

The fortified settlements in the Saint-Dié-des-Vosges basin

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Saint-Dié-des-Vosges' basin is a good example of fortified sites studies. It is a micro region with several fortified sites with equal size and dating, and some of them are known by archaeological surveys. These sites hold local scholars' attention as well as enthusiasts' and archaeologists' since the beginning of the 19th century. This basin is located in the mountain part of the french department of Vosges. It is separated from the rest of the massif and withdraws into itself because of its geology. This peculiar geology led to a mineralization and the formation of metals such as iron and silver, exploited since the middle ages according to the state of art. The rocks were exploited previously.

Moreover, this basin is crossed by the river "Meurthe" creating a large valley between Alsace and Lorraine. Therefore, it is an important link through the Vosges' mountains enabling to reach the important cols of the Donon, Saales, Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines and the Bonhomme. All the natural ways between the Lorraine plateau and the plain of Alsace meet in this valley.

It is because of this geology that several fortified settlements were able to set up on the spurs on the summits of the mountains.

Five of these hilltops settlements were inhabit during La Tène D and have been excavated or surveyed. They are all located in a range of 12 km and therefore are within sight of each other.

Moreover, some of these hilltop settlements are reoccupied during the 2nd or the 3rd century AD and their fortifications are rebuild.

Other localities in this area are likely to be archaeological sites, but without field research it is not possible to verify.

We do not know why there is so much fortified settlement in this little area. This may be because of its position at the entrance of the Vosges' massif and its resources. These sites could belong to a defensive system protecting the Meurthe's valley and its access roads.