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SUMMARY

THE CONTINUITY OF DWELLINGS AND DWELLING STRUCTURES IN STARI RAKALJ

Anton PERCAN

The area of Stari Rakalj is located above the steep coast of Raša Bay which has always been a boundary between the domains of different masters. In the prehistoric era, it was a natural border between the Histri and the Liburnians, while in antiquity it was the border between Italicum and the Illyrian areas. The medieval state of Croatia extended to the Raša River.

The strategic position of the highland, from which every ship's arrival and departure in Kvarner Bay could be seen and monitored, defined the settlement's fortification purpose. Apart from its strategic role, the fort situated on the top of the hill was also a refuge in the event of danger for herds and the shepherd families that lived in the surroundings of the fort. The remains of shepherds' dwellings can still be seen on the southern steep slopes above Raša Bay which were protected from the bora wind. The dwellings offer an example of how their exact geometric form, a square ground floor and a double-sloping roof structure, has survived in the course of two to three millennia of existence. The crystal clear dimensions of the archetype of the Istrian house in the form of a cuboid surmounted by a horizontal three-sided prism are reflected in the roof construction made of a longitudinally set beam leaning on gable walls. The north gable wall is, as a rule, semi-dug into the ground and serves as a natural protection from the north wind.

Shepherds from this area were not nomadic, so they encircled their land, including land suitable for cultivation, with high dry walls. The walls, apart from protecting the crops, were also meant to protect the shepherds and their herds in the case of sudden danger and if they were unable to run for shelter to the nearby fort located on the hill. These units, with the dwelling structure located in the middle of the property and surrounded by high and wide dry walls, represent real forts themselves. Continuity of dwelling in this area and in such dwelling structures also survived the first wave of Morlachian shepherd families who came from the hinterland of Dalmatia via the North Adriatic islands. At the end of the 17th century, with the development of cattle raising and cultivation of soil, and the growth of the settlement located in the area of modern Rakalj, dwelling structures in the area of Stari Rakalj were used only as dvori, that is, as temporary dwelling places for shepherds and their herds.