

## ***St. Nikola's Fortress, St. Ante's channel, Šibenik***

Country or territory:  
Republic of CROATIA

Name of organization  
compiling the information:  
Ministry of Culture,  
Conservation Department Šibenik

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<u>Name and address of building or site:</u>	ST. NIKOLA'S FORTRESS, ST. ANTE'S CHANNEL, ŠIBENIK
<u>Inventory reference number:</u>	RST 174/18
<u>Building(s) type:</u>	Fortification architecture
<u>Main date(s):</u>	1541-1545
<u>Current use(s):</u>	Without specific use, occasional concerts of classical music

### Significance:

St. Nikola's Fortress is a fortification structure built on an islet facing the entrance to St. Ante's channel and Šibenik port. The fortress was designed by the Renaissance architect from Brescia, Michele Sanmicheli. It was built on two levels, the space with cannon openings at sea level which is vaulted with extensively spanned vaults and a plateau over the vaults with military structures on it, the captain's quarters and a small chapel. The plateau is protected with cavaliers (Venetian phase) namely, buffer stops (Austrian phase) with cannon openings. The space at sea level and the plateau are connected with a swing-gate over the inter-level of the main and only entrance to the fortress.

The fortress is triangular in shape. The base of the triangle faces landwards and is built from two semi-bastions that form a funnel, i.e., "the pincers of the fortress". The top of the triangle faces the channel and is made from a strong semicircular tower mutually connected by flanking sides built as cortinas. In the centre of the triangle a large cistern was built. The space between the cortinas and the cistern is vaulted with barrel shaped vaults and a fascinating mushroom shaped vault on the torion over the semi-circular space that connects the space of the cortinas at sea level with the access swing-gate of the entrance space on the inter-level and fortress terrace plateau.

Through geometrical forms the designer created a strong sea fortress that defends, with its combat line, the channel entrance from the Southeast cortina through the semicircular torion to the Southwest cortina at sea and ship mast levels. From possible land attacks the fortress is protected by semi-bastions, which form a funnel, namely, "pincers" between them.

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The fortress was built from tufa blocks cut at the Krka falls, a light material easily formed and ideal for large spans. The tufa is lined with bricks brought from Venice. The base of the fortress is partly cut in the rock and partly built by escarpment in the rustic technique. The fortress is mostly preserved with minimum alterations on the Southeast cortina made by Austria due to the use of cannon with fluted barrels.

The main entrance which is approached by a wooden bridge from the pier was like a Renaissance portal in the rustic technique, flanked with two semi columns, a frieze with ram heads "Buccaniola" and triglyphs and metope over which is an attic which once had above it the Venetian lion. The year 1824, when the fortress was comprehensively renovated, was written on the attic.

#### Categories of Significance:

International importance

#### Categories of ownership or interest:

The structure is an exceptional example of Dalmatian-Venetian Renaissance fortification architecture. There were three similar fortresses in the Mediterranean, in Venice itself, on Malta and in Šibenik. The Šibenik sea fortress has been preserved almost entirely in its original state.

The fortress is in the ownership of the City of Šibenik.

#### Documentation and bibliographic references:

The fortress has been geodetically and architecturally surveyed in M-1:100 and M:1:50 (Conservation Department Šibenik)

The complete photo documentation is kept at the Conservation Department Šibenik  
Sources: Historical Archives of the City of Šibenik, "Castellum" no. 7 Ane Deanović Prijatelj  
zbornik: Josip Čuzela The St. Nikola Fortress

#### Condition:

The fortress is in moderately good condition. The construction has been somewhat repaired while the remaining part is in good condition. The brick lining and semi-circular stone cornices are in a very poor state (salt, humidity, cold and vegetation) so that bricks are crumbling or being separated from the basic mass of the wall and caving in. The stone cornices are flaking and are severely threatened from humidity and freezing temperatures. Precipitation is dripping from the vaults over the cortina spaces and they have to be insulated from the humidity (rinsing of binder in the vault construction). The cistern is filled up with materials from the demolished structures and it requires cleaning and remediation.

#### Risk:

The fortress is at risk because it is not used and there is no regular maintenance. The greatest threat is posed by its micro location on the very sea shore (impact of humidity, salt, wind, freezing, etc.) and its very accessibility (increased costs of transportation, difficulties in approaching the structure, etc.).

#### Condition risk:

Under repair or in fair to good repair but no user identified or under threat of vacancy

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Technical assessment and costings:

Projects for the renovation of the fortress cover and cleaning of the cistern with estimated costs have been drawn up.

The estimated costs in 1997 amounted to 1,500,000 EURO.

Ownership:

It is in the ownership of the City of Šibenik (the process of transferring the ownership from the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia to the City of Šibenik is underway)

Occupation:

The structure is occasionally used during summer for classical music concerts (two to three days in summer).

Management:

The Conservation Department Šibenik and the City of Šibenik are responsible for its management.

The responsibility of administering the finances lies with the Conservation Department Šibenik and City of Šibenik while supervision of the works is within the competence of the City of Šibenik (construction works) and Conservation Department Šibenik (conservation supervision)

Summary:

The structure is a registered immovable cultural good (prior to zero category) of international significance (a combination of Dalmatian and Venetian cultures), almost fully preserved in its original state with very small interventions from the beginning of the 19th century.

Due to its micro location and the fact that it is not used the fortress is threatened because regardless of the satisfactory condition of its structure the brick lining that protects the calcareous tufa construction. required repair. The brick lining is of special format and colour laid in a specific wall building order.

Sign and date:

Miroslav Škugor, d.i.a.  
Šibenik 22. ožujka 2004.