

Trajče NACEV

Fortification of the Medieval Fort Isar – Shtip

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Abstract: *The medieval fort Isar, which was built on top of the ruins of the antique town of Astibo, is located on the hill with a North-South orientation in the central city core. The fortification had its largest increase during the 14th century and from this period we have the best preserved architectonic remains of the fortification. The entire fort is surrounded by fortification walls, with the main entrance in their eastern portion. The suburbs are located on the eastern and southern slopes of the Isar hill. At the highest part (the acropolis) there was another, smaller fortification, probably a feudal residence with a remarkable main tower (Donjon). The article reviews the fortification in the context of the results from the 2001 – 2002 and 2008 – 2010 excavation campaigns. During the first campaign, one of the most significant discoveries was the second tower, a counterpart to the main Donjon tower, and the entrance to the main part of the acropolis positioned between them. With the second 2008 – 2010 campaign, the entire eastern fortification wall of the Isar fort was uncovered.*

Key words: *fortification, fort, curtain wall, tower.*

The medieval fort Isar (Fig. 1) (Pl. 1) that sprouted on the ruins of the ancient city Astibo, is located on a dominant hill between the Bregalnica river from the north and west and Otinja from the south and east, in the downtown core, in the north –south direction.

The oldest traces of the existence of life on this site come originally from the Eneolithic and the Classical period, discovered in the sector Stara Klanica by the medieval church of Saint Blaise.¹

The oldest remains of the existence of the fortification of Isar, belonging to the ancient Astibo, were discovered in the substructure of the wall covering attached to the eastern facade of the tower 2.² The way of building and the material are quite different

¹ Archaeological research of the sector Stara Klanica was performed by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Museum Stip, led by Zvonko Beldedovski, in the period from 2008 to 2011. Within this research several fragments of pottery belonging to the Eneolithic and Classical period were found. The material from the Eneolithic period is deposited in the museum depot and the material from the classical period is displayed in the permanent archaeological exhibition of the Institute and the Museum Stip.

² Within the conservation archaeological research conducted in 1998 and 1999 in the area of the acropolis under the leadership of the author of this paper, an older substructure which differs from

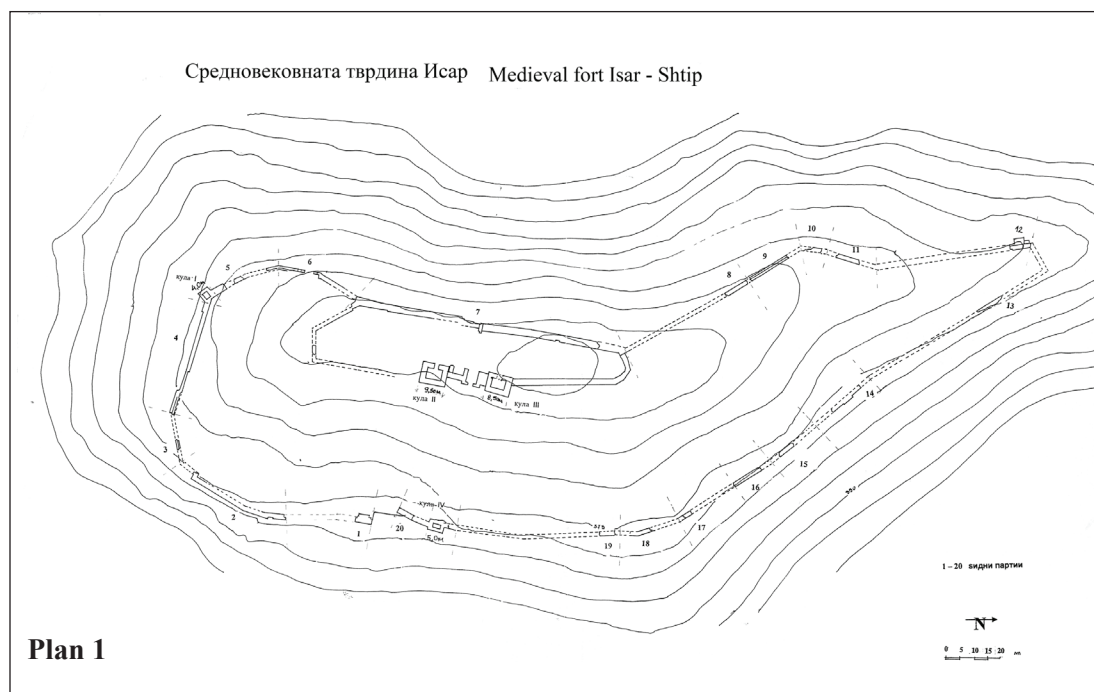


Fig. 1. View of the archaeological site Isar Stip

compared to the superstructure. In the southern base of Isar, during the construction of three residential buildings on the street Bel Kamen nos. 3, 15 and 19, a wall in a line on three different locations was discovered, built with large stone blocks with dimensions of approximately 2.00 -1.50 x 1.00 m.³ On the same street no. 33, while digging the retaining wall, a marble head was found, as well as coins and remains of foundations.⁴

the substructure of the medieval Tower Donjon was found (substructure of this section does not exist because the walls of the tower and of the defense wall are placed directly on the rock).

³ Thanks to Koce Todorov, resident of Bel Kamen Street and to Marjan Stefanovski, owner of an individual residential building on Bel Kamen Street no. 3, for the information obtained.

⁴ I take this opportunity to thank Vane Efremov, owner of an individual residential building on the street Bel Kamen No.3, for the information.



Fig. 2. Detail(ear) of marble male head used as spolia in a newly built house

In the northeastern lower town of Isar, also during the construction of a residential building, a wall with fresco mosaics and a fragment of a marble female head, probably Aphrodite's, were discovered.⁵In the walls of the medieval fort Isar Stip several spolia were discovered. In a newly built house, a part of a marble male head (ear) was used as spolia(Fig. 2).

The following are an addition to these findings that complement the information about the positioning of the antique city Astibo: marble sculpture, marble decorative plastic⁶ (male portrait head, Young Ephebeus Head, torso of naked Aphrodite, statue of Nike - Athena, fragments of statues of horses and cavalry, parts of a composition of lions, massive fragments of pillar trunks and cannelures, capitals, various stands that chronologically belong to 1st – 3rd century), and also architectural remains: water supply installations⁷, mining galleries⁸ and a necropolis⁹.

⁵ I received this information from the doyen of the Stip Theatre Tome Gagovski about the events that occurred during digging the fundamental bases of his family house in the northeastern foot of Isar.

⁶ Sculptural marble decorative plastic was discovered on the street that leads from the neighborhood Star Konak to the elementary school "Goce Delchev" in Stip.

⁷ T. Нацев T. 2013, 294

Water supply installation was discovered during the construction of family houses in Star Konak and on the street leading to the elementary school "Goce Delchev". In the vicinity of Stip there are also remains of an aqueduct that bridged Otinja, near the archaeological site of Kemer. Water from the spring in Suitlak passed through the aqueduct intended for the population of Astibo.

⁸ З. Белдедовски, 1990, 25.

Mine galleries in the length of about 50 m with vertical air vents were discovered under the building Kubus in the central part of Stip.

⁹ In the northern foot of the settlement Star Konak towards the old bus station, two - three funerary structures were accidentally discovered while building a family house, which can be put into the chronological frame from 1st to 3rd century. Some of these findings are displayed in the permanent archaeological exhibition at the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Museum Stip.

Remains of the late-ancient period have not been found, but that does not mean they do not exist,¹⁰ because new family houses that sprang on the remains of the Ottoman profane architecture which in turn was built on the ruins of a medieval settlement, were built on the entire area which we assume was the location of the city Astibo.

The medieval settlement which later transformed into an organized important medieval fortification sprouted not only on the remains of the antique city Astibo but also on the ruins of the Byzantine settlement Stypion which later got the name Stip.

From 976 to 1014 Stip was a member of the first Macedonian Slavic state (Samuel's state). The fort of which there are also no preserved remains was probably conquered in the early 11th century.

From 1014 until the expansion of the Serbian feudal state under the dynasty of Nemanja southward to Macedonia, Stip remained under Serbian rule during a longer period of time, but this was also the period when power changed several times.¹¹

From 1282 to 1231 during the reign of King Milutin, Stip again came under Serbian rule and it was the period when it was the border area between the Serbian state and Byzantium. In this period it shortly fell under Byzantium. During the reign of Stephen Dečanski (1321 - 1331), Stip was incorporated within the Serbian state. The governor of Stip was Protosevastes Hrelja in this period. He was succeeded by John Oliver. From 1335 until the arrival of the Ottomans Eastern Macedonia was governed by the brothers Constantine and Dragan Dejanovci.¹²

Archaeological research at the site Isar Stip was performed repeatedly. In the seventies, during drilling and archaeological research of the acropolis part, two water tanks were discovered. In the eighties, during protective archaeological research in the lower town of Isar, a number of individual residential buildings were discovered.¹³ Within the conservation archaeological research in 1998 and 1999 the entrance part to the acropolis was discovered. The systematic archaeological research in the period 2007 - 2011 of the acropolis part discovered defensive fortification walls on the Acropolis, a few buildings with profane character flanked beside the inside face of the defensive wall, defense towers 5, 6 and 7, and a medieval one-nave church. The Stara Klanica sector discovered the remains of the church Saint Blaise, a medieval necropolis, and the discovery of movable objects in this location were the fragments of pottery belonging to the Eneolithic period and several ceramic dishes corresponding to the chronological framework of the classical period.

The fortification of the medieval fortress Isar Stip in this paper will be presented by preserved architectural remains on the terrain and with the results of conservation archaeological research in 1998 and 1999.¹⁴

¹⁰ In this area, except for the archaeological research done in the acropolis part and in the sector Stara Klanica, archaeological research was not conducted on other locations.

¹¹ Б.Панов, 1986, 135-147.

¹² Т. Томовски, 1986, 175 – 187.

¹³ З.Белдедовски, 1977, 195 – 215.

¹⁴ Report on the performed conservation and restoration work on the main tower Donjon and on parts of the rampart of the fortress Isar - Stip, with reference number 0801-181 dated 13.12.1999.



Fig. 3. Main entrance into the medieval fort Isar Stip

The fortification of the medieval fortress Stip closes the space of the highest set of the highest fortified acropolis part (frurion) and external town–lower town. The space within the entire fortification covers an area of approximately 17,000 m² and the fortified acropolis area alone covers an area of about 1700 m².

The main entrance to the fortress Isar (Fig.3) is located on the eastern foot of the fortress, a location that is quite inaccessible compared to the north side of the fortification. The main entrance to the medieval town of Stip is a hidden lateral entry not seen from a distance; we cannot determine the width of the entrance because no archaeological research was performed in this space. The entrance was protected by tower no. 4 located between the curtain wall N and the curtain wall O.

Curtain wall A

Curtain wall A¹⁵(Pl.1) starts from the main entrance and it includes a wall covering 1 and 2 with a total length of 67 m with a preserved height ranging from 3.20 to 5.00 m and width of 1.60 m. This curtain wall, with the exception of the wall which is not preserved in the wall covering 1, is one of the best preserved of all the curtain walls in

¹⁵ Curtain wall is the distance between two towers. In relation to the medieval fort Isar Stip, when used, the term curtain will not correspond to the distance between the two towers, because on the whole fortification only seven towers were discovered of which five on the acropolis and two on the defense walls in the foot. In this case the curtain will represent both and distance between the two towers and the distance between the wall covering, because of a more detailed description of the fortification.



Fig. 4. Tower 4 inner part.

the whole fortification, excluding the curtain wall on the west side of the acropolis part of the fortification. This curtain wall does not move in a straight line but at two places, and due to the configuration of the terrain, faces the inside of the fort at a right angle.

Curtain wall B

Curtain wall B (Pl.1) extends from the wall covering 2 to tower 1. It includes wall coverings 3 and 4, with a total length of 48 m with the preserved height of 3.20 to 6.00 m of the outer facade and the width of 1.60 m.

The curtain wall is the least preserved in wall covering 3 and the best preserved in the wall covering 4.

This curtain wall, like the previous one, is not in the same line with other wall coverings and its construction was influenced by the terrain.

Tower 1

Located at a distance of 32.00 m from the beginning of the wall covering 4 of curtain wall B (Fig.4) (Pl. 1) the tower leaves the line of curtain wall B and curtain wall C, drawn into the curtain wall with the inner length of 1.60 m or the entire width of the curtain wall in the direction of NE - SW. It is roughly square in shape with outer dimensions: length 4.20 and width 3.80 m. The internal width of the tower is 2.00 x 2.20 m or a total of about 4.40 m². The width of the walls is 1.00 m with preserved height from 2.20 to 4.00 m from the external facade of the tower. The entrance to



Fig. 5. The centerpiece of the wall covering 6 of the curtain wall C (opening for surveillance)

the tower has not been preserved, and it was probably at a greater height than the preserved interior walls of the tower.

Curtain wall C

It starts from Tower 1 and it includes wall coverings 5 and 6 with a total length of 55 m (Pl.1). The preserved heights are different - from 2.50 to 3.60. The central part of the wall covering 6 (Fig.5) has a parapet with a width of 0.80 m and an approximate height of 1.20 m. From this height there is an opening with an approximate width of 3.00 m. Above this part, at the height of approximately 1.00 m, the opening widens northward. I do not have an answer to the question whether there was a widening toward the south. Such an opening, but much smaller, is also found in curtain wall O (Fig.14).

Curtain wall D

Curtain wall (Fig. 6) (Pl. 2) is located on the west side of the acropolis part of the fort and it includes the wall covering 7 (A) with a total length of 44 m. The curtain wall occupies the space from the wall covering 6 to tower 5. It enters the well preserved curtain wall walls although the defense wall is completely ruined on one position, with preserved heights of 1.00 to 4.00. Unlike previous curtain walls having a width of 1.60 m, this curtain wall and other curtain wall walls of the acropolis are 3.00 m wide and they are wider by 1.40 m. than previous curtain wall walls and the curtain wall walls



Fig. 6. Curtain wall D

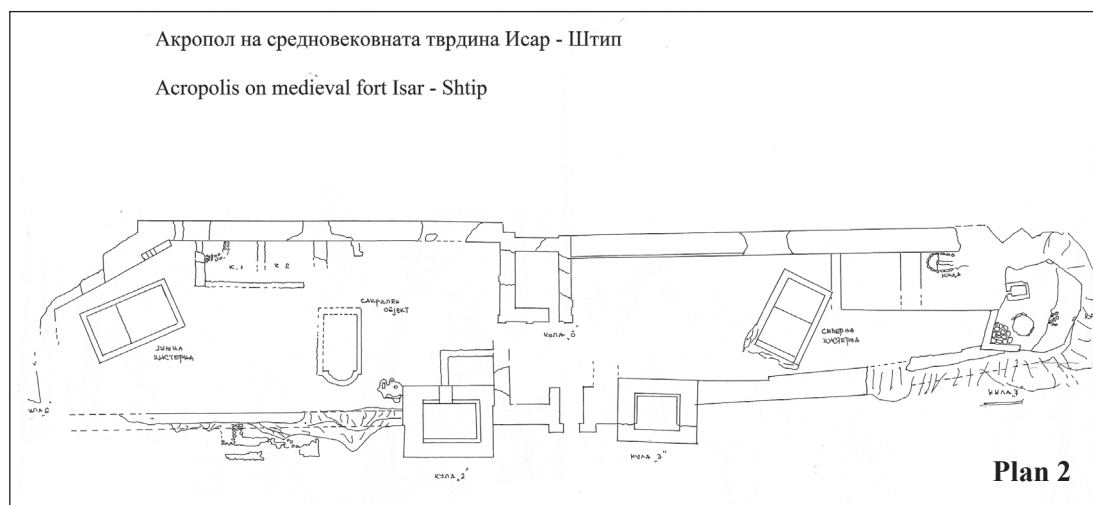
on the northern and eastern lower town. The only narrowing of the defense wall is seen in the space where the curtain wall merges with the west wall of tower 5.

Tower 5

The tower is located in the inner part of the acropolis (Fig. 6) (Pl. 2) between curtain walls D and E.¹⁶ The tower has a rectangular shape with external dimensions of 12.00 x 11.00 m and internal dimensions of 8.50 x 6.50, with the direction west - east. The width of the walls is different and it is between 2.00 meters at the west and north wall to 2.20m at the east and south wall. The entrance to the tower is located in the north eastern corner of the wall with a width of 1.50 m, and the east and the north wall are as door frames at the entrance. The walls of the tower are preserved in a height from 0.20 to 0.40m at the external façade. The inner part of the tower is fully explored with a higher wall of the inner façade, because of the depth of the tower that was intended for a horreum.

The tower divides the acropolis into two parts: the northern part - military barracks, and the southern part where the “feudal castle” was probably located.

¹⁶ The tower was discovered within the systematic archaeological excavations carried out in the period from 2007 to 2011 by the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments and Museum Stip led by Zvonko Beldedovski.



Within the conservation archaeological research in 1999 under the leadership of the author of this text, between the eastern wall of the tower and the newfound entry part of the acropolis, remains of a vaulted entry with single-breasted ark performed in the technique *opus testaceum* were found between the mentioned walls. We were limited in the conservation archaeological research because of the research funds and therefore the conclusion from 1999 about the existence of an entrance or gate dividing the fortification into two parts was confirmed by archaeological research in the period from 2007 to 2011.

Curtain wall E

This curtain wall (Pl. 2), as well as the previous one, is located on the west side of the acropolis and it occupies the area from Tower 5 to the corner where the defense wall turns eastward. Wall covering 7 (B) with a total length of 40 m belongs in this curtain wall. This curtain wall also belongs to the better-preserved curtain walls of the medieval fortification of Isar, with the preserved height of 1.00 m and 4.00 m.

Curtain wall F

This curtain wall occupies the area from curtain wall E, i.e. from wall covering 7 (B) to tower 7 (Pl.2). This curtain wall is the least preserved, and there are only a few small traces of it in the negative of the wall covering 7 (C), with the height of one row of stone of 0.20 m.

Tower 7

It is situated on the highest point of the acropolis (Pl.2), at a distance of 70 to 75 m north of tower 3. It has been preserved only in the negative on the rock without the possibility to determine its shape and dimension.



Fig. 7. Tower 5

Curtain wall G

This curtain wall covers the wall covering 7 (C), between tower 7 and tower 3 of the entrance part of the acropolis (Pl.2). Like the curtain wall F, this curtain wall also belongs to the curtain walls of the medieval fortification least preserved, with preserved heights from 0.50 to 1.00 m. On the majority of the curtain wall, of the substructure, remains of lime mortar in the negative of the fundamental rock were discovered in only a few places.

Entrance part of the acropolis

The entrance part (Fig.8) (Pl.2) of the acropolis contains tower 3, the entrance to the acropolis and tower 2 (Donjon).¹⁷

Tower 3

The tower (Fig.9) (Pl.2) is at a distance of 70 to 75 m south of tower 7. The tower has a rectangular shape with external dimensions: 12.00 x 9.50 m and internal dimensions 8.00 x 5.50 in the north - south direction. The width of the walls is different; the east wall has a width of 1.85 m and the north, south and west walls have a width of 2.25

¹⁷ The entrance (main entrance and tower 3) were fully uncovered within the conservation and archaeological research in 1999, under the guidance of Trajče Nacev. The report on the conservation and restoration works carried out on the main tower Donjon, on the archaeological site Isar Stip in 1999.



Fig. 8. Entrance part of the acropolis, photographed from the inside of the acropolis



Fig. 9. Tower 3 after exploration in 1999

m. The entrance to the tower has not been preserved, and it was probably set on a higher position by the west wall of the tower. The preservation of the walls is different and it ranges from 0.50 to 1.40 m. The interior of the tower was filled with millet and probably tower no. 3, as the other towers excluding towers no. 6 and 7, was dug up to the foundation rock. Based on the research of tower 3, this space was most probably intended for the horreum in all towers. After cleaning the millet from the inside of the tower a floor made of stone tiles appeared, and under the floor three channels spreading in the direction west - east, across the full width of the tower, entering the east wall of the tower. These channels probably had the function of ventilation channels for the horreum.

Because of the terrain the tower comes out of the line of tower 2 and is drawn inside the acropolis for approximately 1.00 m.



Fig. 10. Entrance into the acropolis photographed from the inside

Acropolis entrance

The entrance to the acropolis (Fig.10) (Pl.2) was protected by tower 2 and tower 3 and is composed of two wall coverings attached to tower 3 and tower 2. The entrance has a length of 6.00 m and is not in line with the towers that protect it and it is drawn inside towards the acropolis. The northern wall covering has an approximately square shape with dimensions of 5.00 x 5.50 m. The southern wall covering has a rectangular base, following the width of 3.00 m of the defensive walls of the other curtain walls of the acropolis. The two wall coverings towards the entrance end in the form of a turned upside down Cyrillic letter Г, because of which two different widths appear: external 2.20 m and internal 3.50 m. Whether as in the example of late antique and medieval fortifications there is an inner propugnaculum or this is just a coincidence - I here leave space for reflection and research of this new moment in the medieval fortification architecture in Macedonia.

Tower 2

The tower, which at the same time is the symbol of the city of Stip, in literature and with people, is also known as Donjon Tower, and it is one of the best preserved towers of the medieval fortress Isar Stip (Fig.11) (Pl. 2). It has a rectangular shape with exterior dimensions: 13.50 x 11.00 m and interior dimensions 8.50 x 5.50 m. The width of the walls of this tower are also different - the eastern and the western are 2.00 m, the southern is 3.00 m and the northern is 1.70 m. The entrance to the tower is in



Fig. 11. Tower 2

the central part of the western wall with 1.50 m of width. The preserved walls have different heights that range from 1.20 m by the western wall to 13.40 m by the eastern wall.

Curtain wall I

This curtain wall contains the wall covering 7 (D) (Pl. 2), and occupies the space between tower 2 and tower 6, with a total approximate length of 50-55 m. The same as the previous curtain wall, this one also belongs to the least preserved curtain walls of the fortification. The internal part of the central part of the curtain wall with a length of 28.00 m and a width of 1.30 m and a preserved height from 0.20 to 0.40 m is the only preserved part, and on the remaining part of the curtain wall only the negative of the lime mortar on the foundation rock is preserved.

Tower 6

It is located on the southeast corner of the acropolis between curtain wall I and curtain wall J (Pl.2). Only the negative of certain positions on the fundamental rock of

the tower is preserved. The shape and the dimensions cannot be determined because of poor preservation.

Curtain wall J

It is situated between tower 6 and wall covering 7 (A) of curtain wall D. This curtain wall covers wall covering 7 (E) with a length of 36 m (Pl. 2). This curtain wall is very poorly preserved, especially in the eastern half where only on several positions there are remains of the negative of lime mortar of the foundation rock. In the western half of the defensive wall of the curtain wall only in the inner part is preserved. The preserved height is different - from 1.20 to 1.80 m.

Curtain wall K

The curtain wall, located on the west side of the fortification, occupies the space between curtain wall D and curtain wall L; it includes wall coverings 8 and 9 with a total length of 69 m (Pl.1). The walls of the curtain wall are poorly preserved, with a total length of 69 m of which only 24 meters are preserved walls, but in certain places there is only the negative of lime mortar. The wall width is 1.60 m with preserved heights from 1.00 m to 4.00 m.

Curtain wall L

This curtain wall, as the previous one, is located on the west side of the fortification, between curtain wall K and curtain wall M; it includes wall coverings 10, 11, and 12 with a total length of 84 m (Pl.1). The curtain wall is poorly preserved and only one fragmented wall in each wall covering, or a total of 22 m wall mass, is visible on the terrain, and the remaining walls are present as a negative of lime mortar only on certain positions and not along the entire length. The preserved walls have a width of 1.60 m and a height of 1.00 to 2.00 m.

Curtain wall M

This curtain wall belongs to the group of poorly preserved curtain walls, placed on the northern and eastern part of the fortification, between curtain walls L and N. It includes wall coverings 13, 14, 15, and 16 with a total length of 143 m (Pl.1). On the ground there are only a few places where there are remains of a defensive wall which allow us to determine the direction of the curtain wall. The preserved walls have a width of 1.60 m and a height of 0.50 to 1.70 m.

Curtain wall N

It occupies the space between the curtain wall M and tower 4. It includes wall coverings 17, 18, and 19 with a total length of 99 m (Pl.1). As with the previous curtain wall, the walls are poorly preserved and they are found only on a few positions along the entire curtain wall, and because of the vegetation it is almost impossible to see the negative of the lime mortar. The width is the same, i.e. 1.60 m with preserved heights of 0.40 to 1.70 m.

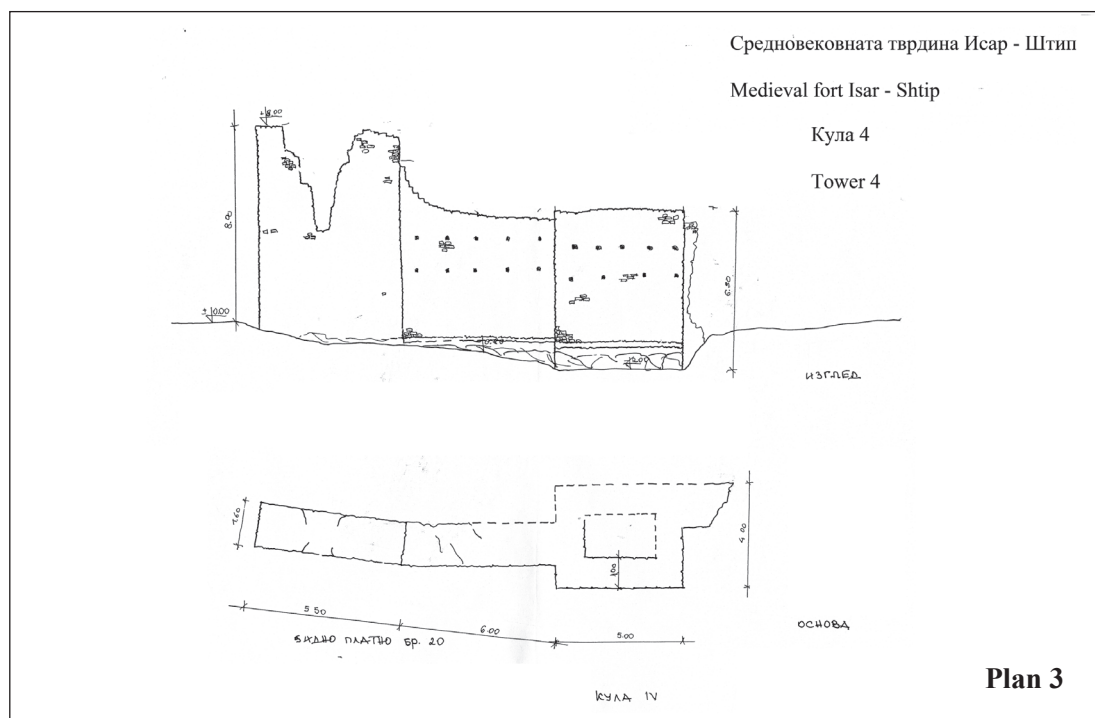


Fig. 12. Tower 4 inner part

Tower 4

The tower is located in the eastern foot of the acropolis at a distance of 10 m north of the main entrance (Fig.12) (Pl.3). It has a rectangular shape with external dimensions: 5.00 x 4.00 m and internal dimensions of 2.80 x 1.70 m in the north - south direction. This tower with its location had the function to protect the main entrance to the fortress. The walls have a width of 1.00 m and different heights from 3.00 to 6.00 m.

Curtain wall O

Located in the eastern foot of the acropolis, between tower 4 and the main entrance to the fortress, it includes wall covering 20 with a total length of 11.50 (Fig.13) (Pl.3).



Fig. 13. Outer façade of the curtain wall O

This curtain wall belongs to those better preserved. The width of the defensive wall is 1.60 m with preserved walls of 6.30 m to 8.00 m. The southern part of this curtain wall along with the northern part of the curtain wall A form the main entrance to the medieval fortress Isar Stip. In this curtain wall, as with the curtain wall C, there is a small opening for observation in the upper parts (Fig.14).

The way of building the defensive walls and towers of the fortification is almost the same in all these. Defensive walls and towers have no substructure, but they are founded on the previously flattened rock (Fig.13). The superstructure in the lower parts by the defense walls was built in *opus incertum* without obvious lines, with amorphous stones connected with lime mortar, and at the entrance part of the acropolis the construction technique is also *opus incertum* with emphasized horizontal rows of processed sandstone linked with lime mortar. In the upper portions the entire fortification was built in santrac system with horizontal and vertical wooden beams connected with metal clamps and nails. Horizontal beams emerge at different heights but not less than 1.50 m on the outer side and 1.20 m on the inner side, alternately as belts at every 1.00 m. The space between the beams on the external and internal façade is also filled in the technique *opus incertum* as in the lower parts, and the core of the walls was filled with amorphous stones of different sizes and then filled with lime mortar.



Fig. 14. Inner façade of the curtain wall O (small opening in the upper parts)

During the conservation archaeological research it was found that plaster with different quality was used for the walls of the towers and the fortification. In the lower parts stronger lime mortar was used and in the upper parts lime mortar with a smaller percentage of lime was used. The weak plaster, rotten beams of the santrac system and the lack of substructure together with erosive forces are the main reasons for the collapse of the walls of the medieval fortress Isar Stip.

The defense system of the fortress consists of defensive walls and seven towers, five of which are deployed on the acropolis part and two towers on the curtain walls in the southern and eastern suburb; the function of tower 4 was to protect the main entrance to the fortress. All towers have a rectangular shape; with the exception of tower 4, all other towers have walls with varying widths. The towers are also arranged so that they can protect the entire acropolis. Based on the research of the interior of tower 3, we can conclude that for towers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 the buried part served as an horreum.

Two widths were found of defensive walls in curtain walls of the entire fortification: 3.00 m of the acropolis curtain wall and 1.60 m of curtain walls in the eastern, northern and southern suburb.

From the layout of the defense towers and the wall width on the curtain wall we can conclude that the acropolis was well fortified by the suburb. It can be determined with certainty that there are two entrances: the main entrance to the fortress located between curtain walls O and A and the entrance to the acropolis between tower 2 and tower 3.



Fig. 15. Road by the main entrance of the fortress, which leads all the way to the acropolis

Ivan Mikulcic¹⁸ and Zvonko Beldedovski¹⁹ are of the opinion that the entrance to the acropolis is by the southern wall of tower 2 and that there should be another entrance at the north side which is most accessible. My opinion is the opposite of theirs. If there had been an entrance from the most accessible part of the fortification, then surely the defense power would have been smaller and it would have been much easier to conquer the fortress. Another entrance into the fortress intended for carts should be looked for on the south side. From the main entrance to the fortress there is a road (Fig.15) that leads all the way to the west of the acropolis. The entrance to the acropolis should be sought in the western part of the curtain wall J, where the MRT antenna pole is placed.

The openings in the curtain wall C and the curtain wall with O, are new elements in the architecture of medieval fortifications and now we can conclude that their function was that of monitoring, but that they also significantly weakened the fortification. In other curtain walls no such openings were found, which does not mean that they did not exist, because in most of the curtain walls the upper parts of the substructure are destroyed.

¹⁸ И. Микулчиќ , 1996, 351 – 356

¹⁹ З. Белдедовски, 1977, 195 – 213.

With systematic archaeological research carried out in the period from 2007 to 2011 no representative architectural remains of the entire acropolis were found. These research results induce me to question whether there really was a “feudal castle” or the entire acropolis were barracks where only the army was situated. The division of the acropolis into two parts is made for greater protection of the fort. In the northern part soldiers were housed in buildings flanked beside the walls of the curtain walls, and in the southern parts were the facilities for the military officer who commanded the army. Ivan Mikulcic is of the opinion that on the entire area of the north of the acropolis a feudal castle or palace was built, and that utility rooms were located in the southern part.²⁰

In the suburb houses were located workshops, etc. In case of siege, the fortification served as shelter for the suburb population.

Based on archaeological research we can conclude that the medieval fortress Isar Stip was built on the foundations of the ancient city of Astibo and the Byzantine city of Stipeon in the late 13th century. The fortress was conquered by the Turks in 1385, who continued to use it until the late 16th century.²¹ There was a tunnel in the fortress there from the acropolis to the riverbed of the river Bregalnica, about the existence of which Evliya Çelebi wrote²² during his visit to Stip in 17th century. The tunnel was discovered during the construction of the collector in the place called Cikican Skala and fully revealed in the period 2007 - 2009.²³

Analogies with the medieval fortress Isar Stip are found in Markovi Kuli - Prilep, Carevi Kuli - Strumica,²⁴ Samuel's Fortress - Ohrid,²⁵ Kale - Skopje, Gradiste village Grad- Delcevo²⁶ and others.

²⁰ И. Микулчиќ , 1996, 351 – 356

²¹ А.Стојановски , 1981, 75

²² E. Celebi, 1967, 339-340.

²³ With the archaeological research in the period from 2007 to 2011, led by Zvonko Beldedovski, a tunnel which led from the river Bregalnitsa to the acropolis was fully discovered. The research revealed a very small part. Probably the rest of the tunnel was demolished in the mining of this part and by the erosive forces that are also a great enemy of the walls of the fortress and of the rock.

²⁴ М.Јовановиќ , Штип 1961, 104

²⁵ К. Петров , 1964, 589-590; Битракова В.Г.,-Папазоглу Ф., и Маленко В., 1985, 1-172.

²⁶ Т. Нацев ,2003, 31 -51.

Фортификацијата на средновековната тврдината Исар – Штип

Резиме

Средновековната тврдина Исар е лоцирана на едно доминантно возвишение помеѓу реките Брегалница од север и запад и Отиња од југ и исток, во централното градско јадро, со правец на протегање север – југ.

Најстарите траги за постоење на живот на овој локалитет потекнуваат од енеолитскиот и од класичниот период, откриени во секторот Стара Кланица кај средновековната црква Св. Власие.

Средновековната населба која подоцна ќе премине во организирано значајно средновековно утврдување, никнува не само врз остатоците на античкиот град Астибо туку и врз урнатините на византиската населба Стипеон, која подоцна ќе го добие името Штип.

Во фортификацијата на тврдината Исар-Штип, влегуваат 14 куртини и 7 кули од кои пет се распоредени на акрополот, а две на останиот дел од фортификацијата која го заштитува подградието. Од распоредот на одбранбените кули, потоа разликата во ширината на одбранбените сидови и од димензиите на основата помеѓу кулите од фортификацијата на акрополот и од подградието, можеме да констатираме дека акрополот бил подобро организиран во одбраната во однос на подградието.

Во фортификацијата постојат два влеза: главен влез во тврдината и влез во акрополот, кој бил штитен со двете главни и највисоки кули.

Во архитектурата на средновековната тврдина Штип се појавуваат нови елементи, непознати во средновековната архитектура: внатрешен пропугнакулум кај влезот во акрополот и два отвора во сидните платна во куртина С и О.

Резултатите од археолошките истражувања на акрополот, пред сè неоткривањето на репрезентативни градби, ни даваат за право да констатираме дека, најверојатно, на овој дел била сместена касарната за војската, а не како досегашните мислења од поедини научни работници, дека на овој простор бил изграден феудалниот дворец.

Во тврдината постоел и тунел, од акрополот сè до коритото на река Брегалница, за чие постоење пишува и Евлија Челебија при неговата посета на Штип во XVII век. Тунелот е откриен при изградбата на колекторот во западното подножје на

тврдината, на левиот брег на реката Брегалница, кај местото нарекувано Чикичан Скала.

Тврдината била освоена од страна на Турците во 1385 година, кои продолжиле да ја користат сè до крајот на 16 век. По овој период, на тврдината и на подградието, не се откриени материјални докази дека таа била користена.

Аналогии со средновековната тврдина Исар - Штип, наоѓаме кај Маркови Кули - Прилеп, Цареви Кули – Струмица, Самуиловата тврдина - Охрид, Кале - Скопје, Градиште село Град – Делчево и други.

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