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Neil Christie and Hajnalka Herold, eds. *Fortified Settlements in Early Medieval Europe: Defended Communities of the 8th–10th Centuries* (Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016, 352pp., 85 colour and 98 b/w illustr., 4 tables, hbk, ISBN 978-1-78570-235-8)

Defining and understanding defended settlements and fortifications in post-Roman Europe has long been hampered by deeply entrenched notions about 'The Dark Ages'. Among scholars, there has sometimes been an idea that the centuries which are the focus for the discussion and articles in this volume, the eighth to tenth centuries AD, represented a period without defended settlements. That is, the centuries before the emergence and development of seigneurial systems and the erection of 'classical' feudal manors with stone walls and keeps. Although archaeological investigations have been carried out which have touched upon these centuries, such investigations have had a more local and regional focus in specific countries, for example in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and in Poland. The purpose of the volume—to compare and assess the archaeology of fortified settlements across Europe beyond the regional scale—is thus very welcome and needed. The work incorporates twenty-three chapters by twenty-seven authors, including established scholars and early career researchers, which is a sympathetic approach. These chapters deal both with well-established and recently started research programmes. Similarities and differences in the origins, forms, and functions of these settlements are discussed in the context of the development of European regions, mainly during the eighth to tenth centuries.

The volume is the result of two conferences in 2013. There is always a risk with conference volumes of publishing the

various contributions too late, when much could be perceived as out-of-date. The editors of this volume should therefore be given credit for having published the conference proceedings so soon afterwards. Additional experts were included after the conferences were held to ensure better geographical coverage. A complete coverage of the entire European continent is a hard nut to crack and would probably have meant two volumes. Nonetheless, the lack of an editorial comment on this topic is surprising. The Scandinavian countries—with the exception of Denmark, which is lumped together with the British Isles (why?)—are neither represented nor mentioned (for research in Sweden and Denmark, see Holmquist & Olausson, 2009). The same goes for the Baltic countries (see the ongoing Baltic Hillfort Network project, von Carnap-Bornheim & Ibsen, 2015). The content is, as expected, heterogeneous, with approaches ranging from interpretative and generalising to data-focused and descriptive. The authors discuss key, as well as lesser-known, sites, both in a regional perspective and within thematic studies.

In their introduction, the editors identify five main themes of ongoing debate, which are addressed by the contributors: 'site types and definitions', 'geographies of power', 'impact on the landscape', 'workforces and residents', and 'qualities of the archaeology'. The introduction also contains useful references to publications which show that the question of fortified settlements in early medieval Europe has a growing wider academic interest. The theme 'site types and definitions' touches, among other things, upon problems of continuity, discontinuity, and origin—be it Roman, 'Romano-barbarian', or 'barbarian'. To my mind, after having read this book, it seems rather obvious that many forms and structures in, for example, central Europe or the Balkans have much in common with older ones from the Roman period and Late Antiquity. With that in mind, I strongly felt the absence of a reference to the most relevant work by Steuer and Bierbrauer (2008).

Of the themes identified by the editors, 'site types and definitions' is probably the key archaeological issue, but is of course problematic and not as clear as one might think. This is all the more true for this book since it deals with a wide variety of fortifications, including newly founded urban fortresses in Anglo-Saxon England (Ch. 5, by Christie, Ch. 12, by Lavelle) and Carolingian forts and palaces in Frankia and more remote provinces (Ch. 13, by Tys, Deckers & Wouters on Flanders and Zeeland; Ch. 18, by Jurković on Istria; Ch. 10, by Boschetti-Maradi on Switzerland). On the southern Carolingian frontier in Spain, the *Roda Civitas* mentioned in written sources is identified (Ch. 15, by Ollich-Castamayer, Rocafiguera-Espona & Ocaña-Subirana). In northern Iberia, fortified settlements during the *Incastellamento* are discussed (Ch 14, by Quirós Castillo). Viking circular fortifications in Denmark (Ch. 6, by Pedersen), Slavic strongholds with adjacent settlements (Ch. 7, by Biermann for Northern Germany; Ch. 8, by Urbańczyk for Poland), and towns with Roman origins in Italy (Ch. 20, by Citter) are also included. Likewise, Roman towns and fortifications in Byzantium—specifically Bulgaria and southern Romania—are covered (Ch. 16, by Kostova), as are lordly estates in central Europe (Ch.9, by Herold on Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia). To this one can add defended rural refuges (Chs 21–23 on Italy and Sicily, by Valenti, Fronza, and Molinari respectively) and the problems with fortified lagoons and *Castra* in and around Venice (Ch. 19, by Gelechi). In some places, churches and monasteries had to be fortified (Ch. 11, by Christie &

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Hodges), as well as the strange island retreats in the western Balkans (Ch. 17, by Bowden). In Ireland, over 47,000 enclosures and ringforts emerged, mostly earthen raths and stone-built cashels (Ch. 1, by Comber, and Ch. 2, by O'Sullivan) and, finally, we have defended and fortified settlements and hilltop sites in Scotland and Wales (Ch. 3, by Noble, and Ch. 4, by Seaman).

The authors use written sources to present their cases, but—as many attest—the relationship between written and archaeological sources is problematic. 'We still discuss too much on what literary sources tell us, [rather] than on archaeological data' as Citter (Ch. 20, p. 277) puts it while discussing walled towns in central Italy. In the case of Venice and its surroundings, from the sixth century onwards there are written sources mentioning lagoon fortifications and *Castra*, but the city walls mentioned by John the Deacon are, according to Gelichi (Ch. 19), improbable. Gelichi concludes that the archaeological evidence for fortifications before the tenth century is so poor that if we stopped interpreting archaeology on the basis on written sources there would be hardly anything left. Clearly, much has still to be done in this field of research (for a recent discussion of archaeology and written sources during Late Antiquity to early Carolingian times, mainly in central Europe, see Geuenich & Zotz, 2008).

Another relevant issue highlighted by the theme 'qualities of the archaeology' is the extent to which sites have been excavated. This is exemplified by the circular and D-shaped fortifications found in Flanders and Zeeland (Ch. 13, by Tys et al.). The authors' aim is to explore the chronology of these sites and present results from new excavations. Tys et al. make an important statement regarding circular ringforts and their basic shared layout—a reason why they have been treated as a single site category. They conclude that the assumption that all forts had a similar design and occupation history can be rejected based on reinterpretations of older excavations and assessment of those carried out more recently. This highlights the danger in using thoroughly excavated sites as a model and standard for other, largely unexcavated, sites. Only a handful of the coastal fortifications could be connected to measures taken against Viking attacks. The three forts on the island of Walcheren (p. 186–87) serve as a good example of why ringforts and other fortifications must be understood in their own terms with reference to their individual histories. One fort already had a settlement before the construction of the rampart. One saw a development towards a religious, administrative, and commercial centre during the eleventh to twelfth centuries while the other two fell into decline. The coastal fortifications in Flanders and Zeeland have what Tys et al describe as an apparent relationship with Danish circular forts of the Trelleborg type. But what kind of relations are we talking about? The authors do not continue with this thread. Nor, to my disappointment, does the contribution by Pedersen (Ch. 6) on monuments and fortifications in Denmark discuss this intriguing and important matter. Rather, Pedersen simply states that the fortifications of the tenth century drew upon traditional monumental types. I would say that the Trelleborg type forts are an anomaly with no predecessors nor any similarities in the following centuries. Pedersen further argues that the forts were probably inspired by major works in neighbouring countries—but, one wonders, from where, how, and why? One link may be that Danish Viking chiefs and kings during the second half of the ninth century held positions in the military and feudal structures of the Low Countries,

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supporting the Carolingian emperors. These chiefs most probably knew and had seen circular ringforts.

A central question regarding defended settlements and fortifications of different kinds is the link between form and process/function. Do heavily fortified ramparts always indicate a paramount chief or king, and defence and military activities? This issue cannot be discussed without taking into consideration the location of the fortification, its impact on the landscape, and its spatial relations with other fortifications and surrounding settlements. Important discussion regarding this issue is provided by Herold (Ch. 9), focusing on the landscape impact of fortified sites. This issue is also highlighted by Valenti and Fronza (Chs 21 and 22 respectively) for Tuscany in central Italy. The walls of these settlements were, in many cases, a way of defining the settlement proper and as a way of corralling animals. Moving from Italy to Ireland, a huge number of raths and cashels had rather low walls that could probably be used as a defensive barrier but were probably erected as social markers and as signs of status and power more than as actual defences (Ch. 1, by Comber, Ch. 2, by O'Sullivan). This question of military versus symbolic functions—especially where the site was erected on an older socially, politically, and/or religiously important place—was addressed by Halsall (2003), who made an important distinction in discussing the differences between defendable sites versus defended sites.

This leads us to the question of fortifications and warfare, that is, not only how forts worked in the landscape in more general terms, but their participation in actual combat. The editors make a statement regarding the interpretation of the 'end' of fortified sites linked to problems with written sources and the nature of excavations. They note that without complete excavation, it is impossible to link evidence of fire to the total destruction of a site (p. xxvii). From their point of view, warfare is too often the main explanatory factor. By contrast, Boschetti-Maradi's examples from Switzerland (Ch. 10) feature many concrete examples of destruction, not least by fire. In Biermann's chapter on north-western Slavic strongholds (Ch. 7), he states that nearly all ringforts saw damage or destruction by fire, mostly at the ramparts. Fire could result from events other than violent assault, but then one must provide alternatives. In some places there are human bones, in some cases signifying massacres. While I realise that this theme is raised as a practical problem in interpreting the end of fortified sites, I reject the method of total excavation as necessary for definitive proof of violent destruction. Caution is of course needed regarding interpretations, but in this context one has to point to the problem of the 'pacification' of history, which hampers debate.

My closing comment concerns the final part of the introduction, titled 'Other Themes', in which the editors discuss 'reusing the past in the landscape' and 'church and community' by reference to the various chapters. I have no objections to this; on the contrary, many of the contributing authors take up aspects that they find necessary to develop in future research. To my mind, however, this section should have been lifted out and placed as a new and final editorial chapter. In doing so, the different questions and aims from the contributors could have been raised up and put into the perspective of 'future work', and the central themes developed much further. In this way readers would have been more able to make their own reflections by comparison to the editorial summary, and the different themes addressed in the volume might have been more 'disruptive' with regard to future work. Nonetheless, I find the book

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very useful and very much needed for ongoing academic research.

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James H. Barrett and David C. Orton, eds. *Cod and Herring: The Archaeology and History of Medieval Sea Fishing* (Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016, 272pp., 104 figs, pbk, ISBN 978-1-78570-239-6)

Medieval sea fisheries of Western Europe focused principally on two main species: cod and herring. James Barrett and David Orton's edited volume draws together evidence for the changing exploitation of these species (alongside other freshwater and marine fish) across an extensive geographic and temporal range spanning the North Atlantic, North, Baltic, and Irish seas, principally in the period c. AD 500 to AD 1550. The origins of this volume stretch back well over a decade, and in particular to questions raised by an article published in 2004 by Barrett and his colleagues (Barrett et al., 2004). This article, '"Dark Age Economics" Revisited: The English Fish Bone Evidence AD 600–1600', drew together evidence from across the UK to identify a stark increase in the presence of marine fish bones in the years surrounding AD 1000 alongside evidence for the transportation of increasing numbers of these fish to inland sites, changes which went hand-in-hand with the emergence of the market economy and origins of urbanisation. The archaeological indicators for this Fish Event Horizon were found to be echoed in continental material, leading the authors to question whether the rapid transition to marine fish consumption was also taking place on the European continent at the dawn of the second millennium AD; and where its origins and drivers may have lain.

Leading on from '"Dark Age Economics" Revisited', the primary lines of enquiry are introduced by Barrett in Chapter 1 and form the main strands which tie the volume, and the work of over twenty different specialists, together. The publication