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The Five Themes of Varna**

Although my current place of inhabitance is Sofia, I was born in the city of Varna, often called “the sea capital of Bulgaria”. I chose to write about it not just because I’ve lived there for 13 years and I know it like the back of my hand, but also because this city has preserved all of my childhood memories and blissful moments and will always be the place I will go back to.

Location  
 Varna is a city on the northern Black Sea coast, approximately 450 kilometers East from Sofia and 115 kilometers North from Bourgas. Its absolute location is 43**°**12’ North and 27**°**54’ East. Inserted in its territory and shaping the sea coastline, are the Varna Lake and the Varna Bay. At around 18 kilometers West you can find the geological phenomenon “Pobiti Kamani”, which is a park of stone sculptures in different shapes. Inside the city itself are situated the “Rimski Termi”, ancient Roman diggings dating from the 15th century and still not completely excavated.

Place  
 The population of Varna is around 350 000 people, but grows drastically in the summer, when tourists flood from all over Europe. The social pattern is really diverse, including people from Turkey, Greece, Romania, France, and more. According to a statistic, 36% of Varna’s population speaks Turkish and 27% speak natively Bulgarian. The rest of the people speak Greek and other languages. (Zahariev, 2011) Still, Varna keeps its customs alive and tries to preserve them in various ways. Well-known traditions are the musical festival “Varna summer”, the multiple concerts and events hosted by the Varna Opera, and feeding the swans that approach the seashore in the spring. The most emblematic spot in the town is the Sea Garden, which is the place that unites all people in its infinite alleys and lawns perfect for all kinds of activities. Dobrinka Dobreva, who is 68 and is a current inhabitant of the city, says, “We, Varna people, are really fond of our Sea Garden, because it’s a symbol of purity and solidarity.” (Dobreva, 2015) In Varna it’s a common belief that the future holds prosperity and the sacred symbol is the sea, which is praised by the people, as it is always there for them. As for the physical characteristics, the landform of the city is hilly, with many bays and capes. The largest river is Kamchia, which is mainly used for fishing. The climate is favorable, slightly windy and moist due to the sea. There is dense vegetation, with oak, beech and laurel being the most wide-spread trees. Swamps are often found as well, mainly in the suburban areas. Wildlife representatives are mainly birds, but also hinds, boars, and deer. The soils are peaty, which makes the fields around Varna really fertile.

Human – Environment Interaction  
 The fact that Varna is on a sea coast, makes it dependent on the sea in many ways. Dependency comes in an economical way, through the need of creating beach resorts and maintaining beaches to satisfy tourists, but also on an environmental way, because if there is some trouble or disaster in the sea, like a tsunami, Varna will be highly affected. The last tsunami in Varna has happened in 543 AD, but currently there are often threats of tidal waves causing landslides and reducing the seashore, that’s why in 2013 after a serious earthquake there was a tsunami alert that shocked the whole town. (Shterev, 2013) Another way the city depends on the sea is through alimentation. The fish that is caught by fisherman is an important source of food and an export product that contributes to the economical development of Varna. On the contrary, Varna modifies the sea by polluting it in different ways, like through marine transport and canalization. One of the biggest harbors in Bulgaria is the one in Varna, therefore, all the ships arriving and departing leave a trail of fuel in the sea. Then, all the waste coming from the households outflows in the sea after passing through a wastewater treatment plant. Finally, people from Varna have adapted to the more moist weather in the town by wearing appropriate clothes and growing only crops that can survive in those conditions.   
  
Movement  
 Goods travel in and out of Varna most often by sea and through ships, but also by trains, buses, and airplanes. Varna Airport functions since 1920 and was currently renovated according to European standards. The most famous exported products are fish products, crops, and wood. All the necessary products that Varna factories don’t produce are imported from other countries or cities in the same way. In the city, people move mainly by public transport, but also by taxis and bicycles. Because of the many pedestrian areas, walking from place to place is also a common way of transportation. Information, news, and ideas about what improvements are being done in the city, what accidents have happened, and what are the upcoming events travel from person to person, in information sites like “moreto.net”, in newspapers like “Narodno delo” and “Cherno more”, and on the two TV channels “Cherno more” and “TV Varna”.

Region  
 Varna is separated into approximately 25 quarters, which unite people with a different social and economical status. The oldest quarter is Asparouhovo, and is often referred to as “the labor quarter”, because it used to be the center of Varna’s industrial work. The city may also be divided into center, suburban parts, and sea zone. As functional regions can be assigned “the harbor area”, “the summer resort area”, “the shopping centers’ area”, and “the car dealership area”. Nevertheless, the people who live in Varna mainly orient themselves using vernacular regions. One of the most often used ones is “the gypsy neighborhood”, which is also known as “the bad part of town”, and is characterized by mangy houses and a lot of crime, like burglary and theft.

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