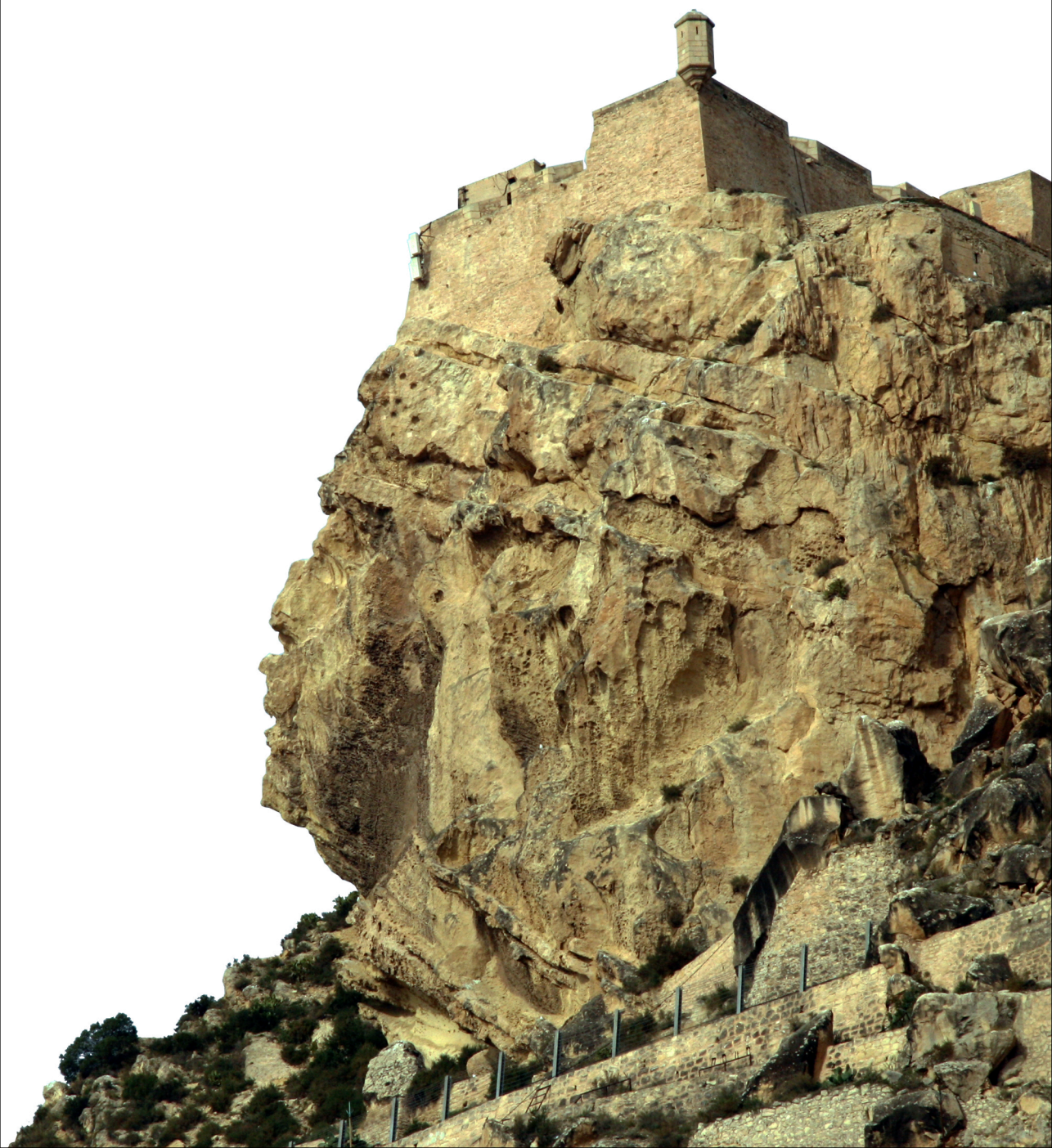


5 DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

XV to XVIII Centuries

Víctor ECHARRI IRIBARREN (Ed.)



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Careers and projects illustrated in manuscripts. The Vintana, military architects (16th-17th centuries)

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Abstract

The role of the Vintana, as a dynasty at the service of the battlefields and defensive needs of a centralized and autocratic Empire in the phase of stability as the Austrian one was between the XVI and XVII centuries, is emblematic to understand the defense approach carried out on the border land on behalf of the Habsburgs. Such intervention would like to describe, with the opening up of the great quantity and unpublished archive documents found, the *Corsus honorum* of such military architect family. Numerous documents have been found at the *Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv* of Graz and others in several Friulian archives. The Vintana participated in numerous fortifications within the *Innerösterreich*, drafting reports and proposing renovating, enlarging and modernizing interventions of fortified buildings in a modern way.

With the presented documentation, moreover, the diversities are also pointed out and points of contact between two political and administrative realities such as the Austrian and the Venetian one, analyzing the approach supported by both towards the concept of Borders; Such definition, in the Austrian environment will have a much different meaning than the Venetian one, or rather almost inexistent as dividing line or "respect zone".

Keywords: Vintana, fortifications, Habsburg, *Innerösterreich*.

1. The military architect, a family trade

To understand the work and the *cursus honorum* of a person, during the same period, attention should be paid to the studies carried out to cultural and work experiences; Instead to understand, on one hand, a subject, in this case a military architect or a family of architects who lived between the XVI and XVII centuries and hence, their approach to the design and construction of "modern fortified constructions". One has to contextualize the architectural production within the social *humus* in which the

family grew and developed, leading to analyzing relations and political ties of all its members.

The first news regarding the Vintana family is found in Gradisca and successively in Gorizia, within the *Innerösterreich* territories. In the discovered documents, the title which above all especially identifies Corrado Vintana, certainly was head of the family and worked from 1549-1561, is always *Gradiskaner Baumeisters* and this one suggests an already local presence already from the first half of the XVI century, although today there are many hypotheses

regarding the family's origins. On Corrado Vintana's death, on November 21st, 1561, his son Giuseppe was appointed as the imperial architect responsible for the County of Gorizia and the city of Gradisca. The appointment came directly from Graz by Archduke Maximilian, following indications from the Emperor Ferdinand I, a proponent of fortification and bureaucratic-administrative reorganization in all of Austria and specifically in the border regions, *Militärgrenze*.

The appointment foresaw an annual compensation of sixty Rhenish Florins, equivalent to the compensation received by his father Corrado, as we learn from an Archducal missive dated November 7th, 1561¹. In the fervor of the battles against the Turks and the reorganization of the borders, Giuseppe Vintana in 1565 was sent to inspect the fortress of Gradisca. In the following year he was also asked to repair the main square of Gorizia, being the provincial administrator and Captain of Count Francesco von Thun. Given the increase in the projects assigned to him, Giuseppe on September 2nd, 1566 asked for an increase in salary; the request was denied for the reasons for such denial:

«La preghiera rivolta a questa Magnifica Convocazione del supplicante non può venire per ora accolta; i 60 fiorini renani che ora riceve non li ha mai prima ricevuti, ciò non ostante la sullodata Convocazione glieli darà tanto in tempo di pace che di guerra ma ciò non ha da essere una spinta per altri obblighi².»

A few months later, following the arrival of Archduke Carlo in Gorizia, on May 1st, 1567, even the Provincial States began to recognize the great work of the architect, and also increased his economic compensation. A similar increase was given to Vintana on March 15th, 1568, on suggestion of the war commissioners. The popularity and excellence were further

compensated on June 12th of the same year when the Provincial States decided to assign, in addition to their normal salary of eighty Rhenish and forty Carantani Florins, an annual premium of forty Florins during the work at the citadel fortifications and twenty Florins in case of inactivity for commitments in other places in the Empire.



Fig. 1 - Headquarters of the Gorizia Civic Magistrate. Today's view.

In 1572, a few years after Michele Sanmicheli's Friulan inspections and the following year at the request of the Lieutenant of Udine to fortify the capital in the Little Land, Giuseppe Vintana continued studying the walls of Gorizia to increase its efficiency. Also in 1572, as a result of static problems of the recent completed construction, Giuseppe had to deal with

restoring and reconstructing the headquarters of the Gorizia Civic Magistrate, one of the works that will be most remembered. The news of the excellent result of these works was also reported to the court, the architect earning esteem from Archduke Charles who appointed him on January 11th, 1576 Commissioner for the inspection of fortifications of the citadel of Gorizia and in February of the same year, he gave him an increase of 25 Rhenish Florins on his wages and cash bonuses.

On the 13th of June, 1576, aware of the qualities he possessed, Giuseppe, thanks to the intercession of the Archduke, received from the Provincial States an advance of two hundred Florins which he should have returned with holdings of forty Florins per year. This sum is supposed to have been given to the architect for the purchase of land and buildings. On the 14th of October the same year, from the Archduke's esteem, he was appointed *Baumeister der windisch-Kroatischen Grenze und der Landbefestigungsgebäude*. Following this proposal, for a few months and until the spring of the following year, he did not receive the salary of such assignment or any request for work or reconnaissance missions. This impasse led Giuseppe to send a reminder letter to the commissioners of war, requesting the payment of arrears and the delivery of the tasks for which he was hired:

«Molto Ill. tri Sig. ri Commissarij [...] et Sig. ri miei Sempre Gratosi. Molti giorni sono st. i la Sua Ser. ma Altezza me Concesso loffito del Superintendente di tute le Sue fabriche Ecutuando quelle delli Confini di Crovattia et Schiavonia Come appar nel Decreto fatto a tanti di Marcio proximo Pasato in Clogenfort mentre che all'hora me fose promisso di fare a lubiana o vero a goritia il mio Stolprof. Con la mia particollare Instrutione di tuto il Caricho et offitio mio mentre di men fin hora non ho havuto

Cossa, alchuna ne hordine alchuno, e pero Con questa mia Humilissima de hora prego et Suplichio humilmente alle V. S. Ill. me che quello si degnino et siamo Contente di farmi havere tal mia Instrutione Con il mio ditto Stolprof. quanto prima sara possibile per cio ti sarebe tal Cosa Ancho Necessarijssima per hutile et Bemsitio della fabricha di questa et altre fortezze, epero hora qui in questa de graz in diverse Cose squali se lavora al Contrario et a mallafitio della fabricha, la qual Cosa andando sopra il locho Con Ragione se fara Veder il tuto chiaramente alle V. S. Ill. me epero in mediate farebe bisogno di qualche buon Remedio et hordine, Mediante et sopra il tuto gli sia la obedientia dalli Capi muratori soprastanti muratori, taglia pietre et altri similli a fine che le fabriche, di Sua Ser. ma Altezza siano fatti et a seguito Con quella dilligentia et fidelta che sij possibile, promitendo ancora ijo che dal Canto mio Usare tuta quella dilligentia sollicitudine et fidelta che mi sara Possibile si come che sempre per avanti nelli altri servitij di Sua Ser. ma Altezza ho sempre fatto. Ancora io Prego Humilmente le V. S. Ill. me che quelle di Deg. mmo farmi hordinare le mie Page pasate secondo el Deretto et quelle per havenire acio et con quello che di ragione si conviene nelli mei bisogni io mi posi sostentare cosi sperando di otenere la buona gratia di V. S. Ill. me con ogni debitta Reverentia et fidelta aspettavo la loro Benigna et gratiosa risposta Pregando Iddio C. ro Sig. re li Conservi sempre sani fellici et longa Vitta. D. V. S. Ill. d. Loro fidel. mo servitore. Iosepho Vintano Architetto ³ ».

The letter had the desired effects, already from the autumn of 1577, he began to schedule the departure for reconnaissances along the Croatian and Slavonic borders. To dampen the quantity tones of honors, on the 4th of November, 1577, Giuseppe Vintana received the request brought by a appointed *ad hoc* debt collector, to return the two hundred Florins obtained on loan from

the Provincial States. The request came when not even half of the debt had been extinguished and in any case well before the destined full return.



Fig. 2 - Graz and its fortifications, G. M. Vischer, Topographia Ducatus Styriae, 1681.

From a working point of view, however, the rise continued, due to the excellent organizational and planning skills in the building site reached Giuseppe Vintana as far as Graz, where he went in 1580 to replace the architect Domenico de Lelio (* Scaria, 1515 † Croatia, 1563) in the creation of new and more efficient fortified structures. As a point of attraction for the Austrian provinces, the town of Graz became increasingly in the following century the center of Austrian architecture. This involved apprenticeships from many Austrian regions including Salzburg⁴ and during this period Giuseppe got married to Diana. In the beginning of the 1580s, in 1581, Giuseppe wrote to Archduke Charles requesting to change his duties, wishing to leave his post as superintendent to his brother Giovanni Battista. The original letter is kept in the *Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv* Graz⁵. The Archduke responded positively to this request on 21st March 1581⁶.

2. New prospects, projects along the *Militärgrenze*

The appointed brother Giambattista for the office of architect superintendent of fortified

structures for the city of Gorizia, Giuseppe accomplished his first and most important structured reconnaissance, in respect to the earlier ones, on the fortresses located in the border areas of the *Militärgrenze*. It started on June 18th, 1582⁷ and controlled the fortresses of Weitschavar, Karestur, Kopreinitz, the latter had already prepared a project for the fortification and various wooden models, Kreuz, Ibanitsch Warasdin and finally Tolmin. After the reconnaissance, with a detailed report, he returned to Graz. A few months after this important reconnaissance and sending the report to the War Council, the salary for that trip was late in arriving. The urgent economic necessities forced Giuseppe to send a letter to the Archduke urging payments and asking for an increase in his remuneration due to the huge sums he had to personally pay, the horses but above all the soldiers who allowed him to pass along the borders⁸. In Graz, the place where he sent the letter, he remained there for a few months, continued to work in the project overseeing and supervising the construction sites at the Northern Styrian fortifications. On this occasion, the fortresses were used to protect Judenburg, Leoben, Sechau (Seckau, Seccau), Zeiring and Ptuj Castles.

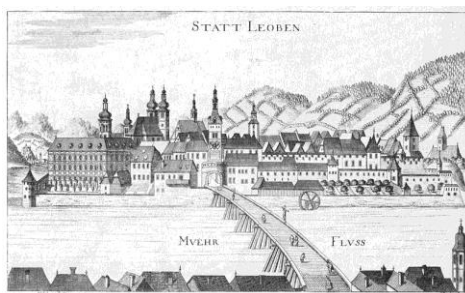


Fig. 3 - Leoben Stadt, G. M. Vischer, Topographia Ducatus Styriae, 1681.

It could be noticed that changing the localization of reconnaissance also changed the architecture to which Vintana approached. In the border areas, for the most part, new fortifications or old

ones were modernized with artefacts stemming from the modern art of fortification, while in the more internal territories of Styria, the architecture was still of a feudal character and consequently the interventions had a minor entity. Upon completion of this reconnaissance in 1583, he planned to implement the fortifications in Stanjel fortress, commissioned by the Cobenzl nobles. This was a very challenging year for Vintana, in fact, he was called to design a new series of fortifications for the city of Gorizia, Judenburg and Klagenfurt. In this latter city he also had to conduct an investigation into the work carried out by Giovanni Antonio Verda.



Fig. 4 - Castle of Stanjel, Slovenia.

In 1584, Giuseppe was first of all involved in the site inspections and then in Ptuj's projects and works regarding the castle and the nearby harbor. Towards the 1580s, however, this work firstly saw him involved in the completion of the fortification works but, shortly afterwards, because of fervent ideologies carried out by Protestantism, seeing that he was opposed to this religion, he was dismissed from the work on the fortress. He died a few years later, in 1587, leaving his wife Diana and her son Giampietro. His son followed the fathers and uncle's footsteps, wishing to embark on an architect career and although opted for an international education was also supported by the Emperor. In April of 1587, in fact, Diana *relicta* Vintana, wrote a letter to Archduke

Charles requesting in which, «[...] *per i servigi a lui resi e all'imperatore Ferdinando I nel Friuli e ai confini veneto, slavone e ungherese* [...]» on behalf of her late husband, she asked that she could receive a pension or an annual income, in consideration to that, also for this reason she requested her husband's merits «[...] *non guadagnò neppure tanto da poter fare il tetto della sua casa*». The answer to that letter was delayed until July 16th, 1587, when the Archduke made arrangements to pay an annual pension of 100 Florins to the widow and 52 Florins to his son Giampietro for three consecutive years. This sum allowed his son to finance his studies in the Netherlands⁹, thus allowing him to obtain a degree and more specifically committing himself to the service of Archduke Ferdinand II.



Fig. 5 - Castle of Seccau (Seccau, Sechau), G. M. Vischer, *Topographia Ducatus Styriae*, 1681.

3. Infrastructures and construction sites, Giambattista Vintana

As previously mentioned at the beginning of the 1580s, Giuseppe's brother, Giambattista became more actively involved in the construction, control and design of fortified structures in the internal territories of Austria and especially in the County of Gorizia. In fact, in 1581 he was appointed as *scrivano delle fabbriche* taking over some works that his brother was following in 1583 for Gorizia and Tolmin Castles, where they were spending huge sums to modernize the

fortifications. About two years later, on April 19th, 1585, the Archduke sent a missive from Graz who commanded the Provincial States «[...] *l'imediato esborso di F 680:12 da farsi al Vintana ad oggetto di riparar, et ristaurar la cadente fabrica del Castello di Tolmino*[...]». The reports and missions of Giambattista Vintana and the Provincial State representatives were very often written in Italian, in contradiction with the instructions of the central administration.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, from 1585 to 1587, Giambattista was engaged in structural improvements of the castle and the port of Trieste. In fact, from 1590 to 1595 he was appointed supervisor of the fortifications of Gorizia and Trieste. In Trieste, he continued working on the Captain's house in 1597 and later in the beginning of the 17th century. He restored the chapel of San Giorgio, where shortly afterwards he dedicated the re-consecrated altar to the Patron Saint. Towards the end of the sixteenth century he was involved in the construction of the Isonzo river bridge.

4. Gian Giacomo and the definitive social elevation

After the death of Giuseppe and his brother Giambattista, Gian Giacomo, representing the third generation of Casa Vintana's architects, appeared on the scene of Gorizia's architecture. Gian Giacomo, Giambattista's son and Giuseppe's grandson, was also a tireless architect in the service of the empire. He got married in Gorizia in 1605 to the noble Caterina de Suardi, from whom he had many daughters, some of whom will be remembered for hereditary questions and diatribes with the Gorizian clergy. Already before getting married with an exponent of an exponent of the Gorizian nobility, the Vintana family gave their consent. The profession of an architect, therefore, allowed the family to increase their

social *status* resulting from the exercise of this art, not necessary vile.

It is well known that architects or *ingenieri* from the late fifteenth century, could have had two different cultural backgrounds. Some like the Olgiati (Leydi, 1989), from Milan, or Lantieri a Paratico came from a wealthy noble family and had embarked on a military career and then put to the service of the *dux* their knowledge in the ballistic field, thus becoming experts in the art of fortification. Others like Michele Sanmicheli or Domenico de Lallo (*seu* Allio) had a more practical training, from stonemasons or apprentices from some other architect. Two formations were forged by events and by the demands and the needs which led to the creation of functional fortifications, in some cases implemented by those attentions of *decor* which the Prince appreciated. Apart from that, Gian Giacomo's professional activity saw him in 1620 involved in the project of the port and *mandracchio* of Trieste shortly after the end of the Gradisca war. From archival research it was discovered that the family did not become extinct, thanks to subsistence, at least at the end of the seventeenth century the branch of Giampietro Vintana, son of Giuseppe.

Giampietro, in fact, returned from his studies in the Netherlands and was hired by the archduke as imperial architect, got married and had two sons, Giuseppe and Francesco. Giuseppe got married to Maria, from whom Giovanni was born in 1628. His brother Francesco, however married Caterina and had four children: Lucrezia born in 1629, Giovanni Andrea born in 1641, Elisabetta born in 1642 and Francesca born in 1646.

5. Conclusions

The copious unpublished documentation found at the *Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv* in Graz and Friuli archives, allowed to thoroughly understand the training and other action taken in

the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by members of the Vintana family. Through the study of literature, combined with handwritten reports sent by Vintana, it was also understood and contextualized the concept of "Border" put in place by the Hapsburgs to protect their territories from the Ottoman incursions; from this, therefore it was pointed out that the Austrian approach was based on a strip of land, the *Militärgrenze*, regions with statutes and "dedicated" grants and armies and administrations spread over multiple levels of intervention. The various reconnaissances carried out by Vintana emphasize, precisely, a constant presence of the hierarchy and Austrian bureaucratization necessary for the performance of each single action or request. However, it is understood that this approach is different from the policy of the Serenissima political sieges that given the extent of its territories was not able to define precise border areas in which to convey large amounts of money and a large number of soldiers. In fact, Venice organized through punctiform interventions scattered throughout the territory to form a network of forts defined by Ennio Concina as «the actual realization of a territorial defense machine» (Concina, 1983). The knowledge acquired through its contacts with the school of architecture in Graz and the large group of Lombard architects who worked there allowed Vintana, therefore, to transpose their knowledge in the construction field and also in the construction of "modern" fortifications, remembering the case of the fortresses of Croatian and Hungarian *Grenze*. The reports sent to the War Commission and directly to the Archduke fully outlined their *modus operandi* and economic needs required for their activities: as a result, the elevation materials, horses and above all gifts of money sent to soldiers on the borders, in order to pass and be escorted. By ordering the documents found in archives and placing the work of the

imperial family of architects within the art of war and architecture between the XVI and XVII centuries in the Friuli territories and its borders it was possible to give new light to these four generations of professionals working at the dawn of military reorganization and the bureaucracy of the Austrian Empire fully understanding what was the approach to construction, reconnaissance and the underlying project of the art of military and siege architecture.

Notes

- [1] ASPG, *Atti degli Stati Provinciali*, prima sezione, 1561.
- [2] ASPG, *Atti degli Stati Provinciali*, prima sezione, 1566.
- [3] STLA, *Laa. A. Antiquum, XIV, Militaria*, 1576.
- [4] STLA, *A. Graz Stadt*, K. 60, H. 439.
- [5] STLA, *Innerösterreichische Hofkammer* (IO HK), 1581-I-24.
- [6] ASPG, *Atti degli Stati Provinciali*, prima sezione, 1581.
- [7] Previous Reconnaissance carried out from 1577 onwards, but had not had such a comprehensive and exhaustive character of the various border forts as this and that of 1583 for the areas of Styria.
- [8] STLA, *Laa. A. Antiquum, XIV, Militaria*, 1582-VIII-7, 201514/7711.
- [9] It is believed that, to this date, the school of architecture in the city of Graz was no longer at the forefront in regard to the new provisions of fortifications required by the Empire. In fact, at this time the Dutch school of architecture began to dominate in Europe. Two figures to be remembered who gave impetus to the studies fortifications in the Netherlands, Simon Stevin (1594-1617) and Maurizius di Nassau, Prince of Orange (* around 1567, † around 1625).

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