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A BRAVE NEW WORLD? BUILDING CASTLES, CHANGING AND INVENTING TRADITIONS

Abstract - Following the period of Magyar incursions, the south-eastern borderlands of the Holy Roman Empire witnessed a process of gradual feudalisation. By the late 12th century, the territory of modern-day Slovenia had been divided up into several large dominions under the rule of secular and religious feudal lords of mostly foreign, German origin. Newly established administrative and socio-spatial structures were centred on castles as foci of feudal power. These have replaced earlier, Slavic central places. Material evidence for these processes comes from some early castles, such as Bled/Veldes, Mali Grad Kamnik/Stein, Ljubljana/Laibach, Stari Trg Pri Slovenj Gradcu/(Windisch)Grätz and Ptuj/Pettau, where traces of early Slavic settlements and, above all, burial sites have been excavated. In order to legitimize their rule over land and people, the new feudal authorities have clearly mobilized existing spatial structures and symbolic meanings to establish a relationship with the past social order. This relationship might be understood either as antagonistic, signifying a complete break with the old world, or as affirmative, signifying its continuation.

Key words - Bled, Ptuj, Kamnik, Early castles, Feudalisation, Spatial strategies, Invention of tradition.

Riassunto - Dopo le incursioni magiare, la frontiera sudorientale del Sacro Romano Impero assistette a un processo di graduale feudalizzazione. Nel tardo XII secolo, il territorio dell'attuale Slovenia fu suddiviso in ampi distretti governati da signori feudali, laici e religiosi, prevalentemente di origine straniera e segnatamente germanica. Le nuove strutture amministrative, sociali e territoriali avevano il loro centro nei castelli, nuclei del potere feudale. Questi avevano sostituito le precedenti sedi centrali degli Slavi. L'evidenza materiale di questi processi deriva da alcuni dei castelli più antichi, come Bled/Veldes, Mali Grad Kamnik/Stein, Ljubljana/Laibach, Stari Trg Pri Slovenj Gradcu/ (Windisch) Grätz and Ptuj/Pettau, dove sono state scavate tracce di insediamenti e soprattutto necropoli slave. Con lo scopo di legittimare il loro ruolo sul territorio e sulle genti che lo abitavano, le nuove autorità feudali hanno chiaramente utilizzato strutture materiali già esistenti e significati simbolici per stabilire una relazione rispetto alle strutture sociali del passato. Questa relazione può essere intesa in senso antagoni-

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stico, come completa rottura nei confronti del mondo antico, oppure in senso confer-
mativo, nel segno della continuità.

INTRODUCTION: CASTLES IN A PERIOD OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Castles are the most potent symbols of medieval Europe. They rep-
resent the structures and strategies of domination that were at the very
heart of medieval feudal society. But how has this society come to be?
The appearance of castles in a given region is usually interpreted as the
material sign of the advance of 'feudalization'. What is implied by this
term is that a set of social and cultural traits was introduced, and indeed,
enforced, replacing the existing social order and cultural traditions of
the local population. Clearly, the processes involved must have been high-
ly complex and diverse, heavily dependent on specific circumstances.
The building of castles was one of the key strategies in the establishment
of the 'feudal order'. In view of this, we will try to examine the logic
behind the choice of location for some early castles built in the period
between the late 10th and the early 12th century in the south-eastern bor-
der provinces of the Holy Roman Empire.

Following the period of Hungarian incursions which ended with the
German victory at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955, these regions witnessed a
process of gradual feudalization. Most of today Slovenia has been settled
by the Slavs since the late 6th and 7th centuries, came under Bavarian and
Frankish authority in the second half of the 8th century and finally, by the
late 12th century, it had been divided up amongst several lay and ecclesias-
tical lords, mostly of foreign, German origin. These have sought to secure
the control of their newly-acquired lands by establishing local power struc-
tures. The building of castles was instrumental in this process, though
only a few were constructed before the mid-12th century.

In terms of archaeology, the appearance of castles marks the onset of
a new era, the 'feudal' high and late middle ages. Even as the very first
castles were being built, the 'Early Slavic' material culture – mostly bur-
ials containing typical dress accessories, head-dress, ornaments and oth-
er personal items – began to disappear. By the early 11th century in the
western and central part of today Slovenia and by the late 11th century in
the east, the early medieval burial rite had been abandoned completely.

The social and cultural change that was taking place was all-encom-
passing. The establishment and up-keep of the feudal system of power

relations required close control and management of both human and natural resources. We know but little of the socio-economic structures of the Slavic groups occupying today Slovenia, but clearly the feudal system in its mature form was introduced and upheld here mostly by foreign powers and did not grow organically out of the existing local power structures. How did the new feudal lords establish their rule over land and people? In many ways, a clear break with the old was required at both the practical and symbolic levels. And yet, the local knowledge of the land and its resources, the existing social ties and structures could not be ignored entirely and must often have been employed successfully as the very foundations for the development of feudal estates.

Castles were erected for practical purposes as fortified economic and administrative centres of estates, but they were also powerful political statements cast in stone; they were enduring signs of the lord's presence. As such, they were not set into an empty, neutral space, devoid of meaning and memory. Beside the more practical considerations of accessibility, security and visibility, and other strategic issues concerning the settlement and communication networks and land-use patterns, the choice of any particular location for a castle must necessarily also have taken into account the previous use and symbolic meanings of the place in question. Some early castles in Slovenia exhibit an interesting spatial relationship to earlier settlements, burial sites and possible local power centres. Three examples will be presented here: the castles of Bled (Veldes), Ptuj (Pettau) and Mali Grad Kamnik (the lower castle of Stein).

Bled Castle

The castle of Bled (Veldes) ([1]) was first mentioned directly in a royal deed of 1011 when it was granted by King Henry II to Bishop Adalbero of Brixen ([2]). This makes Bled Castle one of the earliest medieval castles on the territory of today Slovenia to be reliably documented in the written sources. It is possible that the castle might already have existed in 1004 when the bishopric of Brixen/Bressanone first came into possession of the estate of Bled (*predium, quod dicitur Ueldes*) with a deed of

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([1]) To avoid confusion, the toponyms and names of castles in this text are in their current Slovene form. Historical names of castles recorded in medieval Latin and German sources are given in brackets when mentioned for the first time. However, family names derived from castles are given in their historically documented German form.

([2]) Kos F. 1911, No. 28.

grant issued by King Henry II to Bishop Albuin and his church of St. Ingenuinus and Cassianus ([3]). Until the early 14th century, the castle and estate were managed for the bishopric by its serf-knights (ministerials) dwelling at Bled Castle ([4]).

The castle stands on the edge of a cliff on the north-eastern shore of Lake Bled, rising 139 metres high above the town of Bled and dominating views from the flatlands surrounding the lake on the eastern side (Fig. 1). The parish church dedicated to St. Martin stands at the very foot of the castle hill, as does the nearby village of Grad to the north of it. The castle complex was destroyed by at least two devastating earthquakes in the 16th and 17th centuries and in consequence, several medieval structures have been either rebuilt or completely demolished, so that hardly any traces of the castle's medieval history remain visible above ground today. In the 1950ies, the entire complex was restored but no archaeological excavations were carried out and therefore no evidence is known either of the earliest phases of the castle itself or of any previous settlement of the site. The oldest standing medieval walls probably date from the late 12th century when the complex consisted of a curtain wall surrounding the main hall. The entrance tower is probably of a somewhat later date ([5]).

A few metres to the north-east of the castle complex, a car park for visitors has been constructed on a saddle-like flat area next to the former castle gardens. In the course of construction works, several early medieval burials were found and in 1960 and 1968 large-scale archaeological excavations followed. All in all, 173 inhumations were uncovered containing grave goods dated to the period from the early 9th to the mid-10th or possibly even the early 11th century ([6]). The position and size of this burial ground suggest that a relatively large settlement must have existed nearby. The site of the feudal castle at the peak of the hill just above the cemetery would be the most likely candidate, though no artefacts or structures from this period have been documented inside the castle complex so far. The link between the two sites is even stronger in view of the possible late dating of the latest burials, which would indicate that these were actually contemporaneous with the feudal castle itself.

The area around Bled (Blejski Kot) abounds in archaeological sites of all periods. A large number of known sites from the early medieval

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([3]) Štih 2004; cf. Pleterski 1978, p. 388.
([4]) Kos D. 2005, p. 109.
([5]) Stopar 1996, pp. 17-19.
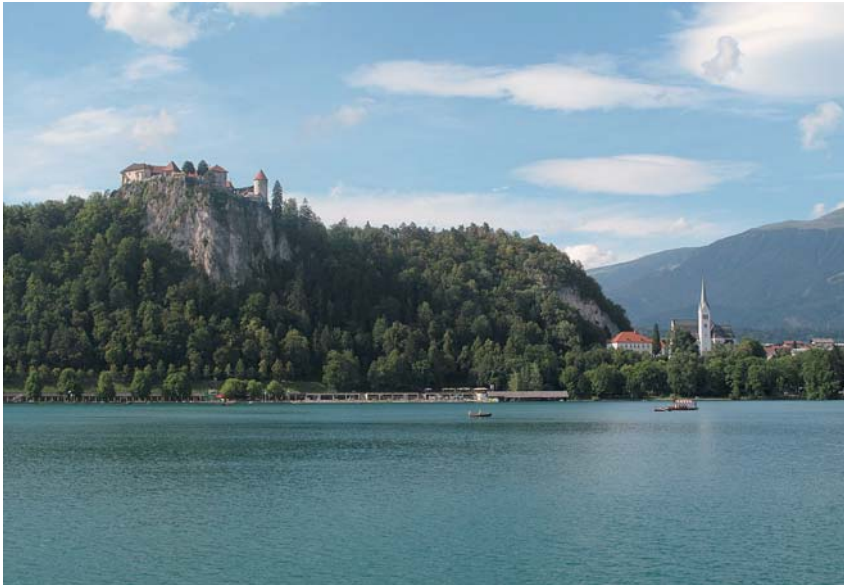([6]) Pleterski 1983; Knific 2004, pp. 102-105.

Fig. 1 - Bled Castle with the parish church of St. Martin (photo © Michielverbeek, under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license).

Fig. 2 - The surroundings of Bled Castle, digital orthophoto image with key sites mentioned in the text (image generated online by Geopedia.siLite, ©2011 Sinergise d.o.o.; data © Geodetska uprava Republike Slovenije).

period and an abundance of preserved written sources documenting the settlement and social structure of the region in the 11th century have resulted in a number of microregional studies by both archaeologists and historians ([7]). Based on these, we will try to assess the beginnings of Bled Castle and the choice of site for its construction with respect to previous settlement (Fig. 2).

The earliest burials containing objects denoted by archaeologists as Slavic ([8]) date back to the 7th century and were found at several sites in Blejski Kot ([9]). It would appear that a relatively small Slavic group entered this region at that time, coming into contact and eventually mixing with the local population ([10]).

In the early middle ages, Blejski Kot was part of Carniola, a more or less independent Slavic principality south of the Karavanke (Karawanken) Alpine range. Like other similar Slavic principalities of the time, Carniola was little more than a loosely bound tribal entity, composed of several territorial units based on clan relationships, known as *župa* ([11]). In the late 8th century, Carniola became part of the Frankish Empire and was included in its great eastern marquisate, the Friulian March. Following the suppression of the rebellion of the eastern Slavic client principalities that had formed a tribal union under the leadership of Prince

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([7]) GORNIK 1967; KNIFIC 1983; PLETERSKI 1986; *Id*. 2011a.

([8]) This is not the place to discuss the complex issues of ethnicity and ethnic interpretation of material culture (cf. JONES 1997) or indeed the 'Slavic' identity (CURTA 2001; for the Eastern Alps and Slovenia see BRATOŽ 2000 and ŠTIH 2001b, pp. 34-38, with references). The presence of Slavic groups in the wider region of the Eastern Alps since the late 6th century is recorded in written sources and may be linked with several archaeological phenomena. The material culture and practices which had developed in this region up until the 11th century, such as the so-called Köttlach Culture, are often uncritically labelled as 'Early Slavic' masking the actual ethnic and linguistic complexity of the local population.

([9]) KNIFIC 1983.

([10]) The site of Pristava at the northern foot of the castle hill is of crucial importance in this respect. 380 graves spanning the period from the 6th to the mid-10th or possibly, the early 11th century have been excavated, as well as the remains of a contemporary settlement. The graves have formed two spatially separate groups. Burials of the earlier group, accounting for about one third of the total number of excavated graves, have contained objects typical of the local Late Roman populations, whereas the younger group of burials (approx. two thirds) has been interpreted as 'Early Slavic'. Archaeologists believe this site to document the immediate contact of an indigenous community with a newly arrived group of Slavic settlers resulting in the gradual assimilation of the locals by the Slavs through intermarriage. The earliest Slavic burials date from the late 7th century (KNIFIC 2004, pp. 94-100; PLETERSKI 2008; *Id*. 2010).

([11]) Cf. BARFORD 2001, pp. 129-130. For the Early Slavs in the territory of the present-day Slovenia see VILFAN 1980, pp. 22-35 and ŠTIH 2001b, pp. 39-48.

Louis of Lower Pannonia (*bellum Liudewiticum*, 819-823), the Franks tightened their hold over these regions trying to integrate them into the Empire more closely. A number of new marches were established on the south-eastern borders in 828. They were still governed by Slavic tribal leaders but only with limited autonomy, as these were now bearing the titles of counts or dukes and were bound by vassalage to the emperor. At that time, Carniolan territory was included into the so-called March along the river Sava (*Marchia iuxta Souwam*) ([12]). The actual status of this region is unclear, though, since no Souwian (Carniolan) count is actually mentioned in contemporary written sources. The Frankish rule must have loosened up considerably during the first half of the 10th century due to the continuing incursions of the Hungarians. In that period, the Slavic population was supposedly still organised into *župas*, each under the leadership of a so-called *župan*.

It was only after the pacification of the Hungarians following the decisive battle of Lechfeld in 955, that these border regions were once more firmly integrated into the empire. By 973, the March of Carniola had been established. The German crown now took possession of all available land, granting vast estates in freehold or fiefdom to several princes of the Church and members of the high aristocracy, mostly of Bavarian origin ([13]).

How were these broader political and social dynamics reflected at the microregional level in Blejski Kot? Analyses of the excavated early Slavic burial sites and the development of field systems have shown that upon entering the region in the 7th century, the Slavs would first have formed small settlements located in fertile lowlands. Agricultural land was probably allotted to individual families and only gradually, these individual farms would have evolved into hamlets and villages. With each new generation, the existing farmland was subdivided amongst family members on the one hand, as well as expanded on the other hand through deforestation and cultivation of the adjoining areas. Every one of these dispersed settlements seems to have had its own burial site laid out nearby on a slightly raised ground, such as a moraine mound or ridge. These cemeteries consisted of a relatively small number of inhumation graves: in Dlesc near Bodešče 47 graves have been excavated ([14]), in Žale near Zasip 55, and the partly destroyed cemetery in Spodnje Gorje

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([12]) Štih 1996a; Luthar 2008, pp. 97-99.
([13]) Hauptmann 1999; Grafenauer 1965, p. 148; Komac 2006.
([14]) Knific & Pleterski 1981; Pleterski 1986, pp. 30-36.

is supposed to have numbered c. 60 graves ([15]). Each of these cemeteries seems to have started as an individual family burial site in the first generation. It would appear that in the beginning, the entire Slavic population of Blejski Kot apparently consisted of only a few families, possibly a few dozen people in all. These families were probably connected by clan ties and united under a common leader – *župan* ([16]).

In the immediate vicinity of the village of Grad, an early medieval cemetery consisting of some 100-150 inhumation graves was excavated in the 19th century at a site called Brdo ([17]). The site is poorly documented but the preserved grave goods suggest that burial was taking place there from the 7th until the early 9th century. The character of some artefacts, particularly the high-quality ornamental brooches, suggests that several persons of high status were buried at Brdo and it is possible that the entire community enjoyed a privileged status ([18]). The corresponding settlement, of which no evidence is known so far, must have existed nearby, probably on location of the present-day village of Grad.

Just as the cemetery at Brdo was being abandoned around the year 800, burial commenced on the site of Sedlo on the castle hill. As already mentioned, the cemetery at Sedlo was in use from the early 9th until the mid-10th century ([19]) and possibly even longer. Recently, the dating of some grave goods has been revised and the latest burials containing disk brooches and cast earrings typical of the so-called Bijelo-Brdo Culture are now dated to the late 10th and early 11th centuries (Fig. 3) ([20]).

A detailed analysis and phasing of the cemetery at Sedlo have shown that even in its earliest phase, a relatively large number of individuals were buried there: in the presumed time-span of one generation at least 19 people were buried, representing 17.8% of a total of 107 datable graves, accounting for possibly up to 31 individuals if the sum total of 173 burials is taken into consideration ([21]). This cemetery differs from the other early medieval burial sites in Blejski Kot in several respects. Firstly, it is located high up on the castle hill as opposed to the common pattern of burial in a slightly elevated position in the lowlands, next to

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([15]) KNIFIC & PLETERSKI 1993.

([16]) PLETERSKI 1986, pp. 125-127.

([17]) The word means 'hillock' and aptly describes the topography of the burial site. Another name for this site is Žale or Na Žalah, signifying 'graveyard'.

([18]) KNIFIC 1983, p. 74; *Id*. 2004, p. 101; BAJDE 2007, p. 64.

([19]) PLETERSKI 1983, p. 146.

([20]) KNIFIC 2004, pp. 102-105, Fig. 13: 5-9; BITENC & KNIFIC 2001, pp. 106-107, Kat. No. 355-356.

([21]) PLETERSKI 1986, p. 57.

the farms and fields. Secondly, the total number of excavated burials suggests that the cemetery at Sedlo pertained to a larger settlement consisting of several families from the very beginning. Thirdly, as in the case of Brdo, some of the grave goods from Sedlo, such as weapons and jewellery, also suggest that high-status individuals were buried there [22]. The overall character of the burials at Sedlo differs even from the contemporary burials at the large burial site of Pristava where high-status objects are less common.

The interpretation offered by Andrej Pleterski was that the area around the castle hill must have represented the social and political core of the region [23]. He surmised that Blejski Kot had been settled by a closely-knit small Slavic group and accordingly organised as a Slavic parish (*župa*). Its leader (*župan*) inhabited a central site at the foot of the castle hill near the village of Grad, together with his wider family and dependants. Around the year 800, *župan*'s dwelling was moved to the peak of the castle hill and a new burial ground was laid out at Sedlo [24].

From the wider perspective of political developments in Carniola in the early 9th century, it is reasonable to ponder whether the establishment of a new power centre on top of the castle hill replacing the previous central site near Grad might not have been due to an intervention by the Frankish authorities or in response of the local population to the wider socio-political events. In the context of the whole-scale reorganisation of the eastern provinces following the rebellion of Prince Louis, if not even before that, the Franks might have made use of the social structures existing among the Slavic tribes, transforming the role of local leaders into (informal) imperial office holders who would act as community level government structure and enjoy certain privileges granted by the provincial rulers. In the case of Blejski Kot, a process of social differentiation is apparent but the role that the Frankish authorities might have played in it, remains unclear [25].

Sometime in the second half of the 10th century, a royal estate was established at Bled with an economic and political centre on the castle hill. The existence of this estate is attested by two royal deeds of 1004 and 1011 when parts of this estate were granted to the bishops of Brixen [26]. The royal estate was probably formed after the pacification of the Hungari-

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[22] Knific 2004, pp. 102-108.
[23] Pleterski 1986; *Id*. 2011a.
[24] Cfr. Knific 1983, pp. 72-74.
[25] Cfr. Pleterski 1986, p. 146.
[26] Gornik 1967; Štih 2004.

Fig. 3a - Bled, selection of personal items from the burials at Sedlo, 10th and early 11th centuries (photo T. Lauko, © Narodni muzej Slovenije; courtesy of Gorenjski muzej Kranj).

Fig. 3b - Bled, selection of personal items from the burials at Sedlo, 10th and early 11th centuries (photo T. Lauko, © Narodni muzej Slovenije; courtesy of Gorenjski muzej Kranj).

ans when the German kings were finaly able to control the lands south of the Karavanke. By 973 they had taken hold of vast territorial possessions which they would then have disposed of piecemeal granting them to ecclesiastical institutions and lay aristocracy [27]. The renewal of royal power with the help of the armed aristocracy has led to the construction of early castles or fortified strongholds, such as Bled Castle which was granted by the king to the bishopric of Brixen in 1011. The German officials managing the royal estate of Bled have built their castle in a naturally secured position with limited and easily controllable access. The location offered good visual control of the surroundings and was at the same time visible from all around, dominating the landscape as an unmistakeable visual message of authority, power and control. We have no information on the actual shape, size and layout of this early castle. Likewise, its relationship to the previous settlement on the castle hill remains a mystery. An interesting local lore speaks of a village that had once stood on the castle hill. It is said that the noise of the villagers had so annoyed the lords that they have moved the entire village to the lowlands [28]. Could this be a distant memory of the events taking place in the late 10th century when the old '*župan's* hillfort' had to make way for the royal castle? With this transformation, burial at the pagan site of Sedlo would also have ceased. It was probably replaced by the Christian cemetery at the church of St. Martin on the shore of the lake.

How abrupt these changes were, remains open to question. Andrej Pleterski believes they were rather sudden and even violent [29]. His dating of the latest burials at Sedlo to the mid-10th century corresponds quite well with the proposed date for the establishment of the royal estate in the second half of the 10th century but, as already noted, burial seems to have continued there for a good while yet [30]. In further support of his thesis, Pleterski calls attention to the site of Pristava where the Early Slavic settlement and cemetery have been dated to the period between the late 7th and the second half of the 10th century [31]. Pleterski explains the end of Pristava in the context of the establishment of the royal estate. In his opinion, the local population must have resisted the appropriation of land and people by the crown. This conflict of interest

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[27] In Carniola, this process took place in the period between 970 in 1070 (ŠTIH 2001b, p. 70; cf. GRAFENAUER 1965, p. 140).

[28] PLETERSKI 1986, p. 57.

[29] ID. 1986; *Id*. 2011a.

[30] Cfr. KNIFIC 2004, pp. 104-105.

[31] PLETERSKI 2008, pp. 160-161; *Id*. 2010, pp. 161-176.

was finally resolved by forced abandonment of the settlement and cemeteries of Pristava and Sedlo ([32]).

This version of events has been questioned by the historian Peter Štih ([33]). As attested by numerous documents preserved in the Brixen archives, in the second half of the 11th century Blejski Kot was full of small freehold properties, many of them owned by peasant farmers. Štih maintains that should the royal estate have been established by force dispossessing the local population of their landed property it would have been highly unlikely that a century later so many peasants would still have owned their land in freehold. Surely they would long since have been pushed into dependence and fiefdom and would not be in a position to dispose of their land freely. Apparently, the royal estate of Bled was not composed of forcibly conquered and confiscated land; it was instead formed in accordance with the legal concept that all of the unappropriated land was property of the king. In executing this royal privilege, all existing ownership of land – at least those forms of ownership recognised by Franco-Bavarian legal traditions – was duly respected. Thus in Blejski Kot the peasants would have kept their rights of property whilst the royal estate would probably have consisted of the old common land, as well as uncultivated woodland or marshland. The land farmed by the Slavic families has retained its allodial status well into the 11th century when many of these properties were granted 'of their own free will' by the peasants themselves to the church of Brixen ([34]). Clearly, this less violent version of events does not exclude every possibility of conflict or dispute, for example over the rights of way, the use of common land and in other cases where the royal power might have posed limitations on the ancient local traditions.

The thesis of a smooth transition into the feudal era might find support in the material evidence, as well, if we accept the longer duration of the burial site at Sedlo. In this case, no violent break is evident in the use of this burial site until the early 11th century when the surmised power centre of the *župans* had already been transformed into or replaced by what might be termed a feudal castle – the residence of royal officials and armed guards managing the royal estate. Perhaps a soft approach was used by the king in his appropriation of the local power structures; *župan* and his family might have been given a role to play in the admin-

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([32]) *Id*. 1986, p. 136; *Id*. 2011a, p. 153.
([33]) ŠTIH 2004, p. 20, Fn. 136.
([34]) GORNIK 1967.

istration of the royal estate ([35]). Or perhaps they were given land and privileges in compensation for the loss of power and autonomy. The continued use of the burial site at Sedlo with no evident change of burial rites seems to indicate that the same population group remained present on the castle hill even after the establishment and/or construction of the castle. What the latter might entail is open to speculation. Perhaps the establishment of the 'castle' as the administrative, economic and military centre of the royal estate did not require any physical changes of the existing settlement structures. Whatever the changes taking place on the castle hill of Bled in the late 10th century, it is possible that they did not involve an immediate and complete destruction of the old settlement or the removal of all its dwellers.

In Blejski Kot, the real and material change seems to have taken place only after the bishopric of Brixen came into possession there. The bishopric's interest in making its property profitable was far more real and practical than the king's. To secure Brixen's authority and ensure the required revenue, it was vital to establish the necessary power structures and mechanisms of physical and social control over the local population as attested by the numerous 11th century documents preserved in the bishopric's archives. At the centre of these processes stood the castle of Bled, an ancient central place now acting as administrative seat of the Brixen feudal estate.

PTUJ CASTLE

The castle of Ptuj (Pettau, also Oberpettau) is situated on a hill above the medieval town of the same name on the northern riverbank of the Drava (Drau) in eastern Slovenia (Fig. 4). The complex consists of a horseshoe-shaped core positioned centrally on the highest peak of the hill and two oblong baileys on lower-lying terraces, one to the west and the other to the east of the core. The castle was constructed in the first half of the 12th century on the site of an earlier fortification but its present appearance dates from the 16th and 17th centuries when extensive rebuilding was undertaken to improve the defences and residential com-

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([35]) Pleterski has argued that the village of Grad with evidently planned layout was established by the king to house the people who had previously lived on the castle hill. In the 11th century, the villagers of Grad enjoyed their property as freehold and Pleterski has surmised that this might have been due to the special duties they have once had to perform in the management of the royal estate (PLETERSKI 2011a, p. 153-154).
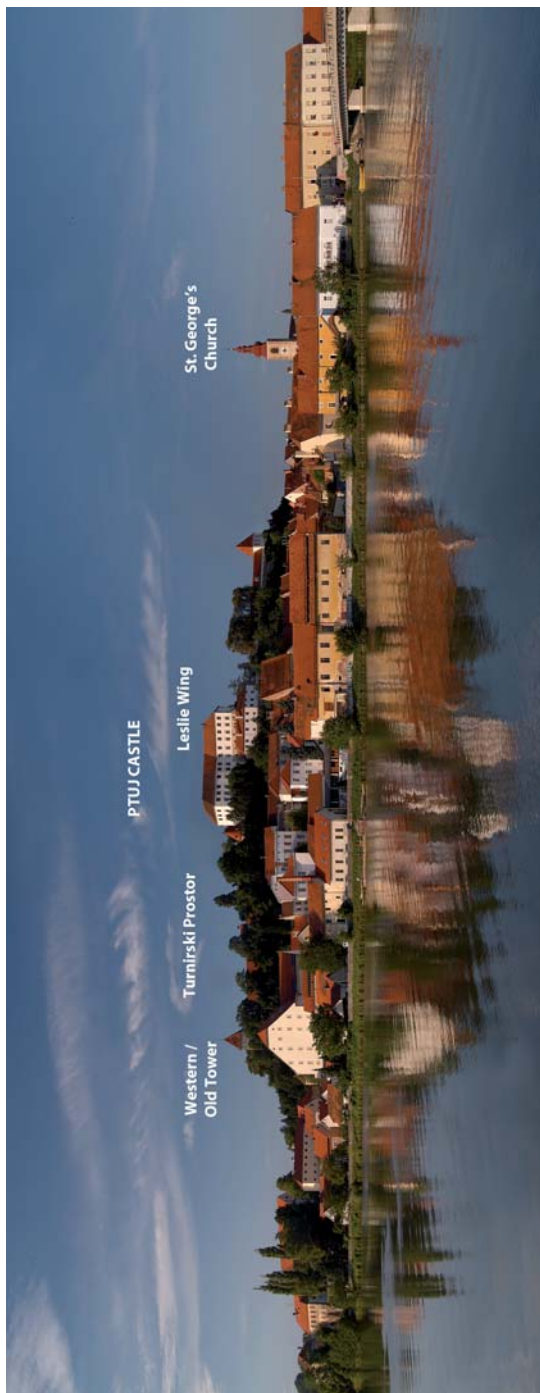
Fig. 4 - Ptuj, scenic view of the medieval town with sites and buildings mentioned in the text (photo © Ž. Camernik / Dreamstime.com).

fort. Among other things, the baileys were cleared, levelled and surrounded with walls, towers and bastions ([36]).

Due to its favourable location at a crossing over the Drava, Ptuj has been settled more or less continually since the Late Neolithic period. The town is best known for its Roman history as Colonia Ulpia Traiana Poetovio, one of the leading urban centres in the Roman province of Pannonia. Poetovio's urban life had waned since the late 5th century with the dissolution of the Empire. Several 'barbarian' tribes have traversed or even temporarily occupied this region until at last it was settled by the Slavs under Avar rule in the late 6th or 7th century. By the early 9th century, Ptuj was once again restored to its role of a central place as indicated by a large graveyard excavated on the castle hill in the area of the western bailey, the so-called Turnirski Prostor (Tournament Field) ([37]).

With the defeat of the Avars in 796, the territory of Ptuj fell under the Frankish rule and became part of the missionary sphere of the Archbishopric of Salzburg. Later it was included into the principality of Lower Pannonia which was established in 840 and ruled by princes of Slavic origin from their main residence at Zalavár (Moosburg) near Lake Balaton. The Pannonian princes had authority and property in Ptuj. Duke Pribina apparently owned two parts of the settlement and he is reported to have built a church there during Archbishop Liupram's reign (836-859) ([38]). Like his father before him, Pribina's son and heir Kocel also built a church in Ptuj which was consecrated by the Salzburg Archbishop Theotmar (Dietmar I) in 874 ([39]).

([36]) In 1564, the town and castle fortifications were modernized in the Renaissance fashion by Italian architects. The castle was thus turned into an artillery fortress able to withstand any possible attack by the Turks (Curk 1958, p. 62; Premzl 1996, pp. 71-72).

([37]) Korošec P. 1999b.

([38]) Kos F. 1906, No. 163.

([39]) *Ibid.*, No. 232; Štih 1996b, p. 539 and Fn. 33; Id. 2001b, pp. 74-79; Luthar 2008, pp. 104-109. The site of Duke Pribina's church remains unknown. Kocel's church is believed to have stood in the eastern part of town, on the site of the parish church of St. George (Grafenauer 1970, pp. 158-168). The present building dates from the first half of the 12th century and was first documented in the written sources indirectly through its parish priest in 1188 (Kos F. 1915, No. 745; cf. Kosi 2009, p. 66), but the site itself boasts a much longer Christian tradition. Remains of an Early Christian cemeterial basilica have been uncovered to the east of the choir and several burials dating possibly from the late 10th and more reliably from the second half of the 11th century have been excavated inside the nave and to the west of the church, as well as some walls which do not allow for a definite interpretation or dating (Curk 1976, pp. 32-33; Lamut 1997, pp. 94-96; Tomanič-Jevremov 1998, p. 73-74). Just a few metres away stands the belfry, a 16th-century tower (Mestni Stolp) which had once housed the chapel of St. John the Baptist on the ground floor. Underneath it, archaeological excavations have uncovered

Following Kocel's unsuccessful attempts at autonomy and his demise in 874/6, Lower Pannonia lost its semi-independent status and was once more incorporated directly into the Frankish Empire or rather, the Kingdom of East Franks under the rule of King Arnulf of Carinthia [40]. It was probably under these circumstances that the Archbishopric of Salzburg came into possession of Ptuj sometime during the second half of the 9th and certainly by the late 10th century. Salzburg's rights over Ptuj were based legally on a forged deed of gift supposedly issued by King Arnulf in 885 or 890 and confirmed repeatedly by several German emperors from 977 onwards [41]. At that time, the greater part of the early urban settlement of Ptuj was owned by the archbishopric including a (parish) church and its tithes, judicial administration, revenue from tolls and the bridge over the Drava [42].

At the very end of the 9th century, Franks started to lose control of Pannonia to the Hungarians and Ptuj was probably under Hungarian authority until the second half of the 10th century when the Archbishopric of Salzburg could finally reclaim its property [43]. Little is known of Ptuj in the 11th century, apart from the fact that Salzburg exhibited a constant interest in its property there by regularly procuring imperial

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the remains of an earlier building, probably a medieval baptistery (Tušek 1998; cf. Curk 1976, pp. 42 and 48). All of this indicates that St. George's has held the status of parish church since the mid-11th century.

[40] Štih 2001b, p. 78.

[41] The so-called Arnulfinum even confirms the previous royal grants of property to the archbishopric (Kos F. 1906, No. 296). This forgery was probably written around 970-977, at a time when German kings were trying to consolidate their eastern territories after decades of instability due to the Hungarian incursions and Salzburg was eager to secure its properties against possible competitive claimants. Certainly, Ptuj came under church jurisdiction of the archbishopric of Salzburg after 796 but the question of the actual inception of Salzburg's feudal dominion there remains unresolved. Still, many historians believe that Salzburg ownership of Ptuj in the late 9th century, though not proven beyond doubt, is highly probable (Grafenauer 1970, pp. 159-160; Štih 1996b, pp. 538-540; Kosi 2009, pp. 33-35 with references).

[42] «...ad Pettouiam aecclesiam cum decima et duas partes civitatis, cum bannis theloneis et ponte et insuper tertiam partem civitatis quae proprietas fuit Carantani eique diiudicatum erat eo quod reus maiestatis criminatus est constare, exceptis illis rebus quae suae uxori concessae fuere, id est in superiori civitate in orientali parte civitatis curtilem locum ubi nova aecclesia incepta est, atque inferiori civitate in occidentali parte civitatis ipsius illa curtilia loca quae in potestate tunc habuit, cum hobis C et vineis X...» (Kos F. 1906, No. 460). On the early urban character of Ptuj see Kosi 2009, pp. 33-69.

[43] A possible trace of this political situation might be the graves No. 13 and No. 262 excavated at the castle hill necropolis containing 'Early Hungarian' jewellery and weapons (Korošec P. 1999b, p. 70). On the course and consequences of the Hungarian incursions into the territory of today Slovenia see Štih 1983.

confirmations of its ancient rights. Until the early 12th century, Ptuj was practically on the frontier with the Hungarian kingdom and thus under constant threat of attack. The intensity and efficiency of the Salzburg rule over Ptuj during that period remain open to speculation ([44]).

As soon as peace was restored in 1131, Ptuj witnessed a revival under the rule of Archbishop Conrad I of Abenberg (1106-1147) who started an extensive building programme on his eastern estates. The castles of Brestanica (Reichenburg), Ptuj and Leibnitz were constructed or rebuilt for protection of the Salzburg possessions in Styria against the Hungarians but also as an internal political measure against the growing power of the provincial rulers ([45]). According to Conrad's biography, an «ancient and ruinous castle» was rebuilt in Ptuj ([46]). This first piece of information about Ptuj Castle refers to an earlier fortification on the castle hill of which we have but little material evidence. It might have been constructed in the second half of the 11th century when the area around Ptuj was more firmly integrated into the empire, possibly under Archbishops Balduin (1041-1060) or Gebhard (1060-1088) ([47]).

([44]) In contemporary documents this tract of land was explicitly referred to as *marchia pitoviensis* (Štih 1996b). In the opinion of the historian Bogo Grafenauer, the authority of Salzburg was practically non-existent until the German-Hungarian war of 1042–1052. The changed political situation might then have favoured the construction of a military stronghold – a castle – in Ptuj. But the real development of medieval Ptuj started only under Archbishop Conrad I, once a more lasting peace with the Hungarians was established in the early 12th century (Grafenauer 1970, p. 167). This explanation seems to correspond well with the archaeological findings, since it was in the second half of the 11th century that the – supposedly – pagan graveyard on the castle hill was abandoned and the new churchyard established at St. George's in the town below (cf. Lamut 1997). A rather loose hold of Salzburg over Ptuj might explain why burial at a pagan site took place without interruption well into the late 11th century. On the other hand, Miha Kosi believes that Salzburg had maintained a real and active interest in Ptuj all through the 11th century playing a vital role in the defence of the Empire's borders. Furthermore, the long continuation of burial according to the old customs was not uncommon in the eastern regions of the Empire (Kosi 2009, pp. 55-57; cf. Giesler 1997).

([45]) Schicht 2010, p. 288.

([46]) «…*Bethowe antiquum extitit castrum*, *sed dirutum multis temporibus*, *atque ab illo*, *sicut hodie cernitur*, *reedificatum est*» (Kos F. 1915, No. 109).

([47]) Curk 1975, p. 186; Lamut 1997, pp. 100-101. Gebhard appears to be the more likely candidate of the two as he was the first Salzburg archbishop with a clear castle-building programme. In his *vita*, he is specifically named as the builder of the castles of Hohensalzburg, Hohenwerfen, Pass Lueg, Friesach and a few others, though it is almost impossible to date any of the preserved structures to his reign. All of these castles were situated strategically on traffic routes connecting the archbishopric's dominions on a supra-regional level. In this, Gebhard and his successors have acted as provincial rulers even though they did not actually enjoy such a status at the time (Schicht 2010, pp. 285-295). The construction of a castle in Ptuj controlling the bridge over the Drava

To ensure the efficient management and development of his dominion, Archbishop Conrad has entrusted Ptuj to his loyal ministerial Frederick who was probably of Bavarian origin and had previously held the office of castellan at the Salzburg castle of Stein in the Lavant Valley (Lavanttal, Austria). Frederick soon began calling himself after his new residence and by the mid-12th century, the Lords of Pettau had started their rapid economic and social rise [48].

Let us now review the material evidence from the castle hill of Ptuj related to these events. Since the early 20th century, archaeological research has focused particularly on the western bailey (Turnirski Prostor) [49], a level terrace which was first settled in the Late Neolithic period. In the Roman period, this exposed location overlooking the city of Poetoviona was used as a temple complex. There is some indication that an Early Christian church might have replaced the pagan temples in the 4th century; traces of a possible apse were documented and some fragments of the altar *mensa* and railing found scattered around the site. By the second half of the 5th century, a rectangular building enclosed by a curtain wall and interpreted as a military fort (*castellum*) was erected in the western part of the complex, destroying the alleged church [50]. At the same time, the area along the northern edge of the bailey to the east of the fort was used for burial. The site seems to have been abandoned for a few centuries, until finally burial was resumed in the late 8th or early 9th century only to be continued without intermissions well into the second half of the 11th century. More than 426 inhumation graves have been uncovered to date [51]. They were spread out over the entire bailey except for the area in the western part where the Late Roman fort had once stood and which was absolutely avoided (Fig. 5). Apparently, the architecture must still have been visible above ground and has thus impeded burial [52].

Some objects found in the graves at Turnirski Prostor, such as high-quality jewellery, battle knives and spurs, seem to indicate a high social

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would therefore be perfectly in line with Gebhard's stratagems to consolidate the archbishopric's territories.

[48] Pirchegger 1951; Kos D. 2005, p. 354.

[49] The site was first discovered in 1909 (Skrabar 1910). Large-scale excavations were carried out in 1946-1947 (Korošec J. 1947 and 1950) and in 1978-1979 (Korošec P. 1981); several smaller interventions followed. For a comprehensive publication of the excavated graves see Korošec P. 1999b.

[50] Korošec J. 1947, p. 20; Klemenc 1950; Šašel 1961; Curk 1975, p. 184.

[51] Only about a dozen date from the 4th-5th century, the rest are early medieval (Korošec P. 1999b).
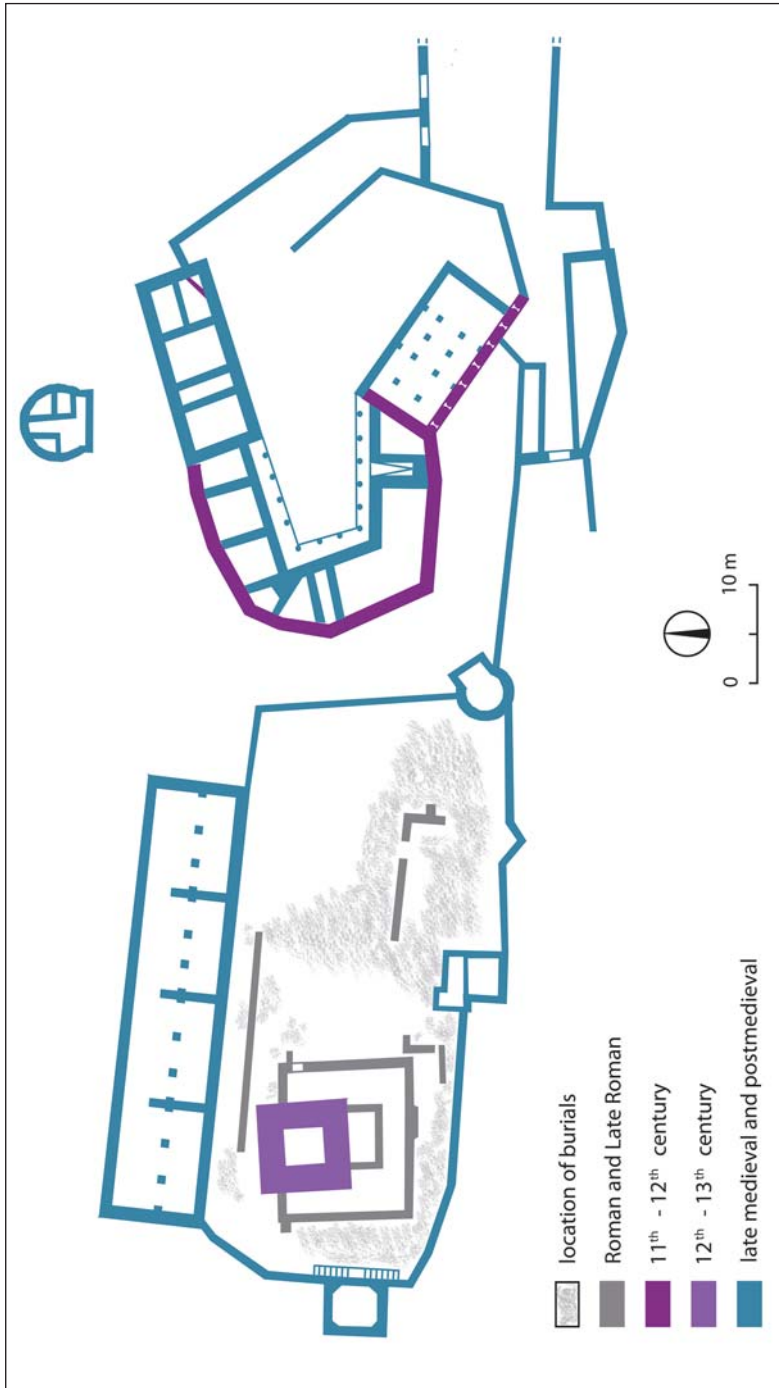
[52] Cfr. Baš 1948-1949, pp. 207-208.

Fig. 5 - Ptuj Castle, schematic ground plan of the castle core and western bailey with excavated architecture and location of burials (digital graphics K. Predovnik; based on VIDMAR & HAJDINJAK 2009, p. 39 and SCHICHT 2010, Fig. 199).

standing of the individuals buried with them ([53]). Some of these artefacts suggest strong links with Pannonia and the regions with Byzantine production traditions, while others correspond with the contemporary material culture of the Eastern Alps. The analysis and dating of the burials show a considerable increase in population since the mid-10th century ([54]).

Where the contemporary settlement might have stood, remains open to question. There is some indication that the northern edge of the bailey might have been occupied in the early medieval period but the evidence is inconclusive ([55]). By the late 9th century, a proto-urban settlement had probably developed at the foot of the castle hill near the bridge on the Drava, though there is no material evidence to support this interpretation which is based entirely on the written sources ([56]). It seems likely that the peak of the castle hill, the site of the later medieval castle core, was settled by the early medieval elite; but again, no material evidence is known to date ([57]).

Burial continued at Turnirski Prostor uninterruptedly until c. 1070/1085 ([58]). The continuation of ancient burial rites – burial of bodies in full apparel, hands of the deceased prostrate alongside the body and not crossed on the chest – seems to imply that the local population was not under a strong influence of the Christian church, in spite of the fact that Ptuj has been under direct authority of the Salzburg Archbishopric, possibly since the late 9th and certainly since the late 10th century. In the last phase of the graveyard at Turnirski Prostor, dated c. 1042/1052-

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([53]) The female burial No. 355 from the late 9th century is of particular interest here. The woman was buried with several personal items and ornaments, including two pairs of golden earrings and a fingerring decorated with granulated filigree in Great Moravian style. The large golden fingerring had to be squeezed into a rectangular shape to prevent it from slipping off the woman's finger; possibly, it had originally been a pontifical ring belonging to a bishop or some other ecclesiastical dignitary. Paola Korošec has even ventured to suggest that the ring might have belonged to Archbishop Methodius who has led the Slavic mission in Lower Pannonia and Great Moravia and has been active at Count Kocel's court for a few years (Korošec P. 1997). There is no need to discuss here Korošec's identification of the buried lady as the wife of Count Kocel who supposedly fled to Ptuj after her husband's demise; clearly, it is all based on speculation. Cf. Kosi 2009, p. 35 and Fn. 129.

([54]) Korošec P. 1999b, p. 84.

([55]) Korošec P. 1999a.

([56]) Kosi 2009, pp. 33-69.

([57]) The existence of an Early Slavic hillfort followed by construction of a wooden fortified manorial residence (*curtis*) in the late 10th century on location of the present Ptuj Castle core has often been surmised but remains purely conjectural (see Curk 1958, p. 58; Curk 1991, p. 114).

([58]) Tomičić 1993; see also Lamut 1997, p. 92.

1070/1085, burial started in the churchyard at St. George's. The abandonment of the ancient pagan burial site seems to have taken place rather gradually and might have been connected with the construction of the pre-Conradian castle [59].

Another archaeological discovery was made at Turnirski Prostor which needs to be discussed in some detail (Fig. 5). In the western part of the bailey, a square structure was uncovered measuring some 11.30 x 11.90 metres and cutting through the walls of the Late Roman fort. It was comprised of four corridors measuring 3.10 metres in width and cut some 2 metres deep into the ground. They were laid out at right angles to one another. The floor inside was not level but appeared to have been paved with gravel and stone slabs, of which some were Roman spoliae. The vertical walls bore traces of mortar or plastering. The entrance was from the western side through a narrow corridor. The block of soil in the centre measuring 5.70 x 5.70 metres and 1.45 metres high was covered with grit and a stone slab [60].

Two interpretations have been proposed for this structure. The excavator Josip Korošec and some archaeologists have argued that it was an Early Slavic religious temple [61], while other archaeologists and historians of art have maintained that this was simply the negative of the foundations of a massive medieval tower which had been plundered for stone, probably in the context of the rebuilding of Ptuj Castle in the 16th century [62]. The latter interpretation seems to be the more plausible of the two [63]. A free-standing tower (a *propugnaculum*) in an exposed po-

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[59] LAMUT 1997, pp. 90-102.

[60] KOROŠEC J. 1948, pp. 14-26; KOROŠEC P. 1979, p. 164; PLETERSKI 1999, p. 403.

[61] KOROŠEC J. 1948; cf. KOROŠEC P. 1975; KOROŠEC P. 1979, pp. 164 and 352–353; PLETERSKI 1999, p. 403; PLETERSKI 2011b, pp. 128–129.

[62] BAŠ 1948-1949; *Id*. 1950; ŠAŠEL 1961, pp. 126-127 and Fns. 51-55 with further references for the early debate of J. Korošec' interpretations; CURK 1958, p. 62; ID. 1975, pp. 186-187; STOPAR 1990, p. 102.

[63] The proposed reconstruction of the supposed Early Slavic sanctuary poses serious doubts. A construction composed of huge corridors cut vertically into the soil, their walls bearing no panelling of any kind but directly plastered over with a layer of mortar (KOROŠEC J. 1948, p. 26; PLETERSKI 2011b) would not have been stable enough to survive even a few years, let alone several decades of use. On the other hand, the argument that some proponents of the Slavic sanctuary thesis give against the tower thesis, that namely the ground composed of several metres of layers of loose soil and rubble could not have borne the weight of a massive stone tower, does not hold. It is precisely why such massive and well-built foundations were needed (cf. BAŠ 1950, p. 134). Furthermore, the 2.80 metres long corridor leading to this structure from the west and opening into its western corridor, the supposed access to the sanctuary, might be explained in the context of the plundering of the tower's foundations; such a massive

sition is a common enough feature in medieval castle architecture ([64]). Good analogies are to be found in the Salzburg castles of Friesach and Leibnitz (both in Austria), and possibly, Reichenburg (Brestanica, Slovenia), where a similar layout existed in the 12th century ([65]). The dismantled tower that had once stood in the western part of the Turnirski Prostor bailey of Ptuj Castle was probably also built in the 12th century as an exposed fortification protecting the castle against the north-west where access to the castle hill was easiest. It might also have served as temporary or permanent residence for the castellan and his family who were obliged to vacate the castle whenever their lord, the archbishop of Salzburg was visiting Ptuj ([66]).

With this, we approach the question of the early phases of Ptuj Castle and their material remains. One standing building is commonly attributed to the pre-Conradian castle – the tower standing on the westernmost edge of the Turnirski Prostor bailey, named also the Western or Old Tower. It measures 7.5 x 8.2 metres in ground plan and now has only three storeys but it was probably lowered in the 16th century ([67]).

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structure would have been difficult to dismantle by hauling the stones up some 2 metres high to the post-medieval walking level. A direct access to the lower level of the foundations must have eased the operation considerably. Still, the complete removal of almost every last stone of the foundations which must have been relatively compact, as indicated by traces of mortar found stuck to the surrounding soil, must have been an immense effort. Apparently, the construction projects of the 16th century demanded the use of all available resources for procurement of the building material.

([64]) Tower-like residential buildings built of stone (in France termed *donjon*) appeared in castle architecture in the early 11th century in Western Europe, particularly in the shape of motte-and-bailey castles (Böhme 1999, p. 61). A free-standing tower with primarily military role and perhaps secondary residential functions (the so-called *Bergfried* in German castellological tradition) is a somewhat later phenomenon. The earliest examples supposedly date from c. 1100 (*Ibid.*, p. 74) or possibly even from as late as the mid-12th century (Zeune & Uhl 1999, pp. 237-238).

([65]) Baš 1950, p. 135; Schicht 2010, especially pp. 148-149 and 242.

([66]) A contract signed between the archbishop and his castellan Frederick of Pettau on July 18th 1280 stated the ancient obligations of the two parties. Among other things, the castellans were obliged to open the castle to the archbishop and vacate it, should he so demand. Clearly, a separate residential building was needed to house the Lords of Pettau during archbishop's visits and must have been constructed at the same time as or soon after the main castle (cf. Stopar 1990, p. 105; Vidmar & Hajdinjak 2009, p. 38). The destroyed tower at Turnirski Prostor has been identified by some researchers as the so-called *castrum minus* mentioned in several 13th-century documents, while others maintain that *castrum minus* was the so-called Upper Court in the western part of the town (Baš 1950, pp. 128-129 with references; Pirchegger 1951, pp. 15-17; Curk 1958, p. 60; Grafenauer 1970, pp. 168-170).

([67]) In the 17th century it was referred to as 'the Old Tower'. In 1669, it was transformed into a garden pavilion when Count Walter Leslie, the owner of Ptuj Castle,

The walls are plastered but the masonry is visible in some places. The corners are formed of roughly hewn, large blocks of stone some of which are positioned vertically. Several Roman spoliae are visible in the northern wall. A medieval portal, now blocked with bricks, is preserved in the eastern wall on the first floor level, somewhat off-centre to the north. The early dating of this tower is generally accepted but seems highly questionable in the light of current research [68].

Let us now turn to the 12th-century 'Archbishop Conrad's' castle. It apparently consisted of a main castle core at the peak of the castle hill and an isolated square tower in the western part of Turnirski Prostor.

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decided to turn the western bailey into a pleasure garden (CURK 1958, pp. 60-64; PREM-ZL 1996, p. 78).

[68] The art historian Ivan Stopar has argued that the tower dates from the 10th or 11th century based on comparison with the masonry of the western tower of the church of St. Peter and Paul in Karnburg (Carinthia, Austria), particularly the manner of positioning the corner blocks in alternating horizontal and vertical positions (STOPAR 1977, pp. 62-64; cf. Id. 1990, p. 102). Following the prevalent opinion of the time, Stopar believed the Karnburg church to date from the late Carolingian period. This dating has recently been corrected and the church is now believed to date from the late 12th century, whereas its western tower was probably built somewhat later, in the 13th century (cf. GLEIRSCHER 2011, p. 295 with references). Stopar's analogical argumentation for an early dating of the Old Tower of Ptuj is therefore invalid. Masonry and construction technique are generally rather unreliable dating criteria, heavily dependent on local building traditions. This is particularly true of the buildings from the 9th until the 12th century, since but a few can be dated independently with written sources, archaeological contexts or absolute dating techniques. Still, current research shows that until the late 12th century, strict layering of stone with occasional use of orthostates represented the prevalent building technique but no accentuation of the corners is known from that period (cf. KÜHTREIBER 2005, especially pp. 188–190, with references). The Old Tower of Ptuj with its irregular stonework and large corner stones does not fit into this description. Jože Curk was of the opinion that the tower was part of that late 11th-century castle complex, whereas the blocked medieval portal was a secondary addition, dating from no earlier than the 12th century (CURK 1975, p. 186). Brane Lamut has observed that two graves (Nos. 378 and 382) had been discovered lying partly underneath the foundations of the Old Tower. Though neither of these burials contained any artefacts, they were ascribed to the Bijelo-Brdo phase based on their location, orientation and body position. Thus the earliest possible date for the tower's construction would have to be during the last phase of the burial site, c. 1042/1052-1070/1085 (LAMUT 1997, p. 98). Franjo Baš has interpreted the construction of the Old Tower in the context of the development of the town fortifications when the castle was connected with the Dominican friary closing off the access to the town from the north-west. Since the friary was constructed sometime after 1230 and the town wall was completed by the mid-14th century, this would be the timeframe for the construction of the Old Tower (BAŠ 1950, pp. 128-130 and 140). Patrick Schicht has recently surmised that the medieval portal was reused and possibly originated from the destroyed medieval keep. He even suggested that the Old Tower itself was post-medieval in date (SCHICHT 2010, p. 221). The dating of the Old Tower thus remains an unresolved issue.
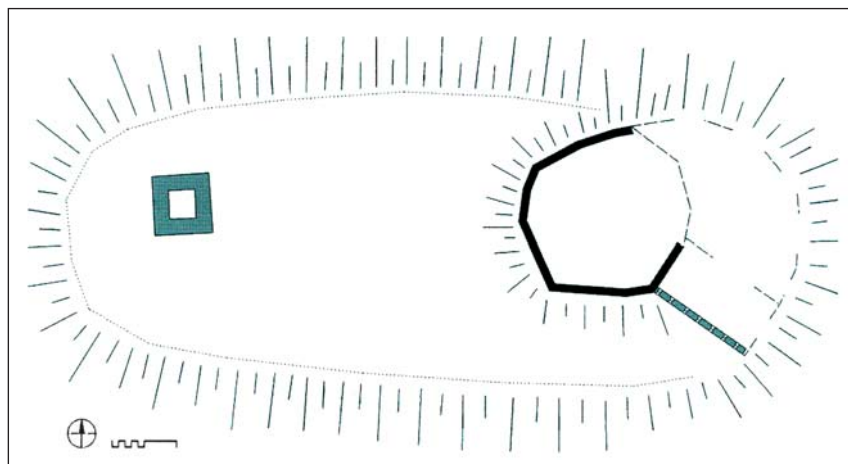
Fig. 6 - Ptuj Castle, reconstruction of the castle complex in the 12th century (after Schicht 2010, Fig. 194).

The core was comprised of a perimeter wall and a large main hall partly preserved in the south-eastern or 'Leslie' wing of the present castle (Fig. 6) ([69]). The ground floor of the hall was lit by a row of at least seven narrow arched windows positioned in the southern wall. The outer front of this wall was built of large, well-hewn blocks of stone arranged in neat rows. Originally, the building must have measured some 15 metres in length but was shortened on the eastern side in the 16th or 17th century. Whether the opposing northern wall of the present building also originates from the 12th century or not, remains unclear. If it does, then the hall might be reconstructed as a rectangular structure with length to width ratio of approximately 2:1. Such proportions were common in similar representative hall buildings of the time; one particularly relevant example is the so-called Hohe Stock, the main hall of Salzburg Castle which was also built under Archbishop Conrad I. Based on this and other analogies, it can be assumed that a representative hall lit by large arcaded windows must once have existed on the first floor of the Ptuj Castle hall as well ([70]).

Archaeological excavations carried out inside the hall in 1990 have uncovered the medieval substructions for a wooden floor with beam supports some 2 metres underneath the window openings. Several square

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([69]) Stopar 1990, p. 102; Premzl 1996, p. 76.
([70]) Schicht 2010, p. 222.

holes for wooden beams, positioned some 60 centimetres apart from one another, are still discernible in the wall, though they have been blocked subsequently. The ground floor of the hall building was probably an open space with a flat wooden ceiling and no internal divisions ([71]).

On the western side, the hall was joined to another building at an obtuse angle. The masonry runs right through this corner joint indicating that the two structures were built simultaneously. However, this is true only of the upper part of the adjoining building. The regular stonework starts only about a meter above ground level, whereas the lower part of the wall is constructed of much smaller unhewn stones (Fig. 7). Patrick Schicht has suggested that this could be the remains of the polygonal perimeter wall of the pre-Conradian, 11th-century castle ([72]). In his opinion, this wall is still preserved in the outline of the horseshoe-shaped core of the standing castle. Originally, it is supposed to have surrounded an area of approximately 25 metres in diameter at the very peak of the castle hill thus giving the impression of a motte-and-bailey type castle.

One other structure might also be related to the pre-Conradian castle. In 1990, a stone wall was excavated underneath the southern wall of the medieval hall ([73]). It was built of unworked but neatly arranged stones bound with strong mortar. The excavated wall was not exactly aligned with the wall above it, so perhaps it was not related to the Conradian hall but to an earlier building ([74]).

Summing up, we may conclude that the construction of Ptuj Castle as the fortified administrative centre of the Salzburg estate and residence of their loyal ministerials from foreign parts was but a final step in a long process of gradual transformation of local power structures and their appropriation by the feudal authority. Burial started on the castle hill around the year 800, possibly after the defeat of the Avars by the Franks

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([71]) The excavator, Ivan Tušek, believed that this room was vaulted originally, since the beam holes were level with the top of the foundations for the two rows of columns dividing the room in three aisles (Tušek 1991, pp. 241-242, Fig. 105). While the beam holes are certainly contemporaneous with the construction of the southern wall (12th century), this need not be true of the columns or their foundations which might have been inserted later, respecting the existing floor level. The columns were probably added in the 16th century, as they are of similar shape to the ones in the arcaded courtyard of that same date. The existing stone vault was constructed in the 17th century (Premzl 1996, p. 76).

([72]) Schicht 2010, p. 219–222.

([73]) Tušek 1991, p. 242.

([74]) Lamut 1997, p. 99.

Fig. 7 - Ptuj Castle, corner joint between the southern wall of the 12th-century hall and the perimeter wall (after Schicht 2010, Fig. 197).

which had brought on important changes in political and administrative circumstances for the local populations. The formation of a number of relatively autonomous Slavic principalities on the Empire's eastern borders suggests that a wide-ranging process of socio-political transformation took place resulting in the re-negotiation of existing power structures and administrative organisation within these territories. It has been surmised that in the context of these events, Ptuj had evolved into a regional administrative and economic centre with the court and residence of the local leader (*župan?*), his family and followers ([75]). This local- or regional-level power structure must have persisted even after the establishment of the Principality of Lower Pannonia, as implied by the continued use of the burial site of Turnirski Prostor. Clearly, the Pannonian princes had a direct interest in Ptuj and have obviously managed to impose authority over the local power holders. A similar situation of continued tradition may be observed in the early period of the

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([75]) Pleterski 1999, p. 403.

Salzburg domination until the abandonment of the burial site in the late 11th century and the construction of the feudal castle. It was only with this change in the spatial use of the castle hill that a final break was made with the ancient traditions.

MALI GRAD, THE LOWER CASTLE OF KAMNIK

The medieval town of Kamnik (Stein) is situated at the confluence of the Kamniška Bistrica and Nevljica rivers in central Slovenia (Fig. 8). A fertile plain opens to the south and west of the town, whereas on the northern and eastern side it is surrounded by the Kamnik (also Savinja) Alps. To the north-east of the town, the narrow Tuhinj Valley offers a natural passage over the Alps via the Tuhinj Pass eastwards into the Savinja Valley. In the middle ages, the Tuhinj road was the main connection between Carniola in the west and Styria [76] in the east. Kamnik occupies a crucial position on this route controlling traffic at a point where the road passes through a narrow spot just before entering the lowlands south of the town [77]. This favourable location has been settled since prehistoric times and by the 10th century A.D. it had evolved into a central place of local, if not regional, importance.

Kamnik had its heyday in the 12th and early 13th centuries as the seat of the mighty Counts of Andechs. This Bavarian dynasty came into possession of the margrave's estates in Carniola c. 1112-1120 through the marriage of Count Berthold II of Andechs to Sophia of Weimar-Orlamünde, the granddaughter of the former Carniolan and Istrian margrave of Thuringian origin, Ulrich I of Weimar-Orlamünde (margrave of Carniola 1050/58-1070, margrave of Istria by 1061-1070). Even though both titles had been transferred to the patriarchs of Aquileia in 1077, the pertaining estates still remained in possession of the House of Weimar-Orlamünde. And so upon the death of their uncle, Count Ulrich II in 1112, Sophia and her sister Hedwig inherited the family estates in Carniola [78].

Count Berthold II and his descendants immediately started to develop their newly acquired territorial possessions and soon managed to

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[76] Until 1036, the territory east of this mountain range was part of the so-called Savinja March (Lat. Sounia, Ger. Mark an der Sann). Thereafter it has been united with Carniola but in the 13th century the northern half of the former Savinja March was included into the province of Styria.

[77] GESTRIN 1985.

[78] KOMAC 2006, pp. 47-53.

Fig. 8 - Kamnik, digital orthophoto image with key sites mentioned in the text (image generated online by Geopedia.siLite, ©2011 Sinergise d.o.o.; data © Geodetska uprava Republike Slovenije).

strengthen their political position in Carniola and Istria, forging alliances and acquiring new estates. In the second half of the 12th century, Kamnik was fully established as the centre of the Andechs dominion south of the Alps ([79]) to the detriment of the ancient urban and administrative centre of Carniola, Kranj. Two castles, the so-called Stari and Mali Grad (Upper and Lower Castle of Stein) ([80]) were erected in Kamnik, one on each side of a short gorge of the Kamniška Bistrica (Fig. 8). Stari Grad was located on the eastern river bank on the mountain of Bregantova Gora (c. 570 metres a.s.l.) rising some 170 metres high above Mali Grad perched on a cliff on the opposite river bank. By the early 13th century, an urban settlement had developed at the foot of Mali Grad ([81]). The choice of Kamnik as centre of the Andechs dominion was evidently due

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([79]) Around 1145, Count Berthold named himself *comes de Stain* (Štih & Simoniti 1996, p. 96).

([80]) The correct English translations of the Slovenian names would be the Old (Stari) and the Little (Mali) Castle. But these are not historic denominations of the two buildings. Medieval Latin and German documents refer to them as the upper (*superior*) and lower (*inferior*) castle of Stein (cf. Štular 2009, pp. 32-33).

([81]) Kos D. 1994, p. 180.

to its key position on the road connecting their territorial possessions on both sides of the Kamnik Alps ([82]).

Taking hold of his dominion in Carniola, Count Berthold took power over the former Weimar-Orlamünde ministerials and their estates. But he also brought with him some of his loyal ministerial families from Bavaria; one of these was entrusted with the management of Kamnik and was probably living in Mali Grad ([83]).

The Carniolan line of the Andechs dynasty reached its peak in the early 13th century with Henry IV who held the titles of the margrave of Istria and the duke of Merania ([84]). Henry was the most powerful lord in Carniola and practically ruled it, even though the title of Carniolan margraves was officially held by the patriarchs of Aquileia. In 1228 Henry IV died with no offspring. The ensuing dispute regarding the rightful inheritance of the Andechs-Meranian estates and titles has eventually opened the way for the rise to power in Carniola of another feudal dynasty, the Carinthian dukes of Spanheim who had already held vast territorial possessions there. Duke Ulrich III of Spanheim married Henry's niece and heiress Agnes in 1249 and in the following year signed a military agreement with the formal ruler of Carniola, Aquileian patriarch Berthold V of Andechs, Agnes' uncle and the last surviving male member of his family. Ulrich thus managed to secure his position as the most powerful man in the province and even wore the honorary title of *dominus Carniole et Marchie* until his death in 1269 ([85]). With this turn of events, Kamnik had lost its political importance. Instead, the Spanheim centre of Ljubljana (Laibach) started to prosper and gradually became the economic and political centre of Carniola.

The presence of the Andechs in Kamnik is first documented beyond any doubt in the period between 1143 and 1147 when Count Berthold II and one of his ministerials addressed themselves after Kamnik ([86]). However, the first direct written evidence of the two castles of Kamnik

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([82]) East of these mountains, the Andechs family was in possession of a large estate of Slovenj Gradec (Windischgraz).

([83]) Kos D. 2001, pp. 188-190, 197-198.

([84]) His career was thwarted in 1208 when he and his brother Bishop Ekbert of Bamberg were accused of playing a part in the conspiracy to murder King Philip II. The punishment – excomunication and loss of possessions granted by the crown – did not curb Henry's ambition nor did it seriously impede his rule over the Andechs dominions in Carniola and Istria. By 1218, his political reputation had been restored (Schütz 1993; Štih 2001a, pp. 17–35).

([85]) Komac 2006, pp. 156-180.

([86]) They signed their names as *comes Bertholdus de Stein* and *Karol de Stein* (Kos F. 1915, No. 195).

comes from a document issued in 1202 when *duo castella de Staine* were pawned by Duke Berthold of Andechs-Merania to the Aquileian patriarch Peregrinus II for a sum of 1.000 Friesach marks [87]. Since then, some documents have referred explicitly either to the upper or the lower castle while others are less specific and their attributions remain speculative [88]. Until c. 1274, the lower castle seems to have been the administrative seat where documents would have been issued; a well-known example is the military agreement between Patriarch Berthold of Andechs and Duke Ulrich III of Spanheim signed in the year 1250 in the upper chapel of the lower castle [89]. After 1274, the upper castle became the administrative seat of the estate, whereas the lower castle was gradually sinking into a decline [90].

Archaeological excavations and analysis of standing remains were carried out at the site of Mali Grad from 1974 until 1995 with intermissions (Fig. 9) [91]. Important discoveries were made regarding the dating, layout, use and structural development of the castle complex. The first stone castle was probably built in the second quarter of the 12th century, upon the arrival of the Counts of Andechs, or even a few decades before that [92]. An irregular polygonal wall enclosed the easternmost part of the rocky plateau surrounded by cliffs on three sides. The western line of the curtain wall facing the access route was thicker and probably higher than the rest, forming a protective shield wall. A narrow main hall was erected at the far northern end of the enclosed yard.

Around 1200, the castle was rebuilt completely [93]. In the inner courtyard, a new hall with at least two storeys was constructed standing at right angle to the old one. On the ground floor there was a kitchen and possibly two storage rooms, whilst grain supplies were stored on the first floor. Several heaps of charred wheat, barley, oats, millet, and horse

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[87] *Id*. 1928, No. 15.

[88] Štular 2009, pp. 32–34.

[89] «… *in capella superiori castri inferioris de Stain*» (Kos M. 1975, I, p. 246).

[90] Štular 2009, p. 34

[91] Sagadin 1997a; Štular 2009.

[92] Some pottery found in the contexts pertaining to the first castle could be dated typologically to the 11th century, as well as the 12th (*Id*. 2009, pp. 145-147). Also of interest in this respect is the tympanum above the main entrance to the castle chapel bearing a relief depiction of the cross surrounded by two angels, a lion and a dragon (Fig. 10). The chapel was constructed c. 1200 but the tympanum is clearly in secondary position and significantly older than the present building. The relief has been dated stylistically to the late 11th or early 12th century and probably originates from an earlier chapel (Sagadin 1997b, p. 33; Stopar 1997, p. 71).
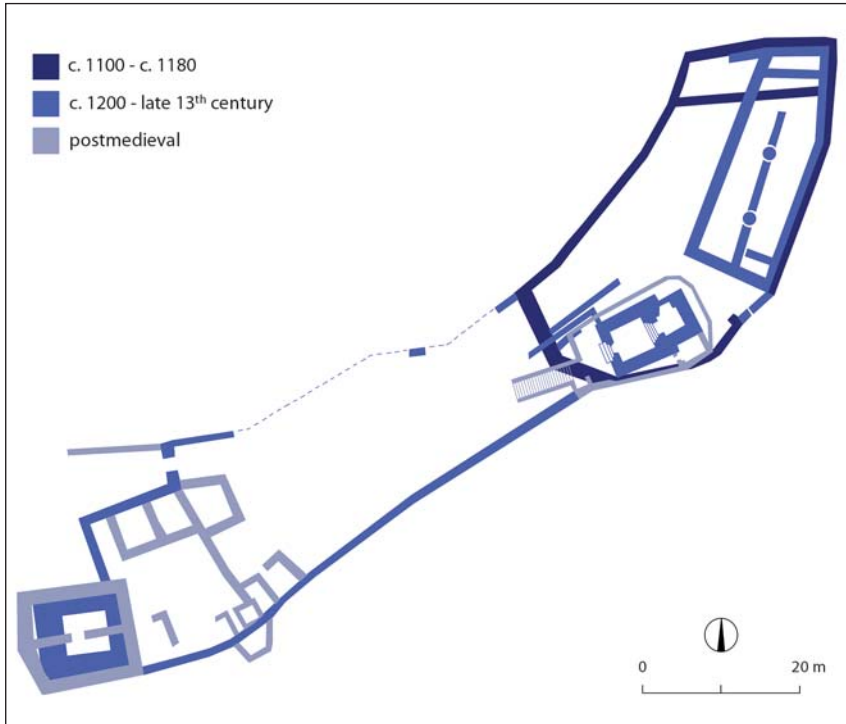
[93] Štular 2009, pp. 147-154.

Fig. 9 - Kamnik, Mali Grad Castle, schematic ground plan (digital graphics K. Pre-
dovnik; based on ŠTULAR 2009, Fig. 4.22).

bean grains were found lying on a thin layer of charcoal representing the
burnt remains of a wooden floor construction. The hall must have burnt
down in the late 13th century. The rebuilding in the early 13th century
also included the erection of a new two-storeyed chapel with a crypt and
the development of the outer bailey. At the easternmost corner of the
bailey, next to the outer castle gate, a massive square keep was erected.
The separate entrance to the upper storey of the chapel and some traces
in the masonry of the curtain wall suggest that a third residential build-
ing must have existed in the outer bailey west of the chapel ([94]).

The archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that the new
main hall was destroyed by fire in the late 13th century and has never
been rebuilt since. The castle soon faced a rapid decline, though life must
have continued in the south-western part of the complex for more than a

([94]) *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61.

Fig. 10 - Kamnik, Mali Grad Castle, tympanum in the main portal of the castle chapel, c. 1100 (photo K. Predovnik).

century. As property of the provincial rulers, Mali Grad was managed by castellans – even two or more at a time – until the early 15th century. In 1444 it was explicitly mentioned es derelict and abandoned ([95]). Thereafter only the chapel and some of the defences, such as the curtain wall and western keep, remained in use by the burghers of Kamnik. To this day, the castle chapel remains the only completely preserved medieval building of the former castle complex.

Archaeological excavations have also brought to light some prehistoric and Roman finds but no other traces of contemporary settlement ([96]). A real surprise, however, was the discovery of an earlier medieval cemetery in the area of the inner castle courtyard (Fig. 11) ([97]). 27 inhumation graves were excavated containing the skeletal remains of 7 males, 7 females and 12 children, whereas one individual's gender could not be determined. Only about one third of the graves have contained personal objects of the deceased, mostly temple and finger rings. These artefacts date the burials to the late 10th or early 11th centuries.

([95]) *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
([96]) Sagadin 1996; *Id*. 1997a.
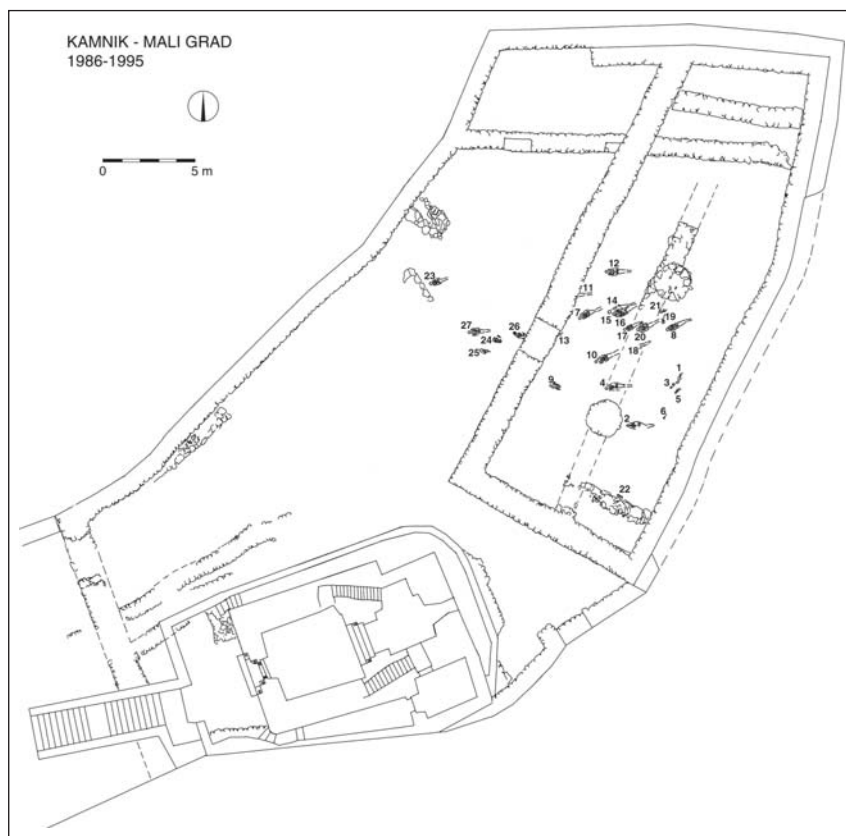([97]) *Id*. 2001; Leben-Seljak 2001.

Fig. 11 - Kamnik, Mali Grad Castle, medieval cemetery, c. 1000 (modified after SAGA-DIN 2001, Fig. 5).

The carefully planned spatial structure of this cemetery has been studied in some detail ([98]). The cemetery was spread out at the foot of a rocky outcrop carrying the 13th century castle chapel. Most burials seem to be aligned exactly with the chapel declining some 23 degrees to the north from the magnetic east ([99]). This alignment, as well as the overall character, structure and dating of the cemetery seem to indicate that it was a Christian burial ground. Apparently, the contemporary church building must have stood on the site of the later castle chapel and must have had the same orientation as its successor.

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([98]) SAGADIN 2001; ŠTULAR 2007.
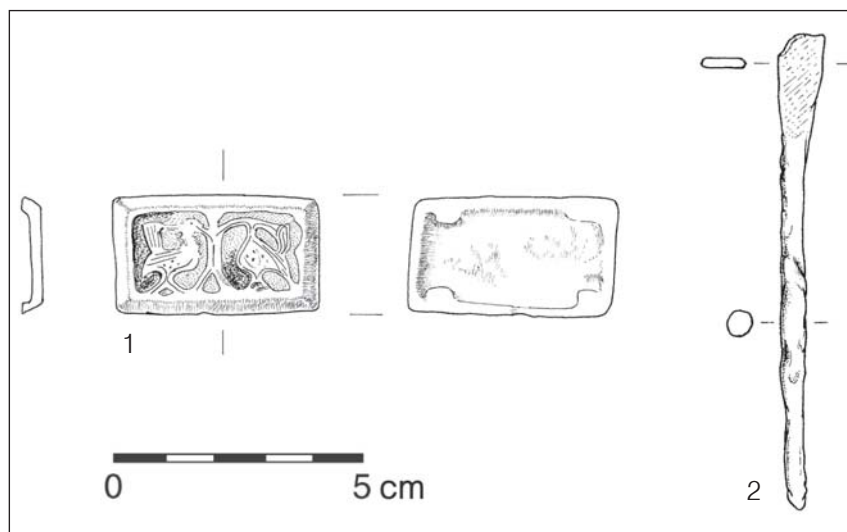([99]) Cf. SAGADIN 2001, p. 367.

Fig 12 - Kamnik, Mali Grad Castle, 1 - enamelled bronze fitment and 2 - stylus (after Sagadin 2001, Fig. 10 and T. 3: 12).

The objects found in the graves at Mali Grad are few in number and rather commonplace. But the very location, carefully planned layout and balanced gender and age structure of this cemetery suggest that it was special in more respects than one. It has been surmised that a small, closely-knit community had exclusive rights of burial there, though the question of where exactly these people lived remains open to speculation. This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that several, presumably early medieval, inhumation graves were uncovered a few hundred metres away at Žale in the early 20th century. Unfortunately, no documentation or finds have been preserved so it is impossible to reflect on the chronological or social relations between the two sites [100].

The special character of the community burying their dead at Mali Grad is confirmed by at least two artefacts found in the layers corresponding stratigraphically with the cemetery (Fig. 12). A cast bronze rectangular fitment with enamel decoration depicting the motif of two birds facing a tree of life probably stems from a leather sword belt. Based on analogies from Lower Austria, Upper Franconia and Hungary, the artefact has been dated typologically to the 9th or 10th century [101]. Fur-

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 371.
[101] Štular 2009, pp. 118-120.

thermore, an iron stylus was found attesting to the presence of at least one individual who had mastered the technology of writing – most probably a cleric ([102]).

The presented archaeological evidence indicates that Kamnik was a central place of at least local importance at the turn of the millennia. Milan Sagadin has proposed that Mali Grad might at that time have been the seat of a Slavic *župan* and his family ([103]). In view of the wider historical context, another interpretation is also possible. At a time when the processes of feudalisation and colonisation started to unfold in Carniola, a feudal estate might have been established at Kamnik, possibly belonging to Carniolan margraves even at that early date. The manor *(curtis)* at Mali Grad might have been occupied by a local lord in the margraves' service and his family, whether of Slavic or German origin ([104]).

Two Carniolan margraves are known by name prior to 1004, Poppo (Pabo) ([105]) and Waltilo ([106]). Between 1004 and 1011, the margraviate was granted to Ulrich of Sempt-Ebersberg from a distinguished Bavarian family. Ulrich's son Margrave Eberhard managed to expand his authority over the previously independent Savinja March east of the Kamnik Alps after the assassination of its margrave, Count William II in 1036 ([107]). In 1044, Count Poppo I of Weimar-Orlamünde became margrave of Carniola. If not before, it was probably during his reign and certainly before the title of margraves passed to the patriarchs of Aquileia in 1077, that the Weimar-Orlamünde dominion and perhaps with it the castle – or even both castles – of Kamnik were established. These estates were thereafter separated from the office of margraves; as family inheritance they were eventually passed down to Sophia of Weimar-Orlamünde who brought them in marriage to her husband, Count Berthold I of Andechs ([108]).

The attraction of Kamnik as central place must have increased once the authority of the Carniolan margraves was extended over the former

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([102]) *Ibid*., pp. 121-122.

([103]) Sagadin 1997a, p. 109.

([104]) Similarly, the historian Dušan Kos has suggested that a feudal castle might have been erected in Kamnik – at Mali or Stari Grad, or possibly both – as early as in the late 10th or 11th century (Kos D. 2005, p. 148).

([105]) Pabo was named in the royal deed of gift to the bishopric of Freising dated 973. Pabo was brother in law to Count Ulrich of Sempt-Ebersberg who later ascended to the office of margrave himself (Štih & Simoniti 1996, p. 93).

([106]) Hauptmann 1999, p. 70.

([107]) Luthar 2008, p. 126.

([108]) Kos D. 2001, p. 197; see also Štular 2005, p. 12.

Savinja March. The construction of at least one of the castles of Kamnik in the context of these events seems likely but has not been confirmed so far. The archaeological evidence from Mali Grad is inconclusive with regard to the exact dating of the first phase of the castle; the last decades of the 11th century are possible, though the early 12th century seems a more reliable date ([109]). The other castle of Kamnik, Stari Grad was probably erected at about the same time, as indicated by the building technique observed in one of its partly preserved walls ([110]).

Whatever the case, for these same reasons and by the 1120ies at the very latest, a feudal castle was erected on the site which had been used for burial some 100 years ago, if not even less. This radical change poses many questions. Even if we suppose that the site had been abandoned completely for over a century, the memory of its previous use and sacred character as Christian burial ground must surely have still been alive among the local population when the castle was being built. Why would the new feudal authorities want to build a castle on a cemetery, walking daily over the graves of their predecessors?

The degree of respect or disrespect for the deceased is difficult to determine for the earliest castle phase when hardly any disturbance of the graves seems to have taken place. Traces of a wooden structure with a fireplace interpreted as a blacksmith's shed and attributed to the first phase of the stone castle were documented in the eastern part of the courtyard ([111]), covering the easternmost part of the burial ground and possibly causing disturbance of the children's graves No. 1, 3, 5, and 6 (Fig. 11). Whilst the earliest stone buildings seem to have respected and avoided the location of burials, this was no longer true when the new hall was constructed c. 1200. Its foundations have disturbed or at least directly covered several graves (Nos. 11, 13, 18, 21, 22 and 26, possibly also 4, 17 and 20). Undoubtedly, the builders and inhabitants of the castle must have been aware of the fact that they were working and living on a burial site.

It is difficult to explain this situation with any certainty. Clearly, we are dealing with a symbolic act of appropriation of an existing or, in the case of a discontinued occupation of the site, ancient central place. The favourable topography seems to have prevailed over any possible considerations or fears of disturbing the dead when choosing to build the

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([109]) See above, Fn. 93; cf. Štular 2005, p. 12.
([110]) Stopar 1997, p. 64.
([111]) Štular 2009, pp. 146-147.

castle on a cemetery. It is tempting to explain this act in terms of a radical break with the past – the new lords taking power over the local population by overthrowing and even literally 'treading over' the old power holders or rather, their graves ([112]). But this need not be so. The newcomers seem to have sought to establish a symbolic link with the past, building on the existing spatial structures while at the same time renegotiating the sacred character of the place transforming it from burial ground into the core area of a busy fortified residence. Though not immediately built upon, the burial area must have been 'defiled' to some extent by the bustle of daily activities. Even if the dead might have been regarded with sympathy as ancestors and fellow Christians, it would have been impossible to set the cemetery area apart as a place of pious remembrance and reverence for the deceased. The limited castle space would not have allowed it. Besides, such sensibilities would probably have felt alien to the medieval world. People were used to walking over the graves of their ancestors buried inside churches and the churchyards, in spite of their sacred character, would often serve as convenient open spaces for rather commonplace – and even sinful – social and commercial activities. This is not to imply that medieval people had no respect for the dead but merely, that it did not find expression in the forms of piety and alienation from death known to the modern world. Perhaps that same attitude may be observed in the case of Mali Grad.

CONCLUSION: EARLY CASTLES AND THE INVENTION OF TRADITION

The three castles discussed above present three different examples of how the feudal authority was established with the employment of specific spatial strategies. Clearly, the detailed understanding of the individual 'life-histories' of these sites is not unequivocal; it is heavily dependent on the accuracy and precision of the dating and interpretations proposed for the available material and documentary evidence. It is difficult to establish with certainty whether these sites have been occupied continually or not. Still, even if the early medieval occupation was discontinued some time before the actual construction of any of these castles, the intermission would not have lasted for more than a century; it

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([112]) This opinion has been expressed by B. Štular following M. Sagadin's interpretation of Mali Grad in the late 10th and early 11th centuries as seat of a Slavic *župan* (*Id.* 2005, p. 12).

would not have resulted in a total loss of knowledge about the previous use and significance of the place among the local population. This knowledge must therefore have had some bearing on the choice of location of these early castles.

Why build a castle in such a place? Did the feudal lords try to establish a link with the ancient traditions, strengthening their claim to power by presenting themselves as legitimate heirs of the old power structures? Or was it exactly the opposite, did they want to make a violent break with the old world to establish an entirely new order of things? Quite probably, both at the same time, as the two motives do not exclude one another.

The pre-history of the castles of Bled and Ptuj seems to have been a process of gradual transformation of the existing power structures, whereby the new authority would have replaced the old one with relatively little upheaval. The castle as a feudal stronghold might thus have been established as a logical and seemingly natural transformation of the old power centre, a mere adjustment to the requirements of the 'modern' times. The old social structures were mobilized by the new authorities and subtly manipulated in accordance with their own ideas of power and world order. Through the establishment of continuity, whether real or imagined, in the use of a given location as central place, the symbolic capital inscribed in it was appropriated and employed by the feudal lords to enforce and legitimize their rule over land and people. A central place of old was still a central place, even though the entire social world had been transformed in the meantime... The implied continuity with the past involved the apparent preservation of spatial structures, whether that past itself was celebrated or explicitly negated, as, possibly, in the case of Mali Grad Castle. The appropriated places would act as anchors of stability in a changing world. These strategies might well be defined as the 'invention of tradition' ([113]).

The importance of spatial strategies for the invention of tradition lies in the fact that social practice takes place through embodied encounters with the natural and social world. Space is the locus of action and therefore spatial structures are a powerful tool for social domination and reproduction, imposing discipline on the body and controlling social action ([114]). Landscapes and places are engaged in the construction of individual and collective identities. Time materializes in land-

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([113]) HOBSBAWM 1983.
([114]) Cf. BOURDIEU 1977; LEFEBVRE 1991.

scapes; they are forever changeable and yet apparently stable. Specific places are imbued with meanings and act as indices of the past, generating memories and guiding action in the present ([115]).

Having said all this, we do not wish to suggest that the local people were simply duped by the foreign feudal elite, passively observing the structures of domination imposed upon them. They were actively involved in the construction of this 'brave new world', whether by opposition and conflict or else by acceptance and submission. As indicated by the evidence from Bled and Ptuj, the old local elites might have been actively involved in the social transformation resulting in – for want of a better expression – the 'feudal order' and the introduction of castles.

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([115]) Cf. BENDER 2002; JONES 2007.

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