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Marion Liboutet

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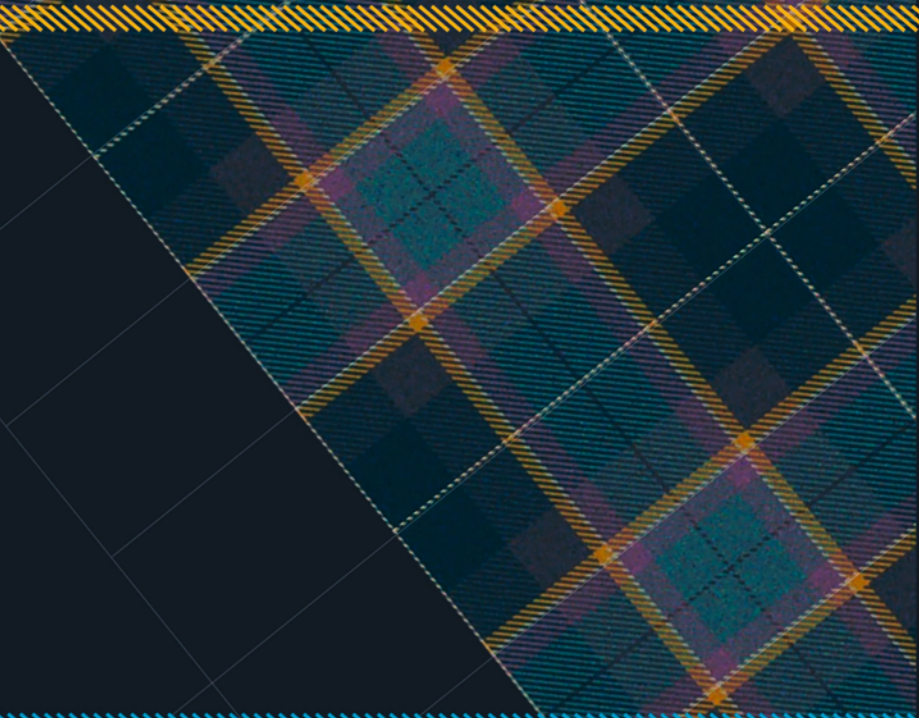
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The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlements and Urban Habitation in Western Switzerland: From Rejection to Absence of Materiel Culture

SESSION RI18

Marion LIBOUTET marion.liboutet@vd.ch

CURRENT PREVENTIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICES PROBLEMS, LIMITS AND ADVANTAGES

• Canton Vaud with such strong and constant density and construction, has a structure of Preventive Archaeology that is relatively sufficient in terms of finance and manpower (when compared to the other cantons), provides effective heritage protection and land management tools and could, through preventive archaeology make up for the delay.

PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

Within the framework of preventive excavation, Medieval sites are discernable but linked to amenity projects and often to the transformation of existing structures; they are situated in urban areas, occupied from the middle ages or even earlier. The remains discovered are therefore partial and fleeting.

• Since there is an absence of knowledge, the typology of structures and remains is not defined which means no one knows what to look for: Medieval remains are sometimes dubious and have the appearance of those of the protohistory (for example the pits at Gilly (Fig 4.), light foundations, trenched structures).

• Medieval remains sometimes lie at considerable depth, as has been seen in the town of Yverdon where postholes from medieval habitations appear at 1.7m and are thus seldom reached by modern building works or at Rôtillon in Lausanne (Fig 5. and 6.) where the habitation and especially the medieval tannery pits where discovered in the Flon Valley, heavily backfilled since the 19th century.

• With the knowledge base of ceramic objects not being particularly advanced, the structures and the backfill are poorly dated (Fig 7.).

• One exception should be highlighted. The Vallon des Vaux (Fig 8.), a cave or rather cliff dwelling, the archaeological study of which was carried in the 80s (despite this quandry appearing vaguely in the 1990s and being then securely reaffirmed in the middle of the 2000s in France) presents a pioneering and almost unique approach. The ceramic material from the medieval levels was also studied. This type of dwelling was precociously integrated into the body of medieval habitation.

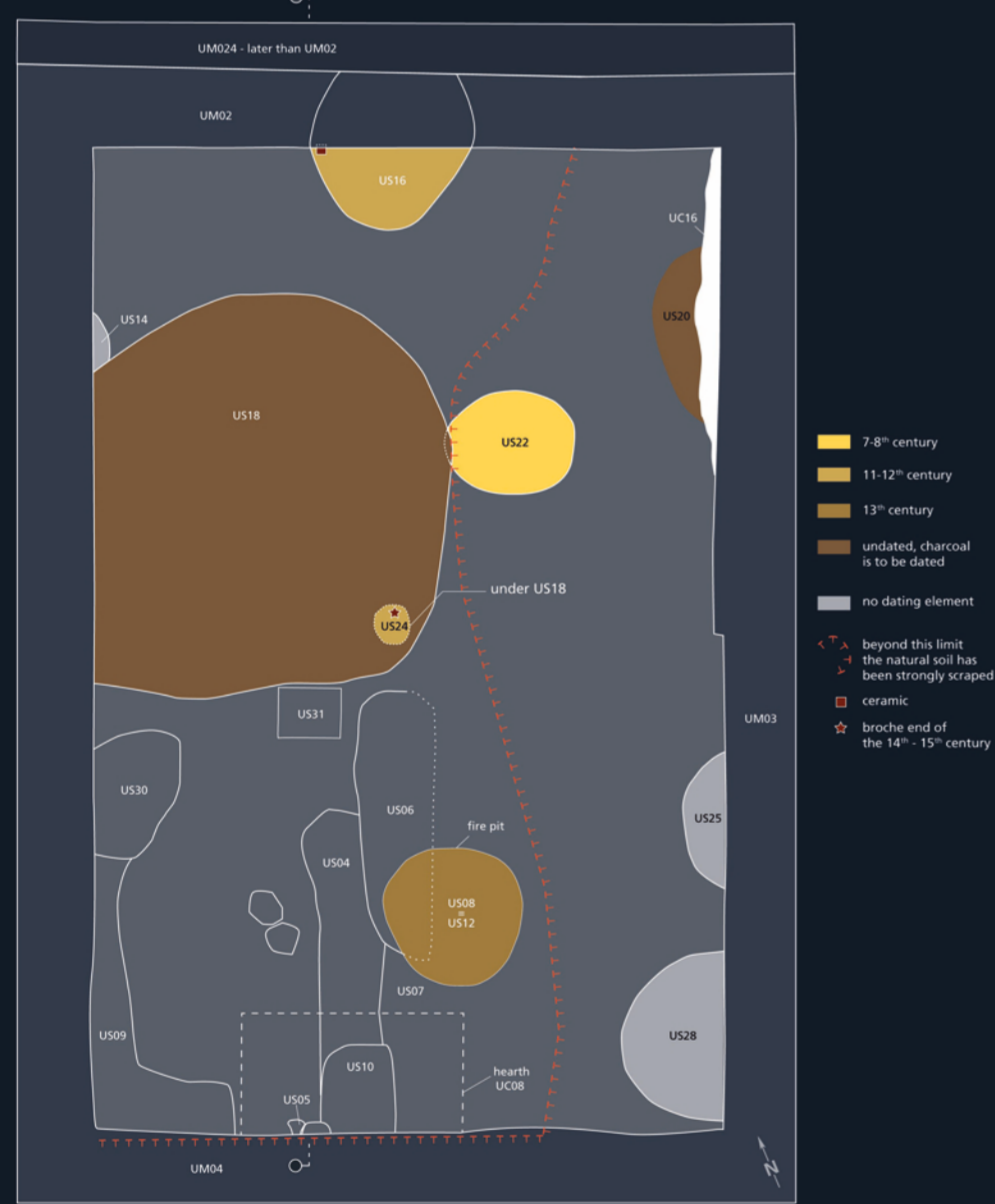
• The opposite table (Fig 2.) shows archaeological conservation areas in which surveys could be conducted.



7 Medieval ceramic, La Rue, Gilly, Canton Vaud. (Colette Grand - Archéologie cantonale vaudoise)



8 Model of the cave-dwelling site Vallon des Vaux, Chavannes-le-Chêne, Canton Vaud. (Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire, Lausanne. Reconstitution: Archeotech/Olivier Feihl. Maquette: Hugo Lienhard. Photo: Daniel et Suzanne Fibbi-Aeppli)



4 Plan, Medieval house, La Rue, Gilly, Canton Vaud.

ADVANTAGES

• With the systemisation of certain operations in the urban environment, notably the archaeological tracing of sewers, partial yet untouched remains appear in the trenches (ex in L'Isle: Fortification foundations in wood, ancient structure in Grandson).

• Decent studies, which resulted in decent archaeological reports of a good scientific level undertaken up until into the 90s, could be published (see the reports and work of the l'Atelier d'Archéologie médiévale in Moudon and Bureau d'Archéologie Monumentale et Urbaine de Lausanne). Furthermore, museum depots and collections may contain information just waiting to be studied.

• The cantons, which practice Medieval Archaeology, have carried out scientific studies, which serve as a reference (City of Fribourg, Bourg of Hermance (Canton Geneva), le Landeron and Valagin (Canton Neuchâtel)). Otherwise only two publications provide a synthesis of the Middle Ages, the execution of the discipline and the level of knowledge of Switzerland in its entirety (SPM VI and SPM VII).

MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY

Despite there being no Department of Medieval Archaeology in Western Switzerland, courses in Medieval Archaeology are on offer within other Archaeology departments (at the University of Lausanne an Introduction to Medieval Archaeology is proposed by the Department of Roman Archaeology and the University of Geneva provides courses on Medieval Archaeology through the Classical Archaeology Department). Courses on the History of Monumental Art were first offered at the University of Lausanne (initiated by Marcel Grandjean between 1972 and 1994) and are still taught to this day. Concerning the archaeological curriculum, Geneva provides an education in Prehistoric Archaeology and Anthropology; Neuchâtel pre and proto-historic Archaeology and Classical Archaeology while Fribourg has no Archaeology Department but a Chair of Medieval History. Neither of the Cantons of Valais and Jura have a university.



5 Wooden fence, Rôtillon, Lausanne, Excavation 2010-11 (Photo: Archeodunum SA)



6 Tannery barrels, Rôtillon, Lausanne, Excavation 2010-11 (Photo: Archeodunum SA)

STRUCTURAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN HOUSES IN CANTON VAUD

• The more archaeological intervention there is in civil houses, the more information can be gained about their origin and occupation prior to construction.

The Importance of:

• Accessing houses before or at the time of renovation work is carried out. This enables ancient elements to be located however vague. In the Canton Fribourg, systematic building visits are carried out prior to building work so before transformation permission is confirmed.

Civil architecture is treated by Monument Historians who had the enormous task of a census of urban and rural habitats (published mainly in *Les Maisons rurales de Suisse - Rural Homes Switzerland*). These publications are a solid base on which structural studies can be built.

But

• The difficulty is to conduct systematic studies owing to the division of tasks between the Cantonal Archaeological Department and the Department of Sites and Monuments and that regulation is nonexistent in this area. Ground surveys are done by the Archaeological Department but not necessarily on above ground structures.