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**Food storage in Serbian medieval forts and urban settlements
(XIII-XV centuries).**

***Abstract:** During the Middle Ages, the provision of food and water for the population was one of the basic prerequisites for the functioning of any fortress and city (town). The manner in which food was stored, both for private and public use, is the main topic of this work. The work draws upon written medieval sources, results of archaeological studies, and relevant historical literature.*

***Key words:** Serbia, Middle Ages, city, fortress, urbanization.*

The supply of water [24] and food for the population and military personnel was a necessary prerequisite for the functioning of any city (town) or fortress in the Middle Ages [26, 27]. The two main limitations to the food supply of large cities were transportation costs and the rapid deterioration of goods. After the successful delivery of food to cities, both from nearby regions [25] and from distant regions, it was stored in different ways, both for private and public needs. Products destined for the market were also stored before being sold.

In medieval cities and towns in Serbia, there were three types of bazaars: daily, weekly and annual. Of these three, we have the least information about daily bazaars. It is assumed that the city authorities approved market rules. In addition, we can assume that daily bazaars developed only in large cities, and were intended for the purchase of daily products. Weekly bazaars represented places where local and foreign merchants could sell their goods. Annual fairs differed from weekly bazaars in that the trade lasted several days, and that at these fairs different goods were sold and bought in bulk. Annual fairs were held in a relatively small number of cities and towns. Only the most important among them held several fairs during the year [5, p. 141–145; 13, p. 163-215].

An idealized description of the wealth of medieval Serbia in the times of Despot Stefan Lazarević was given by Constantine the Philosopher. We pay attention

to certain parts which indicate the richness of agricultural products. In addition, there are numerous vineyards - and nowhere so, without difficulties, as in this country (which) is overflowing with seeds, green plants and fruits... It is necessary to say (something) also about birds, and about everything else that the Lord gave, including (for example) vegetables for human food, which (here) are abundant everywhere, and (somewhere) elsewhere, they are not (in such quantity). Many products go not only to unpopulated, but also to populated (places), (and also) many other fruits, fish and other necessary goods [18, p. 20–21].

Agriculture in medieval Serbia was practiced by the vast majority of the population. The main branch of the economy of medieval Serbia was agriculture. Among the agricultural products, cereals were in the first place, grown on the predominant part of the arable land. Wheat, barley, oats, millet, rye, wheat-barley and wheat-rye were grown [9, p. 74]. The dependent population was obliged to the feudal sovereign to crop, grind and place the grain in pits, as it was clarified in the grant of King Milutin to the Gračanica monastery [14, p. 503]. The so-called grain pits were used to place threshed cereals in large farms. They were dug and made in the ground. They could store large quantities of grain, seeds were well protected from fire, pests and theft, but were not always protected from moisture [4, p. 105]. Farmers most often stored their grain in the part of the house where they lived. Grain was placed in thickly woven baskets which were located in wooden boxes, or only in sacks [4, p. 106].

On the estate of St. George of Skopje's pyrga (tower) "Hrptati" there was a "soknica" (a place intended for storing agricultural products). We do not know how big it was and how it was built, but of great importance is the fact that the grant stated that the tower was in front of the monastery's chamber [14, p. 323]. To the Monastery of the Holy Archangels near the town of Prizren King Dušan presented the nearby fortress of Višegrad, which was used as a monastery's grain barn, wine cellar and storehouse instead of a tower [23, p. 120]. Kitchens were definitely found by archaeologists in the monasteries of Sopoćani, Gradac, Djurdjevi Stupovi, Pavlovac and Kastaljan. It can be assumed that the kitchens existed in the rest of the

monasteries studied, based on the generally accepted location of these rooms. They were located near the dining rooms. The kitchens had hearths and utensils for cooking. There were various food pantries near the kitchen and dining room. The living quarters of monks in Serbian medieval monasteries were on the second floor, while the first floors were almost always used for dining rooms, workshops or other activities. Storerooms might be on the first floor of other monastery buildings. Grain reserves were stored in grain pits. Complexes of grain pits were found in the estates of the Treskovica monastery in Prilep, as well as on the first floor of a building in the Djurdjevi Stupovi monastery [31, p. 108–109]. In the Djurdjevi Stupovi monastery the purpose of the old dining room was changed at the end of the XIII century. The first floor of the dining room was used as a pantry with a dug grain pit in the center of the room [31, p. 243]. In the Studenica monastery food pantries represented an extension of the dining room [31, p. 288]. In the basement of one dormitory of the Hilandar monastery there was a bakery with two ovens; one part was intended for storing flour. On the first floor of this dormitory were rooms for storing food. The other floors of this dormitory included living quarters. Under the dining room there was a wine cellar [19, p. 39, 44].

In some fortresses, food storage was in the lower floor of the donjon tower. The same was the case in Maglić. The tower was three-storey, of which two were below the entrance level [34, p. 99]. The main tower in Stalać was five-storey and the entrance was on the third floor. The floors below the entrance had no openings and most probably were storage rooms [34, p. 150]. On the lowest floor of the main tower of the Small Town in Smederevo there was a room of 4.15 m by 4.1 m. Most likely this room, which had a separate entrance, was a cistern or a pantry for food [41, p. 59]. The main tower of the Resava fortified monastery had seven floors. The entrance to the tower was 11 meters above the courtyard of the monastery. Under this entrance floor there was a round room with a calotte, which most likely represented a grain barn [34, p. 108]. We pay attention to the fact that these objects could change their purpose. Specifically, in June 1382 the Dubrovnik authorities ordered to prepare the St. Mary's cisterns for storing the municipal grain; in April 1383 the butchers were

allowed to cover the inside of the St. Mary's cistern with planks so that it could store the grain [10, p. 117]. If this practice of using cisterns for storing grain existed in Dubrovnik, we believe that cisterns were also used in medieval Serbian fortresses and towns for the same purposes, in particular in case of danger. It is assumed that the basement of the Golubac fortress cellar was a pantry for food and drinks, and we do not exclude the possibility that there was a kitchen in the northern part of it [35, p. 80–81, 83].

Grain storages or grain pits were also found in numerous fortresses and urban settlements. These were mostly pits of various shapes, with walls covered with a layer of clay, stone or wooden boards. The granaries were located in the interior of the dwellings or outside them. If they were within the buildings, they were covered with a stone slab or wooden cover. The granaries built in the open air had dome-shaped covers or wooden canopies. Archaeologically they were confirmed in Trgovišće, Jelać, Stalać, Gradina nad Trgovišće... [20, p. 193]. In the medieval Trgovišće [28], within one house there was preserved a small room designed for food storage. It was a small frame square object. Its structure was made of square-section wooden columns mounted on a foundation beam. The lower part of the building, which was sunk by one meter, was most likely a pantry or granary. One could go down into the storehouse by wooden stairs, through a wooden lid in the floor of the first floor [20, p. 173]. In stone multi-storey houses in Trgovišće (XV-XVII c.) the first floors of the houses were intended for trade, and the rest – for living. In some buildings a number of niches and hidden rooms of different shapes were found. The niches were also found in the vestibule space, most often two niches opposite each other. The first floors of the buildings, mostly sunken into the mountainside, were gloomy, suitable for storing goods and food [20, 180]. Grain was also placed in above-ground objects – wooden or stone barns. There were also separately built objects designed for the placement of grain foodstuffs. The building in the archaeological site of Gradina nad Pazarišt was distinguished by its position, form and construction. It was a four-sided object (27 x 7 meters). The walls of the structure were covered with waterproof plaster. Above this object, most likely, there were

living quarters. This object was probably a grain barn, with a capacity of approximately 400 m². And in the adjacent structure was a basement with a separate entrance and exit ramp. It was also a storage space [30, p. 218].

In numerous archaeological medieval complexes with fortresses, urban settlements and monastic complexes (Ras, Maglić, Novo Brdo, Stalać, Kruševac, Belgrade, Smederevo, Studenica, Djurdjevi Stupovi, Mileševa, Pećka patrijaršija...) there were found numerous ceramic materials. Between the utensils found there were also utensils designed both for cooking (clay lids under which baked bread, pans, pots, “pythos” - ceramic containers, amphorae and bowls), and for storing food. “Pythos” in the Middle Ages had different sizes, shapes, and apparently different functions. They were mainly used for storing grain, honey and other foodstuffs. They were found in archaeological complexes of Novo Brdo, Kruševac, Stalać, Niš, Belgrade, Soko Grad, Smederevo, and in monasteries of Melentija, Ravanica, Gradac, Arilje, Djurdjevi Stupovi... Almost all fragments of discovered “pythos” had on the projecting part elements of reinforcement in the form of relief bands which sometimes had spiral shape [2, p. 54–55]. In addition to “pythos”, clay pots were also used for food storage. In form and size, they most often did not differ from a pot. Amphorae, types of a large jug, with a narrow neck and two opposite handles, were designed for transportation and storage of liquids. The bottom of amphorae was flat, and the neck sometimes had an annular seal around the perimeter, with handles covering the top of the neck, or a trough, such as pots and jugs had in the XIV century. In the Middle Ages they were used in Studenica Hvostanska, Prilep and Skopje [2, p. 53–54]. During the works on the study of Novo Brdo, an important group of ceramic products were storage containers. Between them three clay pots were uncovered with enamel, with thick walls, similar to antique pythos [3, p. 54–55]. A relatively small container designed for food storage was found in Stalać. A certain number of amphora-shaped pots were enameled. This means that they could have been intended for storing liquid food [22, p. 67].

The diet of the people in the late Middle Ages was varied. In addition to cereals, people mostly ate meat (game, fish, and poultry). For canning, drying and

pickling were used most often. According to the data available, meat was very important in Dalmatian communes. The consumption of this foodstuff was more than 100 kilograms per capita [33, p. 35]. One decision of the Charter of Kotor listed bread, wine, meat, fish, oil and everything else necessary for daily nutrition [37, p. 452].

Viticulture in Dubrovnik was regulated by law. The city charter strictly forbade the sale of wine mixed with honey (*molca*, *mulsa*). The authorities also sent an army during the grape harvest to provide peaceful work. The inns were of great importance for the sale of wine. The charter defined the working hours of the inns and required that the inns were located in a stone building. The inns contained large quantities of wine, which had to be stored in stone buildings. The annual consumption in 1360 was about 2 million liters, i.e. 517.5 liters per capita. Besides wheat and meat, wine was the most consumed product in Dubrovnik. Its production often exceeded the needs of the city. The authorities tried to limit the import. The smuggling of wine was severely punished [33, p. 23, 29, 35]. According to the Charter, the sanction was confiscation and pouring, and there were also penalties of 25 *perpera* for the city residents. After 1230 the difference in terms for domestic and foreign merchants was abolished. After that the penalties reached 500 *perpera*, or several months of imprisonment [36, p. 183].

The creation of reserves in case of military danger is confirmed by numerous historical sources. Since the archives of the coastal communes on the Adriatic are better preserved, we will give a number of relevant illustrative examples. Wheat and wine were brought in case of military danger from the surrounding city to facilitate their storage inside the fortress walls. For example, the Dubrovnik authorities, due to the war with King Ostoja in 1402, allowed the population of the Pelješac peninsula to store their wine in the Ston fortress. Because of the war with Venice in 1378, they were ordered not to store wine in the district, but to put it away in the city. Even Governor Hrvoje in 1402 demanded that the people of Dubrovnik took his wine to Dubrovnik [36, p. 42]. The Collegium of the Dubrovnik Republic, upon request, allowed the Neretvlans in 1462 to bring their grain to Ston to be stored there, both in

their houses and in the houses of other inhabitants, without paying customs duty [40, p. 6]. The Dubrovnik authorities annually elected three special officials, noblemen, who ensured that there was always enough grain in the city. The secured grain was stored for future distribution, and from the 15th century special granaries were also created [32, p. 67]. There were no large granaries in Bar, due to which, in case of danger from the Turks, one of the Bar's churches and one tower were turned into a granary. Two deep wells were dug in the floor of the church, two granaries, the walls of which in the central part were made of rubble stone, while the inner surface of the walls was laid out of carefully hewn limestone. The plastering was made of lime and crushed bricks. Both granaries were divided by slabs - the western one into four and the eastern one into five parts [6, p. 38, 276]. Due to deadly epidemics caused by periods of scanty harvest, tragic events occurred. At the end of 1453, in the areas under the control of Duke Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, the population left their homes in search of food. They appeared at the gates of seaside communes, which, for fear of contagion, would not allow them to enter their territory. A large number of these unfortunate people died [16, p. 220–221]. Concern for a steady supply of grain and wine was also expressed in the Serbian cities and towns on the coast. In Kotor, during negotiations with Venice, it was noted that the erection of the St. Mark monument was postponed until the end of the grape and grain harvest [37, p. 401]. In addition, there was a rule in Kotor according to which grain and leguminous plants should be brought precisely to the city and not to another place. Whoever brought grain and other foodstuffs to the port of Kotor had the right to unload half of the products in the city, in two stores, and to sell them in the city, and to sell the other half outside the city. Whoever bought grain to sell it had to get permission from the commune to do so. The residents of Kotor could not sell grain in their homes, but only in a store, or at the market. Only oats could be sold anywhere. We draw attention to this fact because it unequivocally indicates that food was stored in private houses. Wine in Kotor was sold in inns. The barrel makers were obliged to make good products, and in case of defective production, they were obliged to compensate the damage and to pay a fine to the commune [37, 225-226, 283–284, 186, 287]. It was forbidden to export wheat,

flour, honey, meat, fat, cheese and lard in Skadar. Onion, garlic, woolen cloth, flax, wool, fish and cheese could not be resold without permission of the city authorities [38, p. 238, 239]. Guesthouses were a favorite place where people gathered, both in the cities and in the depth of the country. For example, in the will drawn up in 1469, it was listed under the Slavic name of pivnica [17, p. 117]. In Priština Staniša, a servant of a wealthy Dubrovnik resident sold *nela taverna*, his lord's wine [16, p. 89]. According to the authentic document of the Kruševac district, the revenues from the monopoly and fees associated with the sale of wine were large, even after the Ottoman conquest of the Serbian lands [1, p. 229–233].

Food products were also stored in the time of peace. In Dubrovnik, records of grain storage existed from the second half of the 14th century. It was decided to rebuild the tower at Pyla for the storage of municipal millet, and while the work was in progress, it was indicated that an order was received to prepare the St. Mary's cisterns for the storage of municipal grain. In November 1363 it was decided to rebuild the tower at Pyla for the storage of municipal millet; in June 1382 it was ordered to prepare the St. Mary's cisterns to house the municipal grain; in April 1383 the butchers were allowed to board up the inside of the St. Mary's cistern to be able to store the grain. At the end of the 14th century special pits were dug, most likely designed by the *magistri fouearum bladorum* [10, p. 117]. At the beginning of the 14th century all the grain that was brought into the city could be sold only in the "fundak (pundak, i.e. inn)". Two or three officials, who were also called "fundakars", were chosen to work there. In fact, grain could also be sold outside of it if there was not enough space. The stores where the grain was sold had to be open at the same time as the "fundak" was open, and had to use the same containers to measure it. Grain was seldom sold by its proprietors, but much more often by porters ("bastas"), who, in addition to loading the grain, were also engaged in its sale. The porters' pay was determined on an annual basis or by the amount of grain sold. All vessels for measuring grain had to be hollow, and their stone samples were kept in the city [10, 117–118, 128].

Regarding Belgrade, we have information from the Ottoman period. In the city

Khans Dernshvam in 1555 saw a large sultan's storehouse of foodstuffs located below the city. It was enclosed by a rather high wall, 450 paces long, and about 50 paces wide. It had two longitudinal buildings on either side. Also, two years earlier Antun Vrančić mentioned a zahir repository. According to him, the center for storing provisions and the arsenal of munitions was situated on the western side where the fortress was situated [39, p. 67].

The problem of storing trade goods was solved in different ways. Trade goods that were transported by caravans were deposited in large settlements in "stan", and the person in charge of the goods was called "stanjanin". The stanjanin kept the goods in a separate room locked with a key [15, p. 419–420]. In Srebrenica he was known as "stazionar" [17, p. 117]. Small caravanserais placed the houses of individuals or rulers in which goods were temporarily stored [11, p. 321–322]. The rest and overnight houses for passengers, in particular merchants, were also designed to house their horses and goods. Trade was carried out in trading stores where goods were stored [17, p. 115–116, 118]. In Ulcinj the facades of all dwellings were on the street side. The streets were relatively narrow – 1.5 - 4.0 meters. Craftsmen workshops and stores were located in the konobas, and in rare cases on the second floors of individual residential properties [7, p. 63, 71, 146, 147]. In Kotor, single-storey houses were used as warehouses, craftsmen workshops or taverns [12, p. 87]. Certain food products in the turnover of goods were sold in installments: grain, wine, meat, beans [8, p. 106].

Based on the results of archaeological research and written sources, the paper presents the management of food storage in fortifications and urban settlements. Archaeological excavations in Belgrade, Smederevo, Novi Brdo, Kruševac and many other localities provide numerous data on the use of grain pits for storage and preservation of grain food. Towers in the cities were also used for storage. Emperor Stefan Dušan gave the monastery of the Holy Archangels near Prizren the fortress of Višegrad to be its vine storage and granary. On the estate of St. George of Skopje, the pirg (tower) Hrptati was so-called soknica (a place where agricultural products were stored). The dormitory buildings in Serbian medieval monasteries were divided into

living quarters of monks on the upper floor and the space for storage, workshops, or some other activities on the ground floor. Storerooms could be located on the ground floors of other monastery buildings. In some fortifications, food stores were located on the lowest floor of the dungeon tower. Such is the case in Maglic. The tower had three floors, two of which were below the level of the entrance. There is written evidence in Dubrovnik that cisterns were used to store municipal grain. This practice we think was also present in fortifications and cities of medieval Serbia, especially in case of danger. Granaries or grain pits were also found in numerous fortifications and urban settlements. They were mostly hollows of various bases, with walls covered with a layer of clay, stone, or wooden planks. The granaries were located inside or outside of the residential buildings. When they were inside the buildings, they were covered with a stone slab or a wooden cover.

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