

# **Towns and fortresses in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom**

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This article considers the central problems of settlement planning and development in the time of the Second Bulgarian kingdom: emergence and identification of fortified settlements and dominant settlement types from the late 12th to late 14th century AD. A critical study of both written and material sources from the related period was made: the works of the medieval historians and chroniclers as well as the material evidence left by the people from the developed Middle Ages (fortifications, buildings, movable finds). It is suggested that the written sources mention various categories of fortified sites and there is a certain hierarchy of the fortified settlements. Town and fortress are the main terms standing for fortified sites. The author concludes that in the 13th and 14th century AD, the exactness of the concepts decreases due to the transformations of the fortified sites. The sites themselves reflect processes of varied nature: political, military, economic, and social. It is the reason for confusion of the researchers and makes impossible the correct identification of all fortified sites in the Second Bulgarian kingdom by using town and fortress only. The use of the terms is justified only in relation to a particular site's localization; a comparison between the information provided by the source and the evidence from the site should also be part of this process.

In view with all said above the archaeological evidence gains advantage. The differentiation between the real towns and the contemporary fortresses in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom is based mainly on instructive archaeological evidence yielded by fortified settlements, including the following components: area, topography, fortification, town planning, architecture (public and private buildings, churches), cemeteries, and small finds. The components of the instructive evidence provide information about various aspects of the fortified settlement: structure and size, social structure and activity of the population, and therefore this settlement's functions and importance. They form a base for identification of the existing sites described by the terms town and fortress from the 13th to 14th century AD.

The elements of the town structure differ considerably from the fortresses both in spatial (planning and proportion between particular

buildings and architectural assemblages) and in quantitative aspect (number of buildings). The following groups of facilities were recorded in the towns: 1. Monumental buildings and architectural assemblages; 2. A considerable number of churches of various architectural types; 3. Various elements of the town planning: streets, squares, elements of the water supply facilities; 4. A great number and high density of houses and residential buildings; 5. More than one cemetery; 6. Variety of small finds (coins, jewelry and ornaments, everyday life articles). The elements of the internal structure of the fortresses are as follows: 1. Several residential buildings; 2. Church; 3. Water cistern; 4. Small fortified dungeon inside the fortress or a tower. The proportion between these elements, their presence or absence indicates the type of the fortress and its functions: fortified settlement, refugee, fortified residence of a layman or a clergyman, military fortification, etc.

The differences in the area/size, the density of the buildings and the organization of the inhabited space between the 13th and 14th century towns and fortresses, and the differences in their functions are clearly discernable on the background provided by the instructive archaeological evidence. The town is a multifunctional, dynamic formation, a center of various activities of the population. Its complex organization was a result of the mixed social milieu, which inhabited it. For that reason the town developed typical features that are specific for it, and are in constant interaction and depend on each other. Such typical features and functions of the urban center are: seat of the authority, a high concentration of population (for the Middle Ages) performing specific „urban“ activities (arts, scholarship, trade, and usury), existence of a market and market related activities, residence of the Orthodox Bulgarian Church and dominance of the town over a certain area.

The fortresses have one or a couple of functions at most: constantly inhabited fortified settlements; refuges in case of a threat; military posts to control and guard certain territory, etc. Their classification is a subject of another work of this author. The important conclusion here is that the fortresses' function is the result of a specific activity of the population, which inhabited and used them. This term is used most

often to describe technical characteristics and to designate each settlement of certain importance and strong fortification, comprising both urban and defensive functions.

In conclusion, it became clear that the terms town and fortress have designated urban cate-

gories mainly. They were used at the same time to describe certain technical aspects of the sites related to the significance of the fortified sites in military and political events or when particular fortified elements of the topography of a site were discussed.