

"NARRATIVE OF THE KING OF SWEDEN'S
MOVEMENTS 1709-1714 (?)" A ROBERT SAMBER
TRANSLATION IDENTIFIED

On the 14th day of July 1709¹ His Majesty the King of Sweden arrived near Bender, on the other side of the River de Neister, where he was saluted by above 100 Cannon from the City, and the great Turkish field music, and was likewise welcomed by all the Turkish Quality of the Port[e] that were then at Bender. We found there abundance of fine Tents, especially for his Majesty, as also for his Generals, his Chancery, it's Court, and for everyone belonging to him pitched in form of a Camp though we continued there but a fortnight.

When the Ceremonies were over, and our civil affairs regulated as well as the time would possibly admitt, his Majesty thought it proper to regard the Military and to bring the remaining Troops into order, for there were a great many Officers from several Regiments, as also some few Troopers and Soldiers, out of which his Majesty formed a Regiment, and ordered that they should receive their Pay as formerly. But there being too many Officers to be provided for in that Regiment viz. Generals, Colonels, and Lieutenant Colonels, who though wounded followed his Majesty hither, and afterwards recovered, his Majesty thought fit to provide for them another way. There were but very few of his Majesty's Life Guards missing after the Battell of Pultowa, and scarce one of the

¹ The *E.B.* has "*med Jul.st.v.1709*": Samber may have put in the 14th from other works of reference available to him, or may have just made a guess at the date; in reality Charles XII left Otjakov on July 14 Sw.S. and arrived at Bender on July 22 Sw.S. Note that from March 1 1700 till February 30 1712 the Swedish calendar, the modified Julian calendar, was only ten days behind the Gregorian calendar in general use on the Continent, while the English style was eleven days behind; so that one in this period must distinguish between N.S., O.S. and Sw.S. Charles XII while at Bender decided by proclamation of January 23, 1711, to return to the Julian calendar by giving February 1712 30 days, so that from March 1 1712 Sw. S. equalled O.S. once more. The *E.B.* prefers the double form, e.g. Feb. 6/16, while Samber prefers to write Feb. 6 O.S.

Officers so that his Majesty kept them in the same order as formerly, he himself being their Captain, their Lieutenant took rank as Colonel ². And now the Oeconomy of the Army was restored and every thing brought into good order.

The Royal Kitchin and Cellars were provided for and filled with all necessaries. The King kept his Public table as usual, all his Generals and Colonels dined with him. His Majesty's Plate and Silver service which he most valued ³ were allmost all saved [and] were brought hither, and made use of at that table. There was another table appointed for the Cavalier table.

After we had been entertained there above a fortnight, as before-mentioned, his Majesty found it necessary to remove to his Camp, the excessive heat rendering the situation very troublesome. Accordingly his Majesty desired of the Turks the liberty of choosing another piece of ground to pitch our tents in, which they very readily granted: and on the 28th of July ⁴ we removed to that side of the River which is towards Germany, and pitched our tents on the other side of the City, which was very commodious both for the Turks and Swedes, because the Turks who sold their goods to the Swedes needed not to cross the River, over which there was no other passage than two ferries. Our Camp was now near both the City and the River, and afforded a very pleasant prospect of Mulberry and other trees, which grew round about it. At first we made use of our tents, afterwards Some dug into the earth and formed better Appartments and Cells which were very convenient in defending them from the excessive heats of the Sun.

The City of Bender stands upon an Eminence and has been known by that name these hundred years, the whole Country about it derives it's name from it, though some Geographers have given it the name of Tekin. At our arrival there we found it very nasty the streets very narrow and irregular, but after our staying there awhile they were covered with square boards fastned together by

² Samber has here slightly changed the *E.B.*, probably due to his lack of familiarity with the organisation of the Swedish Life Guards; see *E.B.*, p. 7, "*desen Lieutenants hatten den Rang oder Stelle eines Generals oder Obristen.*"

³ Samber has here added to the *E.B.*, which has nothing about Charles XII "valuing the silver service."

⁴ The *E.B.* has "*zu Ende des Monats Julii*".

wooden pins. Abundance of fine houses and buildings were erected and the fortifications mended all round the City. It is a large Place, and might require a garrison of 3000 men for its defence, but at present it contains no more than 6 or 8000, Trades People included. The Suburbs on the South side are very large, and they are daily increasing them. The West-side, where his Majesty's Lifeguard lodged after the assault at Warniza, was not so large. In the Suburbs, on the Northside, which are very large, live only the Lipkani Tartars and the Multuans, the former of whom profess the Turkish Religion, but the latter preten[d]s to be Christians. Here the General of the Asiatics⁵ held his Head-quarters with his Hordes and some Polanders before the assault of Warniza.⁶ The Greeks and Armenians have their common Churches in the Suburbs to the South, and the Jews their Synagogue; but the Turks have their Mosques or Churches both in City and Suburbs, of which they built above ten new since we were there, one of which is extraordinary beautiful and large, and stands in the middle of the City, to which they are obliged to go every day to their devotions. After we had been some time settled in our new Camp we got leave of the Bashaw of Bender⁷ to lodge two Swedish Soldiers at every side of the City to prevent the Swedes going into it without a ticket from their respective Generals, which was never granted unless to buy something that was absolutely necessary. This method for a great while prevented any difference arising between our Troops and the Janizaries, but when our People became acquainted with the Turks, and they began to understand each other these Guards was taken off, and Peace preserved without them. In the mean time, because no body knew how long they might stay, almost every one built him a house, and settled himself as if he were to continue there for life.⁸ They who had

⁵ The *E.B.* is clearer here in speaking of "*der Cossackische Feld-Herr*".

⁶ Samber has left out a sentence here which tells that after the assault on Warniza General Baron von Sparre and General Baron von Züllich and other officers took their quarters here. This information is repeated later on, cp. *infra*, pp. 137-138, and Samber may have thought it superfluous at this stage.

⁷ Yusuf Pasha, Seraskier of Bender until November 1710.

⁸ Samber has left out a paragraph, see *E.B.*, pp. 12-13, relating an anecdote about a man who first built himself a house where he forgot to make windows and had to cut himself a window in the door, and who later built himself a house with the largest windows in the camp.