

SUMMARY

Seredžius on the basis of archaeological data /SEREDŽIUS

By Linas Kvizikevičius

Lithuanian History Institute

On the basis of archaeological and written sources the author investigates the formation and urban development of little town Seredžius on the Nemunas River banks in the Dukedom of Samogitia (*Žemaitija*) in the 16th–18th c. period. The history of the town was not investigated till now, therefore first of all the paper deals with the attributions of the town founders and the town establishment date problems. The author proved that the 1551–1556 founding date that was dominating hitherto was false. The name of the town was given to Seredžius in 1579. The real date of its establishment is unknown, but it is thought the founders of the town were the Sapiegas. The documents of 1580 and the later ones show that Seredžius was the Sapiegas' estate of Mežireči.

The archaeological sources and the numismatic material show that since the middle of the 16th c. the increase in exchange of small coins took place and the professional calculating means—counting metal discs—began spreading in the town that was formed in the first half of the 16th c.

The cultural strata topography shows that Seredžius was formed in the Nemunas River valley, in the territory between the rivers Pieštvė and Dubysa, in the site of a pre-Christian grave-yard. In the 16th c. the centre of the town covered 4 ha area. The farmsteads were founded around the church at some distance from it and at a little cemetery. The buildings were spread one from another at some distance. The urbanized former Dubysa castle site (the Sapiegas' estate territory) was in the western part of the town, at the confluence of the rivers Dubysa and Nemunas. The area of the central part of the town didn't increase but the whole territory of the town spread. Some farmsteads sprang up on the other side of the Pieštvė Rivulet in the western part of the town. In the 17th c. the town was made up of several parts: the nucleus—the most densely populated site in the centre around the church, its western part—the territory beyond the Pieštvė River, the farmsteads situated in the north-east part, at the terrace. A separate part from the western side limited by a water canal made up the manor established on two hills. The territories among these parts remained empty during the whole 16th–18th c.-s (even the 19th c.) period—most probably vegetable gardens and pastures were there. The planned space structure of Seredžius formed in the 17th c. and it survived without any more significant changes up to the end of the 18th c. During the spring flood of 1829 the whole town was destroyed and then it was built in a new site at some distance from the Nemunas River.