

## Smederevo Fortress from Capital Town to World Heritage

### ABSTRACT

The construction of the Smederevo Fortress from 1428 to 1439 represented a unique construction undertaking, not only in terms of construction and organization, but also in cultural, historical and symbolic terms. It was built in a period of dramatic historical events at the contact area between Europe and Asia during the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the birth of the new Ottoman Empire on its ruins. Despot Đurađ Branković built a new capital city of medieval Serbia, which became its dynamic center, but in a symbolic sense it was also an undertaking of a fateful character for the preservation of the state and people before the Ottoman conquest.

With the fall of Smederevo in 1459, the historical course of the medieval Serbian state ends, and its epic life in legends begins, as a unifying symbol of the heroism and tragedy of the Serbian people. The life of the city of Smederevo continued in the following centuries within the framework of the Ottoman and Austrian states, and in 1805, during the restoration of Serbian statehood, as the first freed city and seat of the Governing Soviet, it became the thread that connects medieval and modern Serbia in a broad historical arc.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought the greatest destruction to Smederevo Fortress in the wars, but also great research and reconstruction, and at the same time, its new appreciation as an important part of the national monumental heritage. The process of proving its universal values as a basis for it to become part of UNESCO's world heritage is underway.

### KEYWORDS

Smederevo Fortress, Smederevo Town, Middle Ages,  
Research, UNESCO, World Heritage

## INTRODUCTION

The construction of the fortified city of Smederevo, its sudden development and importance, followed by a tragic decline, numerous destructions and restorations, as well as subsequent research and new life, became inseparable parts of almost six hundred years of duration, which is deeply woven into the historical, cultural and spiritual tradition of the Serbian people.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city of Smederevo retained only its military role, which the grandiose towers and ramparts emphasized, and the insufficiently visible and unexplored urban structure within the former city strengthened. Thus, over time, the name Smederevo Fortress became established, which does not reflect all the importance, influence, symbolism and stratification of the city of Smederevo in the architectural, spatial-historical and civilizational context.

Despite the great attention of researchers and valuable knowledge, which completed the overall picture of the Smederevo Fortress over time, many unknown facts and dilemmas remained. Scientific disputes and disproportionate interest in certain topics and historical periods have created an unbalanced picture of the past and to a significant extent diverted attention from the unsatisfactory state, status and future of the very subject of research and dispute.

This is precisely why there is an increasingly pronounced need to direct attention to the indisputable facts and values related to the Smederevo Fortress, in order to open up space for a sharper and more refined perception of its past, deeper layers of value and meaning, and at the same time for a more comprehensive consideration of its future development, social roles and influence. We hope that this article, created in that aspiration, will contribute to the process of proving its authenticity and universal value, as the basic criteria for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

## SPATIAL DIMENSION

The confluence of the Great Morava and the Danube is one of the main strategic points of the Balkan Peninsula and the Pannonian Plain, determined by the spatial-historical importance and mythical power of the Danube, whose banks and flow unite and separate times and people. It is emphasized by the vast Morava Valley, which connects the entire Peninsula like a pivot. It is part of a wider contact space of interpenetrating Central European, Transcarpathian, Black Sea, Asia Minor, Mediterranean and indigenous Balkan cultural influences.

The natural advantages for crossing the Danube right near its mouth make it an important crossroads of water and land routes, whose direct or indirect control gives a tactical advantage in peacetime, and especially in wartime circumstances. From a military-strategic perspective, it has predominantly defensive importance from the point of view of the inhabitants on the right bank of the Danube, in contrast to the zone where the Sava meets the Danube, which has a distinctly offensive character. The positions of Margum and Kulič Town on the right and Old Town near Kovin

Fig. 1

Coin of despot Đurađ  
Branković, minted in  
Smederevo, Averse  
and Reverse

(Museum in  
Smederevo)



Fig. 2

Transfer of the Relics of St. Luka in Smederevo, fresco in the  
Church of St. Georgie in Smederevo, A. Bicenko 1935–1937

(© V. Gogić)



on the left bank of the Danube played a key role in the immediate control of this traffic junction.

It was geostrategic reasons that decisively influenced Despot Đurađ Branković to decide to build a new capital near Smederevo, 40 km downstream from Belgrade and 10 km upstream from the confluence of the Great Morava and the Danube. This choice, in the short term, provided the possibility for political balancing between Hungarian and Turkish interests, which were facing each other in this area. At the same time, it was important for the long-term positioning and control of space, because the place had good military-strategic possibilities for defense, traffic connections for the development of trade, enough space for the expansion of the city in the future, and nature in the hinterland, which has always been favorable for life.

#### TIME VERTICAL

Traces of life in the immediate environment have been discovered continuously since prehistoric times. In that broad chronological arc, the time of the construction of the Smederevo Fortress and thirty years in the capital represent a historical turning point in the time of the clash of civilizations and the end of the medieval era.

During the six hundred years of its existence, the managing changed, and the population changed for the most part, its roles and importance changed, but continuity and symbolic value were preserved, to which insufficient attention was paid.

Since its construction, it has gone through six key periods:

- The period of the capital, from the beginning of construction in 1428 until its fall in 1459, was marked by accelerated construction, development and reaching the greatest rise and importance. After the sudden death of the Despot Stefan Lazarević on 19 July 1427, the new ruler of Serbia, Đurađ Branković, had to hand over the capital Belgrade, as well as a number of other cities and areas to the Hungarians<sup>1</sup>, according to the previously concluded agreement. The Ottomans occupied Kruševac, Niš and Golubac, and other larger cities were unsuitable for the new capital. In such complex and very unfavorable circumstances, the Despot built a completely new city in which to rule. Most of his reign until his death in 1456 was marked precisely by the construction and restoration of Smederevo and the uncertainty of preserving the state, despite the skillful combination of diplomatic, military and economic methods.
- The period of stable Ottoman rule and westward expansion, from 1459 to the second siege of Vienna in 1683. Immediately after the conquest, Smederevo became the seat of the newly founded Smederevo Sandžak. Since then, the city has developed even more rapidly in accordance with the new role it has been

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1 On historical circumstances before the construction of the Smederevo Fortress, see: M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, Beograd 2021, 95–129.





Fig. 3

Smederevo fortress – view  
from the northeast

(© D. Veselinović)

given. After the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 and the victory at Mohács in 1526, the border of the Ottoman Empire was moved to the north and was stabilized for a long time, and Smederevo gradually lost its previous central role, first for controlling the border on the Danube, and then as the main base for further conquests in the north.<sup>2</sup> The seat of the Sandžak was transferred to Belgrade in 1521, but the name of the Sandžak officially remained unchanged until the end of the Ottoman rule in Serbia, although in the literature the name Belgrade Pashaluk is more often used, which is incorrect.<sup>3</sup>

- A period of instability and Austrian expansion to the east, from the second unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 to the Treaty of Sistova in 1791. It was marked by the gradual decline of Ottoman power and the rise of Austria, which at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century extended its power first to the left bank of the Danube, and then on three occasions further south to the greater part of the Smederevo Sandžak. Smederevo was in Austrian possession: from 1688 to 1690, from 1718 to 1739, when it became the seat of one of the 11 established districts, and from 1789 to 1791 during Kočina Krajina. In these conflicts, the Serbs massively sided with Christian Austria, whose military successes were short-lived, and the negative consequences for the people after each return to the Ottoman Empire were long-lasting, because due to catastrophic war destruction and reprisals, two large migrations of the Serbian population were initiated.<sup>4</sup>
- In the period of restoration and stabilization of Serbian statehood, from the rise of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914, Smederevo Fortress gradually became an exclusively military fortification. The center of city life was moved outside the ramparts to the zone of the former suburbs. In the process of liberation from Turkish rule, Smederevo played an important symbolic role, as the old capital and the first liberated city in 1805, where until 1807 it was the seat of the insurgent government – the Serbian Governing Council, the first institution of the restored Serbian state. The Turkish army permanently left a number of Serbian towns, including Smederevo in 1867, and the Serbian army entered the Fortress. Soon after, a pier and a railway line were built in front of the town rampart itself as symbols of the new era.
- In the period of the world wars from 1914 to the end of 1944, the Smederevo Fortress tragically suffered and became a kind of symbol of destruction, due

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2 On historical circumstances and the role of Smederevo at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see: O. Zirojević, *Smederevo od pada pod tursku vlast do kraja XVI veka*, Beograd 1970, 193–200; S. Katić, B. Popović, *Smederevska varoš od 1459. godine do kraja 16. veka*, *Istorijski časopis* 62 (2013) 79–116.

3 M. Pavlović, *Smedrevski sandžak 1739–1788, vojno-administrativno uređenje*, Novi Sad 2017, 7–8.

4 R. Tričković, *Beogradski pašaluk 1687–1739*, Beograd 2013; D. Mikavica, et al., *Srbi u Habsburškoj monarhiji od 1526. do 1918.* 1, Beograd 2016.





Fig. 4

The monumental founding inscription of the Despot Đurađ on the facade of tower 4

(Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Smederevo)



to the catastrophic explosion on 5 June 1941, when it protected the then town outside the ramparts and the devastating artillery and airplane bombardments in 1915 and in 1944. The strategic importance of the place was demonstrated in the First World War, during the second attack on Serbia in 1915, when the main attack of the German army, the forcing of the Danube and the deep penetration through the Morava Valley, were carried out near Smederevo.

- The period of arrangement and restoration of the Smederevo Fortress began after the explosion in 1941 and continues until today. It acquired a systematic character in 1946, when it was declared a cultural monument, and in 1947, when its military purpose was abolished. By turning it into a public space with a monumental character, preconditions were created for its decades-long research, protection, conservation and restoration, and at the same time for arrangement, appropriate evaluation and use. Being placed on the Tentative List of UNESCO's World Heritage in 2010 opened up possibilities for a new step forward and symbolically the beginning of a new life for the Smederevo Fortress.

## BUILDERS

The construction process was a flywheel for gathering a lot of brave people of various knowledge and skills, who inextricably connected their destinies with the new capital city and breathed life and renewing energy into it for a long time. Unjustified, mostly people and their lives remained in the shadow of the building itself and the sequence of historical events.

Very soon, all the most important functions that the capital had to have as the seat of secular and spiritual power, the most important military stronghold, the center of economic, commercial and cultural life were united in Smederevo. It had its own mint,<sup>5</sup> (fig. 1) but also a rich palace library.<sup>6</sup> In 1453, when the relics of St. Luka were transferred from Rogos, (fig. 2) it also received an important medieval symbol of spiritual patronage, and in the case of Smederevo, the last hope for the salvation of the Serbian state.<sup>7</sup>

Written testimonies about the construction and life of the city during the first three decades of Smederevo's existence are mostly circumstantial, and thus assemble an unfinished mosaic from which emerge the names of notable persons, merchants, monks, soldiers, craftsmen, travel writers, as well as data that speak of the people who participated in origin and development of the city.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of

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5 V. Ivanišević, *Novac despota Đurđa, Pad Srpske despotovine 1459. godine, Naučni skupovi SANU 134, Odeljenje istorijskih nauka 32* (2011) 417–428.

6 L. Pavlović, et al., *Rukopisna i štampana knjiga u Smederevu od 1430–1846. godine*, in *Smederevske biblioteke, knjige i biblioteke u smederevskom kraju od 1430. do danas*, Smederevo 1986, 7–57.

7 D. Popović, *Pod okriljem svetosti: Kult svetih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*, Beograd 2006, 295–317.

8 About the historical circumstances during the construction of the Smederevo Fortress see Spremić, *op. cit.* 130–159.



workers and craftsmen of various profiles were involved in the entire process, from the preparation of the material and its transfer to installation, which had to be very well organized in order for the entire system to function and give fast and high-quality results. Local and foreign Greek craftsmen participated in the construction, and a special role was played by George Kantakouzenos, brother of Despina Jerina (wife of Đurađ Branković).

In accordance with the spirit of the times, there is no information in the official records about the difficulties and efforts during the construction. Simply as a kind of emanation of God, the city was “built”, as it says on the monumental founding inscription.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, in verbal folklore, legends and especially in epic folk poems,<sup>10</sup> many details were preserved very vividly and directly, about the dilemmas, concerns and issues of the people of that time, torn between the uncertainty of everyday life filled with renunciations and suppressed, necessary hope for survival. Although hierarchically extremely divided medieval society, in the given historical circumstances, which implied radical measures and painful concessions, the lives of the ruler, his family and the people were completely intertwined and closely connected by a common destiny.

## CONSTRUCTION

The grandeur of the entire project of building the Smederevo Fortress was especially emphasized by the fact that there were no quarries in the vicinity of Smederevo. That was contributed by the complex and very unfavorable historical circumstances in which it was created, the extraordinary speed of construction, even by modern standards, technical capabilities and the imposing size.

All types of stone that could be reached were used in the construction, often from locations over 50 km away. Stone from old ancient fortifications (Mons Aureus, Margum, Viminacium, Lederata...), limestone from quarry in Đerdap gorge and Homolje, slate from Ram, sandstone from Karaula, river pebbles, and to a lesser extent old and new bricks were incorporated. Large quantities were also necessary: lime and sand for binding, oak beams for reinforcing the walls and iron wedges for joining the timber.

The great haste and diverse materials also resulted in a highly functional attitude towards construction, but despite this, the careful processing of the stone carvings around the gates, porticoes and windows, as well as the decoration with geometric motifs in a combination of stone and brick, are noticeable, especially on the Danube rampart. The builders had a special relationship with the numerous Roman spolia and old medieval tombstones, which were placed so that they could be viewed.

The location in the plain was chosen, quite unusual for that time, as well as the triangular shape of the base of the fortification, which was determined by the flows of the Danube and Jezava at its mouth (fig. 3).

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9 Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi I*, Beograd – Sremski Karlovci 1902, 84.

10 M. Detelić, *Epski gradovi: Leksikon*, Beograd 2007, 394–396.





Fig. 7

Smederevo fortress –  
 sacral building in the  
 southeast area of fortress

(Regional Institute for  
 the Protection of Cultural  
 Monuments Smederevo)

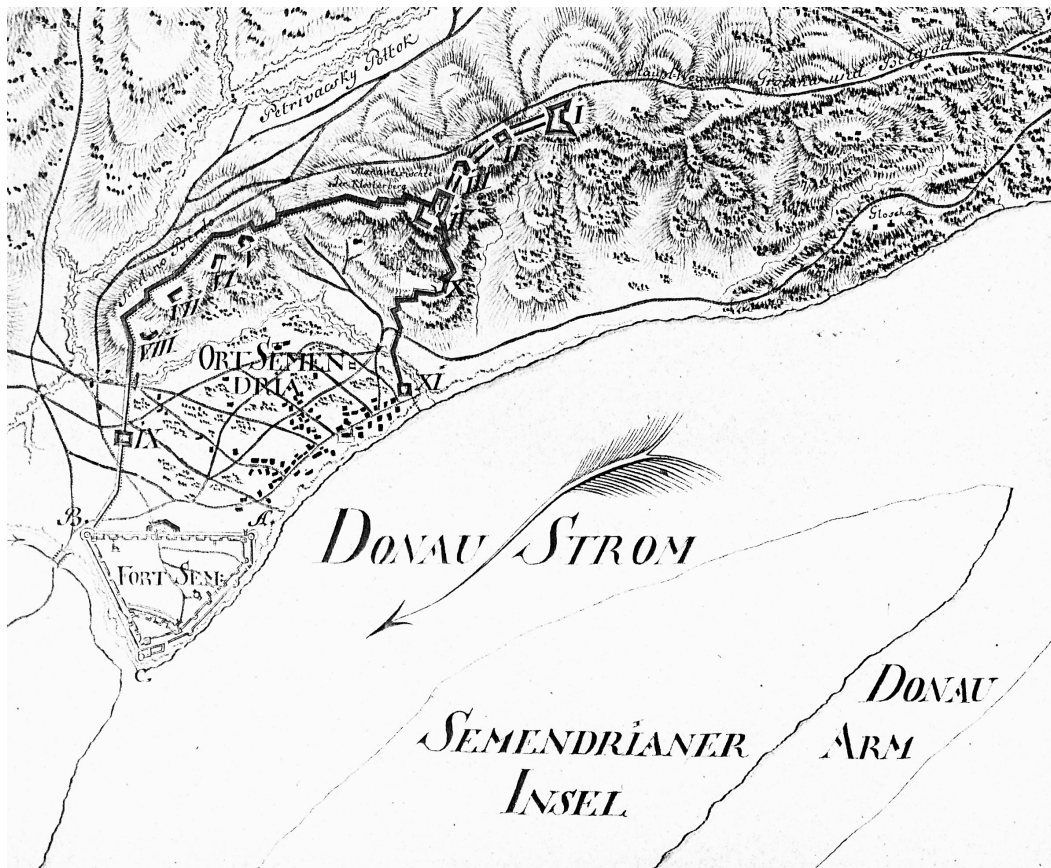


Fig. 8

Plan of Smederevo  
 from 1790

(Kriegsarchiv Wien,  
 sign. H III e 3334,  
 Shmit 2668)

Construction began with the permission of Sultan Murat II in the spring of 1428.<sup>11</sup> First, until 1430, a Fortified Castle was built at the very mouth (most often called “Little Town”). The monumental founding inscription of the Despot Đurađ on the facade of tower 4 on the southern rampart reliably testifies to the time of its construction (fig. 4).<sup>12</sup>

Then, until 1439, the construction of the city ramparts and towers on the Varoš rampart and Jezava rampart was successively continued and mostly completed (fig. 5). After 1444, four towers were added on Dunav rampart and one on the eastern rampart of the Fortified Castle, and the Varoš rampart was strengthened by digging a water ditch and building a part of the outer rampart with cannon openings.

Thus, a strong defensive system was rounded off, on an area of less than 11 hectares, which consisted of the main rampart almost 1500 m long, 2 to 5 m wide, with 25 massive, basically square, projecting towers and the outer ring of the lower protective rampart surrounded by water obstacles.

The construction plan was based on the best traditions of the military architecture of the Byzantine world and the Serbian experience in warfare with cold weapons. The use of artillery, which appeared during construction, became more lethal and important. That is why certain modifications and adaptations to the new way of warfare were already carried out during construction. After the conquest, the Fortress was additionally strengthened for warfare with firearms in 1480,<sup>13</sup> by adding three polygonal cannon towers at the corners, a pentagonal cannon tower in front of the main entrance and by closing the outer wall around the town.

The area of the Fortified Castle was built as a separate functional unit with a strong rampart, a dominant tower of the last defense (*Donjon*), a double gate at the entrance and an auxiliary gate towards the Danube, four massive towers on the southern rampart and a later added smaller tower on the Jezava rampart. Its triangular shape determined the spatial arrangement in the interior. Although it has been completely archaeologically explored, due to its poor preservation, we can only partially glimpse the interior architecture. It had three buildings leaning on ramparts and a spacious square with a well. The most representative object was the building with a hall for ceremonial receptions on the first floor and three preserved, carefully carved double windows (biforis), of the Gothic type, facing the Danube. On the same level, there was also a smaller room with a double Romanesque window. The windows were built inside the wall mass of the ramparts, and each represented a separate sub-unit, with stone benches, emphasizing comfort and intimacy (fig. 6). Opposite it, along the southern rampart, is the Palace for the stay of the Despot's family and courtiers, and along the Jezava rampart is the auxiliary building for the needs of the castle.

The area of the town (most often called the “Great Town”) has been archaeologically explored to a lesser extent, so we only know a small part of its urban structure

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11 Spremić, *op. cit.* 132.

12 S. Nenadović, *Konzervacija natpisa na despotovoj kuli u Smederevu*, Muzeji 6 (1951) 151–160.

13 P. Popović, *Spomenica petstogodišnjice Smederevskog grada*, Beograd 1931, 109–110.



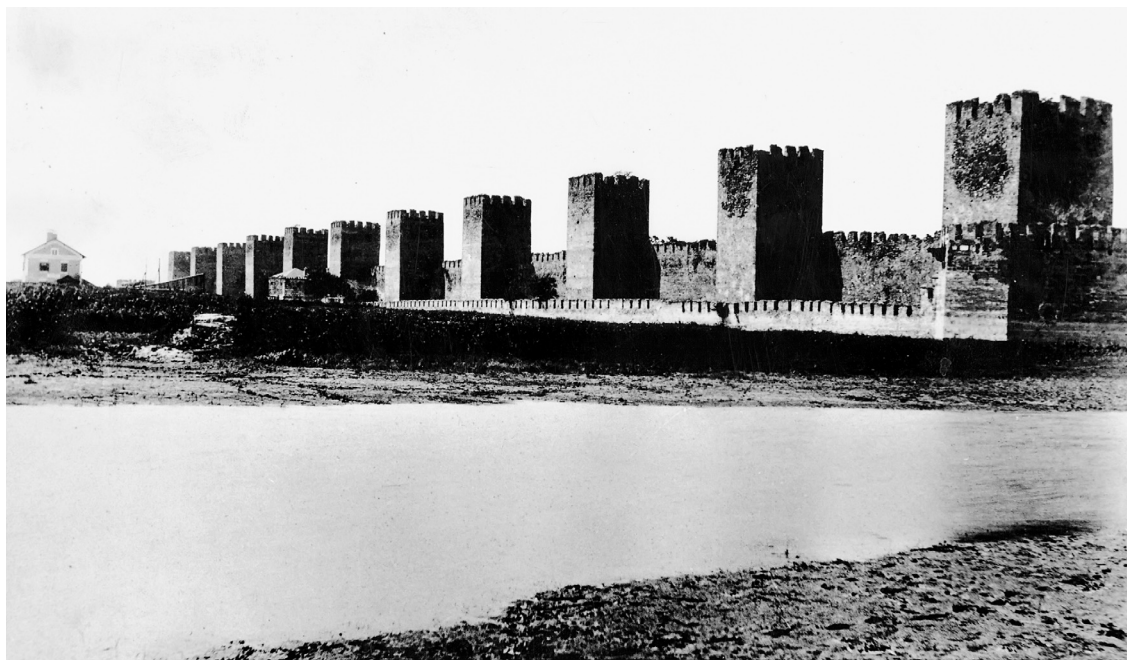


Fig. 9

Smederevo  
fortress – the  
town rampart  
in 1880

(© Đ. Stanojević)



Fig. 10

Varoš rampart  
after the  
explosion on  
June 5, 1941

(Regional  
Institute for  
the Protection  
of Cultural  
Monuments,  
Smederevo)



in relation to its size. The key elements on the basis of which we can guess its spatial organization are the gates (five in total),<sup>14</sup> the fundamental remains of the sacral complex in the southeast corner and the hammam next to the Danube wall. The positions of the gates indicate the possible directions of providing the most important communications and the assumed central position of the main city square with the cathedral church of St. Annunciation. Its possible disposition causes numerous controversies.<sup>15</sup> It was demolished in 1459, and the cannon tower at the confluence of the Jezava and the Danube was built from its construction material.<sup>16</sup>

In the southeast corner are the fundamental remains of a sacral complex with a complex structure, which was extended and significantly remodeled several times (fig. 7). Apparently, before the construction of the Fortress, a one-nave church with a shallow semicircular apse in the east and a square chancel in the west was built. During the period of the Despot Đurađ's rule, two square choirs, a deeper horseshoe-shaped altar apse and triconchal chapels were added to the narthex, on the north and south sides.<sup>17</sup> The church was transformed into a mosque with new alterations and additions first in 1439 and then in 1459, while during the Austrian rule it was used as a Catholic church. The dating of individual construction phases and their interpretation in the literature differ.<sup>18</sup>

After 1459, the city developed intensively and acquired a number of religious, public and economic buildings, and the population lived in hamlets.<sup>19</sup> The only building from that period visible today is the hamam, which was built between 1485 and 1490 by the Danube rampart by the administrator of the sultan's treasury, Firuz-aga.<sup>20</sup>

During the Austrian rule at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the city was additionally protected by a palisade rampart, which included strategic elevations in the area, due to possible artillery attacks<sup>21</sup> (fig. 8). Its traces are no longer visible due to the nature of the material.

From the mid-16<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the army was mostly stationed in the city, so that the buildings in its interior were mostly for military purposes, about which there are indirect data, but there are no visible remains of them today.

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14 M. Popović, *Kapije smederevskog grada*, *Starinar* 28–29 (1977/1978) 213–230.

15 M. Popović, *Ka problemu srednjovekovnih crkvi smederevskog grada*, *Starinar* 50 (2000) 201–219; D. Crnčević, *O mogućoj prvobitnoj funkciji crkve Uspenja presvete Bogorodice u Smedrevu*, *Istorijski časopis* 54 (2007) 63–91; S. Katić, *Mitropoljska crkva Blagoveštenja*, *Istorijski časopis* 69 (2020) 107–126.

16 S. Nenadović, *Razmišljanja o arhitekturi crkve Blagoveštenja despota Đurđa Brankovića u Smedrevu*, *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja* 9–10 (1979) 403–424.

17 M. Vuksan, et al., *Kraljevi i svetitelji srpski: katalog izložbe*, Beograd 2021, 288–289 (D. R.).

18 Popović (2000), *op. cit.* 201–219.

19 Katić, Popović, *op. cit.* 79–116.

20 S. Katić, A. Krstić, *Firuz Agha and his hammam in Smederevo*, *Starinar* 68 (2018) 191–210.

21 I. Zdravković *Stari planovi u zbirkama nekih ustanova u Beču*, *Zbornik zaštite spomenika kulture* 16 (1965) 219–230; L. Pavlović *Istorija Smedereva u reči i slici*, 209–250.



Fig. 11

Varoš gate after archaeological research in 2021

(Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Smederevo)

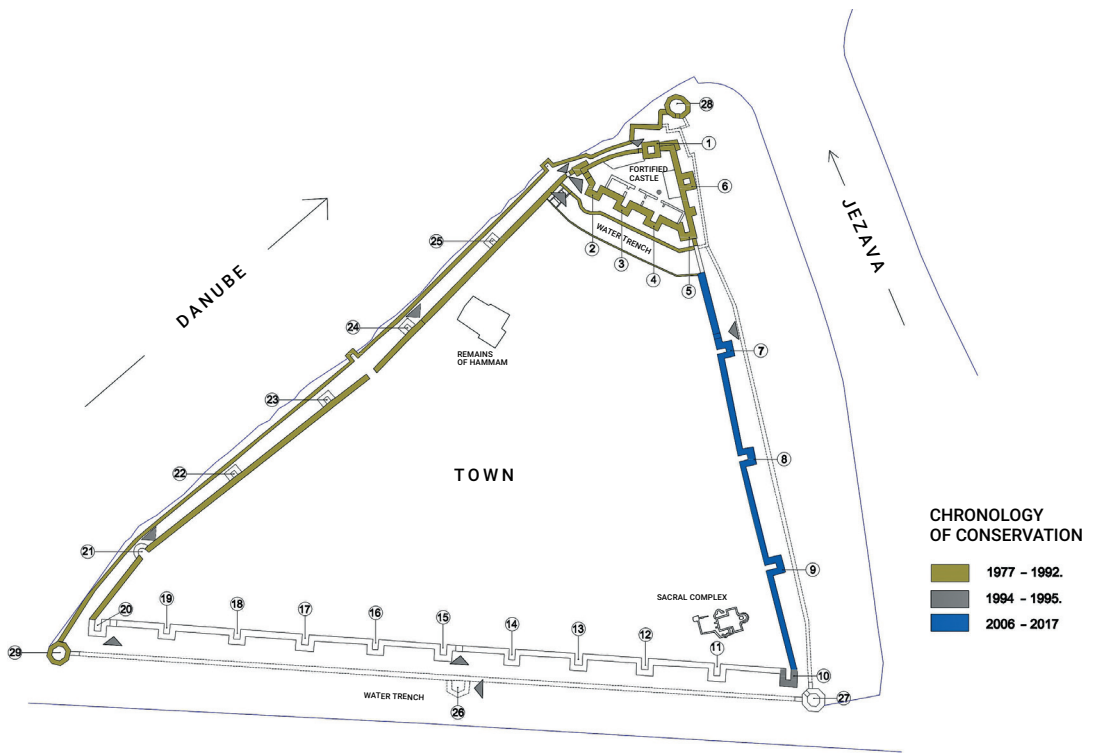


Fig. 12

Smederevo fortress – chronology of the reconstruction and conservation

## DESTRUCTION

The first destructions followed immediately after the construction of the largest part of the fortification in 1439, during the siege in which cannons were used for the first time, as well as during two unsuccessful sieges in 1454 and 1456, when cannons were used by both attackers and defenders.<sup>22</sup>

Artillery was much more deadly in 1688 in Austria and especially in 1690 during the Turkish siege when the city was burned in retaliation after the conquest.<sup>23</sup> Smederevo was captured without a fight in 1718 and 1739, so there was no destruction, but in the Austrian-Turkish wars during Kočina Krajina period from 1788 to 1791, the fortress changed owners several times, and in 1790 cannons were also used in the Austrian attack.<sup>24</sup> In 1805, the insurgents also used cannons for their attack, but the destruction was less severe, because their firepower was weak.<sup>25</sup>

The end of the 19th century brought the first major peacetime destruction when the Smederevo – Velika Plana railway was built in 1881.<sup>26</sup> Then, due to the laying of tracks, the cannon tower in front of the main entrance and the western part of the outer city rampart were demolished, and the defensive trench in front of it was buried.

Despite numerous sufferings, the Smederevo Fortress was exceptionally well preserved until the great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 9).

In the First World War, in October 1915, the main target in the three-day artillery bombardment of the city from the Banat coast was the Fortified Castle and the Danube rampart, as well as the entire town. The Donjon tower and the double gate were mostly destroyed, and the cannon tower at the mouth was also significantly damaged. A large breach was made on the Danube rampart, through which the Germans entered the Fortress after forcing the Danube.<sup>27</sup> Due to the force of the artillery strikes, the ground gave way and Jerina's tower and the wall with the windows tilted towards the north. During the occupation, the outer rampart on the city side from the cannon tower in front of the main entrance to Jezava was demolished, and part of the trench in front of the outer rampart was buried. On the Varoš rampart, a wide opening was made at the second gate for the railway to be carried inside the Fortress. Most of the outer Jezava wall was demolished in order to form a railway for the transport of military equipment, which was transferred over the Danube by a pontoon bridge.

The Second World War brought even greater suffering. At the very beginning of the war, on 5 June 1941, inside the fortress there was a terrible explosion of rifle, artillery and aircraft ammunition, fuel, explosive materials and other confiscated war equipment,

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22 Spremić, *op. cit.* 141.

23 T. Katić, Tursko osvajanje Srbije 1690. godine, *Studia Osmanica* 1 (2012) 86–90.

24 L. Pavlović, *Istorija Smedereva u reči i slici*, Smederevo 1980, 213–242.

25 *Ibid.* 254.

26 J. S. Nikolić, *Istorija železnica Srbije, Vojvodine, Crne Gore i Kosova*, Beograd 1980, 91–93.

27 J. D. Milenković, *Šumadijska divizija prvog poziva*, Kragujevac 1930.



which was brought to Smederevo after the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.<sup>28</sup> Due to the force of the explosion, the central part of the Varoš rampart was damaged the most, where the main Varoš gate, tower 15 and 60 m of the rampart west of the gate were completely destroyed (fig. 10). Part of the Danube rampart was also damaged, and most of the battlements on the Fortress were destroyed. In the central part of the Varoš rampart, in the direction of the main impact, the explosion caused an almost tectonic movement of the ground, which pushed the foundation zone of the rampart to the south, in the central part, by a full 7 m (fig. 11).

The damaged city had not yet recovered from the explosion, and three bombings by Anglo-American aviation followed in 1944.<sup>29</sup> Then, on the southern rampart of the Fortified Castle, tower 3 was mostly destroyed, the foundations of towers 9 and 11 were damaged (which leaned towards the south), tower 17, which was already damaged, collapsed, the hammam, and the cannon tower near the bridge on the Jezava was stricken.

The condition of the Smederevo Fortress after the destruction it suffered in the great wars was catastrophic.

## RESEARCH AND RESTORATION

The city of Smederevo first attracted the attention of spies, chroniclers and travel writers, who left valuable written data and drawings. The turning point in the study is represented by the work of P. Popović, published in 1930 on the occasion of five centuries since the construction of the Fortress,<sup>30</sup> which provides extensive documentation on the appearance of the city before suffering in the Second World War. Smederevo was studied studiously in research by A. Deroko.<sup>31</sup> The extensive monograph by L. Pavlović is especially valuable, published in 1980,<sup>32</sup> and the capital study by M. Spremić, first published in 1994.<sup>33</sup> In recent times, in the work by S. Katić,<sup>34</sup> attention is directed to the sources from the Turkish archives, which significantly sheds light on the era of Ottoman rule.

Archaeological research had been carried out successively since 1956, until 1980 they included the Fortified Castle, which was fully explored (A. Deroko, I. Zdravković, D. Pribaković, M. Popović). Then the city gates (M. Popović), the Sacral complex in the southeast corner (M. Cunjak 1981–1986<sup>35</sup> and D. Radovanović, revised in 2012<sup>36</sup>), as well as the Varoš Gate sector 1 (D. Radovanović 2019–2021) were investigated.

28 M. P. Lazić, *Eksplzija u Smederevu 5. juna 1941. godine: 80 godina posle*, Smederevo 2021.

29 S. Perić, *Smederevski kraj u ratu 1941–1945*, Smederevo 2019, 94–96, 100–101.

30 P. Popović, *Spomenica*.

31 A. Deroko *Smederevski grad*, *Starinar* 2 (1951) 59–98.

32 L. Pavlović, *Istorija Smedereva*.

33 Spremić, *op. cit.*

34 S. Katić, B. Popović, *Smederevska varoš od 1459. godine do kraja 16. veka*, *Istorijski časopis* 62 (2013) 79–116.

35 M. Cunjak, *Smederevska tvrđava, novija istraživanja*, drugo dopunjeno izdanje, Smederevo 2011.

36 M. Vuksan, *op. cit.*

The main attention in the conservation and restoration works is devoted to the area of the Fortified Castle. More serious works were started in 1958 and intensified in 1977 and were carried out continuously until 1994. According to the projects by J. Nešković, and in the organization of the Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Smederevo, work was completed on the towers, ramparts and buildings of the Fortified Castle, on the Danube rampart (except for the towers), the outer Danube rampart, the cannon tower at the mouth and tower 10. After a long break, the works continued from 2007 to 2017, with the renovation of the Jezava rampart and extended from 2018 with the renovation of the Varoš rampart, static stabilization and partial conservation of Leaning Tower 11 (fig. 12).

#### LANDMARKS ON THE WAY TO WORLD HERITAGE

The feat of building Smederevo was not based only on the need to preserve the state, but much more on the idea of defending the value system. Before the eyes of contemporaries, a deeply rooted world imbued with ancient, Eastern Roman, Orthodox-Christian and Slavic heritage was disappearing. Constantinople, although its power was broken, still represented the notion of an ideal, impregnable city, the guardian and symbol of precisely those values, and that is why it was the main role model for the builders of Smederevo, while the similar triangular shape of the base further emphasized such a vision. Although it cannot be compared to Constantinople in terms of size, it still belongs to the ranks of the largest fortified cities of its time, unique in its consistently implemented concept, which has been preserved in its original architectural structure even after six stormy centuries.

With the fall of the city under Ottoman rule in 1459, the entire medieval era symbolically came to an end, and the rich oral tradition about the last Orthodox Christian capital became a centuries-old landmark for the preservation of national identity, especially important at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the restoration of Serbia's statehood. Then Smederevo symbolically became the thread that connected medieval and modern Serbian statehood.

Construction and decline left a very strong impression on contemporaries not only in Serbia but also much wider. The memories have been passed down to the present day as a living tradition, especially preserved in folk literature and artistic creativity imbued with motifs of sacrifice, faith, hope, doubt, betrayal and purification. The following historical figures left a particularly impressive mark: Despot Đurađ, Despina Irina (*Damned Jerina*), Sultanija Mara, Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk (*Fiery Dragon Wolf*) and Oblak Radoslav.

With the fall of the city under Ottoman rule in 1459, the entire medieval era symbolically came to an end, and the rich oral tradition about the last Orthodox Christian capital became a centuries-old landmark for the preservation of national identity, especially important at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the restoration of Serbia's statehood. Then Smederevo symbolically became the thread that connected medieval and modern Serbian statehood.

Unifying symbols of the feat of construction, superhuman sacrifice and tragic fall, the new century's catastrophic war destruction, especially in the great explosion of 1941,



when the Fortress paradoxically did not protect its interior, yet it built a new city outside the walls, brought new layers of legends and extended the life of old inherited traditions.

Vision, construction skill, economic power and organizational ability, as a prerequisite for building a new capital city, would not have resulted without perseverance, unwavering determination, deep faith and the ruler's willingness to sacrifice himself and all those who often and unwillingly participated in its construction. In medieval Serbia, there was also a specific natural tax obligation "to protect and build the city – urban construction".<sup>37</sup>

That is how it was at the beginning of Smederevo Fortress' path to world heritage. In the modern context, any participation in preserving and building the spirit of the city could be considered as a kind of modern city-building. It is a necessary obligation of the inhabitants of today's city to preserve the authenticity, integrity and universal value of foreign concepts in today's increasingly globalized and unified world.

In the complex and demanding process of nomination of the Smederevo Fortress for the UNESCO World Heritage List,<sup>38</sup> which takes place in an extremely competitive environment, returning to the models and values from the beginning of the journey could decisively contribute to its successful completion. Thus, a completely new chapter of preservation of established value systems, necessary for our future uniqueness and duration, would be opened.

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37 D. M. Radovanović, *Smederevsko gradozidanije – Tvrđava kulture za grad kulture*, Mons Aureus: časopis za književnost, umetnost i društvena pitanja 65–66 (2021) 197–205.

38 Smederevo Fortress, Date of submission: 15/04/2010; Criteria: (iv) (v); Category: Cultural; <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5538/> (accessed August 2023).

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## СМЕДЕРЕВСКА ТВРЂАВА ОД ПРЕСТОНОГ ГРАДА ДО СВЕТСКЕ БАШТИНЕ

Након пријављивања Смедеревске тврђаве на прелиминарну листу светске баштине Унеска 2010. године, нису предузимани даљи кораци који би водили ка њеној номинацији. Овај рад је настао у тежњи да се поново покрене процес и да помогне у одређивању главних вредносних репера на путу ка листи светске баштине.

Подвиг изградње новог престоног града није почивао само на потреби очувања државе, већ много више на идеји одбране вредносног система. Пред очима савременика нестајао је дубоко укореењени свет прожет античким, источно ромејским, православно-хришћанским и словенским наслеђем, са Цариградом као узором идеалног, неосвојивог града, чувара и симбола управо тих вредности, док је слична троугаона форма основе такву визију додатно наглашавала. Спада у ред највећих утврђених градова свога времена, јединственог по доследно спроведеној замисли, која је у изворном архитектонском склопу остала очувана до данас.

Падом Смедерева 1459. године, симболично је заокружена читава средњовековна епоха, а богато усмено предање о последњој православној хришћанској престоници постало је вишевековни оријентир очувања народног идентитета, посебно важног почетком 19. столећа, у време обнове државности Србије. Тада је Смедерево симболично постало нит која је повезала средњовековну и модерну српску државност.

Изградња и пад, оставили су веома снажан утисак на савременике не само у Србији већ и много шире. Сећања су преношењем опстала до данашњег времена као жива традиција, посебно сачувана у народној књижевности и уметничком стваралаштву. Нововековна катастрофална ратна разарања, донела су нове слојеве легенди и продужила живот наслеђеним предањима.

Изградња Смедеревског утврђеног града, његов нагли развој и значај, а затим трагичан пад, бројна разарања и обнављања, као и потоња истраживања и нови живот, постали су нераскидиви делови готово шест стотина година дугог трајања, које је дубоко уткано у историјску, културну и духовну традицију српског народа.

Сам назив Смедеревска тврђава који се временом усталио, не одражава сву важност, утицај, симболику и слојевитост Смедеревског града у архитектонском, просторно-историјском и цивилизацијском контексту. Временом је и занимање за поједине теме и историјске периоде створило неуравнотежену слику прошлости

и скренуло пажњу са незадовољавајућег стања, статуса и будућности Смедеревске тврђаве. Зато је неопходно изоштреније и прочишћеније сагледавање њене прошлости, дубљих вредносних слојева и значења, а истовремено и целовитије промишљање њеног будућег развоја, друштвене улоге и утицаја. Посебно узимајући у обзир њен геостратешки положај, шест столећа дуг континуитет и симболичку вредност, којима није посвећивана довољна пажња.

У сложеном и захтевном поступку номинације Смедеревске тврђаве за Унескову листу светске баштине, који се одвија у изузетној конкуренцији, враћање узорима и вредностима, који су брањени њеном изградњом, могло би пресудно допринети успешном окончању процеса и отварању новог поглавља очувања утемељених вредносних система, неопходних за нашу будућу посебност и трајање