



The medieval fortress Vida (Baba Vida) is situated on a big curve of the river Danube in the northeast part of the town Vidin. Its history dates back more than 2000 years, going through different constructional and architectural periods: ancient (I – IV A.D.), Bulgarian (X – XIV A.D.), Ottoman (XV – XIX A.D.). All the restoration activities took place in XX A.D. The construction of Baba Vida was started based on the ruins of an old Roman fortified watch-point called Bononia, which was most likely built over the foundations of an ancient Thracian settlement at the beginning of I A.D. The Bononia watch-point was in use from the middle of I till the end of VI A.D. It formed a part of the Danube border of the Roman Empire. The remains of the fortifications can be still seen today in different places in the town of Vidin. The best preserved section is the base of the northeast corner tower, which later became incorporated into the Baba Vida fortress during its construction. The first construction works started before the end of the First Bulgarian Empire (X A.D.). The Byzantine chronicles say that the fortress of Vidin survived a siege, which lasted about 8 months. The army who besieged Vidin was led by the Byzantine Emperor Vasilius II. Very little remains of the buildings dating from this period. The best preserved is the fortress wall and the towers situated near the river of Danube. Lasting over the entire period of the Second Bulgarian Empire the fortress Vida was the most important in North-west Bulgaria. The biggest extension was made during the reign of Tsar Ivan Sratsimir, who actually lived in it. During this period many internal walls and towers were built. These extensions map the present day layout of the site. The construction is typical fort his time period – stones and bricks cemented with mortar. They were laid without following a certain predetermined order. Most of the buildings built in this period remain untouched today. The layout of the castle also dates from this period. The castle covers area of 9.5 dekar, surrounded by a moat with a width of 12 m. and depth of 6m. The foundation has a shape of a square, oriented to the cardinal points of the compass with each side 70 m. in length. The castle has two ringed walls. The inner wall is high and 2.2 m thick and has 9 towers –1 at each corner and the remaining 5 situated at strategic points around each wall. The outer wall is lower than the inner and is connected to the inner by two towers. The space between the two walls is actually a courtyard mostly without any buildings. The space inside the inner wall consists mostly of buildings with a small inner courtyard, where the living quarters were situated. These living quarters consist of two floors. The access to the terrace over the quarters is via a spiral staircase and there is a ramp for the movement of cannons. Access within the towers was achieved mostly by wooden ladders. The towers had few floors – lower levels were used as stores, the upper ones – for observation and shooting. The fortress has one gate – on the north side situated in an entry tower. Nowadays there's a stone bridge over the moat, but in the ancient times there was a wooden draw-bridge. The moat was filled with water from the near river of Danube. The gate leads to the first courtyard. A spiral staircase leads to the second courtyard. At the time of the Second Bulgarian Empire the inner court was larger and hosted a

church, a stone building and some barracks. They were all destroyed during the reconstruction made by the ottomans between XVII – XVIII A.D. The ancient stronghold began its conversion into a castle already during the Bdin principality. This process ended at the time of Ivan Sratsimir, who ordered the building of the main tower. This tower is the best preserved in Bulgaria dating from the middle ages. It is 16 m. high and has many ornaments made of brick incorporated into the structure. It is believed that one of them reads as the text “Shishman”. Close to this tower is a secret escape passage. The outer walls date to the same period. From XV A.D. the castle has only been used for defence purposes. It was reconstructed during the end period of XVII and the beginning of XVIII A.D., when the extended use of the cannons in warfare necessitated the strengthening of the defence structures. New buildings were built in the inner courtyard, the shooting apertures were filled in and new crenels were built for the cannons. Near the end of XVIII and the beginning of XIX century additional brick storeys were raised over the inner wall, as well as the roofs of the towers. Also during this period a shooting terrace was built. It consists of a layer of soil 5 m. thick, built over the stone roofs of the living quarters. During the 60's of XX A.D. the walls were restored in their original shape leaving an easily noticeable difference between these restored section and the untouched section of this historical site