

UDC 930.85 (4—12)

YU ISSN 0350—7653

ACADEMIE SERBE DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS

COMITE INTERACADEMIQUE DE BALKANOLOGIE  
DU CONSEIL DES ACADEMIES DES SCIENCES ET DES ARTS  
DE LA R.S.F.Y.  
INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES

# BALCANICA

ANNUAIRE DE L'INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES

## XVIII—XIX



BELGRADE  
1987—1988

BALCANICA XVIII—XIX, Београд 1987—1988, 9—453.



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## SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE ON THE SOUTH-EAST PRE-ALPINE TERRITORY IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES A.D.

In order to acquire a corresponding representation of settling structure in the time of the migration of peoples which can be extracted out of historical sources supplemented — especially in the recent years — by archaeological explorations, we follow first of all an archaeologically oriented concept of discussion and analytic modification. Relevant in this respect are works on the late antique settlements in Rifnik near Šentjur, Ajdna above Žirovnica, Polhograjska Gora, Veliki Korinj, St. Pavel above Vrtovin, Kekec above Nova Gorica, Rodik, Kučar, Pivka near Naklo, Velike Malence near Brežice, Križna Gora above Lož, Vranje, Hrušica, Svete Gore in Bizeljsko, Ajdovski Gradec near Bohinjska Bistrica, then at the localities at Bled, on Brinjeva Gora, the castle at Ptuj, in Ljubljana, Drnovo, Ajdovščina etc. Also used are topographic statements of S. Ciglenečki.

After the antique *limes* on the Danube had been broken in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A. D., a period on the south-east pre-Alpine territory began to be characterized by permanent danger and uncertainty, frequent fluctuation of military power, decrease of population number, then by change of social structure, assumption of political force by the early Christian Church, general impoverishment etc. In the period of the migration of peoples the settling structure on Slovene territory turned out to be quite different than it had been in the previous Roman era. This change was a consequence of the socio-economic as well as political development of the Roman Empire and our region.

Both the difference in the settling raster and the structure of a single settlement unit clearly disclose casual relationship with the circumstances of that time which also came upon the inhabitants on the nowadays Slovene territory — the doorstep

in front of Italy — then exceptionally important area from the strategic point of view. We cannot deprive this area of its value least of all because the late Roman barrages were built in the Carst region. It is true that they did not play an equally significant role at all times, but nevertheless they were constantly the factor which was giving accent to the south-eastern pre-Alpine territory. By a certain concept of treatment this region was privileged in the political-military regard as well, which must have been reflected in its special position, too. At the same time the nearest "out-of-military zone" must have been adapting to these circumstances in a special way, and with the new significant settling structure in the area both within and outside the boundary line — the barrages.

Archaeological evidence obtained in course of the explorations obviously speak about perishing of the antique urban centres and other settlement cores lying near the main communications. In their final phase they were completely "proletarized and crumbling". For the second time in the history of this region the value of the settlements in the hilled country has increased, meaning naturally protected sites often far away from crossings and roads. Of course, all these settlements did not come into existence in the period we are discussing here. For several of them, however, we have to look for the older origin. The finds from earlier, even prehistoric times, indicate that some of these places have been inhabited continuously, still with a different life-component value, but their significance certainly rose in the time of the migration of peoples. In a few cases *villae rusticae* and other objects were fortified too, providing defence and more secure living. Besides we can establish that in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the settling picture on our territory was practically ended, while beginning to change again not before coming or rather anchoring of the latest, new, Slovene ethnic group.

On the basis of the results gained so far from the archaeological researches the following types of settlement units can be singled out:

1. perishing urban settlements of the earlier antique character lying in the valleys near the communications;
2. newly springing or revived settlements lying above all in the heights
  - a) of more or less periodic refugitive type
  - b) of a constant residential character;
3. individual, from the geographic point of view more narrowly independent objects;
4. strongholds of a military character (probably self-dependent or they part of defensive settlement units; besides they were dependent on strategic position).

At first let us mention dying urban centres (1), e.g. Emona, Castra (Ajdovščina), Poetovio, Neviodunum, Celeia, where the archaeological material and the other results, both, by quality and quantity, reflect anything but the ancient splendour. Wherever the remains of that time came into light, they confirm the above statements. No heritage has been found so far which could be paralleled to the previous Roman era. However, the whole picture of that time reflected, as it was already said, general impoverishment which could not be surmounted. The preserved traces speak about the extraordinarily poor nourishing of the people and about their short life-span.

The settlements of a refugitive nature (2a) are hard to be determined. First of all they were conditioned by the occasional refugitive needs of the people and their property. They probably had to be in the vicinity of the old vegetating ancient towns and villages offering shelter during certain periods of time, depending on necessity and some other unknown factors. Such settling places had always to be somehow maintained. We may suppose that these refuges in their inner structure and architectural contents differed from the permanently inhabited settlements. The most necessary defensive and residential architecture probably prevailed in them, while the other buildings were put into background or were completely excluded from the settlement raster. We may presume that some of the refuges changed into the permanent settlements. Of course, this process could take the opposite direction as well. The consequence of development of the *refugium* into the permanent settlement was by all means supplementing the inner settling structure, i. e. building of the sacral object and the like. But there was no rigorous rule since everything was adapted to circumstances and conditions of the time.

The characteristics of the second sub-group (2b) are expressed first of all in the more complete urban structure of the architectural articles significant for longer living. The defensive architecture of such a settling unit undoubtedly depended on configuration of the land, location of the site, its function and role within the wider area and sometimes on the structure of its inhabitants. If the land itself offered suitable conditions for defence, objects built were adapted to that fact as well. Configuration of the land likewise dictated the inner arrangement and relationship among the buildings. The protective walls were emphasized by towers built on the exposed places and by the fortified main gate which was directly connected to the method of realization of the access into the defended settlement. The towers of course did not always have the protective function only. In a few cases they were observing-, signalling-buildings or watchtowers. And in some defensive complexes a protective moat had to be taken into consideration, too.

A central object inside the walls was a worshipping building, i.e. the one-aisled (as it has been known until now) hall-like early Christian basilica (sometimes two of them) with an exterior or interior apse; the church could also have other objects, e.g. a baptistery. The windows of these churches were glazed, the floor usually made of mortar platsering. If there were no other more important buildings, a water collector (or several of them) followed the basilica by significance.

Residential complexes in the settlements with tradesmen workshops and cattle-sheds (which certainly depended on the character of the settlement) were organized in a different way. In some isolated cases the buildings were arranged near the walls, in a somewhat removed position (Rifnik). Gradec near Praprotno, for instance, shows a kind of inner central urban organization of the houses; they are mostly much compressed. The residential buildings on Ajdna and Polhograjska Gora are situated according to the available room within these settlements. And on Polhograjska Gora a central object is represented by a water cistern. Inner arrangement of the objects, as we have already mentioned, is shown in a certain order: a sacral building was a central point in the settlements, but sometimes it was represented perhaps only by a water cistern.

The form and the way of construction show a decline in the architectural knowledge. Dwelling houses were made of stone and timber, but there are houses only of stone or only of timber. There are one or more rooms in the houses. The one-room type is most common among them; however, the five room buildings, for instance, are known, too. The houses had one or two storeys. In some localities they were standing on the extra dug out terraces (Žusem). Thus the size of a house can be a starting-point for having insight in social problems. Several archaeologists point out that the central part of the settlement had to be represented by the most important objects. A central heating is still known in some of the houses but there are objects with hearths, too. The construction of the dwelling houses differed of course from that of the cult-buildings. Objects used by tradesmen and the cattle-sheds were of more inferior architectural quality. The floor in the houses was often very primitive (made of beaten clay, bricks, mortar, timber etc.). Various materials were used for the roofs (tiles, timber, slate, *tegulae*). The locks were still unchanged and were similar to those from the previous Roman era. The roadways which can still be traced somewhere (e.g. Polhograjska Gora) were leading to the settlements and they were at least of one cart width.

What were the links among all these settlements, we do not know yet. But they had to exist because possibility for their maintenance also depended on reciprocal help. Therefore one may suppose that in a certain period of time these sites might

have represented a kind of a broader defensive mechanism in our region. On the territory of the present-day republic of Slovenia and in the neighbouring Austria and Italy quite a number of such settlements has been known, till now. They were populated mostly by indigenous, romanized people, predominantly of lower social class in terms of the social arrangement in the earlier antique periods) who had not emigrated yet. Periodically one may also think on the presence of newcomers — both members of the military class and civilians. But the relationship between the foreigners and the local inhabitants is still rather blurred. The native people were supported mostly by cattle-breeding (whereas they used yarn-combs, shears for wool etc.) and less by cultivating the land (whereby they used scythes, sickles, hoes and ploughs with iron parts). But in the time of danger the residents of such protected settlements had of course to attend defensive tasks, too.

In the vicinity of the settlements there were graveyards (single graves were connected with sacral objects) which were one of the basic material sources for obtaining the cultural image of that time. The necropolises belong to the type of the graveyards in rows with graves oriented to the east, but that was not always the rule (e.g. Vranje). Many times we can ascertain, on the basis of a more complex analysis, the ethnic provenience of the buried and other characteristics, e.g. burial rites, social level of the buried people, their cultural degree, number of the inhabitants and material culture — from tools, weapons to the other objects used for living. Certain relationships between the strangers and local inhabitants can be revealed as well.

Among the individual settling objects (3) we can ennumerate provincial *vilae rusticae* and post stations; in those times several of them were changed into the defensive objects. Unfortunately, this type of the settlement is not sufficiently studied up to now, so that no relevant conclusions can be made. The same applies to the organization and structure of the military camps (4). It seems that in a few cases they were quite independent settlement units. They were located on strategically important places and were not closely linked with the native settlements; in other words, they did not lie within the complex. Such a stronghold, completely isolated from the native living stream, was probably the settlement to which the graveyard at Dravlje belonged. Similar independent settlement is found also on the hill-fort at Pivka near Naklo. But, as it seems, the structure of the population in the settlement at Kranj, on Rifnik, Zasavska gora, Vinji vrh etc., was different. It is obvious that strategic purposes prevailed with this type of objects.

However, a long-standing question arises as to the origin and reason for so sparse single findings of foreign provenance in such a quantity of the material and other remains of native, romanized origin in so numerous Roman localities. One has to emphasize

that there were no grounds for reciprocal relations of any kind between the new settlers who were, first of all, members of the military class, and the native inhabitants. The basic and genuine interest of the local people was the one of preservation and existence. It can be noticed that they had no special wish to adopt social norms which already had been unacceptable for them many times. Also, the number of newcomers was not so large. There is no clear answer yet about such type of the settlement nor any satisfactory evidence thereof. Perhaps one should add that a tower itself within the defensive ring can not speak in favour of the character of a stronghold.

It is certain, however, that in course of time we shall be able drawing analogies to complete the picture of that and other types of settlements in the period of migration of peoples, and more particularly if the research continues with such intensity as in recent years.

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