

Andrew Krasnozhon, *Fortresses and cities of the North-Western Black Sea Region (15th – 18th c.)*, Odessa: Publishing house «Chornomorja», 2018. – 312 p.: 206 il.

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The monograph of the Ukrainian historian, a specialist in the fortification of the North-Western Black Sea Region in the Middle Ages and the New Age, Andrew Krasnozhon, was published in 2018 in Odessa (Ukraine). The book is: «Fortresses and cities of the North-Western Black Sea Region (15th – 18th c.)». It was edited by the Publishing house «Chornomorja», 2018. – 312 p.: 206 il.

In the study of Andrew Krasnozhon the northern Black Sea Region lands in the XV-XVIII centuries appears as a land, which was characterized by high ethnic diversity in the population. During the IV-th century the region had a number of developed, relatively large cities. Moreover, the population density only increased from the XV-th to the XVIII-th century. If at the first stage the researcher allocates only two large cities on the territory between the Southern Bug and the Danube, then the last one already has almost ten. It completely destroys the myth of the underdevelopment of the region during the Ottoman rule and the late Middle Ages, which was enshrined in Russian and Soviet historiography.

In his work the author solves the main problem with the use of conceptually new methodological principles. The lack of a reliable source (primarily documentary) base for determining the dates of the fortresses of the region and their placement in a certain historical context, made the author invent and apply a typological and comparative analysis of the preserved fortresses – for their constructive and planning features, and long-ruined – by the iconographic and cartographic sources. The built-up typology of the studied monuments gives the author the opportunity to determine their chronology. This is a long-standing methodological principle used in the study of material culture, mainly in archaeological science. However, Andrew Krasnozhon uses it to solve historical problems in relation to the architectural monuments of the North-West Black Sea.

As a result, at the intersection of the historical epochs and neighboring state formations, the author opens the structure of stages of the development of fortifications from the archaic Western European model of castle architecture, to modernized bastion fortifications with advanced for its time constructive elements. This influence begins from the Armenian, Hussites, Transylvanian and Byzantine military-architectural medieval traditions, to the bastion fortifications of the French school of fortification of the New Time, which were discovered by the author on the examples of the fortresses considered by them, and are tied to the historical context, chronologically and typologically structured. Of course, this is the main innovative idea of the published work.

It is noteworthy of attract by the author of a number of little-known sources: from the epigraphic data of the building plates, to the cartography of Turkish, Russian, Romanian and Ukrainian archives.

So, the construction of the fortresses of the Northwest Black Sea region is represented by the researcher as a kind of historical relay: the stone walls gradually expanded in time and space, turning into modified defense complexes thanks to the efforts of the most significant ethnopolitical players in this medieval region, depending on the challenges of certain military and political realities.

Thus, the monograph of Andrew Krasnozhan is outside the traditional perception of the evolution of the development of the fortresses of the region, however - in the context of general scientific regulations on fortification. In his conclusions author relies on the data of his own field historical and architectural researches, analysis of historical and contemporary plans, reports of engineers and evidence of historical and archaeological sources. The conceptual and methodological approach of the author to the old and well-known scientific problems in the history of medieval defense complexes and cities of the region is essentially new in the published work.

Unfortunately, this does not exclude some disadvantages in the content of the dissertation itself. For example, a historiographical review appears to be somewhat disordered in terms of chronology. The history of Cossack hikes in the fortress studied by the author is considered sketchy. The history of some small fortresses on the right bank of the Dnieper lower reaches (Tyaginka, Kizkerman, etc.), as well as some of the small fortresses of the Lower Danube (for example, Reni), is slightly covered. However, the source base on these fortresses is still remains extremely scarce.

However, these remarks do not substantially affect to the main conclusions of the author's work. In general, Andrew Krasnozhan demonstrated his scientific ability to find new primary sources and to methodically correctly introduce them to scientific circulation, as well as to set scientific problems and consistently solve them using methodological principles at the conceptual level. All this allows us to positively evaluate the monograph «Fortresses and cities of the North-Western Black Sea Region (15th – 18th c.)». All of this allows us to positively evaluate the monograph that will be useful to a wide range of Ukrainian and foreign experts in the field of fortification, epigraphy, history of the Ottoman Empire and Ukraine.