

Marin Iulian NEAGOE, *Cetatea medievală a Severinului, centru de putere la Porțile de Fier* [The medieval fortress of Severin, center of power in the Iron Gates Region], Craiova: Autograf MJM, 2021, 194 p. il. ISBN 978-606-709-240-0

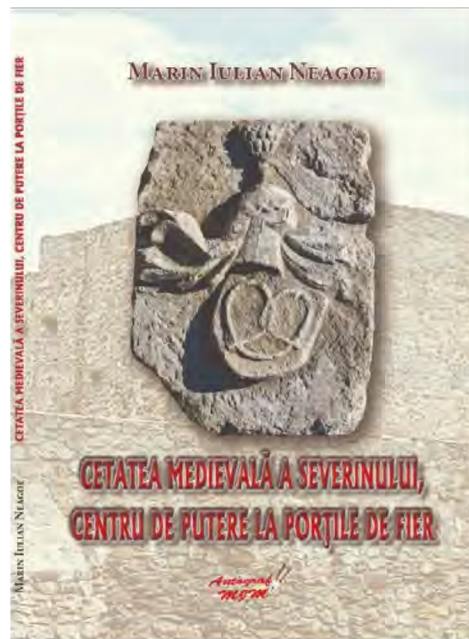
For the beginning (p. 7–10), the author introduces the reader to the subject, mentioning the political and economic context in which the fortress of Severin was built and, subsequently, its restorations.

After the *Introduction*, Chapter I, *Documentary Landmarks on the Settlement and the Fortress of Severin* (pp. 11–24) is presented. We find out that, for the first time, Severin is mentioned in the eleventh century, and, for the first time in a document issued by the Chancellery of Wallachia, Severin is mentioned in 1368, during the time of Vladislav I. Narrative sources and cartographic sources are analyzed.

Chapter II, *The history of the archaeological research at Severin Fortress* (p. 25–34), presents the historiography of the topic and begins with the first information regarding the investigations in the fortress, which is due to Fernando de Marsigli (Italian count, colonel in the Austrian army), who also made the first plan of the fortress. After several attempts to carry out archaeological investigations in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, in 1936, began the systematic research of the fortress, under the coordination of Alexandru Bărcăcilă. It is noticed that relatively few systematic archaeological researches were carried out in the medieval fortress of Severin, if referring to its historical importance (1936–1947, 1965–1969, 1989, 2007, 2011–2012).

In Chapter III, *The Architecture of Severin Fortress* (p. 35–53), the author presents, as the title announces, information on the architecture of the fortress, correlated with historical and archaeological information on the stages of construction and restoration. It is not known exactly, nor archaeologically documented, when the fortress was built. It is known, however, that a coin issued by Andrew II when he held the title of duke of Croatia and Dalmatia was discovered, a type of currency that circulated in the area until the Mongol invasion of 1241–1242. From the period 1247–1260, when Severin was ruled by the knights of St. John, dates the second stage of the construction of the fortress. Restorations are known to have occurred in the following centuries, due to the destruction caused by the sieges of the 14th–16th centuries. Nonetheless, the architecture is analysed, in three subchapters: *The wooden and earth fortification*, *The first stone enclosure of the fortress* and *The second stone enclosure of the fortress*.

Chapter IV, *The Church and the Necropolis of Severin Fortress* (p. 55–57), analyzes the history of the two objectives. It seems that the church was built in the last decade of the 13th century, or in the first half of the 14th century, two restorations being known. During the archaeological research carried out between 1936–1939, it was found the existence of some older ruins, “of which a part of the large apse was preserved, continued to the south by a smaller apse”, which would date from the 13th century. In the course of archaeological research, 22 tombs were identified, which were dated to the 13th–15th centuries. The last of these, discovered in 2011, was dated in the first half of the 13th century and helps the author of the book assume that the trefoiled church functioned during that period, until the Mongol invasion.



Chapter V, *Banat, Country and Fortress of Severin between the 13th and 16th centuries* (p. 59–93), focuses on presenting the external relations of the Land of Severin, in the context of the conflicts in which this space was involved. The geographical position influenced the direct or indirect participation in the conflicts, between the Hungarian kingdom and the Wallachian princes and voivodes, Serbian, Bulgarian and Byzantine leaders, in the 13th–15th centuries. Subsequently, it is done a history of the research, on addressing the establishment and the extent of Banat of Severin, which, apparently at the beginning of the 13th century, occupied the territory between the Cerna and Olt rivers, a space controlled by the first ban of Severin – Dominik de Bassan, but there is insufficient documentary information in this regard. Later, the territory of this political-military formation created by the King of Hungary included the eastern part of the current territory of Caraș-Severin County and a part of the current territory of Mehedinți County, an assertion also accepted by the author of the book we present. At the end of the 14th century, the area of Severin became a subject in the fight between Christianity and the Sublime Porte.

In the penultimate chapter, *The Material Culture of Severin Fortress* (p. 95–129), the author briefly presents the most important categories of materials discovered during archaeological research: pottery, weapons, tools, ornaments and coins. All were divided, in turn, into subcategories.

The text of the paper ends with Chapter VII, *Conclusions* (p. 131–137). We consider that the most important conclusions refer to the moment of the fortress construction, being placed in the first half of the 13th century, when a rectangular donjon with sides of 12 meters was built, and, nearby, there was a church and a necropolis. Then, based on archaeological and documentary sources, it was concluded that an important character, mentioned in the Diploma of the Ionnaites, would have resided in Severin. The first clear mention of the fortress appears in the *Painted Chronicle of Vienna*, in the context of the military campaign launched by Charles Robert of Anjou against Basarab.

The bibliographic list is rich, including, besides works with direct reference to the Severin Fortress, titles that tangentially address the subject issues, starting with works published in the 15th (1453, 1483) and 16th (1528, 1567, 1570) centuries, and up to recently published works.

The work ends with 30 plates (p. 165–194), in which there are illustrated plans, maps, old and current photographs of the fortress, photographs and drawings from recent archaeological research, photographs and drawings of the discovered objects.

Going through the work, anyone can see that the author has made a great effort for its realisation. It should be noted that a lot of important information stands out, some of which represents new discoveries. The author announces the appearance in the future of a monographic work dedicated to Severin Fortress, of greater magnitude, which is long awaited.

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