

Continuity in Late Antiquity Slovenian fortified hilltop settlements

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INTRODUCTION

The aspect of continuity in Late Antiquity hilltop settlements in Slovenia is a very complex issue due to the long duration and different types of these sites. The network of fortified hilltop settlements began to take shape in the second half of the 3rd century¹. Since the 4th century it has been possible to differentiate between different types of sites (refuges, military forts, permanent settlements). By the end of the 4th century most of the military forts had collapsed. In the second half of the 5th century, the settlement permanently moved from Roman cities and country locations to distant, naturally well-protected areas. At this time some hilltop settlements, which were located on the main road *Aquileia – Siscia* (such as Ančnikovo gradišče, Brinjeva gora) had already ceased to exist, while others - mostly on more remote and naturally better protected areas - were now established.

In the 6th century hilltop settlements represented the most common type of dwelling within most of present-day Slovenian territory (fig. 1). The demise of these sites is usually attributed to the first wave of invading Slavic settlers at the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century. Most of these settlements are believed to have come to a violent end.

However, there is an increasing number of evidence indicating that some of the hilltop settlements were also inhabited in the Early Middle Ages. It is not entirely clear whether there was a recolonization of those locations, or if it is possible that in some cases there was an actu-

al continuity from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages. The new evidences shows that some of these settlements did not always come to a violent end but that there were some cases of peaceful resettlement to other locations.

This paper will focus on the hilltop settlements from Late Antiquity in Slovenia where evidences were found proving these were inhabited also in the Early Middle Ages. It will not be concerned with the continuity or discontinuity within Late Antiquity itself in the time from the 3th to the 6th century.

At the times between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages two totally different rural entities were established in the area of modern Slovenia. In the Early Middle Ages the Western part of Slovenia (the Upper Soča Valley, Vipava Valley, Kras and Primorje) belonged to Italy. Since the Lombard migration into Italy in 568 this part was split into Istria, which was under Byzantine rule, and Veneto which was under Lombard rule². The Eastern part of Slovenia on the other hand was free to accommodate new settlers after the Lombards' departure.

From the end of the 6th century early Slavic settlements concentrated on the lowlands of Eastern Slovenia. Despite some contrary opinions about early Slavic colonization³ the large number of settlements (most were discovered and researched while building motorways) draw a relatively clear picture about the invasion of the new settlers⁴. The current state of

¹ CIGLENEČKI 1987, 123 f.; IDEM 1990, 154–157; IDEM 1999, 292 f.

² ŠTIIH 2000, 356 f.

³ CURTA 2008, 648–650.

⁴ We are aware of the problems that come with equating the material culture with ethnicity (in this case equating a certain group of ceramic findings with the Slavs). However the fact that the new type of settlements to-



Fig. 1 The Late Antique and Early Medieval settlement in Slovenia.

research shows strong concentrations of such settlements mainly by the rivers Mura, Drava and Sava (fig. 1). The oldest settlement in the far East of Slovenian territory in the areas around Murska Sobota can be dated back to the second half of the 6th and the first half of the 7th century (Phase 1)⁵.

The situation was completely different in the Western part of today's Slovenia. Here, the organization and cultural tradition with which Slavic settlers came into contact with is much better preserved. According to written sources, by the end of the 8th century, those settlers also settled the Vipava Valley and the Soča Valley⁶.

The coastal towns of Koper and Piran testify a different settlement pattern, one that was continuous and uninterrupted from Late Antiquity onwards⁷. Similarly, Kranj (castel *Carnium*) in the mainland also shows some elements of continuous site from the Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages⁸.

gether with new ceramic forms appears in the Eastern Slovenia at the beginning of the 7th century, could be explained only by the appearance of the new, according to written sources Slavic, settlers.

⁵ GUŠTIN/TIEFENGRABER 2002, 58–60.

⁶ ŠTIH/PERŠIČ 1981, 337 f.

⁷ CUNJA 1996, 130 f.; VIDRIH PERKO 1994, 241–248; VIDRIH PERKO/ŽUPANČIČ 2003, 467–473.

⁸ SAGADIN 2008, 194 f.

Events taking place after the 6th century on the areas in the mainland, inhabited by autochthonous inhabitants, are still widely unknown. The main question is to understand what was happening on the hilltop settlements in the 7th century and how the local population came into contact with the new settlers.

The main problem with researching autochthonous settlements after the end of the 6th century, and their contact with the Slavic newcomers, is the lack of comparative findings. Contact with the Mediterranean (Byzantine) area had almost stopped by this time. The import of pottery into the South Eastern Alpine area, which can be accurately dated, ended in the middle of the 7th century⁹. Findings of objects of Byzantine origin from the time after the middle of the 7th century are also rare. Autochthonous inhabitants were mostly buried without grave goods which makes it difficult to date this burials accurately. The local pottery has not yet been fully researched and its dating remains problematic. Most finds from the Early Middle Ages on Late Antiquity hilltop settlements are metal finds, which were mainly discovered with illegal metal detectors. Their context and their relation to the Late Antiquity layers is therefore widely unknown.

⁹ LUSUARDI SIENA/NEGRI/VILLA 2004, 79 f.

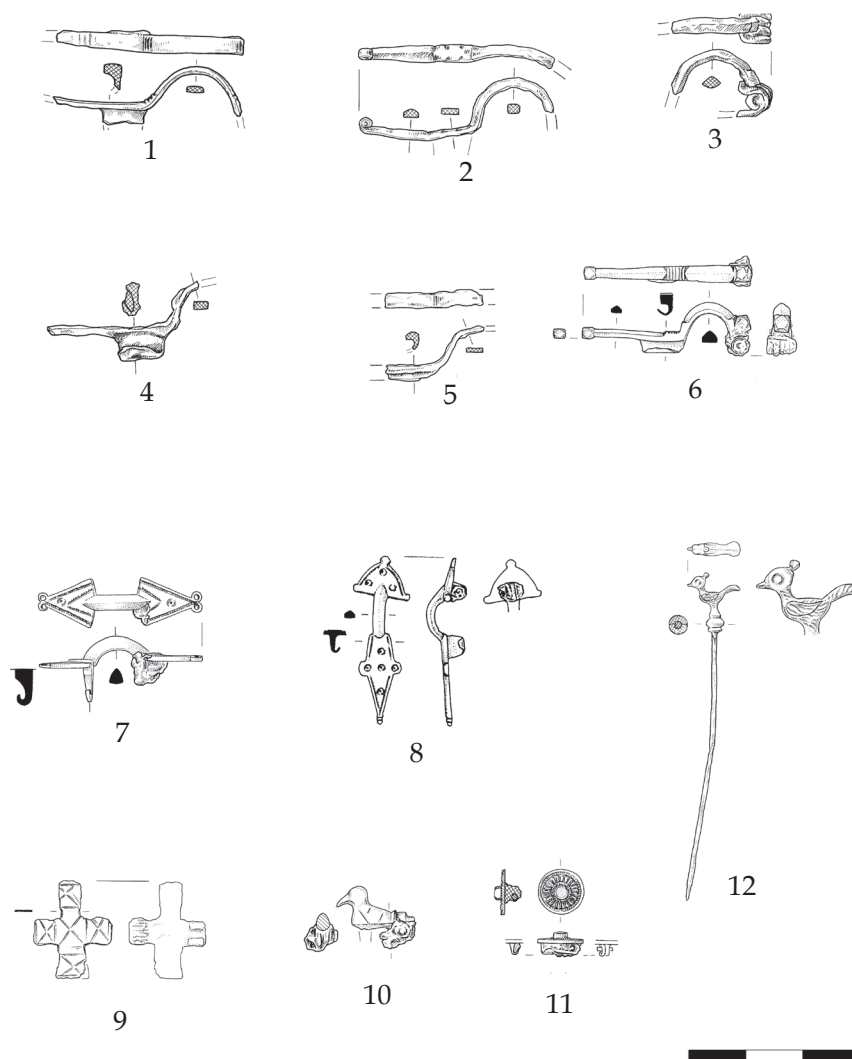


Fig. 2 Tonovcov grad, metal finds from the 6th and first half of the 7th century AD.

For a more precise analysis of the period between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, we have selected the hilltop settlement of Tonovcov grad on which systematic archaeological excavations were carried out. The excavations were important as these have also, in addition to the finds, given us data about their stratigraphic relations.

TONOVCOV GRAD

The Tonovcov grad settlement is situated a few kilometres north of Kobarid in the Soča River Valley in the far west of today's Slovenia (fig. 1). This region was, together with the region of Friuli, under the Lombards' rule from

the year 568. The region came under Frankish government after the Frankish conquest of Italy in 774¹⁰.

The Lombards' arrival in 568 did not vastly change the ethnical picture in the Friuli¹¹. The Lombards' civil settlements are believed to have been located only at Cividale and in its surroundings¹². The Lombard cemeteries located near some strategical points (such as hilltops or passages over rivers) also indicate the existence of small Lombard military crews¹³. However, even after the Lombards' arrival most of the territory

¹⁰ ŠTIH 2000, 356 f.

¹¹ BIERBRAUER 2000, 320–324.

¹² MAGRINI/KRUH 2007, 82–84.

¹³ CIGLENEČKI 2001, 193–195; MAGRINI/KRUH 2007, 84.

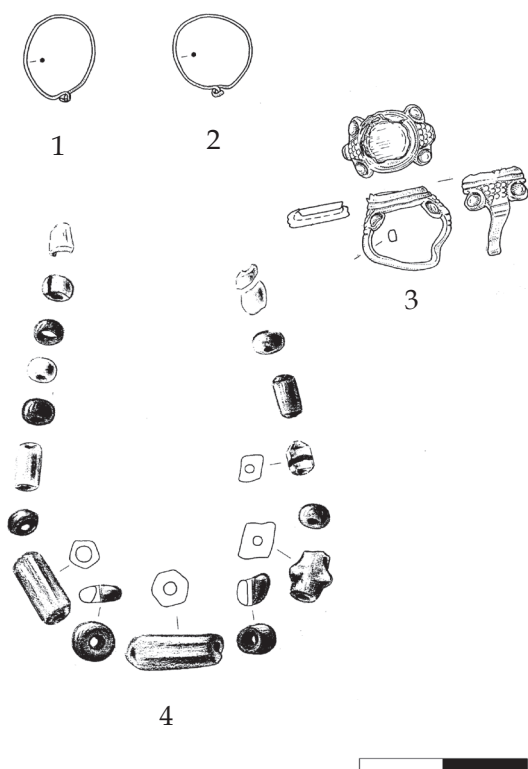


Fig. 3 Tonovcov grad, grave 3.

was settled mainly by autochthonous settlers. Their material culture shows a strong roman and christian character¹⁴.

Based on finds from the cemeteries, the Slavic settlement in this region cannot be accurately dated back further than the 9th century¹⁵. The only finds that can probably be dated back to the time at the end of 7th and beginning of the 8th century are ceramic cups found in the area of a prehistoric building site at Most na Soči. The cups show characteristics of early Slavic pottery and probably belong to the time of the end of 7th and beginning of the 8th century¹⁶. These findings have been interpreted as a Slavic cremation burial¹⁷.

The Tonovcov grad settlement is situated in a strategically important area on a natural extremely well protected 412 m high hilltop on the right bank of the Soča River. The settlement con-

trolled one of the most important gateways to Italy – the road that went from the North, followed the Soča River Valley, and then at Kobarid turned towards the Nadiža River to Cividale/*Forum Iulii* and *Aquileia*¹⁸.

The excavations on the hilltop have been going on intermittently since 1993. Since that time a housing structure, a sacral complex, two smaller structures of unknown function and a water cistern have been discovered¹⁹. An analysis of these findings brought about some new elements, even for the period after the year 600, which is of interest at this place.

The preserved architectural remains and small finds imply that the settlement started in the last decades of the 4th century. It lasted at least to the third decade of the 5th century and was then followed by a short hiatus²⁰. The buildings were partly destroyed and partly reused in the construction of new buildings²¹.

The dwellings, the sacral complex and the water cistern were constructed at the end of the 5th and beginning of the 6th century. The sacral complex in particular underwent many renovations and reconstructions. The last reconstruction took place in the time after the Gothic-Byzantine wars in the middle of the 6th century²². The evidence for this reconstruction is, amongst others, a small amphora (late small *spatheion*) with the coin of Emperor Justinian from the middle of the 6th century. This amphora was found near the altar of the central church.

The settlement was still thriving in the second half of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century and had connections with the Mediterranean Area. This is evidenced with findings of different types of Eastern Mediterranean Amphorae. Most of these date to the 6th century (LRA 1, LRA 2, LRA 5–6)²³. The most recent of the amphorae were the variations of late small *spatheion* and an amphora of the Samos-cistern type which dates from the second half of the 6th

¹⁴ BIERBRAUER 1985, 497–513, fig 4; IDEM 2000, 321–324.

¹⁵ Tolmin, St. Urh (KNIFIC/ŽBONA TRKMAN 1990, 505–520); Kanal (MAGRINI/KRUH 2007, 85, Fig. 7). – For the sites in Italy cfr. IDEM 2007, note 18.

¹⁶ MLINAR 2002, 111 f.

¹⁷ PLETERSKI 2008a, 33 f., fig. 2,3–4.

¹⁸ ŠAŠEL 1975, 76 f.; BOSIO 1991, 193 f.; CIGLENEČKI 2005, 95 f.; MAGNANI 2007, 135–139.

¹⁹ CIGLENEČKI 1994, 184–207; IDEM 2005, 96–103; IDEM 2008, 511–524; MODRIJAN 2007, 175–179.

²⁰ CIGLENEČKI 2008, 513–515, fig. 18.

²¹ For example structures 2 and 3, MODRIJAN 2007, 178 f.

²² CIGLENEČKI 2008, 518–520.

²³ MILAVEC/MODRIJAN 2007, 116–118, fig. 10.

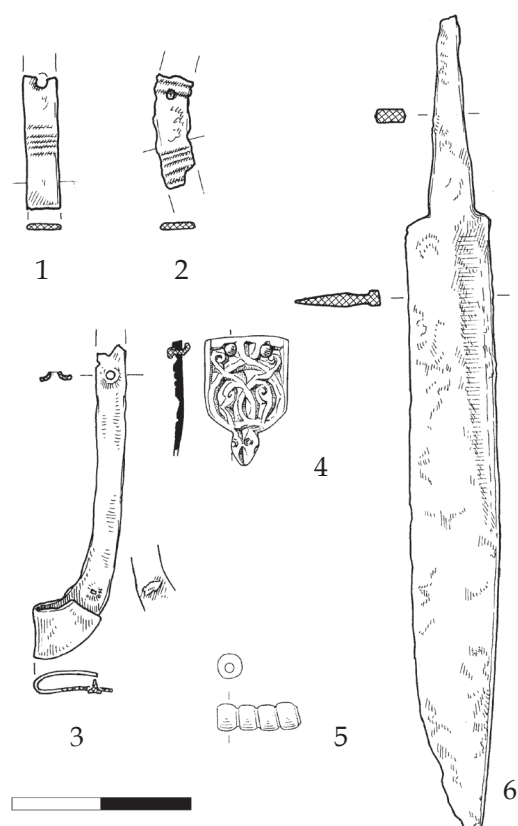


Fig. 4 Tonovcov grad, metal finds from the Early Medieval layers (6th–7th AD).

to the middle of the 7th century²⁴. Amphorae of the Samos-cistern type, from the late 6th and early 7th century, were found mostly at points strategically important for the Byzantine control of the territory after the Gothic-Byzantine wars²⁵. The rim of a late small *spatheion*, which according to Bonifay's typology belongs to variant C of the "spatheion 3", can be dated even to the second half of the 7th century²⁶.

All the above-mentioned amphorae were found in layers dating from the time when the structures was in use. In addition to the amphorae, typical Late Antique coarse pottery and small metal finds were also found in the layers. These finds showed that the inhabitants were of

Roman origin. Their material culture was closer to Friuli than the rest of Slovenia. The finds from the first half of the 6th century were mostly cross-bow fibulae (fig. 2,1–6), while the finds from the second half of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century were cross-shaped fibula (fig. 2,9), bird shaped fibula (fig. 2,10), Voltago type fibula (fig. 2,8) and equal-arm fibula (fig. 2,7)²⁷. There were only a few finds that could be attributed to the Lombards (*spatha* and round fibula)²⁸ despite the geographical proximity to Cividale.

An important find from the last period of the Late Antique settlement on Tonovcov grad was also the grave number 3 (fig. 3, 1–3), which can be dated to the beginning of the 7th century. This grave was found by the narthex of the southern church²⁹. Inside this female grave³⁰ was a necklace made out of 17 cylindrical beads, a pair of simple bronze earrings with a loop and a silver ring. Beads made out of glass with longitudinally cracked surface that were common in the 7th century and later were also part of the necklace³¹. The large silver ring was of the so-called Syrian type. This type of ring was already common in the discussed area in the 4th century but was more widely used in Byzantine jewellery. In the South Eastern part of the Alps, rings of this type were found at the beginning of the 7th century³². The positioning of the grave next to the narthex of the southern church (the church which was built last, most probably in the middle of the 6th century) also supports the late dating.

The manner of demise of the settlement is not entirely clear. An intensive burned layer was documented in some parts of the large dwelling structure but was not found in the area of the sacral complex. This shows that at least the churches did not come to a violent end.

There is also a large amount of evidence

²⁴ ARTHUR 1990, 284.

²⁵ Ibid., 280, fig. 4. The Samos-cistern type amphora is known from Koper (CUNJA 1996, fig. 31, pl. 27,299), Udine (VILLA 1998, fig. 4,16), Oderzo (ARTHUR 1990, fig. 2,2), Marano Lagunare (Ibid., fig. 1), Ravenna (STOPPIONI PICOLI 1983, 138, nr. 8,8), Torcello (TONIOLLO 2007, pl. 3b,1), probably also from Invillino (MACKENSEN 1987, 248, pl. 41,7) and Duel (LADSTÄTTER 2003, fig. 7,8).

²⁶ BONIFAY 2004, 127, fig. 69,C.

²⁷ CIGLENEČKI 2008, pl. 22; MILAVEC 2008, 17–20; IDEM 2009, 245–246, pl. 2: 1–9.

²⁸ CIGLENEČKI 1997, 17 f.; IDEM 1994, pl. 1,22. Ciglencečki assumes on the hilltop a small Lombard crew (IDEM 2001, 193 f.).

²⁹ CIGLENEČKI 1997, 22 f.

³⁰ All determinations of sexes are from LEBEN SELJAK 2008.

³¹ MILAVEC 2008, 83.

³² MILAVEC 2008, 83 f. Similar rings are known from the Lombard grave 1 at San Martino at Trezzo d'Adda (DE MARCHI 2000, 169) and from the female grave 168 from Sabiona (CIURLETI 1997, 524, fig. 151).

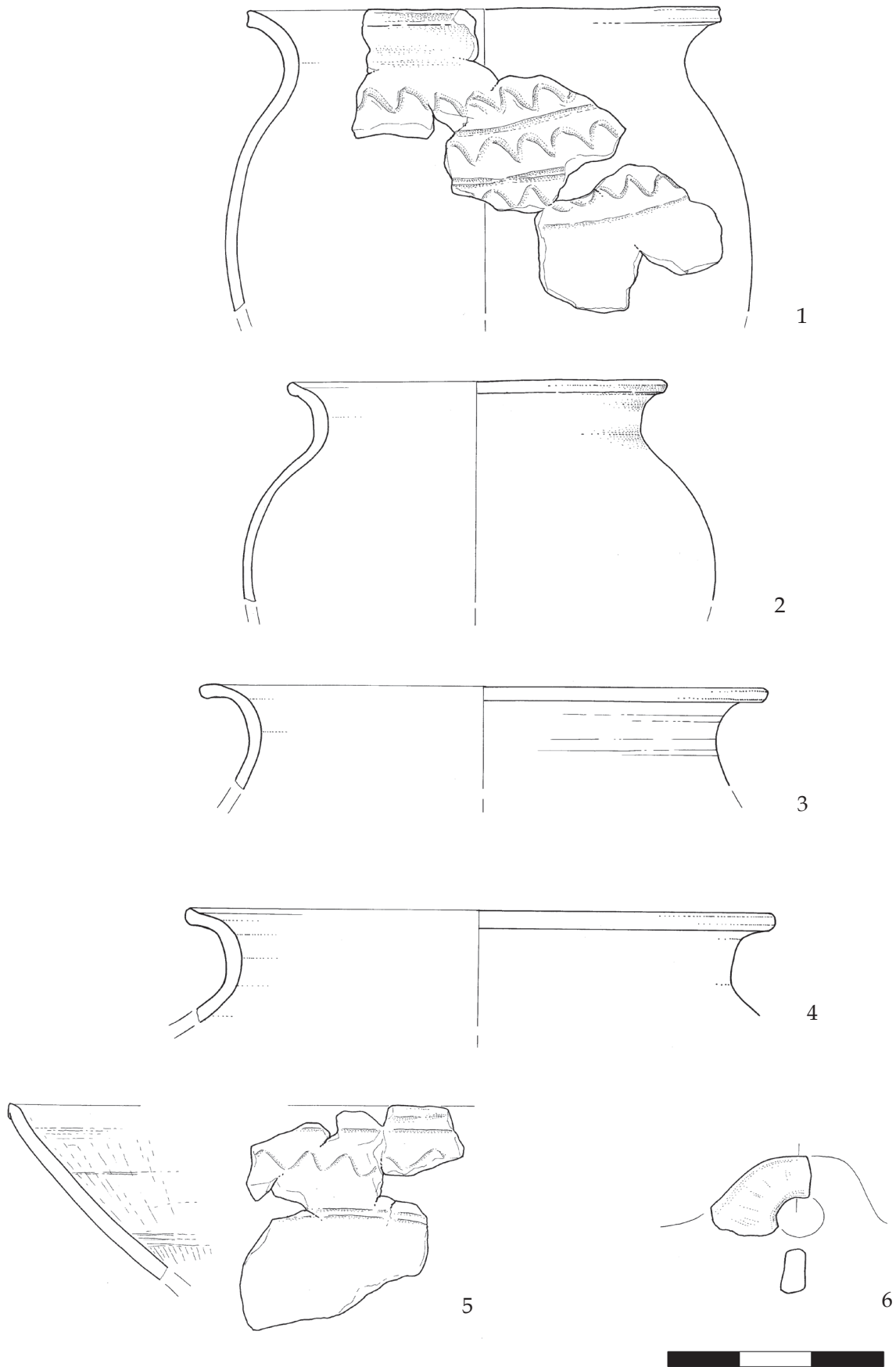


Fig. 5 Tonovcov grad, coarse pottery from the Early Medieval layers (6th-7th AD).

showing that there was still life in the settlement during the period when many Late Antique buildings were already in ruins. The evidence for this has been found at all the excavated structures.

In the burnt layer of the large dwelling structure 1 there was a lot of coarse kitchen pottery as well as metallic finds. The part of the sheath that was found at Tonovcov grad (fig. 4,3)³³ could best be compared with the sheath found at the hilltop settlement of Ajdna³⁴. Another two pieces of the ornamented sheath from the burnt layer (fig. 4,1-2) could best be compared to the sheath from grave 28 from Bodešče near Bled, dated to the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century³⁵. An early Carolingian strap end (fig. 4,4) and blue bead (fig. 4,5) also provide the evidence for dating this layer back to around the year 800³⁶.

A hearth was discovered on the floor in the central church. The pottery in the hearth was similar that from the burnt layer of Structure 1. There were no other finds besides the pottery which could contribute to a more precise dating.

An intensive burnt layer – most probably the remains of a fireplace – was found also in the corner at the bottom of the water cistern. Here, too, only the remains of ceramic dishes were found.

A common characteristic of the pottery from the layers formed after the buildings were partly destroyed, is that they are of coarser texture. As a consequence of the organic temper in the clay the dishes are quite porous. The uncontrolled firing made their surface mottled. There is also a change in the shapes of the dishes. The most common at this time are pots with a long neck and rim (fig. 5,1-4).

Dishes of such type appear in the area of Slovenia and Friuli through the long period of time in Late Antiquity as well as in the Early Middle Age contexts³⁷. At Tonovcov grad such

dishes were found only in layers which started after the buildings had been vacated and which contain no ceramic imports from the Mediterranean. This is an important fact that contributes to the more precise dating of these dishes.

Some similar pots have been found in north Italian cemeteries, in graves which are believed to have belonged to the autochthonous or mixed autochthonous and Lombard people in the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th century³⁸. Such pots are also known from the hilltop settlements, at Invillino³⁹, Udine, Castello⁴⁰ and Attimis, San Giorgio⁴¹.

Similar shapes of pots are also known from Late Antique as well as Early Middle Age archaeological sites in central and eastern Slovenia. At Tinje, pots with a long neck and rim were found in the layers belonging to the Early Middle Ages⁴². At Gorenji Mokronog such pots have been interpreted as autochthonous remains in the Slavic milieu⁴³. Similar pots from an Early Antiquity settlement in Dragomelj near Ljubljana date to the time after the 7th century⁴⁴. Similar pots are also known from Vranje⁴⁵ in central Slovenia and from Hemmaberg⁴⁶ and *Teurnia*⁴⁷ in the Carinthian region.

Despite the fact that pots with a long neck and markedly everted rim also appeared in Late Antiquity contexts, there is a majority of finds suggesting that the ones found at Tonovcov grad can be dated to the Early Middle Ages. The first element is the stratigraphic position of pots in the layers showing a re-settlement of the partly destroyed structures. Other important elements are the technological characteristics of

³³ MILAVEC 2008, pl. 26,6.

³⁴ The sheath from Ajdna was found amongst finds from the 9th century in the burned layer above the remains of the house from the 6th century (VIDRIH PERKO/SAGADIN 2004, fig. 10).

³⁵ KNIFIC/PLETESKI 1981, pl. 10.

³⁶ CIGLENEČKI 1994, 203, pl. 1,14; MILAVEC 2008, 44, pl. 9,15.

³⁷ CIGLENEČKI 2000, 65.

³⁸ BORZACCONI 2007, 266 f., pl. 4; BARTOLI/MASELLI SCOTTI 1989, pl. 2,10, 18, 29.

³⁹ BIERBRAUER 1987, pl. 73,6, 12; 85,1; 86,7; 89,10, 12; 116,8; 118,9.

⁴⁰ BUORA/FASANO 1994, pl. 2, IIIa.1, IIIa.2, IIIa.3, IIIId.1.

⁴¹ VILLA 2003, pl. 2,1-2,4. Here they were found in the layers which started at the time after the objects were vacated.

⁴² CIGLENEČKI 2000, 65, 140, fig. 146; pl. 17-18.

⁴³ PLETESKI/BELAK 2002, 100,7, 10-11, 14.

⁴⁴ At Dragomelj a pot of similar shape was made on a fast wheel. The pot was found in a cave which, by using radiocarbon dating, can be placed between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century (TURK 2002, 82 f., pl. 1,1-2; fig. 4,5).

⁴⁵ KNIFIC 1979, 51, 78, 80, 85.

⁴⁶ LADSTÄTTER 2003, pl. 50,8.

⁴⁷ RODRIGUEZ 1997, pl. 2,10, 12.

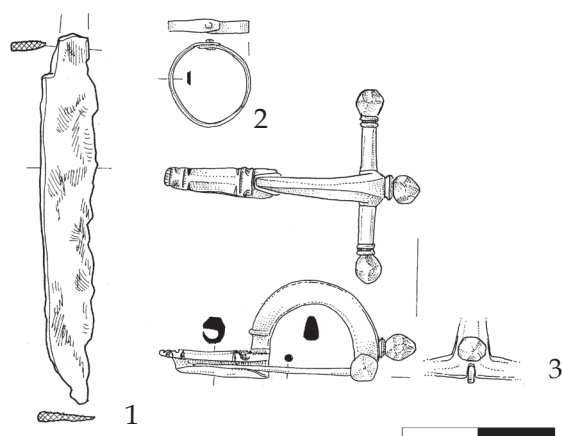


Fig. 6 Tonovcov grad, grave 21.

these pots. The porous surface of the pots shows organic temper to the clay. All pots of this type also have a mottled surface which is not present in the ceramics from the earlier layers where the prevalent colour was black, which was achieved with reduced firing.

An important new form in the Early Medieval layers is also a kettle (fig. 5,6). Such kettles were common in the contexts of the 9th and 10th century in Western Slovenia⁴⁸ and Northern Italy⁴⁹. A fragment of the kettle from Tonovcov grad was discovered in the burnt layer at the bottom of the water cistern.

The coarse pottery from Tonovcov grad discussed earlier can be confidently dated to the Early Middle Ages but a more precise dating is hard to determine. Pots with a long neck and rim appear in the cemeteries in Friuli already at the end of the 6th and in the 7th century. On the other hand, the appearance of this form in the Early Medieval contexts in Slovenia and Friuli shows a long period of use. Other finds from the ruination layers on Tonovcov grad, such as fragments of sheaths and a Carolingian strap end, represent evidence showing that the layers where these types of ceramics were found are actually more recent and date from the end of 8th to the beginning of 9th century. This is also the case for the kettle, which is a typical new form, possibly connected with the new ways of preparing food.

⁴⁸ PLETESKI 2008b, pl. 19,4–6.

⁴⁹ BIERBRAUER 1987, pl. 124,10; LUSUARDI SIENA/NEGRI/VILLA 2004, 88, fig. 2,5–6; 4,1; 13,1–2.

Based on the above, it is not possible to determine a precise dating for the pottery at the partly demolished structures of Tonovcov grad. The pottery forms and the fact that these were made on a throwing wheel imply an antique tradition, but the poor quality of the fabric and the mottled surface of these dishes do not belong to this tradition. Some elements (such as pots with long necks) could be the remains of Late Antique pottery that survived the Slavic colonization of the valleys and taken on some of the new technological solutions and new forms⁵⁰.

Apart from the finds mentioned above, some graves from Tonovcov grad can also be dated to the Early Middle Ages. The female grave 21 (fig. 6)⁵¹ was discovered in the ruins of the sacral complex between the narthexes of the Central and the Southern church. Inside this grave an iron knife was discovered next to the left upper arm of the skeleton. A band-shaped finger ring with a rivet and a bronzed crossbow fibula with onion-shaped knobs type Keller 1a were found in the right hand, and the golden earrings with glass beads in the mouth. The fibula dates to the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century⁵². Judging by the ring, which is a common form in the 8th century, this grave can primarily be placed in the 8th century, despite the early dating of the fibula⁵³. The fact that this grave was dug in the ruination layer is also consistent with the later dating.

Behind structure two, a group of four graves (two male, one female and one child) was documented. Three of these graves were without grave goods, only inside male grave 18 a knife, a short iron strap end with a rivet and a small green bead (fig. 7) were found⁵⁴. The strap end and the bead were dated to the 8th century⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ PLETESKI/BELAK 2002, 102 f.

⁵¹ MILAVEC 2008, pl. 48,11–13.

⁵² KELLER 1971, 32–35; PRÖTTEL 1988, 349–353.

⁵³ MILAVEC 2008, 85.

⁵⁴ MILAVEC 2008, pl. 38,1–3.

⁵⁵ MILAVEC 2008, 74 f. For a strap end cfr. KLEEMANN 1992, fig. 6, Typ 8b; for a bead DANNHEIMER 1968, pl. 1,57. Other graves from Tonovcov grad were without grave goods and, judging from their position in the sacral complex (graves 1,4,5 and 13) and its surroundings (a group of children's graves 6 to 12), could be dated in the period of Late Antiquity.

EARLY MIDDLE AGE FINDS ON LATE ANTIQUE HILLTOP SETTLEMENTS

As discussed in the introduction, Early Middle Age traces are mostly known from lowland settlements in Eastern Slovenia. The settlements were concentrated by the rivers Mura and Drava, a few of these were also located by the Sava River. The settlements of the Murska Sobota 1 Phase, dating to the end of the 6th and the 7th century, were known from a small number of archaeological sites in the East of Slovenia. A higher settlement density could be seen from the settlements of the Murska Sobota 2 Phase which dating to the end of the 8th and the 9th century⁵⁶.

Slavic settlement of the Valleys at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century caused the demise of most of the Late Antique sites, particularly those located in more accessible areas. Despite this, some of the antique settlements showed evidence of life even in the Early Middle Ages.

It is hard to establish the events which took place on the hilltop in the 7th and 8th century, due to the few finds from this time. There is a significant increase in the number of artefacts from the end of the 8th and the 9th century⁵⁷. The most common finds from this era were metal objects of Carolingian origin (such as parts of military equipment and gear for a horse and rider). They were discovered at the settlements close to important roads (Gradišče near Dunaj, Ajdna, Hom, St. Volar) as well as at some more remote points (Gradec by Velika Strmica, Zidani Gaber, Bašelj). Most of the above mentioned artefacts were objects with unknown contexts. For this reason it is hard to establish the character of these sites. The examples at Ajdna⁵⁸ and Bašelj⁵⁹ show that Early Middle Age finds were most commonly discovered in the ruination layers of the Late Antiquity structures.

Apart from the sites where objects of Carolingian origin were found, a group of settlements of civil character was also discovered, located in the more remote areas. Evidence of dwelling structures as well as ceramics that could be

linked to settlement in the Early Middle Ages were found and researched in these sites.

The settlement of Tinje is located in the remote hilly part of Kozjansko. This is a site where a number of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age structures were discovered⁶⁰. Some structures (2 and 4) are believed to have belonged to Late Antiquity (based on building technology and on finds discovered in them). Structures 5 and 7, on the other hand, do not belong to this period. Based on the pottery in them these date to the Early Middle Ages. The pottery shows a mix of autochthonous and slavic elements⁶¹. Structure 6, which dates from Late Antiquity but also contains finds from the Early Middle Ages, is particularly interesting. It is not clear whether this structure showed contact between slavic settlers and autochthonous inhabitants, however the author believes this to be one of the possible explanations⁶².

Ančnikovo gradišče is located on the Southern part of Pohorje and is one of the most Eastern Slovenian hilltop sites. This settlement thrived in the 4th and in the first half of the 5th century but was later abandoned due to its easily accessible position near the road *Aquileia – Siscia*. Evidence of Early Middle Age settlement was excavated in the ruins of the abandoned buildings⁶³. The most common finds in the Early Middle Age layers of Ančnikovo gradišče were pottery. The analysis of these finds showed that the shapes of the dishes were similar to the ones from the Late Antiquity. However some new shapes were also discovered (for example platters), and the technology used for making these dishes was different from that used during Antiquity⁶⁴. Most of the dishes were made in the roman tradition on a throwing wheel and only a few handmade dishes were discovered. The pottery from Ančnikovo gradišče is similar to the pottery from other lowland Slavic settlements close by (Slivnica, Hoče)⁶⁵, particularly to the type Murska Sobota 2⁶⁶. A typical charac-

⁵⁶ GUŠTIN 2007, 289–294, fig. 1.

⁵⁷ KARO 2007, 12–145.

⁵⁸ VIDRIH PERKO/SAGADIN 2004, 22 f.

⁵⁹ KARO 2007, 47–57; KNIFIC 1999, 64 f.

⁶⁰ CIGLENEČKI 2000.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 37 f.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 157 f.

⁶³ CIGLENEČKI/STRMČNIK GULIČ 2002, 72 f., fig. 12–13; STRMČNIK GULIČ/CIGLENEČKI 2003.

⁶⁴ RAVNIK 2006, 67–70.

⁶⁵ CIGLENEČKI/STRMČNIK GULIČ 2002, 67–75.

⁶⁶ GUŠTIN/TIEFENGRABER 2002, 60–62.

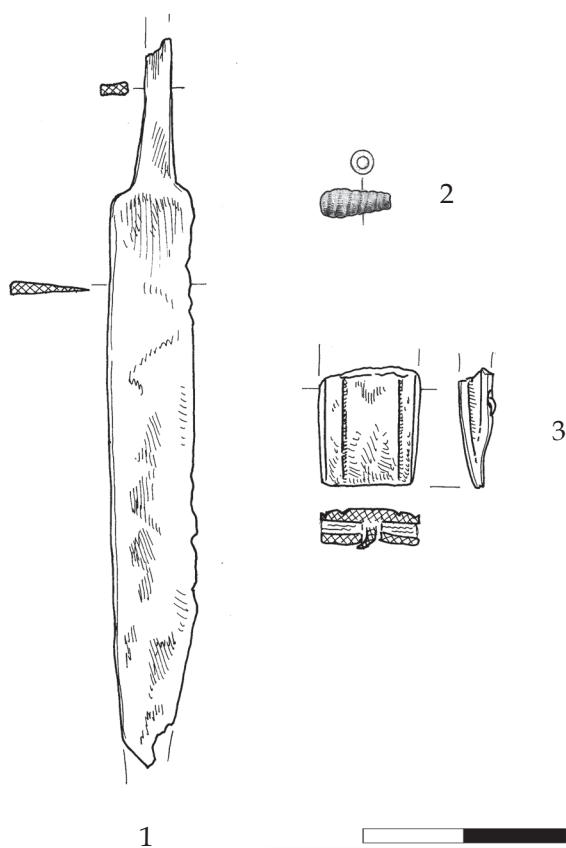


Fig. 7 Tonovcov grad, grave 18.

teristic for this type is the variety of forms and precision in the way these ceramics were made. Technologically there was a transition from handmade dishes to dishes made on a throwing wheel. This pottery was typically decorated with parallel and wavy lines and impressions under the necks of the pots. The Murska Sobota 2 type of ceramics dates back to the 8th and 9th century⁶⁷.

Ančnikovo gradišče shows the 300-year absence of settlement but, despite this, the pottery finds from this site show a mix of autochthonous and Slavic elements.

Another settlement where such interaction had occurred was at Grad near Gorenji Mokronog in the Dolenjska region. At this site a cemetery was found next to the settlement. At this cemetery burials took place until the middle of the 7th century⁶⁸. Most of the finds discovered at the settlement belonged to the autochthonous

tradition, but some new elements, unknown in the period of Late Antiquity (such as hand made dishes with a cracked surface and shining slip on the surface), were also found⁶⁹. The anthropological analysis of the graves also confirms the presence of autochthonous population with a small proportion of foreign ethnic elements⁷⁰.

CONCLUSION

The cases presented indicate that the chronology and manner of the demise of Late Antiquity settlements in Slovenia was very diverse. The most accessible settlement points by the main roads collapsed either in the middle of the 5th or in the 6th century. Burnt layers found in some of those settlements⁷¹ show that these settlements came to a violent end.

Some more remote sites like Tinje and Grad pri Gorenjem Mokronogu that were further away from the main roads were at least partly active for some time after Slavic colonization. These show an interaction of autochthonous characteristics with Slavic elements. Ančnikovo gradišče can be seen as an example of resettlement of an old fortified settlement point.

The situation at Tonovcov Grad was different. The continuity of autochthonous settlement at Tonovcov Grad in the antique tradition can be assumed even from the first decades of the 7th century. The buildings were still standing and contacts with the Mediterranean were still existent, although much less frequent than before. After the middle of the 7th century the buildings partly fell apart. It is not completely clear whether this can be attributed to the migration of the autochthonous settlers⁷². Since the settlement did not come to a violent end there is discussion as to why the settlers left. It is possible

⁶⁹ PLETERSKI/BELAK 2002, 102 f., fig. 13-14.

⁷⁰ LEBEN SELJAK 2003, 397.

⁷¹ KNIFIC 1999, 64f; VIDRIH PERKO/SAGADIN 2004, 220-222.

⁷² The discontinuity of settlement does not always imply ethnical discontinuity and the reverse (for example, the settlement pattern in Friulli and Slovenia had completely changed in the 4th and 5th century, although there were no major ethnical changes at that time. The Gothic and Lombard settlement did not vastly change the ethnical picture (BIERBRAUER 2000, 326 f.).

⁶⁷ Ibid., 60 f.

⁶⁸ BAVEC 2003, 326-330.

that the political situation in then Lombard Italy did not call for the need to live in a fortified settlement. Slavic settlements are not documented in these valleys at the time.

The settlement is believed to have been deserted after the middle of the 7th century. There are some finds, though, which show that life at Tonovcov Grad continued also in the 8th and 9th century. For now these finds are so few that they cannot be the basis for discussion about continuous settlement at this site. The fact is, though, that remains of the settlement (hearths, pottery) from the Early Middle Ages were found at all the excavated structures, proving that there were more than only temporary visits to this place at this time.

The finds from the second half of the 7th and the 8th century were discovered inside graves. The nature of these finds and the burials close to the already ruined churches show that the dead were of autochthonous origin. These graves imply that there was a continuity of the site as a place of worship rather than continuity of settlement. It is assumed that the few Roman settlers who had already left Tonovcov grad and moved elsewhere were still loyal to their once sacred place.

Special phenomena on the Slovenian hilltop settlements are finds of military character from

the end of the 8th and the 9th century. These can be attributed to the intense action around the year of 800 on the territory of today's Slovenia. At this time the Franks confirmed their power via a series of wars with their neighbours.

Despite the fact that there is little evidence for the direct continuity of the hilltop settlement into the Early Middle Ages, there are many elements, which show that the contact between autochthonous and Slavic settlers actually existed. The ceramic evidence shows the interaction of autochthonous and Slavic elements. This interaction was more predominant in the Eastern part of Slovenia⁷³. A continuity of technological innovation – such as use of the throwing wheel –, and a continuity of knowledge about the area – knowledge about main roads, areas with special meanings – are believed to have existed. The knowledge regarding land use such as, for example, high Alpine pastures was similar to this⁷⁴.

⁷³ The ceramic evidence from Tonovcov grad shows a strong autochthonous tradition as well as a strong connection to Friuli.

⁷⁴ The use of high mountain areas for pasture is already known from the Antiquity times (HORVAT 2002, 117–133). Slavic settlers quickly took over this practice. A 1400 m hilltop settlement on Krvavec in Savinjske Alpe dated into the 8th century (PLETERSKI/PERŠIČ 2008, 137–144).

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Kontinuität auf den spätantiken befestigten Höhensiedlungen in Slowenien

Befestigte Höhensiedlungen stellen eine geläufige Siedlungsform der Spätantike in Slowenien dar. Ihre Aufgabe wird meist mit der ersten Welle der slawischen Einwanderung in diese Region am Ende des 6. und zur Beginn des 7. Jahrhunderts erklärt.

Aufgrund von intensiven Forschungen der letzten Jahrzehnte zeichnet sich jedoch ein heterogeneres Bild zu dieser Übergangsperiode (5. -7. Jh.) auf dem Gebiet des heutigen Sloweniens ab. In den verschiedenen Regionen des Landes erfolgten der Zeitpunkt und die Art dieses Wechsels unterschiedlich. Es scheint zudem, dass das Ende der Höhensiedlungen nicht unbedingt mit einer Zerstörung in Verbindung gebracht werden muss.

Im Falle von Tonovcov grad, eine Höhensiedlung im westlichen Teil Sloweniens, lässt sich z. B. das Existenz einer schmalen autochton-romanisierten Gemeinschaft bis zur Mitte des 7. Jahrhunderts nachweisen. Nach diesem Zeitpunkt wurde die Siedlung aufgegeben und die Gebäude teils abgerissen. Nur einige Gräber in der Nähe der spätantiken Kirche ließen eine Datierung ins 8. Jahrhundert zu, belegen jedoch nur eine sakrale Kontinuität am Fundort, nicht eine fortdauernde Nutzung der Siedlung. Am Ende des 8. und zur Beginn des 9. Jahrhunderts wurden die Ruinen der bereits aufgegeben Sied-

lung erneut für zeitweilige Aufenthalte genutzt. Die Keramik aus diesen Schichten zeigt sowohl spätantike als auch frühmittelalterliche Elemente und lässt somit auf Kontakte zwischen der autochthonen Bevölkerung und der neuen slawischen Einwanderer schließen. Einige Kleinfunde, wie zwei metallenen Ortbander und eine karolingische vergoldete bronzene Riemenende lassen diesen Horizont in die Jahre um 800 datieren.

Spuren von Gebäuden, die ins Frühmittelalter datieren, wurde auch auf einigen Höhensiedlungen im östlichen Slowenien gefunden, in Tinje und in Ančnikovo gradišče. Die Keramik dieser Fundplätze zeigt Ähnlichkeiten mit den neu entdeckten slawischen Siedlungen im Tiefland Ostsloweniens, aber die Chronologie und die Art der Kontakte zwischen der autochthonen Bevölkerung und der neuen Siedler sind noch weitgehend ungeklärt.

Anzeichen für eine erneute, kurze Besiedlungsphase auf den Höhensiedlungen sind zur Beginn des 9. Jahrhunderts zu registrieren. Die Metallfunde, meist Waffen, zeigen einen starken fränkischen Einfluss. Diese Funde können mit den Umbruchzeiten unter der fränkischen Herrschaft im heutigen Slowenien in Verbindung gebracht werden.