"SAVUNMA HATLARINDAN YAŞAM ALANLARINA KALELER"

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"SAVUNMA HATLARINDAN YAŞAM ALANLARINA KALELER"

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Basım Tarihi
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Her hakkı saklıdır.

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF OTTOMAN TURKISH FORTIFIED TOWNS 16th - 19th CENTURIES SHOWN BY THE EXAMPLES OF AVLONYA/VLORE (S. ALBANIA), VIDIN, VARNA AND SILISTRA (DANUBIAN BULGARIA).

Machiel Kiel

In the following we will try to sketch in broad outlines the development of Ottoman-Turkish fortified towns, taking four town of the former European Turkey as example. The subject is a rather neglected one. On the Turkish side there is one big monography on the (disappeared) city walls and the detached forts, a pioneering work of Nusret Çam (1993), on the European side the great work of Marko Popovic on the medieval walled town and later Ottoman fortress Belgrade (1982). Many more books of this quality need to be written before we can come to a well-founded overview. That which follows here can only be a short introduction.

Because of an old and deep seated prejudice in the Balkans as well as in Central- and Western Europe towards Ottoman rule, mostly seen as a time of decay and deep decline if compared with the medieval Byzantino-Slavic period, we will give a some hard evidence from little used old administrative sources to bring the picture a bit more in balance.

In his description of the fortress town of Valona/Vlore, (Avlonya for the Ottomans), built between 1537 and 1542 by Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, the famous 17th century traveller and geographer Evliya made the following revealing remark:

"People say the Ottomans do not know how to built fortresses, but anyone who has not seen the fortress of Szeget on the frontier of Erlau, the fortress of Bender on the banks of the Dniester on the frontier of Özü (Ocakov), and this fortress of Avlonya, cannot understand how masterful the Ottoman construction work can be."

Evliya has surely often heard this negative opinion in his time, but his reaction shows that he himselves had no understanding at all of fortification techniques. To generations of Western observers the castle looked medieval and had to be a work of the Venetians of that time (Carl Patsch, 1904, Milan von Sufflay, 1924, Bodo Ebhardt, 1954). With all this said it does not mean that the Avlonya castle could not fulfill its task. The Venetians under Cornaro, with superiod artillery, took it in 1690, during the long war of the Ottomans against the troops of the "Holy League." The historian Garzoni, who was in Avlonya, noted that the walls of the castle were very thick and could withstand a protracted cannonade at close distance. The castle does not exist any more. It was demolished in the early 20th century. To give an impression of the work we give a reconstruction based on the research of Apollon Baçe (1973). We had been lucky to find the building account of this castle for the period between August 1537 and March 1540, and published them in original, transcription, and English translation (Kiel 2006. They give an excellent inside view of how the work was organized and financed, who was in charge and where did the money come from. On the theory of fortification this kind of sources is silent.

When we compare Ottoman fortification with the development of walled towns in Western- and Central Europe great differences can be seen, even for the untrained eye. In the 15th and 16th centuries the Ottomans believed in conquest,

not in defense. Their superb military tactics and seemingly inexhaustible resources in money and manpower, as well as their experience in subduing fortified places, prevented them to see the great developments in fortification that had taken place in Western- and Central Europe, originating from experiments in Renaissance Italy from the early 1500s. It is the same kind of cultural "superiority complex" that has characterized the Western World since the early 19th century. Renaissance Italy developed the bastioned fortress front to prevent well-directed cannon fire to destroy corner towers of castles or town enclosures by concentrating the fire on the "death angles" of round towers. The pointed bastion was the answer to this problem and it very soon spread all over the Western World. It became a dogma that fortification should be strictly geometric, each organ being able to give flanking fire and defend the neighboring bulwark. From the 16th century onward a number of theoretical works of how to draw and built new fortification and the pointed bastion very quickly spread over the entire Western world. The Ottomans did it very different. They produced no theoretical literature about fortification (at least nothing is known hitherto) but built their works following their own military experience. Flanking fire was given with help of massive polygonal bastions without the characteristic bastion's point, obligatory in Western fortification.

A good translation of the great work of Vauban (1635-1707 on fortification was made a full century after its appearance (Topkapı Museum Library, manuscript H. 614) and in 1791, on order of the Sultan printed immediately. Yet, forts and fortifications with polygonal bastions were still built decades after Vauban-Turkish appeared in print, made in a very different manner than in the Western world . As example the fortress of Feth-i Islam (Kladovo) on the Danube facing Orsova, built in 1235/1820 on order of Sultan Mahmud II might be cited as example.

The reason that the bastioned fortification was built until the beginning of the 19th century has to be sought in the attitude in the Western world to believe much to strong in the "drawing board artists" of those times. It took very long to realize that some vital aspects of their fortress plans were not as the soldier in the field would need it. With the improved artillery of the 17th century it became possible for the attacker to concentrate his guns in a half-circle position, able to give all-embracing fire concentrated at the far protruding bastion's "nose" and batter it until it collapsed. The main guns of the attacked fort, almost all standing on the curtain walls, could not prevent this kind of bombardment because their guns did not reach far enough. In other words, there was no need for a sharp nose on the bastions. It made the fort more vulnerable. Yet it took until the 1830s, when the Prussians were reconstruction the fortifications around the town of Poznan (or Posen as it was then). Ian Hogg (Hogg 1975, p.73) himself a master-gunner of the British army, said it very pregnant: "...from the defensive point of view the bastioned trace with its geometrical proportions was weak in its direct artillery defence, since much of the rampart which ought to have been available for mounting guns, was in re-entering angles aligned for defence of the flanks and curtains." Having only practical experience and no theory books and dogmas, the form of the Ottoman fortification became very unusual for the Western observer.

With the citadel of the new castle of Navarino, closing the best natural harbor of Southern Greece, in 1573/76, the Ottomans half heartedly adopted the bastioned plan, drawn by a foreign engineer. The preserved government documents are very careful not to mention the name of that engineer, or hint to his ethnic- religious background. The rest of the work in Navarino, the wall around this new town and the two heavy coastal batteries, were done according to Ottoman taste.

In the 17th century the Ottomans still knew very well how to go in the offensive: 1635 conquest of Erivan, 1638 reconquest of Baghdad, 1660 conquest of Grosswardein/Oradea, 1663 Neuhäusel /Nové Zámky, 1669 Creta, 1672 Kamenets-Podolski) etc.). This was the time that no great works of fortification were erected in the Ottoman domains. In the last two decades of the 17th century the tide turned against them, all the land between Budapest and Belgrade captured by the Habsburg

Empire, the result of a long series of lost battles. At the Treaty of Passarowitz, 1718, the Ottomans lost the very important Belgrade, the northern half of Serbia, and the western half of Wallachia (Oltenia). This forced them to refortify the key fortresses of Niš and Vidin at a grand scale and build a number of smaller forts elsewhere. The works around Niš are largely preserved but remain largely unstudied. More is known about Vidin but only half the works remain preserved.

The fortress town of Vidin through the ages.

Vidin on the Danube in the north-westernmost corner of Bulgaria is the indirect successor of the small Roman town of Bononia, which was destroyed during the Avaro-Slavic invasions of the early Middle Ages and passed out of existence around the year 600 A.D. More than 300 years later the Bulgarian constructed a new and very strong castle directly on the foundations of the of the Roman one, as was proven by archaeological excavations in the 1960s. What remained of the Roman town was only the name, which survived in the Slavic form of Bdin, later turcified in Vidin. The castle is relatively small, covering only a space of 70-72 meter but surrounded by a wide and deep moat, filled with water from the Danube. After the downfall of the First Bulgarian Empire (968) the castle held out against the Byzantins until 1003, when it was finally captured after an eight months siege. Vidin remained under Byzantine rule until 1185, when it again became Bulgarian.

In the Middle Ages Bdin was a heavily contested frontier town of Bulgaria and bridgehead for various Hungarian invasions and occupations that changed hands repeatedly. From the end of the 13th century onward Vidin and the land around it was ruled by various members of the Cuman/Kipçak noble house of Šišman. The Cumans were a pagan Turkic people who in the 11th century settled in what is today Southern Rumania. They were the best cavalry men of their time and much sought after as mercenaries of the various petty Balkan principalities. In the course of time they converted to Orthodox Christianity and were slowly assimilated and absorbed by the Slavs.

In 1365 the Hungarians again invaded Bulgaria, took Vidin and all its land and transformed it into an Hungarian Banat (province). The Hungarians called in the Franciscan monks who carried out a forced campaign of converting the Orthodox Christian population to Roman Catholics, allegedly 200 000 people. In 1369 the Ottoman Turks came in first contact with Vidin, when Tsar Ivan Alexander used Turkish troops to drive out the Hungarians. In the following year the Wallachians crossed the Danube, took and plundered the open suburbs but were unable to take the strong castle. In 1371, during the Battle of Cernomen on the Maritsa, the Ottomans broke the power of the Serbians, then master of large parts of the southern Balkans. Ivan Sratsimir, also of Cuman descent, became vassal of the Sultan and served them faithfully for more than 20 years. When in 1396 a huge Crusaders army under King Sigismund of Hungary appeared before Vidin Sratsimir wavered. After the difficultly won victory over the Crusaders at Nikopol the Sultan removed Sratsimir to his capital Bursa and incorporated the Vidin principality into his empire. A large part of Sratsimir's army, accustomed to Ottoman service and not forced to change their religion, was incorporated in the Ottoman army as sipahi, martoloz or voynuk. The Ottoman population-and taxation register of the Vidin province – T.D. 18, Ottoman Archives in Istanbul – shows that roughly 80 years after the annexation of Vidin 56% of the Ottoman military men of the Sandjak of Vidin were local Bulgarian Christians. Around 1404 the Hungarians launched an armed force under command of Konstantin and Fruzin, sons of Tsar Ivan Šišman of Tirnovo, to Vidin and staged a revolt against the Ottomans. They must have been successful because in 1413 Prince Musa was forced to take the castle back. His successor Çelebi Sultan Mehmed (1413-1421) had to carry out important repairs of the castle. Above the main gate of the castle, and on the south-eastern corner tower two badly preserved Arabic inscriptions record this restoration, the name of the Sultan and the name of his father still being readable.

In the winter of 1442/ the redoubtable Voyvode of Transsylvania, Janos Hunyadi, besieged Vidin but could not take it. In 1444, during the ill-fated "Crusade of Varna" a huge Crusaders army

besieged Vidin and took it. The Turkish inhabitants were all killed, the Bulgarian Christians were spared, "the town was burnt down till its foundations," as is related by two participants, Andreas de Palacio, secretary of the King, and Hans Mehgast from Nürnberg. The same story is related by the "Serbian Janissary," als contemporary. It took many year before Vidin recovered. The Ottoman register from 1455 (M. Cevdet Yazmaları O.90 mentions only 154 households of civil Muslim inhabitants and 187 Christian households, or a civil population of 1500 – 1600 inhabitants of whom 45% were Muslim. After 1396, most probably after the destructions of 1444, Vidin received a population of Turkish colonists of Eastern Anatolia. The peculiar Turkish dialect this group spoke was strong enough to assimilate other groups of Turkish settlers, arriving in various periods, and also strong enough to assimilate sizeable groups of Bulgarian converts to Islam.

In 1502 Vidin was again captured and destroyed by the Hungarian. A large Ottoman inscription from 908 (1502/03, once situated at the octagonal gun tower of the outer wall, relates the extensive works carried out under Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512).

According to the register T.D. 370 from 1530 (p. 561) Vidin had a civil population of 308 Muslim households, 246 Christian households, seven households of Jews (refugies from Spain) and five "Latinân" (Roman Catholics, subjects of the merchant republic of Dubrovnik and vassals of the Ottomans. In total 561 households, or about 2 700 – 2 900 inhabitants of whom 55% was Muslim. The register also shows that the town had two Friday Mosques, eight smaller mosques, two public hot baths (hamam), four dervish convents (zaviye).

During the peaceable 16th century Vidin saw a rapid development. The detailed register of 1585 mentions 669 Muslim households, 269 households of Christians, 31 of Jews, as well as a community of 27 Gypsies, together 996 households or, together with the garrison, about 5 000 – 6-000 inhabitants, who were 67% Muslim. Bulgarian experts like Nikolaj Todorov or Stojanovic estimated Vidin's population at the end of the 16th century as 9 000, very big for time and place.

In 1595 the Valachian Voyvode Michael the Brave besieged Vidin without success. One year later the Transsylvanian commander Farkas attacked Vidin, again without success. In 1598, however, Michael the Brave defeated an Ottoman army near Vidin, took the town which allegedly had "12 000 houses," and burnt it down. The castle of Vidin, however, remained in Ottoman hands. After this catastroph Vidin was rebuilt and expanded greatly. In 1659 Philipp Stanislavov, Roman Catholic Bishop of Nikopol, describes "Vidin Civitas" as being the seat of an Orthodox bishopric having 2 000 houses of Turks and 1 500 houses of "schismatics." The Turks had four (great) mosques, the Christians five churches. The number of households is certainly exaggerated but the proportions of the two main communities do look realistic.

In the second half of the 17th century a Russian captive staying in Vidin noted that the town had a "not very big castle, built in olden times ... but around the town are no fortifications or walls whatsoever. This was to change drastically. In October 1689, during the long war against the Christian coalition, Margrave Ludwig von Baden took Vidin without a fight, together with the castle of Feth-I Islam (Kladovo) and Florentin. On 29 August 1690, less than one year later, an Ottoman land force under Dursun Mehmed Pasha and the Ottoman Danube fleet under Mezamorto Hüseyin Pasha Vidin took back again. After peace treaty of Karlowitz (1699) the Ottomans kept Vidin. During the war of 1715-1718, finishing with the Treaty of Passarowitz the Ottoman could keep the Morea, reconquered by them in 1715, but had to cede to the Habsburgs the entire northern half of Serbia together with the key fortress Belgrade, and the north-western part of the Sandjak of Vidin. The land north of the Danube, Oltenia, also came in Habsburg possession. Vidin now had the enemy sitting opposite it, just across the great river.

The mentioned territorial changes greatly increased the strategic importance of Vidin. The old castle was now strengthened and transformed into an artillery fort, the open court largely

covered over with solid vaults, with a thick "cushion" of earth on top. The high medieval towers shortened and transformed to artillery platforms. At the same time the entire open town was surrounded by a strong earthen rampart revetted with large blocks of cut stone, and a wide ditch (hendek) filled with water from the Danube. The counterscarp wall of the moat was also revetted with stone. If in the initial stage there had been a "covered way" - a space between the top of the counterscarp and the glacis- or if this is a later modernization, can no longer be established. The old glacis of the works is entirely covered by later structures, houses and a road. The two and a half km long enceinte was flanked by eight solid polygonal bastions according to Ottoman usage. No influence from the European art of fortification is detectable. The southern end of the moat was made much wider and its bottom was paved with large slabs of stone. Here the ships of the Ottoman Danube flotilla had a safe haven. Two exquisitely written and cut Ottoman inscriptions, one on the castle and one on the Pazar Gate of the new enceinte, give the years in which the work was done: 1132-1236 (1719-1724). From the same years a number of building accounts and copies of orders from Istanbul are preserved, giving the expenditure for building materials and salaries for the work force day for day. Alas, this great source remains unpublished and has not been touched by Bulgarian scholars. In the inscription at the Pazar Gate the architect, Mustafa Ağa, praises himself as man with the greatest possible knowledge on construction work. Recently young Greek researchers found written evidence that an important group of skilled workmen were brought in from as far as the island of Crete, being trained in the Venetian tradition of building fortresses. Most heavy work was done by forced labour of the rural population in exchange for tax facilities. The bitter memories of the hard work in preserved in the local saying "carrying stones to Vidin" for an impossibly heavy task.

In 1738, during the new war with the Habsburgs, Vidin showed its increased strength and held out against an Austrian siege. In the following year, at the Peace of Belgrade, the Habsburgs were forced to evacuate Serbia and Oltenia and give back the important Belgrade. The pressure on Vidin eased. Immediately after the war the ottoman strengthened the fortifications of Vidin by the erection of two strong detached forts, Kum Kale and Gazi Bayır, protecting the two main entrances to the two from the north and the south.

From 1792 to 1807 Vidin was ruled by the famous soldier-of-fortune Osman Pasvantoğlu. This powerful semi-independent lord made himself beloved be the Muslims as well as by the Bulgarian population, both groups regarding him as a righteous and impartial judge and protector. The reforming Sultan Selim III, irritated by Osman's mounting power and too great independence, tried to dislodge him. In 1798 an Ottoman army of more than 80 000 men besieged Vidin for eight month but was unable to overcome the new line of fortification built by Osman, cleverly making use of the extensive swamps that were partly inundated. Osman was pardoned and continued to rule until his death in 1807. In Vidin he left behind a number of works for the common benefit: schools, fountains, mosques and barracks, a convent for the liberal Bektashi dervishes, a rich public library and, particularly benevolent for the common men, a foundation to provide ice-cooled drinking water and sorbets in the unbearably hot summer months.

In 1828 Maximilian Thielen describes Vidin as one of the strongest fortresses of European Turkey, having 25 000 inhabitants, living from handicrafts, trade and fishing. In 1873 the Ottoman administrative yearbook (Salnâme) of the large Danube Province noted for Vidin 2 129 households of Muslims and 1 399 of Christians, the latter including also the Jews. The town had 24 mosques, 5 churches, one synagogue, five hamams and 1 598 shops.

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78 Vidin held out nine months against the Russian army and their Rumania allies and suffered much destruction of heavy bombardments. The fortress surrendered only after the Treaty of San Stefano and the end of Ottoman control over Bulgaria.

Immediately after they had occupied Vidin Russian engineers started to destroy the formidable fortifications of Vidin. They left the Stamboul Gate standing but broke away the entire southern half of the enceinte. The northern half, of the walls, with the Pazar-, Bokluk-, and Florian Gates remained standing and survived until our time.

At the capitulation of Vidin the greater part of the Muslim inhabitants left the town forever. Vidin almost collapsed and had half a century later still less inhabitants that at the end of the Turkish period.

During the Serbian-Bulgarian war of 1885/86 the outer line of fortifications (all earthworks) built by Osman Pasvantoğlu, was modernized and held out against a Serbian attack. The disappearance of the monuments of Ottoman architecture was a gradual one. In 1908 12 mosques were still standing. In the 1970s Vidin still had four mosques of which only one was "working," the one of Osman Pasvantoğlu. In our days it is the only one remaining and was even restored. The many Ottoman fountains, mostly with beautiful sculptured decoration and elegantly calligraphed inscriptions in Ottoman poetry all disappeared. Most of the inscriptions, however, were kept and stored in the cellars of the old castle. Besides the northern half of the bastioned enceinte of 1719-/34 we can still the the detached fort of Gazi Bayır, its terre plein now serving as race course. In the early 1970s, in a mad nationalistic attempt to change history and adjust it to current nationalist theories, the Stamboul Gate was "restored" and changed from a typical work of the time of advanced heavy artillery techniques into a fake medieval work of the time of bow and arrow. The result was declared to be a "gate of the city of Vidin from the time of Tsar Ivan Sratsimir (c. 1360 – 1396)!

The Vidin castle serves since long as a Museum. It is held to be the best preserved medieval castle of Bulgaria although half of the masonry we see today is Ottoman, reflecting the long military history of this singularly important place.

Varna through the Ages

Varna was founded by the Greeks in the 6th century B.C. as "Odessos."
The name is pre-Greek and means in the since long disappeared Thracian language: "fortified town.

Greco-Roman Odessos had a surface of 35 ha., or about bout 6.000 inhab.

Shortly after 600 A.D. Odessos disappeared from the face of earth; burnt down and depopulated by the Avaro-Slavic invasions. The last coin finds are from Emperor Herakleios (610 – 641).

In 681 the name Varna, together with the name of Odessos, is for the first mentioned in the work of the Byzantine historian Theophanos. It was the name of a district, not of a town. "Varna" is Slavic and means "black", or "raven-black."

In 880-890 we see thefirst signs of new life appearing. The oldest coins found during extensive archaeological excavations are from Emperor John Tsimiskis who in 971 re-united Eastern Bulgaria with Byzance. From the 11th and 12th centuries there are rich archaeological finds of Byzantine coins and ceramics.

The surface of the walled town of Byzantino-Bulgarian Varna, and the more loosely build open suburbs together covered a space of ca. 11 hectare and could have had about 1.700 – 1.800 inhabitants.

In March 1201 the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan captured and totally destroyed Varna. In the traditional Bulgarian historiography is written that Kaloyan "liberated" Varna from the "Byzantine Yoke."
In 1393 Varna fell in Ottoman hands, but in February 1399 it was plundered and destroyed by the Tatars of Aktav, coming from the Southern Russian Plains and fleeying for Timur Leng.

In 1516, according to the oldest preserved Ottoman census-

and taxation register, Varna had: 87 Muslim households (of whom 55 para-milirary), 281 Christ. households (51 para-military)
Together: 368 households, or ca. 1800-2.000 inhabitants (= 24% Muslim).

In 1595, according to the historian Selaniki Mustafa, Varna was burnt down and totally destroyed (bi'l külliye harâb u yebâb oldı) by the Cossacks from Southern Ukrayna.

In 1597 – according to the Ottoman population and taxation register of that year - Varna had: 290 Households of Muslims
800 Households of Christians
25 Househ. of Gypsies, mixed Musl. - Christ.
Together: 1.115 househ., or ca. 5.300 – 5.500 inhab. (= 27%). This strongly suggests that Selaniki greatly exaggerated.

In 1659 - according to Bishop Philipp Stanislavov – Varna had: 400 Houses of "schismatic" Greeks, 1.700 souls, 8 churches 25 Catholic Merchants, 1.500 Turkish Houses and 7 mosques.

The numbers of Stanislavov suggest a town of ca. 9.000 inhabitants of whom about 80% about van Turkish.

Varna in the second half of the 18th century was thought to have 12.000 – 14.000 inhabitants.
In 1856 Papadopoulos-Vretos gives:

8.300 Turkish Inhabitants
6.100 Orthodox Christian Inhab. (Greeks, Bulgarians and Gagauz.
1.000 Armenian Inhabitants
150 Greeks from Greeks
30 Jews
TOTAL: 16.000 Inhabitants (= 52% Muslim)

In 1869 the administrative Yearbook of the Danube Province (Salname-i Tuna of H.1286 (1869), supplemented by Orlin Sabev, Varna had:

19 Mosques	11 Churches
1 Synagogue	4 Medrese (Theological CollagesColleges)
14 Hans	3 Hamams
730 Shops	

In 1876 the whole Sandjak of Varna (with 406 villages) had, according to the French researcher and traveller Aubaret:

92.000 Turkish Inhab.	32.000	Bulgarians
32.000 Bulgarians	6.842	Greeks

3.900 Gypsies (mixed Muslim – Christian)
1.200 Armenians, and a small group of Jews.
Total of whole province (Sandjak) of Varna: 136.000 inhab. of whom 68% was Muslim-Turkish.

In 1810 during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1811 the Russian under Kamenski attacked Varna but were repulsed with heavy losses. During the War of 1827/28 Varna was conquered by the Russian under command of Tsar Nikolas I after a valiant defence of three months. Before their withdrawal the Russians blew up and destroyed all the fortifications and caused great damage to the town.
Between 1830 and '34 the fortifications of the town were rebuilt according the most modern principals. The town and a large piece of slightly elevated land to the west of it was surrounded by a new enceinte, an earthen rampart with the escarp and counterscarp revetted with stone. At the three corners facing the mainland large independent forts were built. The concept strongly reminds one of the Dutch naval base Den Helder as rebuilt on order of Napoleon. On the elevated terrain, inside the walls, large barracks, stores for ammunition and provision were built, as well as a large military hospital, all designed to accommodate a large garrison. The new town gates, fort entrances and the many new fountains for good drinking water were adorned with calligraphed inscriptions in Ottoman poetry, praising Sultan Mahmud and the excellence of the new works.
During the Crimean War – 1853-56 – Varna served as base for the English and French troops fighting against the Russians but saw no fighting itself.
During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78 Varna remained outside the main field of operations. After the Treaty of San

Stefano (1878) Varna was included in the newly formed Bulgarian state. Two thirds of the Muslim population left the town forever. The census of 1934 showed that the Muslims of Varna, once a comfortable majority, had sunk to 9% only. Immediately after the Ottoman army had withdrawn from Varna a beginning was made to demolish the fortifications. The work took several years and left no trace above ground. A number of the beautiful Ottoman inscriptions were preserved and are now stored in the Varna Archaeological Museum. They were partially published by Miyatev (1958) Zajaczkowski (1962) and more complete by Abdulova (1965). In the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul a whole series of building accounts of the Varna fortress are preserved, practically untouched by the historian. Nine tenth of all mosques disappeared after 1878. Today only one, the Tatar Dzamiya, still serves the minuscule Muslim community. Another one, built in the last decades of the Ottoman period in an "English neo-gothic style," survives as a depot.
Today Varna is a booming industrial and commercial centre with almost half a million inhabitants, a city which has turned its back to its long multi-ethnic and multi-cultural past. In the various Balkan historiographies and in the common awareness of history it is often suggested that the in the lands captured by the Turks there has been, in comparison with the "glorious" Byzantino-Slavic Middle Ages, little or no progress. To enable the reader to judge himself we give here a drawing with the outlines of the size of Varna in various periods, all depicted on the same scale.

SILISTRA (2001: 62.000 inhabitants)

Silistra was Ottoman from 1388 to 1878 (with two short intervals).

The name "Silistra," Ottoman: Silistre), is a corruption of the Slavic name Darstar, This in turn is a corruption of the Roman name "Durostorum" which is not of Roman or Greek origin but of Thracian and means "Fortified Place."

In the second half of the 2th century A.D. Durostorum became the base of the Roman Legion XI Claudia. It was made a "municipium" under Marcus Aurelius (161 – 180 A.D.) and under Emperor Diocletian (290-330 A.D.) capital of the Roman province Skythia.

In 5th century great damage by invasion of the Huns. Shortly afterwards captured by the Germanic Visigoths and totally destroyed.

In mid-6th century rebuilt and strengthened by the Byzantins but shortly before the year 600 totally destroyed by the Avaro-Slavic invasions.

The new inhabitants, the Bulgarians, lived for more than two centuries on primitive huts on the ruins of the destroyed town (as shown by archaeological excavations in 1969).

Under Khan Krum (802 – 814) it was rebuilt as a fortress.

In 971 Emperor Johannes Tsimiskis reconquered it for Byzantium and made it capital of the province Paristrion.

In 11th century repeatedly captured and plundered by the Peçenegs. Khan Tatuş even resided in Drastar.

In 1088 the strong Emperor Alexios Komnenos restored Byzantine rule on the Lower Danube Between 1189 and 1393 Drastar was part of the Second Bulgarian Empire but very little is known about this period.

In the winter of 1388 an Ottoman army under Candarlı Ali Pasha took Drastar/Silistra.

Byzantino-Bulgarian Silistra covered a space of 270 x 200 meters and enclosed a space of 5½ hectares, which gives about 1000 – 1.100 inhabitants. Together with some open suburbs perhaps 1.400 – 1.600 inhabitants. For time and place an important town.

In 1390 the Valachian (İflak) Voyvode Mircea the Old, took Silistra and kept it until 1393, when it was retaken by the

Ottomans. After Bayezid I's defeat at Ankara (1402) Mirchea took Silistra back and kept it until 1419, when it became Ottoman again. It remained Ottoman until 1878.

In 1462 the Valachian Voyvode Vlad Tepes (Kazıklı Voyvode) took Silistra and many other towns along the Danube and massacred "6.840 inhabitants, Turks and Bulgarians without difference," as Vlad wrote himself.

The oldest Ottoman tahrir for Silistra is from 1516: mentions 193 Muslim households, including one cema'at of "sürgün (community of deporties). It mentions 193 Muslim hane, including one cema'at of "sürgünân" and one cem'at of Müsellem-i Kale

The town had 2 mosques, 3 mescids and a dervish convent.

The Christians had 13 Mahalles with 160 hane.Altogether 359 hane, or about 1.700 – 1.800 inhabitants, of whom 55% was Muslim.

In 1560/70 (T.D. 483) Silistra had 802 Muslim households, a garrison of 46 men, and 26 sipahis living in the town (and their retainers. The town now had 4 mosques and 16 mescids, served by 29 imams and muezzins.

The non-Muslim population was 633 households Christians and 18 Jewish households. Altogether about 7.200 inhabitants of whom 54 was Muslim%. The town had thus grown four times bigger in just half a century!

In the Spring of 1595 Michael the Brave, Voyvode of Walachia, conquered and wholly destroyed Silistra.

In 1651 and 1657 the famous Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi visited Silistra and left a rich description.

In 1621, during a campaign to the Ukraine, Sultan Osman II ordered the construction of a rampart of earth around the entire settlement. This rampart was restored and modernized several times (bastions added) but remained in essence the circumference in within which the town existed.

In 1773 the Russian army under Rumyancev besieged Silistra but was beaten back.

In June 1810 the Russians under Michael Kutuzov took Silistra after a long bombardment and destroyed all fortifications and most of the town.

In 1828 the Russians again took Silistra and kept it till 1836.

Between 1836 and 1852 the town was rebuilt and newly fortified. In 1845 it had 783 Muslim households, 324 households of Orthodox Christians, 41 Armenian households and 16 of Jews, totaling 5.500 – 6.000 inhabitants (67% Muslim).

The town had a considerable trade and lived from leather- and textile fabrication, fishing and soap-making.

Since the last years of the 1840s the fortifications of Silistra were greatly strengthened by the construction of a series of five detached forts on the hills overlooking the town from the south. The forts were built according to the Neu-Preussische method, with a bomb-proof semi-circular reduit, a mur Carnot at the foot of the strong rampart and caponiers flanking the ditch. It was thus highly modern and fully in accordance with international standards (Kiel 1982).

During the Crimean War Silistra held out gloriously against a Russian siege of more than a month, the new Mecidiyye Tabya playing a great role. The event was celebrated in Namik Kemal's famous emotional theatre play: "Vatan yahud Silistre."

In 1873 (Salname) the town had about 7.000 inhabitants, 60% Muslims.
The Sandjak of Silistra (with 1 town and 235 villages) was for 64% Muslim-Turkish.

Just before the disastrous war of 1877/78 a chain of outer

forts were built, further strengthening the defences. During the war Silistra held out and only surrendered after the Treaty of San Stefano. It had than 13 mosques 3 hamams, 3 churches and 1 synagogue.

After the war the town was included into the new Bulgarian state and between 1913 and 1940 was occupied by Rumania. A large part of the Muslim population emigrated to Turkey.

Today, 2009, Silistra has only 1 mosque left over (the Medzidiye Mosque). It was restored and still serves the Muslim community that has shrunk to a small minority.

In the 1970s Mecidiyye Tabya had very nicely been restored and was transformed into the Historical Museum of the town. The other works disappeared, except to Arap Tabya, which after 1940 became situated just inside the Rumanian border and was kept by the Rumanian army, preventing all research.

By way of conclusion.

After discussing the mighty new Venetian fortress towns on Crete and Cyprus Jeremy Black (2000 and 2008) concluded: "There was little equivalent Turkish fortification re-evaluation, no large-scale equivalent to the new European fortifications, although the Turks scarcely required such a development in the sixteenth century: they were not under attack.

In the following century, however, as external pressure on the Turks increased, they built some impressive fortifications, many of which only fell after lengthy sieges. These included Belgrade, Buda and Vidin on the Danube, Temesvár on the Tisza. Khotin and Bender on the Dniester, Ochakov and Kilburn controlling the Dnieper estuary, and Azov on the Don. Although technically not as impressive as the fortification than Vauban designed for Louis XIV, the Turkish positions fulfilled the same purpose: in general, they absorbed considerable time before they fell. They also reflected the resources available to the Ottoman state."

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16. - 19. YÜZYIL AVLONYA / VLORE (GÜNEY ARNAVUTLUK), VİDİN, VARNA ve SİLİSTRE (DANUBİAN BULGARİSTAN) ÖRNEKLERİ İLE OSMANLI TÜRK SAVUNMA SİSTEMLİ ŞEHİRLERİN TARİHİ ve GELİŞİMİ

Machiel Kiel

Aşağıda geniş bir bakış açısıyla Osmanlı Türk Savunma Sistemli şehirlerini inceleyeceğiz ve örnek olarak eskiden Türklerin elinde olan Avrupa'daki dört şehri alacağız. İşleyeceğimiz konu göz ardı edilmiş bir konudur. 1537–1542 yılları arasında Kanuni Sultan Süleyman tarafından inşa ettirilen Valona/Vlore (Osmanlılarda Avlonya) kaleli kenti hakkında 17. yüzyıl gezgini ve coğrafyacısı ünlü Evliya Çelebi tarafından yapılan tanımlamada aşağıdaki önemli bilgi bulunmaktadır.

"İnsanlar, Osmanlıların nasıl kale inşa edileceğini bilmediğini söylemektedir; buna karşın Erlau sınırındaki Szeget kalesini, Özü (Ocakov) sınırındaki Dniester bölgesinde yer alan Bender kalesini ve bu Avlonya kalesini görmemiş kimse Osmanlıların inşaat işlerinde ne kadar usta olduğunu anlayamaz."

Evliya muhakkak ki kendi zamanında bu gibi negatif yorumları çok duymuştur fakat buradaki tepkisinden anlaşıldığı kadarıyla istihkam teknikleri hakkında bilgisi çok zayıftır. Batılı gözlemciler uzun yıllar boyunca kalenin ortaçağ görüntüsüne sahip olduğunu ve Venedikliler tarafından inşa edilmiş olabileceğini söylemiştir. 19. yüzyılın başına kadar burçlara sahip kalelerin inşa edilmeye devam etmesinin sebebi Batı dünyasının "çizim tahtası sanatçılar"a çok fazla inanıyor oluşuydu.

Vidin Kalesi

Kale nispeten küçüktür ve sadece 70-72 metre bir alanı kaplamaktadır fakat çevresi Danube'nin sularıyla dolan geniş ve derin hendeklerle çevrilidir. İlk Bulgar İmparatorluğu'nun çökmesinin ardından (968) kale 1003 yılına kadar Bizanslılara karşı mücadele etmiş, fakat sekiz aylık bir kuşatmanın ardından ele geçirilmiştir. Vidin 1185 yılına kadar Bizans hükümdarlığı altında kalmış ardından tekrar Bulgarlara geçmiştir.

16. yüzyılda barış zamanında Vidin hızla gelişmiştir. 1585'in detaylı kayıtlarında 669 Müslüman, 269 Hıristiyan, 31 Musevi hanesinden bahsetmektedir. Bunların dışında 27 Çingene topluluğu bulunmaktadır ve toplam hane 996'dır veya diğer bir değişle garnizon ile birlikte 5000–6000 kişi yaşamaktadır ve % 67'si Müslüman'dır. Nikolaj Todorov veya Stojanovic gibi Bulgar uzmanlar Vidin nüfusunu 16. yüzyıl sonunda 9000 olarak tahmin etmektedir, bu nüfus o zamanlar için çok büyüktür. 17. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Vidin'de kalan Rus bir tutuklu şehrin "çok büyük olmayan ve eski zamanlarda inşa edilmiş bir kaleye sahip olduğunu... şehrin çevresinde ise surların veya duvarların bulunmadığını" yazmıştır. Bu sonradan büyük ölçüde değişmiştir. 1689 Ekim'inde Hıristiyan koalisyonu ile yapılan uzun savaşın ardından, Margrave Ludwig von Baden Vidin'i ve aynı zamanda Feth-i Islam (Kladovo) ve Florentin kalelerini savaşmadan almıştır. 29 Ağustos 1690 yılında bir yıldan daha az bir süre sonra Dursun Mehmet Paşa komutası altındaki Osmanlı güçleri ve Mezamorto Hüseyin Paşa komutası altındaki Osmanlı Danube donanması Vidin'i geri almıştır. Karlofça (1699) anlaşmasının ardından Vidin Osmanlılarda kalmıştır. Passarowitz anlaşması ile biten 1715-1718 savaşı sırasında Osmanlılar 1715 yılında fethettikleri Morea'yı ellerinde tutmuşlar fakat Habsburgs ve Sırbistan'ın tüm kuzey kısmını Belgrat kalesi ile birlikte ve ayrıca Vidin sancağının kuzey batı kısmını vermişlerdir. Ayrıca Danube'nin kuzeyi Oltenia da Habsburg'un eline geçmiştir. Bu aşamadan sonra düşman Vidin'in hemen yanı

başında büyük nehrin karşı kısmında bulunmaktadır.

1792'den 1807'ye kadar Vidin ünlü komutan Osman Pasvantoğlu tarafından yönetilmiştir. Bu güçlü ve yarı bağımsız vali hem Müslümanlar hem de Bulgarlar tarafından çok sevilmiştir. Her iki grup da kendisini adil ve tarafsız bir hakim ve koruyucu olarak kabul etmiştir. Reformlar gerçekleştiren Sultan 3. Selim, Osman'ın artan gücünden ve çok fazla bağımsız olmasından rahatsız olmuştur ve onu yerinden etmeye karar vermiştir. 1798'de 80000'den fazla askerden oluşan bir Osmanlı ordusu Vidin'i sekiz ay boyunca kuşatmıştır fakat Osman tarafından yeni inşa edilen ve geniş bataklıkları akıllıca kullanan savunma sistemlerini geçememiştir.

1828'de Maximilian Thielen, Vidin'i Avrupa Türkiye'sindeki en güçlü kalelerden birisi olarak tanımlamakta ve içerisinde 25 000 kişinin yaşadığı ve geçimlerini el sanatları, ticaret ve balıkçılıktan sağladığından bahsetmektedir. 1873 Danuba Eyaleti için kullanılan Osmanlı idari yıllığında (Salnâme) Vidin'de 2129 Müslüman ve 1399 Hıristiyan hane bulunduğu ve 1399 sayısına Musevi hanelerin de dahil olduğu belirtilmektedir. Şehirde 24 cami, 5 kilise, 1 sinagog, 5 hamam ve 1598 dükkan bulunmaktadır.

1885/86 Sırp Bulgar savaşı sırasında Osman Pasvantoğlu tarafından inşa ettirilen tüm dış savunma hatları modernize edilmiş ve Sırp saldırılarını durdurmuştur. Osmanlı mimarisi zaman içerisinde yavaş yavaş yok olmuştur. 1908'de halen daha 12 cami ayaktaydı. 1970'te Vidin'de halen daha dört cami vardı ve bunlardan birisi, Osman Pasvantoğlu tarafından inşa edileni halen daha kullanılıyordu. Günümüzde ise kalan tek cami budur ve restore edilmiştir.
Birçok Osmanlı çeşmesi, çok güzel işlemeli dekorasyonlar ve Osmanlı şiirinin çok zarif bir şekilde yazılmış tüm örnekleri yok olmuştur.

Vidin kalesi bu zamandan beri bir müze olarak kullanılmaktadır. Halen korunan bu bina Bulgaristan'ın en iyi ortaçağ kale örnekleri arasında gösterilmektedir, buna karşın görünen duvar işçiliğinin yarısı Osmanlı'lar tarafından yapılmış ve Osmanlıların uzun askeri tarihini yansıtmaktadır.

Varna

Varna, Yunanlılar tarafından 6. yüzyılda "Odessos" olarak kurulmuştur. Bu isim Yunancadan önce kullanılan ve yok olan Thracian dilindedir ve kaleli şehir demektir. 681 yılında Varna ismi, Odessos ismi ile birlikte Bizanslı tarihçi Theophanos'un çalışmalarında geçmektedir. Bu isim bir şehrin ismi değil bir bölgenin ismidir. "Varna" Slavca "siyah" veya "kuzguni siyah" anlamına gelmektedir.

1516 yılında, mevcut olan en eski Osmanlı nüfus sayımı sonuçları ve vergi kayıtları Varna hakkında şu bilgilere sahiptir: 87 Müslüman hane (55'i yarı asker), 281 Hıristiyan Hane (51'i yarı asker), toplamda: 368 hane 1800-2.000 nüfus (= % 24 Müslüman). 1595 yılında, tarihçi Selaniki Mustafa'ya göre, Güney Ukrayna'dan gelen Cossack'lar tarafından Varna tamamen yakılıp yıkılmıştır (bi'l külliye harâb u yebâb oldı).

1869 yılı için Orlin Sabev tarafından tamamlanan Dnube Eyaletinin idari yıllığında (Salname-i Tuna H.1286 (1869)) şu bilgiler mevcuttur: 19 cami, 11 kilise, 1 sinagog, 4 medrese, 14 han, 3 hamam, 730 dükkan. 1810 yılında 1806–1811 yılları arasında süren Rus–Türk savaşında Ruslar Kamenski komutası altında Varna'ya saldırmış ve büyük kayıplarla geri püskürtülmüşlerdir. 1827/28 savaşı sırasında Varna Ruslar tarafından Tsar Nikolas I komutası altında 3 ay süren başarılı bir savunmanın ardından fethedilmiştir. Teslim olmalarından önce Ruslar kentteki tüm kaleleri yıkmışlar ve kentin kendisine de büyük zarar vermişlerdir. Kırım Savaşı sırasında (1853-56) Varna, Ruslarla savaşan İngiliz ve Fransız askerleri için bir üs olarak işlev görmüştür fakat burada herhangi bir savaş olmamıştır.

Silistre

"Silistra" ismi (Osmanlıcada Silistre) Slav ismi Darstar'dan türemiştir. Bu isim ise Roma ismi "Durostorum" dan gelmektedir. Durostorum ismi ise ne Roma ne de Yunan kökenlidir; bu ismin

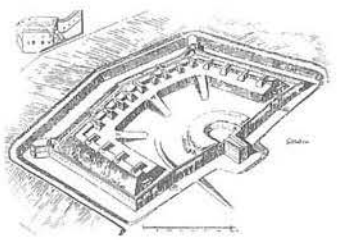
kökeni Trakya'dandır ve "Kaleli yer" anlamına gelmektedir. Khan Krum (802 – 814) altında yeni bir kale inşa edilmiştir. 1388 kışında Candarlı Ali Paşa komutası altındaki bir Osmanlı ordusu Drastar/Silistre'yi fethetmiştir. Bizans–Bulgar Silistre 270 x 200 metre bir alanı ve 5,5 hektar bir alanı kapsamakta ve nüfusu 1000–1100 kişiydi. Bazı açık alanlardaki yerleşimleri de kattığınızda bu rakam 1400–1600'e çıkabilir. O zaman ve mekana göre önemli bir şehirdi. 1390'da Valachian (İflak) Voyvodası Yaşlı Mircea Silistre'yi almış ve 1393'e kadar tutmuştur, bu tarihten sonra tekrar Osmanlılar tarafından alınmıştır. 1. Bâyezid'in Ankara'da yenilmesinin ardından (1402) Mirchea Silistre'yi geri almış ve 1419'a kadar tutmuştur. Bu tarihten sonra yeniden Osmanlıların eline geçmiştir. 1878 yılına kadar Osmanlıların elinde kalmıştır. 1462 yılında Valachian Voyvodası Vlad Tepes (Kazıklı Voyvoda) Silistre'yi ve Danube civarındaki birçok başka şehri almış ve Vlad'ın kendi sözleriyle "6840 insanı, Bulgar Türk ayırmadan katletmiştir". 1836 ve 1852 yıllarında şehir yeniden inşa edilmiş ve güçlendirilmiştir. 1845 yılında Silistre'de 783 Müslüman hane, 324 Ortodoks Hıristiyan Hane, 41 Ermeni Hane ve 16 Musevi hane bulunmaktaydı ve toplam nüfus 5500–6000 idi (% 67 Müslüman). 1840'ların son yıllarından sonra Silistre'deki istihkam alanları şehre güneydeki tepeden hakim olan beş yeni ayrı kale ile büyük ölçüde güçlendirilmiştir. Kaleler Neu-Preussische metoduna göre inşa edilmiştir. Reduit kısmı bombalardan korunacak şekilde yapılmıştır; surların başında bir mur Carnot bulunmaktadır. Bu yüzden çok moderndir ve uluslararası standartlara uygundur (Kiel 1982).

Kırım Savaşı sırasında Silistre, Rus kuşatmasına mükemmel bir şekilde bir aydan fazla bir süre direnmiştir, yeni Mecidiye Tabyası bu savunmada çok önemli bir rol üstlenmiştir. Bu olay Namık Kemal'in ünlü duygusal tiyatro oyununda kutlanmıştır: "Vatan yahud Silistre". 1877/78 yıllarındaki felaket savaştan hemen önce dış bölgelerde zincir halinde kaleler inşa edilmiş ve istihkam daha da güçlendirilmiştir. Bugün (2009) Silistre'de sadece Mecidiye Camii bulunmaktadır. Burası restore edilmiş ve halen daha küçük bir azınlık olarak varlıklarını koruyan Müslümanlar tarafından kullanılmaktadır. 1970'lerde Meciddiye Tabya çok güzel bir şekilde restore edilmiştir ve şehrin tarihi müzesine dönüştürülmüştür. Arap Tabya dışında, diğer eserler yok olmuştur. Arap Tabya 1940 yılından sonra Romanya sınırları içerisinde yer almış ve Romanya silahlı kuvvetleri tarafından tutulmuştur ve herhangi bir araştırma yapılamamıştır.



Bourtange, N.Netherlands





Silistra, bird's-eye view of the Mecidiyye Tabya, built between 1848 – 1852 according to the "Neu-Preussischen System." In the upper corner an enlarged view of the Caponnière. (drawing: Helmuth Pfleger, '82)



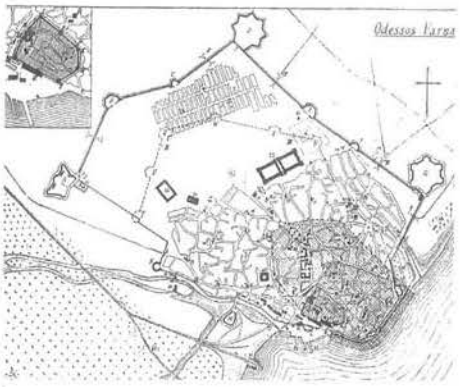


street in Ottoman Varna as drawn by the Russian officer Morozov
ortly after the capture of the town in 1878. From: Kratka Istoriya na
lgarskata Arhitektura, Sofia 1965, p. 3006. Today not a single house
this type is preserved in Varna.



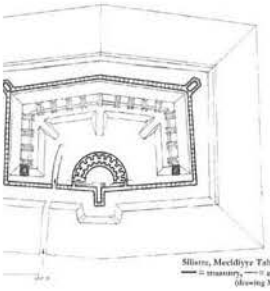
Silistra (N.E. Bulgaria).

Plan of the former Ottoman fortress town. The walls and bastions around the town are those from 1811. The detached forts on the hills dominating the town are from the time of Abdülmecid I and made between 1848 and 1852. The outer line of redoubts (earth works) are from 1877).

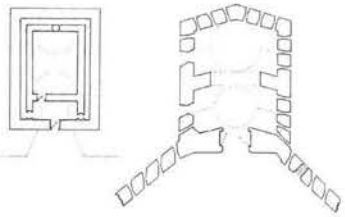


City of Varna as rebuilt after the total destruction by the Russians in 1829, rebuilt under Mahmud II between 1830-1834, with: Three Independent Forts (Tabya), Kışla, Ambarlar, Mağaza, Baruthane, Tophane, Hastahane etc.

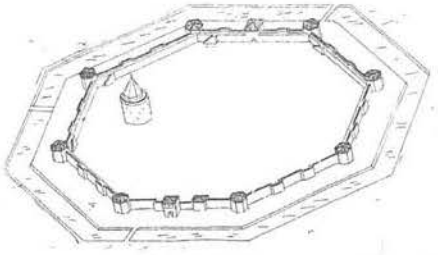
Left, above corner, the medieval town in enlarged size.
Drawing by Škorpil 1930 and Kuzev 1975.



Silistra, Mecidiyye Tabya, 1848/52
— = masonry, — = earthwork.
(drawing M.Kiel '82)



Mecidiyye Tabya,
left: ground plan of powder magasine
right: ground plan of caponnière
(drawing M.Kiel '82)



Reconstruction of the Avtanya castle after Apollon Bana 1972