

## **TOURIST VALORISATION OF MEDIEVAL FORTRESSES ALONG THE DANUBE RIVER: FROM THE SERBIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract.** *The aim of the research is to determine the tourist value of the medieval fortresses of Belgrade, Smederevo and Golubac, which are located along the course of the Danube through Serbia, that is, to evaluate tourist attractiveness of all those occurrences, objects and spaces which define the tourist value of this kind of resource and heritage. Relying on the analysis of defined elements of the qualitative-quantitative procedure of tourist valorisation, the paper indicates the causes of a low level of tourist attractiveness and distinctiveness of the analysed monumental complexes, as well as the guidelines and activities which should be undertaken in order to rebuild and organise this kind of cultural heritage.*

**Key words:** *tourist valorisation, cultural goods, medieval fortresses, the Danube, Serbia.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The significance and attractiveness of cultural resources of Europe is based on cultural accomplishments from the prehistoric period to the modern age. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the usage and tourist valorisation of cultural resources have intensified, particularly in Europe, where cultural heritage and identity have become a competitive power in relation to the rest of the world, offering to all European regions, without exception, unique possibilities of social and economic development (Dželebdžić and Marić 2014). Hence the sudden rise of cultural tourism and cultural paths, old and new museums and the election of cities-capitals of culture in Europe. The valorisation of anthropogenic tourist resources and their cultural activity depend on the educational and cultural level of tourists, as well as the attractive promotion and presentation of resources. The process of the globalisation of culture, the increased interest of people in culture, the

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increase in the significance of cultural values and their authenticities, bring about the increase in the attractiveness of anthropogenic tourist resources (Maksin-Mičić 2008).

Old fortifications across Serbia lost their former functions long ago (Popović 2008) and, today, we recognise in them the elements of cultural resources which represent a noteworthy potential for the sustainable development of tourism. The elements of cultural values which are identified by the interested partakers have economic, social, ecological and cultural development potentials (Šmid Hribar and Ledinek Lozej 2013). Being that the issues of valorisation, protection and sustainable use of resources and heritage in the function of the development of tourism can include a wide range of natural and cultural goods, the selection among the resources and heritages which represent a significant potential for the advancement of the tourist product of Serbia has been conducted for the needs of this research. In this context, the medieval fortresses on the Danube – Belgrade, Smederevo and Golubac – are the monuments of culture which have special significance for the social, historical and cultural development of the people, that is, for the development of their natural environment, and the monuments represent the testimonies of the crucial historical events, on the basis of which they are classified into the category of cultural goods of particular importance (Zakon o kulturnim dobrima 2011). It is not expected that the basic function of the protection of cultural goods is to stop their decay, since the important thing is to expand the protection with the components of education, identification, tourism and development (Nared, Erhartič and Razpotnik Visković 2013). Bearing in mind the due attention which is paid to the architectural and historical character of monuments, groups of buildings and localities, the Council of Europe (1985) encourages the following: the use of protected goods in the light of contemporary life needs; the adaptation of old buildings for new purposes, when possible; and, the best harmonisation of the needs for protection with the needs of contemporary economic, social and cultural activities.

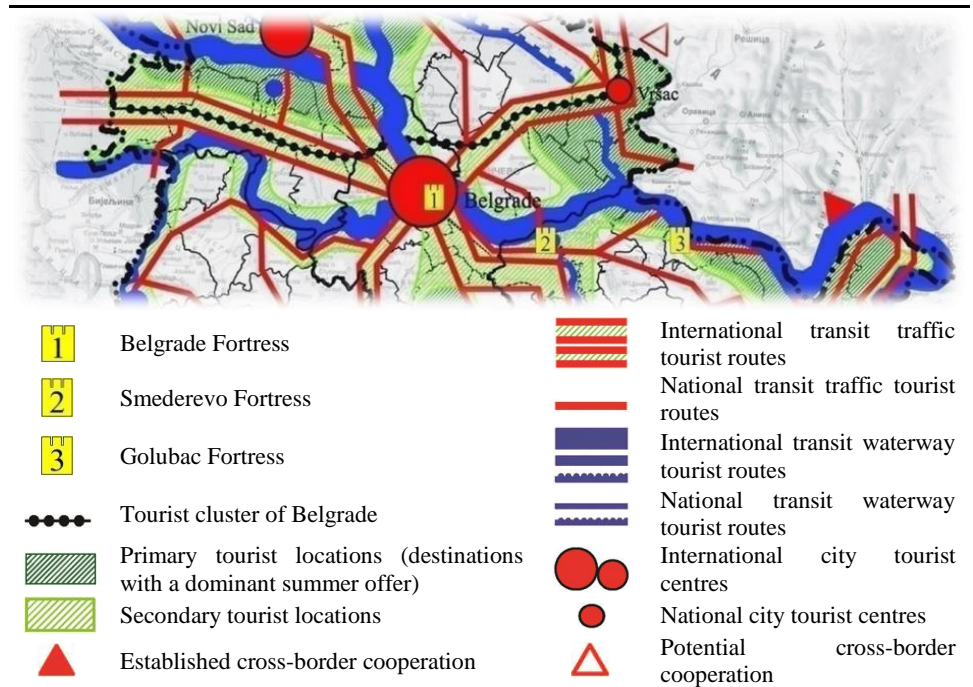
Starting from the assumption that the current situation of the tourist offer of the selected examples of medieval fortresses is not in accordance with their natural and created potentials, the subject of research is focused on the key research question: What is the tourist value of the selected examples of medieval fortresses? This form of question has originated from the relevant social needs to analyse the selected examples through the qualitative-quantitative procedure of tourist valorisation, whose research technique is based on the identification and evaluation of elements which are significant for determining the tourist value of the selected examples of medieval fortresses, as well as for reviewing the levels of tourist attractiveness of the same.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of tourist attractiveness of all those phenomena, objects and spaces which define the tourist value of medieval fortresses and fortified cities implies the systematic use of the following set of scientific methods, such as: the method of observation; the historical method; the statistical method; the empirical method of cognition; the analysis and synthesis; classification and comparing. In order to adequately view the research subject and achieve the set goals, the procedure of tourist valorisation is conducted by combining the aforementioned scientific methods.

Serbia has several hundreds of localities with the remains of old fortifications, which are mentioned in different historical sources. There are few of them whose preserved parts

represent authentic testimonies of their former exterior. Those in better condition include only the fortifications which preserved their function in the later period of the Ottoman rule (Popović 2008; Simić 2010). Belgrade, Smederevo and Golubac fortresses are representative examples of medieval fortification architecture and monumental complexes which are an integral part of the European cultural heritage, as a part of their mutual cultural space; therefore, their protection, valorisation, presentation and interpretation represent a kind of obligation for the establishment of quality international relations.



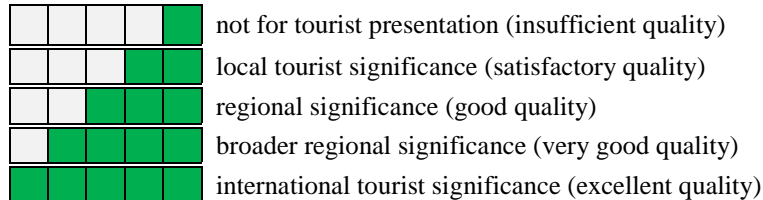
**Fig. 1** Section from the Thematic map: Spatial-functional structuralisation of tourist locations of Serbia (PPRS 2010) with the display of locations of medieval fortresses. According to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010) the given Thematic map spatially and functionally structures the territory of Serbia for the needs of the development of tourism into the following: tourist clusters of Serbia; primary and secondary tourist spaces and places; selection of primary tourist destinations; selection of road and waterway touring tourist routes; cities of international and national tourist significance; and the establishment of cross-border cooperation.

Tourist valorisation of a location represents the qualitative-quantitative procedure of complex evaluation of natural and anthropogenic values which are of importance for the development of different tourist activities and modes of tourism, that is, its attractiveness and potential for the creation of tourist products (Maksin-Mičić 2008; Stanković 2012). It also implies the revalorisation of the attractiveness of that location for the development of tourism and the formation of tourist products in relation to the changes in tourist demands (Jovičić and Ivanović 2006; Šećibović 2006). The general elements of tourist valorisation

of cultural monuments are more and more often explored from the perspective of tourism research and evaluation of tourist value of a physical location, so the existing literature reports the increase in the elements and factors applicable in this field (Tomka 2005). For the analysis of the three cases which are processed in this paper we have used the following elements of tourist valorisation:

- Tourist-geographical position includes the evaluation of the position of a locality in relation to the home towns of tourists, traffic communication and other aspects of availability.
- Artistic value implies the evaluation of aesthetic qualities of a monument, monumentality, rarity, cultural-historical significance.
- Tourist value of the ambient represents an addition to the previous element by evaluating the locality in relation to the type of geographical space, diversity, preservation of the environment and the arrangement of the ambient.
- Tourist attractiveness and distinctiveness – this element evaluates notability and attractiveness for tourists, as well as the level of tourist visits.
- Organisation, construction and equipment of the location implies the level of organisation and construction of the location, as well as the availability of main and additional tourist objects.
- Incorporation into the tourist wealth and the evaluation of the tourist value of complementary motives of the same destination is an important element for the consolidation of a tourist offer or the segmentation of the market and it implies the identification of complementarity or competitiveness of other motives.

Evaluation is conducted for each of the analysed elements separately, in the following manner:



**Fig. 2** Evaluation of tourist value of the analysed elements.

### 3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELECTED EXAMPLES

Serbia has several hundreds of localities with the remains of old fortifications, which are mentioned in different historical sources. There are few of them whose preserved parts represent authentic testimonies of their former exterior. Those in better condition include only the fortifications which preserved their function in the later period of the Ottoman rule (Popović 2008; Simić 2010). Belgrade, Smederevo and Golubac fortresses are representative examples of medieval fortification architecture and monumental complexes which are an integral part of the European cultural heritage, as a part of their mutual cultural space; therefore, their protection, valorisation, presentation and interpretation represent a kind of obligation for the establishment of quality international relations.

### 3.1. Belgrade Fortress

The Belgrade Fortress represents a multi-layered archaeological locality and a very complex monumental complex, formed during a long period between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Mišić 2001; Marković 2007). The remains of the antique castrum, as the oldest and the least preserved fragments of fortifications in this region, provide very limited opportunities for presentation. Medieval fortifications of the urban Belgrade, built during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with their preserved remains represent the most noteworthy part of the monumental heritage of the present Fortress. The ambient of the medieval fortification is most authentically represented by the preserved towers, defensive walls and the gate in the northern part of the Upper city; then, the complex of the Zindan Gate with the entire Eastern suburb and the North-East defensive wall towards the “Fearless Tower.” This general impression of the Middle Age is greatly contributed to by the complex of the Church of Ružica and the Chapel of Saint Petka, although these are more recent buildings (Banović 1988; Popović 2006; Đilić 2008). The monumental heritage of the later epochs, which gave the Fortress its final form, was preserved to a much greater extent than the remains from earlier epochs. The Belgrade Fortress survived into the modern age as a bastion artillery fort, with fortifications which were built at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig. 3** Zindan Gate  
(Photo: Lečić, 2016).



**Fig. 4** Northern part of the Upper City  
(Photo: Lečić, 2016).

### 3.2. Smederevo Fortress

The Smederevo Fortress is located on the right bank of the Danube, at the mouth of the Jezava river. According to Popović (2013), the fortifications of Smederevo erected during the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century belong to a broadly understood Byzantine artistic circle, based on the way they were built and the dominant fortification planning. They were based on traditional principles of warfare by using cold weapons. In this sense, the established plans whose origin can be traced back to the ancient times, keep reoccurring. However, in certain details there is some specificity which is characteristic for Serbian military architecture and its development, which can be observed during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Danube, the Jezava river and the Petije stream, as well as the existing configuration of the terrain, conditioned the triangular basis of the fortification which was, in a spatial sense, divided to: the citadel, that is, “Lower town”, “Upper town” and the suburb, that is, community (Đidić 2008b; Simić 2010). Circumstantially, the fortifications

of Smederevo have survived into the modern age in their original forms, which were constructed and reconstructed during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike Belgrade and other European fortifications, which lost their former original medieval structures due to subsequent modernisations, Smederevo has preserved its basic corpus in the form which was given to it by the builders of despot Đurađ Branković. At the dawn of a new age, when it was finally liberated, Smederevo represented one of the best preserved European medieval fortresses. Unfortunately, the departure of a Turkish garrison in 1867 also marked the beginning of degradation and destruction of the fortress. The fact that heritage is often viewed as an obstacle to the development of cities and local communities (Veldpaus et al. 2013), can be confirmed by the arrival of the railway to Smederevo at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which represented the motive to tear down the outer defensive walls and to backfill the main fortress trench, and further expansion of railway facilities also included the area towards the Jezava River. The Smederevo Fortress suffered its greatest demolition in 1915 during the First World War and the German offensive against Serbia, and twice during World War Two – the great explosion of ammunition in 1941 and during the Anglo-American bombings in 1944.



**Fig. 5** Citadel – “Lower town”  
(Photo: Lečić, 2016).



**Fig. 6** The view of the southern walls of  
the “Upper town” (Photo: Lečić, 2016).

### 3.3. Golubac Fortress

The Golubac Fortress is located on the steep cliffs of the right bank of the Danube, at the entrance into the area of the National Park Đerdap, at the site where the Danube’s course is the widest and reaches up to 6.5km. The Golubac Fortress was erected during the first decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a border strategic fortification, during the period of strong territorial pretensions between Serbia and Hungary. It was in the possession of Serbia during the first decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and, after the death of despot Stefan in 1427, there was an agreement that the fortification was supposed to be transferred into the possession of Hungary. However, it was conquered by the Ottomans and, with minor discontinuances, remained under their rule until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Đidić 2008a). The fortress was originally built for the defence by cold weapons, which is reflected in high quadrangular towers and massive defensive walls with merlons and arrow slits. The discovery of gun powder and the development of warfare technique influenced the further fortification of Golubac, the wall construction around the quadrangular towers and the construction of a cannon tower on the bank of the Danube. The plan of the fortification clearly shows two units – inner and outer fortification, whose towers and defensive walls went down in a fanlike manner from the highest point where the “Donjon” tower is located to the bank of the Danube (Popović and Simić 2003; Simić 2012). As a part of the

broader project “Socio-Economic Development of the Danube Region in Serbia,” the revitalisation of the Golubac Fortress (Internet 1) has started. The project of revitalisation primarily implies the following: the construction of a road bypass and the boring of a tunnel; reconstruction and conservation of the Fortress; the construction of a visitor’s centre; exterior and infrastructural arrangement; and the construction of coastal fortifications.



**Fig. 7** The main gate of the outer fortification (Photo: Lečić, 2016).



**Fig. 6** The view of the southern walls of the North-West (Photo: Lečić, 2016).

#### 4. TOURIST VALORISATION OF SELECTED EXAMPLES: RESEARCH RESULTS

The tourist valorisation conducted for the needs of this paper includes the analysis of previously determined elements, and the qualitative-quantitative results of the research have been shown in the following way:

	<b>Belgrade Fortress</b>	<b>Smederevo Fortress</b>	<b>Golubac Fortress</b>
<b>4.1. Tourist-geographical position</b>			

Tourist-geographical position is one of the basic elements of valorisation, being that a favourable position contributes to more quality and speed in overcoming the spatial distance between the place of demand and the place of supply. The analysed fortifications occupy a favourable tourist position in relation to the Danube as the primary international waterway touring line in Serbia. Starting from the geopolitical position of Belgrade on the map of Europe, as the point of intersection of European roads towards the East, that is, as the capital of Serbia and an international city tourist centre with a complete all-year-round offer on Pan-European traffic corridors 10 and 7 (PPRS 2010), it can be concluded that the tourist position of Belgrade Fortress represents a very important element of tourist development of international importance. The location of the Smederevo Fortress is nearby an international traffic transit tourist route (corridor 10) and it is well connected with the network of state highways and hometowns of domestic tourists, while the Golubac Fortress has a peripheral position in relation to primary traffic routes and larger city centres as broadcasters of tourist demands.

#### 4.2. Artistic value



The architectural form of each of the analysed medieval objects depended, in particular, on the conditions of defence which it should fulfil, which were based on the way of warfare and the existing weapons from that period. Monumentality and rarity of monumental complexes came from the basic defence arrangement against the “cold weapon” of the late Middle Ages. The compositional parts of the fortification were made to be higher, stronger and more massive (Lepage 2002), while being positioned on places which were harder to reach, which altogether gives a specific grandeur of the analysed fortifications. From a wider perspective, the artistic treatment of architectural elements is not a feature of defence buildings in the medieval fortification systems, that is, the aesthetic value did not represent a significant aspect in the building process, and it was not given special attention. On the other hand, many architectural elements of fortifications were poorly preserved, which is a specific characteristic of the medieval period of the Belgrade Fortress; therefore, it is difficult to distinguish artistic values which they originally possessed. Thanks to the mixed technique of wall construction (stone and brick), the analysed examples were decorated mostly by using brick and only certain segments were ornamented, which was pretty modest and simple, in general.

#### 4.3. Tourist value of the ambient



Besides cultural-historical and artistic values, specific natural geographical position, unique views and landscape values also contribute to the ambient values of the analysed monumental complexes. In this sense, as a combination of anthropogenic and natural values, the analysed fortresses represent complex tourist attractions. The ambient unity of the Belgrade Fortress is also complemented with numerous monuments of the modern history, fountains, drinking fountains and other individual cultural monuments of high artistic value; however, certain parts of the complex were built randomly and without any clear concept, often neglecting monumental features. In the same manner, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the location was degraded by the construction of a Zoo, business facilities, vehicular and railway traffic within the Lower town, sports fields in the trenches and the expansion of park areas by planting high vegetation in the parts of bastion fortifications (Banović 1988; Vrzic and Grozdanić 2011; Tatović et al. 2014). The Smederevo Fortress, as the most significant anthropogenic tourist resource and the outline of the identity of Smederevo and its wider surroundings, is not adequately connected to the waters of the Danube and the city centre on the other side. According to the PPGS (2011), the tourist zone along the Danube includes parts of the territory on the right side of the river, starting with the neighbourhood of Jugovo, across the Smederevo Fortress, all the way to the existing marina, including the Smederevo island. However, the tourist zone which is defined in this way does not have the continuity of a tourist-recreational purpose in its entirety. Namely, the facilities of the Old steel factory intersect and separate the complex between the Fortress and the neighbourhood of Jugovo, thus making a spatial discontinuity which significantly devaluates the tourist value of the ambient. A relatively well preserved architectonic elements of the Golubac Fortress and the position at the very entrance into the Đerdap gorge, represent an attractive and distinguishable tourist ambient, but its high value is diminished by a spatial conflict with the traffic lane and the tunnel whose construction ruined the main gate of the outer fortification. The tourist value of the ambient could certainly be higher after the application of appropriate measures of



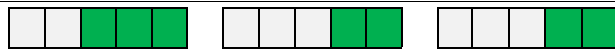
reconstruction and revitalisation, by removing and relocating infrastructural and other unsuitable objects from the environment of cultural goods, by providing better access to all individual parts of the objects, by arranging the complex according to its natural surroundings and by activating suitable additional contents.

**4.4. Tourist attractiveness and distinctiveness**



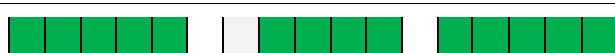
The evaluation of attractiveness and distinctiveness of the analysed fortification objects with the aim of determining the possibilities they provide for the development of the tourist product, refers to the evaluation of all those elements which attract visitors and provide them with all the necessary information. In this sense, the analysed fortifications, with their specificity and unique features, have approximately equally valuable, attractive and distinguishable elements which are very significant for the social and cultural-historical development of the people. The problem with the evaluation of attractiveness is the lack of exact data about the number of visitors within the monumental complexes. The precise data about the number of visitors is available only for the cultural heritage which requires a paid ticket. The entrance into the analysed monumental complexes is not controlled and tickets are not charged.

**4.5. Organisation, construction and equipment of the location**



Monumental complexes are still not adequately and sufficiently organised, constructed and equipped within the context of tourism. There are no active visitor centres, there are no organised guiding services, and the available means of tourist presentation and interpretation are reduced to printed publications and modest souvenirs, while the option of renting a so-called audio-guide is available only within the Belgrade Fortress. Certain objects within the fortifications are inaccessible and unsafe for tourist visits. There is also the need for investments into the projects of renovation of ruined objects and parts of the complex, the regulation of accesses and light equipment, as well as the resolution of spatial conflicts with unsuitable contents which, according to Gunn (1997), jeopardise the sense of “authenticity” of the attractions, that is, the “dignity” of the monumental complex.

**4.6. Incorporation into the tourist wealth**



This element of tourist valorisation is certainly one of the strongest features of the analysed fortifications. The fact that they are well incorporated into the rich cultural-historical heritage along the course of the Danube through Serbia represents an important element of a general tourist value. According to Maksin and Milijić (2012), besides numerous and diverse cultural values, such as archaeological sites from the Neolithic period (Starčevo, Vinča, Lepenski vir and other), the Roman road and bridge in Đerdap, Roman fortifications (Viminacium, Diana and other) and other material and immaterial cultural heritage, the tourist wealth of the environment of the analysed fortifications also includes natural wealth with 35 protected areas and 19 areas which are in the procedure or the plan to be protected, and they occupy around 77 sq km of waters and around 230 km of the bank of the Danube.

**Fig. 9** The qualitative-quantitative results of the research of selected examples.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of identified elements of tourist valorisation, as the main aim of this research, has shown that the current situation of the tourist offer of the analysed monumental complexes is not in accordance with the natural and artificial potentials, so their potential attractiveness for tourists is still not accomplished. As the research results indicate, some of the reasons for the accomplishment of a relatively low level of tourist attractiveness are insufficient and inadequate organisation, construction and equipment of the location, the violated tourist value of the ambient by infrastructural traffic objects and other unsuitable contents, as well as the negligence of the significance of presentation and interpretation of tourist resources for the visitors' experience. The highest value is obtained by the tourist-geographical position, artistic values and incorporation into the tourist wealth, which means that the basic preconditions for the formation of the tourist product exist, but there is a lack of adequate human activity. In order to create the preconditions for the optimum economic engagement of tourist potentials and, therefore, make medieval fortresses along the course of the Danube through Serbia become complementary parts of the tourist development of the Danube river basin, it is necessary that their tourist product is redefined, and that all necessary partakers, both local and national, propose their programmes of renewal and organisation which must have political, social, financial, administrative and volunteer support if they are to be sustainable. Also, in order to economically valorise the tourist potentials, it is necessary that the tourist industry promotes, attracts and keeps the tourist demand. Therefore, the planning of future development should be directed towards those elements in the valorisation which are marked with the lowest values, but also those with high values but insufficiently economically valorised should be commercialised.

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## **TURISTIČKA VALORIZACIJA SREDNJOVEKOVNIH TVRĐAVA NA DUNAVU: POGLED IZ SRBIJE**

*Cilj istaživanja je utvrđivanje turističke vrednosti srednjovekovnih tvrđava Beograd, Smederevo i Golubac, koje se nalaze duž toka Dunava kroz Srbiju, odnosno procena turističke atraktivnosti svih onih pojava, objekata i prostora koji definišu turističku vrednost ove vrste resursa i nasleđa. Oslanjajući se na analizu definisanih elemenata kvalitativno-kvantitativnog postupka turističke valorizacije, u radu se ukazuje na uzročnike niskog nivoa turističke atraktivnosti i prepoznatljivosti analiziranih spomeničkih kompleksa, kao i na smernice i aktivnosti koje bi trebalo preduzeti sa ciljem obnove i uređenja ove vrste kulturnog nasleđa.*

*Ključne reči: turistička valorizacija, kulturna dobra, srednjovekovne tvrđave, Dunav, Srbija.*