

## **Smederevo Fortress**

Country or territory:

Serbia and Montenegro  
Republic of Serbia

Name of organisation

compiling the information:

Regional Institute for Monument Protection  
Smederevo

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Name and address of building(s) or site:



SMEDEREVO FORTRESS, Smederevo

Inventory reference number(s):

No 538 (Central Registry of Republic  
Institute for Monument Protection)

Building type(s):

Mediaeval fortress (of Byzantine building  
tradition)

Main date(s):

15<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Current use: Inside the Fortress, there is a city park for recreation. From time to time, it is used as a place for cultural events, concerts and fairs. The immediate surroundings of the Fortress are used as a marina for ships, as a river harbour, and, partly, as a railroad.

Significance:

During its period of maximum prosperity (i.e. during the first half of the century), the city of Smederevo was one of the most important religious, economic and commercial centres of the region. Thanks to its position and prominence, it became a crossroad between the Balkans and central Europe. Smederevo was the last capital of the Serbian mediaeval state before falling under Turkish power. In the subsequent period, it became the centre of the Turkish *sanjak* and an Austrian province. From 1805 to 1807, it was the centre of the renovated Serbian state. In the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the relics of Saint Luke were stored in the Annunciation Church, within the Fortress. The city was inhabited by a Serbian population and numerous colonies, starting with the merchants from Dubrovnik.

The Fortress is situated on the right bank of the Danube, on today's paneuropean X corridor. It is 45 km south-east from Belgrade and is built on the plateau of the mouth of the river Jezava in the Danube. The inner area spreads over 11 hectares while the external enclosure reaches the edge of the urban areas. The specific importance of the Fortress lies in its preserved original architectural structure, built on a Byzantine model. Owing to the decline in its military importance, the Fortress went through relatively minor changes and managed to preserve its original appearance.

The Smederevo Fortress consists of several parts:

- fortified palace on the river mouth (Little town, built as a first construction stage from 1428 to 1430),
- fortified suburb (a larger settlement, built in the period from 1430 to 1439),
- area of lower defensive walls (escarpment) with towers,
- fortification – open space towards the south, around which later developed today's town with harbour and marina.

One of the main characteristics of this monument is its grandiosity, shown by its 25 massive towers, of a height of approximately 25 m, linked by walls of over 2 m width. The total length of the walls is 1,5 km.

The fortified palace has been explored from an archaeological point of view, while the exploration of the suburb remains incomplete. Besides numerous archaeological findings from the different epochs (15<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century), the excavations brought to light the foundations of a royal palace with auxiliary buildings within the fortified court. Within the fortified suburb, research led to the discovery of remains of a sacral complex, Turkish baths and residential buildings. The sacral complex was constructed over several different historical phases. As for the construction of the Fortress, the building material is similar to that of several neighbouring fortifications, from Roman and old Serbian periods.

The Smederevo Fortress represents a monumental complex, including several elements of today's town and its functional structures. Its importance, therefore, goes beyond the mere architectural and monumental aspects, and would require a new adaptive re-use compatible with its great potential.

#### Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance.

It has preserved the characteristics of the traditional defensive architecture of the Middle Ages. It also constitutes an authentic testimony to the Serbian mediaeval state and church, and provides evidence of the accumulation of different civilisations through history.

#### Categories of ownership or interest:

This cultural heritage is of outstanding national importance and is of interest to all the communities that live in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

- It represents the direct testimony to the historical progress of the Serbian mediaeval state and the Serbian orthodox church.
- It is also of importance for other national communities and confessions, which took part in the history of the area and left a mark in the Fortress.
- It also has economic and tourist importance, particularly as it is on route of the Paneuropean X corridor.

#### Documentation and bibliographic references:

##### Documentation

Available documentation of the Regional Institute for Monument Protection and the Museum of Smederevo include:

- Inventories of movable archaeological findings;
- Technical and photo documentation of archaeological researches;
- Technical and photo documentation of conservation and restoration works;
- Project proposal for the rehabilitation of the Small town (Fortified court)
- Plan and use of the Smederevo Fortress.

##### Selected bibliography

- P.J.Popović, Spomenici Smederevskog grada despota Đurđa Brankovića, Beograd, 1930;
- J.Nešković, Smederevski grad, Smederevo 1975;
- L.Pavlović, Smederevo u reči i slici, Smederevo 1980;
- M.Spremić, Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba, Beograd 1994;
- M.Cunjak, Smederevska tvrđava, Smederevo 1998.

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### Condition:

The present condition of the monument can be classified through several categories: the condition of the fortified court (Small town) can be described as poor. The majority of conservation works have been carried out, and hence the structure is stable, but there is a problem of slight repairs and permanent maintenance; the condition of the fortified suburb (Big town) can be described as very bad. Conservation works have not been carried out (except on one tower and the wall along the Danube), many parts of the walls of the fortress are missing or damaged. The Fortress Tower suffers from a settlement in its foundations. The system of lower walls (escarpment) towards the Danube is in good condition. As the conservation is completed, no significant repairs are needed. In other areas around the Fortress, the walls (escarpment) are still under the ground, and the exact condition will be determined after archaeological excavations.

The Fortress has suffered numerous war damages (several bombardments and a big ammunition explosion stored in its interior). The damage includes roof damage and significant damage to walls, but can be repaired.

The general condition of the monument complex is negatively affected by a variety of natural and man-made factors. A particular problem is the existing railway station and its adjacent infrastructure, whose location and use is not compatible with the preservation of the character of the place. Further to the construction of a hydroelectric power station on the Danube, in the gorge of Djerdap, the level of the water table has changed, and the Fortress was flooded several times until the coast was consolidated.

### Risk:

Generally, there is a risk of slow deterioration.

### Condition Risk:

Slow decay. A solution has been agreed, but it is not implemented. Different grades of problems can be identified:

- Fortified court (Small town) – repair scheme in progress, use and final beneficiary determined,
- Fortified suburb (Big town) – slow decay, solution agreed, but not carried out,
- Wall area around the Fortress (escarpment) – immediate risk of further deterioration, solution agreed, but not begun.

In the immediate surrounding of the Fortress there is a risk of further deterioration from urban encroachment.

### Technical assessment and costing:

In the period from 1975 to 1994 the following activities were carried out:

- restoration of the fortified court (Small town);
- restoration of the escarpment zone by Danube;
- restoration of part of the Fortress walls to Danube;
- restoration of the corner-stone tower;
- archaeological and architectural research of all restored structures;
- archaeological research of church and Turkish bath;

For the complete rehabilitation of the Fortress there is a need for further research and restoration of all the walls and buildings within the complex, as well as of the escarpment system and the reconstruction of some other structures in the immediate vicinity. The approximate costs are estimated to 22,000,000 EUR.

Ownership:

The monument is the property of the Republic of Serbia

Occupation:

The monument is occasionally used. The user is the Municipality of Smederevo.

Management:

The Municipality of Smederevo is responsible for the management of the Smederevo Fortress. The Regional Institute for Monument Protection Smederevo takes care of planning, organisation and conservation works, as well as of the presentation of the monument.

Summary:

The Smederevo Fortress is a monument of outstanding national importance. It has preserved the characteristics of the traditional defensive architecture of the Middle Ages. It also constitutes an authentic testimony to the Serbian mediaeval state and church, and provides evidence of the accumulation of different civilisations through history. For the complete rehabilitation of the Fortress there is a need for further research and restoration of all the walls and buildings within the complex, as well as of the escarpment system and the reconstruction of some other structures in the immediate vicinity. Special attention should be given to a compatible use for the complex.

The potential priority level of intervention is *medium*.