169; Brogiolo 2018). In the Roman period, two large villas were constructed on the peninsula, at Grotte di Catulo and Via Antiche Mura. Both were destroyed in the mid-3rd century, though the latter was extensively renovated in the late 3rd or early 4th century using the material from the abandoned villa. In the second half of the 4th century, Sirmione was transformed into a large fort with its centre in the villa of Via Antiche Mura, while a vast cemetery grew in the area of the other villa, at the tip of the peninsula. Three-metre thick walls were constructed in the late 4th or early 5th century that reached from one villa to the other and enclosed a surface of 26 ha. They appear to have protected a strong army post associated



1 – Sirmione	16 – Tscheltschnigkogel	32 – Gradec (Prapretno)	47 – Veli grad	61 – Gradina
2 – Rocca di Garda	17 – Hemmaberg	33 – Tinje	48 – Korintija	(Vašarovine)
3 – Sant’Andrea di Loppio	18 – Hoischhugel	34 – Marija Gorska	49 – Tribanj Šibuljina	62 – Gradac
4 – Riva del Garda	19 – Tonovcov grad	35 – Ajdovski gradec	50 – Veliki Sikavac	(Potočani)
5 – San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso	20 – Ajdna	(Vranje)	51 – Gradina (Modrić)	63 – Gradina (Vidoši)
6 – Georgenberg	21 – Kranj	36 – Veliki vrh	52 – Čuker (Mokro polje)	64 – Gradina (Kovači)
7 – Knallwand	22 – Mali Njivč	37 – Kuzelin	53 – Gradina (Vrgada)	65 – Gradac (Lepenica)
8 – Castelraimondo	23 – Castelazzo (Doberdo)	38 – Velike Malence	54 – Toreta	66 – Debelo Brdo
9 – Invillino	24 – Sv. Pavel	39 – Zidani gaber	55 – Gradina (Žirje)	67 – Gradac (Ilinjača)
10 – Artegna	25 – Hrušica	40 – Kučar	56 – Split	68 – Gradina (Biograci)
11 – Attimis	26 – Ajdovščina (Castra)	41 – Crkvišće Bukovlje	57 – Gradina Zecovi	69 – Mogorjelo
12 – Kappele near Jadersdorf	27 – Ajdovščina (Rodik)	42 – Velem – Szent Vid	58 – Gradina (Bakinci)	70 – Majsan
13 – Lug ins Land	28 – Pasjak	43 – Tokod	59 – Grad	71 – Koštur
14 – Duel	29 – Korinjski hrib	44 – Sibrig domb	(Gornji Vrbjani)	72 – Gradac (Todorovići)
15 – Ulrichsberg	30 – Ančnikovo gradišće	45 – Sümeg	60 – Gradina	
	31 – Rifnik	46 – Kastрум (Veliki Brijun)	(Podgradina Kamenska)	

Fig. 3.54: Newly-founded fortifications in the countryside from the western part, discussed in the book.



Fig. 3.55: Sirmione. Plan of the fortified complex (Villa 2020, Fig. 4).

with the harbour of the lake fleet and also offered shelter for the local population. Archaeological evidence points to a fire in the mid-5th century, which may have been the consequence of a Hun raid. The villa at Via Antiche Mura was also destroyed in this time, after which mod-

est timber housing was erected in its ruins. The small finds from the 5th and 6th centuries show that the villa at Grotte di Catullo was partly reinhabited. Two forts were built on peninsula in the second half of the 5th century: a small one with high-quality housing that is believed to have hosted the military headquarters and a larger one that included a church. At this time, Sirmione presumably hosted an Ostrogothic garrison of soldiers and their families. After the Gothic Wars, the Langobards chose Sirmione as an important base, which is indirectly reflected in the rich burials unearthed in the ruins of the villa at Grotte di Catullo that continue to the late 7th century.

The hill of **Rocca di Garda** high above Lake Garda holds the traces of a multi-period settlement intensely occupied in Late Antiquity (Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 88–92). On three sides, the summit is protected with precipitous slopes and only readily accessible from the east, where thick walls were put up. Not much is known of the settlement's interior, though excavations did unearth a large Late Antique building. Mentioned on the slope below are the remains of a cemetery from the 7th century, which indicates the Langobards were living in the settlement upon arriving to Italy.

Available evidence allows us to hypothetically include **Monte San Martino – Riva del Garda (San Martino di Campi)**, on the north shore of Lake Garda, in the group of fortified settlements (Possenti 2013, 28, 35; Brogiolo 2014, 149–151; Pisu, Possenti 2020). This high and naturally excellently protected peak (c. 800 m asl) and its southern slope revealed a settlement that grew on the spot of an earlier sanctuary. Several of its buildings have been investigated, as well as a drystone wall that served defensive purposes (Brogiolo 2014, 151). The houses forming a compact row on the slope may also have served as defence. The mass of small finds from



Fig. 3.56: Sirmione. Fortified complex on the peninsula from the west with Rocca di Garda in the background (2003).

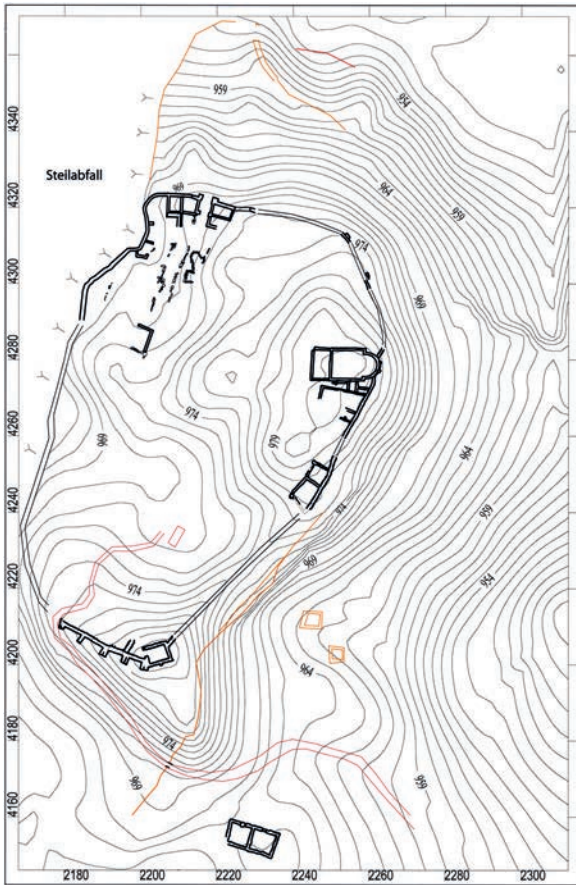


Fig. 3.57: Monte San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso. Plan of the fortification (Zagermann, Cavada 2014, Fig. 5).

the 4th to the 6th century shows an intensely inhabited settlement with different trading contacts. In addition to a civilian function, the large building occupying a dominant position on the eastern slope and interpreted as a *horreum*, but also the location in a strategically significant area along the communications leading from Lake Garda to the heart of the Alps show that the settlement may also have had logistical and military roles. Following a fire in the 6th century, the settlement was partly renovated and a small church constructed in it.

The systematic investigations at **Monte San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso** (985 m asl; Fig. 3.57) revealed a 125 × 80 m large fortification (Zagermann, Cavada 2014). It was encircled with 0.8–1 m thick walls, with a pair of towers additionally protecting the entrance. Built together with the defensive walls were several buildings that leaned onto the walls from the interior. An Early Christian church was also built at the walls. It was a single-aisled apsidal edifice with a narthex. It witnessed numerous modifications, which hinder us from establishing whether the narthex and side rooms were constructed simultaneously with the main part. Small finds and radiocarbon dates limit the construction period to the second half of the 5th and the 6th

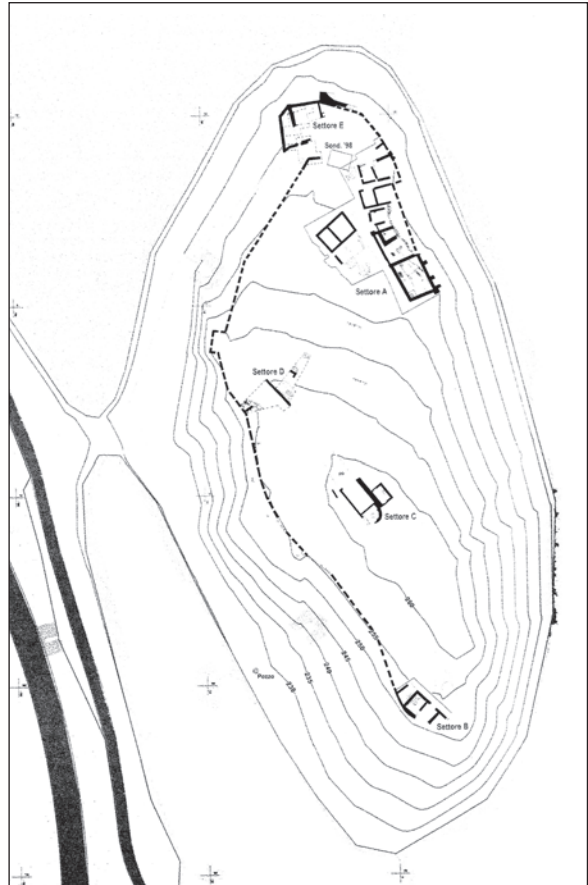


Fig. 3.58: Sant'Andrea di Loppio. Plan of the fortification (Maurina 2016, Fig. 536).

century. The function of the fortification can as yet not be fully explained. The absence of the pieces of female and children's costumes, as well as a short duration of the buildings suggest a strategic significance of the fort manned with a garrison of soldiers, but also the possibility it served as a protected storehouse on the road from the Alps towards major cities in northern Italy.

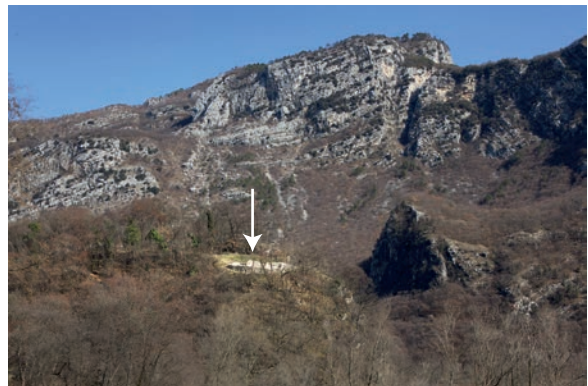


Fig. 3.59: Sant'Andrea di Loppio. Fortification from the south (2016).



Fig. 3.60: Sant'Andrea di Loppio. Remains of the buildings in the north-western part of the fortification (2016).

The fortification at **Sant'Andrea di Loppio** (Figs. 3.58–3.60) is another typical example of a well-fortified strategic post with military assignments (Maurina 2016; ead. 2020). Its particular feature is the location on the island of Lake Loppio, which provided excellent natural protection, but also offered the garrison the advantage of quick reactions in controlling the traffic along the important route that connected the Adige valley with the northern part of Lake Garda. The walled surface on the top of the island measured c. 0.64 ha. The defensive walls were partially investigated, found to be 0.7–0.8 m thick and buttressed. The entrance was in the north and well-protected with a large tower. The remains of the earliest Late Antique buildings of stone and timber (Periods I and II) date to the second half or even late 5th century and presumably accommodated those who were building the later fort. Proper defensive walls were likely constructed towards the end of the 5th century, reportedly on the orders of the central administration (Period III). This period also witnessed gradual construction of housing along the walls in both investigated parts of the fort. Best researched are the houses in Sector A, where a row of densely spaced buildings of a high-quality construction was detected next to the entrance. The small finds place the construction of the fort to the time of either Odoacer or Theoderic, with its strategically significant location indicating a primarily military role. The finds of weapons confirm such a role, as do the coins dating to the time of the Gothic Wars. Some small finds indicate the presence of Byzantine troops with their families sta-

tioned here after the end of the Gothic Wars. The study of the numerous ceramic finds, primarily amphorae, has shown state provisioning of the army (*annona*). After the fort had been abandoned in the second half of the 6th century (Period IV), the newly-constructed modest dwellings point to a different population, presumably the Langobards (Period V). It would appear, however, that the fort retained its military character and persisted as such to the second half of the 7th century.

The systematic investigations on **Colle Santino above Invillino** in Carnia (Figs. 3.61, 3.62) have unearthed the remains of a Late Antique settlement identified as the fortification Paul the Deacon mentions as *Ibligo* (Bierbrauer 1987; id. 1988). A team of German archaeologists conducted extensive archaeological excavations on the hill in the 1960s that explored the entire settlement. Invillino remains to this day the only comprehensively excavated Late Antique settlement in the wider area of the eastern Alps, which is of great value for our understanding of the settlement pattern. It lies on the naturally very well-protected, isolated hill of Colle Santino, which rising above the plain of the River Tagliamento. The remains of earlier habitations are two complexes of buildings presumably dating from the 1st to the mid-4th century, but cannot be reconstructed due to later modifications (Bierbrauer 1987, 291–292). They represent the remains of a small countryside settlement, which could have been established as late as the second half of the 3rd century (Martin 1992, 261). In the second phase, dated to the second half of the 4th and first half

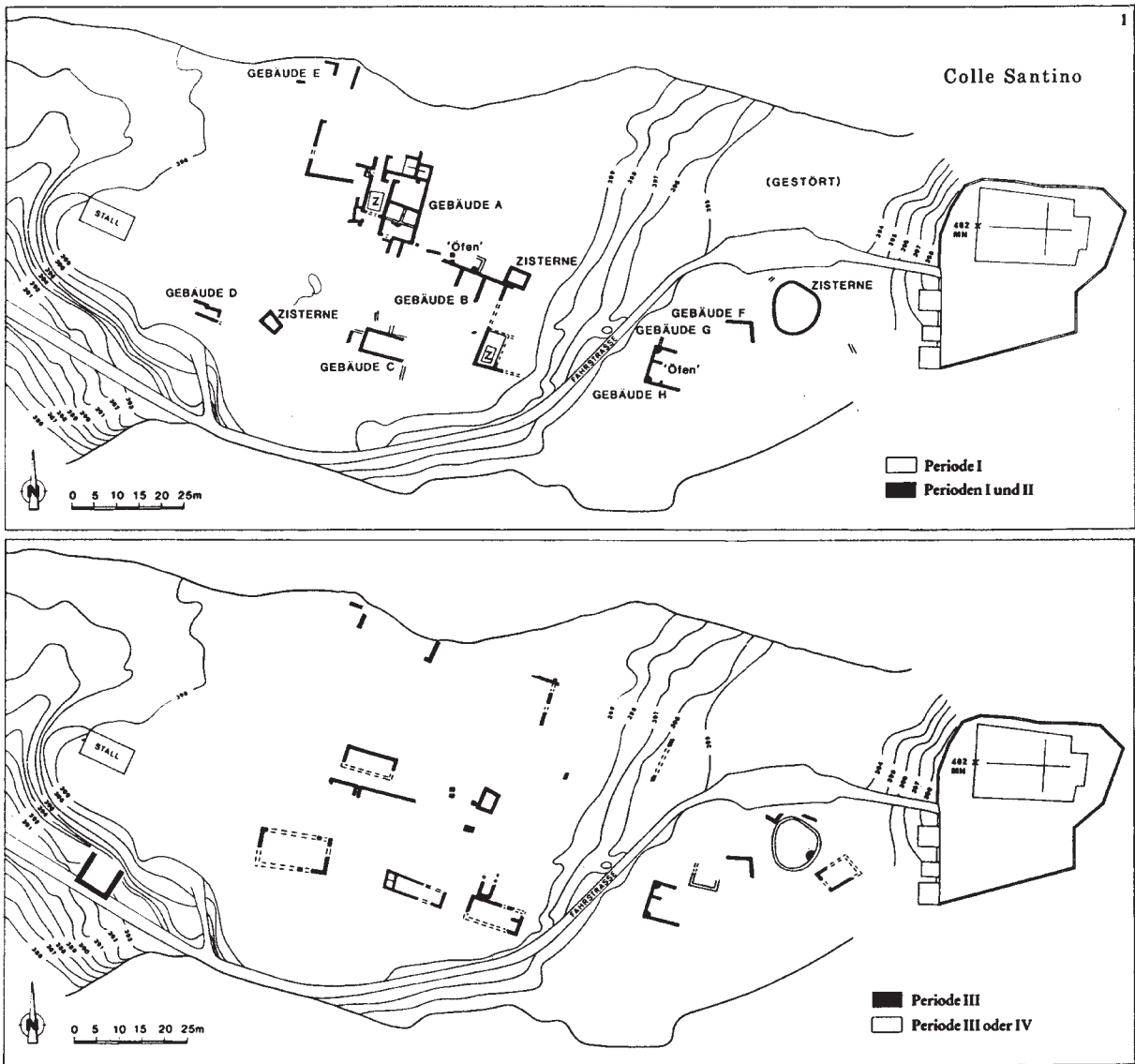


Fig. 3.61: Colle Santino (Invillino). Plan of the settlement in the Roman period and Late Antiquity (Bierbrauer 1988, Fig. 39).

of the 5th century, the buildings retained their exterior appearance, but changed in function. In addition to numerous finds of tools, there were also substantial traces of ironworking and glassworking, i.e. artisanal activities. The imported pottery points to connections with the Mediterranean. The end of this phase brought radical changes in the settlement structure signalled by timber architecture dating from the first half of the 5th to the second half of the 7th century, but also a masonry tower in the area of easiest access. The buildings of this phase are simple, long and rectangular with drystone foundations and a timber superstructure. They have been interpreted as dwellings, while Bierbrauer sees two as workshops. A cistern has also been attributed to this phase. Excavations on the nearby hill of Colle di Zuca revealed an associated large church complex with

a baptistery, constructed in the first half or middle of the 5th and persisting to the first half of the 7th century, when it was burnt down. Excavations also unearthed part of the associated burial grounds, which was in use even before the construction of the church complex. The results of the investigations on both hills show this to be a major settlement and religious centre, which is visible in the architecture and exposed location, but also in some of the smaller settlement cores investigated in a limited extent in the surrounding area, primarily those at Cuel Budin and Verzegnis (Rupel 1997; Villa 2001, 828–829, 858–860; Vannacci Lunazzi 2001, 85–86; Ciglencèki 2003a, 268).

The fortification at **San Giorgio near Attimis** lies on the road that led from Cividale to Arterga, Gemona and Osoppo. It is only known from preliminary reports (Villa 2003; id. 2006, 164–169; Buora 2010). Excavations



Fig. 3.62: Colle Santino (Invillino). Plateau above the River Tagliamento from the south-east (2002).

revealed part of the defensive walls and several buildings, as well as small finds and Ostrogothic coins that date its existence to the first half of the 6th century. Publications reveal that the walls were made of locally available stone, mortared and 0.8–0.9 m thick (Villa 2003, 305). Dwellings survived as clay-bonded walls that were likely the foundations of timber buildings. Researchers see the military finds and Gothic coins as an indication of a garrison stationed in the fort.

More is known on the fort at **Artegna** (Figs. 3.63, 3.64). Similarly as San Giorgio, it lies on the fringes of the Friuli plain, on a low, but naturally well-protected hill. It has defensive walls that incorporate two towers, one pentagonal and the other triangular, which are unusual for the area (Villa 2006, 162–164, Figs. 5, 6). Towers of these forms were frequently erected by Byzantine builders in the Eastern Empire and can be found in all major Early Byzantine forts and settlements (Lawrence 1983, 177–200). Close parallels are also known at nearby Cividale (Vitri et al. 2006, 103). The heavily fortified walls and a large, well-preserved cistern in the interior show this was one of the most important Late Antique forts in Friuli (also mentioned by Paul the Deacon) and one that also had a specially protected acropolis.

A well-researched, but more modest is the fortified hilltop settlement at **Castelraimondo above Forgaria** (Figs. 3.65, 3.66), which was an exception in that it was constructed on an earlier predecessor (Santoro Bianchi 1992). The lower ridge has three peaks separated from one another with in part artificially made ditches. In the Roman period, a square tower was constructed on a dominant location on top of prehistoric remains and several other buildings were renovated. A major break in



Fig. 3.63: Artegna. Well-protected hill hosting a fort, view from the south (2010).



Fig. 3.64: Artegna. Cistern in the interior (2010).



Fig. 3.65: Castelraimondo. Plan of the hilltop site (Santoro Bianchi 1992, Fig. 25).



Fig. 3.66: Castelraimondo. Remains of the multi-period main building (2003).

habitation is perceptible around 275, when the tower and two earlier buildings were damaged. This event is well-dated with the coins of Quintillus, Florinus and Probus. The buildings were soon repaired and the tower served as a military fort throughout the 4th century. It was torn down around 430, presumably in a military assault and fire that destroyed a large part of the buildings. In the next phase, in the second half of the 5th century, the ruins were reused for modest housing. The settlement

is then believed to have been a refuge and persisted as such throughout the 6th and part of the 7th century.

The fortification at **Castelazzo above Doberdo del Lago** (Fig. 3.67) is an excellent example of reuse of a prehistoric hillfort (Furlani 1969; Maselli Scotti, Montagnari Kokelj 1989). The naturally well-protected hill guarded in the south by precipitous rocky faces was the site of a strong fort in Late Antiquity that was located in close proximity to a major Roman road. The fortified



Fig. 3.67: Castelazzo above Doberdo del Lago from the south (2015).

plateau measuring 260×120 m suffered heavy damage in World War I, but archaeological investigations nevertheless managed to find several interesting elements. One is the three-metres-thick defensive walls, the cross section of which shows the prehistoric rampart twice reinforced with a mortared wall. Earlier authors report of several towers and other buildings, which together with the recovered small finds and the location along the road indicate a strong military post from the 4th and early 5th centuries. Standing out among the many small finds is a multitude of coins (scattered hoards?) from the 4th and first half of the 5th century. Small finds and individual coins allow for the continuation of the fort into the second half of the 5th and the 6th century.

Austria

The Late Antique hilltop settlements in the eastern Alps have been first identified as an important settlement factor in Austria, in the early 20th century. The many early excavations joined by several more recent systematic investigations provide a good insight into the Late Antique settlement structures in both Norican provinces of Late Antiquity.

A pride of place among the Late Antique fortification north of the Alpine arch goes to **Georgenberg near Kuchl (Cuculis)** (Fig. 3.68). It is one of the rare such sites in the area under discussion that is debated in greater detail in an ancient written source (Vita Sancti Severini, Chapters 11 and 12; cf. Ubl 1982, 85). The settlement lies on a 400×150 m large elongated plateau naturally protected from all sides and located near the Roman road that connected Iuvavum and Teurnia. Excavations were

mostly conducted here in the 1960s and again recently, with the results being jointly published in a monograph (Lang 2019). The top of the hill was inhabited or visited in many periods. In Late Antiquity, more precisely the 460s and 470s according to the written source, it hosted a settlement with a church that Severinus visited on two occasions. Excavations on the summit, in the vicinity of the present-day church, unearthed a building with a heating channel and another Late Antique edifice on the other side of the church. The interior of the present-day church also revealed several earlier constructions, but these could not be more reliably identified. The burials inside this church include a skeleton radiocarbon dated to the 5th/6th century. A Late Antique origin of the defensive walls could not be reliably confirmed, though it is likely, according to trial trenches at the point of easiest access. Part of a Late Antique cemetery was found at the foot of the hill. Small finds recovered from the settlement paints an unusual picture: the monetary circulation peaks in the second half of the 4th and early 5th century and even other small finds do not reach beyond the early 5th century. Finds from the 6th century are completely absent. As for the metal finds, parallels from other sites in the eastern Alps only show the settlement existed to the mid-5th century.

The mountainous part of the Enns valley hosts several Late Antique sites. The most revealing is at **Knallwand near Ramsau** (Figs. 3.69, 3.70), located at 944 m asl below the Dachstein Mountains (Steinklauber 2005, 142–157). This hill is naturally protected from three sides and only accessible from the north, where 0.6 m thick walls were constructed. Leaning onto them from the interior are two rooms that held a layer of burnt debris. The 75×30 m large fortification interior held traces of a wall that suggest a bastion-like building. Investigations revealed no other buildings. The many recovered coins,



Fig. 3.68: Georgenberg near Kuchl from the north-west.

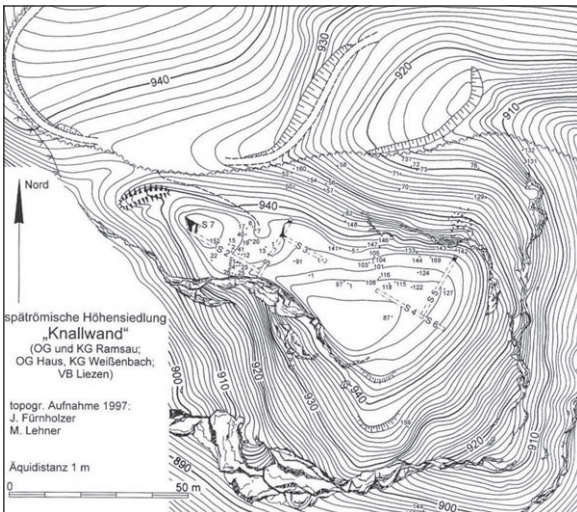


Fig. 3.69: Knallwand near Ramsau. Plan of the fortification (Steinklauber 2005, Fig. 10).

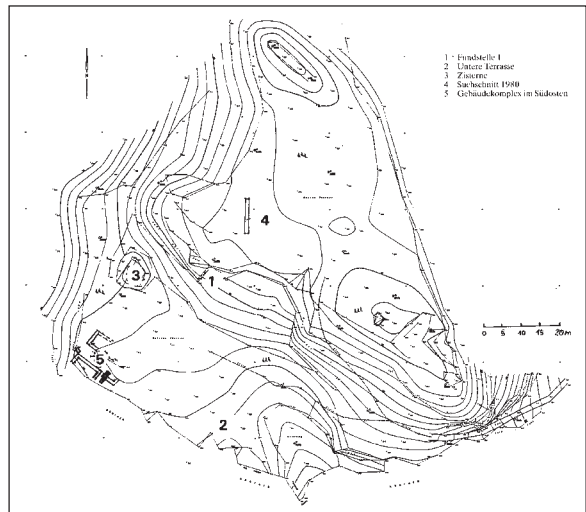


Fig. 3.71: Kapelle near Jadersdorf. Plan of the fortified settlement (Felgenhauer 1993, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.70: Knallwand near Ramsau. Hilltop site from the north (2007).

pieces of costume, iron tools and pottery date the site to the 3rd–5th century. The traces of a fire are believed to have signified the end of the settlement in the mid-5th century at the latest. The question that remains open is whether the site was a refuge of a long duration, a short-term settlement from the second half of the 4th century, the post of a small garrison stationed here in the second half of the 3rd and again in the second half of the 4th century or even a combination of all three.

Located between the valleys of the Gail and the Drau/Drava are the remains of a fortified settlement at **Kapelle near Jadersdorf** (Fig. 3.71) (Felgenhauer 1993). It covered a surface of 90 × 90 m with remains of Late Antique buildings in part visible on the surface. Excavations unearthed well-constructed masonry edifices, but

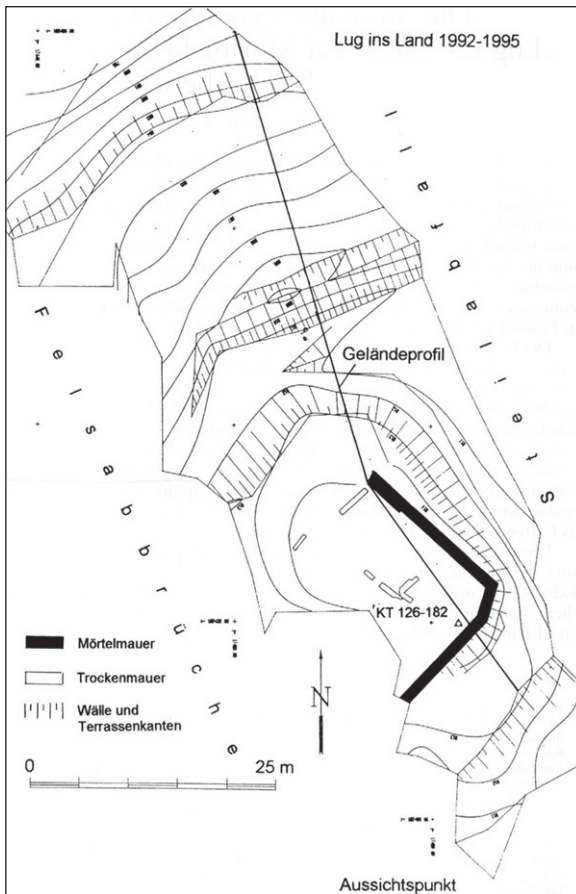


Fig. 3.72: Lug ins Land. Plan of the hilltop site (Gostencnik 2000, Fig. 1).

also timber buildings, which suggests a social differentiation of the inhabitants. Certain metal and ceramic items point to lively trading and diverse artisanal activities that include metalworking.

The fortification at **Lug ins Land** (Fig. 3.72) lies near Molzbichl, high above the Drau/Drava valley (Gostencnik 2000). It is 90×30 m large and naturally excellently protected. Two Late Antique phases have been established. In the first phase, drystone buildings with loam floors were erected on the plateau and later burnt down; the quantity of the recovered pottery suggests permanent settlement. In the second phase, a rampart was built on the north side where access was easier, while terraces with stone retaining walls were created on the plateau. The summit was girded with substantial, 1.2 m thick mortared walls. This phase also yielded only Late Antique pottery that cannot be more precisely dated. Lug ins Land has a good visual communication with Duel and Teurnia, hence could have served as a signalling post and also offered permanent shelter for a small group of people.

The systematic investigations conducted between 1928 and 1931 on the hill of **Duel near Deutsch Feistritz** (Fig. 3.73) revealed a large Late Antique fort on a strategic location on the right bank of the Drau/Drava (Egger 1929; Petrikovits 1985, 236–237; Steinklauber 2013). The investigation results are only partially published and do not offer a more integral insight into the site. The fort was constructed on a roughly 250×110 m large plateau with very steep slopes on all sides and additionally protected with a stream. The 0.9 m thick defensive walls have two

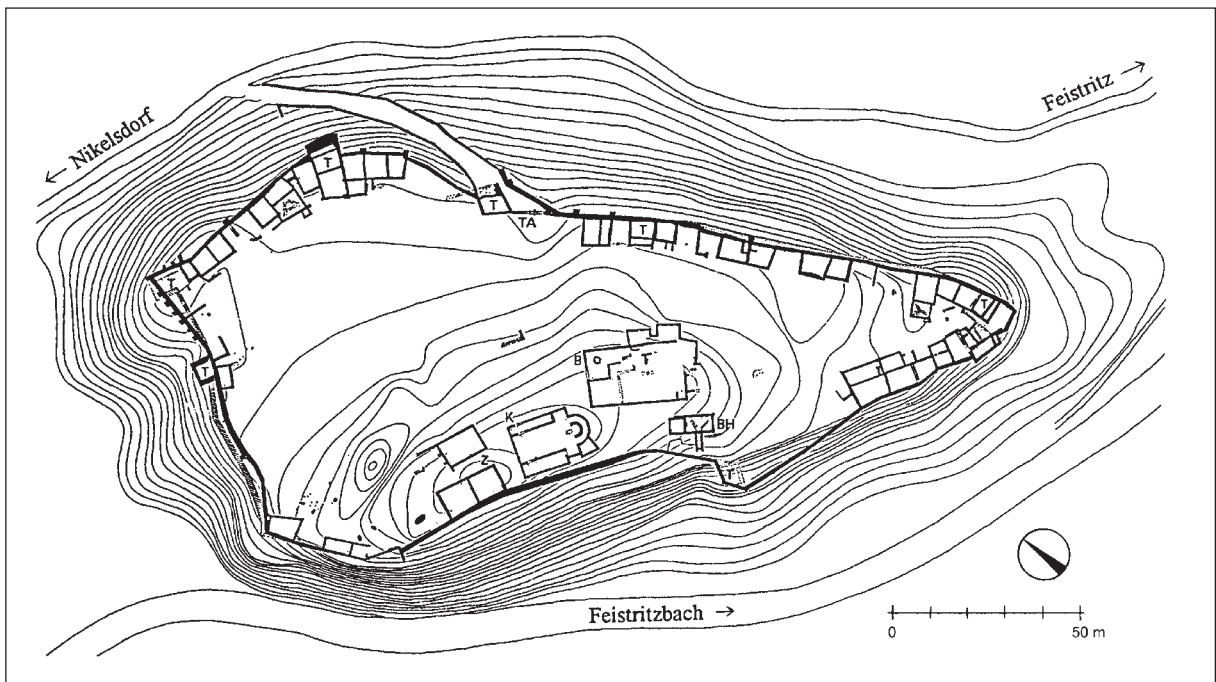


Fig. 3.73: Duel near Deutsch Feistritz. Plan of the fortification (Glaser 1996, Fig. 35).

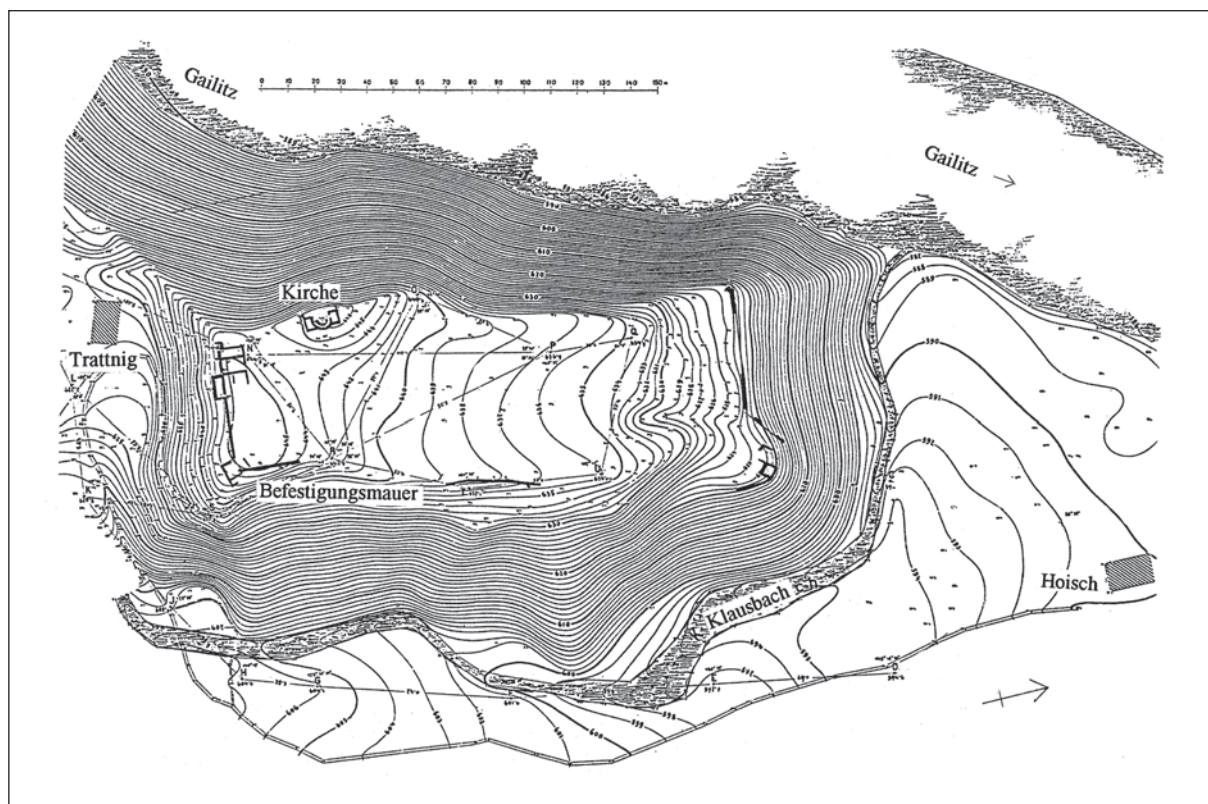


Fig. 3.74: Hoischhügel near Maglern. Plan of the fortification (Glaser 1996, Fig. 31).

phases that correspond with two thick layers of burnt debris. A particularly interesting construction feature is the triangular west terminal of the second-phase walls. Such terminals are a characteristic of Early Byzantine fortifications. Access to the fort from the north runs along a raised ramp and the entrance is reinforced with a large tower. An Early Christian church occupies the highest point of the fort interior, flanked by another large building with a baptistery (presumably also a church). Three smaller buildings were also unearthed, the function of which could not be reliably identified. Many masonry buildings leaned against the defensive walls from the interior, most of them interconnected; Egger marked some of them as towers on the plan of the site. A vast part of the interior was not built-up, though postholes suggest makeshift buildings. The fort is believed to have been established in the 5th century, while the form of the defensive elements suggests the second phase could be attributed to the time of Justinian's reconquista (Egger 1929, 211–212; Petrikovits 1985, 236–237). The later analysis of the small finds does not oppose such dating (Steinklauber 1990, 124; ead. 2013, 63–64). The fort controlled the traffic along the Drau/Drava valley and provided shelter for the local population in times of danger.

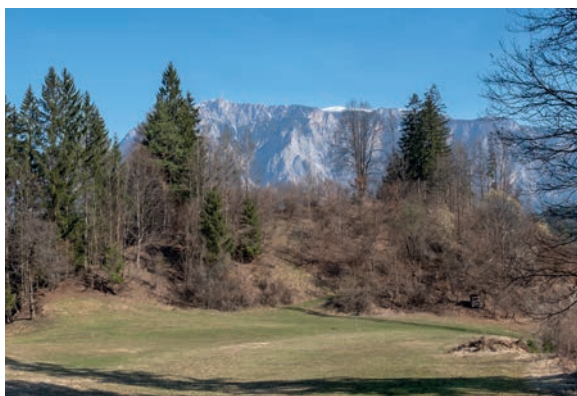


Fig. 3.75: Hoischhügel near Maglern. Substantial walls of the fortification (2023).

The poorly known site at **Hoischhügel near Maglern** (Figs. 3.74, 3.75) can also be seen as a military fort (Egger 1916, 97–104; Steinklauber 2013, 55–62). It was constructed along a major Roman road and is similar in size to the fort on Duel (210 × 90 m). It has substantial walls running in fairly straight lines and incorporating towers and buildings leaning on them from the interior. The fort hosts the remains of a large Early Christian church. Excavations were mainly conducted here in the early 20th century, later there was only lim-

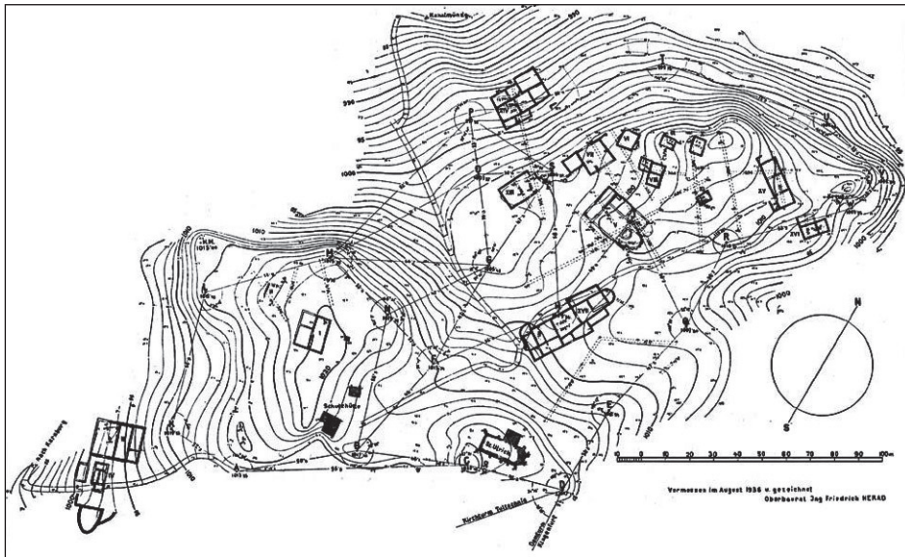


Fig. 3.76: Ulrichsberg. Plan of the hilltop settlement (Egger 1950, Fig. 6).



Fig. 3.77: Ulrichsberg from the south-west (1999).

ited trial trenching conducted in 1982 and 1983, hence many a question remains open. The time of the fort construction can also not be identified more precisely; similarly as for Duel, Egger presumes this occurred in the late 4th century (Egger 1929, 214) and the settlement likely lasted to the late 6th century (Steinklauber 2013, 64). Considering its strategic position, the garrison in the fort certainly performed demanding tasks in the 6th century, which can be indirectly inferred from the hoard finds of solidi from the late 6th century.

Investigations in the fortification on **Tscheltschnigkogel (Kadischn)** were conducted before World War II and only published in preliminary reports (Dolenz, Görlich 1935; Glaser 1996, 66–68; Steinklauber 2020). The

fortification boasts a highly exposed strategic location on a major Roman road, it is naturally well-protected and affords unimpeded view over vast areas. The defended surface measured 270×180 m and was only protected with 0.9 m thick walls in two areas where access was easier. In the east, defensive walls protected the main entrance to the summit that was flanked with a pair of towers. A single building was excavated in the interior; it had two rooms, the larger of which had heating. Two timber buildings presumably leaned onto the defensive walls on the west. The interior revealed a multitude of coins and other small finds that roughly date the site to the 4th–6th centuries. Pieces of church furnishings also indicate the existence of a church. Found below the set-

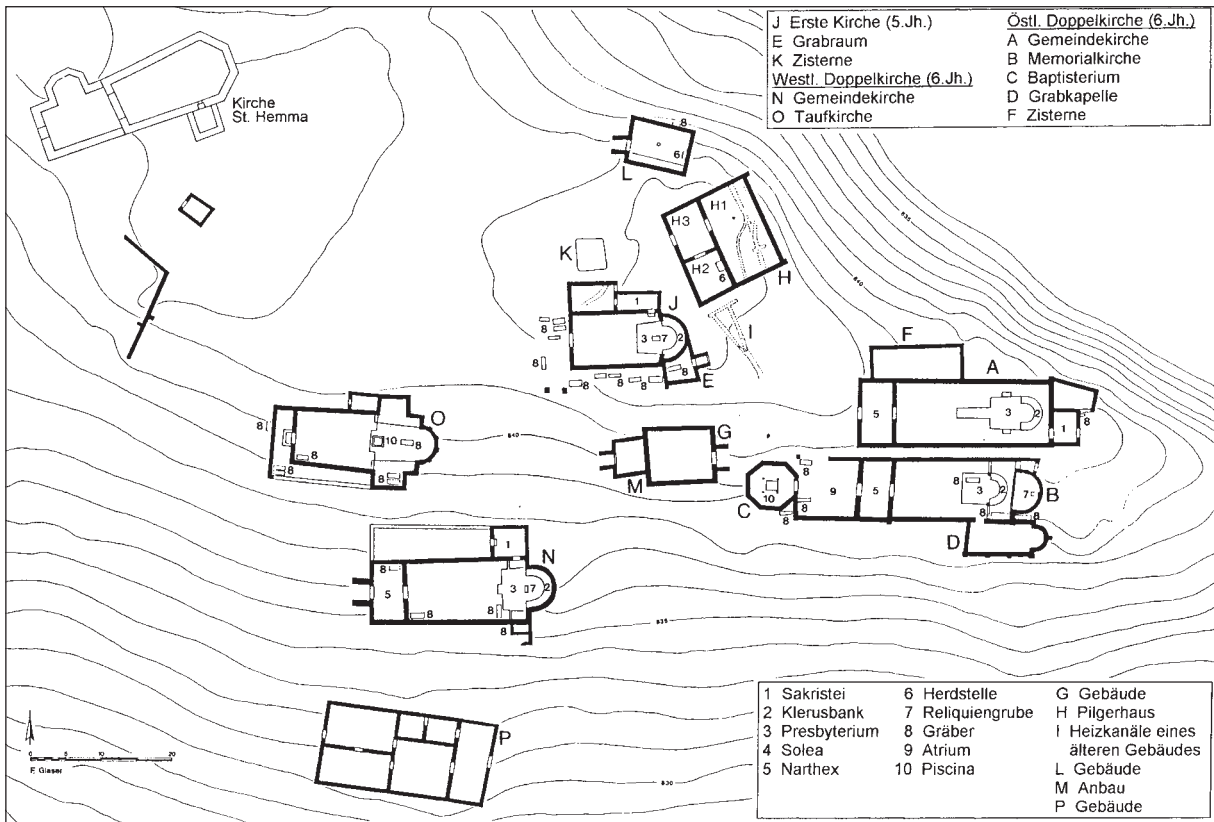


Fig. 3.78: Hemmaberg above Globasnitz. Plan of the hilltop settlement (Glaser 2008, Fig. 10).



Fig. 3.79: Hemmaberg above Globasnitz from the north-west (1995).

tlement was an Early Christian cemeterial church with several burials.

The high hill (1022 m asl) of **Ulrichsberg above Zollfeld** (Figs. 3.76, 3.77, 3.303) holds the remains of a Late Antique settlement (Egger 1950; Glaser 1996,

59–60). It is a clustered settlement on a protected terrace just below the summit, composed of different houses and an Early Christian church. The settlement is excellently naturally protected in the east, but lacks defensive walls in the west. A later survey has shown a chronologically



Fig. 3.80: Hemmaberg above Globasnitz. Remains of the western double church (2017).

undetermined rampart located at a greater distance from the central part of the settlement and enclosing a much larger area (Glaser 1996, 58, Fig. 24). The area has not been investigated and it is not clear whether the settlement was actually larger or was the additional area intended for sheltering people from the lowland. Only a rough dating can be given, to the 4th–6th centuries.

The hilltop settlement on **Hemmaberg above Globasnitz** (Figs. 3.78–3.80, 3.311) is located at the north foot of the Karawanken/Karavanke Mountains, where long years of investigations unearthed an ecclesiastical centre that was presumably also a pilgrimage site (Glaser 1991; id. 1997, 96–120; id. 2008, 617; Ladstätter 2000; Eitler, Seidel 2022). The hill rises some 300 m above the surrounding plain and is well-protected with rocky slopes, while the more readily accessible south side is protected with walls. The vast summit, measuring roughly 10 ha, has so far revealed as many as six Early Christian churches and several residential buildings, the function of which has been related to the ecclesiastical centre. Housing is believed to have been arranged along the defensive walls. The first church was presumably erected in the early 5th century, two double churches in the early 6th century and another church under the Frankish rule. The settlement remains largely unexplored and further research may shed light on the function of the complex; the site may even have functioned as an ecclesiastical administration centre. The associated necropolis dates to the 6th century.

Hungary

The eastern foothills of the Alps at the western fringes of the Pannonian Plain hold the remains of a typical, but poorly known example of a fortified hilltop settlement at **Velem – Szent Vid** (Quast 2011; Filipec et al. 2020, 201–205). This is a large multi-period site with several horizons of a prehistoric fortified settlement, but also habitation remains from the 4th and 5th centuries. This high (569 m asl) and naturally well-protected hill was already fortified with a rampart in prehistory, when it hosted numerous habitation terraces used and modified also later. The summit plateau revealed a timber building from the second half of the 4th century. Publications mention Late Roman finds and stray finds from the 5th and 6th centuries. The area below the summit plateau revealed several inhumation burials with artificially deformed skulls, dating to the 5th century.

The long frontier of the Roman Empire along the Danube (*Ripa Pannonica*) is marked by a series of fortresses exposed to incessant pressure from barbarian peoples from the north and east (Soproni 1978; id. 1985; Visy 2003). Research has shown an extensive renovation of the limes under Diocletian and again under Valentinian, which was mirrored in the contemporary construction of forts in the hinterland. The reinforcement and renovation of these fortifications in the 4th century represent the efforts of the central government to protect this vital part of the Empire. The group of forts built in

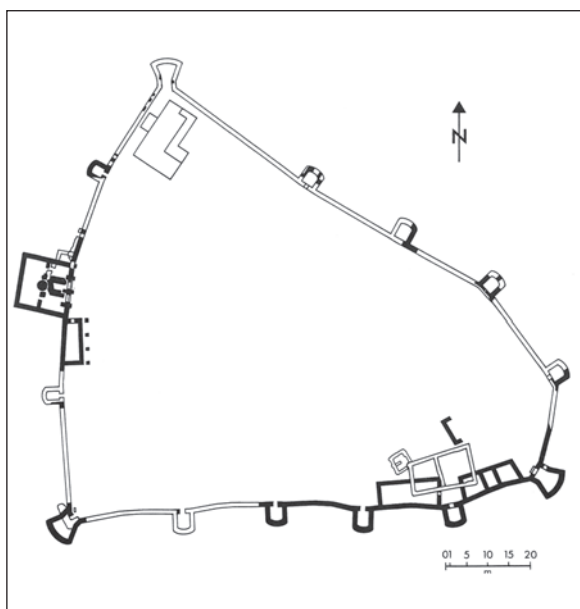


Fig. 3.81: Sibrig domb near Visegrad. Plan of the hilltop site (Soproni 1985, Fig. 27).

the 4th century shows a different choice of location with regard to the earlier ones, now sited in higher-lying and naturally well-protected locations, similarly as we observe across the hinterland of the eastern Alps and the Balkan Peninsula.

An example of a fairly typical military fort with protruding towers is at **Sibrig domb near Visegrad** (Figs. 3.81, 3.82). It was constructed on an elevation above the

Danube, well-protected on three sides and affording an excellent view over a wide stretch of the limes in the Danube knee (Soproni 1978, 55–58). The fort was built in the 310s, partially modified under Constantine II and again under Valentinian, and finally abandoned around 378. Buildings were only observed along the defensive walls, while the interior was found to be empty. In the second phase, a large square tower was constructed at the entrance, which presumably retained its function as a watchtower long after the fort had been abandoned.

It is not clear whether some of the Pannonian villas with fortifications features (primarily towers) also belong to the group of newly-founded fortifications; the difficulty is that it is unclear whether these features are of a merely prestigious or also a defensive nature (Thomas 1980, 293–296). Considering their location in the lowland and often in the vicinity of other unfortified complexes, their defences seem rather symbolic, particularly if compared with the contemporary and well-protected ‘inner fortresses.’ As a typical example of a fortified Pannonian villa, we will therefore only present that at **Sümege**, north of Lake Balaton (Thomas 1964, 111–116; ead. 1980, 312; Mulvin 2002, 104). The villa was presumably already built in the 3rd century, with its fortified design pointing to the late period of villa construction. Its defensive walls are reinforced with a protruding rectangular tower in each of the four corners. The interior holds houses arranged along the defensive walls and around a vast courtyard. A large rectangular building of an east-west orientation was found in the vicinity; this was presumably an Early Christian church dated on the basis of the construction technique into the 4th century.



Fig. 3.82: Sibrig domb near Visegrad. Tower in the western walls with the Danube River in the background (2011).

The well-researched fort at **Tokod** (Figs. 3.83, 3.84) was created at a major road junction, only 3 km from the Danube (Mócsy 1981; Soproni 1985, 58–60). The 142 × 118 m large fort was constructed on a gentle slope and enclosed with 1.6 m thick walls reinforced with horseshoe-shaped towers in the corners, semicircular ones along the sides and two rectangular ones flanking the entrance. The interior held a large *horreum*. The recent GPR surveys has revealed an apsidal building next to the horreum, but also several other buildings (Kocsis 2020). The creation of the fort has been set to the Valentinian period. Some decades later, timber housing and drystone buildings were erected in the interior. The late phase of the fort correlates well with the associated inhumation cemetery from the 5th century.

Fig. 3.83: Tokod. Plan of the fort (Kocsis 2020, Fig. 8).

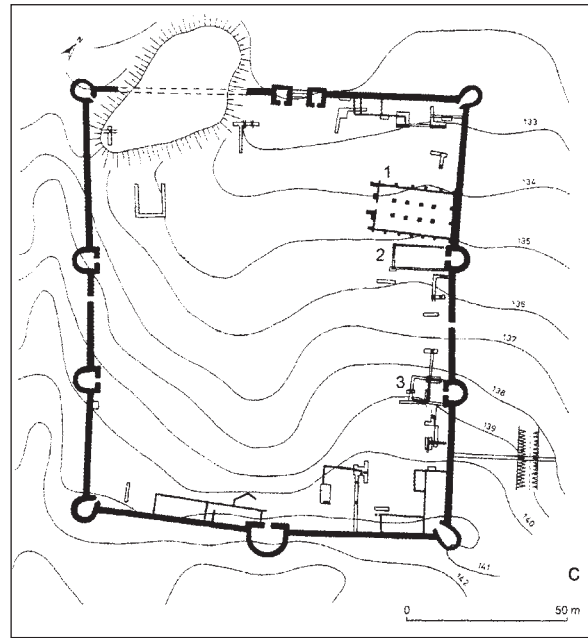


Fig. 3.84: Tokod. Remains of the walls (2011).

Slovenia

Research into Late Antique fortifications in Slovenia has been ongoing since the late 1960s. Many are only poorly known, but there is a fair number of settlements that have been systematically investigated and also comprehensively published.

Systematic investigations over the last three decades have gradually shed light on one of the most important Late Antique centres at the western edge of Slovenia, at **Tonovcov grad near Kobarid** (Figs. 3.85–3.88)

(Ciglenečki 1994; id. 2008; Ciglenečki et al. 2011; Modričan, Milavec 2011). This large and complex settlement is located in the valley of the River Soča, next to a major road connecting Carinthia and Friuli, and only some 20 km from the city of Forum Iulii (Cividale). The first reliable human traces from the Roman period can be dated to the second half of the 3rd century. They come in the shape of well-preserved bronze finds and coins, while we could not identify any contemporary architectural remains and the existence of defensive walls is questionable as the prehistoric rampart may have been reused for the purpose. The small amount of finds suggests this habitation phase was

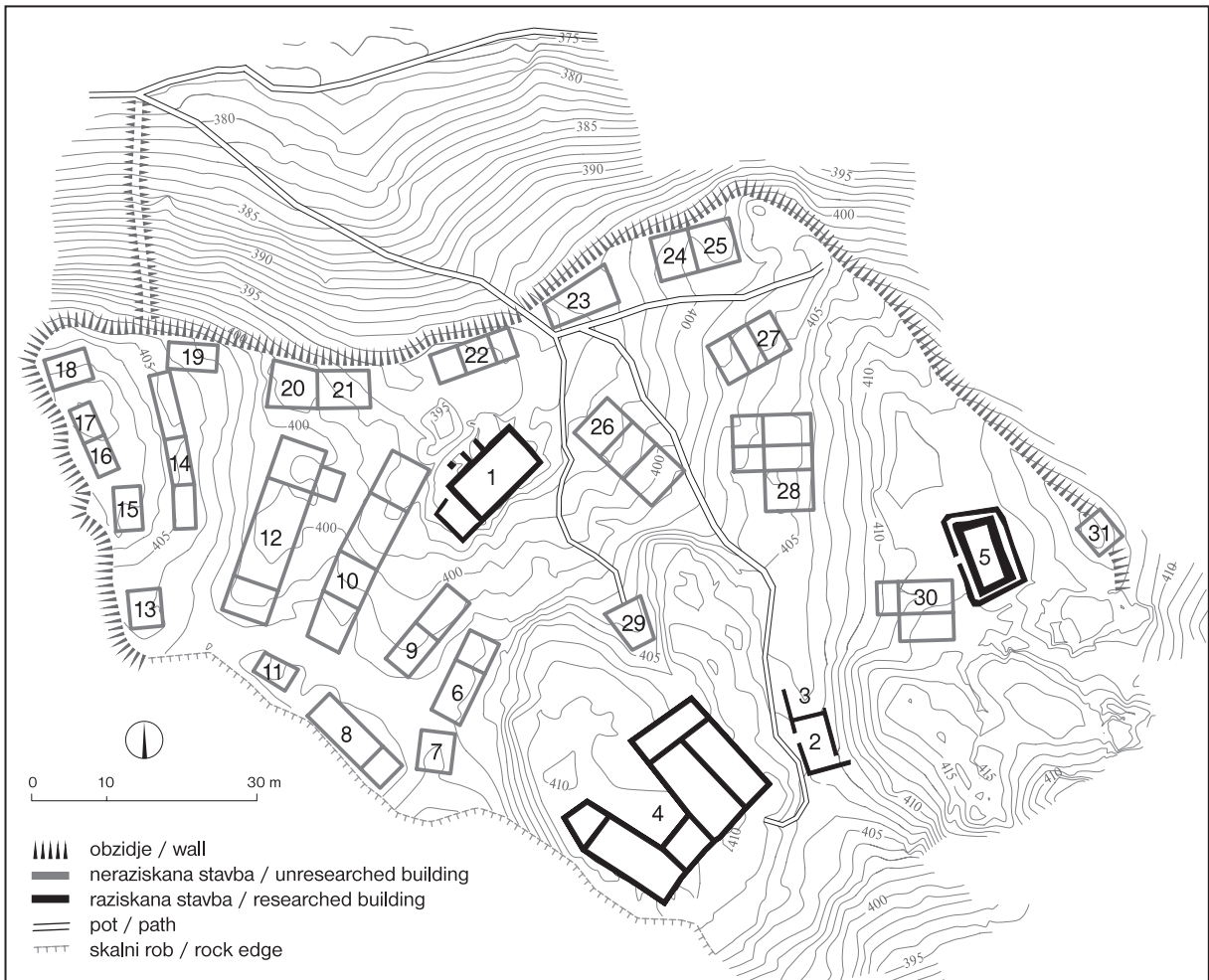


Fig. 3.85: Tonovcov grad near Kobarid. Plan of the hilltop settlement (Ciglencečki et al. 2011, Fig. 1.7).



Fig. 3.86: Tonovcov grad near Kobarid. Main part of the settlement with the excavated residential building (2010).



Fig. 3.87: The position of Tonovcov grad in the gorge behind Kobarid, above the Soča river (1996).



Fig. 3.88: Tonovcov grad near Kobarid. Cistern in the eastern part of the settlement (2010).

very short-lived. More intense habitation can be observed in the second half of the 4th and into the first third of the 5th century. Attributable to this phase are some of the modest remains of walls under later buildings. The considerable amount of military finds indicates the presence of an army garrison. In this time, the fort on Tonovcov grad was among the key points in the *Claustra Alpium*

Iuliarum defensive system that effectively controlled access to Italy from the north.

The main habitation phase at Tonovcov grad began in the last decade of the 5th century, when a heavily fortified settlement with numerous buildings was established here. The 150 × 90 m large summit was protected with precipitous slopes and defensive walls. Excavations unearthed roughly twenty masonry buildings, most of them partitioned into smaller rooms. Housing concentrates in the best-protected northern and western parts. Rising above these is a small rocky plateau that holds the remains of three well-preserved Early Christian churches and a *memoria*. Near the churches are traces of two cisterns, while a third one was investigated in the eastern, highest part of the settlement. In the part of easiest access, the settlement was protected with 0.8 m thick walls reinforced with a series of buildings leaning on them from the interior. The site defences include another wall, running perpendicular to the defensive walls steeply down the slope and enclosing a large area in front of the settlement, which provided shelter for people and livestock in times of danger. The large Late Antique building with an extension, located in the vicinity of the entrance to the

settlement, joined residential, storage and partly even economic functions and is thus in many respects typical of the period. The multitude of artefacts indicates this settlement existed from the end of the 5th to the initial decades of the 7th century. It was a large fortified settlement with an important ecclesiastical centre that served as a central settlement for a wide area of the Soča valley and also played a major military role.

The hilltop settlement on **Ajdna above Potoki** (Figs. 3.89–3.92, 3.308) is, in its location, a paradigmatic example of a naturally defended settlement (Leben, Valič 1978; Sagadin 1987; Vidrih Perko, Sagadin 2004, 219–221; Sagadin 2006). It is sited on a 1048 m asl high crag in the Karavanke Mountains that rises as much as 500 m above the River Sava. The approximately 120 × 10–30 m large settlement spreads on several terraces be-

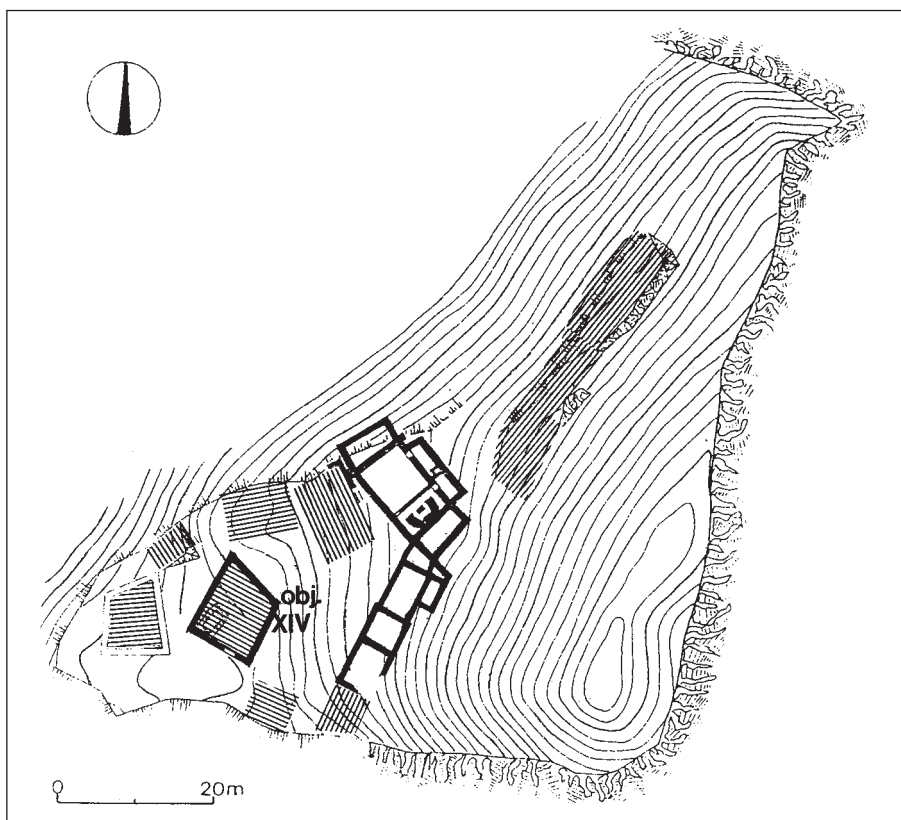


Fig. 3.89: Ajdna above Potoki. Plan of the hilltop settlement (Sagadin 1997, Fig. on the cover).

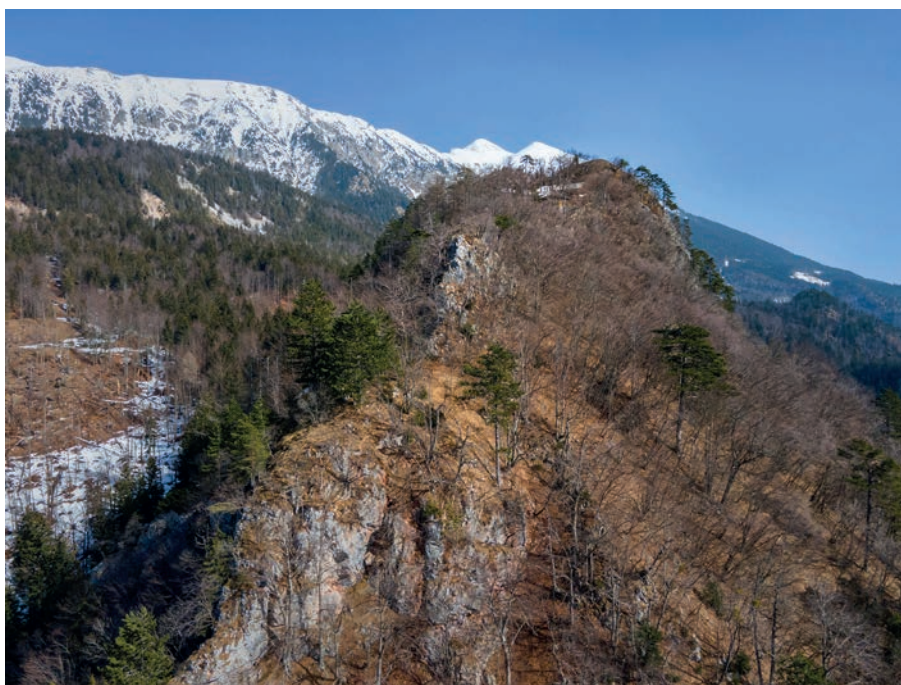


Fig. 3.90: Ajdna above Potoki. Crag from the southwest (2021).



Fig. 3.91: Ajdna above Potoki. Main part of the settlement with residential buildings and the church (2009).



Fig. 3.92: Ajdna above Potoki. Ruins of the residential buildings high above the Sava Valley (2009).

low the summit. Its excellent natural protection required no additional, man-made protection. The ruins of more than ten buildings are visible on the surface, of which only the church and four houses have thus far been excavated. The rich and varied small finds date the settlement to the second half of the 5th and the entire 6th century. The different iron tools indicate an autarchic way of life and the rare imported items point to modest trading contacts. Excavations on the lower terrace revealed two solidly constructed houses that both presumably had a cistern in the interior. A thick layer of burnt debris in

one shows that it was destroyed in a fire in the second half of the 6th century.

The naturally sufficiently protected rocky shelter on **Mali Njivč above Novaki** yielded a narrowly dated range of coins and other items that point to two habitation phases (Istenič 2015). The coins from the terraces show this ridge was used as a refuge in the third quarter of the 3rd century, while most other finds reveal the presence of a garrison stationed here in the last quarter of the 4th century, when it protected the road from Emona to Forum Iulii as part of the Late Roman defences of Italy.

The dominant rocky ridge of **Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin** (Figs. 3.93–3.96, 3.312) holds the remains of a vast Late Antique settlement (Svoljšak 1985; Ciglonečki 2021). Trial trenching, field surveys, LiDAR data and aerial imagery have revealed a settlement with substantial residential, defensive and sacral architecture. The ridge is naturally protected from three sides and has defensive walls in the exposed parts. A 2.5 m thick trans-

verse wall, bound with mortar, divides the approximately 4 ha large settlement in two differently fortified halves. The north half is naturally less well-protected and holds houses on several-metres-wide terraces. Trial trenching on one of these terraces confirmed the existence of a house with solid masonry walls. The houses took up the entire width of the terraces, while their length has not been established. The habitation terraces reach to a small saddle that holds visible remains of buildings and a cistern, on a raised plateau also the remains of a double church. Detectable in the south half are the outlines of numerous buildings of diverse and complex plans, in contrast to those in the north half. This part terminates in the remains of another church with a baptistery. The southern end of the settlement is a rocky area where early sources (Rutar 1886) mention numerous inhumation burials and tombs. In the south, the area protected with thick walls and precipitous slopes terminates in a large tower erected above a water source and accessed from the settlement via a set of rock-cut stairs. Most small finds date to the 5th and 6th centuries while the thick transverse wall was constructed later in the 6th century as revealed by an early layer below it. Iron tools point to an agrarian nature of the settlement, while the finds of weapons reveal a military presence at a major road leading to Italy from the east and north. The settlement

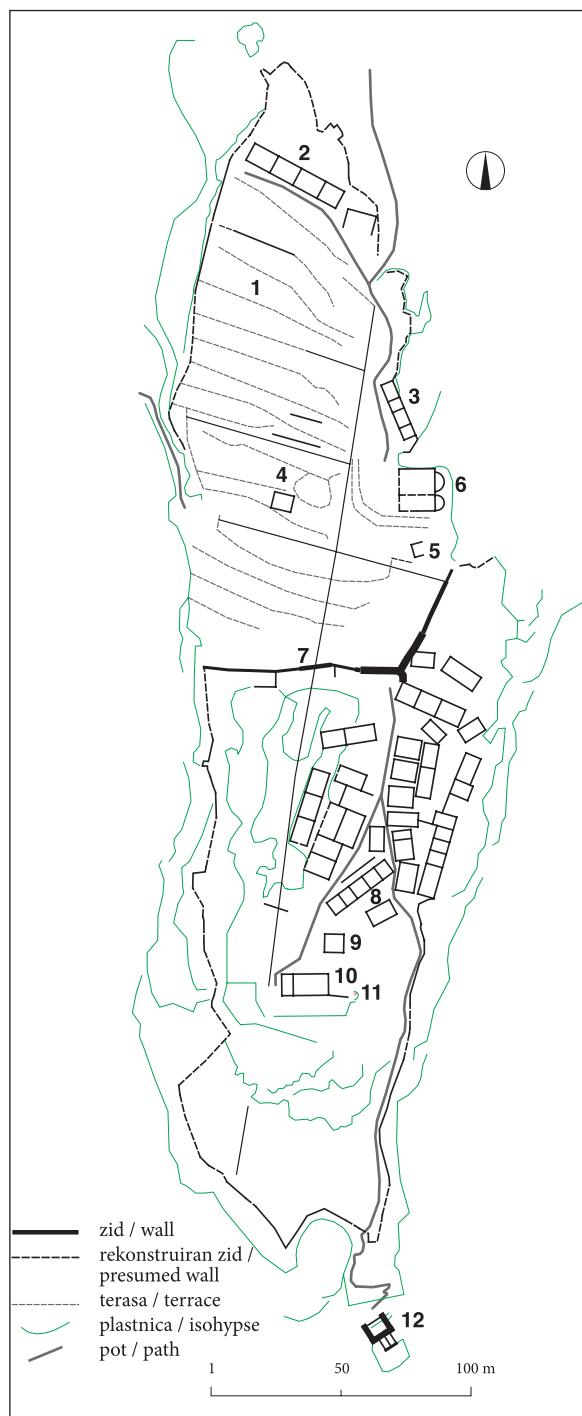


Fig. 3.93: Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin. Plan of the hilltop site (from Ciglonečki 2021, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.94: Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin. Tower above the spring on the southern foothills of the hilltop site preserved to a great height (2021).



Fig. 3.95: Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin. Settlement from the south-east (2021).



Fig. 3.96: Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin. Walls on the south-eastern part of the settlement (2021).

was important for a wide area and represented a semi-urban formation of the 6th century.

Castra (Ajdovščina) (Figs. 3.97–3.99) was the largest fortress of the *Clastra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system and presumed military headquarters (Osmuk 1997; Žerjal, Tratnik 2020; Urek, Kovačič 2020). It was established in the lowland, at the confluence of the Rivers Hubelj and Lokavšček, in the place of the earlier Roman station *Fluvio Frigido*. It was roughly polygonal in plan, measured 220 × 160 m (surface of 2.6 ha) and enclosed

with substantial walls with fourteen round towers. The walls were 3.85 m thick at the foundations and thinned in two steps towards the top. The west side was additionally protected with a ditch. Investigations of the walls, towers and interior buildings have provided a reliable dating of construction to the 270s or 280s (Osmuk 1997, 122, 126–127; Kos 2014, 36; Urek, Kovačič 2020, 57). The interior thus far revealed parts of five large buildings of a predominantly residential nature and small baths. The central part was taken up by a large complex

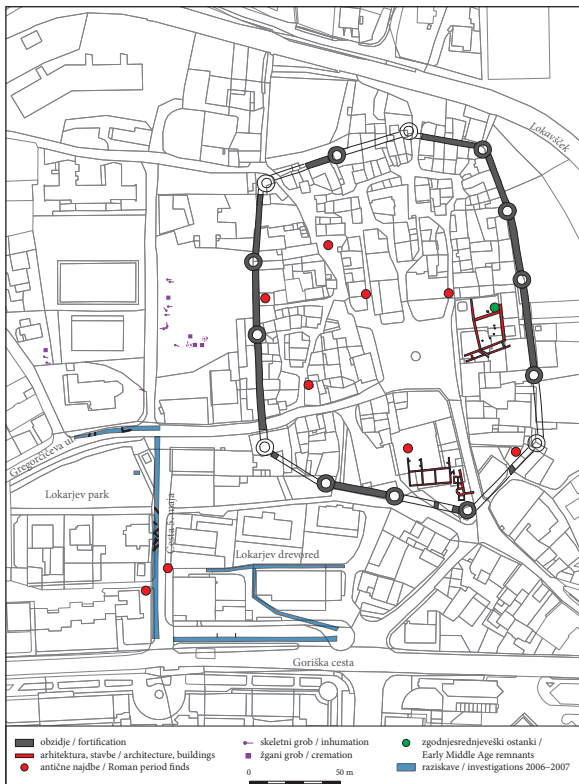


Fig. 3.97: Ajdovščina (*Castra*). Plan of the fortress and the settlement *extra muros* (Žerjal, Tratnik 2020, Fig. 2).

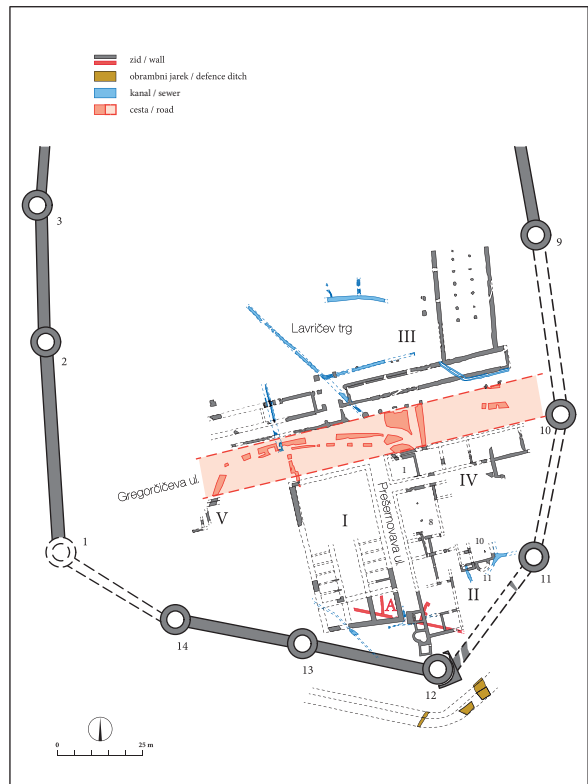


Fig. 3.98: Ajdovščina (*Castra*). Interior of the fortress with excavated buildings (from Urek, Kovačič 2020, Fig. 1).



Fig. 3.99: Ajdovščina (*Castra*). Eastern walls with a tower (2015).

that faced the main street and its monumental entrance opened onto a vast porticated inner court. Only one of its wings has been partially investigated, revealing a long development with four phases. Numerous coins from the last third of the 3rd and the 4th centuries, as well as

contemporary pottery and metal items (predominantly weapons) clearly outline the duration of this fortress at the foot of the Alps, but also show that life in a limited extent continued in the first three decades of the 5th century (Kos 2012, 285, 289).

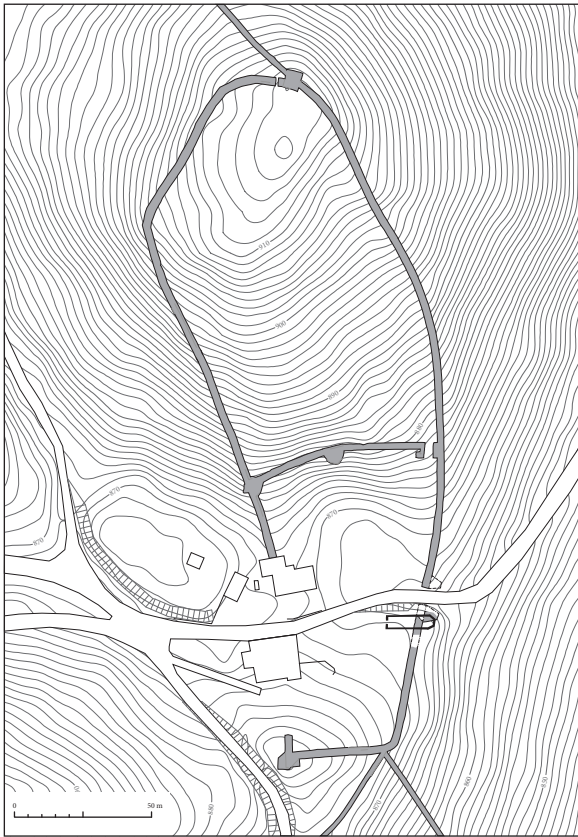


Fig. 3.100: *Ad Pirum* (Hrušica). Plan of the fortress (Kos 2020, Fig. 1).

The fortress of *Ad Pirum* (Hrušica) (Figs. 3.100–3.102) stands on the highest point of the Roman road across the Hrušica Pass (867 m asl) that connected Emona and Aquileia (Ulbert 1981; Kusetič et al. 2014; Kos 2014; id. 2020). It was elongated oval in plan and entirely adapted to the terrain, extending across two peaks and the saddle in between. It covered a $250 \times 35\text{--}86$ m large area. The lower part, in the saddle, was more intensely inhabited and also hosted the Roman road. It was girded with 2.7 m thick walls and divided roughly along the middle with an equally thick transverse wall. Trial trenches showed it was uninhabited in the upper part, which likely served a refugial purpose in case the lower and more easily accessible part was captured, or served as a place to host a larger army unit. The fortress has three polygonal towers and a substantial square tower at the highest point, which served as a watch post. Two other polygonal towers guarded the east entrance; as much can also be surmised for the opposite, west entrance. Late Antique habitations concentrated in the lower part along the Roman road, where investigations revealed several buildings that included one with an apsidal room and hypocaust heating, a cistern, a square building and a log house. The site is reliably dated with numerous coins and other finds (Ulbert 1981; Kos 2020). Some 400 coins have been recovered, most of which fall to the 3rd and 4th centuries. Research of the southwest tower revealed that it was initially square and constructed simultaneously with the defensive walls, destroyed in a massive fire, which coin finds date to the mid-4th century, and then renovated under Valentinian in a sub-pentagonal shape (Svoljšak 2015). The fortress was abandoned in the early 5th century. It is associated



Fig. 3.101: *Ad Pirum* (Hrušica) from the south-east (2022).



Fig. 3.102: *Ad Pirum* (Hrušica). Northern part of the fortress and the transverse wall with two towers and the guarded entrance (2017).

with three differently long walls with towers of the *Claustra* system.

The large hilltop settlement at **Ajdovščina above Rodik** (Figs. 3.103, 3.104) was established on top of a prehistoric hillfort, on a dominant hill (804 m asl) close to the Roman road connecting Emona and Tergeste (Slapšak 1978; id. 1997). The impressive prehistoric stonework rampart, enclosing a c. 260 × 200 m large area, was reused to defend the fortification. The interior held substantial ruins of large and well-built edifices of complex plans (Mušič 1999) that greatly differ from the contemporary and later Late Antique buildings known

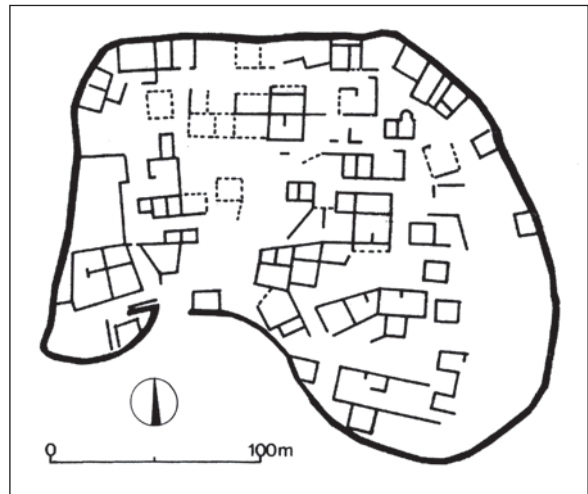


Fig. 3.103: Ajdovščina above Rodik. Plan of the hilltop site (Slapšak 1997, unpaginated).



Fig. 3.104: Ajdovščina above Rodik. Dominant hill with the settlement from the south-west (2022).

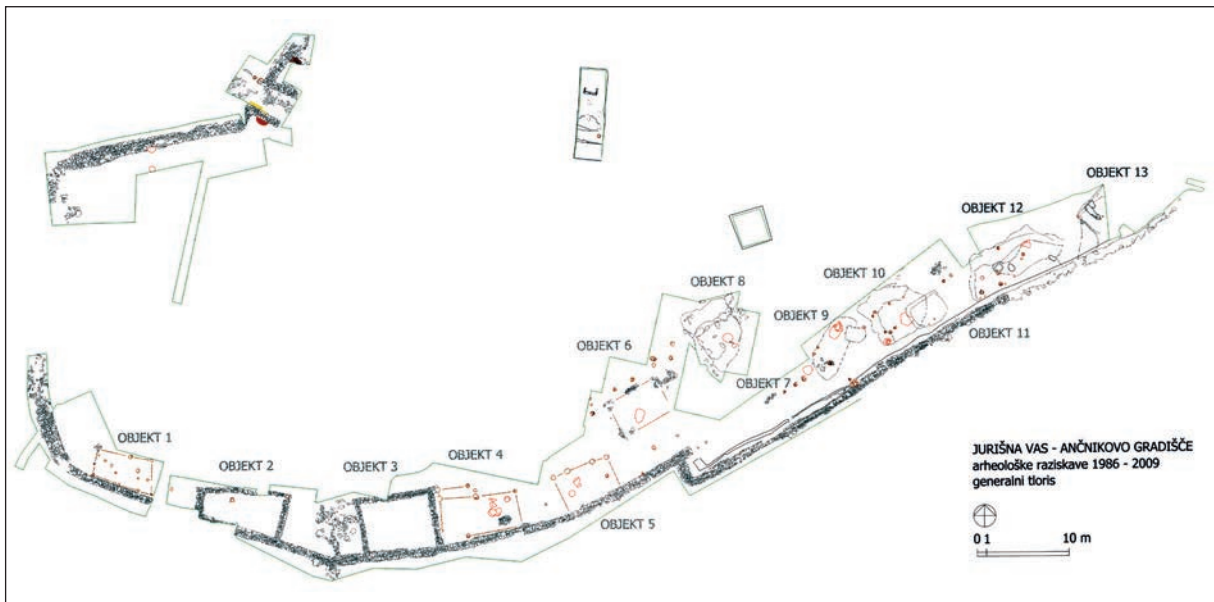


Fig. 3.105: Ančnikovo gradišče near Jurišna vas. Plan of the fortification (Ciglenečki 2015, Fig. 10).

in the eastern Alpine area. Excavations also unearthed part of a two-phase building with an apse. The rich small finds indicate the settlement was inhabited from the 4th to the mid-5th century. The imported goods from the first half of the 5th century could be linked to the *annona* (Vidrih Perko 1997, 349; Vidrih Perko, Župančič 2003, 463–467). Its location just above an important road junction in the immediate hinterland of the Alpine barrier walls and the excellent view over the surrounding area indicate that we might see its role in connection with military events and also explain its increased significance after the main road from Emona to Aquileia across Hrušica had been abandoned (Slapšak 1978, 546–547). It revealed high-quality constructions and a rich cultural layer. Little is known of its Late Antique defences. Trial trenching of the prehistoric rampart unearthed no later defensive elements and suggested that the old rampart must have sufficed, while the absence of stronger defensive walls was the most likely reason for the settlement being abandoned in the 6th century.

The well-investigated hilltop fortification from the second half of the 4th and first half of the 5th century include **Ančnikovo gradišče near Jurišna vas** (Figs. 3.105–3.107) (Strmčnik 1997, 272–279; Strmčnik Gulič, Ciglenečki 2003a; Modrijan 2017; ead. 2020). It lies on a ridge on the eastern foothills of the Pohorje Mountains, at 700 m asl. In the Late Roman period, the most exposed parts of its summit were protected with 1.5 m thick walls and the entrance strengthened with a pair of parallel walls. Two large masonry and several timber buildings leaned onto the defensive walls from the interior, which was largely empty. The fortification was initially marked as a refuge, but the defensive architecture and charac-



Fig. 3.106: Ančnikovo gradišče near Jurišna vas. Walls and the strengthened entrance in the northern part of the fortification (2016).



Fig. 3.107: Ančnikovo gradišče near Jurišna vas. Masonry buildings from the south-western part of the fortification (1998).

teristic military finds unearthed later suggest a military nature. The location offers effective control over a vast area, from Poetovio to the many Late Roman posts in the mountainous hinterland of Celeia. The masonry buildings along the most exposed part of the fortification undoubtedly housed a small garrison and the empty space could have sheltered a large number of refugees and livestock, while the timber buildings could be the dwellings of farmers and shepherds.

Rifnik near Šentjur (Figs. 3.108–3.110) hosts one of the fortified hilltop settlements in the eastern Alpine area that was investigated earliest and is today best-known (Schmid 1943; Bolta 1981; Pirkmajer 1994, 46–47; Bierbrauer 2003; Bausovac, Pirkmajer 2012, 33; Ciglencečki et al. 2020, 179–180, 235–236). The dominant hill rises high above the surrounding area and is naturally well-protected from all sides. The 221 m long and 1 m thick walls protected the settlement in the more easily accessible southern and western parts. The first walls without towers were most likely constructed in the late 4th or early 5th century, while rectangular protruding towers were added in the 6th century. Investigations at Tower 3 provided indirect evidence for dating the late phase of the defensive walls, showing that a large four-room building from the early 6th century was torn down when the defensive walls were modified (Bausovac, Pirkmajer 2012, 33). The interior revealed houses of a well-built and mortared construction. Simple buildings with one or two rooms concentrated in the east and only the above-mentioned long building – undoubtedly the dwelling of a small garrison – was located in the most vulnerable location. There are also several buildings less well-built of poorly durable materials along the interior



Fig. 3.108: Rifnik near Šentjur. Tower and walls from the 6th century above the earlier walls (2003).

of the defensive walls. A large single-aisled church with a baptistry was excavated in the highest part of the settlement, while a smaller apsed church came to light in the west part of the summit plateau. A large part of the 1.65 ha large interior, protected with walls and precipitous slopes, was empty and may either have welcomed people seeking shelter or was intended for agricultural purposes (gardens, pasture). The large quantity of small finds allow us to date the houses and churches from the late 5th to the late 6th century. The defensive wall reinforcement postdates the Byzantine victory over the Goths, when the church on the highest point was also renovated and enlarged; both of these features are characteristic of Justinian period renovations of Late Antique forts across a large part of the Byzantine Empire. Of great importance was the discovery,

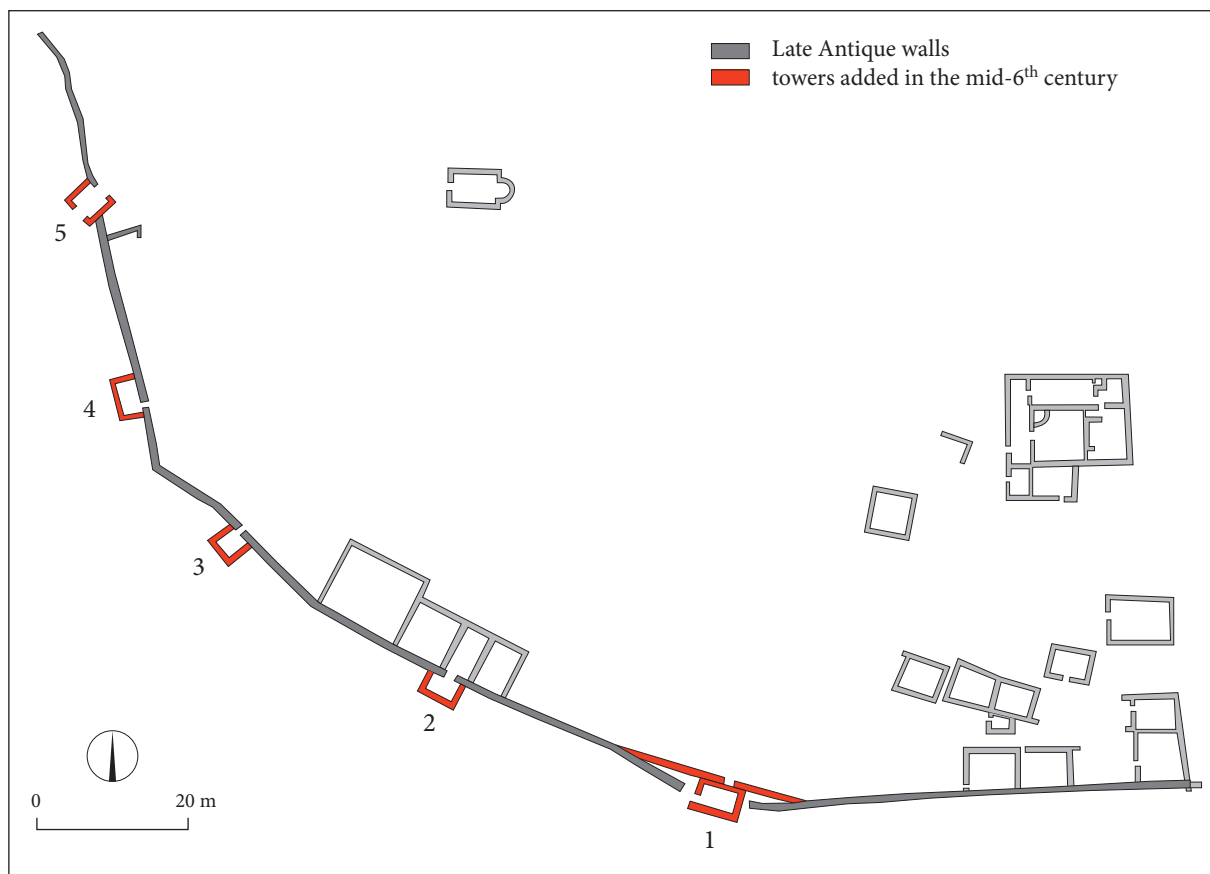


Fig. 3.109: Rifnik near Šentjur. Plan of the fortification (Ciglenečki 2020, Fig. 12.7).



Fig. 3.110: Rifnik near Šentjur. Aerial view from the south-west (2023).

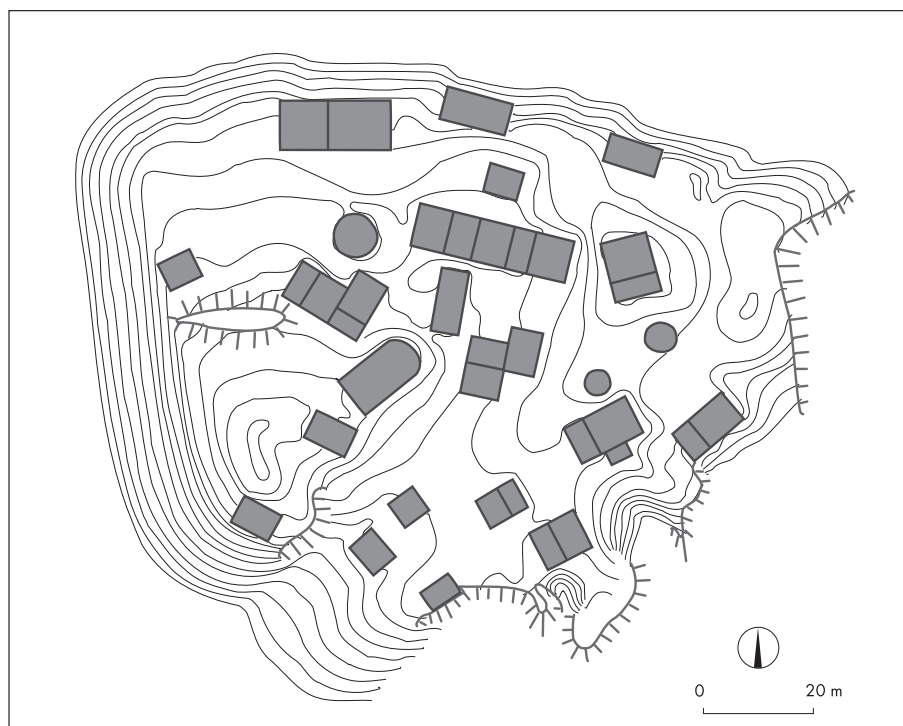


Fig. 3.111: Gradec near Prapretno. Plan of the hilltop site (Ciglenečki 2011b, Fig. 5.9).



Fig. 3.112: Gradec near Prapretno. Panoramic view from the north (1975).



Fig. 3.114: Gradec near Prapretno. Rocky plateau from the south (1977).



Fig. 3.113: Gradec near Prapretno. Remains of the Late Antique buildings are seen in the relief (1977).

at the beginning of modern excavations, of the large associated cemetery with diagnostic goods, which proves continuous habitation from the late 5th to at least the late 6th century. Numerous grave goods correspond well with the material culture known from the settlement.

The Late Antique settlement at **Gradec near Prapretno** (Figs. 3.111–3.114) lies in the hinterland of Roman Celeia, in an area removed from major Roman roads (Ciglenečki 1976; id. 1981; Bausovac 2003). Hidden in the mountains at 732 m asl, it is a characteristic example of a permanently inhabited Late Antique hilltop settlement. The rocky plateau with building remains is sufficiently naturally protected and needs no man-made fortification. The field surveys and trial trenching on the

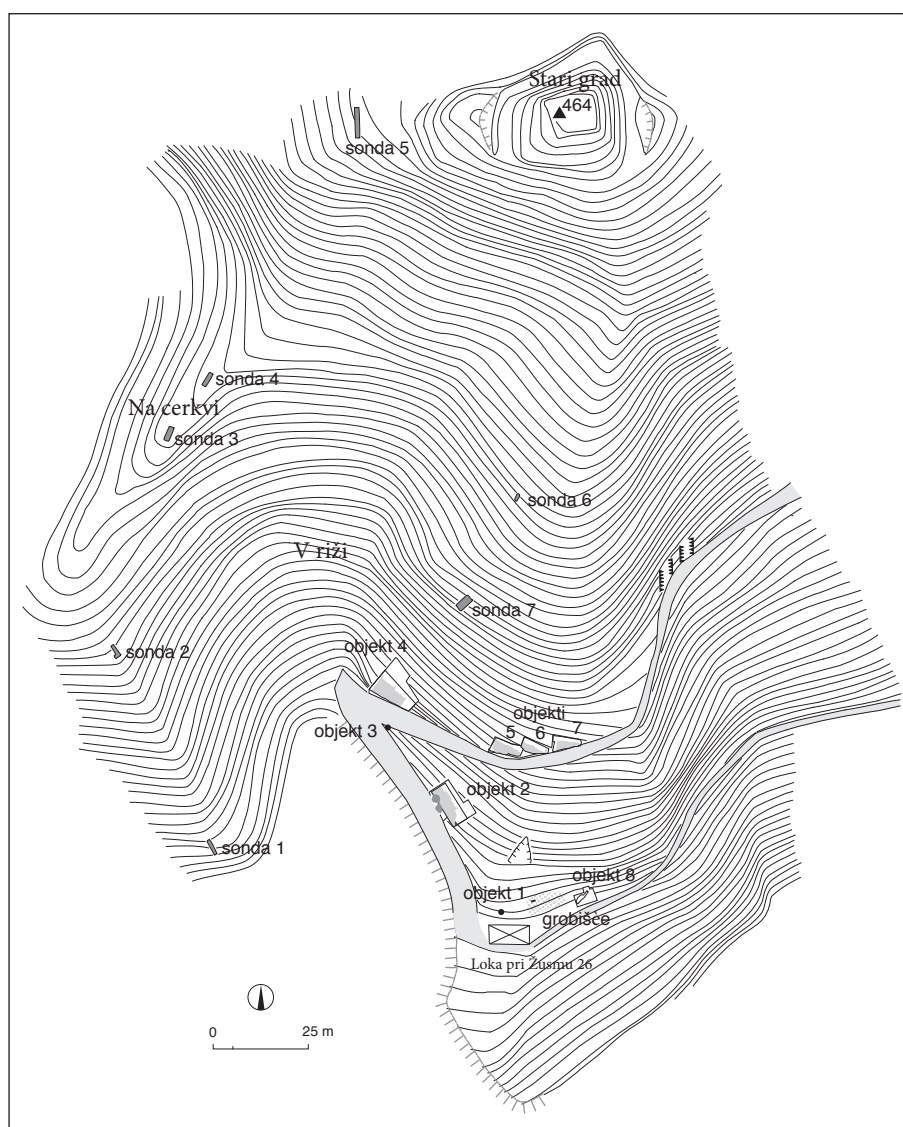


Fig. 3.115: Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu. South-eastern part of the settlement with partially excavated houses (Ciglenečki 2000, Fig. 71).

100 × 90 m large plateau revealed the remains of at least 21 well-preserved buildings. They had one, two or more rooms and some were fitted with cisterns. Their size and distribution indicates social differentiation within a small, but highly effectively organised settlement that made good use of every inch of protected space. The highest part of the interior holds the vestiges of a large building with an eastward orientation – undoubtedly an Early Christian church. Also standing out is a long building with five rooms located next to the main entrance, which probably accommodated a small garrison. A few artefacts from the second half of the 3rd, second half of the 4th and early 5th century allow for the possibility that people occupied this naturally protected location already in this time. The mortared masonry buildings visible on the surface indicate a planned layout with the church in the centre. The

bulk of recovered artefacts indicate a dating to the second half of the 5th, the 6th and possibly the early 7th century.

The fortified settlement on **Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu** (Figs. 3.115–3.118) stands out among the densely spaced Late Antique settlements in the hinterland of Celeia in its location and architecture (Ciglenečki 1987a, 43–44; id. 2000). The limited rescue investigations revealed a settlement mostly covering the vast southern slope of the hill and only partly extending onto the summit. In spite of this unusual location, the settlement was naturally well-protected with steep slopes on three sides and two parallel ditches guarding the eastern slope. In combination with a slightly raised rocky ridge behind them, the ditches protected the settlement in the most easily accessible part and also separated it from the adjacent burial



Fig. 3.116: Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu. Slope with the settlement from the south (1991).



Fig. 3.117: Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu. Remains of the buildings cut into the rocky slope (1981).



Fig. 3.118: Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu. Small building of a cult nature from the south-eastern part of the settlement (1981).

grounds. The defences appear highly improvised, which is understandable as the hidden location provided protection in itself. Surveys indicated that the buildings were distributed evenly across the artificial terraces hewn into the bedrock across a sizeable portion of the roughly 300×200 m large protected hillside. Houses were constructed of timber and some were found to have partition walls and hearths. A large building in the centre of the settlement had channels, which most likely represent the remains of a modest Late Antique heating system. The lower edge of the settlement held a small masonry building, which had a shallow apse in

one of the walls and in it a small stone altar, suggesting a building of a cult nature. Its proximity to a small Late Antique necropolis with predominantly children's burials may point to a cemeterial sacral building. The beginnings of permanent habitation here date to the second half of the 4th century. The small finds and stratigraphic evidence show that the settlement may have been continually inhabited into the 6th century and possibly even beyond, though later finds can only reliably be dated to the 8th and 9th centuries. Evidence also shows that two buildings burnt down and were abandoned roughly towards the end of the 6th century.

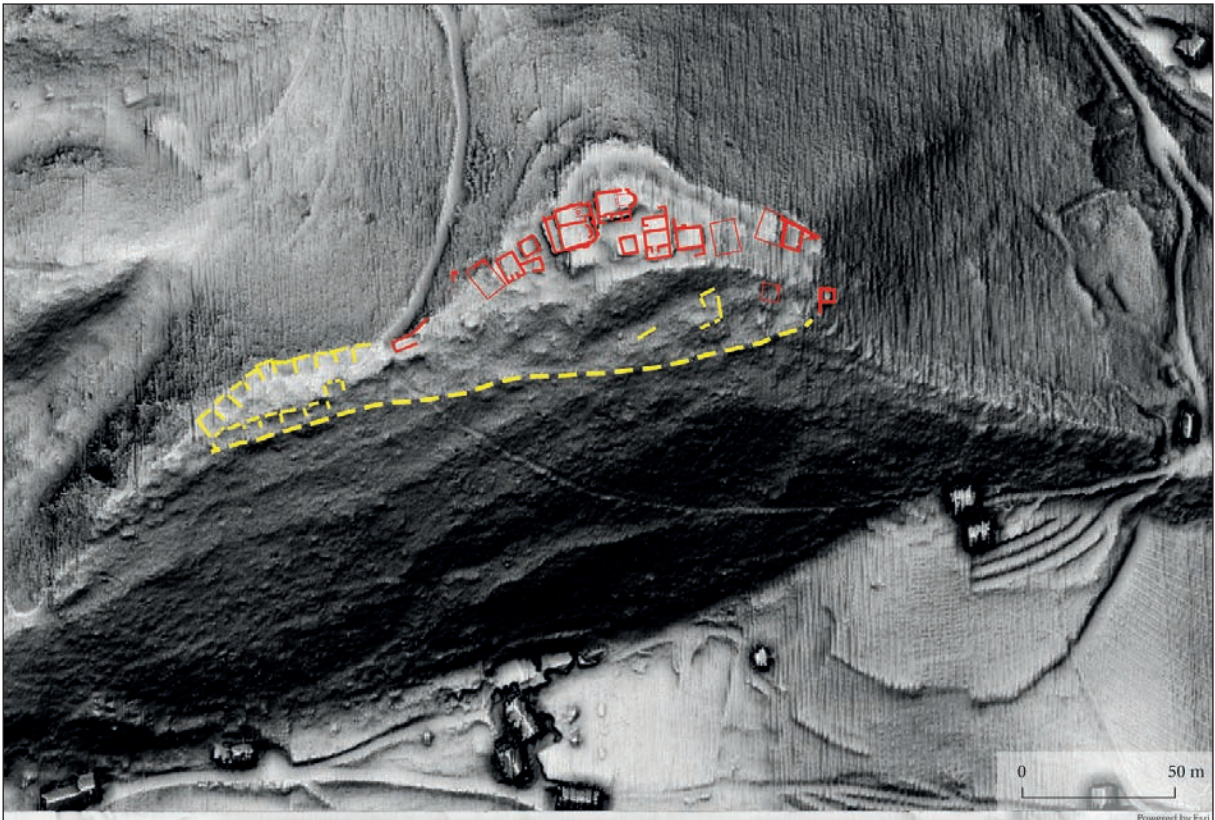


Fig. 3.119: Ajdovski gradec above Vranje. Plan of the hilltop site (red: from Knific 1994, Fig. 4; yellow: LiDAR-derived DEM proven by field survey). Source: ArcGIS, Esri, Slovenija Lidar TlaZgradbe D96, © Ministrstvo za kulturo RS).

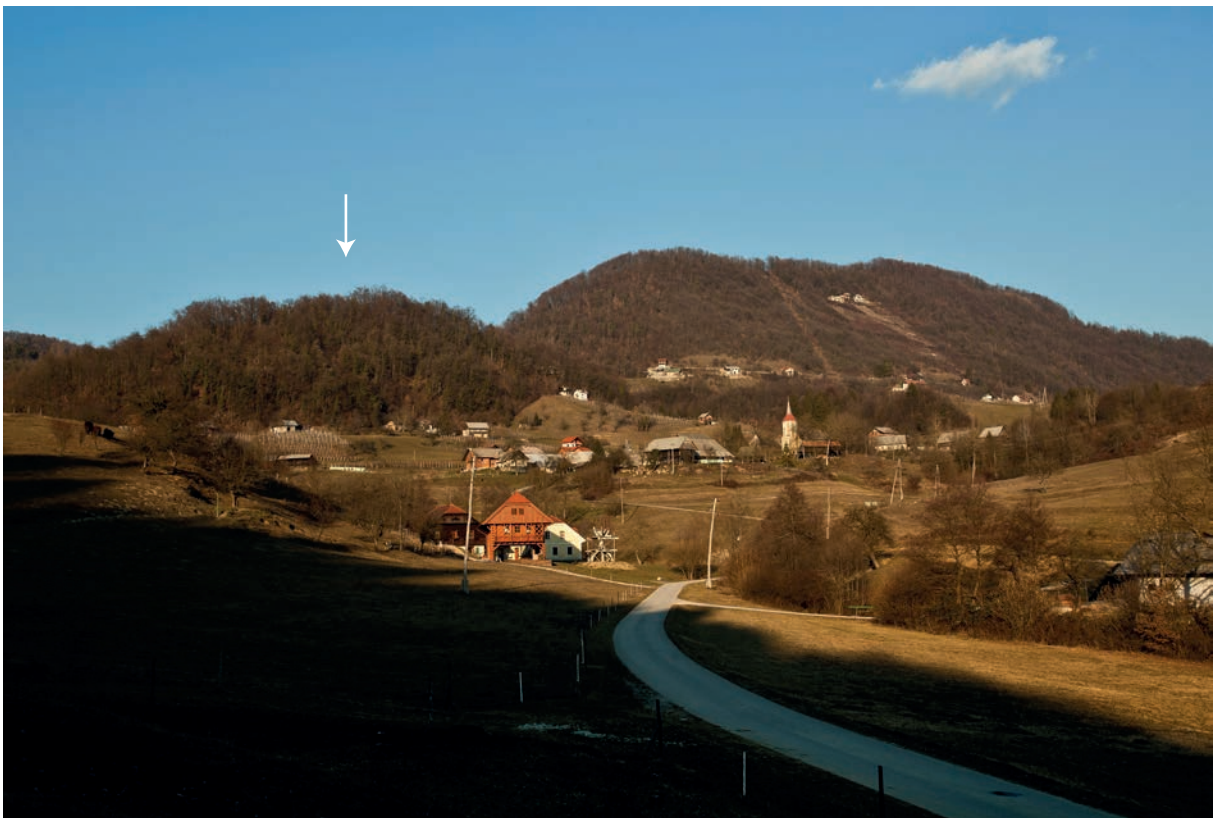


Fig. 3.120: Ajdovski gradec above Vranje. Fortified settlement from the south (2016).

The fortified settlement on **Ajdovski gradec above Vranje** (Figs. 3.119–3.121, 3.304) was long seen as a typical example of a Late Antique refuge with the focus on its role as an ecclesiastical centre (Riedl, Cuntz 1909; Petru, Ulbert 1975; Knific 1994; Glaser 1997, 73–78). It lies in a remote valley below Mount Bohor, extending across the top of a high domed hill and on its eastern and western slopes. It is naturally well-protected from all sides and measures 162 × 66 m. The first major excavations were already conducted here in 1901–1905, while the 1970s brought revision excavations by a joint Slovenian-German team, which the Slovenian team continued for several years. The summit held an apsed Early Christian church and below it another church with a baptistery. The church complex further comprised three buildings very close to one another that appeared to have functioned as a single unit combining residential, prestigious and economic functions. Particularly interesting is a large house, destroyed in a fire, for which the study of the rich small finds allowed the function of individual rooms to be identified (Knific 1979). Several other houses were excavated on both slopes below the summit, as well as a cistern, with excellently preserved parts of the wooden construction, and two towers. The defensive walls can today not be traced in their entirety, though LiDAR-derived DEM does indicate sections of them. The model revealed an additional large area in the south and a narrow strip with housing in the western extension. Previously interpreted as an ecclesiastical centre, the settlement thus shows a much greater presence of housing. Where investigated, the defensive walls are 0.6–0.8 m thick. The hill was first more intensely inhabited in the second half of the 4th century, which is the dating for the building remains under later constructions, as well as numerous coins and other small finds. The majority of finds, and the masonry architecture in particular, however, dates to the second half of the 5th and the 6th century. Layers of burnt debris and well-preserved artefacts from sealed contexts show that the settlement was destroyed and burnt down in an attack (Knific 1979, 752). A small cemetery from the second half of the 5th and early 6th century is located on the north side just below the settlement.

The site at **Veliki vrh above Osredek pri Podsredi** (Figs. 3.122, 3.123) is important for our understanding and dating of the first prominent occupation of hilltop sites in Antiquity (Ciglenečki 1990a; id. 2008, 486). The trial trenching of the prehistoric hillfort here revealed clear traces of habitation of a short duration, which coins and other metal finds reliably place to the late 260s or early 270s. The terraces showed traces of improvised housing and the old prehistoric rampart being reused for defence purposes. Particularly important is the fact that the site was not occupied after this time, which enabled us to date the initial habitation phase also in other, multi-period hilltop settlements in the



Fig. 3.121: Ajdovski gradec above Vranje. Double church with a baptistery; dwelling houses in the background (2023).

eastern Alpine area, where coins and other finds from the 3rd century were predominantly interpreted as residual finds.

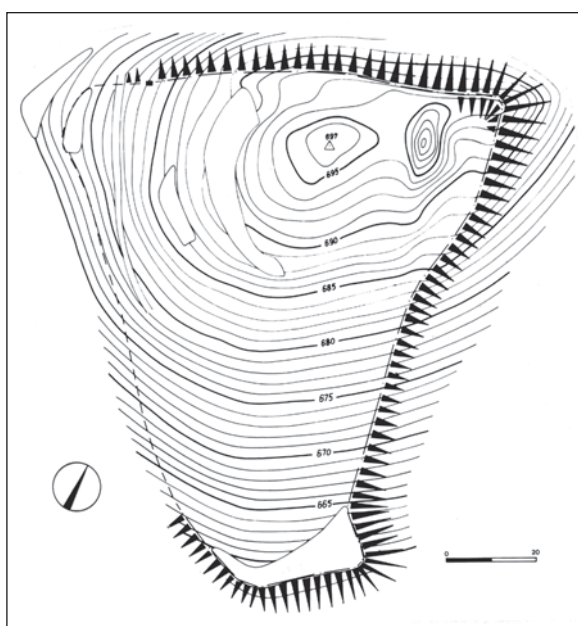


Fig. 3.122: Veliki vrh above Osredek pri Podsredi. Plan of the hilltop site (Ciglenečki 1990a, Fig. 5).



Fig. 3.123: Veliki vrh above Osredok pri Podsredi. Hilltop site from the north-west (1986).

Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj (Figs. 3.124–3.127) exhibits the main architectural elements of a Late Antique fort (Ciglenečki 1985; Ciglenečki et al. 2020). Rectangular towers came to light at the edge of the naturally excellently protected rocky plateau (size 180×100 m). The centre of the protected area revealed the remains of an Early Christian church with an extension hosting a baptistery. The trenches exploring the vast rocky area between the church and the towers revealed no traces of masonry architecture. There were concentrations of habitation traces in the towers, in their vicinity and on a several-metres-wide terrace along the edge of the fort. Three towers yielded finds that point to a habitation function, but also a variety of crafts practised here (processing of bronze, bone and wood), two towers even had a cistern. No defensive walls have been established and it is presumed that the artificial terrace above the rocky area and in part also the old prehistoric rampart sufficed to defend the fort. The analysis of coins and other small finds indicates a possible short-lived occupation in the 270s. A more prominent military presence has been proven for the Valentinian period, a time when a road in the vicinity became significant and the existence of which can be

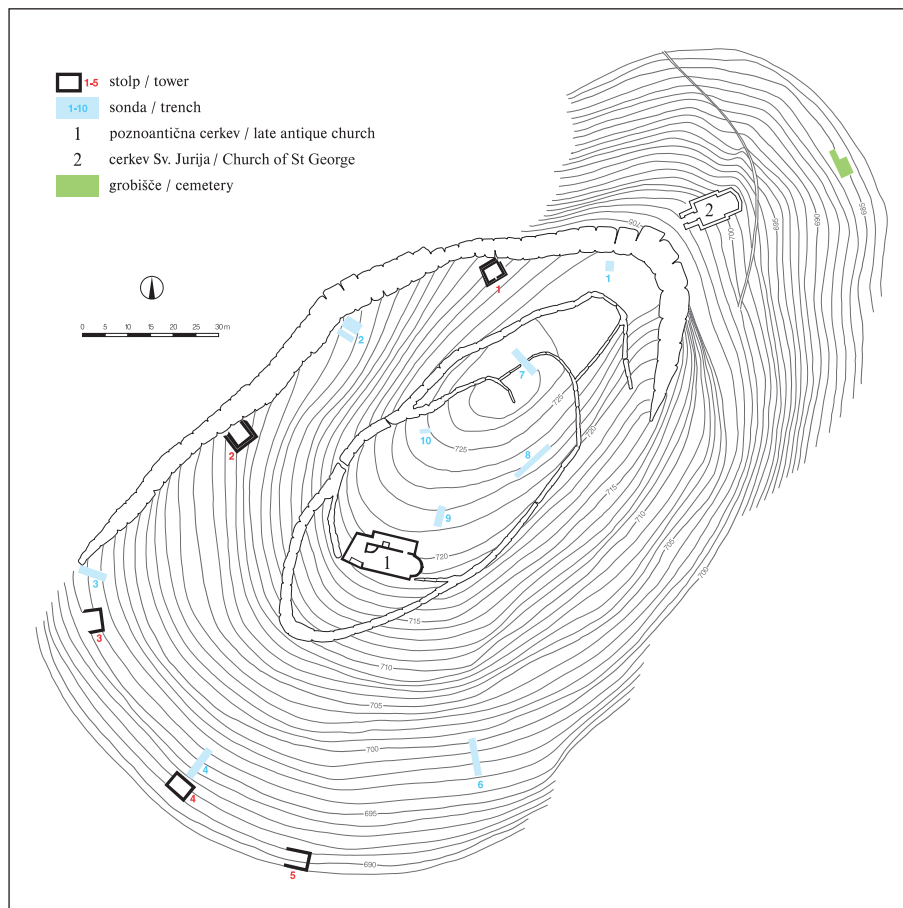


Fig. 3.124: Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj. Plan of the fortification (Ciglenečki et al. 2020, Fig. 13.1).



Fig. 3.125: Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj from the south (2022).

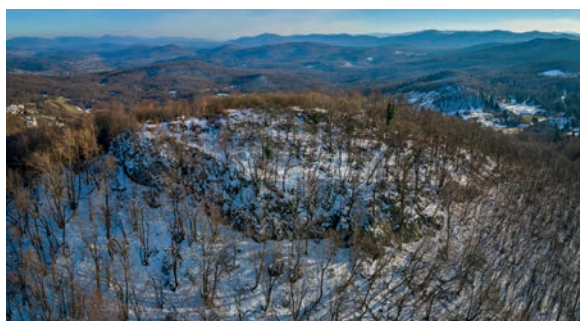


Fig. 3.126: Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj. Precipitous slope from the north (2022).



Fig. 3.127: Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj. Remains of the tower with a cistern (1983).

indirectly surmised from the barrier wall at Rob, not far from the fort, which formed part of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system (Ciglenečki 1985, 267–270). Attributable to this phase is a number of coins, pottery finds and pieces of costume, while the housing must have been of non-durable materials. It would seem that the hill was then inhabited only occasionally, either in times of increased danger or when the posited road needed protection. It may also have served as a signalling post and occasionally a shelter. The longest stretch of habitations in the fort dates from the late 5th to the late 6th century, which is also the dating of the above-mentioned masonry architecture. The small finds from the towers and their parallels from across the Mediterranean date the construction of the towers and the renovation of the church on Korinjski hrib to the time of Justinian's reconquista, i.e. the second third of the 6th century. In plan, the fort shows great similarities with many Early Byzantine forts in the Eastern Empire and in Dalmatia, underscoring its strategic significance.

A considerable number of Late Antique fortification on the slopes of the Gorjanci Hills above Šentjernej shows this area gained in importance in Late Antiquity. The most important among these is at **Zidani gaber above Mihovo** (Figs. 3.128, 3.129) (Ciglenečki 1990b; Bitenc, Knific 2008; Križ 2021, 23–29). It lies on a narrow ridge, the highest part of which holds the remains of an Early Christian church and smaller, residential buildings (possibly also towers?). Access was easier in two areas, both fortified with walls. An associated cemeterial church with several Late Antique burials came to light

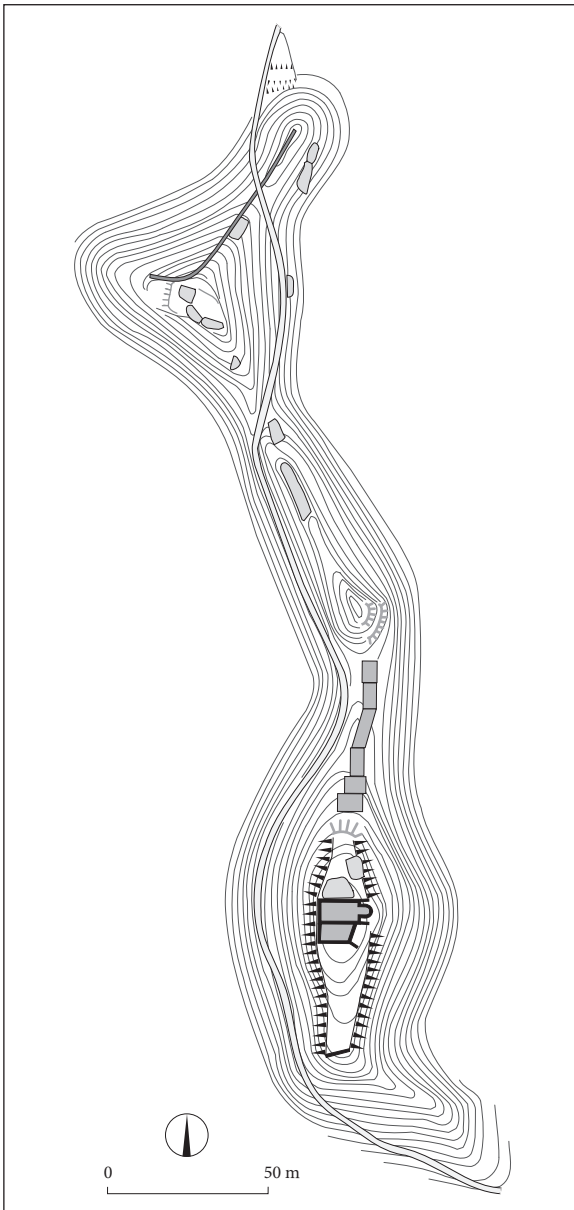


Fig. 3.128: Zidani gaber above Mihovo. Plan of the hilltop site (Ciglenečki 2020, Fig. 12.4).

slightly further to the north (Breščak 1990). The exceptionally numerous small finds from the area show this was a major settlement centre inhabited almost throughout the Late Antique period (Križ 2021). Zidani gaber and a group of adjacent sites were inhabited at least in the first settlement wave in the second half of the 4th and early 5th century, but particularly intensely in the late 5th and throughout the 6th century. The recovered artefacts have not yet been studied in detail, but the preliminary examination points to a largely Roman population with noticeable Germanic and nomadic elements, but also the presence of a Byzantine garrison. Numerous precious items of costume and a mass of weapons from both habitation phases reveal Zidani gaber as one of the main Late Antique centres in the eastern Alpine area.

The fortified hilltop site at **Kučar above Podzemelj** (Figs. 3.130–3.132), in the Bela krajina region, has a unique layout and is a rare example of a fortified ecclesiastical centre (Dular 1978; Ciglenečki 1986; Dular et al. 1995). The hill of Kučar with a massive prehistoric rampart rises above the River Kolpa. Its lower northern summit held a cluster of Late Antique architecture. The hilltop is protected with steep slopes on three sides, as well as defensive walls with towers, guarding a 130 × 90 m large surface. The several years of excavations have revealed two large churches in the central part, beside the upper one also a small building – presumably

Fig. 3.129: Zidani gaber above Mihovo. Hilltop site from the south-west (2016).

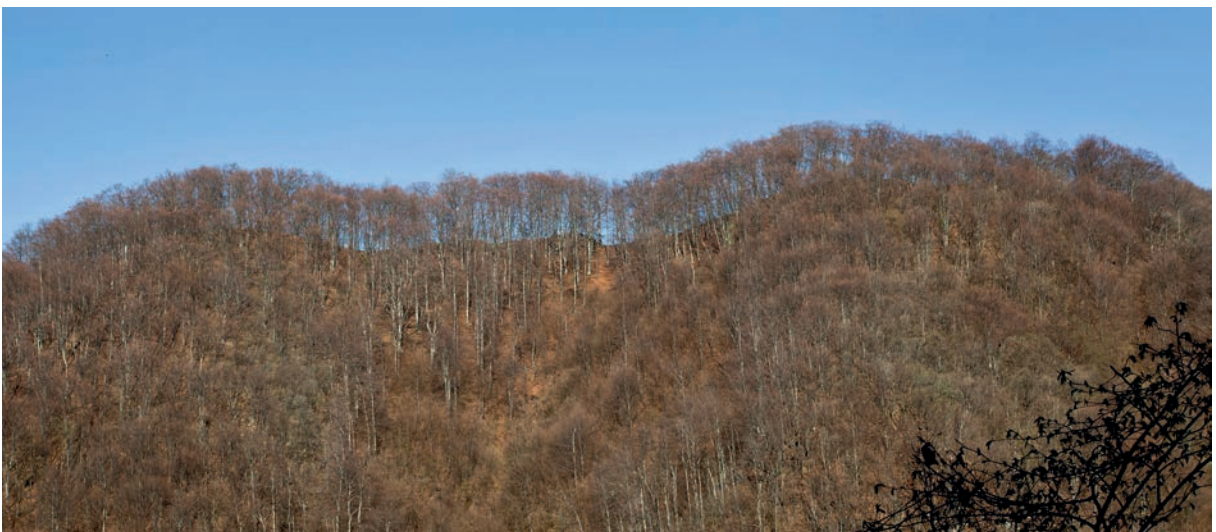




Fig. 3.130: Kučar above Podzemelj. Plan of the hilltop site (Ciglenečki 1994, Fig. 10).



Fig. 3.131: Kučar above Podzemelj. Ruins of the lower church at the western edge of the site (1978).

a baptistery. Leaning against the defensive walls to the south of both churches was a large residential building (25 × 17 m) with two rooms fitted with central heating, the larger of which was the main hall. A smaller house stood between this building and the upper church. The

defensive walls were 0.7 m thick and reinforced in two places with towers constructed on the interior side. The total number of towers cannot be ascertained as part of the settlement was destroyed prior to the excavations. Also integrated into the defensive walls was part of the



Fig. 3.132: Kučar above Podzemelj. Remains of a large residential building from the southern side of the hilltop site (1979).

narthex of the lower church and the south part of the above-mentioned large residential building, which provided additional protection to the most easily accessible area of the site. The small finds and the architecture suggest the settlement dates roughly between 380 and 500.

Standing out in size and strategic importance is the fortress on **Gradišče near Velike Malence** (Fig. 3.133) (Saria 1929; id. 1930; Ciglenečki 2003b, 586–587). It lies in the vicinity of the confluence of the Rivers Krka and Sava, on a narrow low plateau between the Krka and the Gorjanci Hills, just above the Roman road connecting Siscia and Emona. It is triangular in plan and covers a surface of 430×270 m. Its western and northern sides are naturally well-protected with very steep slopes, while the south side rises only slightly above the surrounding area. Defensive walls with towers were constructed on top of the rampart of the prehistoric hillfort, with towers more densely positioned along the more exposed southern side. Balduin Saria distinguished between two phases of the fortress. The 2.10 m thick defensive walls were built in the early phase, later reused and strengthened, but also pierced to integrate rectangular towers at a distance of 35–40 m from each other. Saria conducted trial trenching in the interior, detecting no masonry buildings here in the first phase and presuming the existence of wooden huts (Saria 1939, 144). In the second phase, he posited the construction of an Early Christian church. However, the unearthed apsidal building with an unusual, westward orientation and very thick walls is nothing like the Early Christian churches known from Late Antique forts, which makes its function and dating questionable. Saria used historical more than archaeological data to date the two

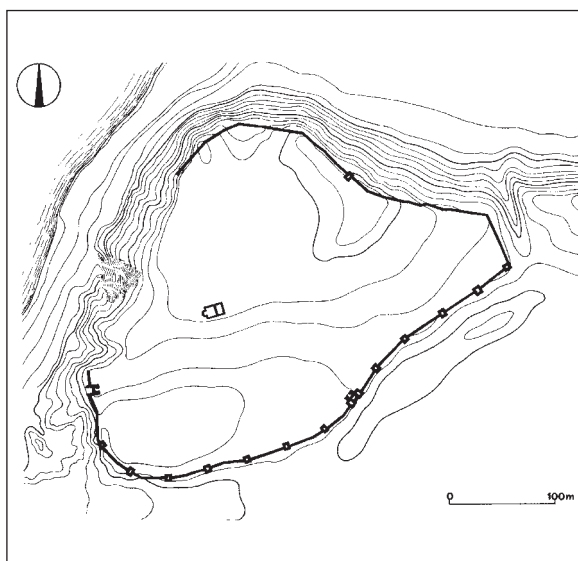


Fig. 3.133 Gradišče near Velike Malence. Plan of the fortress (Ciglenečki 1987a, Fig. 146).

phases, setting the first one to the 3rd and the second one to the late 4th or early 5th century (Saria 1939, 145). The plan and position of the towers alone does not seem sufficient grounds for such precise dating of the second phase (cf. Wilkes 2005, 261–264). With its interior poorly known, we can use its size (c. 8 ha) and fortification features to draw parallels with the Pannonian ‘inner fortresses’, though the absence of small finds suggests it was only occasionally used as a military fortress.

Croatia

The fortified hilltop settlement at **Marija Gorska near Lobar** (Figs. 3.134–3.136) revealed traces from different periods (Filipec 2007; Filipec et al. 2020, 211–218). The well-protected domed hill is only readily accessible

via a saddle, where in Late Antiquity a 0.7 m thick wall was built on top of a high prehistoric rampart; there are also visible traces of a ditch. Coins and other small finds indicate habitation already in the 3rd and 4th centuries, though a large fortified settlement (c. 230 × 140 m) was only established in the second half of the 5th and contin-

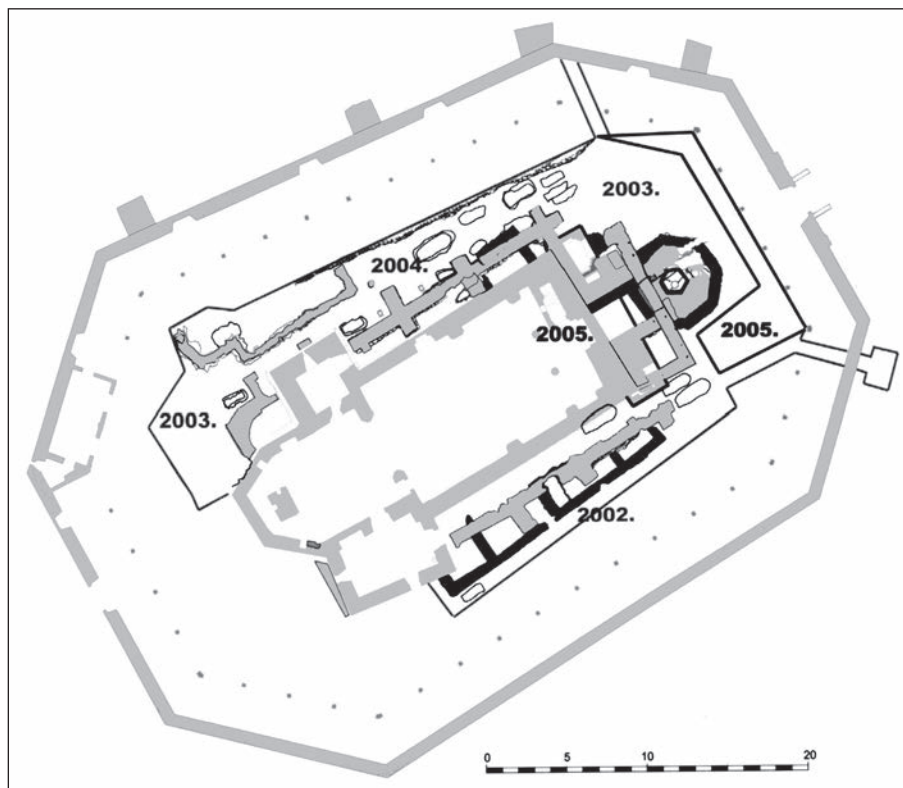


Fig. 3.134: Marija Gorska near Lobar. Plan of the fortified hilltop settlement. Remains of the Early Christian church with a baptistery are marked in black (Filipec et al. 2020, Fig. 11).



Fig. 3.135: Marija Gorska near Lobar. Fortified settlement from the south-west (2017).



Fig. 3.136: Marija Gorska near Lobar. Prehistoric rampart with a wall on top of it from the north (2017).

ued throughout the 6th century. Under the present-day pilgrimage church, the interior of the settlement holds the remains of a large Early Christian basilica with an octagonal baptistery that was destroyed in a fire in the early 7th century. The excavated artefacts reveal intense habitation across the whole settlement, while the size and furnishings of the basilica reveal the site was one of the Early Christian centres in the southeastern part of Noricum Mediterraneum.

The fortification on **Kuzelin near Donja Glavnica** (Fig. 3.137) lies on a naturally very well-protected hill in proximity to the Roman road connecting Andautonia and Poetovio (Sokol 1981; id. 1994; id. 1998). The defended area on the summit measures 200 × 40 m, with buildings concentrated on an 8 m wide and very long terrace a few metres below the summit. The rich assemblage of coins and other small finds indicates two phases. The first one is dated to the last third of the 3rd century based on numerous coins of emperors from Gallienus to Aurelianus. Attributable to this phase are the residential buildings with floors of square bricks in the upper part of the fort. It would appear that a palisade was the only defence at this time. The second phase shows much more intense habitation, which coins and other artefacts date to the last quarter of the 4th and first half of the 5th century. In this phase, a 200 m long and 1 m thick defensive wall was constructed in the east. Erected behind it were 4 × 4 m large buildings, of which only the mortar floors survived. A female burial was found along the interior face of the wall, which the grave goods date to the late 4th century. Numerous weapons and belt parts also date to this phase. The defensive wall and the modest buildings behind it reveal a military post, while the multitude of small finds also mirror a civilian presence, suggesting the fort was also used as a refuge.

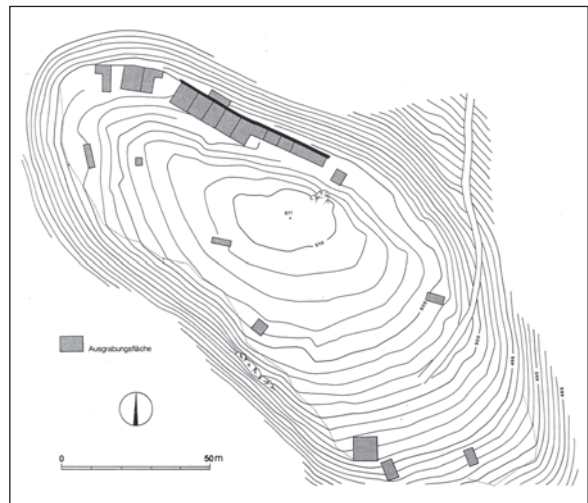


Fig. 3.137: Kuzelin near Donja Glavnica. Plan of the fortification (Sokol 1994, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.138: Crkvišće Bukovlje near Generalški Stol. Plan of the hilltop site (from Azinović Bebek, Sekulić 2014, Fig. 4).

A large Late Antique fort has recently been discovered in the prehistoric hillfort at **Crkvišće Bukovlje near Generalski Stol** (Figs. 3.138, 3.139) (Azinović Bebek, Sekulić 2014, 167–168; iid. 2019). It lies in the bend of the River Mrežnica and is naturally protected with steep slopes. In the highest part of the hill, excavations so far integrally unearthed an apsed Early Christian church, beside which there may be two rooms of a large and well-built edifice. Found beside the west defensive walls were two rectangular single-room buildings, one of them dated to the 4th and the other to the 6th century. The side of easiest access shows traces of two protruding towers. It is as yet not possible to determine when the fort was established. The earliest concentration of finds dates the beginning of the Late Antique occupation to the last third of the 3rd century, while the fort is believed to have been constructed in the second half of the 4th, was added a church in the 5th and then persisted throughout the 6th century. The architectural evidence, the important strategic location on the Roman road from Romula to Senia and the recovered small finds indicate the presence of a garrison here in the 4th and the 6th century, though the fort may also have functioned as a civilian settlement. The protruding towers and the modest church exhibit similarities with the military forts from the Justinian period both along the Dalmatian coast and inland.

The fortified complex at **Kastrum on Veliki Brijun (Brijuni Islands)** (Figs. 3.140, 3.141) lies in a well-protected Madonna Bay (Dobrika) (Mlakar 1975–1976; Begović Dvoržak 2001). The Late Antique settlement was established on top of an earlier villa and functioned as a refuge for the population of Brijuni and adjacent areas, but was also a major military base. The sea, the marshland and the small fort on the nearby Petrovac hill provided effective protection. The location on the exterior side of the islands also concealed it from the view from the mainland. The defensive walls were built



Fig. 3.139 Crkvišće Bukovlje near Generalski Stol from the west (2016).

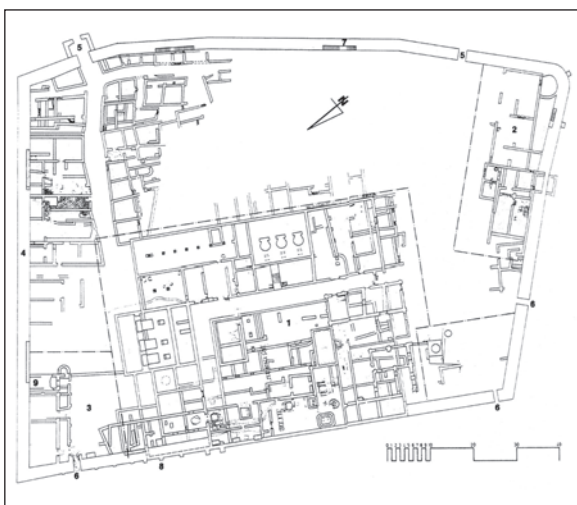


Fig. 3.140: Kastrum on Veliki Brijun. Plan of the fortified site (Suić 2003, Fig. 188).



Fig. 3.141: Kastrum on Veliki Brijun from the south-west (2003).

in two phases. The first phase shows features characteristic for the 4th and 5th centuries; these walls were 2.6 m thick, 2.9 m at the corners, and enclosed a surface of 1.2 ha. Additions and reinforcements date to the early 6th century, to the time of the Gothic Wars, when the fort served as the starting point for crossing the Adriatic to reach Ravenna. The contemporary church of St Mary was erected outside the fort. The defensive system also comprised watch posts at exposed locations on the outer islands of the Brijuni Archipelago.

Because of its short duration, the fort at **Pasjak near Klana** (Fig. 3.142), on the Roman road between Tarsatica and Tergeste, serves as a reliable chronological indicator (Starac, R. 1993; id. 2009, 286). This low hill holds the remains of a roughly rectangular and 100 × 80 m large fort. The 3 m thick walls, bound with solid mortar, thus far revealed three entrances and presumably a tower in the south west. The entrance was protected with two walls running perpendicularly. A thin cultural layer and the coin hoard found under the ruins of the defensive walls show the fort was destroyed around 270 (Starac, R. 2009, 286). It was never renovated.

The fortification at **Veli Grad on the island of Krk** (Figs. 3.143, 3.144) lies on a crag above the sea (Faber 1988, 116–119). It was largely protected by precipitous slopes, on the only accessible side with a 0.8–1.1 m thick wall enclosing an interior surface of 100 × 80 m. In the middle of this wall is the entrance fortified with two parallel walls set perpendicularly to the defensive wall. Visible on the interior side of the defensive wall are buttresses or footing for a wall-walk. Aleksandra Faber noted the great similarity of this wall with the barrier walls of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system. The rocky interior of the fortification did not reveal a cultural layer. The architectural remains show that the fort greatly differs from the later Justinian period forts in the Kvarner Bay and

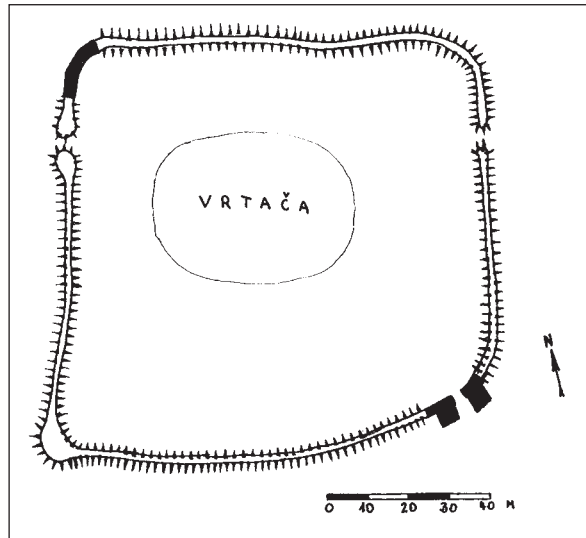


Fig. 3.142: Pasjak near Klana. Plan of the fort (Starac, R. 2009, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.143: Veli Grad on the island of Krk. Walls and the fortified entrance on the western side of the fortification (1996).

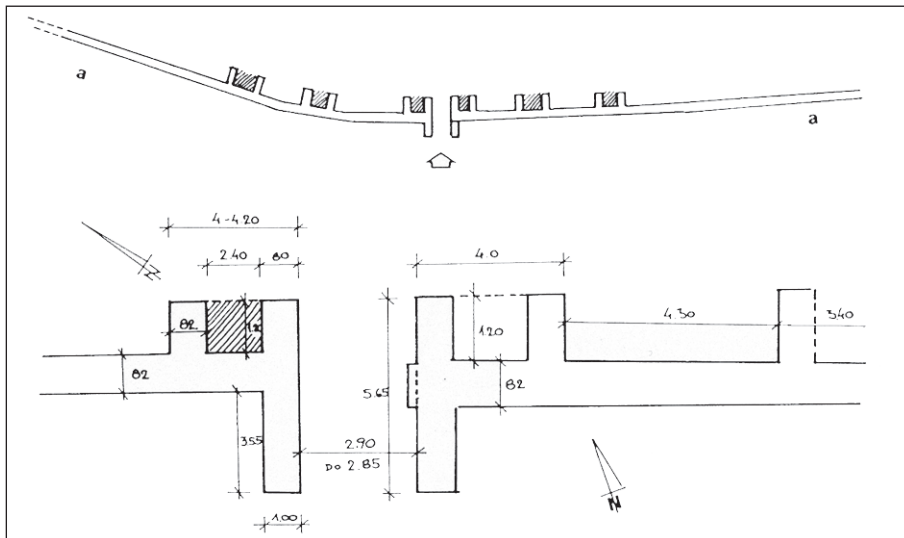


Fig. 3.144: Veli Grad on the island of Krk. Entrance with a part of the wall (from Faber 1988, Fig. 9).

Dalmatia; it is most likely earlier (3rd or 4th century), built to oversee the important narrow route between the island and mainland, but rarely used and rapidly abandoned.

The large settlement at Bosar is already discussed above, in the chapter on the newly-founded Late Antique cities (see *Chapter 2.5*). Located 100 m above it is a well-preserved fortification at **Korintija near Baška** (Figs. 3.145–3.149) on the island of Krk. Similarly as the settlement below, the favourable climate and the absence of vegetation offer an excellent insight into the extent and

structure of buildings without having to conduct systematic investigations (Ciglenečki 1987a, 104–105; Tomičić 1988, 148–151; Faber 1988, 121–127; Šiljeg 2008; Regan, Nadilo 2009, 1080–1083). The fortification is located on a steep hill offering a good view over the activities in two bays sheltered from the wind, i.e. Vela Luka and Mala Luka. The fort measures 110 × 70 m and is protected with well-preserved defensive walls measuring 0.7–0.8 m in thickness. Some of the buildings along the interior of the walls can be interpreted as towers, while others housed



Fig. 3.145: Korintija near Baška from the south (2021).

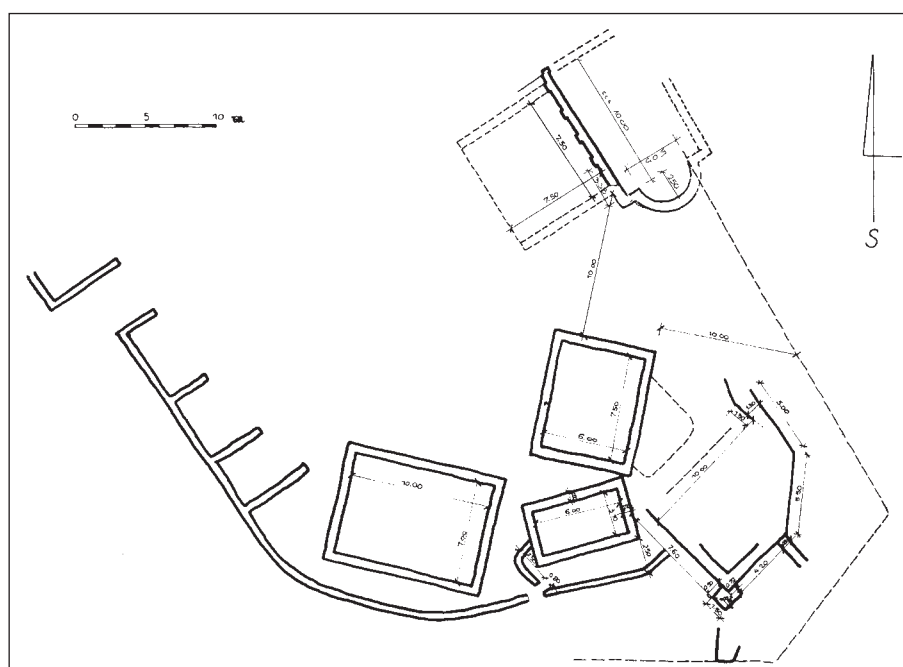


Fig. 3.146: Korintija near Baška. Plan of the south-eastern part of the hilltop site (Faber 1988, Fig. 13).



Fig. 3.147: Korintija near Baška. Eastern part of the fortification from the south-west (2015).



Fig. 3.148: Korintija near Baška. Cistern preserved to a great height in the south-eastern part of the fortification (2021).



Fig. 3.149: Korintija near Baška. Walls from the north-western part of the fortification (2021).

the troops. A large polygonal tower with thick walls, which was constructed with gradual additions, marks the southern end where the fortification was most readily accessible; visible next to this tower is a large cistern. The high ridge in the interior holds traces of an apsed Early Christian church and a side room, while there is a large building with a small cistern further along the ridge. Surface finds of pottery date the fort to the 5th/6th centuries, reaching its peak under Justinian, similarly as other forts along the Dalmatian coast. Small finds and architecture indicate it functioned in association with the contemporary unfortified settlement below.

The small rocky island of **Veliki Sikavac** (Figs. 3.150–3.152), which a narrow strait separates from the island of Pag c. 100 m away, recently revealed the remains of an Early Byzantine fort built only 13 m above the surface of the sea (Oštarić, Kurilić 2013, 270–271; Gluščević, Grosman 2015). It stands in an important strategic position that enabled control over the narrow strait between Pag and the mainland to lead to the Velebit Channel and was, as such, crucial in the control of coastal routes. The fort is adapted to the terrain and measures 90×50 m. The impressive defensive walls were 1.8 m thick and built of stones bound by high-quality mortar. There are six towers, of which the two in the highest part were attached to the walls, while four others integrated in the walls and were open on the interior side. Buildings cluster in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the fort. No building remains are visible in the central part. The northwestern part has 23 buildings measuring 4×5 m on average and arranged in four large groups with clearly discernible passages between them. In the southeastern part, buildings are arranged on six parallel terraces from the defensive walls inwards. The location on a low and poorly defended island displays characteristic Byzantine military architecture with rectilinear defensive walls, protruding towers and army barracks in the interior. Field surveys unearthed sherds of Late Antique pottery, amphorae and glass goblets.

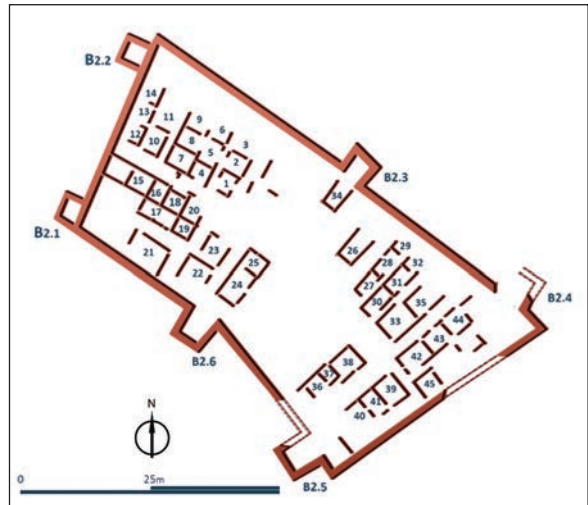


Fig. 3.150: Veliki Sikavac. Plan of the fort (Gluščević, Grosman 2015, Fig. 11).



Fig. 3.151: Veliki Sikavac from the north-east (2016).



Fig. 3.152: Veliki Sikavac. Impressive defensive walls and the remains of the buildings on the eastern side of the fort (2016).

The Early Byzantine fort at **Sv. Trojica, Tribanj, Šibuljina** (Figs. 3.153, 3.154) was built on the site of a Roman settlement, in an important strategic location controlling the land and maritime routes along the Velebit Channel (Glavičić 1984, 19–21; Tomičić 1990, 142–143; Dubolnić 2007, 39–40; Ciglenečki 2020, 255–257). The gentle slope of the hill with the church of St Trinity (Sv. Trojica) holds the remains of a fortification. Most clearly visible on the surface are the excellently preserved remains of the defensive walls with four protruding towers on the most readily accessible north side. These walls survive in the length of some 120 m, height of 6–8 m and thickness of 0.8 m. They show putlog holes in some places. The

walls abutted in the interior on a dry-stone construction, presumably prehistoric earthwork rampart. Modest traces of drystone defensive walls are visible on the less exposed east side. The interior was divided into four or five terraces with remains of heavily damaged walls. The end of the fort in the south has not been established, but it would seem that it covered a smaller area than the earlier Roman settlement. The small finds show that the defensive walls constructed in Late Antiquity, most likely under Justinian, additionally protected the area of the earlier settlement. The size of the defended area suggests the fort served not only to accommodate army troops, but also as a refuge for civilian population.

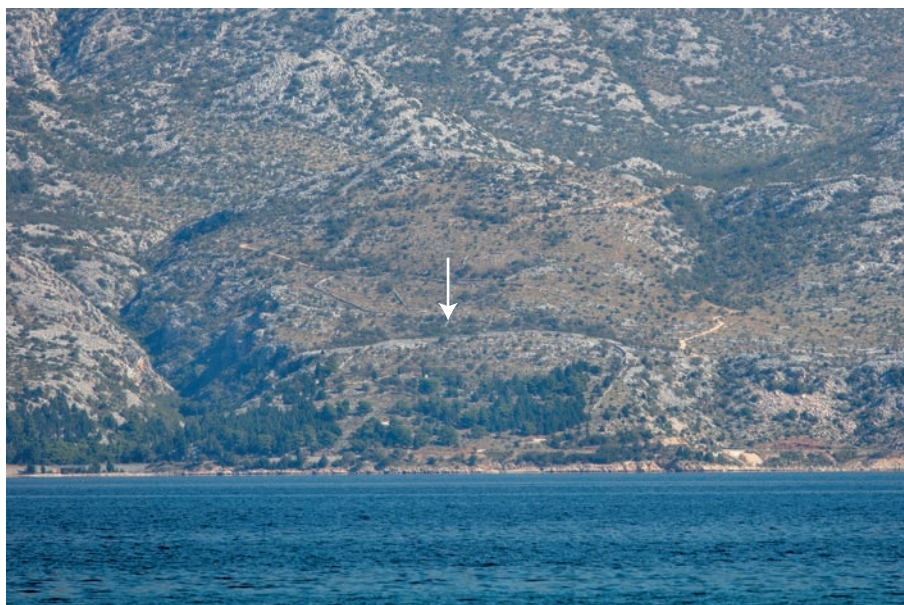


Fig. 3.153: Sv. Trojica, Tribanj, Šibuljina from the south-west (2004).



Fig. 3.154: Sv. Trojica, Tribanj, Šibuljina. Excellently preserved walls on the northern side of the fort (2014).

Field surveys identified another Early Byzantine fort at **Gradina near Modrić** (Figs. 3.155–3.157), at the beginning of the Velebit Channel (Tomičić 1990, 141–142; Dubolnić 2007, 38–39). It lies on a gentle slope inside a prehistoric hillfort, just above the coast. The mighty prehistoric rampart was reused to defend the whole of the north side, where access is easiest, and mortared walls were added on top. Elsewhere, the earlier rampart was reused as a proteichisma. The fort interior is considerably smaller than that of the prehistoric hillfort and its outline takes the shape of an irregular trapezium with straight lines. It measures 162 m in length and 122 m in width. The walls are 1.6–1.9 m thick

and mortar-bound. Publications mention five *c.* 7×6 or 6×6 m large towers. The interior holds the ruins of several buildings, but they cannot be identified or dated more precisely without investigations. The fort enjoyed an excellent strategic location, controlling the passage through the strait of Masleničko ždrilo and the navigable route along the north coast of the island of Pag.

The small fort at **Toreta (Tureta)** (Figs. 3.158, 3.159) on the island of Kornat has been identified as a Late Antique fort very early on (Petricoli 1970; Fabijanić et al. 2012). It is a rectangular tower-like construction on a small hill with steep slopes rising directly from the sea, with a 10.4×5.4 m large interior. It is reinforced with



Fig. 3.155: Gradina near Modrić. Plan of the fort (Ciglenečki 2020, Fig. 12.22).



Fig. 3.156: Gradina near Modrić from the east (2011).



Fig. 3.157: Gradina near Modrič. Late Antique walls on the southern side of the fort (1987).



Fig. 3.158: Toreta (Tureta) from the south-west (2019).

eight large buttresses organically tied into the peripheral walls. The walls and buttresses are 1 m thick. The entrance is carefully made and includes a relieving arch. The ground floor has arrowslits. Higher up there are holes for floor joists and above them eight windows. The small-scale excavations in the tower interior revealed a structure, presumably cistern, which held small finds that included Early Byzantine pottery. The ground floor is believed to have served for storage, while the upper storeys were used for defensive purposes. The fort hosted a small garrison that watched over the maritime routes leading through the Kornati Archipelago. Below it in the Tarac Bay, there are traces of a large and repeatedly modified Early Christian church with a baptistery that was presumably already built in the second half of the 5th century (Zornija 2016). The fertile field in the vicinity

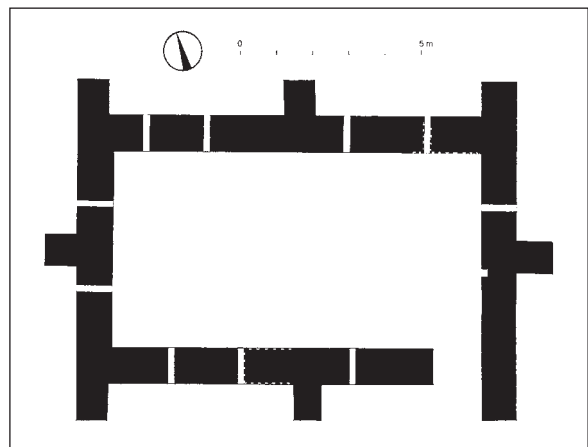


Fig. 3.159: Toreta (Tureta). Plan of the fort (from Petricioli 1970, Fig. on p. 720).

provided sustenance for a small community that could seek shelter inside the fort in times of danger.

Similar small-sized forts (predominantly towers) also came to light on other islands (Fig. 3.315; such as Svetac, Majsan, Palacol) and on the mainland (Ošlje – Gradac), mirroring the diverse strategies employed to protect the maritime route along the eastern coast of the Adriatic (Kirigin, Milošević 1981; Badurina 1982; Gunjača 1986; Tomičić 1996; Baraka Perica, Grbić 2019). These forts share a characteristic, naturally well-protected location associated with a favourable harbour, which clearly shows their function of controlling and protecting navigable routes.

A small Early Byzantine fort lies at **Gradina on the island of Vrgada** (Figs. 3.160–3.162) (Suić 1976a, 238; Domijan 1983, 123; Gunjača 1986, 126–127; Ciglenečki 2020, 185–187, 246–249). Its remains are only known from field surveys. It is sited on the highest part of a rocky ridge that offered visual control over the aquatory between the Kornati Archipelago and Zadar. It was most easily accessible from the north, partly also the east side, whereas the south and southwest sides were protected with steep terrain. The fort measures 85 × 35 m. There are clearly visible remains of five rectangular towers

erected on top of a prehistoric rampart. One of the towers holds a cistern. The slope in front of the defensive walls shows traces of a roughly 1 m thick proteichisma. In the interior there are traces of several buildings. Along the walls is a complex of at least three rooms with a cistern, which is very similar to the residential building investigated at Gradina on the island of Žirje (see below). Smaller buildings also lean against the south rocky edge of the fort. Elements of a contemporary Early Christian church came to light in the church of St Andrew (Sv. Andrija) below the fort (Domijan 1983, 136).

Gradina on the island of Žirje (Figs. 3.163–3.166) holds the most characteristic and also the best researched military post in the area under discussion that offers an insight into the construction of the Early Byzantine forts on the eastern Adriatic coast (Iveković 1927, 49–52; Gunjača 1986; Pedišić 2001; Ciglenečki 2011b, 676–678; Karadžole, Borzić 2020). The fort was built on a low hill of the southeastern cape of the island that provided a good control over the access to the nearby port and over the traffic along the exterior side of the island. It measures roughly 100 × 50 m. It is pentagonal in plan and wholly adapted to the terrain. The 0.8–0.95 m thick defensive walls have protruding rectangular and one pentagonal tower. The north wall



Fig. 3.160: Gradina on the island of Vrgada. Fortification from the south-east (2019).

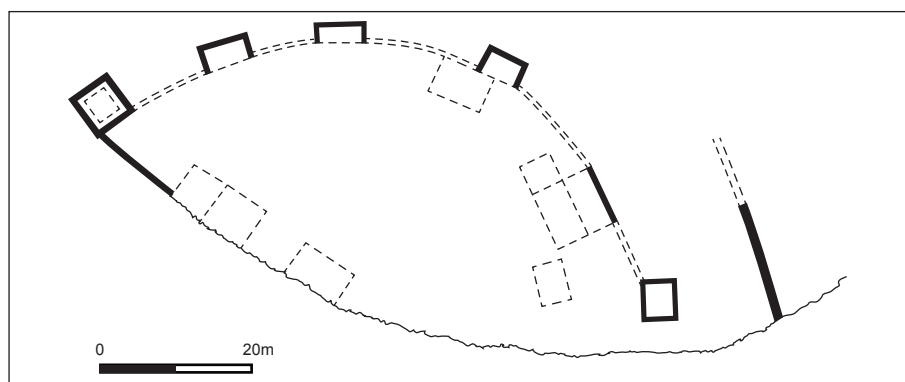


Fig. 3.161: Gradina on the island of Vrgada. Plan of the fort (Ciglenečki 2020, Fig. 12.18).



Fig. 3.162: Gradina on the island of Vrgada. Defensive tower with a cistern on the western side of the fort (2019).

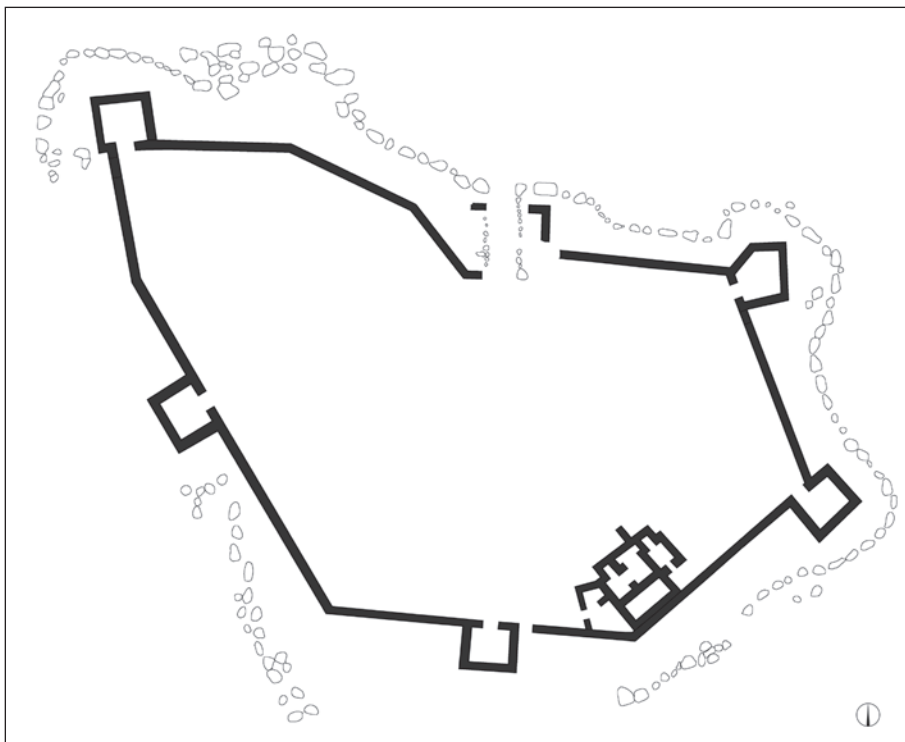


Fig. 3.163: Gradina on the island of Žirje. Plan of the fort (Ciglenečki 2020, Fig. 12.13).

was constructed on the top of the ridge, while the interior extended across the gentle southern slope. The main entrance led through a tower, while investigations revealed three narrower entrances (*poternes*) next to the defensive towers. The fort was additionally protected with a *proteichisma* in the shape of a low wall

of stacked stone blocks. Leaning onto the walls from the interior was a building with several rooms, two of which had heating; the luxurious appearance suggest this was the residence of a commander. Small finds reliably point to the Early Byzantine period and date the establishment of the fort to the time of Justinian's



Fig. 3.164: Gradina on the island of Žirje. Remains of the large building and the walls from the north (2010).



Fig. 3.165: Gradina on the island of Žirje. Tower on the north-eastern part of the fort (2004).



Fig. 3.166: Gradina on the island of Žirje. Part of the northern walls with a pro-teichisma (2010).

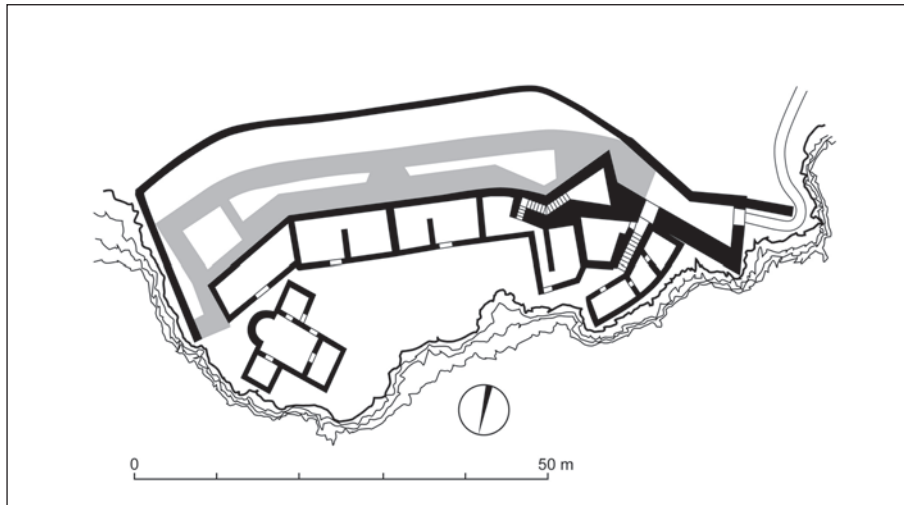


Fig. 3.167: Čuker near Mokro Polje. Plan of the fortification (Ciglenečki 2003a, Fig. 12).

reconquista. It was destroyed in a fire even before the end of the 6th century.

Čuker near Mokro polje (Figs. 3.167, 3.168) is the site of one of the rare well-investigated prehistoric hillforts in the Adriatic hinterland inside which a fort was built in Late Antiquity (Delonga 1984, 277; Ciglenečki 2003a, 268). Having said that, our knowledge of the fort is very limited and only a plan with some marginal notes survives of the investigations that Ejnar Dyggve conducted in 1930. Examination of the site today is hindered by the lush vegetation, making the remains that Dyggve marked on the plan largely unverifiable. We can better understand the site by comparing the surviving plan with those of the forts built into prehistoric hillforts along the fringes of the karst poljes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was constructed on an exposed location above the rocky slopes descending to the River Zrmanja, which blocks access from the north and west. On all other sides, it is protected with a high prehistoric rampart reinforced with defensive walls and a proteichisma. A comparison with other fortifications suggests that the buildings lining the defensive walls were dug into the prehistoric rampart. A small apsidal church stood on a narrow terrace above the Zrmanja. Several small buildings were also erected anew in the southwest. Dyggve's plan, kept in the Römisch-Germanische Kommission in Frankfurt, also shows stairs, which would explain the height differences between the buildings sunken into the rampart and the terrace with the church (cf. Schnurbein 2001, 194, Fig. 18a, top right). Dyggve's plan suggests the fort measured 170 × 70 m, while satellite imagery reveals a much smaller fort, comparable with those in the Dalmatian interior (c. 90 × 30 m).

The complex of buildings on **Majsan** (Figs. 3.169, 3.170), a small island between the Pelješac Peninsula and the island of Korčula, is one of the rare identified Early Christian monasteries in the Adriatic (Fisković



Fig. 3.168: Čuker near Mokro Polje from the north-west.

1980, 230–233). The monastery reused the buildings of a small Roman settlement and combined them into a single organic unit. The residential area arranged around an inner court was separate from the industrial part. The complex was fortified with towers. A tomb, which reportedly once held the relics of St Maximus, was built into

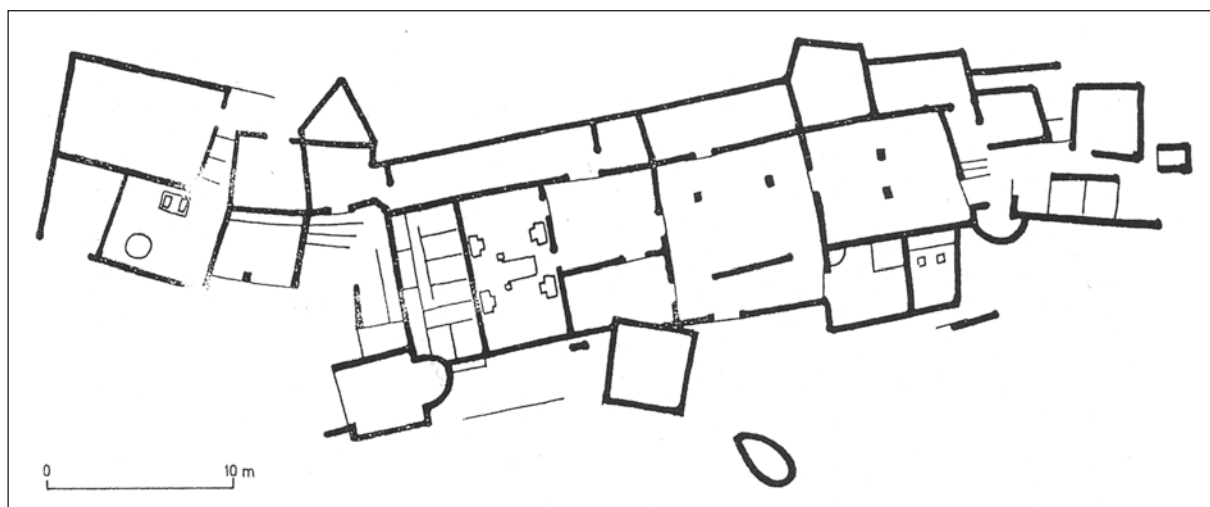


Fig. 3.169: Majsan. Plan of the fortified monastery (Cambi 2002, Fig. 393).



Fig. 3.170: Island of Majsan. The location of the monastery and the tower, view from the west (2005).

one of the central rooms and an altar was set up above the tomb, which gave the room a memorial character. Another tomb was found in the complex, which held three skeletons, presumably belonging to the founding members of the religious community. Later, four pillars were erected above this tomb to hold a cupola intended to emphasise its importance. The monastery located on an important maritime route would certainly have been a pilgrimage destination. A tower was built behind the monastery, on the highest point of the island, which was a watch tower and possibly also provided shelter in times of danger. This feature places Majsan in the system of forts lining the maritime routes (Fig. 3.315) of the 6th century.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The early overviews and the multitude of data collected in *Arheološki leksikon Bosne i Hercegovine* (Čović 1988) reveal a large number of fortifications, though they are often too brief to allow more detailed identifications (Basler 1972; Čremošnik 1990; Špehar 2008).

Gradina Zecovi near Čarakovo (Figs. 3.171, 3.172) displays the characteristics of a medium-sized Late Antique fortification with a military function (Čremošnik 1955b; ead. 1956; Ciglenečki 1987a, 93; Chevalier 1995, 158; Špehar 2008, 571–572). It has a naturally well-pro-

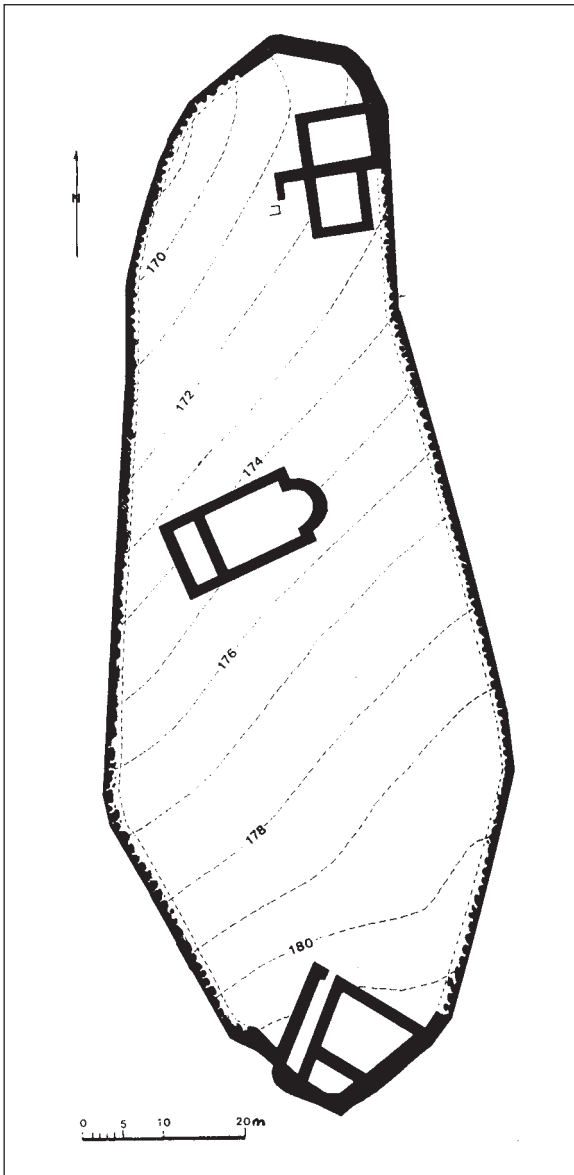


Fig. 3.171: Gradina Zecovi near Čarakovo. Plan of the fortification (Basler 1972, Fig. 26).



Fig. 3.172: Gradina Zecovi near Čarakovo. fortification from the east (1988).

tected location on the Roman road connecting Salona and Siscia. It is 125×50 m large and enclosed with 2 m thick walls. The buildings at the far ends of the fort interior can be seen as towers or accommodations for the troops. A modest Early Christian church with an apse and narthex was investigated in the centre. The small finds and the concept of a fort with a church suggest a date to the 6th century, with possible beginnings in the second half of the 5th century.

In northwestern Bosnia, most likely within the former province of Savia, there was a large Late Antique agglomeration at **Gradina in Bakinci** near Banja Luka (Figs. 3.173–3.176) (Vujinović 2013; id. 2014). It lies in the mountains, slightly removed from the Roman road that led from the valley of the Sava towards Salona. Research in the recent decade revealed the remains of this large settlement on a naturally well-protected hill. Its core is the c. 220×140 m large fortified area on top of the hill. The sections of easier access were protected with walls that measured between 1.2 and 1.6 m in thickness, depending on the terrain. The top of the plateau revealed a well-built single-room building. In the north along the walls, researchers found an unexplored building with high surviving walls. Other edifices are visible on the surface. The distribution of the small finds suggests that the settlement extended down the slopes. The saddle located just a few metres below and east of the fortified part holds the remains of three Early Christian churches, which the plans, construction manner, architectural elements and small finds place to the 5th–7th centuries. Standing out is Basilica A, which is over 40 m long and richly decorated, revealing the great significance of this site as an Early Christian centre. Investigations in the settlement interior have only just begun and have not yet provided more concrete evidence, though the complex of three large churches and the rich artefacts offer indirect evidence of the significance of this settlement complex in the 5th and 6th centuries. The partly excavated churches revealed evidence of their renovation,

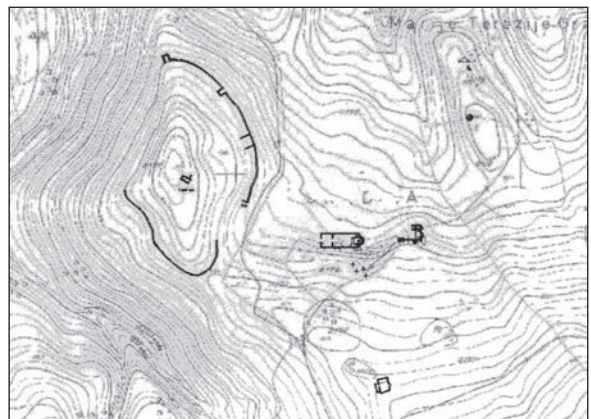


Fig. 3.173: Gradina in Bakinci. Plan of the hilltop site and the churches (Vujinović 2014, Fig. 24).

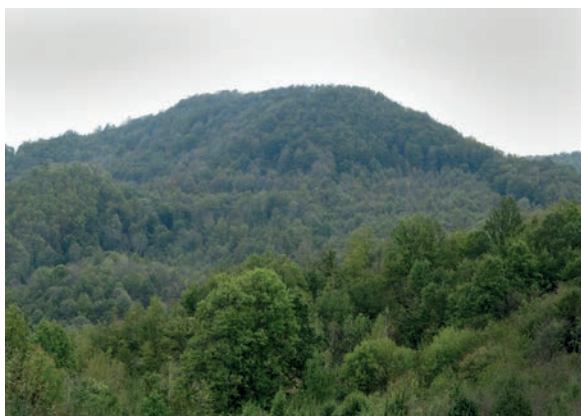


Fig. 3.174: Gradina in Bakinci. Hilltop site from the north (2014).



Fig. 3.176: Gradina in Bakinci. Ruins of a smaller church (Basilica C) outside the walls (2014).



Fig. 3.175: Gradina in Bakinci. Excavated building inside of the fortified settlement (2014).

with earlier elements reused in the *cathedra*, the clergy bench added in Basilica A and the baptistery in Basilica B later partitioned. Particularly intriguing is the find of an impost inscribed with the names *Constantius*, *Andreias* and *Constans*, the first two of which correspond with the names of the bishops present at the synods of Salona in 530 and 533. The state of investigations does not allow a more precise dating of individual phases of the site, while coins and other small finds indicate an even earlier habitation in the 3rd and more intensely in the second half of the 4th and the early 5th century.

The partly investigated fortification at **Grad near Gornji Vrbljani** (Fig. 3.177) lies in a remote mountainous area close to the spring of the River Sana (Bojanovski 1976; id. 1980; Ciglenečki 1987a, 106–107; Špehar 2008,

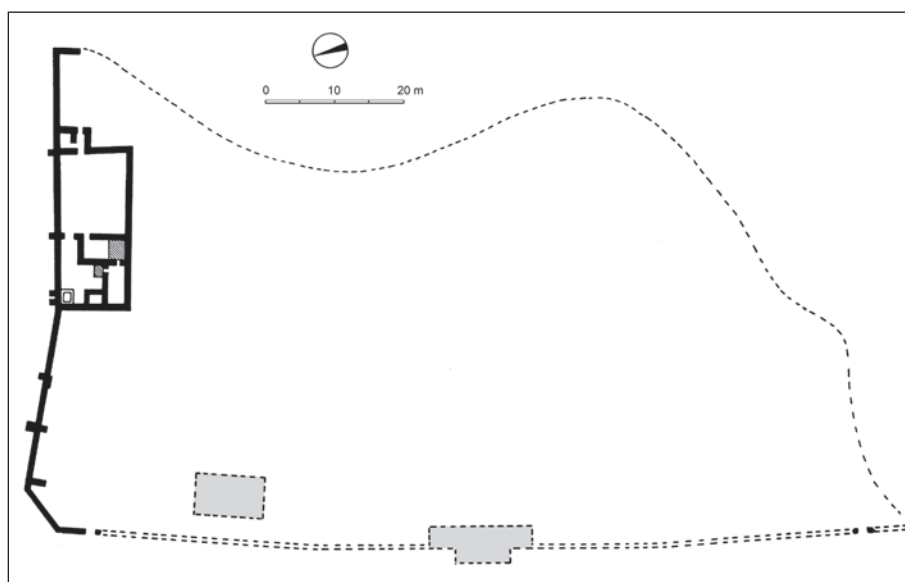


Fig. 3.177: Grad near Gornji Vrbljani. Plan of the fortification (Bojanovski 1980, Fig. 1).

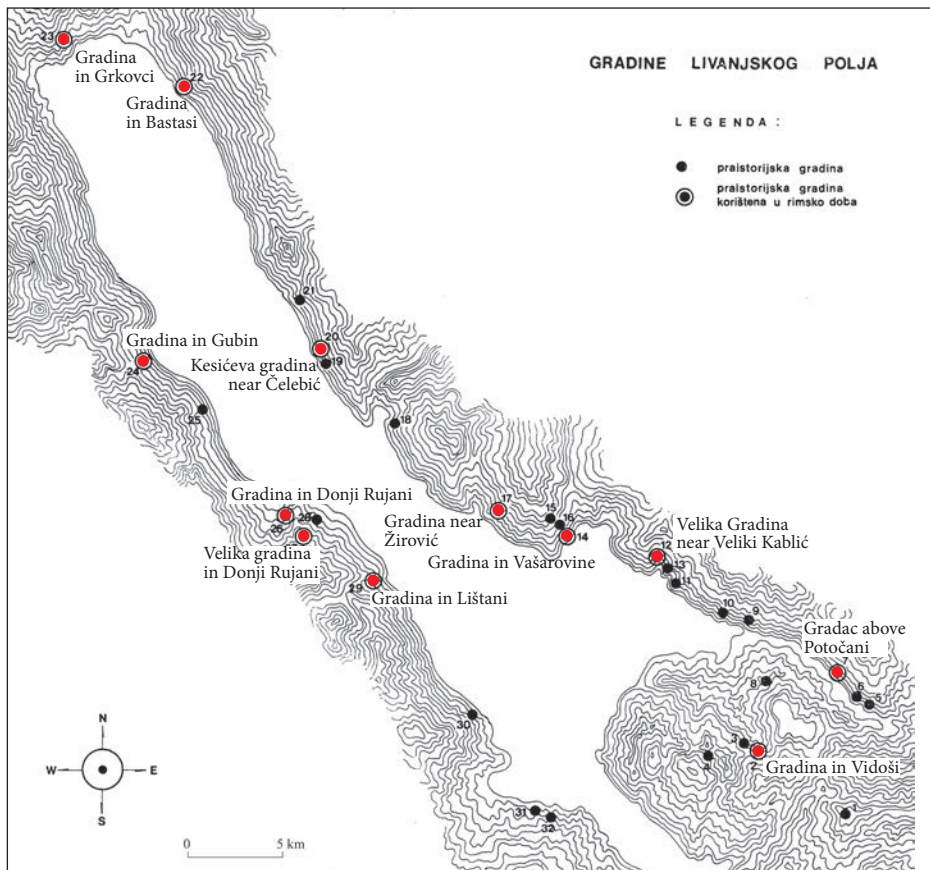


Fig. 3.178: Late Antique fortifications (red dots) of Livanjsko polje (from Benac 1985, map 3).

569–571). It measures roughly 110×65 m and extends across most of the prehistoric hillfort above the canyon of the Lučica stream, which envelops the site from two sides. It is additionally protected with defensive walls, which are merely 0.65 m thick and reinforced from both sides with buttresses. A ditch was dug in front of the walls in Late Antiquity. In the part of easier access, a 22×10 m large residential building leans against the defensive walls in the interior. It has a small anteroom presumably with a staircase, a spacious main room, small room with a large fireplace, court, kitchen and small cistern. The ruins of two other buildings are visible along the western defensive walls. Ivo Bojanovski, who excavated the site, presumed that the fort was constructed in the first half of the 5th and persisted to the late 6th century, though he also mentioned the possibility that it was constructed in the time of the Gothic Wars. The above-mentioned military housing points to the presence of a small garrison, while the fort also provided shelter for the population of a wider area. A detailed research of the adjacent lines of Late Antique communication would certainly shed light on the role of this fort.

Archaeological surveys and rare trial trenching campaigns in southern Bosnia indicate the existence of numerous Late Antique fortifications (Fig. 3.178), but

the limited investigations do not provide evidence for a more detailed discussion. I only present those where the remains are sufficiently visible on the surface to enable at least a brief description of the defensive elements and other architectural features, but have also witnessed some trial trenching. The density of Late Antique settlement in the area can best be illustrated on the example of Livanjsko polje, where field surveys in the 1980s primarily aimed at investigating prehistoric hillforts also detected and briefly described the Roman remains (Benac 1985). In addition to defensive walls, some even revealed the remains of a *proteichisma*, which was lower and built in the drystone technique (Ciglencčki 2003a, 271).

Gradac above Potočani (Fig. 3.179) holds clearly visible Late Antique remains (Benac 1985, 104–106). This fort on a high karst ridge 100 m above the valley is protected by rocky faces in the south, while all other sides were protected already in prehistory by a thick earthwork rampart. It is a small fortification, measuring c. 70×30 m. Thick mortared walls were built on top of the rampart, ten metres in front of it also a drystone *proteichisma*. Traces of other walls along the defensive walls suggest buildings with floors sunken into the prehistoric rampart. Leading up to the fortification is a pathway still clearly visible today.



Fig. 3.179: Gradac above Potočani. Remains of the walls and a proteichisma from the north-east (1988).

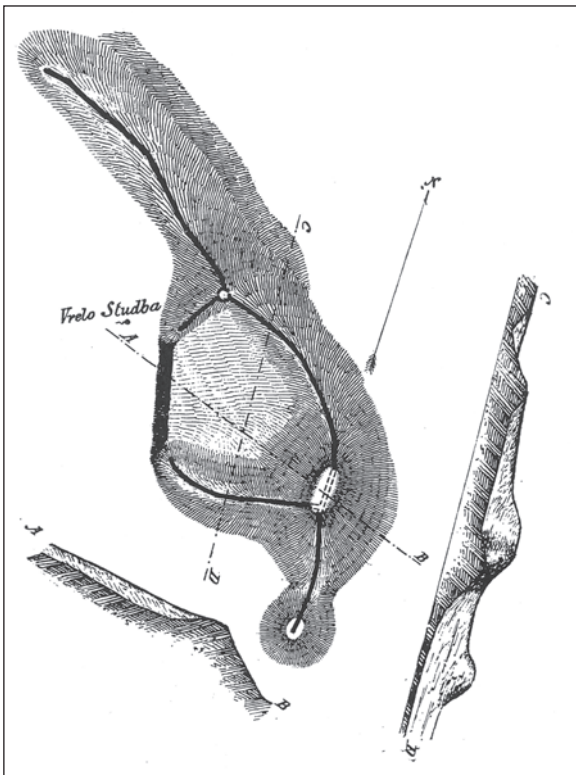


Fig. 3.180: Gradina in Vidoši. Plan of the hilltop site (Basler 1972, Fig. 33).

An example of a Late Antique refuge frequently mentioned in literature is that on **Gradina in Vidoši** (Fig. 3.180), where a mortared wall was constructed in Late Antiquity in the highest part of the prehistoric hillfort (Basler 1972, 60; Benac 1985, 97–99; Basler 1993, 38).

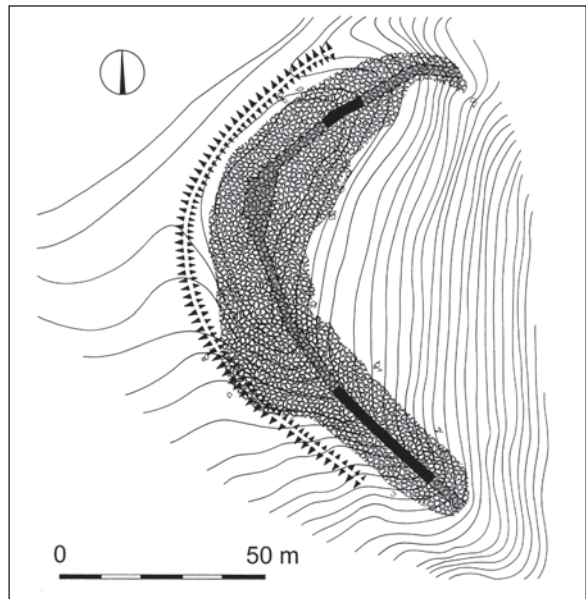


Fig. 3.181: Gradina in Vašarovine. Plan of the hilltop site (Ciglenečki 2003a, Fig. 13).



Fig. 3.182: Gradina in Vašarovine from the south-east (1988).



Fig. 3.183: Gradina in Bastasi from the north-west (1988).

Gradina in Vašarovine (Figs. 3.181, 3.182) holds readily observable defensive elements (Benac 1985, 114–116; Ciglenečki 2003a, 271). This fort lies high above the valley and provided effective control of the surroundings. A very thick and up to 10 m high prehistoric rampart encloses the fort from three sides, while a very steep slope protects it in the east. Substantial, 1.5–1.8 m thick walls were built in Late Antiquity on top of the rampart. In the most exposed part, the walls widened into a bastion (tower?). At a distance of 20 m, the walls were lined along the whole length by a drystone proteichisma. The 110 × 50 m large fortification has differently-sized habitation terraces below.

The fortification at **Gradina in Bastasi** (Figs. 3.178, 3.183) has a completely different location (Benac 1985, 121–123). It lies in the lowland, on the fringes of a karst polje and close to a water spring. It rises barely 10 m above the surrounding area and is protected with a deeply carved bed of a stream. The shorter sides of the plateau hold two stretches of a thick prehistoric rampart, on top of which are the remains of Late Antique walls with a tower and buttresses. A 0.8 m thick wall is also discernible along the longer sides of the settlement.

Similar observations have been made for the fortifications on other karst poljes. The best preserved is **Gradina above Kovači**, in the west part of Duvanjsko polje that rises 100 m above the surroundings (Benac

1985, 39–41). The prehistoric hillfort holds the remains of Late Antique walls that fully integrated the prehistoric defensive constructions and the natural terrain. The fort measures c. 140 × 35 m, with additional artificial terraces visible on the steep slope below. Its 0.8 m thick defensive walls were built on top of the prehistoric earthwork rampart, in some places heavily reinforced. It is very likely that buildings (towers?) were sunken into the rampart. A drystone proteichisma is visible in some places not far below the defensive walls.

Of the many fortifications on the fringes of karst poljes, some may only have been used as refuges, particularly those located in less exposed areas. They may have been used for brief periods, by people otherwise living in the lowland. Examples are known in Kupreško polje, where Dimitrije Sergejevski unearthed two Late Antique forts with the remains of contemporary settlements at the foot of the respective elevations, most notably the remains of churches (Sergejevski 1942, 126–131, 147–153; Basler 1972, 56–57). Of the two fortifications, more is known on the one at **Gradina in Podgradina Kamenska** (Figs. 3.184, 3.185), where researchers examined the most characteristic elements before the site became heavily overgrown (Sergejevski 1942, 147–150; Basler 1993, 36). The plateau above the precipitous face of a torrential stream was already inhabited in prehistory, when it was protected with substantial earthwork

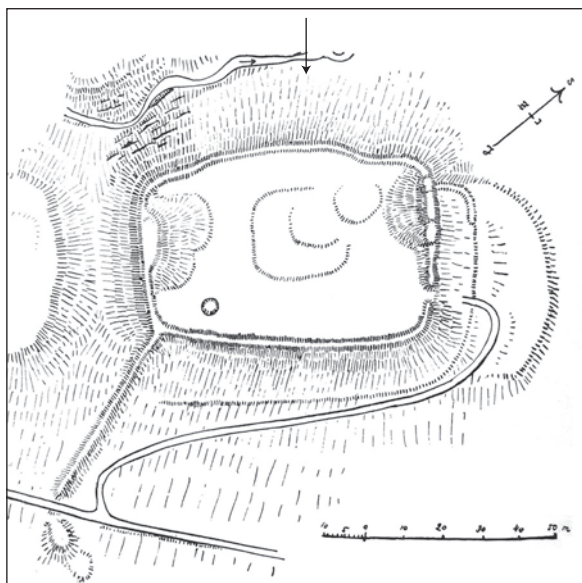


Fig. 3.184: Gradina in Podgradina Kamenska. Plan of the fortification (Sergejevski 1942, Fig. 18).



Fig. 3.185: Gradina in Podgradina Kamenska from the north.

ramparts that are particularly high along the shorter sides. In Late Antiquity, 1.5 m thick mortared walls were built on top of the rampart, associated in the south corner with a wall that traversed the slope and offered

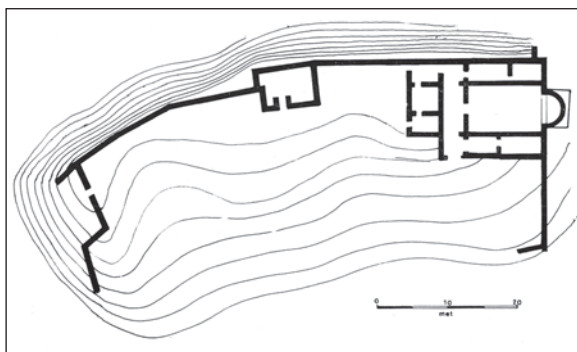


Fig. 3.186: Gradac in Lepenica (Homolj). Plan of the fortification (Basler 1972 Fig. 80).

additional protection. A *proteichisma* was added on the two sides of easier access. The fort was additionally protected with a deep and wide ditch along the southwest. In the 90 × 65 m large fortified area, Sergejevski observed the remains of a large building and a cistern and also presumed two towers on top of the ramparts.

A smaller refuge came to light on the naturally well-protected hill of **Gradac in Lepenica (Homolj)** (Fig. 3.186) (Skarić 1932; Basler 1972, 89–91; id. 1993, 57–59; Špehar 2008, 572–574). Its 70 × 50 m large flat summit was enclosed with defensive walls. Leaning on the walls from the interior was a rectangular tower. A richly decorated small Early Christian church was found in the northeast corner, presumably already built in the 5th century, but renovated and enlarged in the 6th century. Just below the hill are abundant remains of a Roman settlement not known in detail, but one that likely continued into Late Antiquity and was thus contemporary with the fort on the hill.

One of the last more extensively investigated Late Antique settlements in Bosnia is located at **Gradac on Ilinjača** near Sarajevo (Fig. 3.187) (Fekeža 1990; ead. 1991). On this naturally well-protected hill, 0.8–1 m thick defensive walls were constructed in Late Antiquity

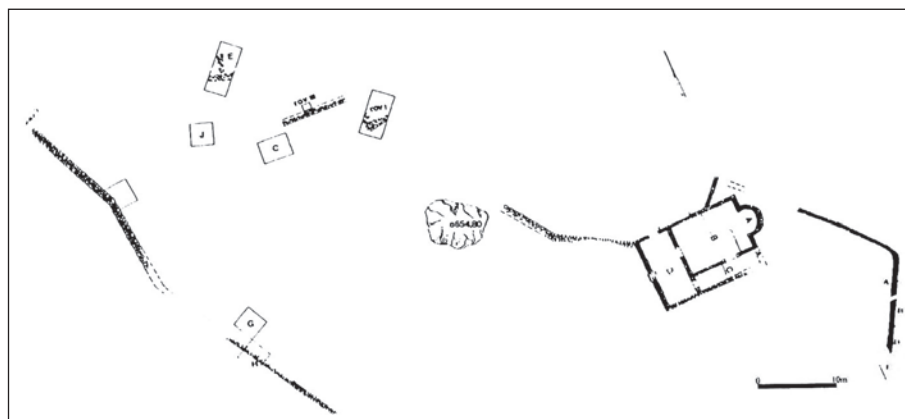


Fig. 3.187: Gradac on Ilinjača near Sarajevo. Plan of the hilltop site (Fekeža 1991, Fig. 1).

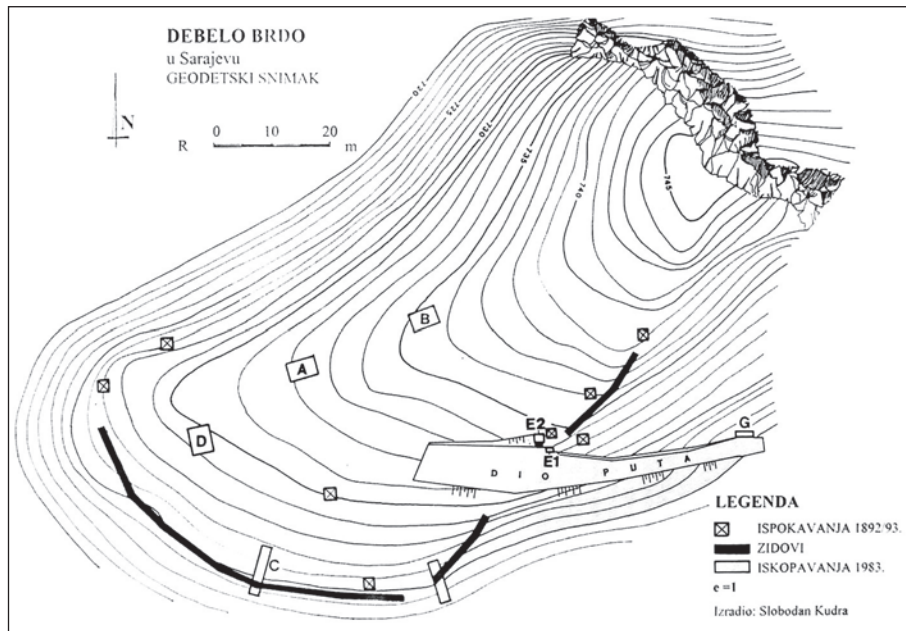


Fig. 3.188: Debelo Brdo above Sarajevo. Plan of the hilltop site (Fekeža 1991, Fig. 9).

on top of the rampart of a prehistoric hillfort, with the walls enclosing a 115×40 m large area. Integrated into the walls from the interior was a small Early Christian church. The church was presumably already built in the late 5th or early 6th century, whereas the defensive walls were erected in the second quarter of the 6th century and incorporated the church into the system of defence. No other buildings are known in the interior, only a cultural layer is mentioned, with modest finds from the 3rd and 4th centuries, and richer finds from the 5th and 6th centuries. There is insufficient evidence as to the type of settlement (refuge?) that existed here from the 3rd to the 5th century when the defensive walls had not yet been built. Did the prehistoric rampart provide sufficient protection?

The fortification at **Debelo Brdo above Sarajevo** (Fig. 3.188) is mainly known from early excavations (Fiala 1894) and small-scale investigations in recent times (Fekeža 1991, 176–178). The fort was constructed on a hill well-protected already in prehistory. The 1.3 m thick defensive walls are completely adapted to the terrain and enclose a 120×70 m large area. Part of the walls survived, as did the south tower, while a report mentions another tower. The interior revealed a fairly thick Late Antique layer that indicates more permanent habitation. The remains of a Roman settlement are mentioned below the hill, near the River Miljacka, which also yielded coins and other finds from the 5th and 6th centuries.

Gradina in Biograci near Lištica (Figs. 3.189, 3.190) is among the rare well-researched sites in this area, but has so far been published only briefly (Čremošnik 1989; Chevalier 1995, 413–414; Špehar 2008, 577–579). The densely built-up Late Antique fortification measuring

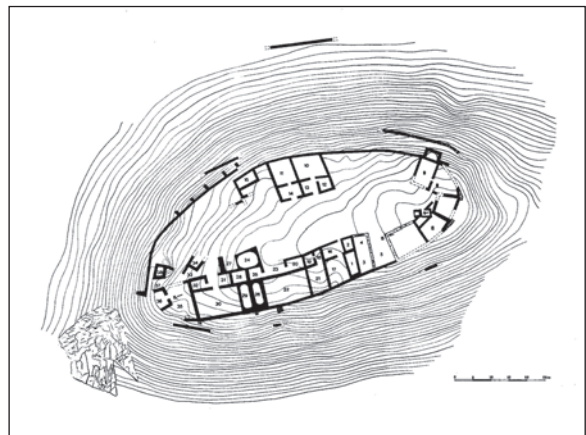


Fig. 3.189: Gradina in Biograci near Lištica. Plan of the fortification (Čremošnik 1989, Fig. 85).

90×40 m stands on a low elevation with an excellent view of the karst polje of Mostarsko blato. Its defensive walls were only 0.6–0.7 m thick, but associated with buildings densely spaced along the interior and increasing the walls' defensive potential. A single rectangular protruding tower was found, while two towers presumably stood in the interior near the west entrance. The site was additionally protected with a proteichisma, part of which was unearthed several metres below the walls, both mortared. The function of the fortification can be inferred from its location near a road that connected the coast and the hinterland, but also from the concept of a fort with buildings lining the interior of the defensive walls. There are no independent churches, while a small church is presumed in the protruding tower with an internal



Fig. 3.190: Gradina in Biograci near Lištica from the north (1988).

apse (Chevalier 1995, 413–414). The chronology is not completely reliable as it is based on architectural features, high-quality pottery and parallels with the then known fortifications; Irma Čremošnik dated its construction to the 3rd or 4th century and continued existence throughout the 5th and 6th centuries. Considering the similar sites, it is more likely that the defensive walls were built in the second half of the 4th century, whereas the dating of the majority of the buildings in the interior remains open. The construction of the *proteichisma* can, as elsewhere, be dated to the Justinian period, when the church may also have been integrated. The scarce military equipment and a variety of tools indicate a pronounced civilian use, but also the presence of a small garrison to control the communications.

The fortified villa in **Mogorjelo** (Figs. 3.191–3.193, 3.309) was investigated already in the early 20th century, but its function remains a matter of discussion (Dyggve, Veters 1966; Basler 1972, 38–42, 97–100; Zaninović 2002; Paškvalin 2003; Busuladžić 2008; id. 2011, 149; Turković, Maraković 2012, 63). In the late 3rd or early 4th century, a large fortified complex with a highly symmetrical layout of rooms, measuring 103 × 86 m, was built on the spot of an earlier Roman villa. It was protected with four rectangular towers in each of the corners and one round tower, while pairs of protruding towers flanked three of the entrances and one tower protected a smaller entrance. The up to 1.65 m thick defensive walls were constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique. Small living quarters and industrial facilities were evenly distributed along three of the interior sides, while a large residential building, with mosaic floor in parts of the upper storey, took up the entire south side. Only the economic part survived of the early villa burnt down



Fig. 3.191: Mogorjelo. Remains of the Early Christian church in the fortification (2009).

in the 3rd century and subsequently incorporated in the new complex. The prevailing opinion is that this was a fortified villa of a large imperial estate supplying the needs of nearby Narona. Its regular rectangular layout with strong defensive walls, towers and reinforced entrances, as well as the series of evenly distributed buildings, however, are more similar to a military fort that, in combination with its economic part, protected and also supplied agricultural produce down the River Neretva (cf. Duval 1989–1990). The complex was abandoned by the mid-5th century. Afterwards, the still well-preserved architecture was turned into a fortified settlement in the late 5th century; this last phase was dated indirectly, on the basis of a double church in the centre, which was built into the ruins of the villa and deviates completely from the orientation of earlier buildings, showing these must already have been destroyed at that time. Research

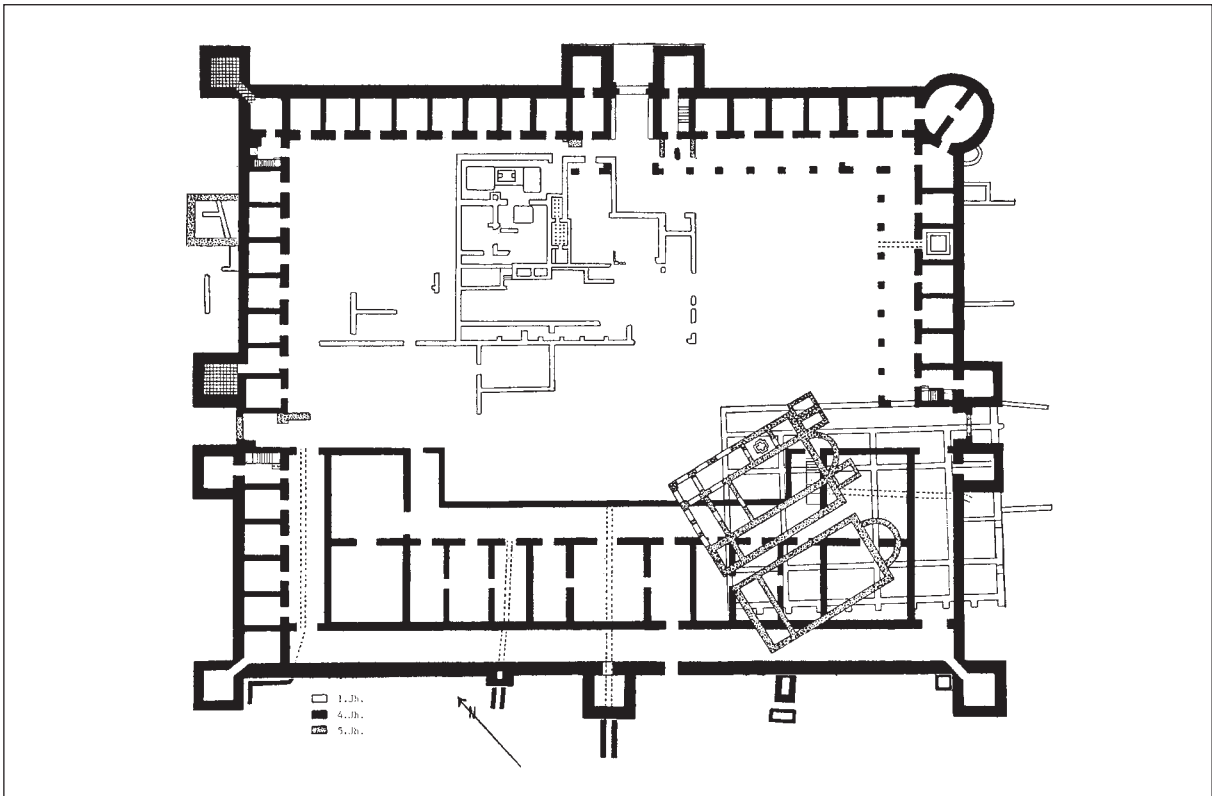


Fig. 3.192: Mogorjelo. Plan of the fortified villa (Basler 1993, Fig. 4).



Fig. 3.193: Mogorjelo. Walls with residential buildings (2009).

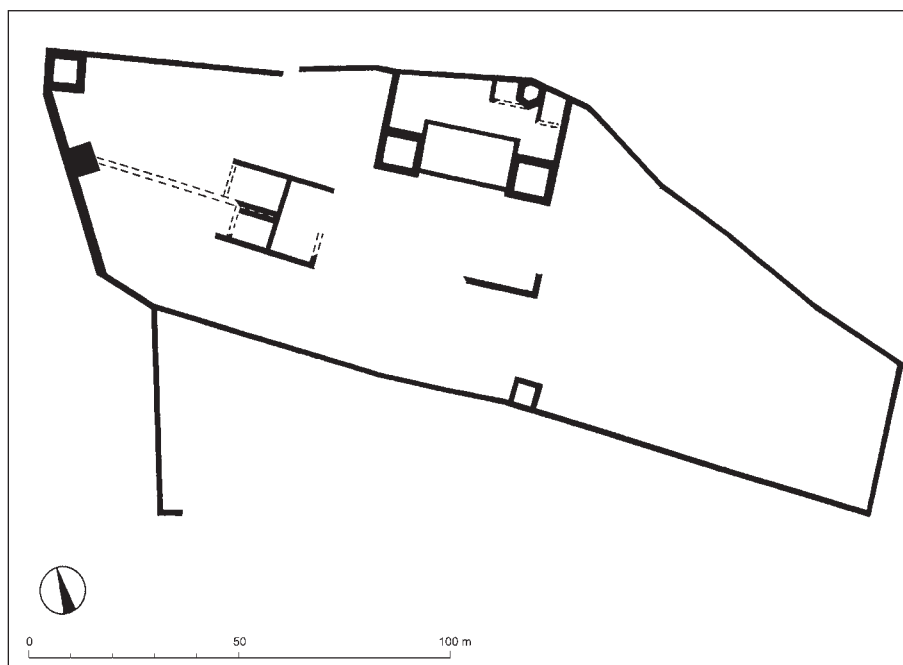


Fig. 3.194: Koštur near Dabrica. Plan of the fort (Ciglenečki 2011b, Fig. 5.22).

established repairs to the defensive walls, while the small finds reach to the late 6th century and reveal that the local population sought shelter here. Slobodan Ćurčić presumes Mogorjelo was a bishopric see, similarly as Louloudies or Gamzigrad (Ćurčić 2010, 139).

The large fort at **Koštur near Dabrica** near Stolac (Figs. 3.194–3.197) lies in a mountainous and not readily accessible area above the canyon of the River Radimlja (Basler 1972, 50–51; id. 1988; id. 1993, 32; Ciglenečki 2011b, 678–681). The present-day name of the site originates from the word *castrum*, which underscores its military nature. Steep and precipitous slopes protect the fort from three sides and it is only accessible from the west, where it rises slightly above the lower part of the ridge. Investigations on the hill were limited to the field surveys of the clearly visible architectural remains. The fort is 180 m long and 65 m wide. It is skilfully adapted to the terrain, though the builders managed to maintain a fairly straight line of the defensive walls, giving them a near pentagonal outline. The walls are particularly well-fortified in the easily accessible west side, where they reach 2.3 m in thickness in contrast to 1.1–1.4 m in other parts. Three towers are visible in the interior of the walls. Associated with them in the southwest is a short wall that guarded the access to the slope below the defensive walls and thus prevented a potential siege from the south. The walls are very regularly constructed, with faces of finely dressed rectangular stones. Traces of a small ditch are visible below the western defensive walls, behind it also a small rampart (possibly *proteichisma*). In the interior, a large building measuring roughly 42 ×



Fig. 3.195: Koštur near Dabrica. Walls on the northern side (1988).



Fig. 3.196: Koštur near Dabrica. Fort from the north-west (1988).



Fig. 3.197: Koštur near Dabrica. Part of a large building (1988).

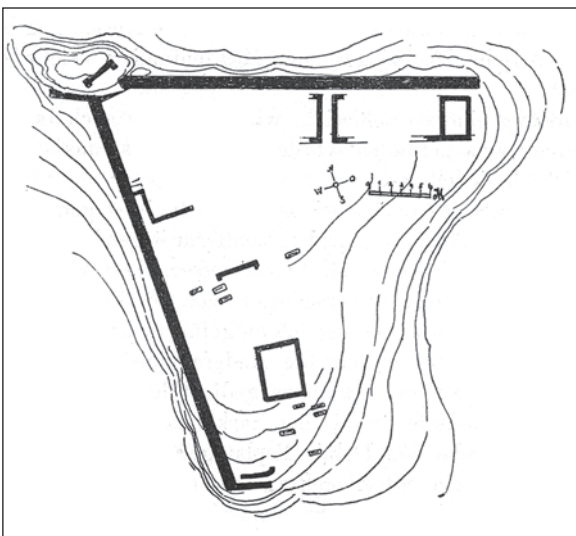


Fig. 3.198: Gradac near Todorovići. Plan of the fort (Truhelka 1893, Fig. 68).

18 m leans against the northern defensive walls in the part naturally best protected. The building shows several rooms and a hexagonal cistern touching the defensive walls. There are traces of another building, not identified in detail, near the western defensive walls. Without further research, it is difficult to date the fort that has been attributed to the 6th century in literature; this dating is supported by the surface finds of amphorae, though its construction may be of an earlier date.

The small Late Antique fort at **Gradac near Todorovići** (Fig. 3.198) was constructed on a steep slope high above the gorge of the River Bregava and is only known from the data gathered in the late 19th century (Truhelka 1893, 296–298). At that time, Ćiro Truhelka conducted trial trenching and drew the plan of the c. 40 × 30 m large triangular fort. One of its sides was naturally protected with rocky faces and the other two fortified with a 1.3 m thick defensive wall reinforced with a tower where access was easiest. Building remains and several burials were unearthed in the interior along the defensive wall. The small, but heavily fortified post presumably protected the road that led from the valley to the Erguda Plateau. It may date as early as the 4th or early 5th century, though it may later have been used as a refuge. In size and shape, it is similar to the Justinian period fort at Bosman in Đerdap (see below).

EASTERN PART

Serbia

Research in Serbia long focused on major Roman cities, particularly the Late Antique fate of Sirmium and its historical significance. Much scholarly attention was also paid to Caričin grad, investigated now for a century. In the 1960s, there were extensive rescue investigations in the Đerdap area, which revealed many important sites (for example Lepenski Vir) that include a considerable number of Roman forts with several renovations in Late Antiquity. Large-scale systematic investigations of Late Antique sites in the countryside began in the 1970s with the investigations of the fortification of Ras. When this site was found to be Late Antique rather than medieval, attention began to be more widely paid to the fortifications of Late Antiquity. In recent decades, this brought a great amount of new topographic data and several trial trenching campaigns, but the results are only briefly published.

The numerous characteristic Roman and Late Antique forts offer a reliable insight into the creation, function, development and end of the Empire's first line of defence (overview in Petrović 1980; Kondić 1984; Vasić, Kondić 1986; Vasić 1995). Their architecture and small finds faithfully reflect the increasing calamities that befell the Empire in Late Antiquity along its exposed border on the Danube. The forms of the Late Antique fortifications range from simple towers, fortified ports, small forts to fortresses at strategic locations. Sited on river terraces and on the spots of earlier Roman forts, they share a fairly regular shape, which distinguishes them from the multitude of contemporary fortifications constructed on hilltops.

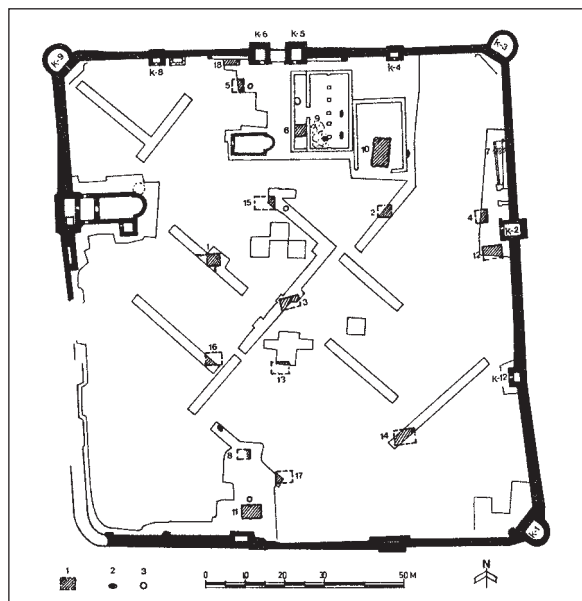


Fig. 3.199: Veliki Gradac near Donji Milanovac. Plan of the fortress (Popović, V. 1984, Fig. 4).

The fortress at **Veliki Gradac near Donji Milanovac** (presumed Taliata) (Fig. 3.199) was built in a strategically very important location and is consequently quite large, measuring 134 × 126 m (Popović, V. 1984). The beginning of its Late Roman phase is dated to the second half of the 3rd century, when the Roman fort was extensively renovated. Following a fire and abandonment in the first half of the 5th century, it was again renovated in the time of Justinianic fortification of the Danube limes. The renovations involved repairing the defensive walls and raising the rectangular towers. The north entrance was retained and all others walled up. New and larger round towers were built in the corners, in the interior a *horreum* and a church. There are traces of small housing units of non-durable materials across the interior. The church, leaned against a tower of the defensive walls, shows two construction phases, the second one dating to the Early Byzantine period. In this last phase, the fortress was more like a fortified village than a military camp, which is evidenced in the church being renovated and the *horreum* torn down and reused as a metal working facility. It was destroyed in a fire, which has been linked to the Avar raids in 595/596.

The medium-sized, but integrally excavated fort at **Boljetin** (Fig. 3.200) clearly shows the characteristic renovation phases in Late Antiquity (Zotović 1984). It measures 80 × 50 m and was constructed on a partly fortified river terrace. It was already built in the 1st, extensively renovated in the second half of the 3rd, abandoned in the early 5th century and reused in the time of the Early Byzantine restoration of the limes. This phase involved reinforcing the defensive walls, modifying the entrances and rebuilding all exterior towers. A simple single-aisled church with an apse and narthex was

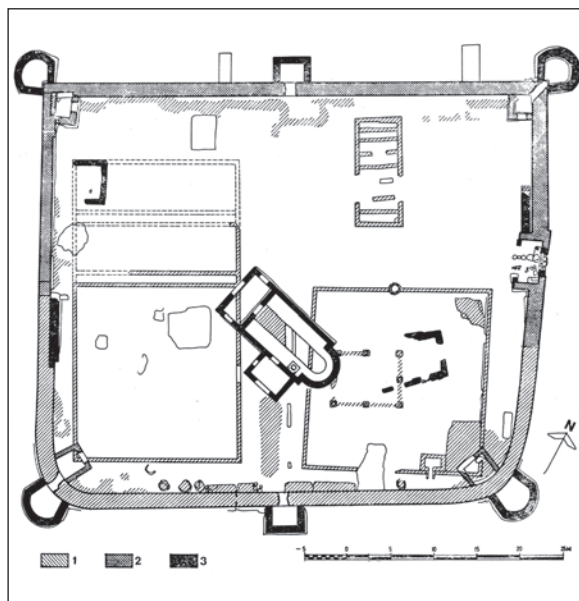


Fig. 3.200: Boljetin. Plan of the fort (Zotović 1984, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.201a: Newly-founded fortifications in the countryside from the eastern part, discussed in the book.

1 – Bosman	25 – Hum near Tutin	49 – Belgrad near Dvorište	72 – Palaiokastro
2 – Boljetin	26 – Đurđevica in Đerekare	50 – Gradište Stenče	73 – Drama
3 – Veliki Gradac	27 – Tupi krš	51 – Markovi kuli (Vodno)	74 – Ai Giannis
4 – Kraku Lu Jordan	28 – Čečan/Gornji Streoc	52 – Pelenica near Dračevo	75 – Khortokopi
5 – Vrelo - Šarkamen	29 – Kekola near Keqekolla	53 – Markovo Kale near Malčište	76 – Gradishteto (Riben)
6 – Liška Čava	30 – Gegje	54 – Gradište near Pakoševo	77 – Golemanovo Kale
7 – Bedem near Maskare	31 – Harilaq	55 – Pešna near Deviç	78 – Sadovsko Kale
8 – Ukosa in Stalaç	32 – Veletin	56 – Kale near Debrešte	79 – Mezdra
9 – Timacum Minus	33 – Korishë/Koriša	57 – Venec near Miokazi	80 – Borovets
10 – Gradina in Radalica	34 – Martinička gradina near Spuž	58 – Gradok (Markovi Kuli) near Čanište	81 – Chertigrad
11 – Kula in Kaludra	35 – Đuteza near Dinoša	59 – Čebren (Grad) near Zovik	82 – Elenska Basilica
12 – Gradina in Vrsenice	36 – Stari grad, Ulcinj	60 – Qafa	83 – Krasen kale
13 – Samograd	37 – Pecës	61 – Golem Grad, Konjsko	84 – Markova Mehana
14 – Kulina in Rogatac	38 – Gradishta (Bardhoc)	62 – Paleokastra near Gjirokastra	85 – Dichin
15 – Gradina Ras	39 – Bushati	63 – Çuka e Ajtojt	86 – Dobri Dyal
16 – Južac near Sopoçani	40 – Domaj	64 – Kastritsa	87 – Kartal kale near Ruyno
17 – Gaj in Babrež	41 – Gradište (Sobri) near Oraše	65 – Kastro Rizovouni	88 – Madara
18 – Zlatni Kamen	42 – Kale near Gorno Svilare	66 – Kephalos	89 – Odartsì
19 – Kale in Bregovina	43 – Gradište near Pčinja	67 – Olympia	90 – Gradishteto (Debrene)
20 – Balajnac near Niš	44 – Žegligovski kamen	68 – Monemvasia	91 – Harmana
21 – Kale, Zlata	45 – Kula near Čelopek	69 – Isthmia	92 – Gradishte (Gabrovo)
22 – Hisar above Leskovac	46 – Kalata near Kamenica	70 – Velika	93 – Dyadovo
23 – Trojan	47 – Kula near Kalauzlija	71 – Louloudies	94 – Carassura
24 – Gradina Ramoševo			95 – Kaletò (Castra Rubra)

Fig. 3.201b: Newly-founded fortifications in the countryside from the eastern part, discussed in the book. Site names correspond with the digits on Fig. 3.201a.

built in the central part. The remains of three well-built masonry edifices (presumed workshops) and smaller rectangular features (presumed tent substructures) are mentioned in the fort interior. Small finds consist of coarse and imported wares, farming tools, arrowheads and others. The fort was destroyed in a fierce fire in the last years of the 6th century.

A special example in the Đerdap Gorge (Iron Gate) is the fort at **Bosman** (Fig. 3.202), which is the only Justinian period construction built completely anew. It was also not repaired or reused later, thus offering the most authentic image of the military architecture of the mid-6th century (Kondić 1984). It was fully adapted to the terrain and triangular in plan, with 45 m long sides. The substantial defensive walls, built in the *opus mixtum* technique, were 2.3 m thick on average and reinforced with three round projecting towers. The only entrance was from the river, which provided additional protection. The interior held a masonry well and traces of modest buildings with wattle-and-daub walls and floors of beaten loam. The coin hoard from 596, found under the ruins, very precisely dates the end of the fort and also of this section of the Danube limes.

Partly investigated in the area of considerable metal ore deposits, particularly the gold deposits in the valley of the River Pek, is the fortified metallurgic complex at **Kraku Lu Jordan** (Fig. 3.203) (Bartel et al. 1979; Tomović 2000). The fortification lies on a low elongated ridge at the confluence of the Rivers Brodička reka and Pek, 70 km south of the Danube limes. It measures

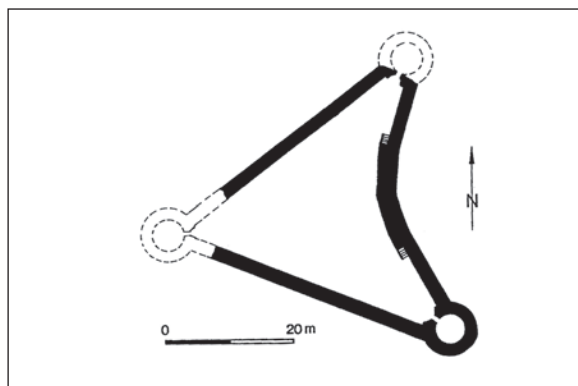


Fig. 3.202: Bosman. Plan of the fort (Kondić 1984, Fig. 1).

160 × 80 m and is protected with steep slopes and thick walls. The complex extends along the southern slope down to the river. Investigations thus far examined seven buildings along the interior of the southern walls and three square towers. The buildings revealed furnaces, smithies and other workshops that produced mining tools. The fortification also served as a mining administration centre, which was presumably located in the western part of the complex. This is where the production of gold and distribution of gold ingots was being controlled, while also providing a place to safely store the gold. Coins and other small finds show that the fortified complex was constructed in the late 3rd

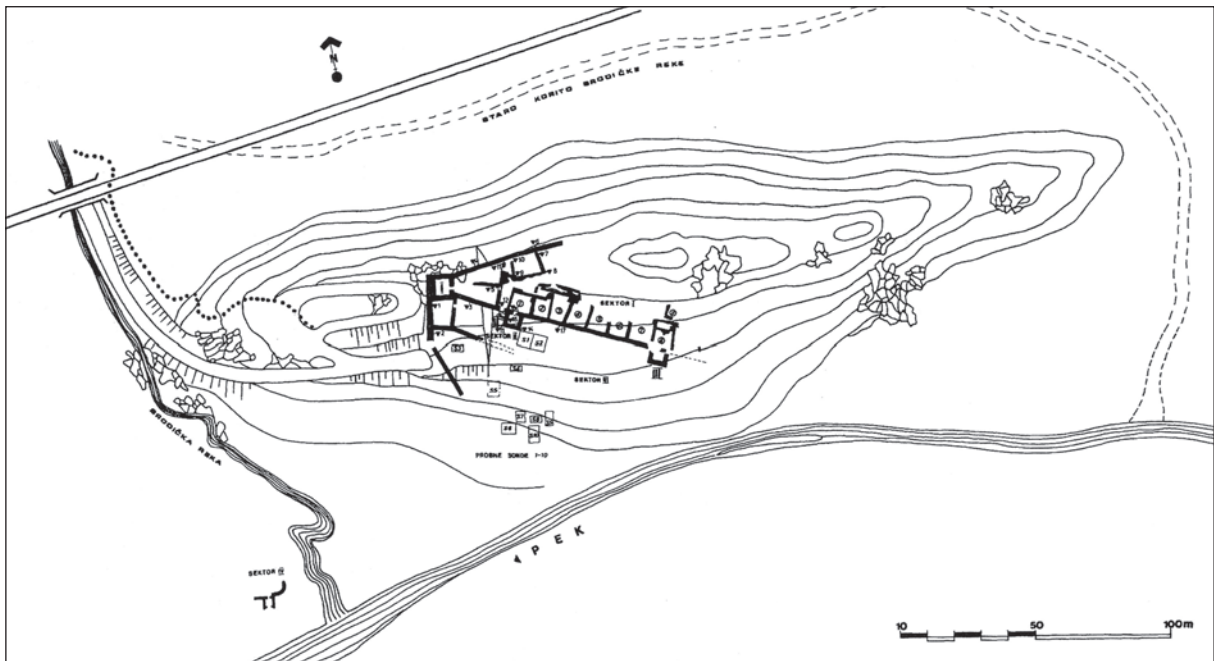


Fig. 3.203: Kraku Lu Jordan. Plan of the fortification (from Tomović 2000, Fig. 4).

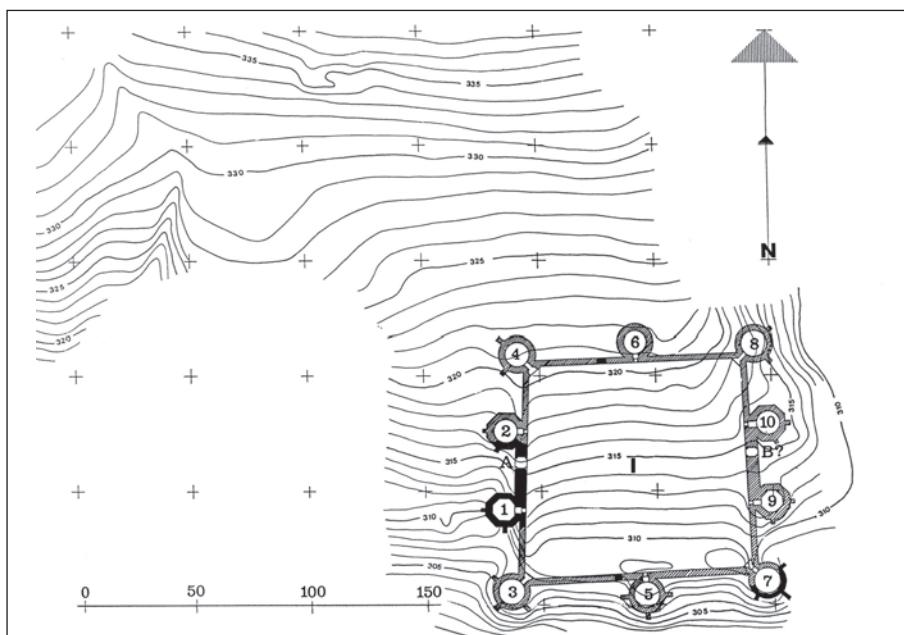


Fig. 3.204: Vrelo - Šarkamen. Plan of the palace (Tomović, Vasić 1997, Fig. 4).

century and later gradually extended. It was destroyed in a fire in the late 4th century and abandoned.

The group of magnificent fortified imperial residences in Illyricum includes the presumed palace of Maximinus Daia at **Vrelo - Šarkamen** (Fig. 3.204) (Tomović, Vasić 1997; Popović, I. 2005; Mladenović 2009). It extends across almost 10 ha and incorporates a fortification, mausoleum, burial mound and several

interconnected structures. Most of these were never finished as the construction was brought to a halt at one point. The foundations of the northern defensive walls were finished, though stratigraphic evidence shows no signs of habitation; only the mausoleum was finished and put to use. It is smaller than the other two palaces (Gamzigrad and Diocletian's palace in Split), discussed among the newly-founded cities (see *Chapter 2.5*), and

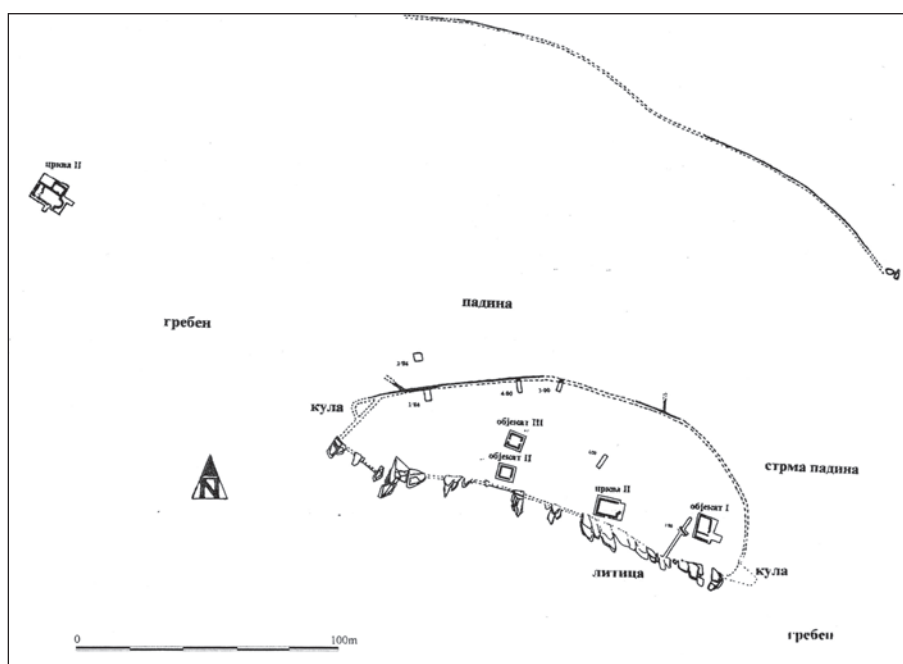


Fig. 3.205: Liška Čava. Plan of the fortified settlement (Milinković 2010, Fig. 276).

also less well-known, but enclosed with equally impressive defensive walls with towers. Future research might offer additional evidence on the fortified palaces that very ostentatiously heralded a new era.

In addition to the above-mentioned exceptional forms of Late Antique fortifications, there are many other fortified posts in Serbia, but they were only rarely systematically investigated. One located in northwestern Serbia is at **Liška Čava** on a 667 m high and naturally well-protected hill (Fig. 3.205) (Radičević 2009; Milinković 2010, 210–216). It extends across two levels, one on the smaller summit plateau, partly protected with rocky terrain, and the other on the larger lower part on the northern slope. More is known on the remains from the 155 × 50 m large summit plateau. Its north side is protected with 1.36 m thick mortared defensive walls. The interior held several residential buildings with clay-bonded walls. A surprising discovery is a small, only 11 × 6.2 m large Early Christian church with an apse, also of clay-bonded walls. Another church, of a similarly modest construction and only very slightly larger, was excavated on the ridge next to the fortification. Small finds, predominantly coarseware and farming tools, but also two precious brooches, date to the 6th century and reflect a heavily ruralised autarchic hilltop settlement that persisted to the late 6th century or possibly slightly longer.

The fort of **Timacum Minus** (Fig. 3.206) lies in the valley of the River Timok on an important communication that connected the Adriatic (Lissus) with the Danube Basin (Ratiaria) (Petrović 1986; Petković, Ilijić 2012). It

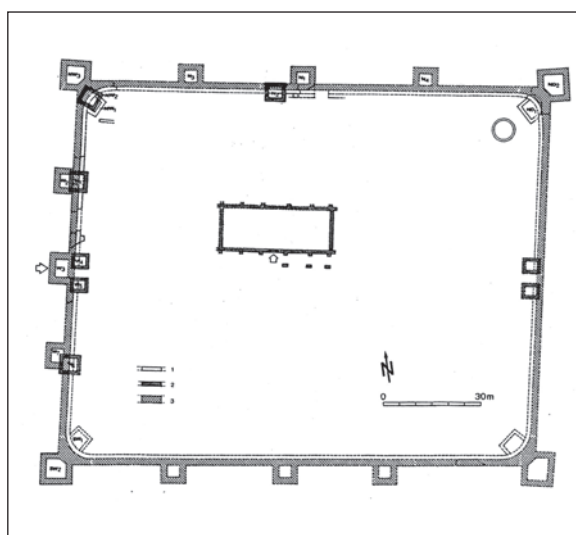


Fig. 3.206: Timacum Minus. Plan of the fort (Petrović 1986, Fig. 2).

is a typical Roman cohort fort with the surface of 1.7 ha, built in the lowland next to a river. Research established three phases, the last one dating to the 4th century and involving extensive renovations and the construction of thicker (up to 3 m) defensive walls with large protruding rectangular towers. Coins and other small finds indicate this well-protected fort was also in use in the 5th and 6th centuries, when there were no more repairs of the defensive features, only adaptations to the interior structures at the entrances and along the walls.

Bedem near Maskare (Fig. 3.207), located at the confluence of the Rivers Južna Morava and Zahodna Morava, is the only lowland Early Byzantine fort from the 6th century in Serbia (Milinković 2015, 63; Rašković 2021, 279–281). It is protected with both rivers and up to 3 m thick defensive walls, and played an important strategic role, possibly even controlled the river traffic. In the 130 × 130 m large fort, excavations revealed a large three-aisled church.

Ukosa in Stalać holds an example of a significant Early Byzantine settlement built on a long ridge above a gorge (Rašković 2016). The few trial trenches at the site confirmed the existence of defensive walls bound with lime mortar. The walls survive up to 1 m high, while their thickness has not been established. A thick Early Byzantine layer contained numerous coins, pottery, glass, bone products, a variety of artisanal and farming tools and a single spearhead. Also mentioned are a few storage pits. The coin hoard from the mid-5th century

can be seen as the consequence of destruction in a Hun incursion. The fort is believed to have been renovated in the late 5th and abandoned in the late 6th or early 7th century.

A large number of Late Antique fortifications came to light in southwestern Serbia, in the area of Novi Pazar and Raška. We will only present those that best illustrate the last posts before the decline of the Empire.

In the central Balkans, a very telling example is the fortification at **Gradina Ras** (Fig. 3.208) (Popović, M. 1999, 73–103). It is one of the first systematically investigated sites of this type in Serbia with reliably dated phases of use. The Late Antique phases are only one segment of the settlement on this high rocky hill above the confluence of the Rivers Raška and Ibar, in an area rich in metal ore deposits. The habitation remains from the middle and second half of the 3rd century are primarily dated with coins. These remains were found on the eastern slope of the hill, at Podgrađe, where Marko Popović

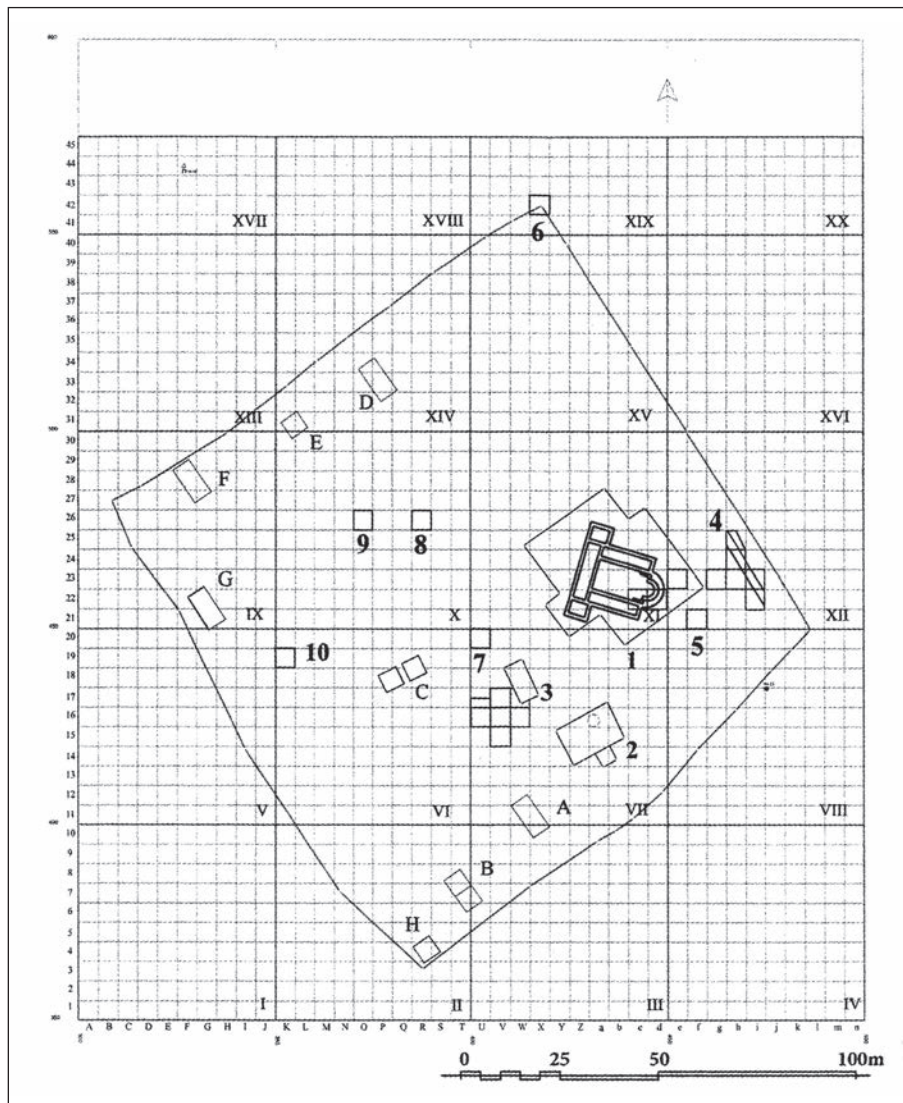


Fig. 3.207: Bedem near Maskare. Plan of the fort (Milinković 2015, Fig. 27).

presumes a masonry building representing a *speculum*; he also dates a timber house on the slope to the mid-3rd century. Stray finds from this time, predominantly coins, also came to light on top of Gradina and show the first, short-term habitation on the hill in the second half of the 3rd century, when the natural defences of the rocky domed hilltop sufficed. Popović observes that the hill was fortified in the initial decades of the 4th century. It incorporated the prehistoric hillfort and the slope (Podgrađe) with the two above-mentioned buildings from the 3rd century. The defensive walls are completely adapted to the terrain and enclose a surface in excess of 5 ha. They are 1.2 m thick and erected in places of easier access, while elsewhere the site's defences relied on the steep rocky slopes. Only three towers were built. Two parallel walls form a narrow entrance into the fort. Even though the fortification is vast, the steep slopes only allow buildings to be constructed in the levelled parts along the defensive walls. Twenty-two Late Antique houses were investigated, which revealed several construction phases. Most were timber buildings on drystone foundations, only few were masonry houses. The remaining space was presumably used to shelter people and livestock. Stratigraphic evidence shows the fort was continuously inhabited from the early 4th to the late 6th century. Within this time, the first phase dates to the 4th and 5th, the second to the 6th century and is marked by the renovation of the defensive walls in the late 520s or the 530s. At Podgrađe, part of the defensive wall renovation dates to the first decades of Justinian's reign. Popović primarily based this interpretation on

the coins from sealed contexts, as the steep terrain often makes the stratigraphic record unclear. For this reason, continued habitation does seem questionable, as the analysis does not take sufficiently into account the possibility of later use. Analysis did provide a relative chronology of individual buildings and their renovations. At the foot of the hill, investigations also revealed the remains of a three-aisled church; this is the largest church in the area of Novi Pazar and was presumably built contemporaneously with the renovations of the defensive walls. The end of the settlement cannot be reliably dated, but presumably occurred at the transition from the 6th to the 7th century.

The fort at **Gradina in Vrsenice** (Fig. 3.209) was systematically investigated and comprehensively published (Popović, Bikić 2009; Milinković 2015, 259). It lies on a hill with steep slopes that greatly hinder access, with the summit located at 1330 m asl. The first phase dates to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, when a building of a military function was put up, serving primarily as a watch post. In the last third of the 4th century (360 or 370s), 1.2–1.5 m thick walls were built on the hilltop that enclosed a c. 0.5 ha large area. A tower was incorporated in the area of easiest access. The earlier building was renovated and added a new, longer building next to the defensive walls, both serving to house the troops. Only some timber buildings were found in the fort interior. In Late Roman times, the fort is believed to have protected the road used to transport valuable metals from the mining centres along the border between the provinces Dalmatia and Upper Moesia to the valley of the Ibar. There are no reli-

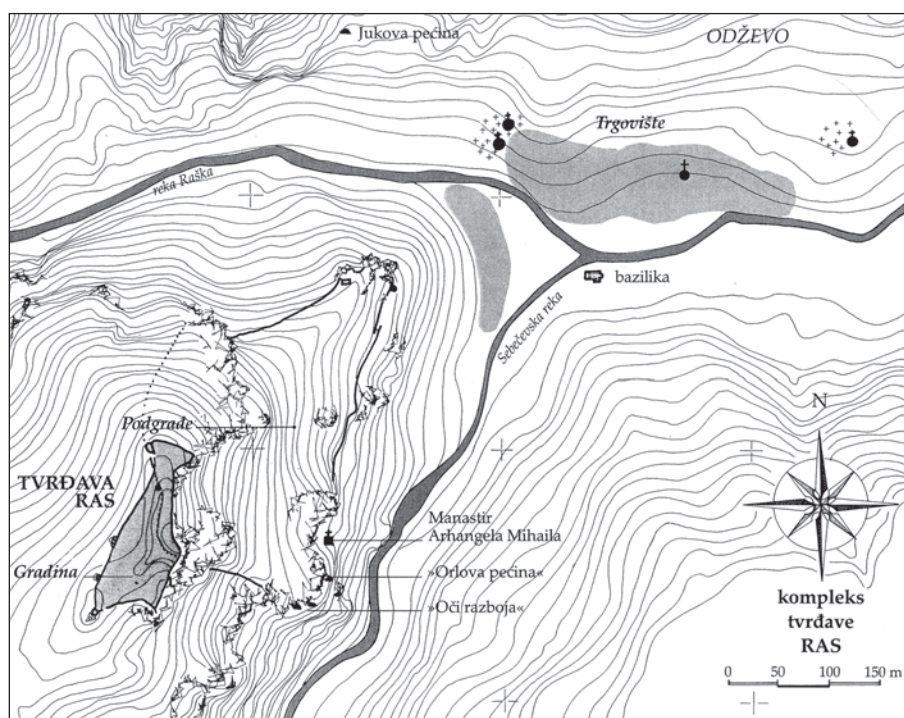


Fig. 3.208: Gradina Ras. Plan of the fortification (Popović, M. 1999, Fig. 8).

able traces of the fort being continually inhabited to the 5th century. After the fort fell into ruin, which is believed to have occurred as the consequence of the earthquake in 518, it was again renovated in the second quarter or even the mid-6th century. The old defensive walls were repaired and additional, 1.4 m thick walls (proteichisma) constructed at a distance of 10–20 m from the earlier walls. Also built was a small and modest single-aisled church with an apse and narthex, in the fort interior also several timber buildings; the tower is believed to have been renovated at this time as well. The cultural layer shows greater intensity of use than in the earlier period and the number of inhabitants increased; they mainly practised livestock farming, while there are no elements

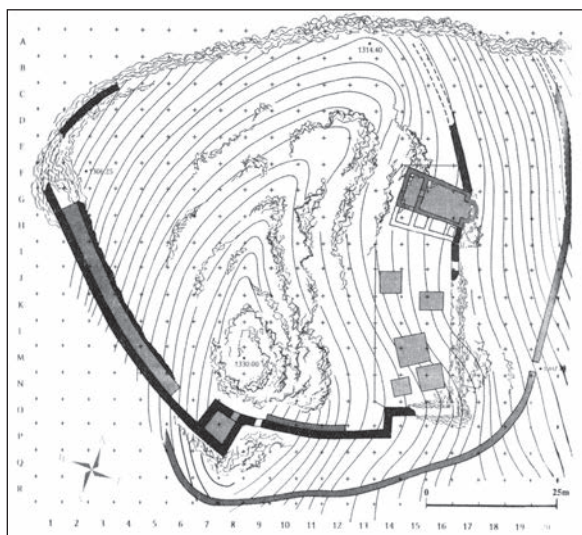


Fig. 3.209: Gradina in Vrsenice. Plan of the fortified settlement (Popović, Bikić 2009, Fig. 32).

to suggest an increased military presence. The fortified settlement is believed to have primarily functioned as the shelter for the local population, though the possibility it formed part of the regional defence system, as it did earlier in the Late Roman period, cannot be excluded.

We should also briefly mention several sites only detected through field surveys and trial trenching, but which importantly contribute to our understanding of the chronology and function of the sites. One is the hilltop fortified settlement at **Zlatni Kamen near Novi Pazar** (Fig. 3.210) (Ivanišević 1990). This high hill (953 m asl) with steep sides revealed a 176 × 66 m large settlement girded with defensive walls and hosting a small church and several other buildings indicative of a more permanent settlement. Investigations also yielded furnaces and slag, as well as numerous deposits of iron ore in the vicinity. It was first settled in the 4th century. It was also inhabited in the 6th century, when the settlement included the above-mentioned church, the smaller buildings and yielded a number of small finds. The mortared 0.9–1 m thick walls were reinforced with two small towers in the part of easier access. The modest cultural layer shows that the occupation of the hilltop in the 6th century was of a short duration (Ivanišević 1990, 11).

The construction of the fortification at **Južac near Sopoćani** (Fig. 3.211) was reliably dated to the 4th/5th centuries (Popović, M. 1987). At that time, 1.4 m thick and mortared defensive walls were built on top of the prehistoric hillfort and reinforced with a protruding rectangular tower in the area of easier access. Several trial trenches explored the 150 × 65 m large settlement and unearthed the remains of a burnt-down drystone and timber construction next to the walls. It was a building that small finds attribute to the second half of the 4th or first half of the 5th century. Later, a masonry building

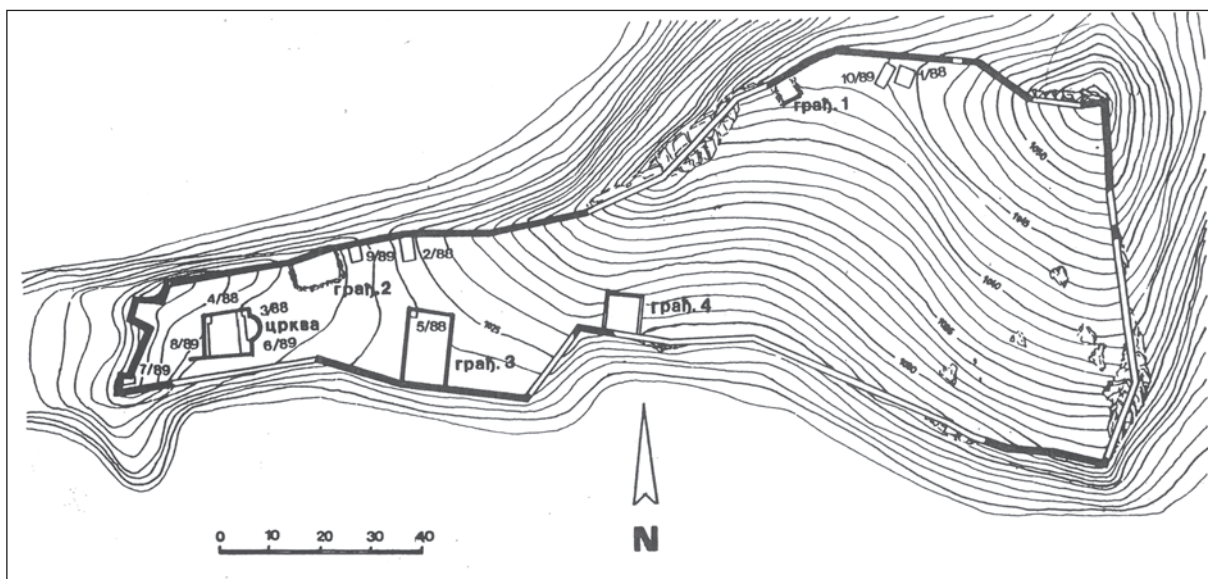


Fig. 3.210: Zlatni Kamen near Novi Pazar. Plan of the fortified settlement (from Ivanišević 1990, Fig. 1).

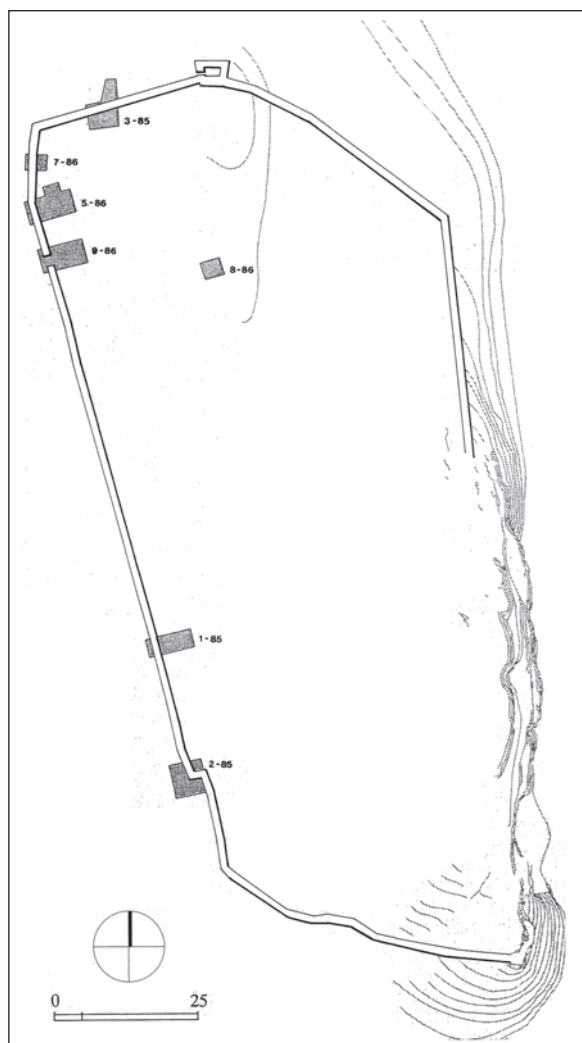


Fig. 3.211: Južac near Sopoćani. Plan of the fortification (Popović, M. 1987, Fig. 1).

was put up on the same spot, which together with small finds shows the fortification was renovated and used in the 6th century.

A characteristic fortified refuge is located at **Hum near Tutin** (Fig. 3.212), at an altitude of 1502 m asl (Ivanišević 1988). The small, 75 × 50 m large fortified area protected with 0.9–1 m thick walls only revealed a thin cultural layer from the 6th century.

Of a similar nature is the site at **Gradina Ramoševo near Tutin** (Fig. 3.213) (Ivanišević 1987). The hilltop revealed 1.4 m thick and mortared defensive walls and two protruding towers that Late Antique pottery roughly dates to the 4th–6th centuries. No buildings were observed in the interior.

One of the earliest fortified sites at the edge of the Pešter plateau is that at **Trojan** (Fig. 3.214) (Ivanišević 1989). Trial trenching explored the basic elements of the fortification that draws its origin from the prehistoric period, when a substantial earthwork rampart was

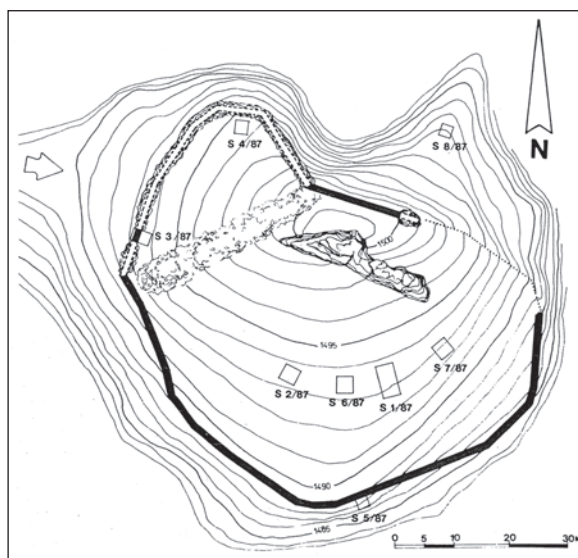


Fig. 3.212: Hum near Tutin. Plan of the fortification (Ivanišević 1988, Fig. 1).

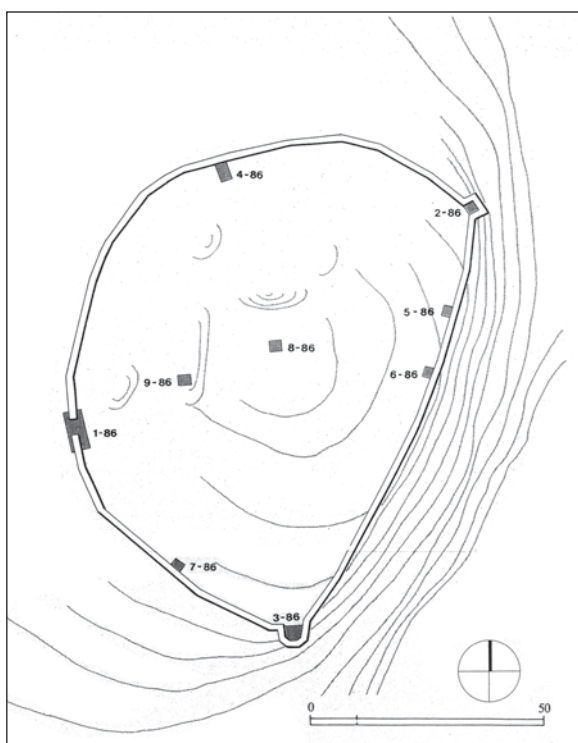


Fig. 3.213: Gradina Ramoševo near Tutin. Plan of the fortification (Ivanišević 1987, Fig. 1).

constructed on the hilltop (1351 m asl) that encircled a 210 × 85 m large area. In the 3rd century, the rampart (presumably also the palisade) was renovated, but without using mortar. Rare coins and other small finds date the modest habitation remains to the first half of the 3rd century, while the settlement or visits to the site

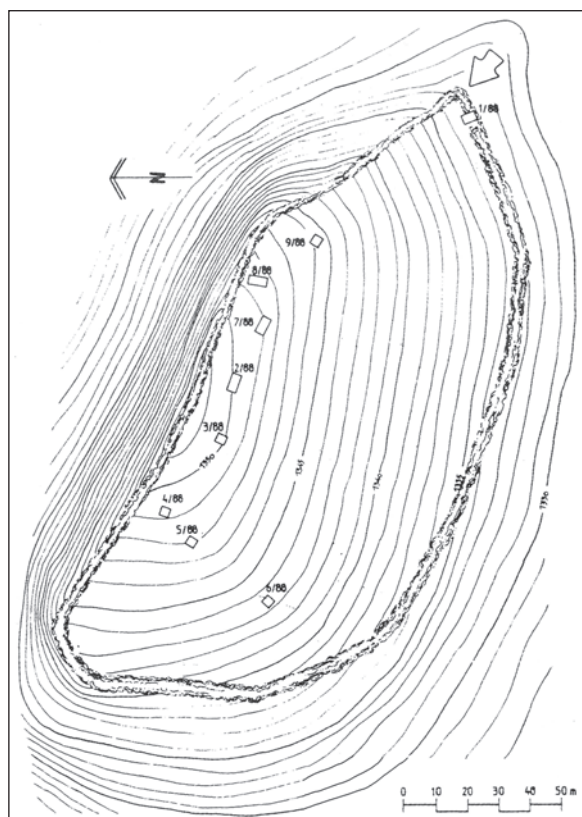


Fig. 3.214: Trojan. Plan of the fortification (Milinković 2007, Fig. 7).

presumably continued to the late 4th century. The interior revealed no building traces. Vujadin Ivanišević posits that it accommodated a small garrison controlling the nearby communications, though the size of the fortification suggests it may also have been in refugial use.

The hilltop site at **Kulina in Rogatac** (Fig. 3.215) was likely inhabited only briefly (Simić 1987). The 1.4 m thick walls protect the 100 × 60 m large site in the north, west and south, with steep slopes providing additional protection. A rectangular tower was found in the southwest. We should also mention a thick earthwork rampart in the function of a proteichisma located in the part of easier access. The interior only revealed a thin cultural layer from the first half of the 6th century and no building remains.

The fortification at **Gaj in Babrež** (Fig. 3.216) is a single-phase site from the 6th century, located on a hill dominating the valley of the River Jošanička reka (Premović-Aleksić 1989). The 1.6–1.9 m thick defensive walls girdle a 100 × 40 m large area of the hilltop. At the highest point, the walls are reinforced with a U-shaped tower that combined defensive and watch functions, while its interior held the remains of a smelting furnace. Two other masonry buildings were found at the walls. The cultural layer dates to the 6th century. The location and the thickness of the walls suggest the fortification controlled traffic and surrounding territory.

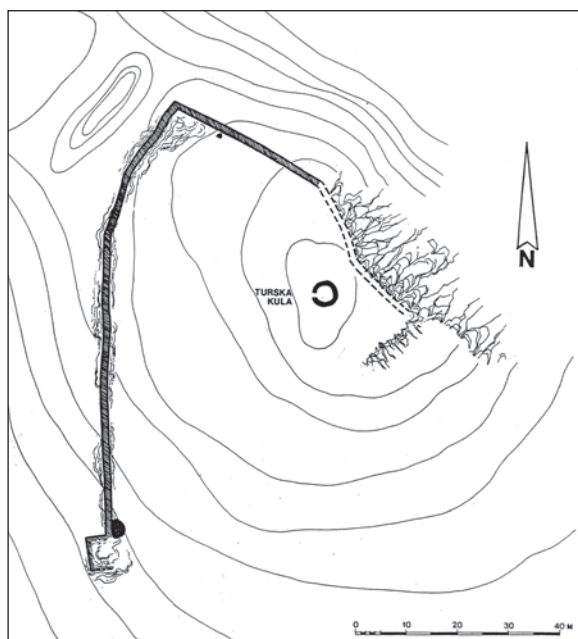


Fig. 3.215: Kulina in Rogatac. Plan of the fortification (Simić 1987, Fig. 1).

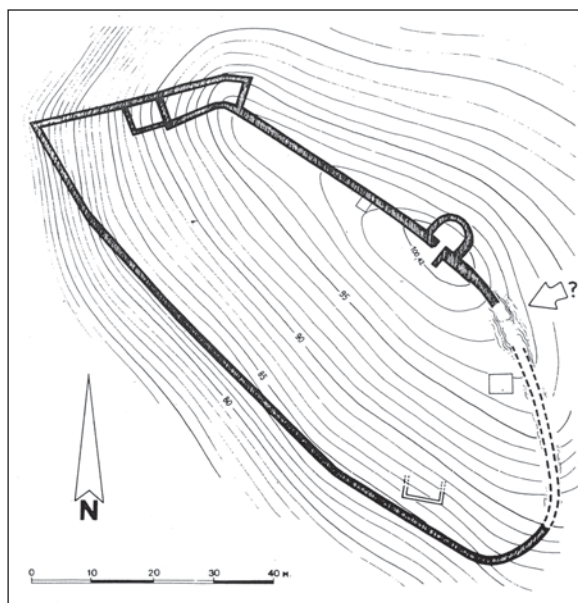


Fig. 3.216: Gaj in Babrež. Plan of the fortification (Premović-Aleksić 1989, Fig. 18).

The fortification at **Gradina in Radalica** (Fig. 3.217) lies on a dominant hill affording control over the surrounding areas (Kalić, Mrkobrad 1985). Remains of buildings are visible in several places, particularly numerous near the defensive walls. The c. 60 × 40 m large fortification is believed to have been established in the 6th century, though it also revealed pottery from the 4th

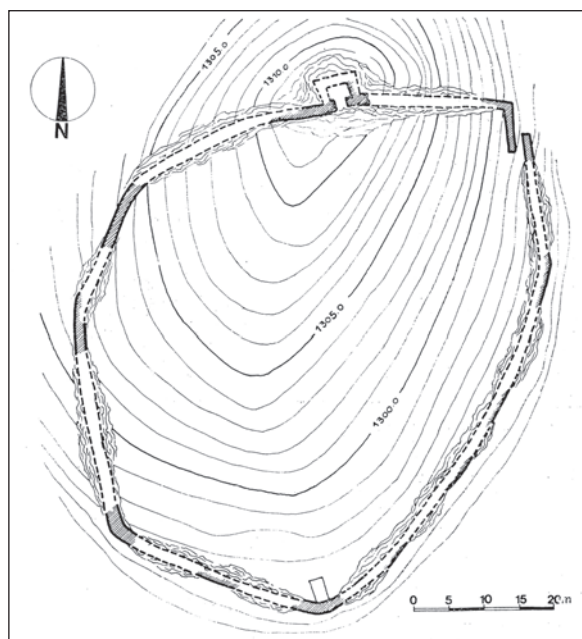


Fig. 3.217: Gradina in Radalica. Plan of the fortified settlement (Kalić, Mrkobrad 1985, Pl. 1).

century. The defensive walls are 1.4 m thick and reinforced with a rectangular tower at the highest point (1313 m).

A small fortification was built on the high hill of **Tupi krš** (Fig. 3.218) (1286 m) that enabled control over the upper reaches of the River Ibar (Milinković 1985). The 47 × 33 m large fortified settlement was in one part enclosed with 1.05 m thick walls and elsewhere protected by rocky faces. Several buildings are visible in the interior, one of which was trial trenched and found to have dry-stone foundations. The small finds indicate its construction in the 6th century.

The site at **Kula in Kaludra** (Fig. 3.219) is heavily fortified (Popović, M. 1984). The 120 × 60 m large fort was built on a naturally well-protected hill at 1041 m asl and additionally protected with substantial defensive walls and presumably eight protruding towers. The original defensive walls were 1.2 m thick and later reinforced to the thickness of 1.8 m. Investigations revealed two phases, both dating to the 6th century. In the first, the walls and towers were built. The second phase followed soon after and involved reinforcing the walls and adding a staircase leading to the top of the defensive walls. The east part, where access was easier, was additionally protected with a proteichisma at a distance of c. 10 m from the walls. At a distance of 20–30 m, a substantial earthwork rampart was also built that enclosed the fort from three sides. The modest pottery remains and particularly architectural features date the fort to the 6th century, with possible limited occupation already in the 4th century.

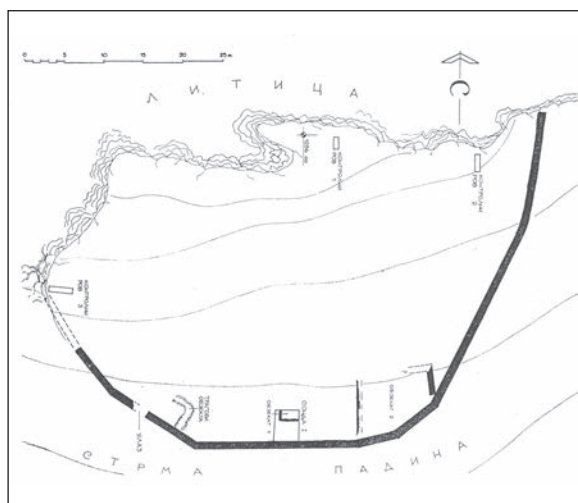


Fig. 3.218: Tupi krš. Plan of the fortified settlement (Milinković 1985, Fig. 1).

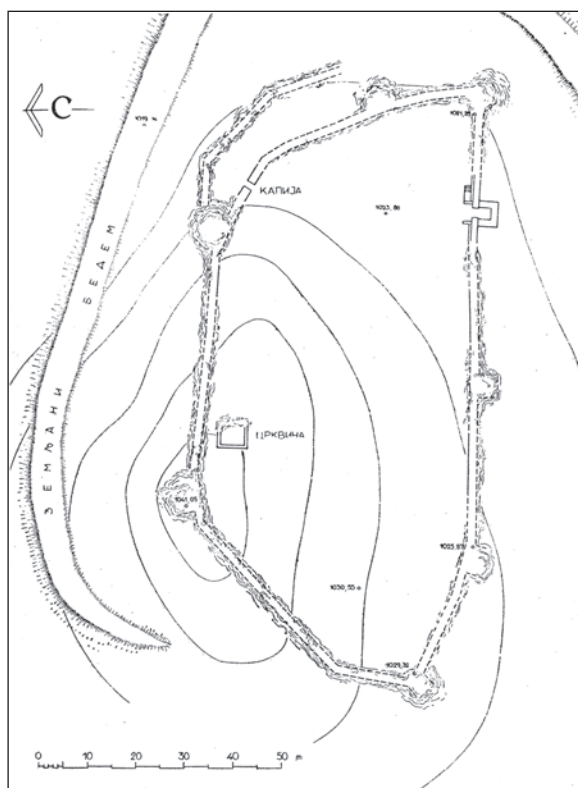


Fig. 3.219: Kula in Kaludra. Plan of the fort (from Popović, M. 1984, Fig. 1).

The fort at **Durđevica in Đerekare** (Fig. 3.220) is also heavily fortified and measures 110 × 60 m (Milinković 1983). It is encircled with 1.8–2.5 m thick walls with three towers along the part of easier access and elsewhere protected with rocky faces. The uniform cultural layer is attributable to the 6th century. A damaged burial of a child was found at the walls. Milinković presumes the

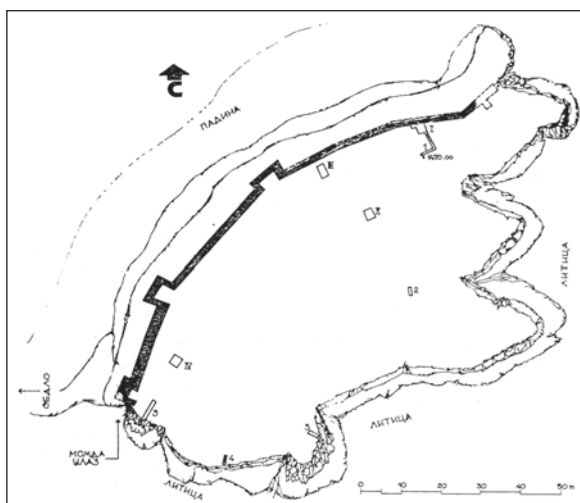


Fig. 3.220: Đurđevica in Đerekare. Plan of the fort (Milinković 1983, Pl. 1).

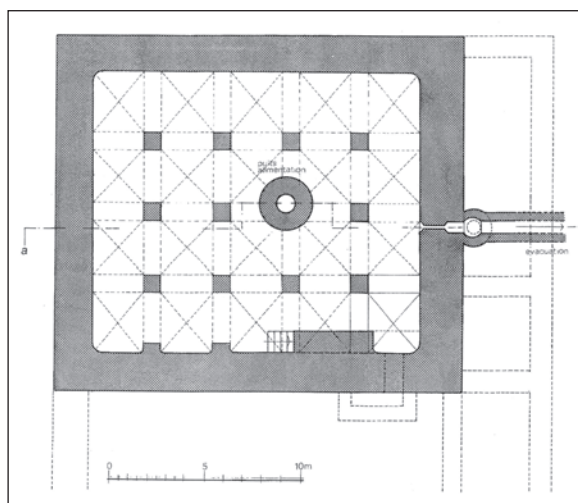


Fig. 3.222: Balajnac near Niš. Plan of the cistern (Jeremić, G. 1995, Fig. 10).

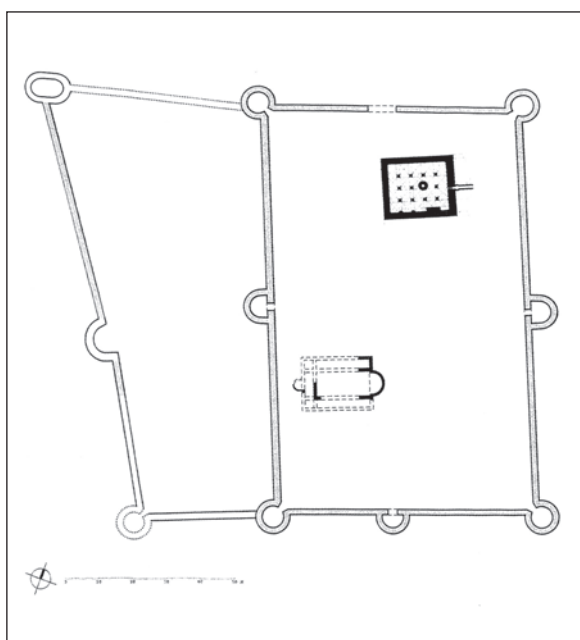


Fig. 3.221: Balajnac near Niš. Plan of the fort (Ćurčić 2010, Fig. 183).

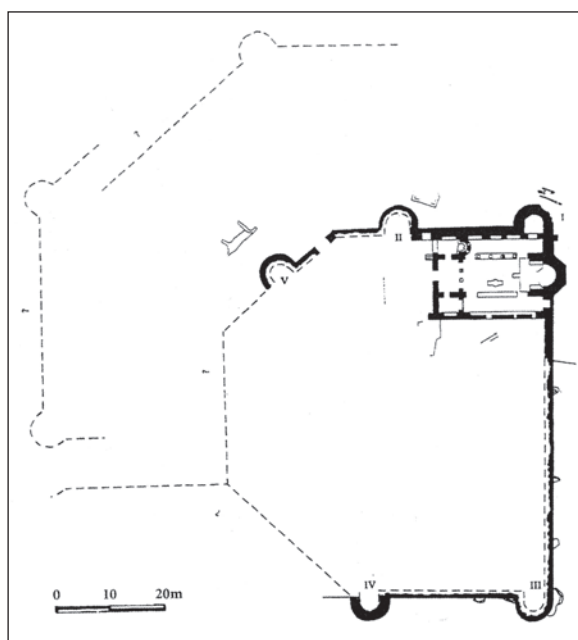


Fig. 3.223: Kale in Bregovina. Plan of the fortified settlement (Milinković 2015, Fig. 5).

fort formed part of a wider system of defence, but also one that could serve as a refuge, as it was defended by civilians with their families.

The same time frame, but greater quality of construction can be observed in the unusual fort at **Balajnac near Niš** (Figs. 3.221, 3.222) (Jeremić, G. 1995). It was built on a low hill some 60 m above the flatland, in the vicinity of the road that led from Naissus to Caričin grad. It has two parts. The upper part is enclosed with rectilinear defensive walls and makes use of the naturally well-protected summit of the hill. The lower part extends across the western

slope. The 2 m thick defensive walls are reinforced with round and semicircular towers. The upper part measures 113 × 70 m, the lower one 135 × 50 m. Trial trenching campaigns in the fort only unearthed two large buildings, presuming the interior was not densely inhabited. A three-aisled basilica with an apse and high-quality marble furnishings was partially excavated. A special feature is the 17.2 × 15.5 m large cistern with up to 1.95 m thick walls, which was very well constructed. Other walls were unearthed in its proximity, possibly even the transverse wall of the fort. The elements found thus far reveal a fort

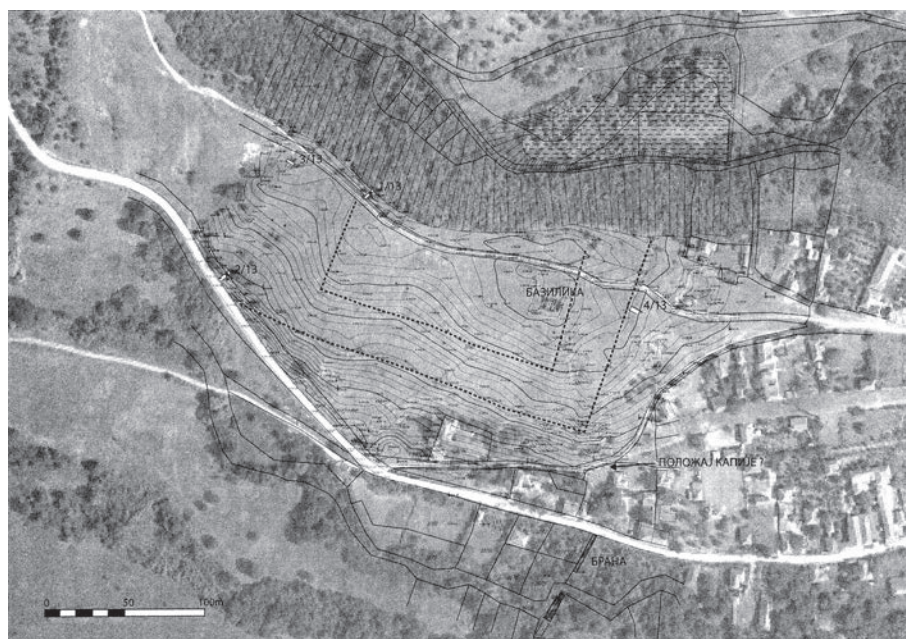


Fig. 3.224: Kale, Zlata. Plan of the fortified settlement (Milinković 2015, Fig. 170).

of a specific character, with walls built in the *opus mixtum* technique, which is rare in this area; also rare are round towers. Even more unusual is the presence of two large buildings and absence of other, particularly residential buildings. The site also yielded an exceptional find, namely the bronze head of a Byzantine empress (Srejšević, Simović 1959).

There are several fortified Early Byzantine settlements in the vicinity of Caričin grad (cf. Ivanišević et al. 2019), which include the partially excavated settlement at **Kale in Bregovina** (Fig. 3.223) (Jeremić, Milinković 1995; Milinković 2015, 228–236). It was built on a low and easily accessible hill. The well-constructed and 1.6–1.9 m thick defensive walls in the *opus mixtum* technique form two defensive belts. The smaller, 60 × 65 m large inner part with at least five protruding semicircular towers revealed a richly decorated three-aisled basilica. Parallel to it is a larger and partitioned masonry building with pilasters of a prestigious nature. Several smaller, but poorly known drystone edifices are also mentioned. The small finds include many farming tools and weapons. The outer belt is poorly known, as is its interior.

The large fortified settlement at **Kale, Zlata** (Fig. 3.224), located 13 km from Caričin grad, is only known in outlines. It was built on a large elongated and naturally protected plateau and its size has not yet been fully established (the inner part measures 165 × 100 m). An aqueduct was found outside the settlement, also visible is a large dam below it (Milinković 2015, 236–248). The dam with the surviving size of c. 100 × 4.4 × 6 m is a feat of hydrotechnical engineering (Milinković 2015, 242, 247). Recent construction work in the highest

part of the settlement uncovered and damaged part of a church built of brick and fitted with a multicoloured mosaic floor. Reports also mention a great amount of architectural decoration and fragments of wall paintings. Trial trenching established a rich cultural layer and two habitation phases, the first of which dates to the 6th and early 7th century. It also unearthed part of a building with walls of clay-bonded rubble.

The fortification at **Hisar above Leskovac** lies on a dominant and naturally well-protected spot at 341 m asl (Stamenković 2013, 143). Investigations revealed part of the defensive walls and a small brick wall in the interior. Small finds date the first phase of the fort to the 4th century (most likely second half), persisting to the Hun incursions. Numerous small finds show a renovation under Justinian and a continuation to the late 6th or early 7th century. A coin hoard was also found, dated to 573/574. An Early Byzantine settlement existed on the slope below, where slag and other finds indicate smelting and iron working.

Montenegro

The newly-founded Late Antique fortification in Montenegro are poorly known, which should primarily be attributed to insufficient fieldwork. There are, however, several examples where a Late Antique phase has been established on previously known archaeological sites. One of these is the fortified hilltop settlement at **Martinička gradina near Spuž** (Fig. 3.225) (Mlakar 1961, 224; Korać 2001; Stevović 2014, 102–105). The

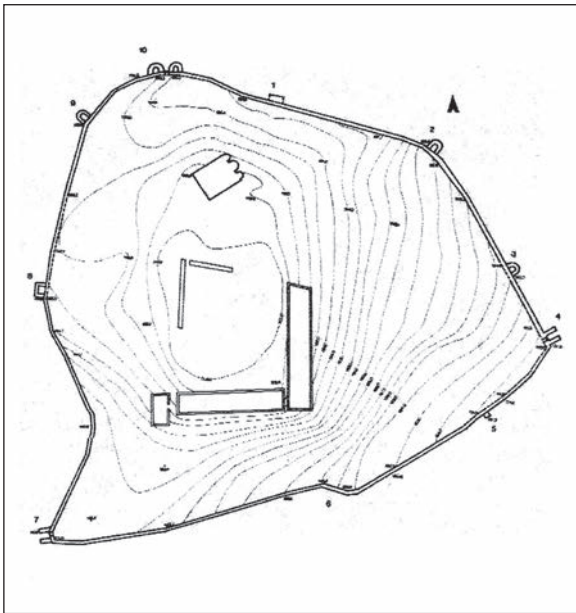


Fig. 3.225: Martinička gradina near Spuž. Plan of the fortified settlement (Stevović 2014, Fig. 89).

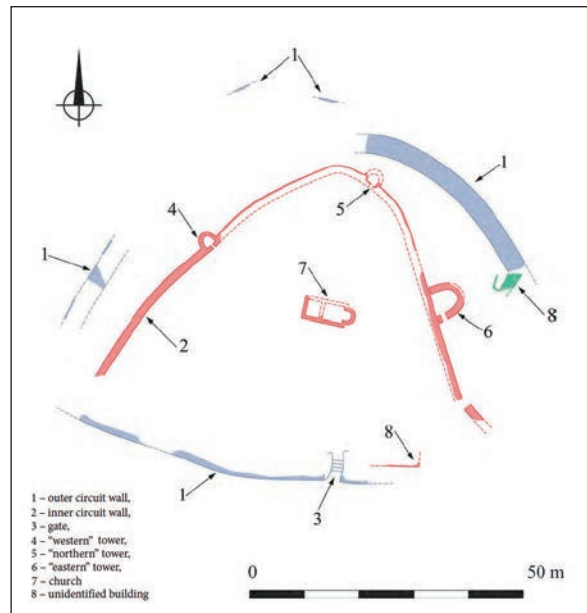


Fig. 3.226: Đuteza near Dinoša. Plan of the fort (from Bugaj et al. 2013, Fig. 3).

high hill above the fertile valley of the River Zeta shows 1.2–1.5 m thick defensive walls with several protruding rectangular and semicircular towers. The walls enclose the top of the hill and the vast, c. 2.5 ha large southern slope. In its design and the form of the walls with towers, it is similar to other Late Antique fortifications, though poor investigations do not allow us to distinguish between Late Antique and later, medieval elements. The hilltop holds a three-aisled church with three apses, which was built in the 6th century and renovated in the Middle Ages. The remains of another, single-aisled apsed Early Christian church lie at the foot of the hill, which was later added a clergy bench and side rooms.

The construction of the fort at **Đuteza near Dinoša** (Fig. 3.226) skilfully used the hill's natural defences and the earlier prehistoric earthwork ramparts (Velimirović Žižić 1986; Bugaj et al. 2013). The hill with steep slopes rises high above the fertile plain and is only readily accessible from the north, where a low saddle separates it from the surroundings hills. A small Late Antique fort (c. 65 × 42 m) was built within the larger prehistoric hillfort with impressive ramparts. In the south, the fort leans against the rampart of the prehistoric acropolis. Elsewhere it is enclosed with 1.5–1.6 m thick, mortared walls reinforced with three roughly horseshoe-shaped towers. Two of the towers are small, the third one large and hosting an additional entrance into the fort. As also observed at other fortifications, the Late Antique walls were constructed so that they were additionally protected with the prehistoric ramparts in the parts of easier access or the ramparts were reused as a *proteichisma*

at a distance of 8–20 m from the walls. Archaeological prospection and small-scale investigations in the fort interior have revealed a simple apsidal church and traces of other masonry buildings. The small finds are poorly known, while the defensive architecture and the simple church show similarities with those from other Early Byzantine forts in the area.

Only preliminary reports speak of the unusual fortified settlement at **Samograd** (Mrkobrad, Jovanović 1989; Mrkobrad et al. 1990). It rises almost imperceptibly above the valley of the River Brzava, but its core is protected from three sides with imposing vertical rocky faces. The defended area measures c. 100 × 80 m. Substantial defensive walls guard the access to the settlement. The interior holds the remains of prehistoric habitation and three Roman and Late Antique phases. The first defensive walls are believed to have been built in the mid-2nd century, but the settlement was already destroyed in the mid-3rd century. The next phase lasted from the 4th to the mid-5th century, after which the settlement was again abandoned. Intense occupation followed in the 6th century, when one Early Christian church was erected in the interior and another one outside the walls. The area was again fortified with even thicker walls, measuring 1.7 m in the lower and 1.3 m in the upper part. The settlement has been associated with the exploitation of the lead, zinc, copper and iron ore deposits in the area.

The area of **Stari grad in Ulcinj**, in the citadel inside medieval walls, revealed highly mixed cultural layers that included a Late Antique cultural layer and architectural

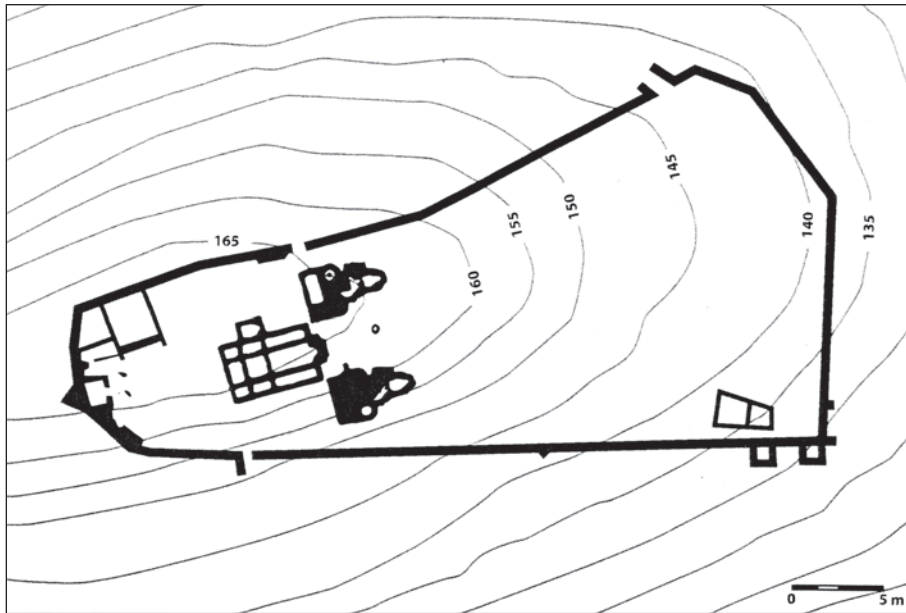


Fig. 3.227: Harilaq. Plan of the fortification (Rama 2020, Fig. 6).

remains (Mijović 1984–85, 73–79; Marković, Stanković 1987). The citadel was constructed on a rocky promontory, which is naturally well-protected and suitable for a fortification, and yielded rich remains from different periods. Found above the Hellenistic walls were modest remains of Late Antique defensive walls dating to the Justinian period, while different structures, burials and a characteristically Early Christian tomb came to light in the interior. The same time frame is also posited for the remains of a cistern and a church indicated by decorative elements of furnishing. Although barely anything is known of the Late Antique phase of the citadel, its naturally protected location above a favourable harbour represents an ideal location for a well-defended settlement. The decision to build a fortification here would have been made easier by the already existing Hellenistic defensive walls and Roman structures. Numerous small finds support habitation in the Roman and Late Antique periods. The fortification most likely formed part of the Justinianic system of protecting navigable routes along the eastern coast of the Adriatic.

Kosovo

For a long time, not much was known on the Late Antique countryside in Kosovo. Recently, however, investigations have been conducted here as well and the results have already been discussed in the first overviews (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003; Rama 2020). Field surveys established over a hundred Late Antique fortifications (Rama 2020, 121). The hilltop sites at Čečan and Gornji Streoc

(Ivanišević, Špehar 2005) are also only known from field surveys. Both have a naturally well-protected location and defensive walls, and are important for the many small finds that shed light on the intensity of habitation on the hilltop settlements of the former province of Dardania. The published finds show at least two habitation phases. Coins and other finds date the first phase to the 3rd and 4th centuries, while the multitude of decorative and everyday items of metal, bone and glass, as well as tools and weapons indicate more intense habitation in the 6th century. This multitude includes many Early Byzantine coins spanning from those of Anastasius to Justin II. Authors emphasise the finds of farming tools, for woodworking and processing leather and posit the existence of a workshops for bone and glass goods. The published selection of finds clearly shows an autarchic nature of the fortified settlements, where we can only expect a limited production of goods for export (the multitude of keys indicates the activity of a locksmith).

An outstanding hillfort fortification with a pronounced sacral component has been investigated at **Harilaq** (Fig. 3.227) (Rama 2020, 117–118). The exposed hill above the flatland west of Ulpiana hosts a fortification of a triangular plan enclosed with defensive walls reinforced with four towers and with four entrances. In the west, where access is easiest, a large rectangular inner tower was constructed that has a triangular projection on the exterior side of the wall. In the highest part, a church complex was built in the *opus mixtum* technique and composed of a three-aisled basilica in the centre and a pair of sacral buildings symmetrically in front of it. The complex was visible from far and was certainly

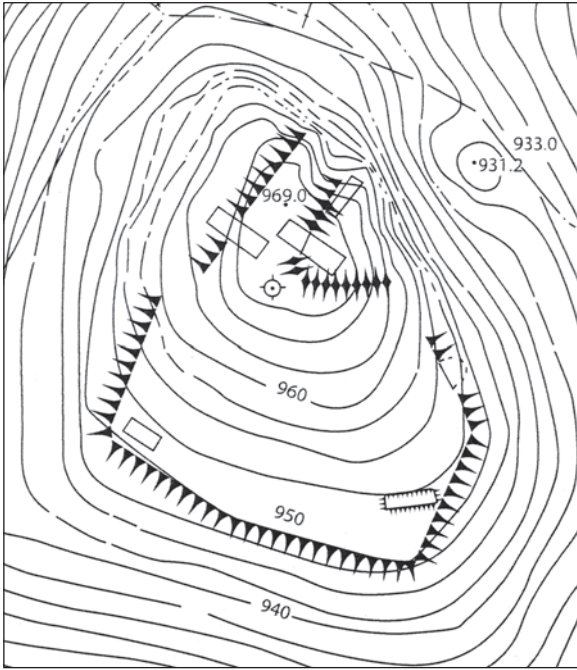


Fig. 3.228: Veletin. Plan of the fortification (Rama 2020, Fig. 20).

of great significance for the population. The two small sacral buildings are seen as martyria honouring Florus and Laurus, two local saints, and the fortified complex is seen as a pilgrimage site.

The geostrategic location and size of the fortification at **Veletin** (Fig. 3.228) show this was an important site in Late Antiquity, which has seen only partial investigations (Jovanović 2004; Rama 2020, 129). It lies on an exposed hill, only 5 km from Ulpiana and in proximity to major mining areas. It offers a good view over a vast area of the Kosovo polje and its lines of communication. Its significance is mirrored in habitation traces from several prehistoric periods. In Late Antiquity, the site was heavily fortified. The c. 1.2 ha large surface extended over the summit plateau and several terraces on the slopes. Its walls were well-adapted to the terrain. Access was easiest from the saddle in the north. Publications mention the remains of a semicircular tower, in the interior also architectural remains.

The fort at **Kekola near Keqekolla** lies in the mountainous area northeast of Pristina and has only recently been investigated (Rama 2020, 124–125). It is naturally protected from three sides, while in the south, where access is easiest, it has defensive walls with a rectangular tower. In its first phase, the tower was part of the defensive walls. It was additionally reinforced from the interior in the second phase and a triangular projection was added on the exterior, giving the tower a pentagonal plan. The fort with a surface of 0.6 ha is enclosed with 1.8–2 m thick defensive walls. The interior revealed the

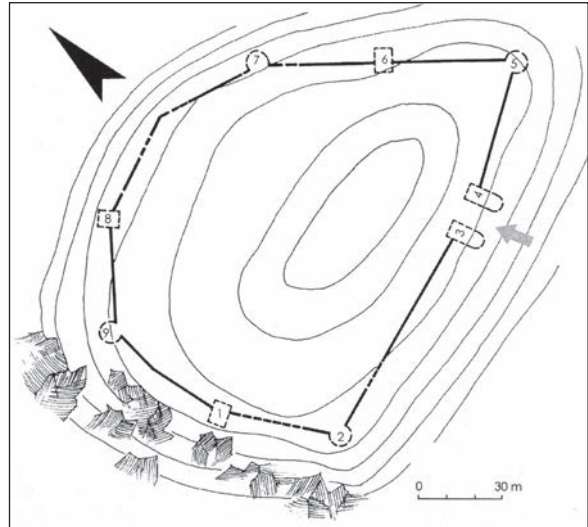


Fig. 3.229: Gegje in Đakovica. Plan of the fort (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, Fig. 34).

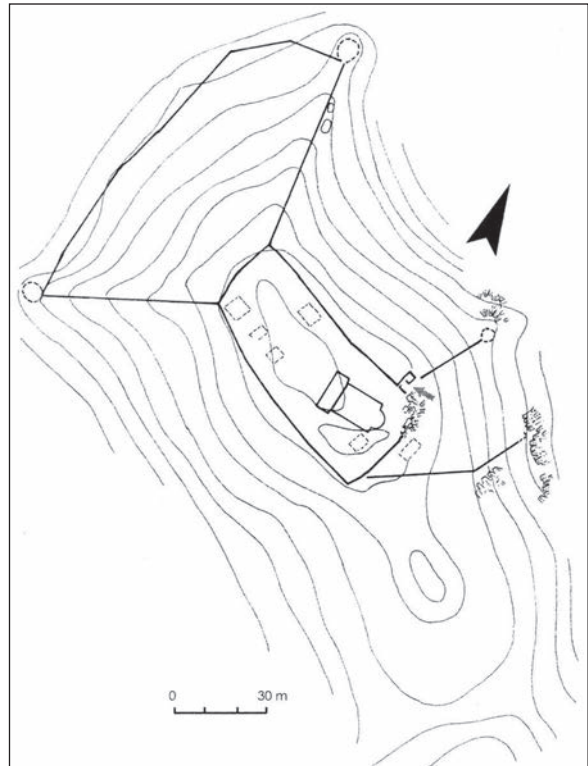


Fig. 3.230: Korishë/Koriša. Plan of the fortified settlement (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, Fig. 55).

remains of houses and a simple apsidal church. The fort is dated to the 6th century, though the first phase may be slightly earlier.

The Late Roman fort at **Gegje** in the south part of the city of **Gjakovë/Đakovica** (Fig. 3.229) is well-known in plan (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 69–73). Field surveys

roughly established the line of the defensive walls, as well as rectangular, semicircular and U-shaped towers. The 150 × 90 m large fort was constructed on a low hill to protect the nearby communications. The plan, shape of the towers and small finds date it to the early 4th century.

The steep hill near the village of **Korishë/Koriša** (Fig. 3.230) holds the remains of a Late Antique fortified settlement only known from field surveys that revealed an interesting plan (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 97–101, 149–150). It comprises the upper part on the fortified summit plateau with remains of housing and a church, as well as the lower part on the terraces of the slope that revealed the remains of masonry buildings. The 1.4–1.8 m thick defensive walls presumably also included several towers.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria has a long history of research of Late Antique fortifications, particularly if also considering the work of brothers Škorpil in the early 20th century (cf. Boshnakov 2007). The very important and widely known work was the investigations by a German-Bulgarian team on the fortified settlement at Golemanovo Kale, which together with the adjacent fort at Sadovsko Kale became the reference point for the study of Late Antique fortifications in a wider area (Uenze 1992). In recent times, systematic surveys of the countryside and excavations at Dichin have been conducted in collaboration with a British team (Poulter 2007c). The first publications aimed at systematically presenting the fortified posts appeared in the 1980s (Ovčarov 1982) and have been growing more numerous (Dintchev 1997; id. 2007; id. 2021b).

Very instructive is the multi-period fort at **Mezdra** (Fig. 3.231, 3.232) (Torbatov 2015). It lies on a rocky plateau above the River Iskar, at the edge of the city of Mezdra in northwestern Bulgaria, along the Roman trans-Balkan road that led from Oescus on the Danube to Serdica. Investigations established several prehistoric habitation phases, a Roman settlement and in the mid-2nd century the construction of a Roman fort. The fortification and the associated civilian settlement were destroyed in 170–190. Renovations began in the late 2nd or early 3rd century, but were never finished. A sanctuary was soon constructed within the ruinous walls and developed into a large religious centre. Different Graeco-Roman, but also Oriental and local deities were worshipped here. The second phase of the sanctuary dates to the second half of the 3rd century when another building was constructed, presumably a second temple. The sanctuary existed to the initial decades of the 4th century. A new construction horizon from the late 300s or early 310s marks the end of the sacral complex. The

defensive walls were renovated then and multi-room buildings erected in the interior. The thin walls and low-quality construction indicate their upper parts were made of sun-dried mudbrick. Investigations in the north part of the defended area revealed that the settlement was partly renovated in the second half of the 4th century. The renovation was presumably the consequence of an earthquake. A crisis occurred in the first half of the 5th century, attributed to the combination of a natural disaster (earthquake) and a devastating Hun attack. The settlement ceased to exist for several decades. Only in the late 5th or initial decades of the 6th century came large-scale reconstruction efforts, when new defensive walls were built on top of the destroyed earlier walls. The defended area was increased with the construction of a short *proteichisma* in the east, at a distance of 5–7 m from the defensive walls. Earlier edifices in the interior were torn down, which raised the ground level. Buildings were constructed with thicker walls compared to those of the Late Roman phase, many of them had more than one storey. Another attack presumably brought about another renovation of the defensive walls and buildings in the second half of the 6th century, marked by a low quality of construction. The end of the monetary circulation and other finds prove that life in the settlement ended in the late 6th century, which Sergey Torbatov associates with Avaro-Slavic incursions.

The fortification at **Borovets near Pravets** is located on a difficult-to-access hill at 847 m asl (Grigorov 2011b). It was irregular in plan, measured 88 × 62 m and was enclosed with 1.35–1.6 m thick walls. The highest point of the hill, which also holds remains from earlier periods, revealed a two-room building that presumably served either as the living quarters of a military commander or a sanctuary. Coins of emperors from Gordian III to Aurelian and other small finds date the building and the fort to the third quarter of the 3rd century. Also found was a fortified entrance initially protected with a rectangular tower in the south and a thick wall in the north. Later, in the second phase, the south tower was torn down and across it another, 2 m thick wall erected. The small finds from the entrance area date also to the second half of the 3rd century.

Two of the Late Antique fortifications with earliest investigations were those at Golemanovo Kale and Sadovsko Kale, near the village of Sadovec (Uenze 1992). They are located only 500 m apart as the crow flies, on the opposite sides of the River Vit and overseeing the valley that opens up not far behind them. More extensive investigations were conducted at **Golemanovo Kale** (Fig. 3.233), which is an excellent example of a fortified hilltop settlement with several phases of development (Uenze 1992; Werner 1992). It lies on a rocky peak east of the River Vit, with the southern slopes gently descending towards the valley and a short, but steep north slope that separates it from the fertile plain below. In the Late

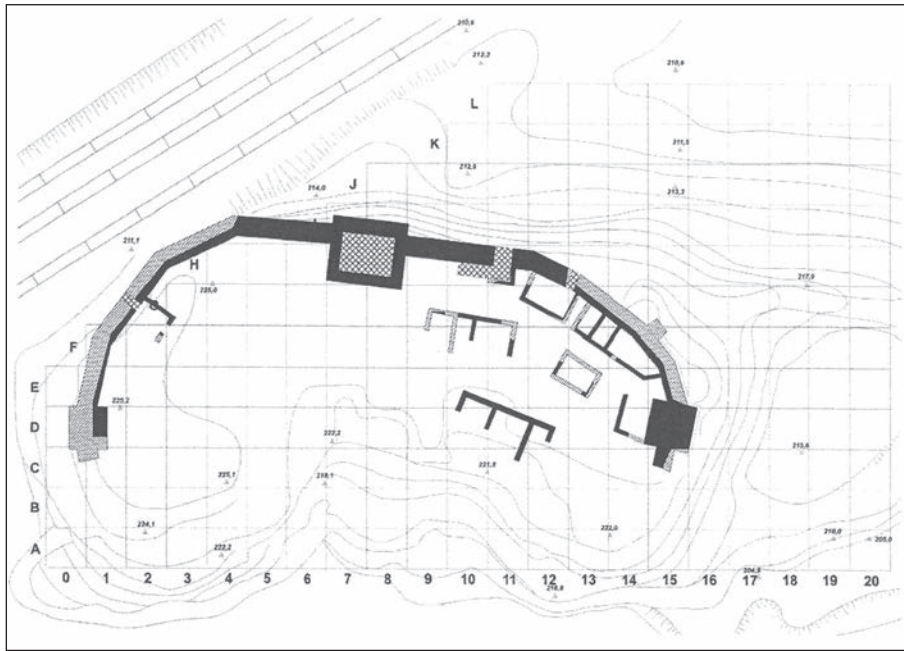


Fig. 3.231: Mezdra. Plan of the fortified settlement (second fourth of the 4th century) (Torbatov 2015, Fig. 8).

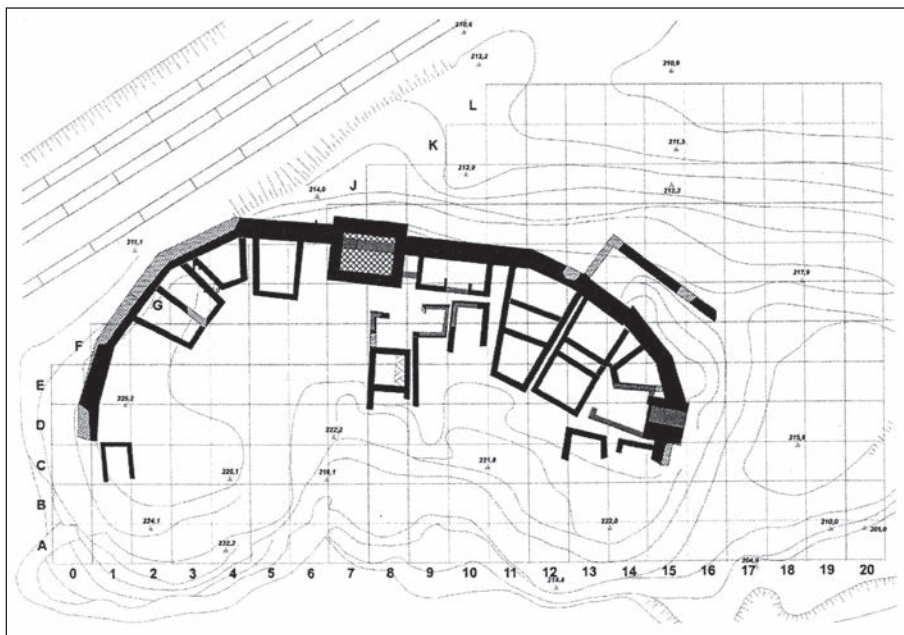


Fig. 3.232: Mezdra. Plan of the fortified settlement (second half of the 6th century) (Torbatov 2015, Fig. 10).

Roman period, a 12 × 11 m large multi-storey tower with 2 m thick walls was constructed in the highest part, connected with defensive walls. The quality of construction suggests that the Roman army erected the walls. Investigations unearthed no contemporary buildings in the interior. This fort is believed to have been destroyed in the early 5th century. Under Justinian (presumably around 540), it was densely inhabited in its full extent, boasting 35 to 40 houses and 40 to 50 store-

rooms. The houses were predominantly two-storeyed with clay-bonded stone foundations, and wood or other non-durable materials used for the upper storeys. The 'Nestor house' had two rooms and stands out in its size and rich interior furnishings; it was the only one with glass window panes and also revealed a hoard of gold coins, indicating a high social status of the owner. The numerous finds of farming tools, woodworking and smithing point to an autarchic farming community.



Fig. 3.233: Golemanovo Kale. Plan of the fortified settlement (Vetters 1950, Fig. 5).

Leaned against the defensive walls in the upper part of the settlement is a two-storey church where mass was held in the upper storey, while the ground floor held a baptistery. Another church from the Justinian period, not of a cemeterial nature, was found outside the settlement. Around 560, the settlement was burnt down but resettled immediately afterwards. It remained inhabited at least to a time soon after 584. In this last phase, the exterior church had already been abandoned and the lower part of the interior church was filled with stones. The settlement may be seen as a fortified village, where the Byzantine army led the construction of the defensive walls, while the locals built-up the interior. The farmers living in the village supplied foodstuffs to the army and the hoards of gold coins indicate that surplus goods were sold to the border troops and civilian population.

The fort at **Sadovsko Kale** (Fig. 3.234) shows a different layout and a different nature (Uenze 1992). It was established and abandoned in the 6th century, hence representing an important monument of the fortified architecture of its day. It is roughly 85 × 50 m large. Investigations were conducted in the western part of the terrace below the summit and on the proteichisma further

down. The eastern, higher part has not been investigated, but seems also to hold building remains. Below the 1.7 m thick defensive walls is a 1.8 m thick proteichisma, which protects a large area on the western slope. An additional defensive feature is a strong, multi-storeyed tower with 2.7 m thick walls. Leaning on the walls and the tower are casemates. The walls of the buildings in the interior were clay-bonded, similarly as those in the interior of the settlement at Golemanovo Kale. The structure of the coins and the similar construction of walls with those of the adjacent fort suggest the fort at Sadovsko Kale was constructed under Justinian, most likely around 540. The interior revealed no churches and shows a more military character (Werner 1992, 415–417). The ground floor of the tower revealed traces of a smithery. The silver mounts of two belts and a pair of silver brooches prove the presence of an important, most likely Gothic family as mercenaries in Byzantine service. All other finds point to the presence of the autochthonous population, living in a settlement of farmers and artisans who defended themselves when the need arose. In this, it is in stark contrast with the adjacent fortification at Golemanovo Kale that otherwise shows several commonalities. The

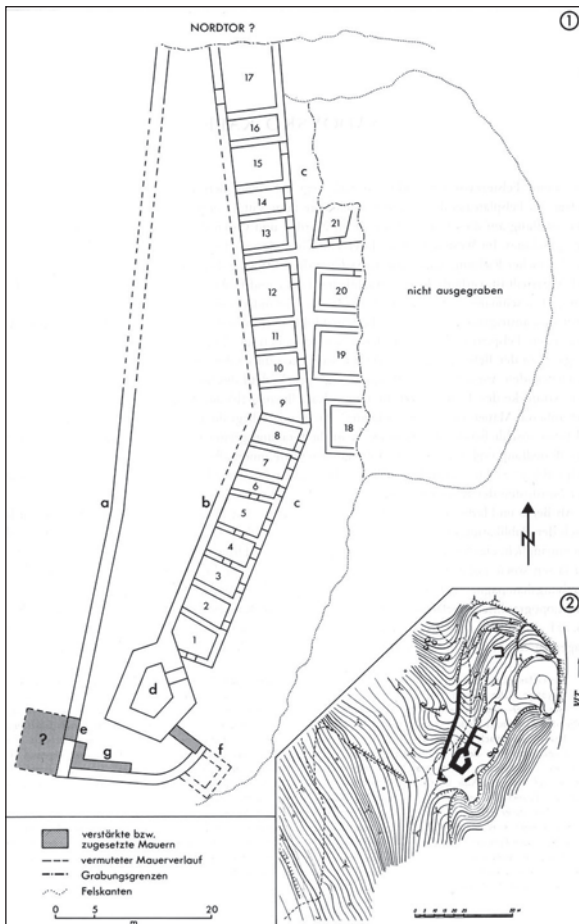


Fig. 3.234: Sadovsko Kale. Plan of the fort (Uenze 1992, Fig. 31).

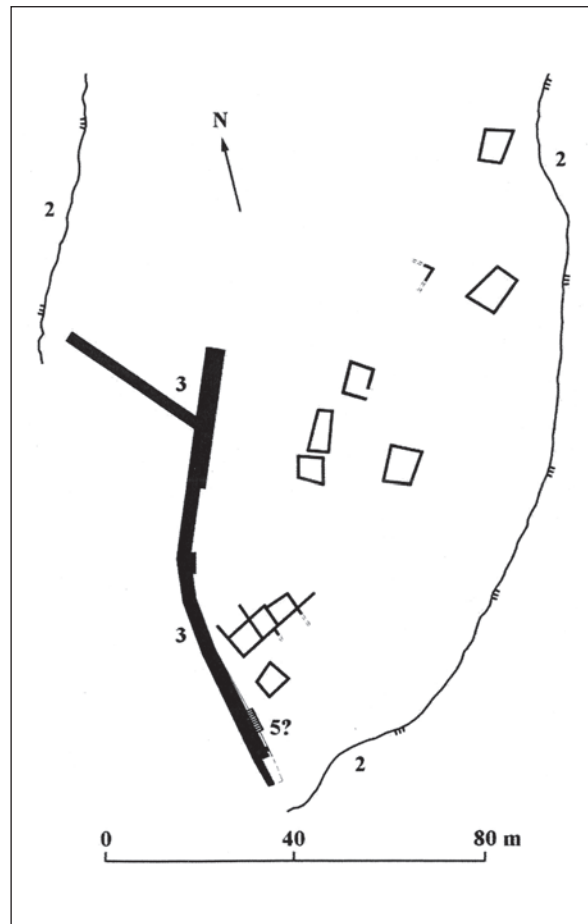


Fig. 3.235: Chertigrad near Brousen. Plan of the fortified settlement (Dintchev 2006, Fig. 91).

smaller fort with casemate-type dwellings may indicate the presence of irregular military units. Significant traces of a devastating fire in combination with trilobate arrowheads suggest that Avars destroyed the fort in the late 6th century.

The fortified hilltop settlement at **Chertigrad near Brousen** (Fig. 3.235) was first used as a refuge and later became permanently inhabited (Velkov, Gočeva 1972; Dintchev 2007, 509, 529). It lies hidden in the mountains at 1284 m asl and occupies the site of a prehistoric hillfort. It is naturally protected with steep slopes on all sides and additionally protected with a 2.2 m thick wall on the side of easier access. In the 4th and 5th centuries, the hillfort was reused as temporary refuge, followed in the 6th century by the construction of several houses on this difficult-to-access hill and constituting a permanent settlement.

The systematic investigations at **Gradishteto near Riben** revealed several Late Antique phases (Torbatov 2018). The fortified hilltop settlement was built on the right bank of the River Vit, on a naturally well-protected rocky elevation. The site of several prehistoric settlements and a Roman sanctuary hosted a *burgus* in the late

3rd or early 4th century that controlled the traffic along the road between Oescus and Philippopolis. Roughly in the mid-4th century, a strong fortification developed from the *burgus*. It witnessed a major cataclysmic event during the Second Gothic War under Valens (376–378) and was temporarily abandoned. It was soon reinhabited (probably by the *foederati*) and continued to the mid-5th century when it was burnt down and abandoned.

Investigations at **Dichin** (Figs. 3.236–3.238) provide important results for understanding the chronology and character of several forts (Poulter 1998, 329–343; id. 2007c, 82–94). Only 11 km from Nicopolis, a low domed ridge rises 10 m above the floodplain on the west bank of the River Rositsa and hosts the remains of a fort with very well constructed defensive installations. Its 2 m thick defensive walls had the inner and outer faces made of limestone blocks interrupted by bands of brickwork, while the core was of mortared rubble. The surviving stairs suggest the walls reached 9 m high. The walls integrated rectangular towers, with round towers in the corners. In front of them was a mortared stone *proteichisma*. The interior held a regular layout of large,

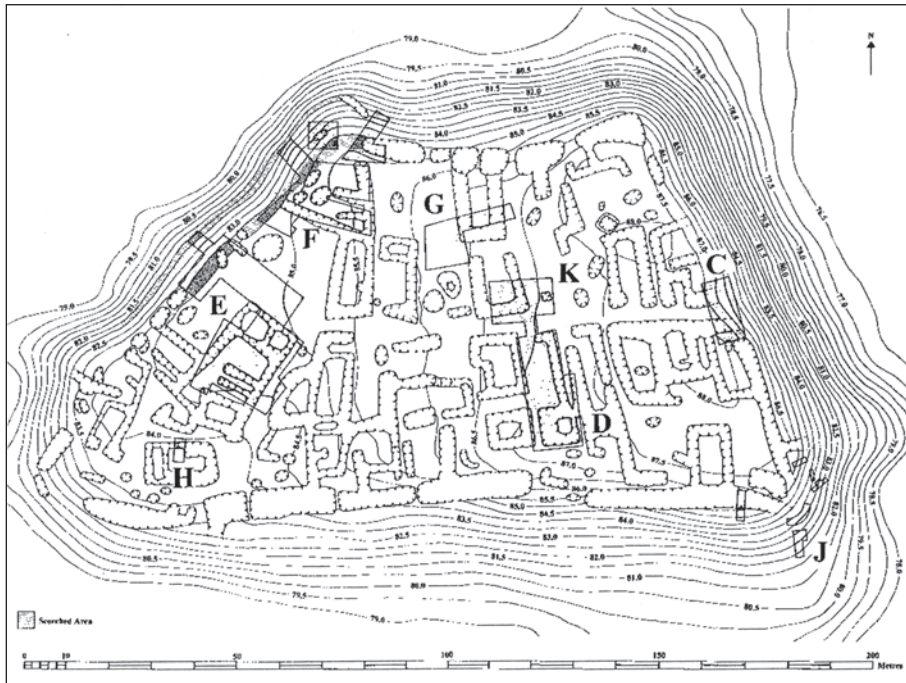


Fig. 3.236: Dichin. Plan of the fort (Poulter 2007c, Fig. 13).



Fig. 3.237: Dichin. Low domed ridge with the fort from the south-west (2012).

mainly clay-bonded buildings on either side of the main street. A small church was also found, with an apse, narthex and stone foundations that supported partly mortared and partly clay-bonded walls. One part held a series of storerooms, while equally-sized buildings (22 × 13 m) were found on both sides of the street that had storage space on the ground floor and soldiers' accommodation in the upper storey. In addition to weapons, the debris layer revealed a number of tools, indicating

the inhabitants performed military tasks and practised arable farming. The establishment of the fort has been dated to around 400. It was intentionally destroyed between 474 and 520, renovated soon after and remained in use to the late 6th century when it was destroyed in a fire. Poulter sees the settlement as an army fort, presumed supply base, garrisoned by Gothic *foederati*. Although the fort was planned by military engineers, it seemed to have been garrisoned by irregular troops with



Fig. 3.238: Dichin. Remains of the buildings by the defensive wall (2012).

policing tasks who also farmed the surrounding land. The imported goods and amphorae indicate a supply system associated with the *annona*.

The small Late Roman fort at **Dobri Dyal** (Fig. 3.239) was found 15 km from Veliko Tarnovo (Poulter 2013). The 20 m high hill has 2.15–2.50 m thick defensive walls. The interior held several buildings with thick clay-bonded walls and some sunken-featured buildings. The hundreds of coins show that the circulation first increased in the third quarter of the 3rd century. Based on the absence of masonry structures, Poulter argues that the site served as refuge for the local population who possibly reused the earlier, Bronze Age ramparts. The coins reliably place the beginning of the strong fort to the late 4th and early 5th century, planned and built by Roman military engineers. It was presumably manned by a small garrison (fort size of only 0.4 ha) controlling the junction of two major roads. Small finds show the presence of both soldiers and civilians. The fort was abandoned in the 440s.

At **Kartal kale near Ruyno** (Fig. 3.240), a small refuge came to light in the east corner of the later medieval fortress (Atanasov 2015). The Late Antique refuge is located on a rocky and naturally well-protected hill surrounded by the dry riverbed of the Senebir. It is triangular in plan and protected with an imposing entrance tower or two U-shaped towers in the part of easiest access. The 1.5 m thick walls are bound by strong white mortar. There are two settlements from the 2nd–4th centuries in the vicinity. The small finds from the refuge date to the late 4th and early 5th centuries and reveal it was abandoned following the Hun incursions that devastated the area of Dobrudja after 422, particularly between 434 and 447.

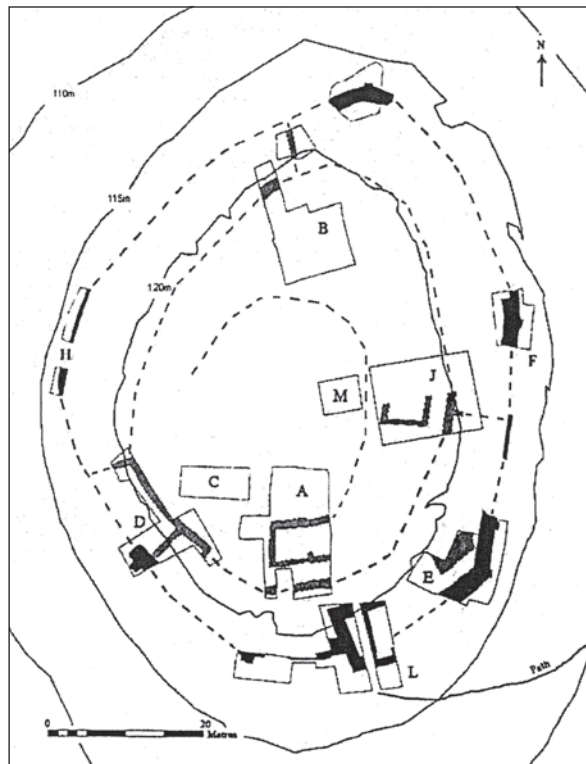


Fig. 3.239: Dobri Dyal. Plan of the fort (Poulter 2013, Fig. 4).

A small (0.37 ha), but impressive fort was constructed on a high rocky plateau above the plain near **Madara** (Figs. 3.241–3.243) (Dintchev 2007, 522), mentioned above as the site of a Late Roman villa (see Chapter 3.2.2). It is believed to have been established in the late 5th and inhabited throughout the 6th century. It was protected

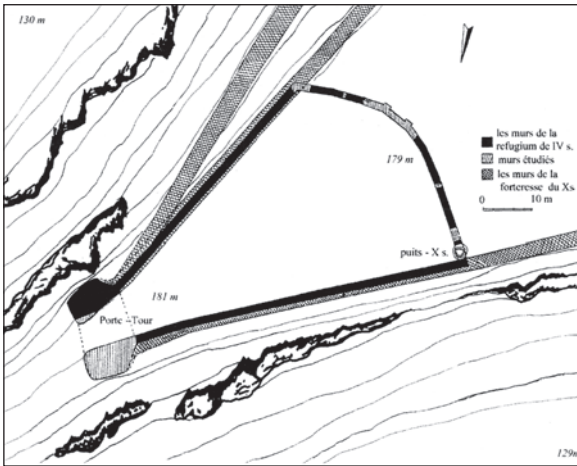


Fig. 3.240: Kartal kale near Ruyno. Plan of the fortification (Atanasov 2015, Fig. 7).

with rocky faces and thick walls with towers. The main entrance was reinforced with a pair of pentagonal towers and a *propugnaculum*. A large building for the troops leaned against the walls. Only three small single-room buildings are known in the interior. The water supply came from the spring in a nearby cave accessed via a rock-cut stairway. The plateau in the vicinity of the settlement holds the remains of a contemporary, but poorly known unfortified settlement.

A good example to illustrate the evolution of a Late Antique fortification is that at **Gradishteto near Debrene** (Fig. 3.244) (Torbatov 2002a, 346–348; Dintchev

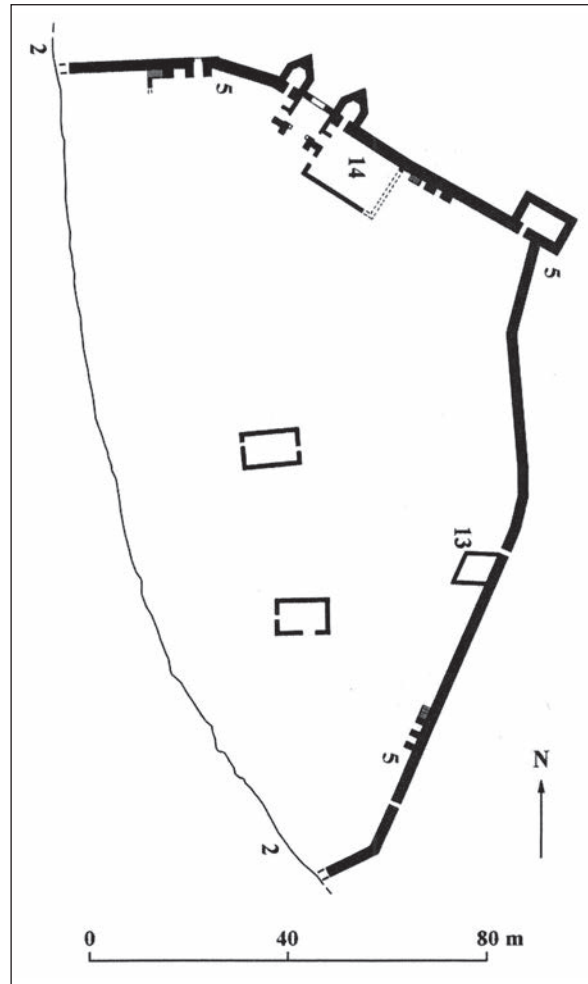


Fig. 3.241: Madara. Plan of the fort (Dintchev 2006, Fig. 87).



Fig. 3.242: Madara. Position of the fort on a high rocky plateau (2012).



Fig. 3.243: Madara. View through the entrance to the interior of the fort (2012).

2007, 509, 530). In the second half of the 4th century, this small and naturally well-protected plateau with the surface of 0.23 ha was partially fortified. On two sides, it was protected by the steep slope of a deep natural depression, while clay-bonded walls were constructed on the side of easier access; this part was additionally protected with a ditch. No buildings were observed in the interior. In the 6th century, the hill was refortified, this time with thick mortared walls and the entrance reinforced with a tower. Leaning on the walls from the interior was a three-aisled basilica with a baptistery. The defended area is too small for a permanent settlement, suggesting it served as a refuge with a church to an unprotected settlement in the vicinity.

The fort at **Odarts** (Fig. 3.245) lies on a mountain ridge naturally protected from three sides (Torbatov 2002b; Kirilov 2007, 337–338; Dintchev 2007, 500). Covering a surface of 1.1 ha, it was inhabited in several periods, with three phases attributable to Late Antiquity. In the first phase, 2–2.9 m thick walls were built presumably in the second quarter of the 4th century. It was renovated on several occasions and had five towers in the part of easiest access, while a large tower terminated the fort on the south side. Traces of a proteichisma were found in front of the walls. The small finds and the fort layout suggest this was a military post tasked with controlling the surrounding communications. This phase terminated in a thick layer of

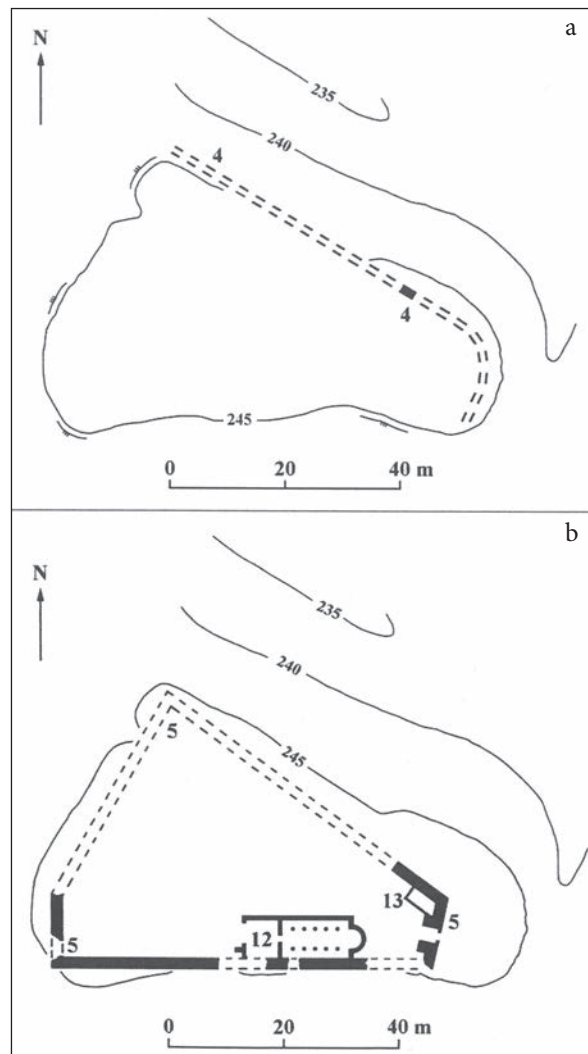


Fig. 3.244: Gradishteto near Debrene. Plan of the fortified hilltop site from the second half of the 4th (a) and 6th centuries (b) (Dintchev 2006, Figs. 92, 93).

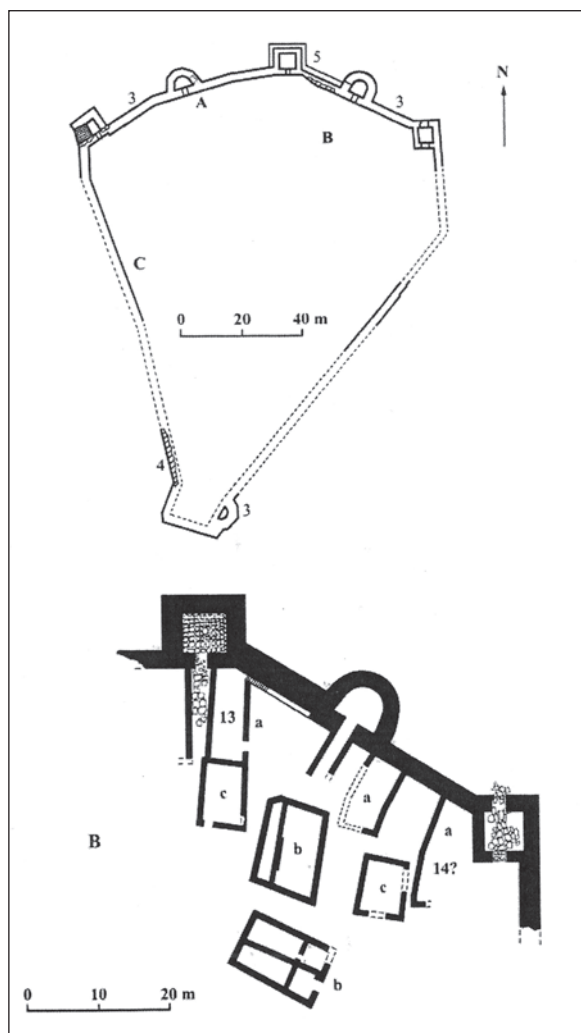


Fig. 3.245: Odartsi. Plan of the fort (Dintchev 2007, Fig. 23).

burnt debris, indicating destruction in the late 4th or the initial decades of the 5th century, presumably during the Hun incursions. The next phase followed soon after and the fort changed its nature to become a civilian settlement. Old buildings were repaired and there were also minor repairs on the walls. Major renovation took place in the third phase, in the first half of the 6th century, when part of the earlier buildings was reused and numerous new ones built that were adapted to the earlier layout. The walls and towers were also repaired. The newly fortified settlement persisted to the 600s or early 610s, when it was completely destroyed and abandoned.

The comprehensively investigated and excellently preserved fort at **Markova Mehana** (Procopius' Stenos?) (Fig. 3.246–3.249, 3.314) offers a remarkable insight into the appearance of Early Byzantine military posts (Mitova Džonova 1998; Dintchev 2007, 524–525). It was located on the border between the prefectures of Illyricum and Oriens, on the Succia Pass that became strategically important in Antiquity as it hosted a major land route connecting East and West. The fort lies on the summit and slopes of a low elevation. It was only 70 × 36 m large, protected with two pentagonal and one triangular tower. Its interior revealed an open gallery along the whole perimeter of the 2.2 m thick walls and, above the gallery, accommodations for the troops and their commander. Numerous dolia show that the southern part of the gallery was used as a granary. The walls were constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique with five-line bands of brickwork. The centre of the fort was empty, surprisingly without a church. The deep niches in the rooms in the upper storeys of the pentagonal tower indicate the rooms were used as a *praetorium* and *quaestorium*. The fort was already constructed under Anastasius, abandoned after

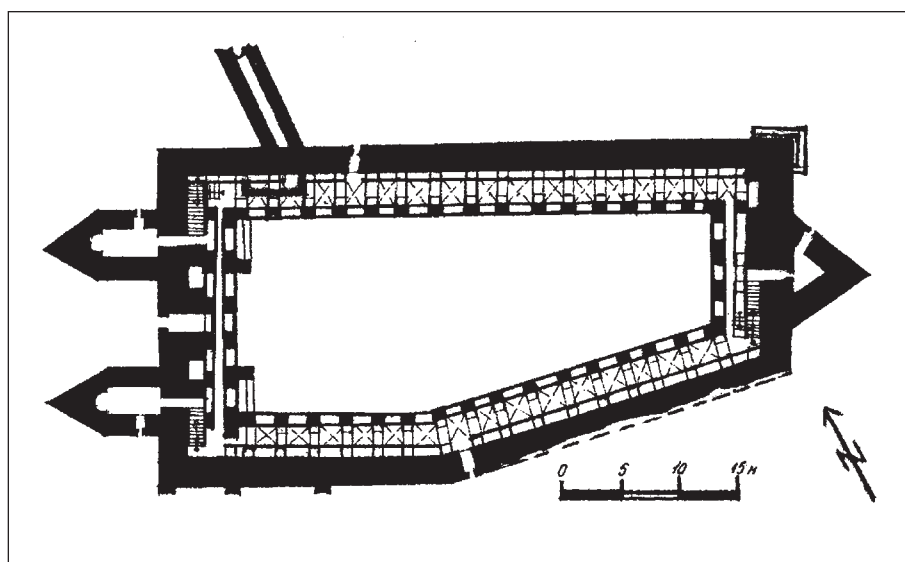


Fig. 3.246: Markova Mehana. Plan of the fort (Mitova-Džonova 1998, Fig. 2).



Fig. 3.247: Markova Mehana. Well-protected entrance (2012).



Fig. 3.248: Markova Mehana. Pentagonal towers and a saddle below the fort (2012).



Fig. 3.249: Markova Mehana. Interior of the fort with remains of the buildings along the wall (2012).

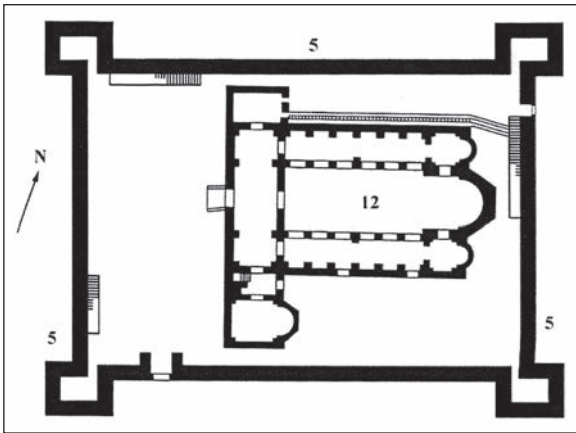


Fig. 3.250: Elenska Basilica near Pirdop. Plan of the fortified site (Dintchev 2007, sl 50).

a presumed earthquake and renovated under Justinian; the two phases are separated by a layer of burnt debris.

It is possible that some smaller fortified complexes represented early fortified monasteries. Dintchev (2007, 530–532) sees such examples at Orlandovtsi, Lozenets and Shkorpilovtsi, but a corroboration is hindered by the fact that these sites are only known from early excavations.

A specific example is the site at **Elenska Basilica near Pirdop** (Fig. 3.250) fortified with thick walls and four towers (Dintchev 2007, 532–533; Borisov 2010a, 203). The defended area is small (0.16 ha) and revealed no other buildings with the exception of a church. This suggests the fort was a refuge for the inhabitants of an unfortified settlement in the vicinity.

The largely systematically investigated fortification at **Krasen kale** (Fig. 3.251) forms a revealing strategic-residential unit together with a contemporary settlement in proximity (Grigorov 2011a). It was constructed on a steep hill and has two concentric walls, with the outer walls enclosing an area of 205×100 m and the inner walls a 112×62 m large area. The distance between them narrows to 7 m on the most endangered north side. The outer walls were interpreted as a proteichisma and include a pentagonal tower and a ditch in the area of easiest access. The outer walls are 2.2 m thick in the north and 1.2–1.4 m elsewhere. The north part of the area between the two walls also holds a two-storeyed prestigious building with several rooms, dated to the 6th century. The fortification interior revealed a cistern and simple houses with one, two or three rooms. A church from the 4th/5th century stands on the plain below the hill. With the pentagonal tower attributable to

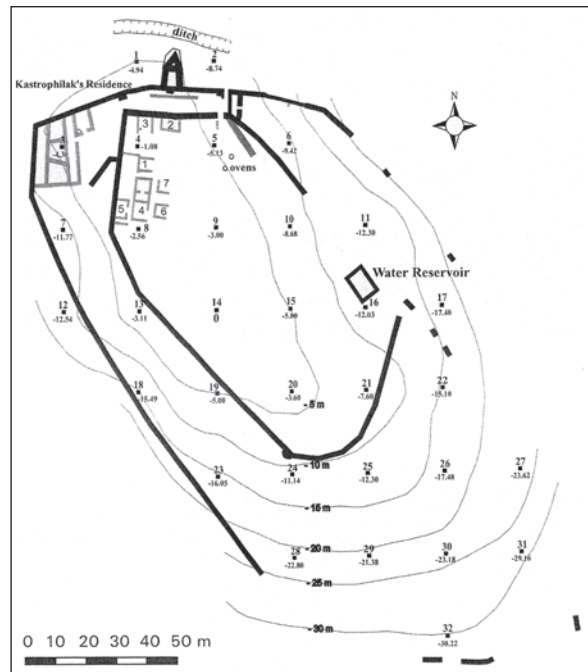


Fig. 3.251: Krasen kale. Plan of the fortification (Grigorov 2011a, Fig. 4).

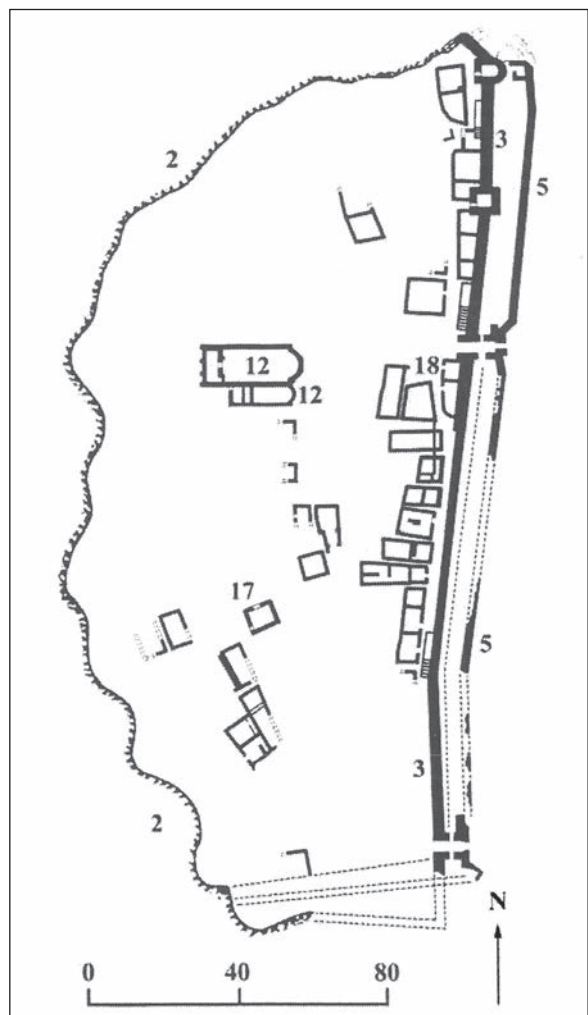


Fig. 3.252: Gradishte near Gabrovo. Plan of the fortified settlement (from Dintchev 2007, Fig. 8).

the Justinian period, it is believed that the fortification was constructed in the late 5th or the first half of the 6th century. Its end came in the final decades of the 6th century. The small-scale archaeological investigations at the foot of the hill detected a large settlement from the 4th to the 6th century, which would certainly also shed light on the fortification above if further investigated.

An earthwork rampart was built on the naturally well-protected spot on top of the high hill of **Gradishte near Gabrovo** (Figs. 3.252–3.255) in the early 4th century and timber buildings erected in its interior (Koycheva 1992; Dintchev 1997, 51; Koycheva 2002). In the second half of the 4th century, the summit was protected with thick walls and two-storeyed buildings were built in the interior. The intensity of habitation further increased in the 5th and 6th centuries, with new

buildings of different floor plans and without upper storeys. The houses were irregular in plan and had two or three rooms, with areas for the livestock added in the rear. The settlement was additionally fortified with a thick *proteichisma* and towers. A large Early Christian church was built in the interior and another church, smaller and of a cemeterial function, outside the walls. The quality of construction and the number of buildings in this 2.4 ha large settlement indicate its central role within a wider area.

The Early Byzantine fort at **Kaleto (Castra Rubra) near Izvorovo** (Fig. 3.256) lies on the Via Diagonalis that traversed Thrace and connected the East and West of the Empire. The fort was well-protected with its location on a slightly raised plateau enclosed on three sides by a river. It is elongated pentagonal in plan and has four



Fig. 3.253: Gradishte near Gabrovo. Remains of the fortified settlement from the north (2012).

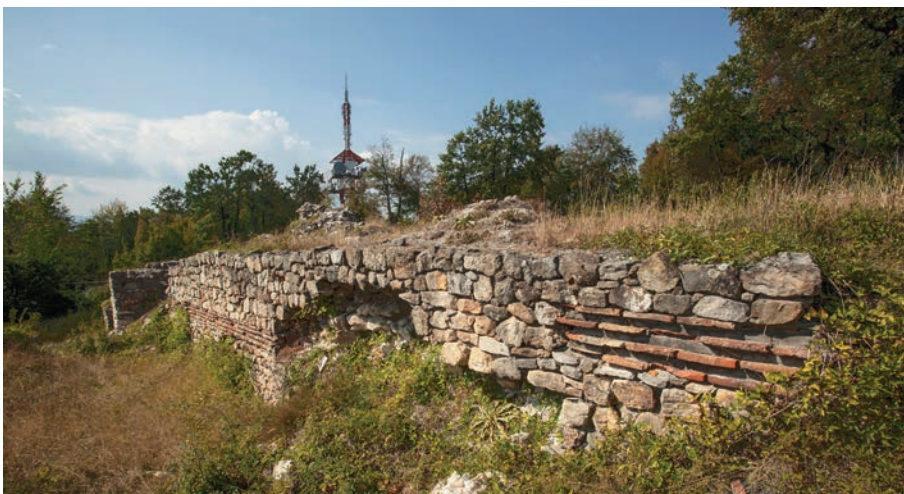


Fig. 3.254: Gradishte near Gabrovo. Thick walls on the eastern side of the fortified settlement (2012).



Fig. 3.255: Gradishte near Gabrovo. Early Christian church in the interior (2012).

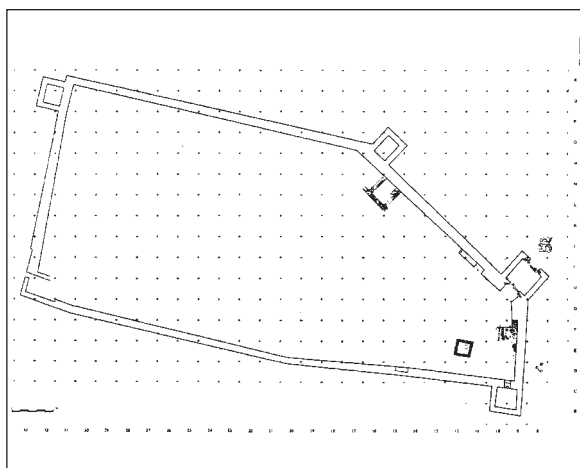


Fig. 3.256: Kaletu (Castra Rubra). Plan of the fort (Borisov 2010a).

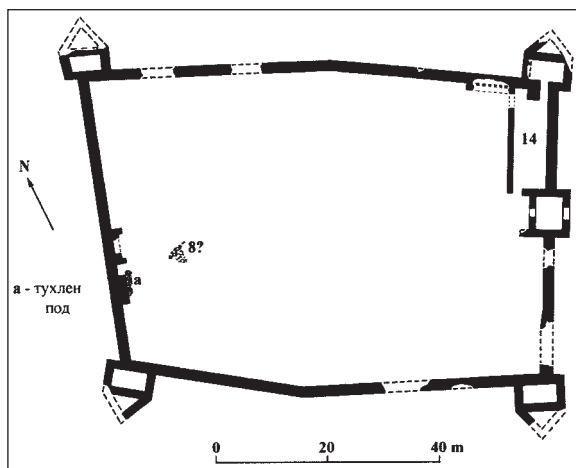


Fig. 3.257: Dyadovo. Plan of the fort (Borisov 2010b, Fig. 32).

rectangular towers with an entrance in one of the large towers. Its construction is dated to the first half of the 6th century (Borisov 2010a).

The tell of **Dyadovo** (Fig. 3.257) holds an Early Byzantine fort of a sub-rectangular plan with thick walls with four pentagonal towers in the corners and a reinforced entrance (Borisov 2010b). The interior only revealed small barracks for the troops. The fort presumably accommodated a small garrison that controlled the nearby road and also offered shelter for the inhabitants of the unfortified settlement in the vicinity. Only 400 m away, investigations revealed a civilian settlements with a large building (probably church) in the centre that yielded small finds contemporary with those found in

the fort. Another contemporary settlement came to light a further kilometre away.

The fortification at **Carassura** on the Via Diagonalis (Fig. 3.258), which is marked as a *mutatio* in the itineraries, has an unusual layout (Dintchev 2000, 74–75; id. 2007, 494). Its walls enclosed a 3.2 ha large area spanning two small elevations and the flatland with a river between them. The walls were probably constructed in the second half of the 4th century. The buildings in the interior have been attributed to two phases, the first one from the late 4th and early 5th century, the second one from the 6th and early 7th centuries. The buildings were largely made of stone and mudbrick. One church came to light in the northern part of the fortification and another, larger

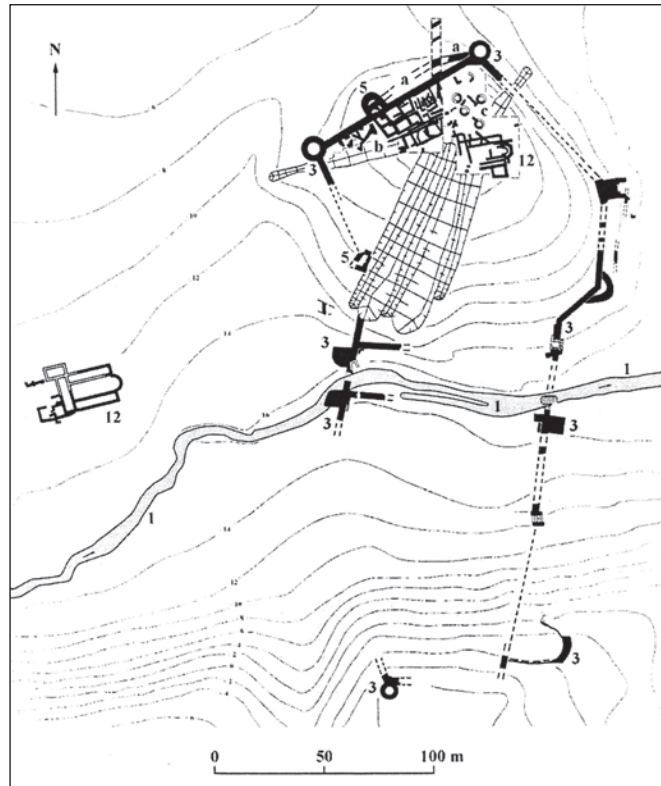


Fig. 3.258: Carassura. Plan of the fortification (Dintchev 2007, Fig. 18).

and more prestigious one was found *extra muros*. The construction of the latter has been dated to the 4th and renovation to the 6th century. The complex was a large central settlement functioning as a local administrative, possibly also economic centre.

The remains of an unusual fort were investigated at **Harmana** (Fig. 3.259) that formed part of the barrier system in the eastern Stara planina mountains or the Gates of Haemus (Dintchev 2012). The remains show an octagonal plan with a 1.2 ha large defended surface. The fortification walls were associated in the north and south by contemporary barrier walls. The passage through the fort was guarded on either side by a large pentagonal tower, while round protruding towers stood in all other corners. The 2.65 m thick walls were constructed in the *opus mixtum* technique. A large drystone edifice occupied the centre of the fort. The modest cultural layer and the fortification features date the beginning of the fort to the late 4th or more likely the early 5th century. The observed layer of burnt debris has been ascribed to the wars with the Ostrogoths in the 470s or 480s. After this time, minor rebuilding took place in the towers, which included narrowing the entrance, but the work was of a lesser workmanship compared with the original. The second phase presumably lasted from the late 5th to the late 6th or early 7th century.

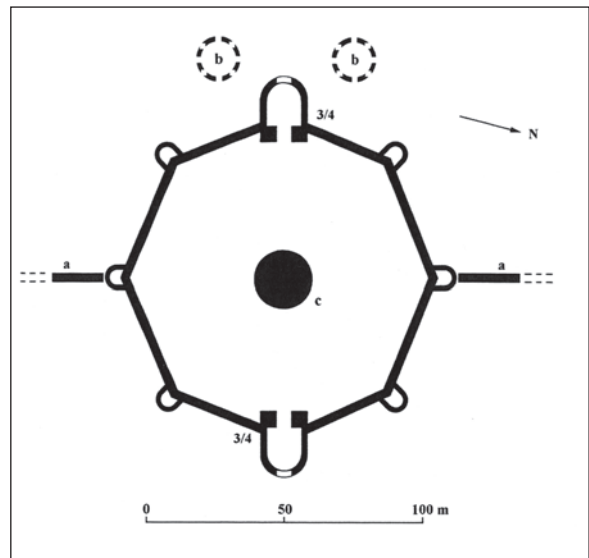


Fig. 3.259: Harmana. Plan of the fort (Dintchev 2006, Fig. 82a).

Albania

Research in Albania revealed a multitude of fortified sites, but only rare ones have been more extensively investigated. A 0.54 ha large fort that witnessed some investigations lies on the high hill of **Gradishta of Bardhoc** (Fig. 3.260) (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 58–64, 142–144). An intriguing feature is mentioned in connection with its defensive walls, namely that both longer 2.6 m thick sides are built in the drystone technique, whereas the equally thick short sides are mortared. The west short side was reinforced with a large rectangular tower. Several quality masonry buildings came to light near the walls that presumably accommodated the troops protecting the road from Lissus to Naissus. The small finds date the fort to the 6th century.

Enjoying an important strategic location in the valleys of the Drini and Bardhë is the fortified settlement at **Pecës** (Fig. 3.261) (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 50–58, 139–141). Systematic investigations showed that this site, hosting a fortified settlement already in prehistory, was again extensively fortified in the late 3rd or early 4th century. The river provides natural protection from three sides, while the fourth one was defended with

substantial, 1.2–2.8 m thick walls and a large U-shaped tower. Several houses were excavated in the 1 ha large interior, while habitation traces also came to light outside the walled area. An Early Christian church was built in the interior in the 6th century. A substantial cultural layer from the 4th–6th century shows that the settlement served as an administrative and religious centre for a wider area.

The small fort at **Bushati** (Fig. 3.262) was built on a strategically significant spot overlooking a major Roman road (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 37–42, 135–137). Its mortared walls enclose a 0.7 ha large interior and are reinforced with as many as twelve towers of different

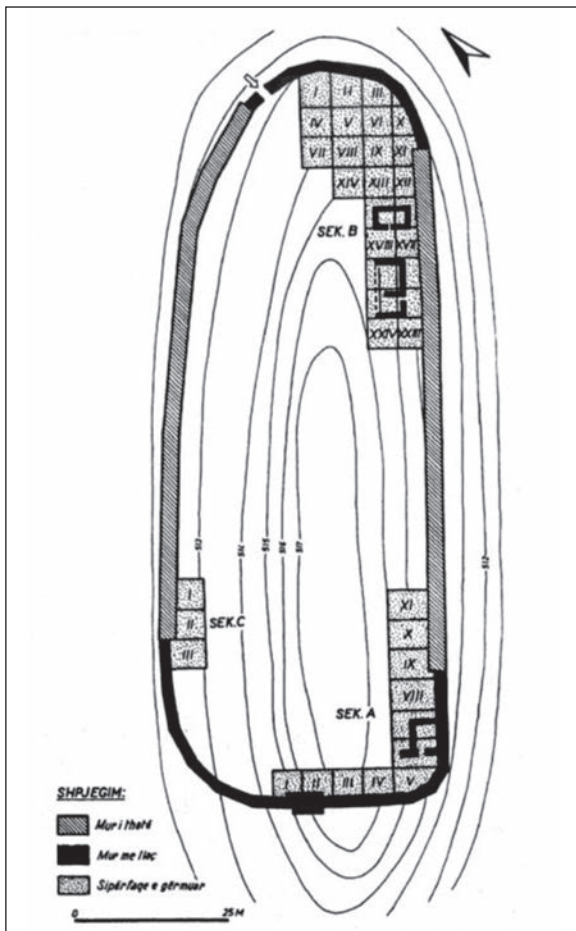


Fig. 3.260: Gradishta of Bardhoc. Plan of the fort (Përzhita 1993, Pl. 1).

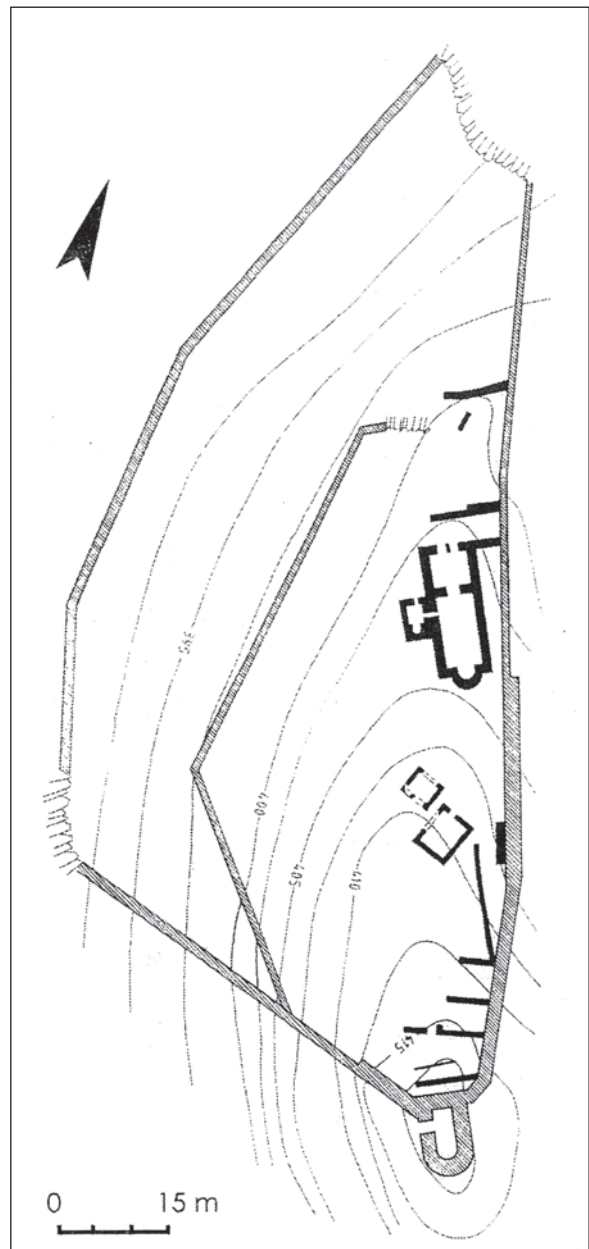


Fig. 3.261: Pecës. Plan of the fortified settlement (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, Fig. 21).

shapes indicating construction in the early 4th century. The entrance was flanked with a pair of U-shaped towers. The architecture shows a characteristic army fort from the early 4th century that could host one cohort.

A smaller fort lies near the village of **Domaj** (Fig. 3.263) (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, 43–49, 137–139). Walls of a high-quality and 1.1–2.1 m of thickness enclose a 0.11 ha large interior. They were shaped as the prow of a ship in the part of easier access, with a rectangular tower protecting the only entrance. The cultural layer from the 6th century and the characteristic shape of the walls indicate a small Byzantine fort with a garrison controlling the nearby road and signalling. The fort may also have served as a refuge for the local population.

The exceptionally well-preserved fortified settlement at **Qafa** (Fig. 3.264) south of Elbasan and on the

Via Egnatia ranks among the large settlements (Cerova 1987; Hoxha 2001; Ćurčić 2010, 183). Extensive investigations were conducted on this hill, rising high above the valley of the River Devoli and next to a road that crosses the knee of the river and the mountainous terrain. The rocky plateau hosting the settlement is protected with precipitous slopes on two sides and is heavily fortified on gentler slopes. The walls survive high and are bound by strong mortar. They are 220 m long and 2.3–2.5 m thick, reinforced with three triangular, one U-shaped and one rectangular tower, the last one guarding the entrance. The 0.8 ha large defended area was additionally protected in areas of easier access with a 1.4 m thick proteichisma that lined the main walls at a distance of 10–20 m. The interior shows traces of thirteen simple single-room buildings, only two of which were

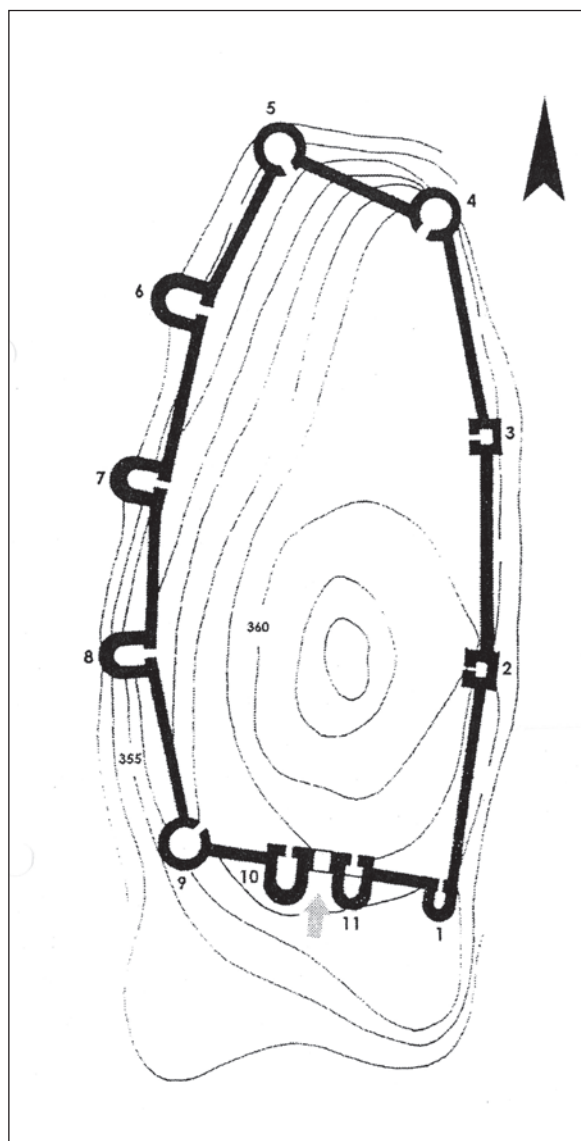


Fig. 3.262: Bushati. Plan of the fort (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, Fig. 10).

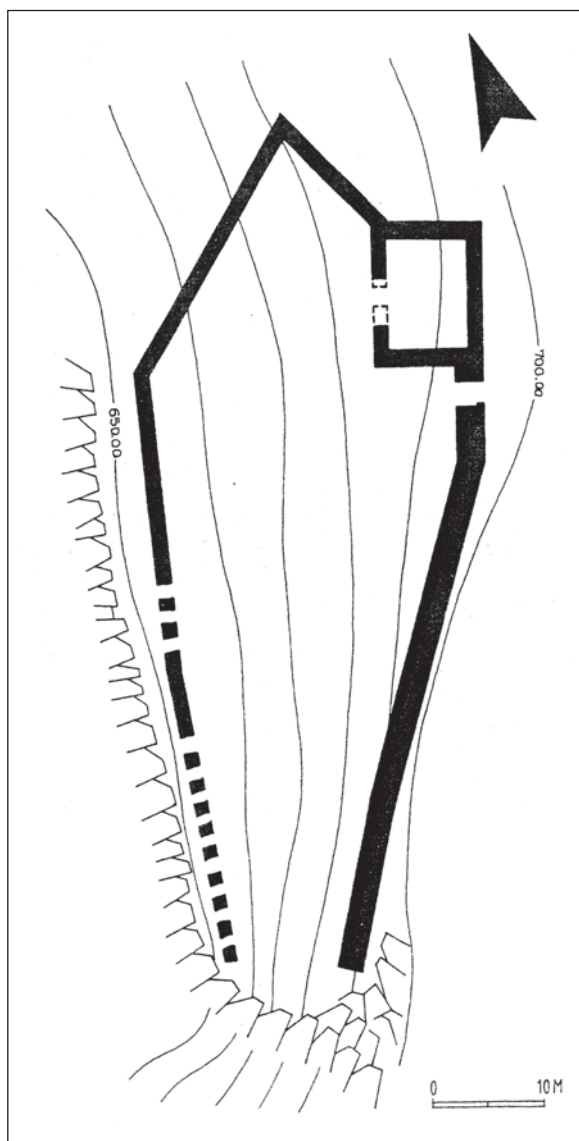


Fig. 3.263: Domaj. Plan of the fort (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003, Fig. 15).

partitioned. A surprising observation is that the walls of these buildings were clay-bonded, while their roofs were covered with brick or slate tiles. Small finds date the cultural layer to the middle or second half of the 6th century. The defensive architecture and the small finds indicate a double, i.e. military and agricultural nature of the fortification presumably controlling the local population and the mountain pass. It shows a combination of strong and well-constructed defensive installations with an irregular layout of buildings in the interior that point to the presence of local inhabitants. Ćurčić even saw the fortification as a small Late Antique urban settlement.

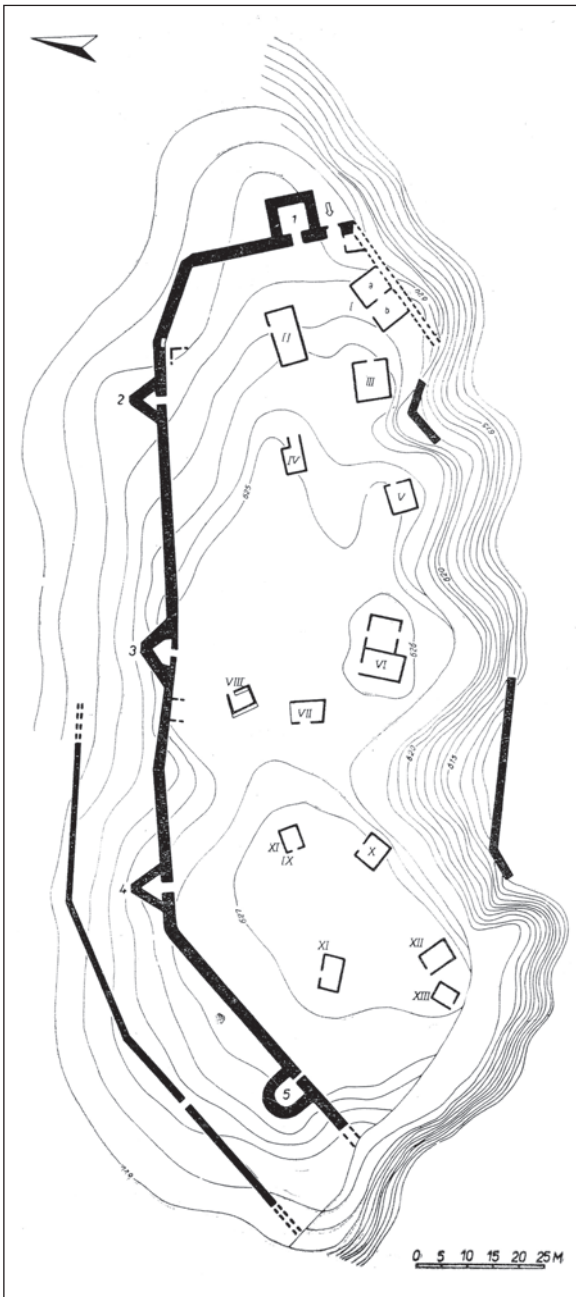


Fig. 3.264: Qafa. Plan of the fortified settlement (Cerova 1987, Fig. 3).

The site of **Paleokastra near Gjirokastra** (Fig. 3.265–3.267, 3.310) holds one of the rare lowland forts (Baçe 1981; Bowden 2003, 180–181). It was built as a Roman cohort fort in the early 4th century. It is the shape of an isosceles trapezium in plan and covers a c. 0.915 ha large surface, using its location above the confluence of the Rivers Drinos in Kardhiq for defensive purposes. Fortifications include fourteen towers and three reinforced entrances. The up to 2.3 m thick walls are built in the *opus mixtum* technique. The interior revealed traces of army barracks built in the *opus spicatum* technique. The fort was already abandoned in the late 4th century, but civilian population reused the remains in the 5th and 6th centuries. In the interior, they erected a three-aisled church with a narthex and an extension. A smaller single-aisled church came to light *extra muros*. Coins and other metal finds date the 4th-century phase, while the phase from the 5th and 6th centuries mainly yielded coarseware, fineware and amphorae. The small finds and church architecture are evidence of the fort's transformation from a Roman military post to a fortified civilian settlement of Late Antiquity.

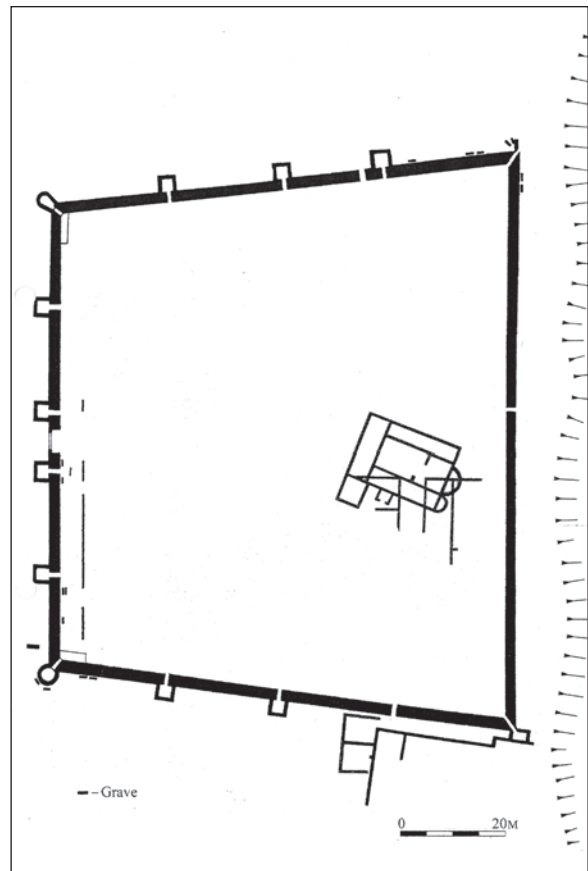


Fig. 3.265: Paleokastra near Gjirokastra. Plan of the fort (Bowden 2003, Fig. 7.18).



Fig. 3.266: Paleokastra near Gjirokastra. Remains of the fort with a tower in the foreground (2009).



Fig. 3.267: Paleokastra near Gjirokastra. Walls of the lowland fort (2009).

The fortification at **Çuka e Ajtojt** (Fig. 3.268) underwent a slightly different transformation in Late Antiquity (Bowden 2000, 21–22; id. 2003, 180). The steep hill that oversaw the communications between northern and southern Epirus witnessed a drastic decrease of the earlier, Hellenistic walls so that they only enclosed a 1.3 ha large surface on the summit and part of the slope. The rebuilt walls were reinforced with three towers. Small finds date the fortification to the 4th–6th century.

North Macedonia

The present territory of the Republic of North Macedonia is most varied and rich in terms of settlement remains, but also most extensively researched. The numerous field surveys, trial trenching campaigns and individual systematic excavations of fortified Late Antique sites have provided us with a wealth of data that greatly contribute to our knowledge of the contemporary settlement pattern.

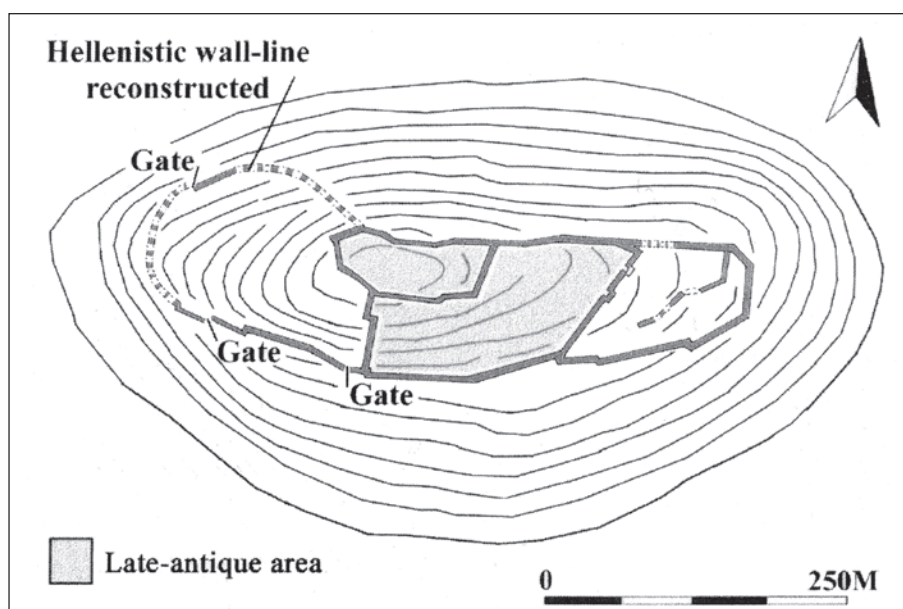


Fig. 3.268: Čuka e Ajtoj. Plan of the fortification (Bowden 2003, Fig. 7.15).

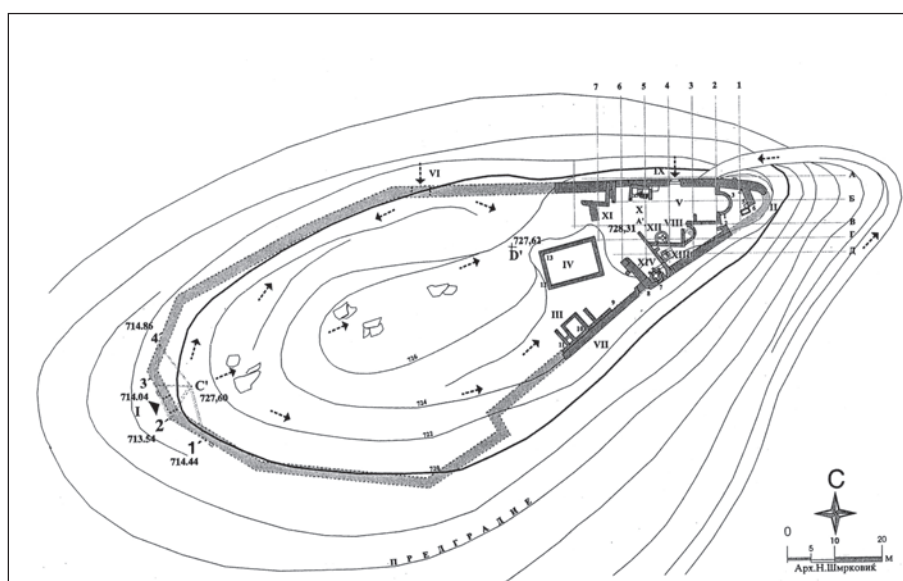


Fig. 3.269: Gradište Stenče. Plan of the fortified settlement (Kostadinovski, Cvetanovski 2008, Fig. on p. 189).

An important settlement with a major ecclesiastical centre of Late Antiquity was established at **Gradište Stenče** (Fig. 3.269), on a naturally well-protected hilltop (Kostadinovski, Cvetanovski 2008). The c. 150 × 70 m large settlement is enclosed with 1.9 m thick walls. Investigations thus far focused on the highest part of the elevation, i.e. the acropolis that revealed an Early Christian complex with two churches, a baptistery and as many as three *piscinae*. This complex is separated from the rest of the settlement; Kostadinovski and Cvetanovski posit an episcopal centre here. Next to the

acropolis is a large cistern and smaller ones at the walls. A considerable part of the settlement remains uninvestigated, while the southern slopes revealed the remains of a potential unfortified settlement.

The ridge of **Gradište (Sobri) near Oraše** (Fig. 3.270) holds traces of a complex fortification (Mikulčić 2002, 463–466). It comprises the acropolis, separated from the rest of the ridge with two ditches, a residential area of a rectangular plan, with buildings visible in outlines, and a large walled area below the acropolis that reached to the foot of the hill. The site revealed a



Fig. 3.270: Gradište (Sobri) near Oraše. Plan of the fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 382).

myriad of defensive elements ranging from substantial, 1.9 m thick walls, towers, ditches and proteichismas, with the recovered small finds supporting its dating to the Early Byzantine period. In proximity, there are traces of a 3 ha large unfortified contemporary settle-

ment and a partially excavated basilica, as well as traces of ancient mining.

The site **Markovo Kale near Malčište** (Fig. 3.271) is large and well-fortified (Mikulčić 1982a, 92–95; id. 2002, 173–174). The substantial and up to 2.2 m thick walls

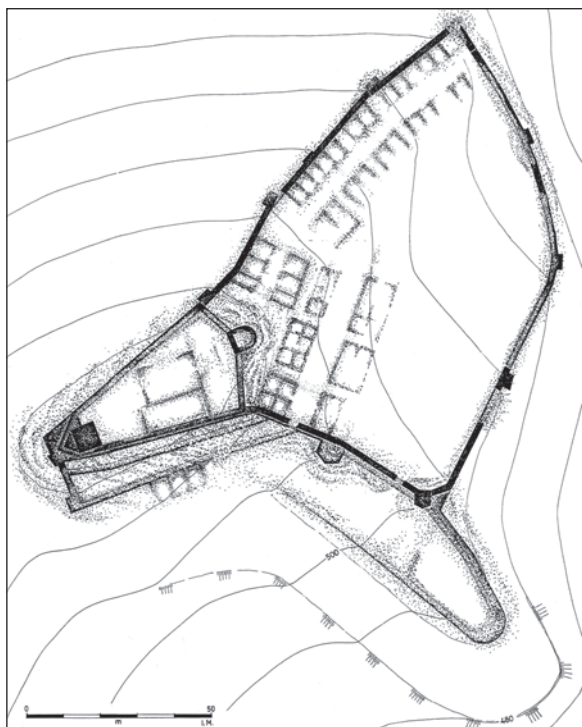


Fig. 3.271: Markovo Kale near Malčište. Plan of the fortification (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 64).

protect a 160×80 m large area divided into the separately fortified acropolis and the lower walled area. The walls are buttressed. The substantial fortifications of the acropolis in the south include several walls (proteichisma?) added on different occasions, as well as four large towers, of which two are pentagonal, one triangular and one rectangular. The lower area hosts evenly arranged and equally-sized houses that are particularly numerous along the northwestern walls. The large building on the acropolis has been interpreted as an Early Christian church. The fortification has been dated from the 4th to the 6th century, during which time its defences witnessed several renovations. It is believed to have guarded the road leading from the Skopje Basin towards the gold mines further south. Found in the vicinity were traces of a settlement and Late Antique burials, on the slope below the hill also an Early Christian basilica.

The complex of buildings at **Pelenica near Dračevo** (Figs. 3.272, 3.273) has been interpreted in literature as a Late Antique fortified villa (Mikulčić 2002, 164–165). Trial trenching of the complex revealed it was walled, but also largely protected with its location at the edge of a slope. Although protected both artificially and naturally, its defences appear less convincing as in most other sites discussed here. The array of buildings (rotunda with mosaic floors, traces of complex architecture) supports the hypothesis of a late countryside villa, which the small finds and the mosaic date to the 4th and 5th centuries,

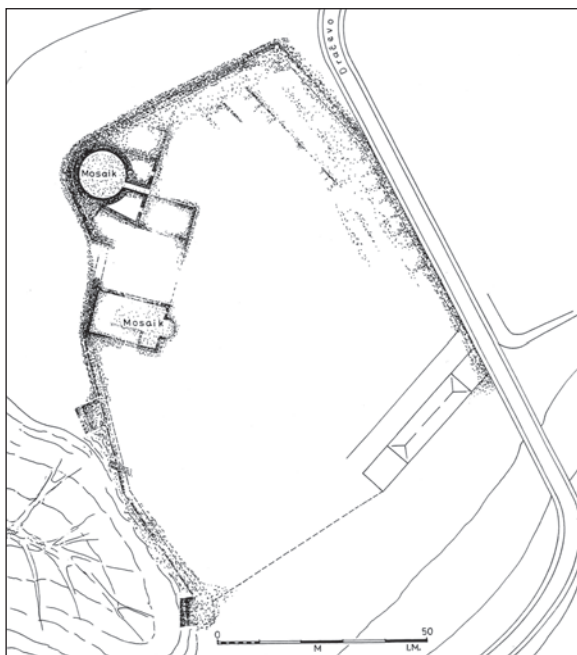


Fig. 3.272: Pelenica near Dračevo. Plan of the fortified villa (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 55).



Fig. 3.273: Pelenica near Dračevo from the south (2004).

while the traces of a three-aisled basilica indicate a long use of the walled area.

Standing out among the numerous fortifications is that at **Markovi Kuli on Mount Vodno** (Fig. 3.274, 3.275), a site located high above the valley and marked in several publications as a 'late city' (Mikulčić 1982a, 48–53; id. 2002, 190–195). The exceptionally large fortified settlement with 2.4 m thick walls enclosing an area of 400×90 m boasts some thirty pentagonal, triangular and rectangular towers. It encompasses three separately fortified parts. The partly investigated acropolis revealed two large cisterns and a large house, while the majority of housing is presumably located in the lower part. The third walled area is in the east, where rescue investigations established several rec-

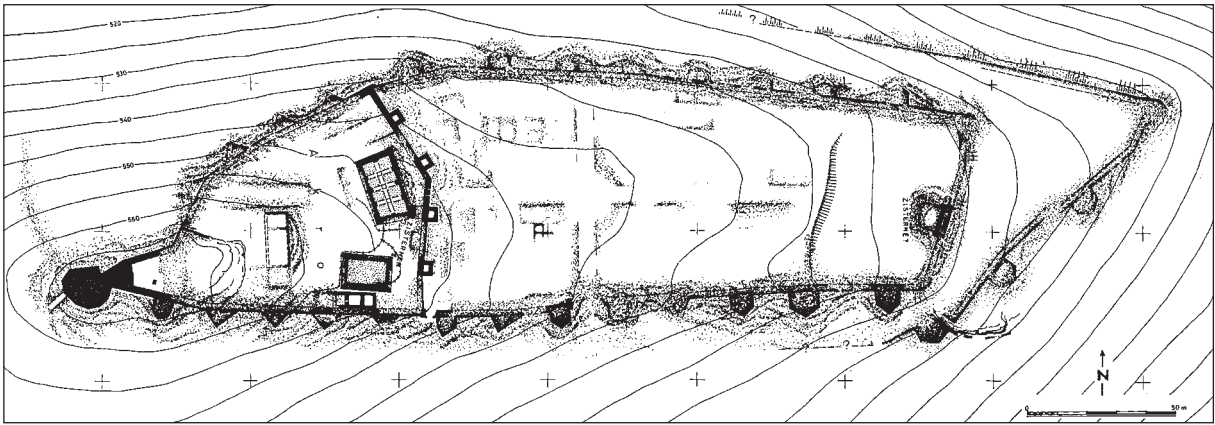


Fig. 3.274: Markovi Kuli on Mount Vodno. Plan of the fortification (from Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 85).



Fig. 3.275: Markovi Kuli on Mount Vodno from the south-west (2004).

tangular towers and two construction phases, one Early Byzantine and the other medieval. No significant habitation traces came to light in the last part (Ristov 2018). Mikulčić set the first phase of the site as a whole to the time of Justinian, the second to the last third of the 6th and the third to the early 7th century. The large bastion on the most easily accessible west side revealed several construction phases and confirmed that the Late Antique fort was already established prior to the mid-6th century and abandoned in the late 6th or early 7th century (Talevski 2018). The settlement is frequently referred to as a ‘city’, to which the inhabitants of Scupi supposedly moved after the devastating earthquake of 518 (Mikulčić 1982a, 48 (143); Saradi 2006, 467). The recent investigations in Scupi, however, revealed irrefutable evidence of the city being continually inhabited

throughout the 6th century, albeit in a reduced extent, thus disproving the above-mentioned supposition. It is unusual that neither the acropolis nor the two lower walled areas revealed any traces of an Early Christian church. The large (c. 6 ha) and heavily fortified site certainly exhibits a primarily military character and one that could, at least in the two lower areas, welcome refugees from the surrounding area in times of danger. The site cannot be tied to any settlements mentioned in the ancient texts.

The small fort at **Gradište near Pakoševo** (Fig. 3.276) is located on top of a high crag above the River Vardar (Mikulčić 2002, 178–180). It is a 32 × 20 m large rectangular structure with a triangular projection on one side. Some habitation traces are visible inside the fort, while better-preserved remains of roughly eight houses



Fig. 3.276: Gradište near Pakoševo. Plan of the fort (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 70).

can be observed on the terraces just below it. Small finds date the fort from the 4th to the 6th century.

The fortress at **Kula near Čelopek** (Fig. 3.277), north of Kumanovo, has only been investigated with field surveys (Mikulčić 2002, 124–125). The remains of walls clearly visible on the surface show a c. 175 × 53 m large fortress with 1.8 m thick walls and several towers. The parts of easier access show a drystone proteichisma. Small buildings are visible in the interior, arranged along the interior of the walls, there is also a larger building with six rooms. These are elements characteristic of an Early Byzantine fortress without a church, but with large headquarters and accommodations for the troops.

A very clear division between military and civilian parts can be observed at **Kula near Kalauzlija** (Fig. 3.278) (Mikulčić 2002, 390–391). This mountain ridge holds two fortification, each located on its own peak separated by a natural depression. The west part hosts a triangular, 160 × 120 m large fortress with 1.8 m thick walls and three towers, of which the one in the area of easiest access is pentagonal and the other two rectangular. The interior of this fortress has a large building next to the entrance, while habitation remains are more prominent in the lower part of the site. The fortified area on the opposite peak measures 145 × 90 m and is protected merely with a 2 m thick drystone wall. Excavated in its interior was an unusual church of a square plane. Both fortification date to the Early

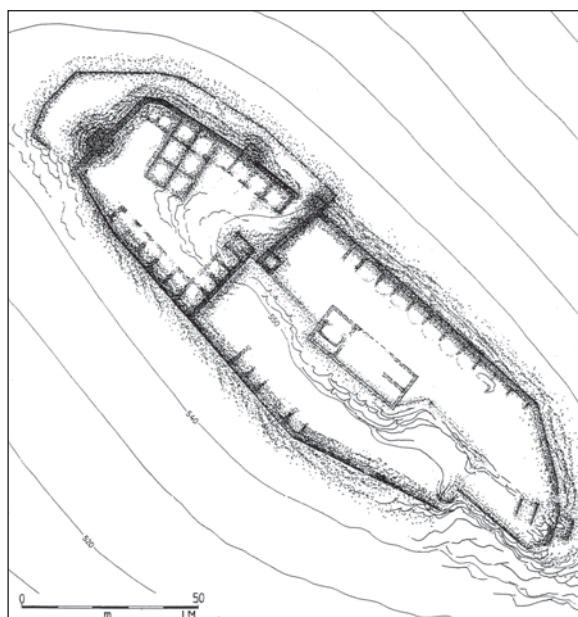


Fig. 3.277: Kula near Čelopek. Plan of the fortress (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 12).

Byzantine period, while the remains of a contemporary settlement were unearthed in the plain nearby.

Visible from afar, the prominent basalt plateau of **Žegligovski kamen near Mlado Nagoričane** (Figs. 3.279, 3.280) holds the remains of another typical Late Antique settlement (Mikulčić 2002, 133–137). The 150 × 90 m large fortification is protected with precipitous slopes on all sides and additionally fortified with walls. Excavated in its interior was a three-aisled basilica and a two-part cistern. Investigations also indicated the existence of large houses in the centre of the plateau and small buildings along the edge. Small finds and burials show that the fortification was already inhabited in the 4th, though more intensely in the 6th century. An Early Christian hypogaeum came to light on the slope below. The prominent location and the vicinity of major roads show the fortified settlement must also have accommodated at least a small army unit.

The fortification at **Gradište near Pčinja** (Fig. 3.281), which controlled a major communication, was built in a bend of the River Pčinja, in the narrowest part of the gorge (Georgiev 1989; Mikulčić 2002, 139–142). It shows characteristic fortification features. It only has a thin wall on the three sides protected by the river, while the east side of easiest access was guarded with thick walls additionally reinforced on two occasions. The length of the east walls was lined with a wide ditch, while the access across the saddle was additionally protected with two shorter ditches. In the Late Roman period, the walls on the saddle were reinforced with a rectangular tower, while two large pentagonal towers were built there in the mid-6th century. Towards the end



Fig. 3.278: Kula near Kalauzlija. Plan of the hilltop site (from Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 296).



Fig. 3.279: Žegligovski kamen near Mlado Nagoričane. Plan of the fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 27).



Fig. 3.280: Žegligovski kamen near Mlado Nagoričane from the west (1984).

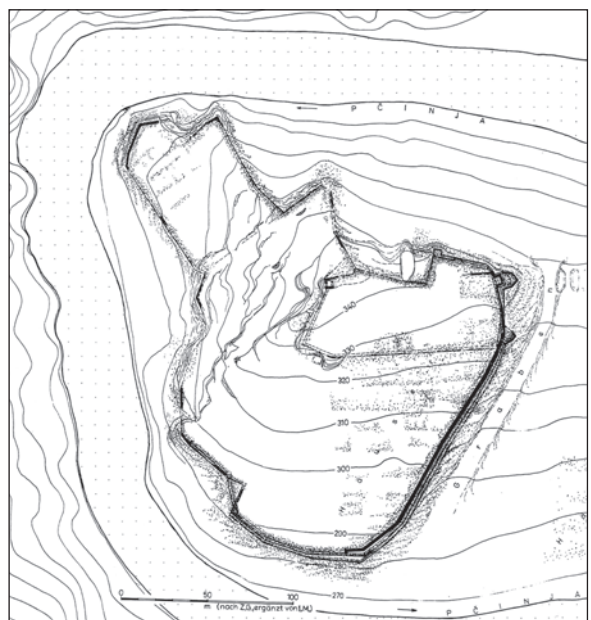


Fig. 3.281: Gradište near Pčinja. Plan of the fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 31).

of the 6th century, a new rectangular tower was built on the spot of the earlier one. The fortified area measured c. 3 ha. The acropolis revealed the remains of an Early Christian church, while the slopes below hold housing remains. Buildings were also found on the unprotected slope east of the fortification.

Kalata near Kamenica (Fig. 3.282) is a large agglomeration with the features of a small city (Mikulčić 1975, 122–131; id. 2002, 211–213; Lilčić 2013, 1023). It was constructed on a terrace above the confluence of the Rivers Kamenica and Bregalnica. As an economic and ecclesiastical centre on a major crossroads, Mikulčić believes it became a city in the 6th century. The c. 2 ha large acropolis holds the remains of multi-phase walls. In the Justinian period, thick walls were built on top of drystone foundations and a drystone wall (proteichisma) added along the exterior. The terraces in the interior hold the remains of differently-sized building that presumably include a basilica. In the southeastern part of the settlement below the acropolis, excavations unearthed a basilica with a large atrium from the 6th century and housing remains. The buildings in the interior date the settlement to the 3rd–6th century. A richly decorated three-aisled basilica from the 6th century was found at Begov Dab, a site west of the settlement. Another, cemeterial church is located northeast of the acropolis. Two other Early Christian churches were identified slightly further away from the settlement. All this reveals an Early Christian centre, but the settlement itself has not been extensively investigated and cannot be reliably interpreted.

The trial trenching at **Venec near Miokazi** (Fig. 3.283) revealed a fortification from the 6th century (Spasovska-Dimitroska 1989; Mikulčić 2002, 473–474). The c. 1.5 ha large fortress was enclosed with 1.65 m thick walls reinforced on the exterior side with evenly spaced rectangular towers and in areas of easier access also with a drystone proteichisma. Lining the walls in the interior

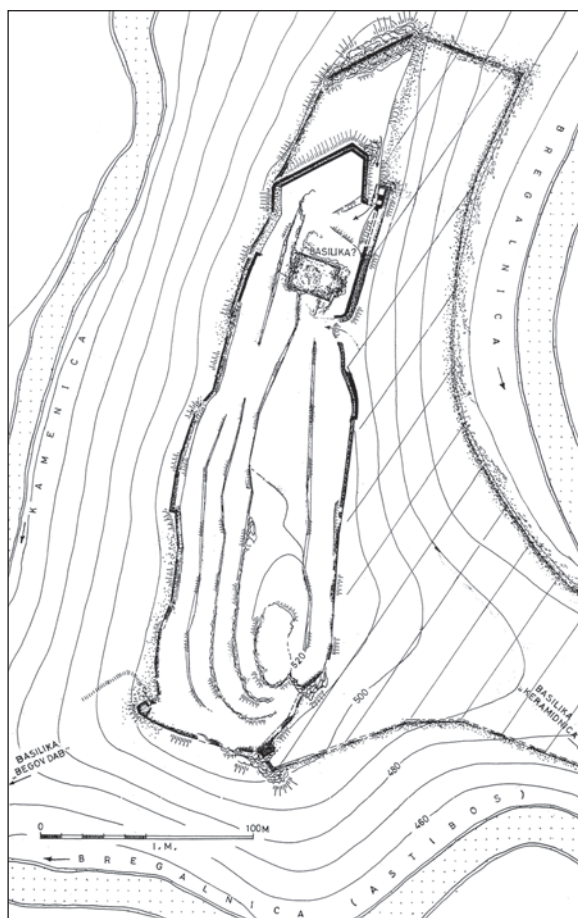


Fig. 3.282: Kalata near Kamenica. Plan of the fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 102).

are evenly spaced small buildings with clay-bonded walls and interiors with hearths and pithoi. A three-aisled church with a baptistery stood on the top. Publications also mention traces of larger edifices not identified more precisely. The layout of the fortress with towers and army

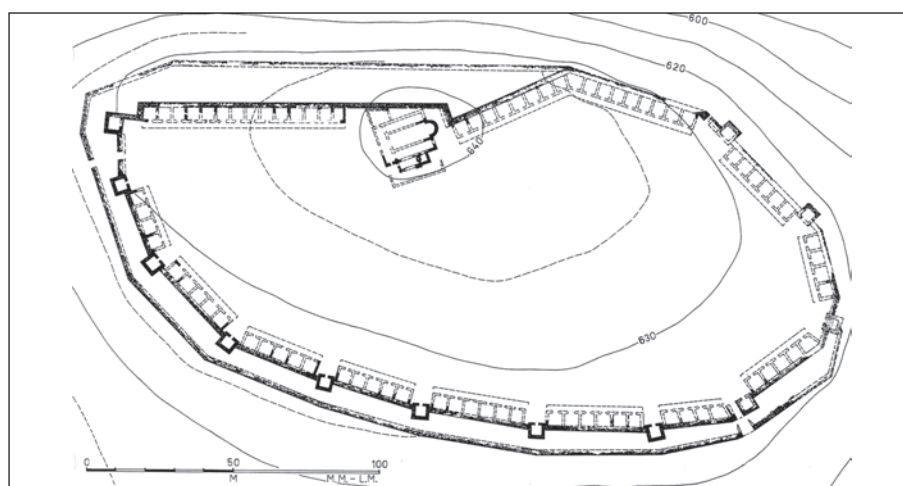


Fig. 3.283: Venec near Miokazi. Plan of the fortress (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 391).

barracks systematically arranged along the walls point to a strong army post next to a junction of major Roman roads.

The size, thick walls with towers and the location on the Via Egnatia just before its ascent towards the important Barbara Pass show that the fortified site at **Kale near Debrešte** (Fig. 3.284) was a significant fortress charged with protecting the above-mentioned road (Hensel, Rauchtowa 1981; Mikulčić 2002, 348–350). It was built in the flatland, but used the surrounding wetland for protection. A fortress measuring 175 × 157 m was built here in the Late Roman period, which had four reinforced entrances and walls strengthened with round towers in the corners and square ones elsewhere. In the Early Byzantine period, the north and south entrances were walled up, the other two reinforced with pentagonal towers and a *propugnaculum*. The up to 2.4 m thick walls with towers were also renovated. A three-aisled basilica with a baptistery was constructed at the east entrance. Next to it was a large rectangular Late Roman building of an unknown function. Most of the interior has not been investigated, though it did reveal traces of other buildings. Also found were traces of a contemporary unfortified settlement in immediate proximity (cf. Mikulčić 2002, 350). The numerous finds show the site was abandoned in the late 6th century.

In the southernmost part of North Macedonia, systematic excavations unearthed a small settlement on the island of **Golem Grad, Konjsko** in Lake Prespa, naturally protected with the waters of the lake that enabled a fairly peaceful existence in Late Antiquity (Bitrakova Grozdanova 2011). The island is 21 ha large and delimited with rocks that rise 40 m above the current surface of the lake. It was presumed to have hosted a walled refuge (Mikulčić 2002, 379–381), which the recent excavations did not confirm. Only the part of easiest access to the rocky plateau was walled. Excavations on the best protected part of the plateau, on the saddle between two elevations, revealed several simple buildings, on the very edge of the plateau also a well-constructed cistern that collected rainwater from the roofs of the adjacent buildings. Building remains also came to light in the western part of the island. The group of Late Antique houses included a small Early Christian church, while another one, slightly larger and in part decorated with mosaic floors came to light further away. Near the latter was a small cemetery from the 6th century. The excavated coins and other small finds, as well as grave goods date the settlement from the 4th to the early 7th century. The naturally protected settlement in the middle of the lake could certainly welcome a large number of refugees fleeing from danger.

An interesting example of an Early Byzantine fortress was unearthed at **Belgrad near Dvorište** (Fig. 3.285) (Mikulčić 2002, 423–425). The elongated, 170 × 64 m large fortress had up to 1.5 m thick walls with equally-sized casemates lining the interior. A special fea-

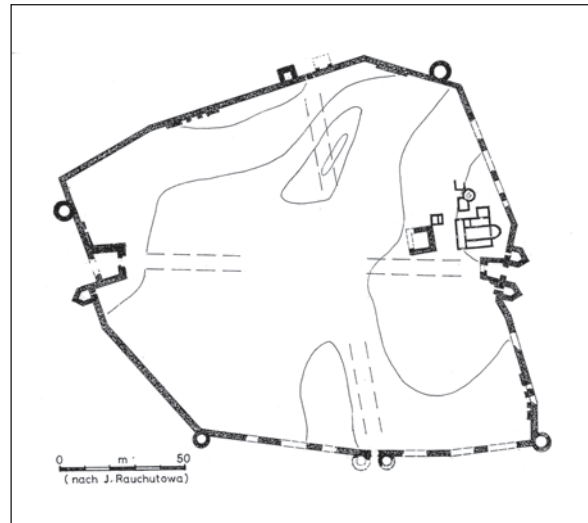


Fig. 3.284: Kale near Debrešte. Plan of the fortress (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 248).

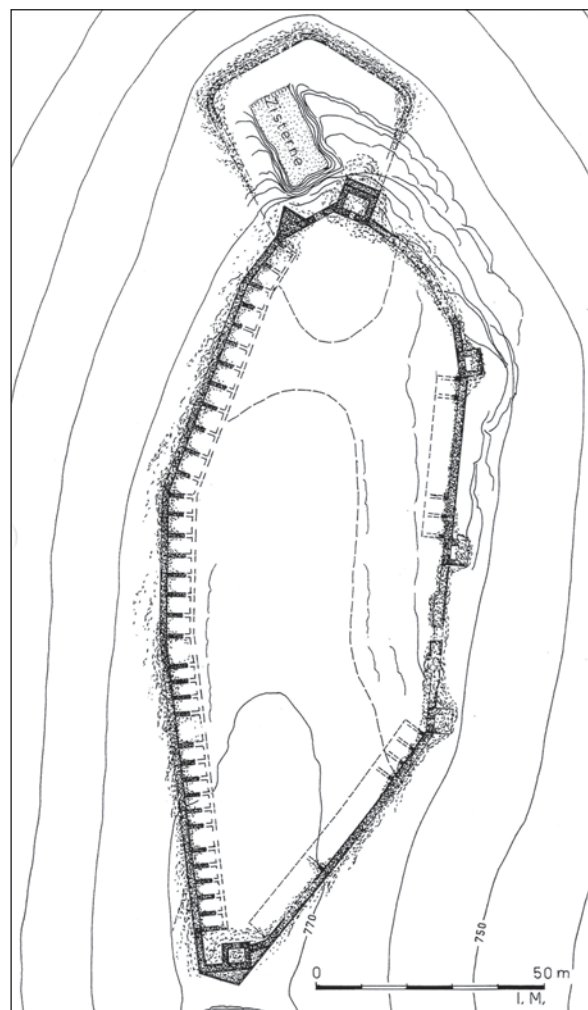


Fig. 3.285: Belgrad near Dvorište. Plan of the fortress (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 332).

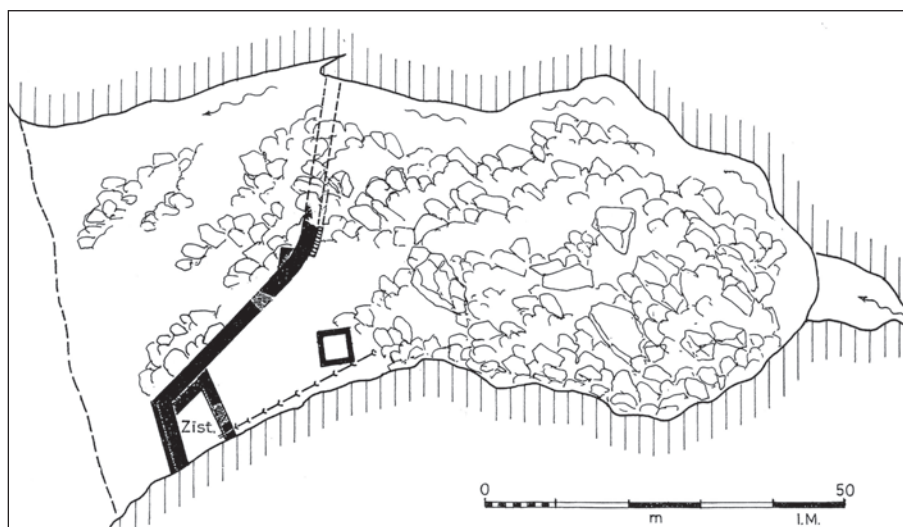


Fig. 3.286: Pešna near Devič. Plan of the fort in the cave (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 192).

ture is a rock-hewn 19×8 m large cistern below the walls on the exterior side, which was enclosed with a drystone wall and additionally protected with two towers of the fortress walls. This cistern was certainly also available to exterior visitors, with the troops overseeing its use.

A very special fort is that built in the large horizontal cave of **Pešna near Devič** (Fig. 3.286) (Mikulčić 2002, 293–295). The cave entrance was guarded with impressive, 2.1–2.5 m thick walls. The fort measured 105×35 –50 m. In the interior, a cistern was built next to the walls. The fort is dated to the 6th century and protected the nearby road.

The hill of **Gradište near Delisinci** (Fig. 3.287) revealed an example of a reused earlier fortification (Mikulčić 2002, 415–416). As at several other sites it occupied the summit and slopes already fortified in prehistory. The 2.2 m thick Late Hellenistic drystone walls were reused without reinforcing or in any way improving them. The numerous remains of Late Roman pottery show that the site was either used as a refuge on several occasions or was inhabited over a long time. The slopes also yielded burials from the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The hill **Gradok (Markovi Kuli) near Čanište** (Figs. 3.288–3.290) holds the remains of a vast two-part fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, 344–347). It was built on the summit and its southern slope. The surface of 4.5 ha was protected with 1.5–1.7 m thick walls with several protruding rectangular towers. The summit plateau of the hill has a wall separating it from the lower part; it represented the main habitation area with the entrance reinforced with towers. This acropolis holds the remains of two churches, the larger

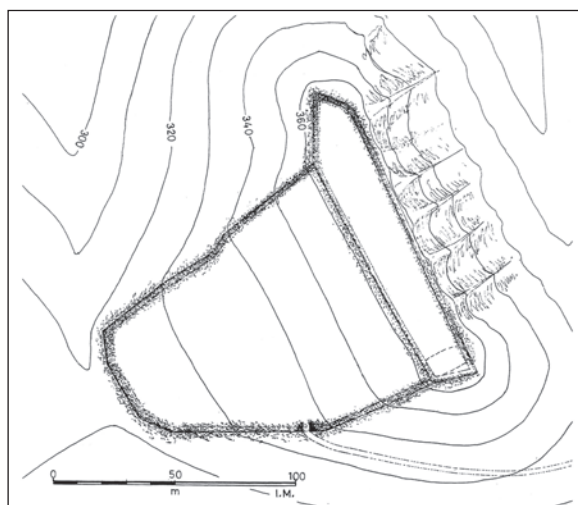


Fig. 3.287: Gradište near Delisinci. Plan of the fortified hilltop site (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 325).

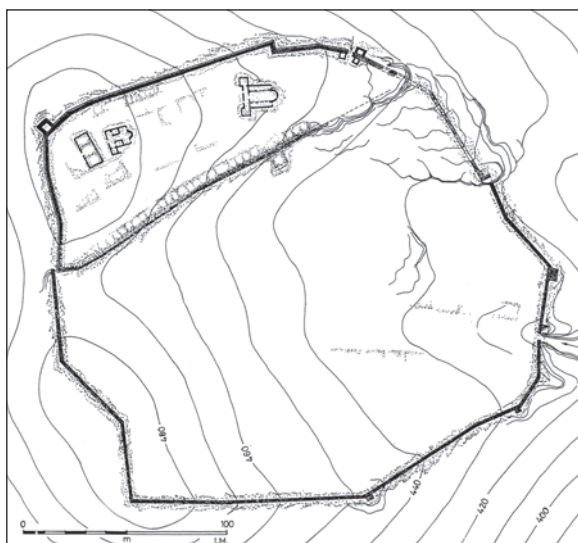


Fig. 3.288: Gradok (Markovi Kuli) near Čanište. Plan of the fortified settlement (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 245).



Fig. 3.289: Gradok (Markovi Kuli) near Čanište. Fortified settlement from the west (2004).



Fig. 3.290: Gradok (Markovi Kuli) near Čanište. Remains of the west church (2004).



of which is a three-aisled basilica in the east, while the west church is functionally associated with a large residential building with three rooms. There are also traces of other buildings on the acropolis, while such remains are not readily identifiable in the lower south area. The small finds and church architecture date the settlement to the 6th century. Its two-part layout shows a more permanently inhabited upper part and a larger lower area that was either in refugial use or served for economic purposes.

The site at **Kale near Gorno Svilare** (Fig. 3.291) hosts a small (80 × 60 m) fort (Mikulčić 2002, 166–168). It was constructed on a high hill that afforded control of

Fig. 3.291: Kale near Gorno Svilare. Plan of the fort (Mikulčić 2002, Fig. 58).

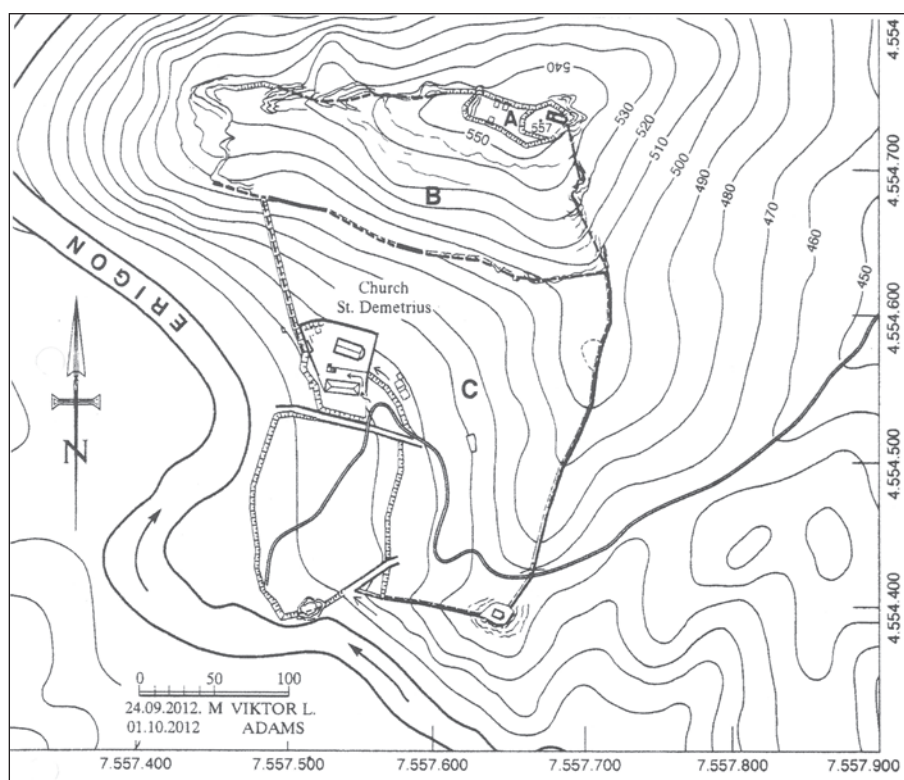


Fig. 3.292: Čebren (Grad) near Zovik Plan of the fortified settlement (from Lilčić Adams 2018, Fig. on p. 72).

the communication at the point where the River Vardar exits the Derven Gorge. Its walls have five protruding towers and densely spaced buildings along the interior. Also visible in the interior is a large cistern and a small Early Christian church. A proteichisma in the form of a thick stonework rampart was constructed in areas of easier access. In the south, the fort was additionally protected with two parallel walls. The architecture and defensive elements reveal an Early Byzantine fort, while the small finds indicate it may already have been established in the Late Roman period.

The steep hill of **Čebren (Grad) near Zovik** (Fig. 3.292) holds the remains of a c. 8 ha large fortified settlement established in a bend of the River Crna reka (Mikulčić 2002, 287–288). The better-protected highest part holds the acropolis with a large rectangular terrace below. It is defended with up to 2.2 m thick walls reinforced with several towers. The lower part revealed a large Early Christian church. The habitation terraces and numerous small finds indicate intense habitation. Mikulčić presumes a fortress here in the 4th–5th centuries and a settlement of an urban character in the 6th century. The fertile surroundings hold traces of intense Late Antique habitation and mining activities. In the 6th century, the settlement can be seen as a large fortified settlement with an economic hinterland and the capacity to accommodate a large number of soldiers in its interior.

Greece

Newly-founded fortifications of Late Antique are not well-known in Greece. With the scholarly attention focused on the Classical period, such sites were often overlooked or only briefly mentioned. The situation is changing gradually in recent times and research indicates that such sites are fairly numerous, particularly in northern Greece, and possibly show a distribution similar to that observed in areas to the north.

At least fourteen hilltop sites (refuges?) of a Late Antique date are mentioned in the area around the plain at Philippi, which were presumably associated with the unfortified settlements in the plain. They may in part be strategic forts manned with soldiers (Dunn 2004, 548–555). An example is the first-phase fort at **Drama**, which boasts impressive *opus mixtum* walls. One or even several churches are mentioned in the interior, while small finds include Late Antique pottery.

A site that appears particularly important is that at **Ai Giannis, Adriani**, where an Early Christian basilica was found on the acropolis and beside the basilica densely arranged buildings that also yielded Late Antique pottery. Given the continuity of the toponym, the site has been linked with the Justinianic *phrourion* Adrianon, the successor of the previously sprawling city of Hadrianopolis (Dunn 2004, 549).

The fortified settlement at **Palaiokastro near Palaiochori**, at the foot of Mount Pangaion, revealed the remains of stone houses, a cistern and an Early Christian church, but also Late Antique pottery (Dunn 2004, 550).

The small fort at **Khortokopi II** was enclosed with thin, but double walls (proteichisma?). It yielded the foundations of stone buildings, a cistern and a small church (Dunn 2004, 550).

We should again mention the fortified church complex at **Louloudies near Katerini**, which is already discussed among newly-founded cities (see *Chapter 2.5*). Leaving aside the hypotheses of the episcopal see being transferred to this *quadriburgium* and limiting the discussion to the basic archaeological evidence, this site shows a familiar form of settlements frequently mentioned in areas to the north. The 90×80 m, i.e. 0.9 ha large *quadriburgium* held a large Early Christian church, parallel to it a large residential building and smaller auxiliary edifices lining the walls. Also characteristic is the proximity to a 4 ha large fort from the 6th century, located only 150 m away.

In northwestern Greece, fortifications are also poorly known. Most were established on top of the earlier Hellenistic fortified settlements. An example of this can be found at **Kastritsa near Ioánnina** (Figs. 3.293–3.295), a high hill at Lake of Ioánnina with remains of a multi-period fortified settlement (Blackman 2000, 46, 65–66; Bowden 2000, 40–42; id. 2003, 181). It revealed substantial remains from Late Antiquity. The summit is enclosed with Hellenistic walls that in places show Late Antique repairs and additions. Excavations unearthed two earlier buildings that were later subdivided. One of the buildings revealed numerous coins from the 4th to the late 6th century, but also a hoard of coins that end with a follis of Mauricius Tiberius from 582/583. Another house is marked by numerous pitthoi and Late Antique coarseware, which suggests it served as a storehouse.

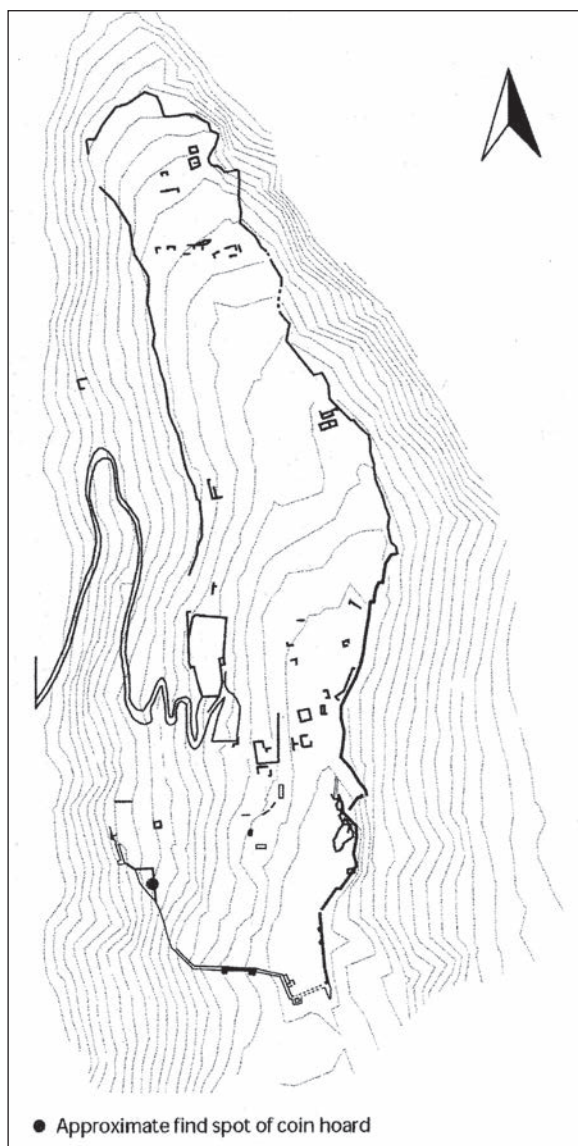


Fig. 3.293: Kastritsa near Ioánnina. Plan of the fortified settlement (Bowden 2003, 7.19).



Fig. 3.294: Kastritsa near Ioánnina. Remains of the buildings on the western slope of the settlement (2013).



Fig. 3.295: Kastritsa near Ioánnina. Settlement in the upper part of the site from the south (2013).

Not much is known on the large fortification at **Kastro Rizovouni** (Fig. 3.296) (Bowden 2000, 107–109; id. 2003, 180). It is located on a dominant steep hill above the Thesprotikon Plain and was inhabited in several periods. The extensive Hellenistic walls were partially renovated in Late Antiquity and a construction with reused stone and brick courses added on a top of the earlier walls. Underneath the later church are the remains of a three-aisled Early Christian basilica. The field survey in the interior revealed modest remains of Late Antique pottery, which led to the hypothesis that it only functioned as a refuge. It was presumably used by the people living in a nearby lowland settlement at present-day Rizovouni, where the remains of an Early Christian church and other buildings came to light.

The research conducted in the last two decades in Thessaly revealed a mass of unfortified, but also several fortified hilltop settlements. The most important and also best researched among these is undoubtedly at **Velika**, a high hill above a city of the same name and just above the coast (Sdrolia 2016, 127–129). In the Early Byzantine period, earlier defensive elements were reused to build a 2.1 ha large fortified settlement. The walls are well-built, 2 m thick and reinforced with towers. Standing out among the buildings in the interior is a three-aisled basilica and a large building with three wings enclosing a court. It is believed to house the office for supervising produce trading. Found on the slopes outside the walls was another church complex with an oil press and storerooms. Coins, other small finds and architecture date the settlement to the Justinian period. The settlement was abandoned after the 7th century. The great quantity of imported goods and transport vessels

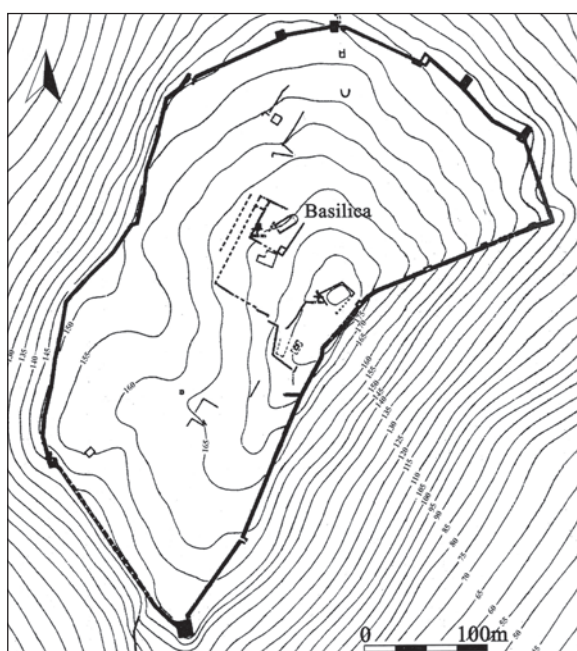


Fig. 3.296: Kastro Rizovouni. Plan of the fortified hilltop site (Bowden 2003, 7.14).

indicate a major role of the Late Antique fortified settlement in the Aegean trade network.

A special type of island settlements or 'refuge islands' has been observed along the Greek coast that were predominately established in the late 6th century (Bowden 2003, 186–190; Veikou 2012, 177–188). A particularly characteristic and well-known example is the

settlement on the island of **Kephalos** in the Ambracian Gulf, near the city of Vonitsa in Epirus. The previously uninhabited island measuring 200×50 m witnessed a hive of construction activity in the 6th century that included two Early Christian basilicas, but also numerous remains of residential buildings. Coins, other small finds and mosaics date the settlement throughout the 6th and part of the 7th century. The limited space available on the island meant that the settlement could only function in communication with the mainland. Similar settlements were also found along the southern coast

of Greece. Bowden sees them as merely a maritime variation of hilltop settlements (Bowden 2003, 189). The archaeological evidence is illuminated by the accounts in the Chronicle of Monemvasia and other historical sources that speak of the population from urban centres dispersing to the islands (Liebeschuetz 2001, 284–291; Veikou 2012, 182–188).

Associated with the trans-isthmian wall of the Hexamilion, which in Late Antiquity barred access to the Peloponnese, is the large fortress at **Isthmia** (Figs. 3.297, 3.298) (Gregory 1993; Kardulias 1993). Its size and eminent strategic location reveal the main fortress protecting the barrier wall. The trapezium-shaped fortress was the heart of the defensive system and took full advantage of the slightly raised terrain. It covers a surface of 2.71 ha and its walls are 2.3 m thick. Insufficient research offers limited insight into the interior, where only the outlines of several buildings were recognized. More is known of both monumental entrances and the protruding rectangular tower, while the interior only revealed the outlines of several buildings. The fortress and the Hexamilion were constructed in the 410s and renovated under Justinian in the mid-6th century, indirectly corroborating the two fortification periods in the wider Balkan region.

A small Early Byzantine fortified settlement was created in the plain holding the ruins of ancient **Olympia** (Figs. 3.299, 3.300) (Curta 2014, 35; Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, 705–707; Völling et al. 2019). The records of the early excavations from the second half of the 19th century allow for a partial reconstruction of the settlement believed to have been established in the 5th century on

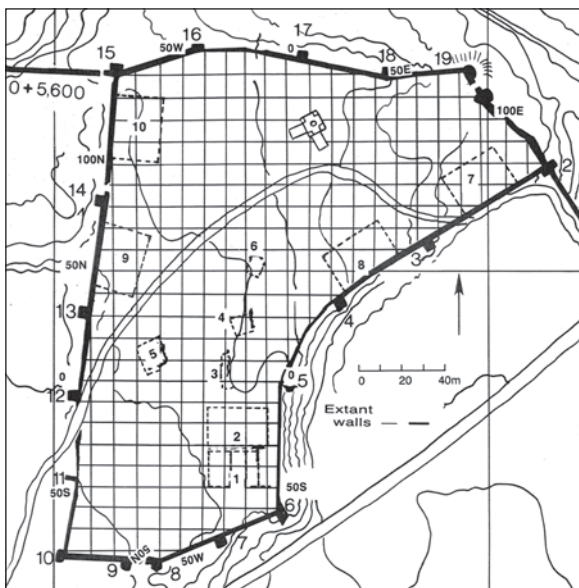


Fig. 3.297: Isthmia. Plan of the fortress (Kardulias 1993, Fig. 1).



Fig. 3.298: Isthmia. Well-preserved barrier wall of Hexamilion near the fortress (2007).

the ruins of Greek temples, persisting throughout the 6th at least to the early 7th century. It had substantial walls, made of reused stone and reinforced with four towers. It revealed two phases, one dating to the 5th century and the other that began in the mid-6th and lasted to the early 7th century. The numerous farming tools indicate a highly agrarian community. The finds from the associated cemetery show this was a settlement of Romanised inhabitants that was particularly densely inhabited in the 6th and early 7th century.

To further illustrate the late fortification pattern, we should mention another one of the many naturally protected sites that offered shelter for those living in the southeastern Peloponnese, one reported in the Chronicle of Monemvasia (Cameron 2012, 154; Veikou 2012, 184– 188). The mighty plateau of **Monemvasia** on a difficult-to-access peninsula is presented in the chronicle from the 10th/11th centuries as a naturally excellently defended location where people sought refuge, fleeing from the incursions of the Slavs.

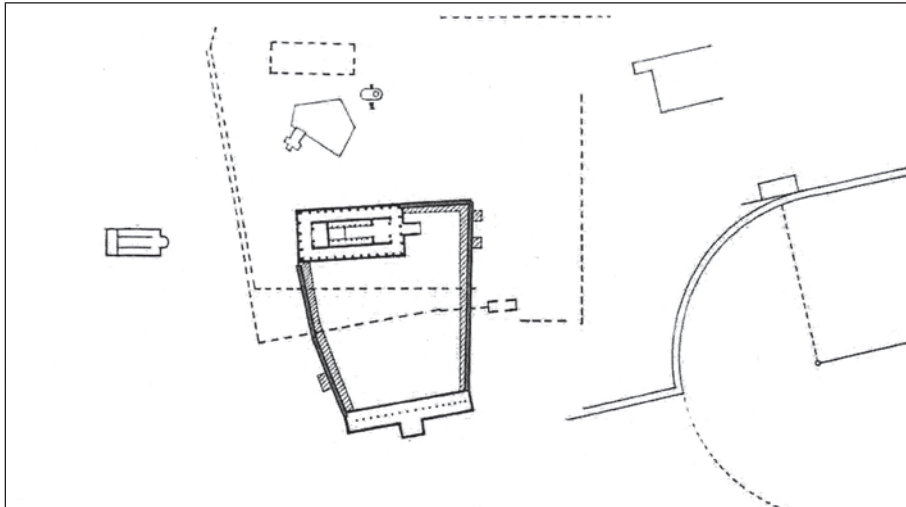


Fig. 3.299: Olympia. Plan of the fortified settlement (Baldini, Bazzechi 2016, Fig. 10).



Fig. 3.300: Olympia. Remains of the Early Christian church outside the fortified settlement (2007).

3.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The overview of the different forms of countryside settlement has revealed two major categories of sites. The first predominantly consists of unfortified settlements rooted in the tradition of the earlier Roman settlement with villas, farmsteads and villages rationally distributed across fertile lowland areas. Settlements of this category are quite rare in the mountainous hinterland, where their subsistence was tied to specific economic activities.

Settlements of the second category are a *novum* and comprise fortified sites of diverse forms that paint a completely different picture with their great numbers and partly with locations in naturally well-protected mountainous or even high-altitude areas. This category also incorporates unfortified settlements, but their remains are modest and poorly-investigated, and thus do not allow for reliable conclusions as to their appearance and duration.

3.4.1 SETTLEMENTS WITH CONTINUITY

The overview above briefly presented a selection of villas and other sites that represent a continuation of the habitations established in the first three centuries AD (Figs. 3.1, 3.26). Some of these were already abandoned in the last third of the 3rd century, though for most the process of abandonment unfolded in the course of the 4th century, few persisted to the first half of the 5th, while only some villas around Lake Garda, along the Adriatic coast and in Greece survived into the 6th century, albeit in a heavily altered or reduced form.

Numerous investigations have been conducted in Italy, particularly its northern part, that provide a wealth of data on the fate of the villas in Late Antiquity and beyond (cf. Brogiolo, Chavarria Arnau 2014, 233). They reveal a rather standardised evolution and end of villas across the Empire, but also that their transformation already began in the 3rd century. Initially, the most apparent change was in the function of rooms, which became production units. From the 5th century onwards, life in these villas continued on a modest scale and included minor artisanal activities; it is not clear whether they were still inhabited by Roman aristocracy. Brogiolo dates the final phase of the villas around Lake Garda from the late 5th to the late 6th century and notes a degradation of earlier buildings, subdivision with primitive constructions and burials in the villa interiors (Brogiolo 1997, 300).

Much research has been dedicated to the villas in Hungary, which results in a good understanding of the different aspects of their existence, but even more importantly in a reliable typology and chronology of construction and abandonment (Thomas 1964; Bíró

1974; Mulvin 2002). We should note the pioneering work of Edith Thomas, who gathered vast amounts of data and defined the types and functions of the villas (Thomas 1964). A particular feature of the villas in Hungary is the fortification of the most important residential buildings, though not to the degree of forming fortified settlements proper.

The research of the villas in Istria has revealed clear signs of continuity. An example is the villa at Dragonera Jug, where excavations established a Late Antique phase with high-quality renovation of the residential part and a continuation of the villa to the early 7th century (Starac, A. 2010). A continuous life has also been evidenced for the villas on several islands in the Adriatic (e.g. Muline on Ugljan, Novo selo Bunje on Brač).

Villas in Bulgaria ceased to be inhabited after the invasion of the Huns in the 440s. Simple dwellings were erected in their ruins that show a transformation similar to those observed in the western part of the Empire (Dintchev 1997).

Less is known of other forms of settlements such as *vici* and roadside stations, and it is not possible to draw conclusions regarding their continuity. The recent large-scale rescue investigations in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria have confirmed their existence only in the 4th century.

The Dalmatian hinterland has revealed several examples of small Roman settlements that witnessed multiple renovations and persisted to the end of Antiquity; an example is the group of buildings at Bisko near Knin (Milošević, A. 1986). Other such examples associated with contemporary Early Christian churches came to light along the coast (e.g. Muline on Ugljan, Lovrečina on Brač, Proložac Donji, Ubli on Lastovo; Fig. 3.301).

An interesting example of an unfortified settlement have been discovered at Cherven breg in Bulgaria, in which an Early Christian church was erected in the mid-4th century and the settlement persisted as such to the late 5th century (Petrova 2019).

Several unfortified settlements in northern Greece presumably also continued to the 6th century, but evidence on them is scarce (Dunn 2004, 539–542).

3.4.2 NEWLY-FOUNDED UNFORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS

The unfortified settlements include many that were built soon after the crisis in the 3rd century and display a continuation of the former settlement patterns (Figs. 3.33, 3.49). These villas are fewer in number, but many show a more luxurious interior; this is a development similar to that observed in the villas with continuity. In addition, a number of modest settlements were also established in the lowland, mainly composed of timber buildings, that can be seen as late villages (primarily



Fig. 3.301: Ubli on the island of Lastovo. Remains of the unfortified settlement with a church near the harbor (2017).

from the 4th century). The majority of these end in the late 4th century and only rare ones persist into the 5th century. Some very late villas established in remote areas (Ostrovica, Mirje, Rankovići near Travnik, Kruče near Ulcinj, Donje Nerodimlje) were either abandoned or destroyed presumably as late as the 6th century. More attention should be paid to these intriguing settlements, as they are only partially investigated and briefly published.

In addition to the strong continuity of villas, Istria and the Adriatic coast boast several other forms of settlements that appeared in the Late Roman period and lasted to the end of Antiquity. Examples of these include the unfortified settlement at Rim near Roč in Istria, a small rural complex of simple buildings at the church of St Chrysogonus near Milohnići, on the island of Krk, and the complex of buildings at Vučipolje near Dugopolje (Marušić 1986; Janeš 2015; Borzić, Jadrić 2007).

A similar continuity can be established for the small village with a church in North Macedonia, at Trpčeva Crkva near Dunja (Kepeska, Kepeski 2006).

The intensive surveys in Greece show a countryside dotted with dispersed unfortified buildings or settlements (Bintliff 2012, 352–359). This settlement pattern is primarily the result of the geographic location deep in the south that made it less exposed to barbarian incursions, but also meant greater proximity to the capital of the Empire. Evidence on the forms of settlements mainly comes only from intensive surveys, which cannot provide details on the nature, size and duration of a site.

Most unfortified countryside settlements lie in remote areas, often also at higher altitudes, they are modest and unorganised. This, however, does not diminish their

importance as they point the direction in which the missing links of Late Antique settlement should be sought, particularly for the poorly-known 5th century. They also represent the settlements from which the inhabitants fled to seek shelter in nearby refuges (see below).

3.4.3 NEWLY-FOUNDED FORTIFICATIONS

The phenomenon of fortified (hilltop) settlement forms of Late Antiquity (Figs. 3.54, 3.201) is – as already outlined above – not well-known to the broader professional public and should therefore be more extensively discussed. This is in part due to the fact that these sites were frequently seen as a local phenomenon and subject to different interpretations and names within different regional archaeological practices. The discussion below will therefore open with a short outline of the history of research into these sites and continue with the difficulties regarding their interpretation and the understanding of their role within the broader settlement pattern.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH

To illuminate the gradually developing awareness of the changes in the settlement pattern, we should begin the discussion with a brief presentation of the main centres of research. The fortified hilltop settlements of Late Antiquity in the eastern Alps were first identified as an important settlement phenomenon



Fig. 3.302: Newly-founded fortifications



in the south-eastern Alps.



Fig. 3.303: Ulrichsberg. Plateau of the settlement from the east (2005).



Fig. 3.304: Ajdovski gradec above Vranje. The first sistematically examined church complex in the fortified settlement (2023).

in Austria in the early 20th century, when Rudolf Egger investigated Early Christian churches on hills and observed they frequently lie in naturally and artificially well-protected areas (Egger 1916). The military fortification at Hoischügel was also investigated at that time, which was followed between both world wars by systematic excavations at Duel (Egger 1929). Using the research results from several other fortified settlements (Ulrichsberg (Fig. 3.303), Teurnia), Egger published the first historical-archaeological outline of the Late Antique settlement, entitled *Die Spätantike in Ostalpen*, as early as 1942 (Egger 1942). The book treated Late Antiquity as a distinct chronological unit and also identified an altered settlement pattern. Egger's research marks the beginning

of a systematic detection of fortified Late Antique sites in the area under discussion and wider, and had a great impact on their subsequent interpretation and research.

Later research in Austria focused primarily on the systematic investigations at two major fortified hilltop sites, namely Hemmaberg and Teurnia, while minor investigations were also conducted elsewhere (overview in Glaser 1997, 96–120, 131–140; Bauer 1997; Ladstätter 2000; Glaser 2008; Winckler 2012; Steinklauber 2013).

Playing an important role in the research of Late Antique fortifications was the *Kommission zur archäologischen Erforschung des spätrömischen Raetien* in Munich. It was headed by Joachim Werner, who saw



Fig. 3.305: Gradina on the island of Žirje. Large residential building along the walls of the Early Byzantine fort (2004).

the significance of such sites for understanding the transition period between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Alongside his investigations of the Late Roman forts in Germany (Lorenzberg, Kellmünz, Goldberg), he initiated and enabled systematic investigations in Italy (Invillino, Sabiona), Austria (Georgenberg near Kuchl) and Slovenia (Hrušica, Ajdovski gradec above Vranje; Fig. 3.304) as early as the 1960s. He organised the publication of important Bulgarian sites of Golemanovo Kale and Sadovsko Kale, which had been excavated before World War II (Uenze 1992). He recognised the great significance of investigating Late Antique sites in North Macedonia and also encouraged and enabled the publication of its Late Antique fortified cities and fortifications, which is undoubtedly one of the most important publications for understanding the settlement patterns in the Balkans (Mikulčić 2002).

During his excavations at Invillino, Volker Bierbrauer published an overview of the fortified hilltop sites in South Tyrol and Friuli (Bierbrauer 1985; id. 1987). It is a topic that received much attention in northern Italy over the last decades. In addition to the research at Invillino and Sabiona, there were also systematic investigations at the vast fortified site at Monte Barro, which is located outside the area under discussion, and the first monographic overview of the fortified posts in northern Italy (Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996). Investigations are currently conducted at Sant'Andrea di Loppio (Maurina 2016; ead. 2020) and San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso (Zagermann, Cavada 2014; Cavada, Zagermann 2020b).

In Slovenia, systematic investigations of the Late Antique fortifications have been conducted since the

1960s, when they began with the excavations of the forts forming part of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system (Šašel, Petru 1971). The collaboration with German colleagues in the early 1970s brought large-scale systematic investigations at Hrušica and Ajdovski gradec above Vranje (Petru, Ulbert 1975; Ulbert 1981). These were joined by numerous other excavation campaigns, for example at Rifnik, Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin, Ajdna, Kranj, Korinjski hrib, Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu, Gradec near Prapretno, Brinjeva gora and Ajdovščina above Rodik (overview in Ciglencečki 1987a). The last three decades also brought monographic publications of the investigations at Kučar (Dular et al. 1995), Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu (Ciglencečki 2000), Tonovcov grad near Kobarid (Ciglencečki et al. 2011; Modrijan, Milavec 2011) and Korinjski hrib (Ciglencečki et al. 2020).

Investigations in Croatia focused on the forts along the Adriatic coast. The first synthetic publication and assessment of sites (Gunjača 1986) was followed by a series of field surveys that detected innumerable forts (cf. Tomičić 1996). Their good preservation and the absence of vegetation enabled the first interpretation of these predominantly Early Byzantine forts. There were also large-scale excavations of the fort at Gradina on Žirje (Fig. 3.305) (Pedišić 2001; Karadole, Borzić 2020). In continental Croatia, significant investigations were conducted at Kuzelin, Marija Gorska near Lobar and Crkvišće Bukovlje (Sokol 1994; Filipec 2007; Azinović Bebek, Sekulić 2019).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Đuro Basler published an insight into the Late Antique settlement pattern already in 1972 that included a discussion of the associated Early Christian churches (Basler 1972). Many



Fig. 3.306: Caričin grad, presumed Iustiniana Prima. The location of a fortified settlement on a low, but naturally well-protected hill (2012).

of the subsequent investigations were interrupted when the war broke out, though their large scale is reflected in the finds collected and synthetically published in *Arheološki leksikon Bosne i Hercegovine* (Čović 1988), but also in several later brief overviews (Čremošnik 1990; Špehar 2008).

From 1912 onwards, investigations of the Late Antique fortified sites in Serbia focused on excavating Caričin grad (Fig. 3.306), a typical fortified hilltop settlement and presumed Iustiniana Prima. The construction of a hydropower plant in Đerdap Gorge in the 1960s brought large-scale rescue excavations that unearthed important sites including many Roman forts renovated in Late Antiquity (see the reports in *Starinar* 23–24 (1984)). Investigations of the fortified countryside sites in Serbia began in the 1970s with the excavations at Gradina Ras, which revealed a Late Antique habitation horizon under the medieval remains. A vast amount of new topographic data has been gathered in recent decades, also several trial trenching campaigns, but their results are only partly published (overview in Milinković 2008; id. 2015).

Bulgaria enjoys a long history of research at fortified sites in the countryside, particularly if also considering the topographic efforts of brothers Hermann and Karel Škorpil in the early 20th century (cf. Boshnakov 2007). Of great importance was the research of a German-Bulgarian team in the fortified settlement at Golemanovo Kale; together with the adjacent fort at Sadovsko Kale, this site long served as the reference point for the study of Late

Antique fortifications in a wider area (overview in Uenze 1992). The first publications aimed at systematically presenting fortified sites came out in the 1980s (Ovčarov 1982) and have since been growing in number (Dintchev 1997; id. 2007; id. 2021b). Recently, there are also intensive surveys of the countryside and the excavations in the fort at Dichin, conducted in cooperation with a British team (Poulter 2007c). The numerous investigations are revealing an important share of fortified sites in the local settlement pattern.

The topographic surveys that Ivan Mikulčić headed in North Macedonia revealed an exceptionally high number of Late Antique posts (Mikulčić 1982a; id. 1986; id. 2002, 87–89). They include 290 reliably identified and 95 presumed Early Byzantine forts, a large part of which dates to the time of Justinian. Particularly important is the distinction between military sites, on the one side, and civilian settlements and refuges, on the other, that could be made for several sites (Mikulčić 2002, 87). The field surveys and excavations conducted in recent times add to the wealth of knowledge on the Late Antique settlement (Lilčić 2013).

Recent investigations are beginning to shed light on the Late Antique countryside of Kosovo (Përzhita, Hoxha 2003; Rama 2020). Field surveys have established over a hundred fortified Late Antique sites, but they only witnessed limited further investigations (Rama 2020, 121).

The recent field surveys in Albania indicate a site density similar to that in neighbouring North



Fig. 3.307: Distribution of Early Byzantine fortified settlements in south-eastern Europe (showing largely just the state of research!) (Milinković 2014, Fig. 4).

Macedonia, though the sites have only rarely been investigated further. The first overview of the fortified sites was already published in 1976 (Bace 1976), while later topographic surveys offer additional insight into this segment of the settlement pattern (e.g. Përzhita, Hoxha 2003).

Less is known on this segment of the Late Antique settlement in Greece. With scholarly attention focusing

on the Classical period, Late Antiquity has often been overlooked or only summarily outlined. More frequent publications in recent times, however, suggest that fortified sites were fairly numerous, particularly in northern Greece, with their density possibly comparable with that in the areas to the north (Dunn 2004; Veikou 2013, 131; Sdrolia 2022).

FUNCTIONAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEWLY-FOUNDED FORTIFICATIONS

The nature of the different types of Late Antique fortified sites has frequently been discussed, but often with contradictory results. Literature uses different terms for sites of the same form, a problem already mentioned in the introduction. It is also a problem that hinders an appropriate understanding of the settlement patterns and we should therefore briefly present and critically assess some of the early interpretations of fortified sites that continue to be used in current publications. The myriad of substantially different fortifications in particular requires a very careful examination that must take into account the specifics of individual types, as it is only possible to gain a comprehensive picture of the Late Antique settlement pattern by understanding its diversity.

In the history of research, we already mentioned the important role of Rudolf Egger, who considered the fortified settlements with Early Christian buildings as refuges for the Roman population, saw two of them as military posts guarding a major route to Italy and one as a permanently inhabited settlement or village (Ulrichsberg). At that time, however, the number of such sites known in the eastern Alps was small and did not allow a systematic approach to their study.

Similar functional interpretations can be observed in Basler's overview of the Late Antique architectural remains in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had a great impact on later interpretations across former Yugoslavia (Basler 1972, 60–61; id. 1993, 38–40). He identified large forts with towers as *castra* established on the orders of the central authorities and manned with soldiers protecting major communications, those east of the River Neretva also the Byzantine-Gothic border; these forts may have provided shelter for civilians in times of danger. He marked smaller forts as *castella*, which were primarily built as part of the local population protection and saw the soldiers stationed in them as militia, i.e. armed local inhabitants. The third category of fortified sites he interpreted as refuge enclosures, merely serving to shelter civilians, though not excluding some form of armed self-protection. He correlated the size of these refuges with the size of the local population; some also hosted churches. This suggests that he presumed refuges to be merely temporary shelters and not permanent settlements. He also treated the fortifications at Crkvina near Halapić and Podgradina Kamenska as refuges, already marked as such by Dimitrije Sergejevski, even though their location on a major communication and their strong defences indicate a combination of a fort and refuge (Sergejevski 1942, 147–150; Basler 1972, 56–57). What Basler did not recognise among these sites is permanent settlements, which is the most common type in many regions. He found practically no differences

between *castella* (i.e. small forts) and refuge enclosures in the Dalmatian hinterland, at least as far the location and size were concerned (Basler 1972, 61).

In Slovenia, the Late Antique settlement pattern appeared clear in the 1970s: people lived in lowland settlements to the late 4th century, then largely moved to naturally well-protected hilltop settlements in remote areas and persisted there to the arrival of the Early Slavs in the late 6th century. Most researchers believed that evidence indicated the existence of fortified hilltop settlements from the second half of the 4th (beginning presumably after 378) to the late 6th century, but also that they were of a fully uniform type (Petru 1978, 362; Slabe 1978, 386; Šašel 1980, 14). Such interpretations primarily rested on the site of Ajdovski gradec above Vranje, which was well-known at the time, but one whose church complex makes it an exception rather than a rule among such sites in Slovenia. This relatively logical interpretation initially corroborated with discoveries at select sites soon proved to be oversimplified.

In Italy as well, Volker Bierbrauer used the investigations at Invillino to interpret these fortifications as Roman settlements constructed in a specific historical situation around 400 that remained uninhabited to the end of Antiquity (Bierbrauer 1985, 511).

Field surveys in the eastern Alpine area have brought to light numerous new fortified sites, which dotted this highly endangered area at the doorstep of Italy (Ciglenečki 1987a; Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996; Bauer 1997; Ciglenečki 2008; Glaser 2008). Being exposed to mass migrations, the Roman population retreated to remote areas and to fortifications. In Slovenia, there are no traces of habitation in unfortified lowland settlements in the 5th and 6th centuries, with only minor exceptions (cf. Milavec 2020, 160), which is in contrast with other areas discussed here, where the settlement picture is not so uniform. Slovenian sites thus enabled the identification of different types of fortified sites, among which the permanently settled fortified settlements were the most characteristic and most numerous. In addition to the early forts of the 4th century, we were able to identify several military fortifications from the 6th century, but also a variety of refuges. Excavations and the analysis of the small finds from sealed contexts have enabled a more reliable dating of individual settlement waves inferred from at least three pronounced habitation phases (Ciglenečki 1987a; id. 2008). Both chronologically and typologically, the previously uniform settlement picture now disintegrated and revealed many variations in the types of fortified sites and their gradual occurrence.

In line with the early interpretations, the different fortifications were long only understood in the fort – refuge dichotomy. Particularly those from the 5th and 6th centuries were marked as refuges, but this did not correspond with the actual finds on the newly-discovered sites. In my article from 1979 with a slightly provocative

title of *Kastell, befestigte Siedlung oder Refugium?*, I highlighted this problem and used examples from Slovenia to show that we are dealing with all three categories of Late Antique fortified sites, among which the fortified permanent settlements actually predominate (Ciglenečki 1979). I later enhanced this division in many aspects and included sites from the whole eastern Alpine area in the discussion (Ciglenečki 1987a). In this paper, I emphasised that only rare sites could be seen as clear examples of a type and that the fortifications had different sets of functions in different periods, with the function changing for instance from a refuge in the initial phase to a permanent settlement later, when it may also have served as a fort (Ciglenečki 1987a, 110). Marking some of the sites in the western part as military was received with scepticism at first, but was later corroborated by new investigations at many sites. Recently, there are even views that go in the opposite direction, i.e. seeing merely military fortifications in all the sites, at least in the eastern part of the area under discussion (cf. Curta 2017).

In his first comprehensive study of the Late Antique forts in the area of Skopje, Ivan Mikulčić proposed a fairly detailed division of the fortified sites (1982, 58–64). His first group only comprised *praesidia* and *burgi* from the 1st to the 3rd century, which he paralleled with *castra* and watchtowers. The second group consisted of *castella* and Early Byzantine *oppida* that developed into proper small cities by the end of Antiquity. The third group combined refuges located in remote areas, devoid of the defensive features (towers) characteristic of *castella* and permanently settled at the end of Antiquity. The last group also included fortified villages (*vici*) with thinner walls without towers and interiors hosting Early Christian churches and other buildings. As a specific example different from all others he mentioned the fortified villa at Pelenica near Dračevo.

His later research led him to emphasise that half of all fortifications were of a civilian character and only one quarter proper military forts, while the last quarter were *oppida* and *oppidula* of a mixed civilian and military nature representing the most significant group (Mikulčić 1986, 275). The monograph on the Late Antique cities in North Macedonia incorporates *castella*, most of which he believed lost their military character in the 5th and 6th centuries and became fortified settlements; only rare examples retained a military role. He noted that these sites can only conditionally be termed *castella* (Mikulčić 1999, 363–388). He discussed his division at greater length in the major work on Late Antique and Early Byzantine forts in North Macedonia, which presents a synthesis of all the findings mentioned above (Mikulčić 2002, 58–68).

In Serbia, the Late Antique fortified sites were initially mostly marked as *refugia*, but it soon became clear that these sites were of a more complex nature (Milinković 2007, 166). In defining hilltop settlements,

the feature most underlined is their high altitude, which is predominantly above 500 m and commonly even above 1000 m, not so much their relative altitude (Milinković 2007, 167). In the first detailed overview, Mihailo Milinković interpreted hilltop fortifications as fortified villages also inhabited by women and children and not as military forts (Milinković 2007, 169, 174, 180). He also noted a chronological hiatus in these settlements in the second half of the 5th century. A good example of the changes in the understanding of settlement remains is Caričin grad, presumed Iustiniana Prima, which is discussed here as a newly-founded city. The early research focused on the church architecture and only revealed a small portion of the actual extent of the city, but used it as a prime example of Procopius' exaggeration with regard to size and richness! Recent investigations and the use of modern techniques (LiDAR, geophysical survey, aerial photography and others), however, have revealed a considerably larger city with a densely built-up interior (see *Chapter 2.5.2*).

In his study of fortified sites in the province Epirus Vetus, William Bowden tackled the question of how to categorise hilltop sites (Bowden 2003, 180) that he saw as cities, fortified sites or episcopal sees. He found there were no differences between cities and other kinds of hilltop forts as mentioned in Procopius or Hierocles, where the use of the term 'polis' and the description of the attributes of a city were also anachronistic. He agrees that the primary motivation for the location of these sites is the natural defensive features of the terrain or earlier fortifications, positing that some of these sites only served as refuges. In his opinion, only excavations can resolve the question of whether the sites were refuges or permanent settlements and that not enough is known on the Late Antique settlement in Epirus to draw any general conclusions (Bowden 2003, 182–184).

The Early Byzantine fortifications in Bulgaria were initially interpreted primarily as component parts of the defensive system protecting the heart of the Eastern Empire. Dimitar Ovčarov identified a defensive system with three lines of defence. He mentioned three types of fortifications: large urban centres, small and middle-sized cities, and newly-built *castella* (Ovčarov 1982). The increasingly intensive investigations in the last decades have brought a more in-depth knowledge of the Late Antique fortifications. Discussing many of these sites in Bulgaria, Ventsislav Dintchev came to conclusions similar to those indicated by the research in the eastern Alps and North Macedonia (Dintchev 1997). Presenting the Early Byzantine fortifications in the dioceses of Thrace and Dacia, he documented three basic categories of newly-founded fortified sites. The first category is fortified settlements that comprise a large part of the sites from the 5th and 6th centuries. The second category is military forts. The third category comprises refuges, forts protecting churches, fortified monasteries and

fortified villas, the last ones already abandoned in the first half of the 5th century (Dintchev 2006; id. 2007). He also mentioned the different functions of fortified sites in different periods of Late Antiquity (for example, Chertigrad was originally a refuge that transformed into a permanent settlement in the 6th century). He also noted that settlements with a militarised population predominated and proper military forts were rare.

We already mentioned the position of Florin Curta, who presumes military garrisons stationed at most fortified sites in the eastern part of the Empire (Curta 2001a; id. 2001b). He later altered this view somewhat and wondered, even in the title of a paper, whether these sites were really forts or rather refuges, concluding that the 'hill-top sites in the Balkans may not all have been military, but none of them appears to have functioned as a fortified village' (Curta 2013, 812, 837). In his following paper, he writes on a matter of current (!) debate, namely whether the sites were 'civilian (fortified villages) or military (forts inhabited by soldiery)' and concludes that the hilltop sites were mainly forts. In his opinion, 'the world of the Balkans was not one of fortified villages, but one of strongholds maintained and supported by the state' (Curta 2017, 439, 449). In some measure, this opinion may hold true for the eastern Balkans, but is certainly not valid for the western part where fortified settlements and refuges predominate, with the exception of some Byzantine forts on the islands.

Summarising the different views that researchers have on the functional diversity of fortified sites, we can observe that most distinguish between three basic categories, with the most elusive being the distinction between military forts and civilian settlements, but also the identification of hybrid sites with both military and civilian components. We can propose that investigating the poorly known refuges and the associated unfortified settlements in their vicinity appears to be among the priorities of future research.

CATEGORIES OF FORTIFIED SITES

The fortified sites of Late Antiquity (*Fig. 3.307*) display a great diversity of form and function. There are several elements that allow a distinction between different types of such sites, namely plan and size, defensive walls, towers, form and distribution of buildings in the interior, characteristic array of small finds, density of small finds in the cultural layer, location with regard to major communications, presence of foreign elements and others.

These elements define three main categories: permanently inhabited fortified settlements, forts and refuges. We should emphasise that these are not clearly separated categories and the boundary between them is often uncertain, in some cases because of indistinct features, but more frequently because of a poor state of

investigation that does not reveal the basic features. In addition, their nature may be subject to change in time; for instance, a refuge may develop into a permanent settlement, a military fort may become a civilian settlement and vice versa, and a myriad of other possibilities.

The **permanently inhabited fortified settlements** form the most numerous and most diverse category. Most lie in naturally well-protected elevated locations and are additionally fortified with different defensive elements (walls, towers, entrance reinforcement). They are predominantly self-sufficient settlements of the civilian population that have, at least in the 6th century if not earlier, one or more churches in the interior.

The **military fortifications** have (at least in their early phase) a rather regular plan with substantial fortifications, with housing concentrated along the interior of the defensive wall and sometimes also in the towers. The interior is predominantly empty, some have an Early Christian church built in the central part in the 6th century. The military presence is corroborated by the prevailing finds of military equipment, weapons, also coins. They are located in proximity to major communications or other strategically important spots.

The **refuges** have very modest habitation traces in the interior, with the merely occasional occupation confirmed by scarce small finds. Prehistoric ramparts are often reused for defensive purposes and the fortification walls are improvised.

The main characteristics and examples of each of the three categories are presented below. Also discussed are the sites that display a hybrid function that either simultaneously combine the characteristics of different categories or their function changed through time.

Permanently inhabited fortified settlements

Fortified settlements (villages) were the quintessential Late Antique fortified sites, inhabited either permanently or over prolonged periods of time. Their numerous, frequently masonry buildings in the interior make them most readily identifiable. They can in short be defined as fairly densely populated settlements on naturally well-protected spots that were often additionally fortified with man-made structures. They constitute a vast group of settlements of many forms that mainly differ from one another in the extent and distribution of buildings in the interior. One or more Early Christian churches most often dominated the settlement from the highest point, while other buildings were arranged either evenly across the interior or concentrated in certain parts. In addition to a great relative altitude, these sites are also typically located in areas of considerable absolute altitude. The structure of the small finds recovered from the interior, largely



Fig. 3.308: Ajdna above Potoki. Location of the settlement on a hard-to-reach and high rocky peak (1992).

consisting of locally made pottery and tools, suggests that a great majority of them were autarchic. The surrounding landscape with its natural characteristics may have been used for small fields and pasturing. Some sites even revealed traces of long-distance trading. As opposed to forts, the appearance and structure of the fortified settlements from the 4th to the early 7th century do not show differences.

These settlements greatly differ from one another in terms of protection features and display the complete array of the defensive elements used in Late Antiquity. Some, for example Monte San Martino – Riva del Garda and Ajdna (Fig. 3.308), were sufficiently protected by their location on a rocky crag. Most others have defensive walls ranging from thin to substantial, a limited number of differently shaped towers, ditches, ramparts, buttresses, proteichismas, reinforced entrances and specially fortified acropoleis (cf. Basler 1972, 60–61; Ciglencčki 1987a, 128–130; Mikulčić 2002, 91–104; Dintchev 2007, 483–494; Milinković 2015, 49–108).

A particularly illustrative example in the western part is Gradec near Prapretno, located in a mountainous area away from major Roman lines of communication (Ciglencčki 1981). Its 0.8 ha large interior holds more than twenty buildings of different layouts and a church in the centre. Similar settlements are those at Ajdna above Potoki, Kappele near Jadersdorf and Ulrichsberg. Buildings were mostly made of mortared stone (e.g. San Martino – Riva del Garda, Ulrichsberg, Gradec near Prapretno, Rivnik, Ajdovski gradec above Vranje, Tonovcov grad, Ajdovščina above Rodik, Gradina Bakinci), rarely of clay-bonded drystone (Invillino) or timber (Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu).

In the eastern part, the numerous permanently inhabited fortified settlements include Gradina Ras, Liška Čava, Zlatni Kamen near Novi Pazar, Samograd, Korishë, Pecës, Ai Giannis – Adriani, Palaiokastro, Kastritsa near Ioánnina, Velika and Olympia. They predominantly hold buildings of clay-bonded stone or sun-dried mudbrick (e.g. Gradina Ras, Tupi krš, Golemanovo Kale, Dichin, Qafa), while walls of mortared stone were only used for churches and other important buildings. At many sites, even the defensive walls are drystone constructions (Dintchev 2007, 483). Some of the large settlements show a division into a better protected acropolis and a lower part; such settlements have only been recorded in the eastern part, for example at Balajnac, Kale in Bregovina, Pecës, Korishë, Gradište (Sobri) near Oraše, Markovo Kale near Malčište, Gradok near Čanište and Markovi Kuli on Mount Vodno.

The fortified settlements include many where nature and duration can only be surmised from a thick cultural layer, while there are no known architectural remains in the interior due either to a lack of investigations or to a poor state of preservation and we may presume the existence of buildings of perishable materials. Examples can be found at Debelo Brdo above Sarajevo, with thick defensive walls and a rich cultural layer, Gradac on Ilinjača, which only revealed the remains of a church (Fekeža 1991), and Ukosa in Stalač that only revealed storage pits in addition to a thick Early Byzantine cultural layer (Rašković 2016).

Many fortified settlements were created within the defensive walls of Roman or Late Roman fortifications. A typical example is Mogorjelo (Fig. 3.309), which transformed in the second half of the 5th century



Fig. 3.309: Mogorjelo. In the strongly fortified Roman villa, traces of the settlement from the 5th and 6th centuries are visible (2009).



Fig. 3.310: Paleokastra near Gjirokastra. Lowland fort with traces of later church and settlement (2009).

from a heavily fortified villa into a fortified settlement (Ćurčić 2010, 139). Similar examples are the military forts of Timacum Minus and Paleokastra (Fig. 3.310), which were inhabited by a civilian population in the 5th and 6th centuries (Petković, Ilijić 2012, 168; Bowden 2003, 180–181). The fort controlling a road at Gradina in Vrsenice changed into a permanently occupied settlement; this also occurred in the fort at Odartsi that became a civilian settlement in the second half of the 5th century (Popović, Bikić 2009; Dintchev 2007, 500).

Some of the forts in Đerdap were transformed in the second half of the 6th century to settlements of a rural population protected with strong defensive installations (cf. Popović, V. 1984, 280; Špehar 2010, 146–151, 154). The opposite has been observed at Rifnik, where the fortified settlement received towers reinforcing the circuit walls and a small garrison in the Justinian period (Ciglenečki et al. 2020, 236).

Large ecclesiastical centres (at least two churches, baptistery and associated facilities) were located in some



Fig. 3.311: Hemmaberg above Globasnitz. Remains of the earliest church at the top of the settlement plateau (2014).

of the fortified settlements. Standing out among these is Hemmaberg (Figs. 3.78, 3.311) with as many as six churches which led to interpretations as a pilgrimage destination (Glaser 1997, 118–120). Similar sites in the western part are also Ajdovski gradec above Vranje (Petru, Ulbert 1975) and slightly larger Tonovcov grad near Kobarid (Ciglencečki et al. 2011). In the eastern part, the acropolis of the settlement at Gradište Stenče holds two churches with three baptisteries (Kostadinovski, Cvetanovski 2008). A specific site is the memorial ecclesiastical centre at Harilaq, which has a church flanked by a pair of symmetrically positioned chapels (Rama 2020, 117–118).

Some settlements were built on naturally less protected spots, frequently on low elevations or at river confluences, but in proximity to communications or other strategic points. They were heavily artificially fortified and presumably hosted army troops in addition to the civilian inhabitants. It is a group of settlements with features similar to those of forts, but still clearly displaying a double nature; the thick fortification walls in some cases combined with towers indicate an involvement of the army in their construction, whereas the distribution of buildings in the interior points to a civilian settlement. The recovered small finds reveal a predominantly civilian population, but they also include pieces of military equipment and weapons. A typical example of settlements with a distribution of buildings in the interior pointing to civilian use and at the same time having certain military tasks (controlling and protecting communications, signalling) is Mezdra, where a Late Antique fortified settlement grew on the spot of a Roman fort and pre-Christian sanctuary (Torbatov 2015,

157–160). It lies in the lowland, on a naturally excellently protected rocky plateau above a river, it is heavily fortified and densely inhabited. A similar combination can be observed at Đuteza near Dinoša, Kekola, Kale near Debrešte, Žegligovski kamen, Gradište near Pčinja and elsewhere.

The fortification at Golemanovo Kale is an example of a hybrid fort, built on the incentive and with the involvement of the army, but one that hosted civilians who supplied the army deployed to the limes (Werner 1992, 413). Dichin is a similar example, serving as a supply base with a garrison of *foederati* in the 5th century. Its inhabitants were presumably not only performing military tasks, but also engaged in farming the surrounding land (Poulter 2007b, 38). Both are sites in the limes hinterland, which explains their specific hybrid function.

The presence of both soldiers and civilians has also been established at Dobri Dyal, a fort from the late 4th and early 5th centuries (Poulter 2013). The site at Gradishteto near Riben was a large *foederati* settlement (Torbatov 2018).

In the western part, a pronouncedly civilian nature can be ascribed to Kastrum on Veliki Brijun, a fort and a port that served as the starting point for the shortest crossing of the Adriatic en route for Ravenna (Marušić 1975, 338). A revealing fact here is that the church was only constructed outside the fort after it was added a strong civilian use.

The problem already touched upon in the previous chapter regards the difficulties in distinguishing between presumed urban and other large settlements. There are some settlements that cannot be seen as cit-



Fig. 3.312: Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin. Fortified settlement with habitation terraces from the north (2021).

ies, but their size, distribution of buildings, extent of church buildings and other features indicate a greater significance within the multitude of smaller fortified settlements. The well-researched territory of Slovenia holds numerous hilltop fortified settlements that include some of an outstanding size. The 10 ha large settlement in Kranj has been classified as a city. Smaller settlements, which are still large compared with most others, with a densely built-up interior, are those at Sv. Pavel above Vrtovin (4 ha; Fig. 3.312; Ciglenečki 2021) and Ajdovščina above Rodik (3.8 ha; Slapšak 1997). Both hold buildings with complex layouts, Sv. Pavel also three Early Christian churches. In the heavily fortified settlement at Črnomelj (2.8 ha), the architecture in the interior is only partially known, but its location at a confluence and its thick defensive walls are similar to those in Kranj (Mason 1998).

An example of a large settlement with a central function in Croatia is at Marija Gorska near Lobar (surface of c. 2.5 ha), where investigations unearthed part of the fortification features and a church with a baptistery (Filipec 2007). The Late Antique fortified settlement at Gradina in Bakinci in Bosnia is not known in detail, but its central role can be perceived from the mighty church buildings on the nearby saddle; it has been tentatively identified as the city of Balkis, which the Avars reportedly captured on their march towards Dalmatia in 597 (Vujinović 2014, 179–182).

The site at Kale, Zlata in Serbia may be identified as a newly-founded city given its size (c. 7–10 ha), a basilica

decorated with mosaics and an impressive dam on the river, though the lack of investigations hinders a positive identification of the nature of this settlement, at a distance of only 13.5 km from Caričin grad (Milinković 2015, 236–248).

In Bulgaria, Ventzislav Dintchev used size to distinguish between several categories of sites. Settlements extending across more than a hectare were seen as quasi-urban centres (Dintchev 2007, 482). Standing out among these in size, thick fortification walls and two large churches is Carassura.

Ivan Mikulčić presumes a semi-urban status for two large fortified settlements in North Macedonia, namely Kalata near Kamenica and Čebren (Grad) near Zovik (Mikulčić 2002, 211–213, 287–288).

The settlement at Qafa has been defined as a small city in literature (Ćurčić 2010, 182–183). Bearing in mind its relatively small size (0.8 ha), fairly simple buildings and a single church, however, this definition seems questionable. It seems more reasonable to classify it as a large fortified settlement. Given its location on top of a mountain pass and its mighty walls with evenly spaced towers along the side of easier access, it could also be partly military in nature.

Fortified monasteries have only rarely been identified in the areas under discussion and were presumably not common (see Curta 2001c, 53–57; Ćurčić 2010, 142–145; Uroda 2013). An example that has been reliably identified is located on the Majsan Island (Fisković

1980), others are presumed at Orlandovtsi, Lozenets and Shkorpilovtsi (Dintchev 2007, 530–532).

Military fortifications

Ever since research began, attempts at defining military fortifications in the mass of different fortified sites have only seen limited success (cf. Basler 1972, 60–61; Ciglencečki 1987a, 111–114; Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 11–22; Mikulčić 2002, 63–68; Pärzhita, Hoxha 2003, 119–123; Dintchev 2007, 516–528; Sarantis 2013, 9–18; Brogiolo 2014, 153–154). Having said that, most researchers agree that the forts from the late 3rd and the 4th century are considerably easier to identify in comparison with those built in the second half of the 5th and the 6th century. The former only relied on natural defences in a small measure and were primarily protected with thick walls with evenly spaced towers. The layout was fairly regular as most were built on low elevations or even in the lowland, which did not require adaptations to the terrain. Most were also located in immediate proximity to main communications, crossroads, the limes, and many are mentioned in ancient texts.

The group of forts from the early period of Late Antiquity certainly includes those of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* system, particularly *Ad Pirum* – Hrušica and *Ad Frigidus* – *Castra*, but also many located along the limes and at strategic points in the interior (e.g. Doberdo, Tokod, Velike Malence, Pasjak, Iatrus, Harmana, Gegje, Bushati, Palaiokastro, Bargala). They existed alongside smaller forts, primarily *burgi*, such as Castelraimondo, Gradishteto near Riben and Gradište near Pakošev.

Contemporaneously, there were other fortifications, located at naturally better protected and higher sites. Most had thinner walls and less towers. The range of small finds is similar to that from the reliably identified military sites, but combined with traces of civilian presence. Examples of such forts are Georgenberg near Kuchl from the second half of the 4th and the early 5th century, Ančnikovo gradišče from the second half of the 4th and initial decades of the 5th century, Tonovcov grad from the second half of the 4th and initial decades of the 5th, Kuzelin from the late 4th and early 5th centuries, Crkvišće Bukovlje from the second half of the 4th century, Gradina in Vrsenice from the last third of the 4th, Gradina Ras from the 4th, Borovets near Pravets from the third quarter of the 3rd and Odartsi from the second quarter of the 4th to the first half of the 5th century. Such hybrid forts with a combination of soldiers and civilians were primarily tasked with controlling and protecting the communications, but also provided shelter for refugees.

The forts in naturally protected locations without artificial defences were also occasionally used for military purposes (watch posts, signalling posts, communi-



Fig. 3.313: Predjama. A small military crew was occasionally stationed in the cave in the middle of the rock wall (1992).

cations protection?). Such an example from Slovenia is at Mali Njivč, which characteristic military equipment and weapons date to the last third of the 4th century (Istenič 2015, 373). Another one is Jama below Predjama Castle (Fig. 3.313), where a cave passage in the middle of a rocky face revealed habitation traces from the Late Roman period that included military equipment (Korošec 1983). An example of an excellently protected site is the large fort on the Sirmione Peninsula at Lake Garda from the second half of the 4th and first half of the 5th century, which was enclosed with a thick defensive wall and could welcome large numbers of refugees.

Common to all these forts dating from the last third of the 3rd to the initial decades of the 5th century is the absence of Early Christian churches.

It is much more challenging to define the forts of the later group, from the second half of the 5th and the 6th century, as these in a large measure completely lack the features defining the earlier military fortifications. Similarly as for the group of hybrid forts from the late 3rd to the first half of the 5th century, it is often very difficult to define their basic function and distinguish them from civilian settlements, because they frequently



Fig. 3.314: Markova Mehana. Strong fort of a regular military unit guarded the important Succi Pass (2012).

combine the features of both. They are mostly located on higher and naturally much better protected spots, were entirely adapted to the configuration of the terrain and consequently had thinner defensive walls. They were predominantly somewhat removed from the communications they controlled. Living quarters were arranged in the towers or in the buildings abutting the defensive walls. Many had an Early Christian church in the interior and only rarely another large masonry building.

Ancient texts adequately explain the reasons behind the proliferation of hilltop forts under Justinian, when numerous already existing and many newly-built forts were used to station troops (overview in Sarantis 2016, 188–198). However, the texts do not (or not clearly) distinguish between the newly-built forts and the earlier ones that were either modified or reused without modifications. All this results in confusion and hinders the identification of military posts.

Many authors believed that it was not possible to identify the forts of the regular army in the last period of Antiquity, though the archaeologically better researched sites have provided indications to this very effect. Standing out in the multitude of forts are some that reveal an entirely state-based incentive and construction, as well as an entirely military character. They were built for imperial purposes in neuralgic locations, primarily along the limes and major lines of communication. Most were established on low elevations, with fairly rectilinear walls and are thus partly similar to the ‘classic’ Roman camps. The undoubtedly most illustrative example is the fort at Markova Mehana (Fig. 3.314) from the early 6th century, set on a strategically vital location on the pass of

the most important route connecting East and West, and also on the border between the prefectures of Illyricum and Oriens (Mitova Džonova 1998). With its location on a low hill, it boasts lofty defensive walls enclosing the interior that only holds army barracks arranged along the walls and, very significantly, no church.

Of a similar nature is the fort on the small island of Veliki Sikavac (Gluščević, Grosman 2015) that controlled the access of the navigable route to the coastal belt. It has thick walls with evenly distributed towers and its interior holds accommodations for a fairly large garrison that depended entirely on provisions from the outside.

Another characteristic example of a strictly military fort is Gradina on the island of Žirje, located on the navigable route along the outer side of the Adriatic islands (Pedišić 2001). It is protected with walls, strong towers and a *proteichisma*, and has a large well-constructed building abutting the walls from the interior, presumably the accommodation of a commander or the headquarters.

This group also comprises fortifications along the limes, in the Đerdap Gorge for example Veliki Gradac near Donji Milanovac (Popović, V. 1984), Saldum (Petrović 1984, 129–134), Bosman (Kondić 1984, 137–145) and Ravna (Kondić 1984, 233–251). These are Late Roman forts renovated in the 6th century according to the same principles and with the emphasis on repairing or raising the defensive walls, as well as modifying or even constructing new towers that were larger than the previous ones. Simple churches with a baptistery were constructed in the interior of large forts such as Čezava, Boljetin and Veliki Gradac, which were otherwise largely occupied by poorly-built dwellings (Vasić 1984; Zotović



Fig. 3.315: Selected Early Byzantine forts in the eastern Adriatic coastal area.

1984; Popović, V., 1984.). In the time of Justinianic renovations, these forts may have hosted regular army units, while the interiors became ruralised in the second half of the 6th century, which indicates an influx of the local population (Špehar 2010, 146–151, 154).

In addition to these and the already mentioned fort at Markova Mehana, the Balkan interior holds other forts at strategic locations, for instance at Koštur near Dabrica from the 6th century (Basler 1972, 50–51), Madara (Fig. 3.316) from the late 5th and the 6th century (Dintchev 2007, 522), Castra Rubra and Dyadovo from the first half of the 6th (Borisov 2010a; id. 2010b) and the fortress at Isthmia from the mid-6th century (Gregory 1993). They have thick defensive walls with towers and

often proteichismas, as well as housing arranged along the walls. They have no churches in the interior, which are otherwise present in most contemporary forts. This may only be the consequence of a lack of space in smaller forts, but can it also be a sign that these were newly-built forts of the regular army? Finally, this group also includes substantial independent towers such as those at Toreta, Svetac and Ošlje – Gradac (Baraka Perica, Grbić 2019). Evidence suggests that all these were constructed according to a pre-conceived plan and by the army and that they hosted units of the regular army.

Much more numerous is the group of fortified sites from the second half of the 5th and the 6th century with less pronounced military features. Defences in



Fig. 3.316: Madara. Early Byzantine fort dominated the plain (2012).

particular are less substantial for some fortifications, with thinner walls and less densely spaced towers. The modest housing is mainly arranged along the walls and the interiors frequently hold a church. Small finds show both a military and civilian character and some sites revealed inhumation burials of women and children. The interpretation of these fortifications is not unambiguous; we may presume at least partial presence of army troops stationed here together with their families, though they may also have functioned as supply centres. They can be defined – similarly as the less characteristic forts from the last third of the 3rd and the 4th century – as hybrid fortifications for which the ratio between military and civilian inhabitants cannot be reliably assessed.

These forts include Duel, which had a military character combined with a civilian presence. Accommodations were densely spaced along the walls, while the interior was empty with the exception of sacral buildings. This led to assumptions on the interior hosting shelters for the people from nearby unfortified settlements (Egger 1929, 204–210; Petrikovits 1985). The fort at Hoischhügel had a similar role (Glaser 1996, 69–72).

In Italy, characteristic examples are Monte San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso and Sant'Andrea di Loppio. The former was presumably a strategic fort from the second half of the 5th and the 6th century tasked with providing supplies and controlling communications (Zagermann, Cavada 2014). The latter is a fortification from the late 5th and the 6th century on a naturally excellently protected insular site with less pronounced man-made defences, while the small finds show a military nature with a civilian presence, but also reflect several changes of government (Maurina 2016, 751).

Grad near Gornji Vrbljani is an example of a hybrid fort constructed at a slight distance from the major communications. The large building on the most exposed spot of the defensive walls, identified as the accommodations of a permanent garrison, marks this construction as a military fort (Bojanovski 1980). The walls are thinner and presumably include a single tower. The interior is large enough for hosting both refugees and livestock.

Less readily identifiable are the remains at Balajnac, where the thick walls with densely spaced towers on the acropolis only protect a large church and a very well-constructed cistern (Jeremić, G. 1995). It is strategically located on a major road, while the acropolis indicates a prestigious character of the fort with the lower part that could host additional troops and a civilian settlement.

The fortification at Čuker near Mokro polje (Fig. 3.317) shows an unusual layout (DeLonga 1984, 277). Its location in the lowland, on a river terrace, and the evenly distributed rooms built into the prehistoric rampart reveal a fort that protected a line of communication and a river crossing. There are several similar examples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example Gradina above Kovači and Gradac above Potočani, but they are only known from surface surveys (Benac 1985, 39–41, 104–106).

The group of hybrid fortifications may further include Krassen Kale (late 5th and the 6th century), Gradina Zecovi near Čarakovo, Gaj in Babrež, Kula in Kaludra, Sadosko Kale, Gradishta of Bardhoc, Kula near Čelopek, Venec near Miokazi and Kale near Gorno Svilare (all 6th century). Belgrad near Dvorište holds an unusual fortress from the 6th century that protected a large cistern abutting the defensive walls from the exterior. A well-investigated example of a hybrid fortification is that at Gradina in Bi-



Fig. 3.317: Čuker near Mokro polje. Fort on the edge of the river terrace (2013).

ograci, which is believed to have accommodated soldiers with their families (Čremošnik 1989).

Some military fortifications, such as Duel, Zecovi near Čarakovo and Dyadovo, were designed to have a large empty space in the interior to welcome people fleeing the nearby unfortified settlements.

Finally, there is a number of sites where the current state of research does not allow a reliable distinction between military posts, permanent civilian settlements and – the most likely option – a combination of the two (e.g. Zidani gaber, Gradina in Radalica, Tupi krš, Đurđevica in Đerekare). They do, however, aptly illustrate the broad range of the different forms of military and even more of the hybrid fortifications in the last period of Antiquity.

Refuges

This is a group that joins the fortified sites with lesser defensive features, where the walls were most frequently improvised or the earlier prehistoric ramparts and natural steep slopes reused for protection. The interior only very rarely revealed evidence of permanent housing and small finds are few in number. They show differing degrees of occupation or habitation, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from the briefly inhabited settlements. With regard to small finds, the sites identified as refuges in this book yielded only roughly 10% of the small finds recovered at permanently inhabited settlements. The scarce (mainly metal) finds unearthed at the early refuges from the last third of the 3rd century frequently cause dif-

ficulties in determining whether a site is merely a refuge of civilian population or one that was at least in part used for military purposes (watch post, signalling post).

Refuges were occupied in times of danger and were not conceived for permanent habitation. Their naturally protected location, however, caused many of them to become inhabited later, which covered the traces of the original occupation. At several sites, the initial refugial nature can only be inferred from the well-preserved finds lost here in the first phase of occupation. The fortified settlement at Kirchbichl in Lavant is an example where this first phase can be clearly identified as a refuge or the beginning of a permanent settlement. The diagnostic finds date as early as the second half of the 3rd century, whereas the buildings indicate a later time (Grabherr, Kainrath 2011, 188–191).

The sites not occupied later (Veliki vrh near Osredek pri Podsredi), those where later occupation was modest (Trojan) and the sites where investigations were able to reliably date the early phase and establish its elements (Kartal kale near Ruyno) are therefore all the more valuable. The last site also confirms that only systematic excavations will enable a more substantial number of refuges to be identified. The initial investigations frequently did not pay enough attention to the modest early features, which are not adequately described and interpreted in the publications, while the artefacts from the Early Roman period were – regardless of the state of preservation – only identified as residual finds.

We already mentioned above that refuges were often set up within prehistoric hillforts, of which the ramparts and remote location provided sufficient protection. An example is Veliki vrh above Osredek pri Podsredi, where

traces of makeshift dwellings and rare artefacts came to light on the small terraces of the site. Coins and diagnostic metal finds set the brief occupation to the second half of the 260s or the early 270s (Ciglenečki 1990a, 147–154). A similar dating can be proposed for the first use of Mali Njivč above Novaki, a rocky crag with only natural defences (Istenič 2015, 373). The systematic investigations at Tonovcov grad near Kobarid and Korinjski hrib above Veliki Korinj also revealed the first peak in monetary circulation in the last third of the 3rd century, which is the time frame for several well-preserved metal finds as well. Neither of the sites yielded remains of contemporary buildings, while the prehistoric rampart sufficed as defence (Ciglenečki et al. 2011, 292; Modrijan, Milavec 2011; Ciglenečki et al. 2020, 342).

An increase in small finds at Marija Gorska above Lobar has been detected in the 3rd century, while defensive walls were presumably built on top of the prehistoric rampart in the 3rd–4th century (Filipec 2007, 415–416). Occupation traces from the last third of the 3rd century were reliably established at Kuzelin, when the summit was presumably only enclosed with a palisade and the site served as a refuge (Sokol 1994, 201–202).

The refuge at Gradina Ras in Serbia was sited on a naturally protected rocky peak. It is coin-dated to the middle and second half of the 3rd century (Popović, M. 1999, 70–71). At Trojan, a palisade is believed to have been erected on top of the prehistoric rampart in the 3rd century. Investigations revealed no buildings. The site may also have been occasionally inhabited in the 4th century. It presumably controlled the nearby lines of communication, but was also used as a refuge (Ivanišević 1989).

Monetary circulation shows that the refuge at Dobri Dyal in Bulgaria dates to the last third of the 3rd century, when a Bronze Age rampart was reused for defence (Poulter 2013, 369).

Ivan Mikulčić identified a number of refuges in North Macedonia (Mikulčić 2002, 61–63). It is often difficult, however, to discern his division line between the fortified sites with a thick cultural layer and those with only sporadic small finds. For the large fortified settlement at Kalata near Kamenica, for example, he mentions artefacts from the 3rd–6th century, while the survey results are unclear as to whether the site was a refuge from the 3rd century on the acropolis enclosed with a drystone wall, or the whole site has been permanently inhabited from the beginning (Mikulčić 2002, 211).

Simultaneously with refuges, many earlier unfortified settlements in the lowland were still inhabited, which suggests that most refuges may be expected in the last third of the 3rd and the 4th century and less later.

Of the refuges from the second half of the 4th century in Serbia, we should mention the presumed first phase of the fort at Južac near Sopoćani, which

only became more intensely occupied in the 6th century (Popović M. 1987).

A good example in Bulgaria is Chertigrad, where a refuge was established in the 4th/5th century at an altitude of 1284 m asl, within a well-protected prehistoric hillfort, which only became a permanent settlement in the 6th century when housing was constructed (Dintchev 2007, 529). A different example is Gradishteto near Debrene, in the lowland, which was strengthened with a wall and a ditch in the second half of the 4th century. In this phase, but also later, in the 6th century when the wall was reinforced and a church built in the interior, it served as a refuge (Dintchev 2007, 530). The naturally protected location was used at Kartal kale near Ruyno, which was reinforced with defensive walls and a fortified entrance. This site was briefly used as a refuge between the late 4th and the middle of the 5th century, when it was abandoned in the face of the invading Huns (Atanasov 2015).

At Gradište near Delisinci in North Macedonia, Late Roman pottery came to light inside the Hellenistic defensive walls that speaks of an occasional refugial use of the site (Mikulčić 2002, 416). The whole island of Golem Grad, Konjsko in Lake Prespa has been positively identified as a refuge in the 4th–6th century (Mikulčić 2002, 379–381; Bitrakova Grozdanova 2011). It revealed individual buildings inhabited over a long time, while the access to the vast rocky plateau above the lake was additionally protected with a wall and thus provided shelter for many people from the surrounding area.

Not much is known on the refuges from the second half of the 5th and the 6th century, when other forms of fortified sites predominated. In Italy, the fort at Castelraimondo is believed to have been abandoned as a military construction around 430, while a refuge was established in the ruins of earlier buildings in the second half of the 5th century and remained in use throughout the 6th and part of the 7th century (Santoro Bianchi 1992, 195–204).

In the vicinity of Tonovcov grad, a c. 120 × 20 m large post was found at Gradec near Logje that was only protected with very steep slopes. The find of an equal-arm brooch dates it to the last phase of Antique occupation, while the modest cultural layer defines it as a refuge (Osmuk 1985; ead. 2001).

The group of late refuges may also include Kučar, where the defensive wall encircled an ecclesiastical centre and a vast empty space. In times of danger, only a great number of refugees could mount a sufficient defence of the site (Dular et al. 1995).

The numerous fortified sites along the edges of the karst poljes in Bosnia and Herzegovina only saw limited investigations, which makes it difficult to distinguish refuges from settlements. The site at Biograci, for example, was seen as a refuge in 1972 (Basler 1972, 59–60), whereas later excavations unearthed a permanently inhabited fort (Čremošnik 1989). A refuge can

reliably be identified at Gradina in Vidoši, where a mortared defensive wall was constructed on top of prehistoric ramparts (Basler 1972, 60; Benac 1985, 97–99). The scarce finds from the 3rd and 4th centuries found at Gradac on Ilinjača indicate the possibility that the prehistoric hillfort was reused as an occasional refuge in that period (Fekeža 1991, 189).

A thin cultural layer from the 6th century came to light in the interior of the prehistoric hillfort at Hum near Tutin, at 1502 m asl, which was reinforced with a thin wall (Ivanišević 1988). A similar refugial nature can be observed at Gradina Ramoševo near Tutin, a slightly better fortified site with no traces of permanent habitation in the interior (Ivanišević 1987).

The site at Elenska Basilica near Pirdop, protected with walls and towers, served in the 6th century as a refuge for the inhabitants of a nearby unfortified settlement (Dintchev 2007, 532–533). The earlier refuge at Gradishteto near Debrene was refortified in the 6th century, and also added a church.

An interesting complex in North Macedonia is Kula near Kalauzlija, which holds a fort and a less fortified refuge with a church. The interior of the last revealed no other buildings, only sporadic pottery sherds (Mikulčić 2002, 391).

In Greece, the Late Antique activities at Kastro Rizovouni only involved the renovation of a part of the earlier, Hellenistic walls and the construction of an Early Christian church in the interior. The absence of other buildings and only rare fragments of Late Antique pottery indicate a refuge that provided shelter to the inhabitants of an unfortified settlement in the vicinity (Bowden 2000, 107–108).

Across the area under discussion, there was also a number of caves and rock shelters inhabited or occasionally occupied in Late Antiquity, though not much is known of these sites (cf. Ciglencečki 1999, 294). A more detailed analysis and identification of functions in the different phases of Late Antiquity will only be possible after cataloguing and systematically investigating such sites. As an example, we should mention Pečina Laganiši in Istria, which revealed prehistoric and Late Antique artefacts, stone structures and hearths, presumably left behind by a Romanised population (Komšo 2008).

All three categories of sites include examples where traces of contemporary unfortified settlements were found in proximity to fortified sites. Such sites not explored in detail have been mentioned at Sirmione and Garda in Italy (Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 171) and at Podgradina Kamenska in Bosnia (Basler 1972, 56). Many examples also came to light during the field surveying in the eastern part of the area under discussion. In Bulgaria, there are examples near the forts at Dyadovo (Borisov 2010b), Madara (Dintchev 2007, 522) and Krasen Kale

(Grigorov 2011a), in North Macedonia near Gradište near Pčinja, Markovo Kale near Malčište, Gradište near Pakoševo, Kale near Debrešte and Gradište (Sobri) near Oraše (Mikulčić 2002, 142, 174, 180, 350, 466), but also a settlement with an ecclesiastical centre at Stenče (Kostadinovski, Cvetanovski 2008). In times of danger, the inhabitants of these settlements sought refuge in nearby fortifications.

On whose initiative were fortifications constructed?

There are different opinions in literature as to who initiated the construction of fortifications. In this book, the subject is indirectly tackled in the discussion of all three categories of fortified sites.

There is extremely little evidence on private initiative. For the eastern part, evidence might be seen in the inscription from Izbičanj (see *Chapter 2.5.2*), dating to the mid-6th century, which probably indicates just such private initiative if further research confirms a fortified settlement mentioned in the inscription at the nearby site of Kovingrad.

Several such examples are known outside the area under discussion. One is the fort at Lake Como that is believed to have been constructed on the incentive of Marcelliano, Subdeacon of Milano (Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 20; Marano 2016, 749). There is also an inscription found in the French Alps that relates a private individual by the name of Cl. Postumus Dardanus who set up a refuge named Theopolis in a high mountain valley (Johnson 1983, 242). This inscription, carved into a rock at the entrance into the valley, is not supported by archaeological evidence of a settlement here and it would seem that the location in a high-altitude and remote valley sufficed for a refuge. At the eastern border of the Empire, in Syria, a private fort was built in the mid-6th century in the centre of the large settlement of El Andarin, at the edge of a desert, which is clearly recorded in an inscription above the entrance (Strube 2011, 216–219).

Leaving aside the private initiative, which sources reveal to have played a minor role, discussion mainly focuses on the relationship between local and state initiative. Most authors see state initiative primarily in connection with military forts and rarely with fortified settlements.

In the time between the last third of the 3rd and the middle of the 5th century, there is evidence of both state (characteristic military forts, some even mentioned in ancient texts) and local initiative (refuges and in a small measure also fortified settlements). This is also the time when several hybrid fortifications were constructed, with impressive defensive elements that point to the initiative and construction by the army and with inhabitants composed of soldiery and civilians (e.g. Ančnikovo gradišče).

It is more difficult to differentiate between state and local initiative for the second half of the 5th and the 6th century, though distinctions between the eastern and western parts come into sharper focus. In the western part, a single source refers to state initiative, namely Cassiodorus' report of the edict of Theoderic that urges the inhabitants of Tridentum to move to the naturally-protected hill of Verucca (Doss Trento) (Bierbrauer 1985, 497–498; Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 18). In the eastern part, Procopius mentions the construction of numerous military posts in the time of Justinian, though they can only rarely be reliably identified in the archaeological remains (cf. Sarantis 2016, 161–198).

A large part of the fortified sites in the west was created on local initiative. This can primarily be inferred from the choice of location at remote, high and naturally protected sites. The defensive elements are modest and poorly built, the buildings in the interior show a haphazard distribution. The small finds in them reveal a predominantly self-sufficient economy. The fortified settlement on Ulrichsberg was presumably built by farmers (Egger 1942, 266). All the *castra* in South Tyrol and Friuli are believed to have been constructed on local incentive (Bierbrauer 1985, 511, similarly in Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, 35–36). Gradec near Prapretno presumably hosted a local refugee community (Ciglenečki 1981, 430). In the eastern part as well, many fortified hilltop sites in Serbia are believed to have been villages (Milinković 2007, 172–176). Most fortified settlements of the 5th and 6th centuries in Bulgaria were presumably built to host a local population (Dintchev 2007, 482–483); this local incentive has been particularly emphasised for the refuge at Kartal kale (Atanasov 2015, 225).

Alongside the great local initiative, however, there is a series of forts where we may suppose state intervention in a variety of forms, ranging from reliably identifiable military forts to settlements constructed with the help of the state, but also vice versa, local initiatives subsequently transformed to serve the needs of the state. These are marked by a location in the vicinity of major routes or other strategic points, thick defensive walls with evenly spaced towers and a great amount of military finds. The opinion most frequently voiced in literature is that the local population constructed some fortified hilltop settlements, while those on strategic

locations were constructed on the initiative of the Emperor (e.g. in Liebeschuetz 2007, 107). Other authors presume that the forts constructed after the 4th century were part of centrally-implemented measures, but their form and construction depended on local organisation (cf. Wilkes 2003, 754; Brogiolo 2014, 153). An example of this is Sant'Andrea di Loppio, a fort constructed on state intervention using military engineers with a participation of the local population (Maurina 2016, 751). It is also posited that local authorities initially instigated the construction of fortifications, while the army governed them in the Gothic and Langobard eras (Brogiolo 2014, 153). The question raised in connection with the sites in Bulgaria is whether they represent new Gothic settlements or merely refuges of the local population (Poulter 2007b, 15). Many believe that the construction of fortified settlements merely formed part of Justinian's military strategy (cf. Curta 2013, 837–839).

We may presume that most fortified settlements and refuges were initiated and also constructed by the local communities, whereas the category of military forts reveals an imperial interest and therefore also incentive. There are several hybrid options, where the defensive walls were presumably built with imperial help, whereas the buildings in the interior were the responsibility of the local population (Golemanovo Kale, Dichin). We should also mention the possibility of the same sites being subject to different incentives in different periods. There is ample archaeological evidence of settlements fortified on local initiative, but additionally fortified by a minimal participation of the state that used the sites to control lines of communication or even accommodate small army units. An example is the settlement on Rifnik, built at least in the late 5th century on local incentive and receiving a new defensive wall with towers under Justinian, which together with a varied array of military equipment indicates a state-prompted fortification. It would appear that numerous fortified settlements in the eastern part were transformed according to this model in the 6th century, but also some along the major roads in the western part. Fortified settlements, constructed on local initiative, predominated in remote and high-altitude areas, which the authorities merely controlled, but not helped with state interventions.

4. DIACHRONIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SETTLEMENT CHANGES AND OF THE CITY–COUNTRYSIDE DYNAMICS. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE SETTLEMENT CHANGES

In order to better comprehend the changes in the settlement patterns, we should begin with a diachronic examination of the basic transformations that settlement witnessed from the last third of the 3rd century, when the first major changes can be observed, to the first third of the 7th century, when Antiquity came to an end across a large part of the area between Constantinople and Ravenna, and left behind an utterly different settlement picture.

The process of abandoning unfortified lowland habitations (primarily villas) most likely already began in the second half of the 3rd century. Settlements were then numerous deserted in the second half of the 4th century and only rare ones persisted beyond this date. For most of the 5th and the 6th century scant evidence of their existence mainly comes from field surveys or indirectly from contemporary buildings (mainly churches) in their proximity.

Concurrently with the decline of cities and the abandonment of unfortified lowland settlements, we see the appearance of fortified forms of settlement. In the western part, they have often been dated between the 4th and the 6th century, and seen as simply replacing the earlier, unfortified settlements, while in the eastern part they were predominantly attributed to the time of the Emperor Justinian. A more detailed examination of all the settlement forms reveals, however, that such generalised conclusions oversimplify a very complex process, which involves migrations from cities to the countryside and vice versa, but also from unfortified to fortified settlements. Studying this topic has to contend with a poor knowledge of the final phases of cities and an unreliable dating of the different phases of repeated settlement in unfortified and fortified sites. The number of well-researched sites has been growing in recent times, but we still know very little (or cannot identify) settlement remains in the periods when the unfortified sites were already largely abandoned and the fortified posts only served as refuges. This hiatus is particularly glaring in the middle third of the 5th century in the western part, and throughout the second half of the 5th and partly in the first third of the 6th century in the eastern part.

There is a large number of sites that have only been broadly dated, either to the Late Roman, Late Antique, Early Byzantine periods or to one or more centuries. These sites are usually only known from surface surveys or small-scale trial trenching and do not provide more precise dating of the settlement shifts. Dating the duration of settlements with coins alone is also not sufficiently reliable, as it has long been established that earlier, particularly Late Roman coins remained in circulation for extended periods of time and even came to light at sites from the 5th and 6th centuries (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001, 43–46; Guest 2007, 298–299; Kos 2011, 229–237). For a precise dating, we primarily used the sites where investigations yielded reliable stratigraphic and chronological data.

Systematic investigations at many sites broadly dated to the 4th–6th or even 3rd–6th centuries revealed several waves of settlement separated by gaps of differing durations. The fortified hilltop settlement at Tonovcov grad, for example, shows a brief occupation of the hill in the 270s, followed by a long hiatus, a lengthy period of habitation from the last third of the 4th century to the 430s, again a hiatus, of half a century, and finally a permanent settlement from the late 5th to the opening decades of the 7th century. Similar observations have been made for other sites, for instance the forts in the Đerdap Gorge (Vasić, Kondić 1986, 549–558), at Iatrus-Krivina and Mezdra.

The settlement changes are not uniform across the vast and geographically heterogeneous area under discussion, visible in the urban fabric and the changed appearance of the countryside. Their administrative, religious, economic and primarily military-political underpinnings may be well-known, but only archaeological research can reveal the major changes at a particular site. Here, we can observe the changes by tracing several key elements that include the destruction or abandonment of a city or countryside settlement, shift of habitation location, construction or renovation of defensive installations, major changes in the housing and the construction or abandonment of Early Christian architecture. In the countryside, the main indication is the construction of new military fortifications and a mass use of fortified settlements and refuges.



Fig. 4.1: Rome. Aurelian Wall, the most important and symptomatic example of the fortification of cities in the empire in the last third of the 3rd century (2007).

4.1 FIRST CHANGES OF THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 3RD AND FIRST HALF OF THE 4TH CENTURY

A sharp break in settlement, both in the cities and in the countryside, is archaeologically detectable in the second half of the 3rd century, particularly in its last third (cf. Sodini 1984, 393–396; Ciglenečki 1990a, 154–156).

In cities, this break is primarily visible in the fortifications and in some cases also in the reduction of urban areas. Many Roman cities in northern Italy become enclosed with city walls at this time (Johnson 1983, 117–121; Christie 2007, 563–565). In Verona, an inscription dates their construction to 265. Very revealing is the construction of the Aurelian Wall in Rome (Fig. 4.1), the heart of the Empire, which indirectly tells of the great endangerment of urban and non-urban settlements in the provinces closer to the limes. Under Aurelian, fortification of cities and the countryside also begins in Pannonia (Thomas 1964, 389–390). Histria, located in the north-eastern part of the limes, was fortified with a wall in the late 3rd or early 4th century that only encircled the naturally best protected acropolis. In North Macedonia, city walls began to be constructed after the third quarter of the 3rd century, while cities not thus protected ceased to be inhabited (Mikulčić 2002, 78–79; Snively 2009, 39). The major defensive wall renovation in Philippi has been dated to the late 3rd century and the heavily reduced post-Herulian wall in Athens to a time soon after 267.

Some cities show destruction and abandonment that were soon followed by renovation, as well as the spread and creation of new fortified urban areas. In Teurnia, habitation terraces were abandoned in the second half of the 3rd century. A large fort was constructed at Favianis in the last third of the 3rd century that subsequently developed into an urban settlement. The city of Gorsium (Fig. 4.2) was deserted in the 260s and only rebuilt in the first third of the 4th century. The first Late Antique renovation of Ulpiana dates to the late 3rd or early 4th century. Serdica was greatly enlarged under the Tetrarchs or Constantine. The *vicus* in the city of Novae was destroyed in the Gothic raid in the second half of the 3rd century, which led to an extension of the adjacent legionary fortress that accepted the refugees. An illustrative example is the destruction and abandonment of the city of Styberra, where the last sealed contexts are dated with the coins of Gallienus (Mikulčić 1999, 58–59). Thick layers of burnt debris reveal that Heraclea Lyncestis and Stobi were destroyed at the same time.

Settlements in the countryside also show ample signs of destruction and abandonment of some settlements in the second half of the 3rd century. Both villas on the Sirmione Peninsula were devastated in the mid-3rd century, the villa at Ponte Lambro was deserted. At Castelraimondo, a break in habitation was noted around 275, when several buildings were damaged. There are also observable traces of renovations of old and construction of new settlements. At Invillino, the construction of both building complexes on Colle Santino has been dated to the late 3rd century (Martin



Fig. 4.2: Gorsium. Roman city from the south-east (2011).

1992, 261). Reliable traces of Late Antique habitation at Lavant belong to the second half of the 3rd century. In the villa at Tatárszálláson, the destruction of a timber building in a fire has been dated to 260/270. The fort at Környe was built on a levelled layer of the previous settlement destroyed under Gallienus. In Gamzigrad, the earthquake and destruction of the early villa dates just before the construction of the Palace of Galerius next to it. In Bulgaria, many villas were deserted in the mid-3rd century (Dintchev 1997, 121–123).

In addition to abandonment, the second half of the 3rd century also witnessed the creation of several new villas and other forms of settlement, for instance at Radvanje, Mali Mošunj, Lisičići, Obelija and Pešterica. It is not always possible to precisely date their beginning, though we may surmise they were predominantly built after the hiatus in the 260s and 270s. They are joined by numerous others in the course of the first half of the 4th century, for example the villas at Löffelbach, Skelani, Mediana, Kostinbrod and the masonry building of the roadside station at Tatárszálláson.

A contemporaneous occurrence is the creation of new, already slightly differently sited and shaped military fortifications. A characteristic example is the fort at Pasjak, which was erected in the early 270s on the major Roman road from Aquileia to Salona. The first concentration of coin finds at Hrušica, an important military post, also falls in the 270s and points to the first significant presence of the army at the site, while the construction of the fortress has been attributed to the Constantinian period (Kos 1986, 199–200). The

headquarters at Ajdovščina (Castra) were constructed soon after 260. The fort at Kuzelin was used in the last third of the 3rd century, when the modest housing in the interior was only protected with a palisade.

The refortification phase of the forts along the limes in the Đerdap Gorge (e.g. Veliki Gradac and Boljetin) has been well-researched and dated to the second half of the 3rd century. In North Macedonia, nine military forts are believed to have been built in the late 3rd century or during the battles between Constantine and Licinius (Mikulčić 2002, 65). The forts at Čučer and Gegje belong to the second half of the 3rd century.

Prehistoric hillforts in the vicinity of the new low-land settlements begin to be inhabited in the last third of the 3rd century (most often refuges), some were also additionally fortified (Ciglencečki 1987a, 123–124; Milinković 2008, 538–544; Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014).

In Slovenia, short-lived habitation from the second half of the 3rd century is most clearly visible at Veliki vrh near Osredek pri Podsredi, which was not used after this time and thus represents a time capsule from the 270s. Such habitation remains are much less readily discernible at multi-layer settlements such as Rifnik and Tonovcov grad, where few coins and well-preserved artefacts indicate a brief human presence in the last third of the 3rd century.

The appearance of fortified hilltop sites in Serbia has been dated to around the middle of the 3rd century (Milinković 2008, 538–544). Standing out among these is Trojan, which was presumably inhabited to the third quarter of the 4th century. The forts at Ras and Kraku



Fig. 4.3: Hissar. Formation of the mighty city walls with towers is dated to the beginning of the 4th century (2012).

Lu Jordan were created in the second half of the 3rd century. No major destruction has been documented in the forts on the limes in the Đerdap, though we do see additional reinforcement of the defensive elements (Vasić, Kondić 1986, 549–550). In Bulgaria, the fort at Dobri Dyal briefly served as a refuge in the last third of the 3rd century and Borovets near Pravets revealed reliable traces of habitation primarily in the 260s and 270s.

Most cities in the area under discussion show the last peak of prosperity after the reforms of the Emperors Diocletian and Constantine. This is perceptible in the construction of city walls, for instance in Aquileia and Celeia, but even more so in the construction of private *domus*. The last peak is clearly visible in Aquileia, Flavia Solva, Sirmium, Athens, Corinth, Gortyn and elsewhere. These cities now host the first large Early Christian buildings such as the basilica in Aquileia, dated to the 310s, and Basilica D or Octagon in Philippi, dated to around 340 (Jäggi 1990, 173; Saradi 2006, 403). Diocletianopolis (Hissar; Fig. 4.3), a city protected with a lofty wall, was constructed in the early 4th century. The inscription from 315/317 reliably dates the construction of the city Tropaeum Traiani. Dinogetia is created in roughly the same period.

The safe conditions of this period enabled life to intensify in the lowland, where numerous renovations and new constructions were observed within the already existing settlements, while lavish villas also became common. The great majority of the refuges set up in fortified sites in the late 3rd century was abandoned, only some showed modest habitation traces. Three large imperial countryside palaces were built in the early 4th century,

of which those of Diocletian and Galerius were later inhabited by civilian populations, while not much is known on the palace at Šarkamen.

Several military fortifications can also be dated to the opening decades of the 4th century, in addition to the already-mentioned Hrušica also Abritus, Iatrus, Paleokastra, Scampis, Bargala and the forts in the Đerdap Gorge. In Hungary, ‘inner fortifications’ were erected in the middle third of the 4th century. In the second quarter of the 4th century, the fortified settlements at Mezdra and Pecės were renovated and the fort at Odartsi constructed.

4.2 MARKED CHANGES IN CITIES, GRADUAL ABANDONMENT OF LOWLAND SETTLEMENTS AND THE APPEARANCE OF NUMEROUS HILLTOP SITES (LAST THIRD OF THE 4TH AND FIRST HALF OF THE 5TH CENTURY)

Major and long-term changes in the settlement patterns occur in the second half of the 4th century, mostly towards its end. Ancient texts from this period tell of numerous incursions and invasions, which coincide with profound political and socio-economic changes perceptible across a large part of the Empire (overview in Wickham 2005; Poulter (ed.) 2007a; Cameron 2012). The unsafe conditions are clearly reflected in the transfer of the western capital from Milano to the naturally better protected Ravenna, also accessible from the sea, in 402. A more detailed chronology of the changes depends on the geographic location in this vast and diverse area;



Fig. 4.4: Stobi, Domus Fullonica. Building shows significant changes at the end of the 4th century (2013).

the changes were radical in many places (such as the abandonment of most cities in the western part) to the degree of representing one of the greatest breaks in the history of human settlement.

After the last construction works in the first half of the 4th century, cities gradually began to decline and some were already abandoned in the late 4th or early 5th century. Many urban villas were subdivided into smaller housing or economic units, for example in Brescia, Sirmium, Stobi (Fig. 4.4) and Tropaeum Traiani. Housing shows the degradation and gradual ruralisation of the urban areas. As for public buildings, earlier ones such as theatres, baths and forums were being abandoned, whereas church architecture prospered.

The peak of prosperity that Aquileia witnessed in the 4th century gradually faded in the first half of the 5th century. The Hun incursion greatly affected the city, corroborated by an extensive layer of burnt debris from the mid-5th century. Neither the unfortified Virunum nor the walled Celeia thus far revealed any buildings that could reliably be dated to a time after the first third of the 5th century. Around 400, the defensive wall and the first-phase diocesan church were constructed in Teurnia. The influx of people to Favianis after 370/380 caused the fort to be enlarged and the buildings in its interior renovated.

Some unfortified cities on the fringes of the Pannonian Plain, such as Salla, Flavia Solva, Nevidunum and Andautonia, were already largely deserted towards the end of the 4th century, with the modest small finds indicating an only occasional human presence (overview in Ciglenečki 2011a, 185).

The Roman cities in Hungary were mostly abandoned in the early 5th century, with only Scarbantia showing prolonged existence. Sopianae was destroyed in a fire towards the end of the first third of the 5th century and abandoned. The second phase of the 'inner fortifications' dates to the Valentinian period, though they were already abandoned in the 430s with the exception of Keszthely-Fenekpuszta.

The last reliably dated habitation layers in Poetovio date to the first third of the 5th century, while the last convincing Late Antique trace may be identified in the small cemetery with the burial of a warrior from the time of the Hun incursions (Fig. 4.5). In Emona, the destruction and abandonment of the episcopal centre soon after 423, most likely even before the Hun incursion, can be seen as an excellent indication of the decline and abandonment of the city.

Many Roman cities witnessed the construction or renovation of city walls that frequently also brought about the reduction of the urban area. Along the Adriatic coast, Nesactium was walled in the late 4th century, the defensive wall in Salona was extensively renovated under Theodosius II. Deultum was enclosed with a wall slightly before 383, the wall of Stobi was renovated in the Valentinian period. In the early 5th century, the perilous conditions are also clearly reflected in the construction of the land wall to protect the eastern capital of Constantinople.

The construction or renovation of city walls has been dated in Ulpiana to the late 4th or early 5th century, in Scodra to the early 5th century, in Heracleia (Perinthus) and Thessaloniki roughly to the first half



Fig. 4.5: Poetovio. Grave of a nomadic warrior from the middle of the 5th century is the last reliably dated grave in the city (2000).

of the 5th century. The refortification of Sparta presumably occurred in the time of Alaric's Goths, when the acropolis was enclosed with a wall that incorporated a theatre (Lawrence 1983, 180). In Athens, the agora was destroyed after the Gothic raid in 396, a time when most public buildings were also devastated in Corinth. New walls constructed in Dion and Thespieae in the late 4th century greatly decreased the size of the respective cities. Up to the mid-5th century, Serdica was reduced to the extent it had before Constantine. A large part of Nicopolis ad Istrum was destroyed around 447.

The inscription from the fort at Bargala relates that it became a city at least in 371 and that it hosted both soldiery and civilians. The renovation of Romuliana dates to the last quarter of the 4th century, being densely occupied by soldiers and civilians up to the mid-5th century. The housing in Stobi and Heraclea Lyncestis already underwent great changes towards the end of the 4th century. Transformation of housing has also been detected in Philippi, where some urban villas were turned into workshops in the second half of the 4th century.

Priscus reports of the Huns destroying Naissus in 441 or 447, which is corroborated by archaeological evidence. The sharp break in settlement that occurred in Stobi in the mid-5th century has also been tied to the Hun incursion of 447.

In contrast with the examples above, the southern parts of Illyricum and even more the coast of the Mediterranean show a greater continuity of residential architecture. In the coastal city of Buthroton, archaeologists documented the expansion of an existing villa with the addition of a peristyle and portici around

400, and a further addition of a three-apsed triclinium around 420.

At the same time in the countryside, we can trace the gradual abandonment of villas and other forms of unfortified lowland settlements (Thomas 1964; Henning 1987, 35; Dintchev 1997; Mulvin 2002, 42; Milinković 2008, 545). This process occurred similarly as for the cities, i.e. first on the continent and with a slight delay in the coastal areas. On the other hand, rare new villas (e.g. Höflein) and modest unfortified settlements (e.g. Vučipolje) were still being built in remote areas.

The process of weakening cities and abandoning unfortified settlements is paralleled in the countryside by a mass construction of different new fortified sites. These are particularly numerous in the most endangered areas in the last third of the 4th century, though it should be noted that the current state of research rarely allows us to distinguish between military and civilian sites; the multitude of such sites and the small finds recovered from them certainly indicates civilian use as well. Some were inhabited only occasionally and others permanently (Ciglencčki 1997).

The emergence of fortifications is observable across a large part of the area between Constantinople and Ravenna; they comprise renovated earlier settlements and newly-established military posts such as the large fort on the Sirmione Peninsula, the fort at Tokod dated to the Valentinian period and the Late Roman phase of the fort at Golemanovo Kale. This is also the peak for the forts of the *Claustra* system, which is corroborated by the recorded intensification of the monetary circulation in 364–378. Some forts in the Đerdap Gorge show



Fig. 4.6: Gradishte near Gabrovo. In the second half of the 4th century a fortified settlement was built (2012).

refortification under Valentinian and even more so under Theodosius I. For the fort at Iatrus (Krivina) in Bulgaria, greatly intensified habitation has been noted in the last third of the 4th and first half of the 5th century. The construction of the fort at Dobri Dyal has been dated to around 400. The defensive system in the Stara planina Mountains with the fort at Harmana belongs to the late 4th or early 5th century, while the construction of the Hexamilion Wall and the associated fortress in Greece has been set to the 410s.

There are also rare fortified settlements that persist to the second half of the 5th century, for example Ajdovščina above Rodik and Tinje above Loka pri Žusmu with a hybrid civilian and military nature, or Kučar of a purely sacral function. Their interiors hold masonry and timber buildings. Phase II at Invillino has been dated from the middle/second half of the 4th to the first half of the 5th century or, according to an alternative interpretation, to the decades around 400. At Castelraimondo, the fort was presumably militarily active to around 430, when it witnessed a fire and the destruction of most of its buildings.

Part of the settlement at Kappele is dated to the first half of the 5th century, which is supported by numerous metal finds from the second half of the 4th and the early 5th century. The earliest church at Hemmaberg was constructed around 400, which is also the dating *post quem non* for the fortification wall and the densely distributed timber buildings in its interior.

Tonovcov grad appears to have been intensely inhabited from the 370s to the 420s or 430s. Building traces from this period have been unearthed under the architec-

tural remain of the settlement from the late 5th century. The first defensive wall at Rifnik was presumably erected around 400, a dating provided by the imported pottery recovered in particularly great quantities along this wall. At nearby Ajdovski gradec, modest building remains from the second half of the 4th century came to light in the area of the baptistery.

Small finds show that Kuzelin was most intensely occupied in the last quarter of the 4th and first half of the 5th century. A lofty defensive wall was constructed in this time with timber buildings along its interior. The same phase at the complex site of Gradina in Bakovci is only indicated by well-preserved metal artefacts.

For Serbia, many elements suggest a partial shift of civilian population to fortified sites in the late 4th or first half of the 5th century (Milinković 2008, 540–545). Numerous forts are only dated with coins, which are not a consistently reliable indicator on sites of long duration (problem of residuality). This problem is particularly apparent at Gradina Ras, where a coin of Licinius has led to the construction of the defensive wall being dated to the early 4th century, whereas a large part of the finds from the fort belongs to the second half of the 4th century (Popović, M. 1999, 79). Fortification of Gradina in Vrsenice has been attributed to the last third of the 4th century. The fort at Ukosa revealed small finds from the 4th century and a hoard from the time of the Hun incursions, the latter suggesting that the hill was used at least as a refuge in that period.

Among the examples from Bulgaria, we should particularly mention the extensively investigated fort at Iatrus (Krivina), where the second habitation phase



Fig. 4.7: Dyrrachium. The strong walls were built during the time of Emperor Anastasius (2009).

presumably already began in the 360s and intensified in the 380s, lasting to the devastation in the mid-5th century. The establishment of the forts at Dichin and Dobri Dyal has been set to around 400. The small refuge at Gradishteto near Debrene was already fortified in the second half of the 4th century. The refuge at Kartal Kale was briefly used between the late 4th and the mid-5th century, after which it is believed to have been abandoned due to the Hun invasions. Gradishte near Gabrovo (Fig. 4.6) was fortified and its interior built-up in the second half of the 4th century, but in contrast with other fortifications went on to be even more intensely occupied in the 5th and 6th centuries.

Most forts in North Macedonia were already constructed in the 4th and first half of the 5th century, and temporarily abandoned in the middle of the 5th century similarly as in Bulgaria (Mikulčić 2002, 84–87). Better-known examples include Markovo Kale near Malčište, Gradište near Pakoševo, Žegligovski kamen, Gradište near Pčinja, Kale near Debrešte and Čebren near Zovik.

The end of the Late Roman phase of the forts in the Derdap has been dated to the mid-5th century (presumably to 441–443) and linked primarily to Hun incursions (Vasić 1995, 44). A destruction in the mid-5th century is also well-recorded at Iatrus (Krivina), where a thick layer of burnt debris covered a large part of the fort. The fortified settlement at Gradishteto near Riben was abandoned in the mid-5th century. The destruction of the fort at Odartsi has been dated to the late 4th or the opening decades of the 5th century, presumably also as the result of Hun incursions. The abandonment of the fort at Dobri Dyal has been set to the 430s.

4.3 TRANSFORMATION OF THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AFTER THE MID-5TH CENTURY: LANDSCAPE OF FORTIFICATIONS AND DECLINING CITIES IN THE 6TH AND THE END OF LATE ANTIQUE SETTLEMENT IN THE FIRST THIRD OF THE 7TH CENTURY

The middle and second half of the 5th century is a time least clear with regard to the settlement pattern. The great destruction brought on by the Hun incursions resulted in a fateful break in settlement. This was particularly apparent along the major lines of communication that the Huns used in their progression through the Balkans and towards Italy, which signified similar consequences in both parts of the area under discussion. Alongside political, economic and social changes, the Hun incursions are doubtlessly the main contributing factor in the radical change of the settlement pattern, as they led after the mid-5th century to a complete destruction and abandonment of numerous cities or to a greatly reduced continuation of others.

Major changes in the west occurred towards the end of the 5th century and slightly later in the east. Archaeological evidence does not allow for a precise dating of individual sites, even though the small finds include slightly more numerous coins. We should first mention the radical changes in cities, for example the abandonment of Diocletianopolis in Thessaly and Pydna in the late 5th century, and the construction of fortified settlements with an urban character, such as Golemo Gradište near Konjuh and Louloudies in Greece, the latter hosting the



Fig. 4.8: Carevec. At the beginning of the 6th century the small settlement was changed to a city (2012).

bishopric transferred from Pydna. Some cities witnessed a shift to naturally protected locations in proximity, for example at Tridentum, the inhabitants of which sought refuge on the hill Doss Trento, and Iulium Carnicum, with its inhabitants fleeing to the nearby hill San Pietro.

In Noricum Ripense, population was evacuated from the endangered areas along the Danube in the 480s, under the leadership of St Severinus (Ubl 1982; Liebeschuetz 2001, 370, 378). The last period at Favianis, which falls in the time of Severinus, only revealed modest habitation traces and abandonment after 488.

After the devastation around 447, Nicopolis ad Istrum became a greatly reduced city of a completely different layout. The incursion of the Ostrogoths in 482 led to the people from the large city of Demetrias to flee to the nearby hill of Iolkos.

Reductions of city walls took place in the late 5th and early 6th centuries, observable for example in Pharia on the island of Hvar, in Deultum, on the east side of Heraclea Lyncestis and in Nicopolis in Epirus, with the great reduction in the last city dated to the time of the Emperor Anastasius.

The second major indication of settlement changes is the construction or reparation of city walls. A transverse wall was presumably built in this time in Aquileia, which considerably reduced the city area. At the foot of the Alps, Forum Iulii was fortified with double walls (proteichisma) and pentagonal towers. In Verona, the city wall was renovated and integrated the amphitheatre under the Ostrogothic rule.

The reconstruction of the city walls in Pola began after the Hun incursions, the city walls in Mesembria

were renovated in the second half of the 5th century. The thick city walls in Diocletianopolis (Hissar) and Philippi were added a proteichisma in the sections of easier access. Literary sources and brick stamps suggest that the walls of Dyrrachium (Fig. 4.7) were constructed under Anastasius. Recent research has dated the renovation of the Hellenistic walls of Buthroton to around 525.

It is also a time when numerous changes in the housing and church architecture are observable in the city interiors. Housing is becoming increasingly modest and poorly built, while there is a proliferation of large Early Christian churches, both inside cities and outside. Under the Ostrogothic rule, several houses in Brixia and Verona were renovated, in Verona the fortified palace of Theoderic was constructed on a nearby hill.

Modest huts were constructed in the second half of the 5th and the 6th century in Sirmium, inside formerly lavish buildings. An isolated settlement of huts was erected inside the hippodrome. The last phase of the semi-urban settlement in Gamzigrad dates from the late 5th to the early 7th century.

After a devastation brought by the Hun incursion, the fort at Iatrus (Krivina) was reinhabited in the late 5th or early 6th century, while the small settlement at Carevec (Fig. 4.8) was enlarged and transformed into a city. The fort at Dichin was destroyed between 474 and 520, but renovated soon afterwards and continued to the late 6th century.

Important new constructions in Heraclea Lyncestis include a large episcopal basilica, next to it a smaller church and an episcopal palace, all enclosed with defensive walls. The construction of the episcopal basilica in



Fig. 4.9: Byllis. Eastern part of Victorinos' walls with the entrance (2009).

Bargala has been attributed to the late 5th century and its renovation already in the early 6th century.

The final part of Late Antiquity also brought the last peak of urban prosperity under the Emperor Justinian. Along the Mediterranean coasts and the eastern part, we can observe a renewed prosperity in some cities already in the early 6th century, which became particularly apparent in the second third of the 6th century. There are three inscriptions that mention public construction work on the initiative of bishops in the time of Justinian, more precisely in the late part of his reign. One is an inscription from Heraclea Lyncestis dated to 561, relating that Bishop John had a beautifully decorated fountain built. The second inscription, from Serdica, speaks of a renovation of an aqueduct and the third one from Izbičanj even describes the construction of a fortified villa or settlement.

In the eastern part, two cities were established under Justinian, which bear his name. Iustiniana Prima, identified at Caričin grad, is first mentioned in ancient texts in 535, hence its formation can be dated to the 530s, which is corroborated by archaeological evidence. It saw numerous additions and renovations, and was only abandoned in the opening decades of the 7th century. In Ulpiana (Iustiniana Secunda), a new fortified city was erected next to a partially abandoned earlier one. Also under Justinian, the fort of Iatrus was destroyed in a fire in the first half of the 6th century and afterwards renovated and mentioned in ancient sources as a city. In Thessaly, Justinian had the inhabitants of the devastated Diocletianopolis move to the island in Lake Castoria.

The Justinian period also witnessed the reinforcement of defensive walls in numerous cities, for example in Tergeste, Salona, Serdica, Philippopolis, Scodra, Byllis and Heracleia (Perinthus). The new walls in many cities brought a great reduction of the urban area. A typical example is Byllis (Fig. 4.9), where the construction work is well-documented with inscriptions.

The reinforcement of the city walls with towers, buttresses and a *proteichisma* in Asseria (Fig. 4.10) has been reliably dated, as one of the buttresses was built on top of a tomb from the first half of the 6th century. Also dating to the Justinian period is the minor renovation of the walls of Varvaria. In Salona, the period brought a reinforcement of the walls with a ditch and the addition of triangular terminals to the rectangular towers. Ancient texts reveal that the construction was done in haste, which is archaeologically visible in the numerous amphorae used to fill the core of the city walls.

The cities of the time witnessed a proliferation and peak of Early Christian architecture. Numerous new churches were constructed, for example in Tergeste, Salona, Histria and Caričin grad, while others in most active cities were renovated and embellished. The great significance of sacral architecture is visible in the Justinianic church in Iatrus (Krivina), which was constructed inside the former fort marked in the late sources as a city and greatly stands out in size and quality of construction from the very modest contemporary housing that surrounds it.

Most cities cease to exist in the late 6th or first half of the 7th century. In a time of gradual decline, cities witnessed the final blow with the Avaro-Slav incur-



Fig. 4.10: Asseria. During Justinian's restoration, a wall buttress was built over the tomb from the first half of the 6th century (2004).

sions (Popović, V. 1982, 547–548; Liebeschuetz 2001, 284–291; Sodini 2007, 331–332). Dating to this period is the transfer of the metropolitan see from Aquileia to Grado. Safety and connection with the maritime routes being of paramount importance is also visible in the case of Pola, which continued on the same spot, whereas Nesactium, located in proximity but slightly removed from the coast, was completely abandoned in the late 6th century! Salona shows no signs of violent destruction, but stray finds indicate it was gradually abandoned in the first half of the 7th century while at the same time the smaller, but well-fortified palace of Diocletian was inhabited. The Avars took Sirmium already in 582. The modest housing in Stobi reveals that the city persisted in the second half of the 6th century, but was deserted even before the arrival of the Slavs. Heraclea Lyncestis was inhabited longer and includes among the late buildings in the city centre some that were presumably still occupied in the Middle Ages. A similar fate befell cities in Greece, most of which were abandoned between the last quarter of the 6th and first quarter of the 7th century, and only rare ones exhibit reliable signs of continuity into the 7th century; an example of the latter is the excellently fortified centre of Thessaloniki (Sodini 1984, 393–396).

In the far south, Gortyn on Crete was renovated around 627, when an aqueduct was also restored. It was only the earthquake around 670 that turned the city into a small settlement.

In the last third of the 5th and the 6th century, there was merely a handful of unfortified settlements in the countryside, for instance Castel Antico, Castelletto di Brenzone, Rim near Roč, St Chrysogonus in Glavotok,

Vučipolje near Dugopolje, Bisko, Ograja in Putovići, Trpčeva crkva, as well as some large villas that either continued in a slightly altered form or were newly built at this time, for example at Barbariga, Dragonera Jug, Vižula near Medulin, Mirje near Postire (Fig. 4.11), Novo selo Bunje, Polače on Mljet, Rankovići near Travnik, Kruče near Ulcinj, Mirište in Petrovac, Diaporit and Akra Sophia.

This is a time when fortifications came to dominate the area between Constantinople and Ravenna, in the western part already in the late 5th century and in the eastern part slightly later, and went on to persist to the end of Late Antiquity. Most of these sites in the western part very likely appeared in the 490s. In addition to the diagnostic finds from the settlements, this dating is corroborated by the associated cemeteries that revealed no elements predating the late 5th century (e.g. cemeteries at Hemmaberg, Rifnik, Kranj).

Two forts were constructed on the Sirmione Peninsula in the second half of the 5th century. The creation of the forts at San Martino di Lundo/Lomaso and Sant'Andrea di Loppio in the Alpine area has been attributed to the second half or the late 5th century. At Hemmaberg, two large complexes of double churches were erected in the early 6th century. The densely built-up settlement at Kappel has been dated to the late 5th and the 6th century.

The most intensive habitation on the well-researched fortified settlements at Ajdovski gradec above Vranje, Rifnik (Fig. 4.12), Ajdna, Tonovcov grad and Korinjski hrib already began in the late 5th century, which



Fig. 4.11: Mirje near Postire. Remains of Late Antique villa from the north-east (2021).

is corroborated by numerous small finds. The Early Christian complex at Marija Gorska near Lobar has been broadly dated to the 5th and 6th centuries, though the published finds do not allow us to more precisely define the beginning of this phase.

Small finds date the large and important fortified settlement at Gradina in Bakinci from the late 5th to the early 7th century. This dating is supported by the church architecture next to the settlement with several construction phases. The impressive villa at Mogorjelo transformed into a fortified village in the second half of the 5th century.

In Serbia, there are no known fortified sites from the middle and second half of the 5th century (Milinković 2008, 545). Even along the limes in the Đerdap, research shows a long habitation hiatus in the second half of the 5th and first two decades of the 6th century following the Hun devastation (Vasić 1995, 44). The three coin hoards from the mid-5th century, found in the hilltop sites at Sv. Petka on Veliki Jastrebac, Ukosa and Jerinin grad in Trubarevo, are therefore all the more important (Rašković 2021, 283–284); the fortifications may have been used as refuges at this time, which would indicate an at least occasional occupation in the middle of the 5th century.

The major fort of the regular army at Markova Mehana is dated to the reign of Anastasius. The extensive renovation of the fortified settlement at Mezdra and the construction of the fort at Madara date to the late 5th or early 6th century. The fortified settlement at Odartsi is

believed to have been rebuilt after the Hun incursions, probably in the second half of the 5th century, Krasen Kale in the late 5th or the first half of the 6th century. The second phase of the fort at Harmanovo, which formed part of barrier walls, is dated from the late 5th to the late 6th/early 7th century.

Similarly as in cities, the countryside also reveals the establishment or renovation of numerous fortified settlements under Justinian. In the western part, there are many changes and additions in the already existing fortifications. That at Duel, for example, was renovated. The churches at Tonovcov grad show a major renovation of the interior, which has been reliably dated with a coin of Justinian inside an amphora found under a newly-built altar. At the same time renovations took place at Ajdovski gradec above Vranje. The Justinian period at Rifnik and Korinjski hrib brought the construction of masonry towers and the renovation of both churches.

There is a series of forts along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, both on the islands and on the mainland, the geographic distribution and fortification features of which testify to a major project of protecting the navigable routes in the time of Justinian's reconquista. This dating has been corroborated by the excavations at Gradina on Žirje, but also the numerous surface finds and small-scale excavations in several other forts, for example at Veliki Sikavac, Korintija and Gradina near Modrić.



Fig. 4.12: Rifnik. Late Antique buildings in the most habitable part of the settlement (2023).

Most of the newly-established fortifications in Serbia have been attributed to the reign of Justinian and associated with his fortification programme described by Procopius (Milinković 2008, 545–557; id. 2015, 258–263). It is a period that saw the renovation of numerous forts along the limes, such as Veliki Gradac and Boljetin, or the construction of new ones (Bosman). Their renovation dates between 529 and 540 (Vasić 1995, 44). The fortified hilltop settlements of this time, identified for example at Liška Čava, Bedem near Maskare, Kula in Kaludra, Gaj in Babrež, Balajnac, Kale in Bregovina and Kale, Zlata, mainly had a single phase of occupation and were established in the 530s. Gradina Ras and Gradina in Vršenice were renovated at this time.

The dense occupation of the interior of the fortification at Golemanovo Kale has been attributed to the time around 540, when the nearby fort at Sadovsko Kale was also presumably built. The first half of the 6th century is the time when the forts at Dyadovo, Kaletu near Izvorovo, Đuteza, Kekola and Domaj were constructed, and when many earlier forts such as Markova Mehana, Odartsi, the fortress at the Hexamilion and Markovi Kuli on Vodno were renovated. Small finds date the

fortified settlement at Qafa to the middle and second half of the 6th century.

In the publications of surface surveys, several fortifications have been identified as either Early Byzantine (e.g. Belgrad, Velika), dated to the 6th century (e.g. Gradok near Čanište) or more precisely as Justinianic (e.g. Gradina Žirje). Most of the small finds thus recovered, however, are poorly diagnostic and therefore require caution. We should nevertheless note the fact that the reliably dated artefacts mainly belong to the Justinian period.

In spite of the vastness and diversity of the area between Ravenna and Constantinople, the available evidence shows a similarly dated end of the fortified settlements in the countryside, which occurred in the late 6th century (e.g. Rifnik, Ajdovski gradec above Vranje, Korinjski hrib, Kappel, Mezdra, Golemanovo Kale, Sadovsko Kale, Dichin, forts along the limes in the Đerdap Gorge) or the early 7th century (e.g. Tonovcov grad and Odartsi). A vast majority of these settlements were permanently abandoned and only a handful reinhabited in the late 8th or early 9th century (cf. Milavec 2012; ead. 2020, 162).

5. BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE LATE ANTIQUE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

This chapter outlines the settlement patterns in other parts of the Empire and does that – for the purposes of facilitating comparison – in an order similar as above in terms of form (cities, countryside) and geography (West, East). The outline provides a general description of the settlement patterns illustrated with typical examples of sites.

5. 1 WESTERN PART OF THE EMPIRE

5.1.1 CITIES

The main phases of development and decline of the cities in the West are clearly discernible despite the dense settlement of the majority of them also after Late Antiquity. There are marked regional differences, but they show a generally similar transformation (overview in Ward-Perkins 2000; Liebeschuetz 2001, 82–103; Wickham 2005, 635–674; Quiroga 2016).

The process of abandonment in the westernmost part of the Empire, i.e. Britain, in many areas along the Rhine limes or Aquitania, but also individual examples on the Iberian Peninsula began in the late 4th century (Liebeschuetz 2001, 88). The large Roman cities in Spain, such as Taraco, Italica, Clunia, were in decline at this time, but still inhabited, albeit in a limited measure. In the 5th and 6th centuries, the southern provinces of Spain and Gaul exhibit a greater level of urbanisation compared with the north (Liebeschuetz 2001, 90).

Cities with continuity are much more numerous in the West than in the area between Ravenna and Constantinople, and closely reflect the changes in the urban structure. Numbers notwithstanding, most of them underwent a transformation that is similar in its basic traits to that presented in the previous chapters.

Many cities in the Gallic provinces were walled in the 3rd and 4th centuries, which often reduced their size. Concurrently outside the city walls, suburbs gradually



Fig. 5.1: León. Well-preserved northwestern section of the Late Roman city walls (2011).



Fig. 5.2: Conimbriga. The late Antique city walls were constructed on top of earlier buildings (2011).



Fig. 5.3: Haïdra. A large fortification was constructed in the middle of the Roman city of Ammaedara, on the naturally best protected spot (2001).

developed around cemeterial churches and monasteries (Johnson 1983, 82–135; Liebeschuetz 2001, 84; Brogiolo 2014). Many cities in Spain were also fortified at this time, with excellently preserved and extensive walls surviving at Lugo, León (Fig. 5.1) and Astorga. The walls in Conimbriga in Portugal (Fig. 5.2) cut through the previously inhabited part of the city and radically reduced the populated area (Liebeschuetz 2001, 90).

Interesting forms of urban fortifications can also be found in Byzantine Africa (Pringle 1981). Hastily built defensive walls only encircled small parts of cities that came to function more as forts or refuges than as a proper cities. There are also clever adaptations of earlier monumental buildings that were incorporated into new fortified complexes. Only the forum and the

capitolium were fortified at Dougga and Sbeitla. At Haïdra (Ammaedara) (Fig. 5.3), a mighty fortification was built in the centre of the city that took advantage of a protected location on a gentle slope and held the most prominent buildings that included a church (Pringle 1981, 179–181).

In general, people still lived in the cities and only sought refuge behind defensive walls protected by small garrisons in times of danger.

The interior of western cities reveals buildings of lower quality, subdividing of earlier constructions and encroachment on public spaces, leading to a spatial fragmentation of the urban fabric and a reduction of the population (Wickham 2005, 669; Kulikowski 2010). This is strikingly similar to the development in the ar-



Fig. 5.4: Trier. Porta Nigra, the lofty north entrance (2022).



Fig. 5.5: Merida. Remains of the Roman buildings and a theatre (2011).

eas between Ravenna and Constantinople, sharing the dividing line of the mid-5th century that marks a severe break in urban continuity. Also similar is the appearance of numerous churches inside and outside the city walls.

Only the cities that went on to become the capitals of Germanic kings recovered again towards the end of Antiquity (e.g. Metz) (Liebeschuetz 2001, 86). Trier (Fig. 5.4) became the imperial residence in the late 3rd century and reached the pinnacle of its development in the 4th century. It was a vast, 285 hectares large city enclosed with thick walls built in the late 2nd century. The development of this major administrative and economic centre was halted in the early 5th century with Germanic

incursions, when the Gallic prefecture was transferred to Arles. (In late 4th century, the imperial capital as well was transferred to Milan). The Roman administration of the city of few inhabitants lasted to the early second half of the 5th century, after which the city came under the Frankish rule.

Cities in Provence retained their Roman character longer. For most of the 5th and the first half of the 6th century, Arles remained a large city (Heijmans 2004). Its cathedral was created in the 4th, the city walls renovated in the 5th century. Archaeological remains become scarce after 550, the number of inhabitants decreased, though the city still hosted a bishop and administrative facilities.

Simple buildings were constructed in the 5th century along the exterior of the circus, which may have still been in use, and were deserted in the mid-6th century. Other simple dwellings were constructed inside the abandoned Forum of Augustus and in the abandoned houses; the large two-storey palatial building was still in use. Life continued in the walled classical part of the city and outside it. Lyon was spatially fragmented in the 6th century, with separate habitation cores inside the classical Roman city. One of these cores on the right bank of the River Saône was intensely inhabited until around 600 and then less intensely from the 7th to the 9th century (Wickham 2005, 665–666).

Merida (Fig. 5.5), as the most important city on the Iberian Peninsula, was densely populated in Late Antiquity, with the forum presumably still active in the first half of the 5th century. Very early on, a large Christian complex developed around the sanctuary of St Eulalia that became a popular pilgrimage destination (Kulikowski 2004, 290–293). In the second half of the 5th century, the large urban *domus* began to be subdivided. They also exhibit an intriguing transformation into collective housing units with poorly built rooms surrounding a central court, which is a specific form of reusing lavish earlier buildings (Quiroga 2016, 81). Late Antiquity in Tarragona brought a noticeable shift of habitation to a slightly higher part of the city where the former monumental sacral and administrative complex was replaced by different newly-built dwellings. As in Merida, extramural churches formed small habitation cores.

A typical example of Late Antique urban transformation can be found at Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges



Fig. 5.6: Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges. Remains of the Roman city in the foreground and the hill with a Late Antique settlement in the background (2011).



Fig. 5.7: Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges. Western defensive wall of the hilltop settlement (2011).



Fig. 5.8: Sbeitla (Sufetula). Well-preserved fortified house in the foreground and an oil press constructed on the street further along (2001).



Fig. 5.9: Tipassa. House of the Frescoes (2018).

(Figs. 5.6, 5.7), where habitation area began shrinking in the 5th century, when people were moving from the lower city to the naturally well-protected and additionally fortified elevation above (Wood 2002; Wickham 2005, 667).

Different elements show a lesser degree of urban ruralisation in different parts of the West, particularly in Spain (Quiroga 2016, 83). Similarly as in the Balkans, however, Carthage and Valencia did reveal modest dwellings set up in the protected shells of theatres.

Cities in North Africa displayed the classical urban features longer. Great prosperity is observable to the early 5th century, though the numerous mosaics from this time show that the quality of urban living remained high even in the Vandal period. The urban structure was gradually changing, with dwellings and economic facilities encroaching on public spaces (Lepelley 1992; Potter 1995; Liebeschuetz 2001, 74–76, 99). The disintegration of the basic urban elements occurred from the late 6th century onwards. In Sbeitla (Sufetula) (Fig. 5.8), for example, an oil press was set up in the middle of the main street (Potter 1995, 67). Aristocratic houses in Carthage

and Djemila (Cuicul) show several phases of renovation (Lepelley 1992, 52). In Africa as well, urban *domus* were subdivided into smaller units; a good example is the House of the Frescoes in Tipassa (Fig. 5.9), which shows the characteristic subdividing of the previously grand urban building (Ellis 2000, 111).

Sbeitla shows an additional feature, namely the construction of heavily fortified houses – towers in the city centre, which broadly date to the 5th and 6th centuries (Pringle 1981, 142, 284–285). In Dougga, a small fort was constructed under Justinian on the spot of the forum and capitolium, and the city was enclosed with a Late Antique wall of poorer quality. The city was additionally protected with several forts in immediate vicinity (Pringle 1981, 244–246).

Many large settlements, such as Albi, Orleans and Auxerre, were given the status of *civitates* in Late Antiquity and as such welcomed a bishop (Liebeschuetz 2001, 88). These new cities or episcopal sees are comparable with some of the newly-founded cities in the eastern Alpine area and the Balkans. In Spain, the



Fig. 5.10: Tolmo de Minateda. Hill with the remains of an episcopal centre on top (2011).



Fig. 5.11: Reccopolis. Remains of a palace in the fortified Visigoth royal city (2011).

fortified hilltop settlement with an ecclesiastical centre at Tolmo de Minateda (Fig. 5.10) has been identified as Elo, an episcopal see mentioned in literary sources (Quiroga 2016, 76).

A frequently mentioned example is Reccopolis (Fig. 5.11), which was a city newly-founded in the late 6th century (Quiroga 2016, 85–88). It is primarily marked by its naturally protected location, fortifications wall, church on a prominent spot and numerous, but simple masonry dwellings, all of which are features similar to the newly-founded cities in the Balkans; the only difference is a presumed royal palace at the edge of the settlement.

5.1.2 THE COUNTRYSIDE

Countryside settlement in the West shows similar patterns regarding the unfortified settlements as the one

presented in the chapters above (cf. Chavarría, Lewit 2004; Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau 2014, 233).

It is commonly believed that the Roman villas in the West represented the most important and best known segment of the countryside settlement (Van Osse, Ouzoulias 2000; Liebeschuetz 2001, 96; Wickham 2005, 465–495; Chavarría Arnau 2007; Teichner 2011). Between the late 3rd and the late 5th century, some were abandoned and others lost their original function with the installation of agrarian facilities, storerooms and workshops, which gave them a fully economic function. Only rare ones continued as residential villas beyond the 5th century (e.g. S. Giovanni di Ruoti in southern Italy). Modest dwellings were constructed in villas in the 5th and 6th centuries, some were turned into churches or cemeteries. Churches next to villas were predominantly built after the change of function. It is frequently difficult to distinguish between continuity



Fig. 5.12: Torre de Palma. Presented remains of a Roman villa (2011).



Fig. 5.13: Torre de Palma. Remains of a church in immediate proximity to the villa (2011).



Fig. 5.14: Sao Cucufate. Well-preserved remains of a Late Antique villa (2011).

of a villa or its reoccupation with a different function. In spite of their transformation, the utilitarian or cult use of the villas suggests that people continued to farm the adjacent land.

The large villa at Torre de Palma (*Figs. 5.12, 5.13*) was inhabited up to the first half of the 5th century, when the complex transformed and was subdivided into smaller residential units, persisting in this form into the



Fig. 5.15: Timgad. Early Byzantine fort from the 6th century, located at the edge of the Roman city (2018).

7th century. A church was constructed next to it, presumably already in the 4th century, the area around which was used as a cemetery from the 5th to the 7th century (Maloney, Hale 1996; Chavarría Arnau 2007, 269). The excellently preserved villas, such as those at Centelles and Sao Cucufate (Fig. 5.14), were used as residential villas to the mid-5th century, later subdivided on several occasions and used as production units to the 6th century. On the Mediterranean coast in Tunisia, the villa of Nador was already subdivided to create accommodation for several families and economic facilities in the early 5th century (Potter 1995, 78–79).

It is not possible to be certain that villas were walled for defensive purposes (Van Ossel 1992, 164–165; Chavarría Arnau 2007, 104–108). In Africa, fortified villas have been identified in mosaics depictions, but they served more as status symbols, used by the owners to control the works in the surrounding area and defend them against local raids and robbers (McKay 1998, 176; Hirschfeld 2001, 264–266). Mosaic representations also show simple farms in the vicinity of villas.

Archaeological research is providing increasing evidence that the lavish villas mentioned, for example, by Sidonius Apollinaris and Venantius Fortunatus in the 5th and 6th centuries are more likely a form of poetic exaggeration. This discrepancy has been noticed early on, for example by Rudolf Egger who observed that the palace at Mosel (episcopal villa) as described in a poem by Venantius Fortunatus actually had traits recognisable in the modest fortified ecclesiastical centres of the 6th century in the eastern Alps (Egger 1940, 87–94).

From the 5th century onwards, there is another form of settlements newly-established in the lowland, which persisted into the Early Middle Ages. These are small compact groups or hamlets of very simple wooden dwellings or sunken huts with associated agricultural

and work buildings (Chavarría, Lewit 2004, 35–36). In some places, they are already observable in the 3rd and 4th centuries, but become more numerous in the 5th and 6th centuries. They are typically of a shorter duration and frequently shifting location. In a large measure, they are similar to the settlements of simple wooden buildings in the discussed part of the Balkans and the eastern Alps, with the difference that the latter do not reach beyond the late 4th century (see *Chapter 3*).

The reasons behind the transformation of the classical rural villas and the location the inhabitants from the unfortified settlements moved to are not entirely clear. We can exclude the possibility of moving to cities, which in the 5th and 6th centuries show no signs of major influx of people. To a limited extent, they may have chosen fortified hilltop locations, as indicated by examples from Italy, south-eastern France and partly also Spain (Randsborg 1991, 56–64, 71–72; Liebeschuetz 2001, 96).

Until recently, fortified hilltop settlements in the West were poorly known and only rarely considered in the overviews of countryside settlement patterns. They were presented as a local phenomenon and predominantly interpreted as refuges or military posts (cf. Usler 1964, 16–24; Petrikovits 1971, 187–189, 192–193; Sennhauser 1979, 152–156; Overbeck 1982; Johnson 1983, 226–244). The scholarly problems they pose, however, are similar to those in the area discussed in the previous chapters, particularly with regard to distinguishing between military and civilian sites.

The typical fortifications are the military posts dating from the 3rd to the early 5th century, which are often also better investigated (overview in Petrikovits 1971; Johnson 1983, 136–225). Later ones, particularly Justinian period forts, came to light in Algeria and Tunisia (cf. Pringle 1981). An excellent example of a large Early Byzantine fort has been investigated at Timgad



Fig. 5.16: Limysa. Excellently preserved *quadruburgium* (2001).

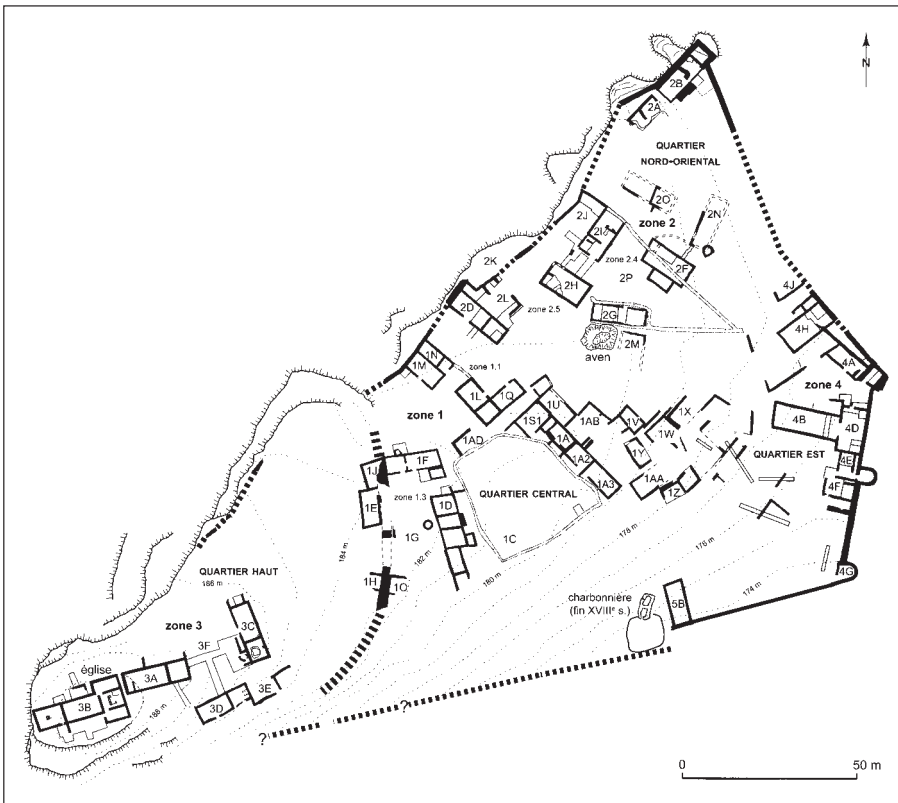


Fig. 5.17: Roc de Pampelune. Plan of the fortified settlement (Schneider 2007, Fig. 7).

(Fig. 5.15), where strong perimeter defences were coupled with army barracks, a water cistern and a church in the interior (Lassus 1981). A small, but better preserved is the *quadruburgium* at Lymisa (Fig. 5.16), for which size and number of soldiers correspond with that of the smaller forts in the Dordap and on the Adriatic islands.

Civilian and civilian-military hilltop sites are well-investigated in Germany, in the areas of Eifel and Hunsrück, which were created and used in different phases

from the last third of the 3rd to the early 5th century. Investigations succeeded in distinguishing refuges, fortified settlements and military forts (Gilles 1985). Such sites, albeit in smaller numbers, have also been identified in Switzerland and westernmost Italy (overview in Steuer et al. 2008; Cavada, Zagermann 2020a).

In France, only few fortified settlements with small finds from the 5th and 6th centuries were known for some time. New research, particularly in the south-eastern



Fig. 5.18: Roc de Pampelune. Hilltop settlement, view from the south (2011).



Fig. 5.19: Larina. Late Antique buildings in the hilltop settlement (2011).



Fig. 5.20: St. Blaise. Remains of the partly excavated defensive walls (2011).



Fig. 5.21: St. Blaise. Late Antique buildings on the hilltop (2011).



Fig. 5.22: Sisteron. Entrance to the mountain valley with an inscription cut into the rock (2011).

part, has revealed many new sites (overview in Schneider 2001; id. 2007; Constant et al. 2015; Kasprzyk, Monteil 2017). One is the relatively extensively investigated site at Le Roc de Pampelune near Argelliers (dep. Hérault) (Figs. 5.17, 5.18), which displays features characteristic of fortified settlements (Schneider 2003). It was constructed on a naturally well-protected hill, enclosed with a defensive wall reinforced with towers. A church stood on the highest spot, while simple two- or three-room buildings are visible elsewhere, particularly densely in the central part of the plateau around a large empty space. The numerous farming and other tools indicate a largely self-sufficient settlement of civilian population.

Fortified sites further include large Late Antique settlements that have the characteristics of centres, such as Larina (Fig. 5.19) and Saint Blaise (Figs. 5.20, 5.21) (Schneider 2001, 436–439; Porte 2011). In many cases, these were set up in earlier hillforts. Standing out is the oppidum at Constantine in Provence, with dwellings and a church inside a hillfort, where the prehistoric rampart was mortared in Late Antiquity (Duperron 2013).

An exceptional example is the naturally protected refuge of Theopolis near Sisteron (Fig. 5.22). An inscription reveals that a private individual by the name of Thomas offered the high mountain valley to general use, though archaeological evidence of this only consists of this inscription, which is carved into a rock near the entrance to the valley (Johnson 1983, 242; Ripoll Arce 2000, 97).

Recent investigations have also provided more information on fortified sites in Spain (Catalán et al. 2014; Sánchez-Pardo, Galbán Malagón 2015; Fernández Pereiro, Sánchez-Pardo 2022). Two such sites have been partially investigated in the area conquered by the Byzantines, namely Cerro de Montroy (Fig. 5.23) and El Monastil (Fig. 5.24) (Sánchez 2009, 192–194, 246–248, 421, 463–465).



Fig. 5.23: Cerro de Montroy. Defensive tower of the Late Antique fort (2011).



Fig. 5.24: El Monastil. Vestiges of the Early Byzantine fortified settlement (2011).

5.2 EASTERN PART OF THE EMPIRE

The settlement patterns in the East differ more substantially from those observed in the wider area of the Balkan Peninsula. To name only two major differences, cities display more prominent continuity that is clearly mirrored in the archaeological record, while in the countryside we can see more numerous and widely distributed unfortified settlements that peak in the 5th and 6th centuries.

5.2.1 CITIES

Many eastern cities ceased to be inhabited after the end of Late Antiquity, hence their development is bet-

ter known than in the West (overview in Liebeschuetz 2001, 30–74; Morisson, Sodini 2002, 184–193; Butcher 2003; Bagnall, Rathbone 2004; Wickham 2005, 609–635; Saradi 2006; Quiroga 2016; Zanini 2016; Rizos 2017b, 20–24, 32–36). There was a continuous development across a large part in the 6th century and many survived through the fateful 7th century, as the arrival of Islam did not signify a total urban break. Cities prospered in Late Antiquity and the homes of the urban aristocracy frequently continued to develop. The presence of commercial buildings points to a lively trading activity. There are also a number of literary sources that tell of a busy urban life; they mention the use of baths throughout the 6th century (Kennedy 1985, 8–10).

The disintegration of cities in the East began in the 6th century. Similarly as in other parts of the Empire,



Fig. 5.25: Ephesus. Remains of Roman buildings in the upper part of the city (2002).



Fig. 5.26: Ephesus. The lower part of the city with the Arcadiane, a thoroughfare that led to the harbour (2002).

this is observable in the abandonment of large public buildings and homes of the elite, as well as the appearance of modest dwellings and workshops. Architecture of an inferior quality encroached on streets and roads, groups of burials appeared in cities, the sewage and water supply systems were neglected, refuse was piling up in the streets (Morisson, Sodini 2002, 189). Shops and different workshops were set up along the main porticated streets, forming a linear marketplace as the beginning of the Oriental souq. Dense habitation and urban life can be traced to the end of the 6th century.

Concurrently with strong continuity and qualitative transformation of housing, there was a large-scale construction of church architecture, which reached its peak in the 6th century, producing a series of splendidly decorated churches (cf. Krautheimer 1986, 201–282).

Ephesus (Figs. 5.25–5.29) was among the key cities in the East, a metropolis, emporium and major Christian centre (Liebeschuetz 2001, 32–36, 49; Ladstätter 2011; Pülz 2011; Ladstätter 2017). It transformed after the political changes and earthquakes in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Many buildings altered their function and whole insulae were either abandoned or transformed. Dwellings were set up inside public buildings and the city centre shifted from the upper part to the harbour area. The city only recovered in the mid-4th and witnessed great prosperity in the late 4th century. Different administrative buildings and housing complexes developed next to the harbour, with shops nearby. The city walls, although not yet precisely dated, only protected the main, greatly reduced lower part of the city that was densely inhabited in the 6th century. An array of shops



Fig. 5.27: Ephesus. Remains of an important Early Byzantine building (2002).



Fig. 5.28: Ephesus. The church of Mary (2002).



Fig. 5.29: Ephesus. A large pilgrimage centre formed in the 6th century next to the church of St John (2002).



Fig. 5.30: Sardis. Densely spaced Late Antique shops in the portici of the gymnasium (2002).



Fig. 5.31: Palmyra. View of the city from the southeast. The Diocletian's fortress on the right side (2004).

and workshops lined the main streets. The suburbs were less densely inhabited, though the church buildings in them became an obligatory stop on the Early Christian pilgrimage itinerary. In addition to important public and private buildings, there is a recent discovery of a 'Byzantine palace' with reception rooms, a bath complex, oil production facilities and a large garden. Life in the city partly continued even in the 7th century.

Sardis (Fig. 5.30) was a major provincial centre (Liebeschuetz 2001, 43–44, 48–49; Rautman 2017). It only saw few investigations, but these include a well-researched bath complex incorporating a gymnasium and synagogue. The covered portici of the gymnasium received numerous shops and workshops in the 5th and 6th centuries, known as the 'Byzantine Shops' (Stephens Crawford 1990). They were built in two storeys with shops on the ground floor and dwellings of the owners

above. Numerous small finds from these shops indicate lively trading that continued to the early 7th century.

Palmyra (Fig. 5.31), a desert city on a major caravan route, witnessed great changes in Late Antiquity (Rizos 2017b, 20–21; Intagliata 2017). Under Diocletian, this lowland city in an oasis was added a legionary fortress on the naturally better protected slope of the adjacent hill, which exhibits both the characteristic change in the location of Late Antique military forts and the first example of the marriage between a city and a legionary fortress.

The provincial capital of Apamea (Fig. 5.32), with its monumental colonnades, sumptuous houses and churches, reflects the splendour of the Late Antique city, with numerous *domus* forming its centre. It suffered two earthquakes in the first half of the 6th century and was both times renovated. It only began to change radically in the second quarter of the 7th century with the formerly



Fig. 5.32: Apamea. Impressive colonnades along the *cardo maximus* (2004).



Fig. 5.33: Bosra. The excellently preserved Roman theatre was later added defensive towers (2004).

lavish buildings subdivided into ruralised dwellings (Liebeschuetz 2001, 56).

Inscriptions and well-preserved architecture of Bosra and Gerasa confirm intense construction activities even in the first half of the 6th century (Liebeschuetz 2001, 59–62). Bosra (Fig. 5.33) was the capital of the province Arabia and a major military and trade centre in the area on the border with Persia. Investigations here mainly unearthed important military and church buildings. A special feature is a theatre subsequently reinforced with towers and turned into a fortress. In the excellently preserved Gerasa (Fig. 5.34), changes in the urban fabric only become visible in the second half of the 6th century. At this time, public buildings were abandoned, modest housing erected and ruralisation was increasingly present. In spite of these marks of decline, there was intensive construction of churches even in the second half of the 6th century (Brenk 2003, 86–91).

The defensive architecture shows considerable regional differences. Cities in western and central Asia Minor were largely unfortified. Some were walled in the 3rd and 4th centuries, presumably more as a display of urban confidence than necessity (Niewöhner 2007, 122–135; Jacobs 2012, 117–125). In the 5th and 6th centuries, walls were only built exceptionally. The mighty city wall of Nicaea (Fig. 5.35) was already built under the Emperor Claudius II in 268/269 and later reinforced with numerous towers (Rizos 2017b, 32–33). The city of Sagalassos (Fig. 5.36) was walled soon after 400, though the walls only enclosed one third of the whole urban area and soon fell into disrepair (Waelkens 2005; id. 2019, 17–18); its construction is believed to be the consequence of Isaurian raids, but also the expression of civic pride.

Because of a permanent Persian threat, cities in the Levant were well fortified and militarised, which is vis-



Fig. 5.34: Gerasa. Elaborate entrance to the cathedral complex (2008).



Fig. 5.35: Nicaea. Thick city walls from the early 4th century (2003).



Fig. 5.36: Sagalassos. View of the city from the southeast (2011).



Fig. 5.37: Amida (Diyarbakir). Mighty walls of the city, view from the south (2003).

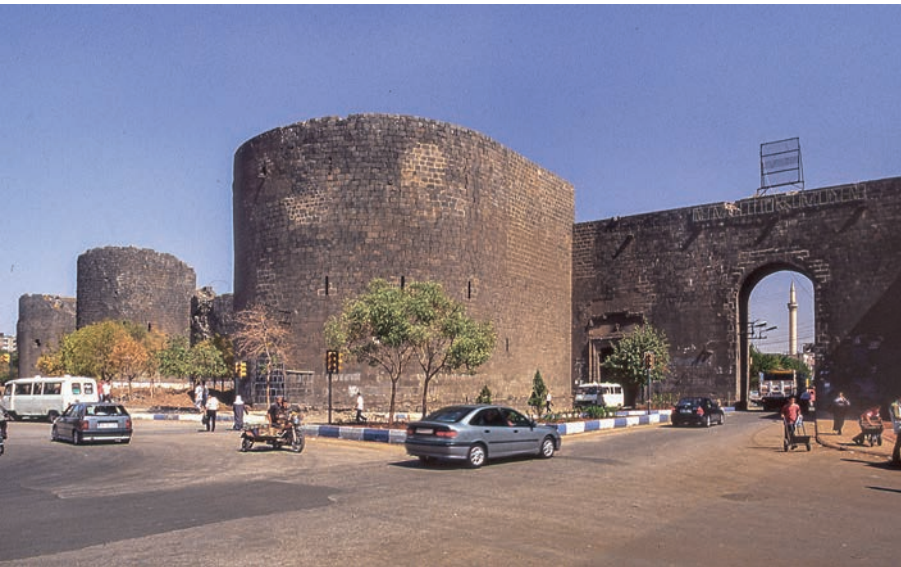


Fig. 5.38: Amida (Diyarbakir). A section of the well-preserved city walls with an entrance (2003).

ible at Antioch, Palmyra, Sergiopolis (Resafa), Zenobia (Halebiye), Dara and elsewhere. Procopius reports on many renovations under Justinian, for example the restoration of Antioch following the Persian raid in 540, when all the urban features of the city were re-established, but also the renovation of the pilgrimage city of Sergiopolis. The Late Antique walls of Miletus, Sardis, Ephesus and Pergamon are not completely reliably dated, though most likely belong to the 6th century, and show considerable reductions of the urban areas (Liebeschuetz 2001, 49–52). In Miletus, for example, the ‘Justinianic’ wall only encircled one quarter of the Roman city.

Many cities were established in Late Antiquity primarily for military purposes (Rizos 2017b, 20–24, 32–36). Amida (Diyarbakir) (Figs. 5.37, 5.38) became a city-fortress at least in the mid-4th century, though possibly already under the Tetrarchs (Assénat, Pérez 2017).

Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that it permanently hosted one legion and had the capacity to accommodate four additional legions in the case of military operations. Its lofty defensive wall could also provide shelter for the inhabitants from the surrounding areas.

Justinian had the fortress of the Queen Zenobia on the Euphrates transformed into a heavily fortified border city of Zenobia (Halebiye) (Fig. 5.39; Blétry 2017). It has a characteristic location on a naturally protected slope between the river and the top of the hill and is marked by a strong defensive wall with densely spaced towers, a separately fortified citadel on the hilltop, an excellently preserved *praetorium* and the interior only hosting two churches, a bath complex and housing.

Sergiopolis (Resafa) (Figs. 5.40–5.42) is an unusual example combining a pilgrimage centre, city, military fortress and trading post on a caravan route, boasting



Fig. 5.39: Zenobia. Heavily fortified Early Byzantine city on the slope above the River Euphrates (2004).



Fig. 5.40: Sergiopolis (Resafa). Vast city with strong walls and a pilgrimage centre (2004).



Fig. 5.41: Sergiopolis (Resafa). Ornate facade of the north entrance to the city (2004).



Fig. 5.42: Sergiopolis (Resafa). Interior of the city's largest church (Basilica A) (2004).



Fig. 5.43: Arif. Remains of buildings along the defensive wall (2011).



Fig. 5.44: Arif. Early Christian church (2011).



Fig. 5.45: Ören Tepe. Hill with the ruins of a small Late Antique city (2011).



Fig. 5.46: Umm el-Jimal. Panoramic view of the vast settlement (2008).

a thick defensive wall, splendid church complex, large cistern and residential buildings (Ulbert 1993). The 1.8 km long city wall was already built under Anastasius and subsequently reinforced, particularly in the Justinian period (Hof 2016; Gussone, Sack 2017). It undoubtedly had an ostentatious character, but also a great defensive significance in the exposed area near the border with Persia.

Some cities in Asia Minor display quite radical restructuring that actually resulted in the construction of new, smaller, but naturally better protected cities. An outstanding example is Arykanda in Lycia, where the classical city was deserted in Late Antiquity and the inhabitants moved to a smaller (c. 250 x 100 m) and naturally much better protected location at Arif (Figs. 5.43, 5.44), some 2 km away (Knoblauch, Witschel 1993, 229–262; Saradi 2006, 469). The latter is in many aspects similar to the

newly-established cities in the Balkans, with its defensive wall with towers and the interior only hosting simple dwellings and three churches, but completely devoid of the urban features of a classical city and particularly of public buildings. It would appear that a small portion of the population still lived in the old city, from where they could flee to the naturally protected rocky acropolis, high above the city, in times of danger.

A similar shift occurred at Panemoteichos in Pisidia, where the city was transferred to the naturally protected hill of Ören Tepe (Fig. 5.45) in the vicinity (Saradi 2006, 390). The ruins on this hill reveal a compact series of buildings lining the defensive wall, while the interior only holds a single large and partitioned residential building with a church on the summit.

An example of a newly-founded small unfortified city from the 6th century was found at Viranşehir,



Fig. 5.47: Umm el-Jimal. Remains of Late Antique architecture (2008).

which has been identified as Mokisos, established under Justinian. It was built in a remote area of Asia Minor, below Mt Hasan Dağı at 1500 m asl (Berger 2017). It holds dispersed simple dwellings, while only churches are mentioned as public buildings.

There is also a group of large settlements marked in epigraphic and literary sources as *kóme* or *metrokomía* (see Dagron 1979). These are mostly unfortified, but display great similarities with some of the newly-established cities.

A particularly characteristic example is the large settlement at Umm el-Jimal in Jordan (Figs. 5.46, 5.47), with more than a hundred multi-storey houses and as many as fifteen churches, which peaked in prosperity in the 5th and 6th centuries (Graf 2001, 234; Kennedy 2004, 86–91; Quiroga 2016, 82). The distribution of the buildings speaks against a uniform design and public buildings are missing with the exception of the churches. A small fort stood at the edge. The settlement was reduced with the arrival of Islam, but only abandoned after a plague that struck in the mid-8th century.

Large examples of such settlements include El Bara in the Limestone Massif of northern Syria, as well as Israeli *metrokomía* at Shivta, Nessana and Rehovot in the Negev. They are sometimes referred to as 'secondary cities' (Morisson, Sodini 2002, 179–183).

Standing out in Syria is a large and densely inhabited settlement of Androna (Al-Anderin) (Figs. 5.48–5.50; Strube 2011; Mundell Mango 2011; ead. 2017). It covered an area of 160 hectares, had double

walls, eleven churches, a military fort and public baths. The dating of the inscriptions indicates a peak of the settlement in the 5th and 6th centuries. One inscription relates that a wealthy inhabitant named Thomas had a walled *kastron* constructed in its centre in 558–559, and that it also served as a refuge.

5.2.2 THE COUNTRYSIDE

Our knowledge of the countryside in the East is extensive, particularly because of the innumerable unfortified settlements surviving in an excellent condition (overview in e.g. Hirschfeld 2001; Morisson, Sodini 2002; Bagnall, Rathbone 2004; Wickham 2005, 442–465).

The countryside in the East holds a number of fortified sites. In addition to the forts inside cities, which are mentioned above, there was a greater number of *quadriburgia* established along the endangered eastern border (*Strata Diocletiana*), as well as a network of forts in Egypt (Kennedy 2004; Bagnal, Rathbone 2004). Most of these persisted throughout Late Antiquity, when they were renovated and hosted different army units and *foederati* with their families. A characteristic example is the *quadriburgium* at Qasr Bshir (Fig. 5.51), built under Diocletian and also used later (Kennedy 2004, 48–151). Its central court was surrounded by multi-storey buildings that accommodated soldiers in the upper storey and provided rooms for animals on the ground floor, which



Fig. 5.48: Al-Andarin. Ruins of a church in the foreground and a large settlement with the remains of a fort in the background (2004).



Fig. 5.49: Al-Andarin. Partially uncovered entrances to the fort (2004).



Fig. 5.50: Al-Andarin. Entrance to the fort with the inscription of the founder (2004).



Fig. 5.51: Qasr Bshir. *Quadriburgium*, view from the south (2008).



Fig. 5.52: Luxor. Defensive walls and towers of the legionary fortress on the west side of the Temple of Amun (2006).

suggests a cavalry unit. In Egypt, forts were constructed along the Nile and the approaches leading to its valley under the Tetrarchs. Well-known is the legionary fortress in Luxor (Fig. 5.52), which enclosed the Temple of Amun and cleverly made use of its architecture (Bagnall, Rathbone 2004, 191–192).

A special example is the fortification at Kale'i Zerzevan (Fig. 5.53), not far from Amida in northern Mesopotamia, with the location on a hundred-metre-high and naturally excellently protected rocky peak that is in many ways similar to the hilltop settlements presented in previous chapters (Deichmann, Peschlow 1977). It is a fortification from the Justinian era that has a thick defensive wall with evenly distributed towers and interior showing the characteristics of a settlement. A

survey revealed a church and a cistern, while the best preserved tower is believed to have served defensive, watch and signalling functions. The authors of its publication interpret the site as a post tasked with controlling the major road in the valley below. They believe a garrison of *limitanei* was permanently stationed in this fort that also served as a refuge. They found parallels in different military forts in Africa and the Đerdap, and the closest parallel in the fortified settlement at Ajdovski gradec above Vranje (see Chapter 3.3).

The hallmark of the countryside in the East is the hundreds of still clearly visible settlements. Their excellent state of preservation, wealth of architectural remains and epigraphic monuments make them an invaluable

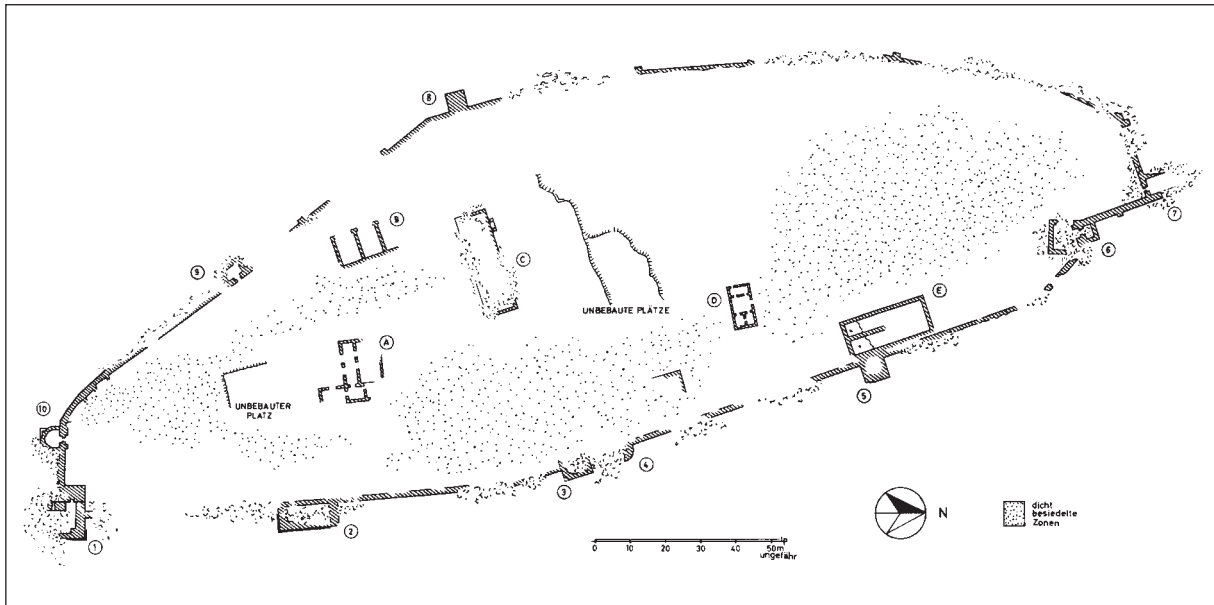


Fig. 5.53: Kale'i Zerzevan. Plan of the fort (Deichmann, Peschlow 1977, Fig. 1).



Fig. 5.54: Baude. Remains of a small Late Antique settlement in Syria's Limestone Massif (2004).

source of information for understanding the Late Antique countryside (Morisson, Sodini 2002, 178–179; Butcher 2003, 145–179; Wickham 2005, 443–465). The villages are particularly characteristic of Syria and some areas of Turkey. They have been known in literature ever since the seminal work by Georges Tchalenko on the excellently preserved settlements in the Limestone Massif of north-western Syria (an example in Baude; Fig. 5.54), between the major centres of Antiquity in Antioch and Beroe (Tchalenko 1953–1958). They form a network of some 700 settlements, termed 'Dead Cities' in early literature due to the extensive remains. Some date as early as the 3rd and 4th centuries, though most were built in the 5th and 6th centuries. They continued to develop in their full extent in the first half of the 7th and were less intensely inhabited

to the 9th century. Recent research has shed light on many details of life in these rural settlements, their chronology and economic base (Sodini et al. 1980; Tate 1992; Butcher 2003, 145–179). They still exhibit most achievements of the Roman civilisation. Baths survive in several of them, buildings show very high quality of construction, as well as great diversity of architecture and architectural decoration. The baths in Serjilla (Figs. 5.55, 5.56), one of the best surviving villages, have been dated to 473 on the basis of an inscription. These villages of independent farmers were not built according to a preconceived plan. Inscriptions allow us to distinguish between two main phases, one spanning from the late 3rd or early 4th to the early 5th century, the second one from the first half of the 6th to the 7th century. They were autonomous villages with



Fig. 5.55: Serjilla. A medium-sized and well-preserved settlement, with baths from the 5th century in the foreground (2004).



Fig. 5.56: Serjilla. Production room with an oil press (2004).

specific functions that bring them close to cities in nature (Butcher 2003, 159).

In addition to the most comprehensively known settlements in the Limestone Massif of north-western Syria and Hauran, there are similar settlements in the Negev in Israel, i.e. the already mentioned *metrokomía* at Shivta, Nessana and Rehovot (Hirschfeld 2001, 270). Also well-known are those in Cilicia, a remote part of Turkey in the hinterland of Seleukeia, that show great similarity with the villages in Syria (Hild, Hellenkemper 1990). They also host well-preserved multi-storey buildings, though with less architectural decoration. The settlement at Karakabakli (Figs. 5.58, 5.59), for example, has numerous buildings, mostly multi-storey, and two churches, at the edge also a tetrapylon at the intersection of village streets (Hild, Hellenkemper 1990, 290).

Unfortified villages are also typical of Egypt, but were inhabited also after the end of Late Antiquity and are therefore less well-known. An excellent example is Karanis in the Fayum, with continuity from the Hellenistic period to the 6th century, but also Jeme near Luxor (Fig. 5.60), where a vast settlement was set up in the ruins of the Temple of Ramses III, with continuity into the Early Middle Ages (Bagnall, Rathbone 2004, 131–134, 193).

Also in Egypt, in the Western Desert, a large settlement at Ain Labakha and a small Late Antique fort were established on an important crossroads in the Kharga Oasis (Fig. 5.61) (Bagnall, Rathbone 2004, 255–257). This is a combination of a military fort and a settlement in its vicinity similar to the numerous fortified sites in the Balkans.



Fig. 5.57: Jerade. Ruins of a Late Antique settlement and its tower (2004).



Fig. 5.58: Karakabakli. Ruins of residential buildings (2010).



Fig. 5.59: Karakabakli. Remains of a tetrapylon and ancient road (2010).



Fig. 5.60: Jeme, Medinet Habu. Late Antique and later buildings abutting the earlier wall of a temple precinct (2006).



Fig. 5.61: Kharga. The fort at Ain Labakha with an associated settlement in a small oasis of Egypt's Western Desert (2006).



Fig. 5.62: Akkale. Late Antique villa of a high state official, view from the west (2010).



Fig. 5.63: Qasr Ibn Wardan. Palace with a church and army barracks at the edge of the desert (2004).



Fig. 5.64: El Breij. Monastery on the edge of a fertile plain, in the densely inhabited Limestone Massif in Syria (2004).

Widespread in the semi-arid belt of Lybia is a type of fortified tower-like farmhouses with an inner court known as *gusr*, which is characteristic of the 4th–6th century. Similar farmhouses are also mentioned in the Negev in Southern Palestine (Hirschfeld 2001, 266; Morisson, Sodini 2002, 179).

In contrast with the western part of the Empire, typical Roman villas are rare in the East. Many in the Levant were associated with compact settlements and cities or sited among farmhouses in the suburbs. More is known on the luxury villas in the Daphne suburbs of Antioch, renowned for beautiful and high-quality mosaics (Hirschfeld 2001, 262). An example of a fortified villa has been identified at Ramat Hanadiv in Israel (Hirschfeld 2001, 266).

A luxury complex associated with a harbour lies at Akkale (Fig. 5.62), near the city of Elaiousa-Sebaste on the Cilician coast (Hild, Hellenkemper 1990, 165–166; Sodini 2003, 35). It has a multi-storey palatial building in its centre and around it buildings that include baths, cistern, oil press and a small domed edifice. The complex is seen as an aristocratic villa from the late 5th century, an inscription from which mentions the owner Illous, who was an important person at the court of the Emperor Zeno.

A unique complex has been unearthed at Qasr Ibn Wardan (Fig. 5.63), at the edge of the Syrian Desert, and comprises a two-storey palace, church and army barracks. It is presumably the home of a military commander, dated in 564 (Krautheimer 1986, 247–249, 259).



Fig. 5.65: Mt Sinai. Fortified monastery of St Catherine, view from the north (2019).



Fig. 5.66: Alahan monastery. Excellently preserved church, view from the west (2003).

Archaeological research in the East shows different settlement patterns, but also different densities of Early Byzantine settlement (Graf 2001, 220–223). The favourable climate conditions between 300 and 600 are believed to have enabled cities to prosper and the countryside to be maximally inhabited (Decker 2017, 4–5). The existence of settlements in remote and previously uninhabited areas is proof of a growing population and indicates a shift from cities to rural areas. We see many examples of modest construction in cities and, at the same time, numerous well-built and beautifully decorated constructions in countryside settlements.

Recent investigations have shown that the Islamic conquest in the East did not have a fatal impact, causing

an abrupt end of the tradition of Classical Antiquity. Many cities and villages lived on into the Umayyad period and only show decline in the late 8th or the early 9th century (Graf 2001, 234).

Monasteries and hermitages are a specific settlement phenomenon, occurring in such a number that suggests they represented a special type of settlement (Hirschfeld 2001, 270–271; Liebeschuetz 2001, 67–70). Of the two, monasteries are better known and also recorded in contemporary texts. Many were erected at the edge of settlements in the Limestone Massif of north-western Syria (Fig. 5.64) and in Egypt (Butcher 2003; Bagnall, Rathbone 2004). Egypt also holds several



Fig. 5.67: Qalaat Samaan. Octagon with the remains of the pillar of St Simeon Stylites (2004).



Fig. 5.68: Qalaat Samaan. Monastery in a pilgrimage centre, preserved to a substantial height (2004).

proper monastic settlements with an ecclesiastical centre surrounded by numerous monk cells, for example at Kellia, Nitria and Wadi Natrun, while there are larger fortified complexes in more exposed areas, an example of which is the monastery of St Catherine on Mt Sinai (Fig. 5.65) (Bagnall, Rathbone 2004, 107–115, 123–125).

Another feature particular to the East is the numerous newly-formed pilgrimage centres such as Abu Mina, St John in Ephesus, Resafa, Alahan (Fig. 5.66), monastery of St Thecla near Seleukeia and others. A centre important in the 5th and 6th centuries was at Qalaat Samaan. (Figs. 5.67, 5.68) with nearby monasteries in the Syrian Limestone Massif. On top of this hill, a large and beautifully decorated church was built c. 480 around the

remains of the pillar of St Simeon Stylites, and beside it a large multi-storey monastery. Its renown drew masses of believers. Below the hill was Telemos, a large settlement with several monasteries and pilgrims hospices along the edge. The complex is very well preserved today and offers an insight into the significance and functioning of pilgrimage centres in these areas.

The settlement of the East is highly diverse and documents many aspects that are archaeologically less readily visible and less preserved in the areas between Ravenna and Constantinople, and in the West in general. As such, they provide invaluable evidence for a better understanding of the dynamics between different forms of Late Antique settlement patterns.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND AN ATTEMPT TO INTERPRET THE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

In Late Antiquity, the area between Ravenna and Constantinople experienced a number of political, military and socio-economic crises that, together with a relentless barbarian pressure from beyond the limes, resulted in a fundamentally transformed landscape. The prosperity, gradual disintegration and abandonment of cities, the changes in the typical forms of Roman countryside settlement and the creation of numerous new, predominantly fortified settlements reveal very dynamic settlement processes that unfolded in the area under discussion.

The intensification of research from the 1970s onwards has fundamentally changed our perception of the settlement patterns. Despite this, the perceived changes in the settlement are only very briefly addressed in the major syntheses on Late Antiquity, in which much of the area is discussed only exceptionally and often erroneously interpreted.

The time frame of this book is delimited by changes in the settlement, both its beginning and its end. The beginning in the last third of the 3rd century is primarily marked by the first intense use of hilltop sites, which become the most important aspect of countryside settlement in the course of the next three centuries. The end comes with the major settlement changes of the late 6th and early 7th century, when most of the remaining cities are abandoned and fortified hilltop settlements predominantly cease to be inhabited, leading to a complete change of the settlement paradigm.

There are terminological difficulties associated with this topic, as already discussed in the Introduction, that stem from the different names used for the same types of settlements in the area. The different names range from ancient terms, used fairly inconsistently, to completely neutral descriptive names that were developing within different national archaeological traditions. In addition, there are different functional interpretations of hilltop sites from a time when the boundary between civilian and military sites became interceptible in the archaeological record. All this greatly hinders our understanding of the otherwise very similar settlement phenomena across the area under discussion.

The overview of the characteristic Late Antique cities has revealed great differences between them, but also the different degrees of transformation in different areas and phases of Late Antiquity. In some cities, changes were taking place within the original design, others reduced their urban area and still others were partially or completely transferred to better protected locations. The cities that saw a more intensive development in this period are those that became provincial centres and those sited on major land and, even more prominently, maritime routes. Because of their strategic significance, all enjoyed imperial support. This is particularly apparent in the eastern half of the area and is reflected in numerous important constructions.

There are three categories of cities that differ in the time of their beginning and abandonment, but also in specific functions. The first one comprises cities abandoned before the end of Late Antiquity. They can be found in the continental part of the western half. They largely retained the tradition of the Roman urban design and their degradation only began just before the abandonment.

The second, largest group consists of cities that continued to the end of Late Antiquity, some even longer. They retained some achievements of the classical urban design, but also witnessed changes reflected in the disintegration and ruralisation of the urban fabric that intensified after the mid-5th century. These cities underwent a reduction, sometimes drastic, of the urban area.

Cities with continuity in the western half are located in the well-protected Italy and along the eastern coast of the Adriatic. From Ravenna, Brescia, Verona, the drastically reduced Aquileia to the major cities on the Adriatic such as Parentium, Pola, Iader and Salona, they show a widespread degradation of housing, but also well-constructed churches and housing of the elite. The cities in the eastern half survived with several attributes of Roman cities, for example street grid, aqueducts and baths, and changes are observable in the renovation of city walls, as well as monumental constructions and renovations of Early Christian churches in many interiors. In these cities as well, the most apparent changes

pertain to housing, with subdividing into new and smaller units, but also to the civic infrastructure being left in disrepair, the introduction of rural elements and the increasing numbers of *intra muros* burials. Also characteristic is the concentration of modest housing in cores particularly in the shells of theatres and hippodromes.

The third group comprises newly-founded settlements that may, in accordance with the rather modest standards of Late Antique cities, be seen as possessing some urban characteristics. We can distinguish between two chronologically and functionally distinct subgroups. The first joins cities that were newly established on imperial initiative in the late 3rd and early 4th century, primarily in the limes area and its hinterland, some also at strategically important locations in the interior (Hissar, Iatrus, Tropeaum Traiani, Dinogetia). Their emphasis was on the military function and massive walls that signalled the Roman presence in an endangered area. Some were located in the lowland, but no longer included monumental buildings.

The second subgroup consists of large settlements established after the mid-5th century on well-protected elevations that can also be interpreted as small cities. They differ from contemporary fortified settlements in their greater size and the fact they retained rudimentary residential, administrative, military and increasingly important ecclesiastical functions. They were less numerous in the western part (Kranj, Blagaj), but already began after the mid-5th century, whereas those in the eastern part appeared in greater numbers, but only under Justinian (Caričin grad, Vinica, Shoumen, Louloudies). They represented the centres of small territorial units. In them, the classical city was transformed into a large and well-fortified settlement dominated by an ecclesiastical centre and eventually permanently accommodating a small garrison, though a large part of the interior held numerous, but modest dwellings.

In comparison with cities, the countryside settlement of Late Antiquity displays an even more dynamic transformation and intermixing of patterns; we can observe a tendency towards a gradual abandonment of unfortified lowland settlements in favour of new fortified forms. This also includes a gradual transformation of military posts with the boundary between military and civilian sites becoming increasingly blurred.

The transformation of the countryside is also the part of the Late Antique settlement that receives greater attention in this book compared with earlier major studies that rather focused on lowland settlements and provided ample knowledge on the Roman villas and their transformation, whereas the multitude of fortifications was barely considered and poorly understood. To correct the skewed view of settlement patterns this focus created, we attempted to provide a more balanced picture and present the known fortified forms of settlement in particular detail, while only briefly outlining

the unfortified lowland settlements that have their last peak of prosperity in the 4th century. Similarly as in other parts of the Empire, we can detect an accumulation of estates here as well, and with it the creation of a small number of large villa estates (Bruckneudorf/Parndorf, Balácapuszta, Panik). Some shaped into a different type of settlements and into economic or even religious buildings (Manerba del Garda, Mirište in Petrovac). In the central part of the area under discussion, understanding the villa transformation is hindered by a poor state of investigations that do not reveal the extent and much less the structure and function of later habitations. Roman settlements only very rarely continued to be inhabited to the late 6th century – most frequently in the coastal belt and on the islands (Rim near Roč, Dragonera Jug, Ubli).

As stated, more attention is paid to the better-investigated fortified hilltop sites, where it was frequently possible to identify several phases of occupation, albeit not always chronologically clearly definable. The greatest density of such sites has been noted in the eastern part, where several hundred were identified in North Macedonia alone, some with associated unfortified settlements in proximity. We expect a similar density in southern Serbia, as well as in Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and northern Greece. Slightly fewer sites have been observed in the western part, which is in part the result of the (lower) degree of investigation and less favourable conditions for surface surveys. This is confirmed by a more detailed survey of the prehistoric hillforts in the area of the karst poljes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which showed that many were reinhabited in Late Antiquity (Livanjsko polje). In the eastern Alpine area, i.e. Slovenia, Austria and the fringes of northern Italy, concentrations of Late Antique fortifications indicate that most people living in the endangered areas along the main routes to Italy fled there in the face of barbarian incursions. In terms of the settlement pattern, we see the countryside settlement in Late Antiquity as bipolar, exhibiting an interdependence and intermingling of unfortified and fortified settlements, but also a shift from the lowland to the hills and vice versa.

For a better insight into the transformation of cities and the countryside, we provide a chronological overview of the milestones and phases of settlement changes. The first changes in cities are perceptible in the last third of the 3rd and early 4th century and take the form of abandonment of a city (Styberra), reduction of city walls (Athens) or destruction of buildings (Stobi). Many old city centres were revived in the first half of the 4th century, following the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine. This is a time of great prosperity in cities, which is reflected in an accelerated renovation of private luxury buildings. Both emperors also prompted the creation of several new cities of a mixed civilian-military nature (Hissar, Tropeaum Traiani).

In the countryside of the last third of the 3rd century, numerous unprotected lowland settlements were destroyed or abandoned. This was soon followed by the creation of new, fortified habitation forms, which had a primarily refugial character and part of which shows a short-lived presence of army units. These display a slightly broader span; reliable evidence in some cases points to their beginnings as early as the time of Gallienus or Aurelian (Pasjak, Veliki vrh near Osredek), while elsewhere changes only become clearly perceptible under Diocletian and Constantine (Bushati, Paleokastra). Military forts were established along the main roads in the interior of the area under discussion that show an increasingly irregular layout, as they were constructed in naturally better protected locations that required adaptations to the terrain (Hrušica).

The first occupation of hilltop sites in the last third of the 3rd century was brief and followed by a hiatus that cannot always be dated more precisely. The small finds (primarily coins) from some sites show roughly equal numbers also in the first half of the 4th century, though it should be noted that these finds were not unearthed in reliably dated sealed contexts. It would appear that they are likely residual finds, but we cannot exclude the possibility that some of the hilltops were occasionally visited, potentially even hosting sanctuaries. These first shifts from the lowland to fortified hilltops are harbingers of the changes that become the new normality in Late Antiquity and went on to become the settlement norm.

The next major and longer-lasting changes occurred in the second half of the 4th century, most commonly toward its end when ancient texts relate numerous military incursions and invasions in the area. Cities display signs of gradual decline and many also abandonment (Virunum, Sopianae) in the late 4th and the opening decades of the 5th century. Several small and exposed cities were already abandoned towards the end of the 4th century, primarily those along the Danube limes and in the Pannonian hinterland. Others persisted to the early and some even the middle of the 5th century. A reliable indication of their existence after the early 5th century are Early Christian churches, but these were abandoned or destroyed soon afterwards, which consequently proves the abandonment of cities (Emona). There are few such examples in the eastern part in spite of the fact that barbarian raids brought great devastation here as well, causing variously long interruptions in occupation.

Many urban villas were modified into small habitation or economic units, there is gradual ruralisation of the urban area, many cities were walled at this time or their walls were reinforced (Brescia, Sirmium, Stobi). Only those along the Mediterranean coast display stronger housing continuity.

The population of the abandoned cities initially sought refuge in the nearby military forts (Carnuntum, Aquincum) and naturally protected locations (Iulium

Carnicum, Aguntum), where in many cases they persisted to the end of Late Antiquity. Wherever this was not an option, people moved to safer areas, largely deeper into the interior of the Empire or to the Mediterranean coastline.

Contemporaneously in the countryside, we can trace a gradual abandonment of villas and other forms of lowland settlement, with only rare examples of unprotected settlements that were newly established. On the other hand, we can observe a great rise in different forms of fortified sites. They are particularly numerous in areas greatly endangered in the last third of the 4th century (Ančnikovo gradišče, Odartsi). Some were inhabited only occasionally, others already permanently (Rodik, Gabrovo). Most, including those of a pronounced military character, were abandoned in the first half of the 5th century, only rare ones persisted.

The paucity of settlements in the middle and second half of the 5th century, both in the lowland and on elevations, mirrors the state of insecurity caused by barbarian incursions. People no longer renovated the old cities and settlements, but were also not prepared for a definite resettlement. In terms of Late Antique settlement, this is a time of least available evidence. A fatal break came with the devastation caused by the Hun raids, particularly along the major routes, which the Huns took to progress to the Balkans and towards Italy. Archaeologically, evidence of this devastation can in some cases be seen in the Hun artefacts found in layers of burnt debris, though we also have evidences in contemporary texts. In many places, cities and Roman villas were being gradually abandoned even earlier. Alongside socio-economic changes, the Hun invasions were certainly the most powerful motivation for a radical change of habitation. Many cities were either completely destroyed or lived on in a reduced form after the middle of the 5th century. Some reveal that their inhabitants moved to nearby elevations (Demetrias), others show a substantial reduction of the urban area (Philippopolis, Dion). The housing of this time is archaeologically least detectable and we may presume that buildings partly in ruins were reused for habitation.

The cities that either did not suffer Hun attacks or soon recovered show no major changes. This is primarily the case with numerous cities on the coast, but these are less well-known due to the continuity of the urban use into later periods. It would appear that partially altered houses in them mainly continued to be inhabited.

The Hun incursions posed physical danger, but also had a tremendous psychological effect, which in the countryside generated a strong impulse toward establishing new fortified settlements. We see indications of small-scale and improvised constructions in the middle third of the 5th century, but also occasional use of refuges on fortified hills (Ukosa). Only in the second half of the 5th century do we see an intense occupation

of fortified hilltop sites in the western part, which lasts in most cases to the late 6th or even early 7th century (Rifnik, Tonovcov grad, Lobar, Bakinci). It seems that the people who had previously hoped to return to their former homes now decided to permanently settle in better protected locations. Coins and other small finds indicate this settlement took place even before the arrival of the Ostrogoths (Rifnik, Ajdovski gradec). Most settlements established at this time show local initiative. In the western part, the time of renewed peace under Theoderic consolidated the resettlement and the fortified settlements were included in the administrative and economic system of the new state. For several strategically significant cities settlement was a state initiative. In the mass of newly-founded fortified hilltop settlements, some even seem to have been minor regional centres with modest urban features (Carnium).

In the eastern part of the area under discussion, a complete shift of the settlement paradigm mainly occurred from the 530s onwards, when a great majority of new fortifications was established as part of Justinian's altered strategy of state defence. Compared with the western part, the creation of large central settlements, sort of semi-urban units no longer akin to classical cities, is even more clearly visible here (Caričin grad, Jelica, Vinica, Shoumen). Throughout this geographically, politically and economically diverse area, we can observe a common trend of settlement shifts, but their speed and intensity differ.

The creation of fortified hilltop settlements was largely a spontaneous reaction of the local inhabitants, as inferred from the numerous pre-Justinian period fortifications across the western and less numerous also in the eastern part. The Emperor Justinian made clever use of this self-preservation reflex of the population and deployed the army as his architects to support primarily those sites that played major strategic and administrative roles (Markova Mehana, Hexamilion). A large number of late fortifications with defensive installations, however, were less well-constructed and show an absence of the imperial interest. The process also ran in the opposite direction, with the local population arranging modest dwellings in the safety of earlier military forts (Veliki Gradac near Donji Milanovac, Golemanovo Kale, Odartsi).

The last major step in the transformation of cities can be detected in the final decades of the 6th century, when there is a final migration wave of people from the interior or from other abandoned cities to the naturally well-protected locations along the Adriatic coast. The clearest examples include the formerly powerful metropolis of Aquileia, from which the ecclesiastical centre moved to the well protected, but much smaller *castrum* of Grado on an island in the nearby lagoon, but also the last inhabitants of Salona moving to the former palace of Diocletian in Split. Only few formerly major cities

show signs of urban continuity in the classical tradition, with an emphasis on church architecture (Iader, Thessaloniki). In the time of the Avaro-Slav incursions in the late 6th and early 7th century, we also see several large semi-urban units that could be associated with the influx of the Roman population from the interior (Ulcinj).

The settlement picture again changed in the late 6th or first half of the 7th century, when most Roman cities ceased to exist and the countryside witnessed a shift from the fortified hilltop settlements back down to the lowland. This is also a time when housing underwent a complete transformation, losing all connection with the classical tradition and largely mirroring the living standard of newcomers. Continuity has only been observed in some cities in northern Italy and along the Mediterranean coastline.

The comparison with parts of the Roman Empire outside the area under discussion has revealed many commonalities, but also great differences that underscore the specific nature of the area between Ravenna and Constantinople. Cities in the West show all the features of transformation and abandonment observed in the area under discussion. The great crisis of the 5th century is followed in many places by a renewed intensification of urban life in the 6th century. We can also observe a greater prosperity of cities in the Mediterranean coastline contrasted with a modest existence in the interior, in the 5th century also migrations from the lowland to the nearby elevations (Saint-Bernard-de-Comminges).

The settlement patterns in the countryside of the West are very similar, but the changes do not follow the same pace. The transformation of Roman villas occurred slightly later; many persisted in their original function to the first half of the 5th century or even beyond, and we know much more of the different types of transformation in the 5th and 6th centuries. New research suggests that fortified hilltop sites in some parts (particularly south-eastern France) were settled much more extensively than thought until recently, which brings the West close to the area under discussion in terms of settlement patterns.

Greater differences are visible in the East. The large and flourishing cities of Asia Minor, the Levant and Egypt are hardly comparable with those in the eastern Alps, Pannonia and the northern Balkans, as the latter show a much more pronounced degradation of the urban area, decline of monumental buildings and other urban achievements than their counterparts in the East. The border with the Sassanian Empire did constitute a threat, but it also allowed for a continued existence of cities and a fairly intense settlement of the countryside. This development cannot be interpreted in any other way than by a lesser pressure, in both scale and frequency, on the eastern border of the Empire as the one noted in the Balkans and the Middle Danube Basin.

In the cities of the East, we can trace important public buildings, as well as still existing water supply and sewage systems in some places even towards the end of the 6th century, whereas such examples between Ravenna and Constantinople are mere exceptions. What is similar is the proliferation of church buildings, particularly in the 6th century. Fortifying cities with walls was an existential necessity in the area under discussion, in the East often only a display of civic pride. It is true, however, that city walls were important factors in the urban design of cities in endangered areas, for example Syria (Sergiopolis, Zenobia, Amida).

Radical changes in the East largely occurred in the 6th, while they already become perceptible in the area under discussion in the 5th century. Furthermore, the decline of cities in the East came later, with the classical achievements, architectural in particular, continuing in the early Islamic cities. To summarise the comparisons, we can state that cities everywhere witnessed extensive construction of church architecture in the 5th and 6th centuries, but there are differences in the continuation of other public buildings and urban amenities, as well as the size of the urban population; throughout Antiquity, in fact, cities in the East were particularly densely populated. A commonality pertains to some cities being established in easily defensible places both in the East (Arif) and in the eastern Alpine and Balkan areas (Caričin grad).

The greatest differences are observable in the countryside. In a large part of the East, in the 5th and 6th centuries, unfortified settlements were the basic form of living. Fortified settlements are extremely rare and Roman villas only slightly more common. The dense settlement of the countryside in the eastern Mediterranean, especially with the intensely inhabited Limestone Massif in northern Syria, is without parallels in the area under discussion; closest are some areas in the central and eastern Balkans, in the well-known North Macedonia in particular.

The countryside in the West reveals settlement patterns similar to those discussed in the previous chapters, with differences pertaining to fortified settlements being less represented in the West and the transformation of unfortified countryside settlements being less well-known in the eastern Alps and the Balkans.

The settlement patterns in the eastern and western parts of the Empire show the processes in cities to be similar and thus universal in their significance. The countryside, on the other hand, shows substantial differences. The exposed position in the hinterland of the limes influenced an earlier transformation in comparison with most other parts of the Empire and also caused migrations on the largest scale. The numerous hilltop settlements are the last manifestation of the classical settlement tradition, preserving many civilisational elements of Antiquity to the late 6th and in many places

into the opening decades of the 7th century. With the end of these last *nuclei* of the ancient civilisation, we can speak of the end of Antiquity in a large part of the continental area between Ravenna and Constantinople.

For the area under discussion, we still lack evidence for a reliable distinction between a military and civilian nature of a large part of the late fortified sites. Archaeological evidence shows that those in strategically significant locations had at least some military assignments and hosted garrisons for that purpose (soldiers with their families?, *foederati*?, local militia?), while those at less exposed sites were largely the result of the local initiative. What is surprising is the low-quality construction of housing in the Late Antique cities both in the western and eastern halves compared with the mortared masonry constructions of high quality in numerous contemporary hilltop fortified settlements that persisted to the late 6th century. This shows that only the government administration with the Church at his head remained in the ruralised cities, whereas part of the elites – particularly in the western part under the Ostrogoth rule – moved to smaller, but better protected settlements. Even in difficult living conditions, well-built housing was constructed here by employing the knowledge of construction brought with them from the cities. Masonry architecture predominates in the fortified settlements in the western half. In the eastern half masonry architecture is only used for the most prominent buildings and in a small portion of such settlements (Jelica). Further investigations will show whether this only mirrors the social status of the refugees or was the consequence of the later construction (in the 530s). The outlined characteristics of the housing construction in cities and fortified settlements indicate ever smaller, in some cases non-observable differences between them.

How does the knowledge of the Late Antique settlement patterns between Ravenna and Constantinople contribute to the scholarly discourse on the decline or transformation of the classical world? The urban culture clearly shows a decline, whereas the diversity of the countryside settlement rather points to a radical transformation of human habitation with the fundamental achievements of Antiquity still visible in the newly-established settlements. The newly-founded cities as well, which are predominantly large central settlements, continue the traditions of the ancient urban lifestyle, albeit in a considerably more modest form. The boundary between cities and late, mostly fortified settlements is blurred in many parts and only the administratively significant cities in the interior and the major trade centres along the coasts of the Mediterranean stand out.

Archaeological research and Procopius' writings are unveiling a cleverly devised defence system of forts, but also cities and fortified settlements operational in the time of Justinian. The system functioned by com-

binning the different elements, all of which could serve military purposes (surveillance, signalisation, occasional presence of army troops) in addition to their civilian functions. We clearly see a variety of contemporary interventions that additionally fortified cities and earlier settlements, thereby allowing an at least short-term presence of army units in many of them. These interventions were most often aimed at strengthening city walls in key sections, while those in the interior only focused on modifying and enlarging churches and, even more prominently, adding baptisteries. It would thus appear that a great majority of the fortifications noted in Procopius merited to be mentioned as such due to limited, but effective measures. At the same time, some new posts were built, both along the limes and in its hinterland. Particularly significant is the discovery of a series of forts along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, which are not mentioned in *The Buildings* by Procopius, but show clear Early Byzantine fortification features, with the archaeological finds recovered from them confirming such dating (Gradina Žirje). The choice of naturally protected locations and the predominantly thinner walls testify to the haste in construction and the necessity to protect the conquered territories, especially the land and maritime routes connecting East and West. In relation to Early Byzantine fortifications, we should mention the *proteichisma*, a feature unknown in the western part of the area under discussion prior to the Gothic War. Exclusively military forts were only constructed at key strategic points (Veliki Sikavac).

The example of Victorinus in Illyricum shows that the state only provided help to some cities and large newly-founded fortifications in the shape of experienced architects. For the strategically significant forts, on the other hand, we may presume the army was involved in their construction, but also that imperial funding was secured for the purpose.

The settlement picture of Late Antiquity shows a gradual decline of cities in favour of smaller fortified settlements that could be more easily supplied and were often even completely autarchic. The latter are the most characteristic expression of the changed political and socio-economic conditions. Their existence was short-lived in some places, but longer or recurrent in more exposed areas. In a limited and modest extent, they are

the continuation of the classical civilisational achievements and a link between the old Roman populations and the newcomers.

The political, economic, military, ecclesiastical, and cultural history enables general conclusions, while systematic investigations of the different types of countryside settlement forms are required for a comprehensive understanding of the changes in the settlement patterns within smaller areas. The discussion so far mainly focused on the sites with well-preserved architectural remains and valuable artefacts, but these only show the most readily visible aspect of the settlement patterns, while all others are poorly known. Research in the future should focus on a detailed analysis of the vast quantities of small finds, but also on the economic and environmental factors. Only comprehensive research of individual settlements and their economic hinterland can offer a reliable answer with regard to the different settlement patterns in different areas. If this answer is certainly more complex for cities, the creation of fortified settlements is largely an indication of the dangerous conditions in the period of civil wars and barbarian incursions when these settlements were inhabited precisely because of their naturally protected location. The mass of countryside settlements, particularly the more readily perceptible fortified, but also the unfortified ones persisted to the end of Late Antiquity and attest to a much greater population density that previously posited.

The settlement patterns in a vital, but also the most endangered area of the Empire, between Ravenna and Constantinople, in many ways complement the transformation of cities and even more so of the countryside across the whole of the former Roman Empire. The previously oversimplified patterns, represented in the East primarily by the excellently preserved unfortified settlements in Syria's Limestone Massif and in the West by the characteristic Roman villas, have been substantially enhanced in a large part of the Empire with different forms of fortified sites. It is no longer acceptable to discuss and reiterate the simplified settlement patterns, as the settlement in Late Antiquity has been shown to be much more complex and nuanced in general, not only in the area between Ravenna and Constantinople.

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