

Shaping of a monastic landscape in medieval Slavonia

Abstract:

The remains of the Benedictine abbey of St. Margaret are situated 500 m south of the village Bijela, south-east of Daruvar (central Croatia), on a 120 m long and 85 m wide oval elevation. On the south-eastern side, the hill sharply descends into the Brzica Stream. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Benedictine Monastery of St. Margaret, on the western slopes of Papuk, was one of the order's most important centers in medieval Slavonia. Although the exact date of the foundation and construction of the monastic complex is still unknown, Bijela Abbey has the best-recorded history. The number of known documents mentioning the monastery, from only ten in the fourteenth century increases significantly to a total of seventy in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, documenting the transformation of a priory into a flourishing abbey. In its beginnings, the monastic community in Bijela was subordinated to the abbey of St. Margaret of Garab in Srijem. The old abbey had vast estates in Slavonia, on the border of the Zagreb and Pécs dioceses, and organized the community in Bijela as a priory and grange to manage that estate. The abbey's possessions encompassed a large area on the western edges of Papuk Mountain. This paper will present the possibilities of studying topography, Franciscan cadastre, contemporary maps, and written sources as a tool for mapping the structure of the abbey's estate, with a market town, villages, parish church, mills, fish ponds, quarries, and distribution of arable land and woods.

Keywords: -