

**THE STATE OF OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE IN MACEDONIA
AND LATEST RESEARCH***

*Selçuk SEÇKİN***

Abstract:

In this paper, we will discuss our project, entitled as “Ottoman Monuments in Macedonia”, supported by Scientific Research Projects of MSGSU. This field work Project we undertook in the months of July and September 2014. Many structures were identified as a result of field work. We have gathered many data in this field work that will be presented with an assessment over all. In this context, we will study Ottoman Monuments previously listed as an inventory work by the Macedonian State Ministry of Culture in 1991. In this Project we verified the list of Ottoman structures in Macedonia taken from the Macedonian State Ministry of Culture. Also we found recently identified Ottoman structures which are not in this list. Also the structures in this list which are in existent or repairs performed will be discussed. Emergency repairs, maintenances and their latest state of the structures will be examined. Ottoman monuments that still preserve the original characteristics of these structures will be highlighted. Ottoman structures that we have identified will be informed with their overall architectural features.

Key words: Balkans, Macedonia, Ottoman, Architecture, Restoration.

INTRODUCTION

Ottomans entered Rumeli territory in 1352 after Tzympe (*Çimbe*) and environs were given to Orhan Gazi, who had allied with the Byzantines. Later on, significant conquests were made by Orhan Gazi's sons Süleyman Paşa, Sehzade Murad, as well as commanders such as Evrenos and Hadji Ilbey. Edirne, conquered in 1361, became the centre of the state four years later. The Ottomans besieged Christian forces, which had united after the conquest of Plovdiv on December 5th 1366, at the Battle of Maritsa (*Çirmen Savaşı*), and the Ottomans spread in western Thrace and Macedonia. East of the Vardar River entered Ottoman rule owing to the military achievements of Evrenos Bey and Hacı Halil Paşa. Stip (*Iştîp*) was conquered in 1380, followed by Bitola (*Manastır*) and Prilep (*Pirlepe*) in 1382, and Ohrid (*Ohri*) in 1385. In this period, Balkan forces formed an alliance against the

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** Assist. Prof. Dr., Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Faculty of Science and Letters Department Of Art History Department Of Turkish And Islamic Art- İstanbul/Turkey selcukseckin@gmail.com

Ottomans, and the two military forces met at the Kosovo field. The Ottomans were victorious, though Sultan Murad I was assassinated by a Serb. His successor, Bayezid I (Thunderbolt) continued the conquests in Rumeli, and assigned Evrenos Bey and Paşa Yiğit Bey with further territorial gain. The latter conquered Skopje (İnbaşı, 2002, p. 154-164) (*Üskiip*) on January 6th 1392 –an event described by the Ottoman historian Hadîdî as follows (Hadidi, 1991, 74-75):

“Yıldırım Han acceded to the throne
The sultan took the place of his ancestor
Silver mines of Karatovo
Cellars full of jewels
He let PaşaYigitBey onto Skopje
FiruzBey took Vidin’s environs”

After this date, Ishak Bey (1414-1439), and then his son Isa Bey (1439-1463) (until his post as Bosnia Sancakbey) were the *uçbey*s of Skopje. In terms of administrative structure, the region remained within the *evliye-iselâse* (Thessaloniki [*Selanik*]-Monastir-Kosovo). Macedonia, known today as a state name, was in fact used to denote a geographical region, which spread from the Aegean Sea and Aliakmon (Bistrica) River in the south, to the Sharr Mountain, SkopskaCrna Gora (*Karadağ*), Kozjak and Osogovo mountains in the north, to the Mesta (Nestos) River in the east, and Korab, Jablanica, Mokra and Pindos mountains in the west. Within these borders, other than the provincial centres of Thessaloniki, Monastir and Skopje, there are the *kaza* and sanjak centres such as Siroz (Serres), Drama, Kavala, Petric, Menlik (Melnik), GoceDelcev (Nevrekop), Hazlog, Blagoevgrad (Cum'a-i Bala), Strumica (Ustrumca), Doyran, Kukus, Gevgeli, Vodina (Edessa), Veroia (Karaferya), Katerine, Serbia (Selfice), Kozani, Kastoria (*Kesriye*), Florina, Ohrid, Prilep, Debre (Debar), Veles (*Köprülü*), Stip, Kochana, Kratovo, Kumanovo, Kalkandelen (Tetovo), and Gostivar (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2003, p. 439). The region, which is shared by Greece, Macedonia and Bulgaria today, faced turbulent times and witnessed gang wars especially in the early 20th century. Balkan states formed an alliance in 1912 and waged a war against the Ottomans that ended with the signing of the Bucharest Treaty in May 1913, which ultimately ended Ottoman rule in the region that was then divided between Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The borders of Macedonian territory changed from time to time during the II. Balkan War and the two world wars. In 1946 the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia joined the union as an equal federal unit after its first constitution came into force. Macedonia proclaimed its independence in September 17th 1991 and as such continues its political existence.

As a result of five-centuries-long Ottoman rule, numerous settlements in this region acquired an Ottoman character with their *vaqf* buildings and other architectural edifices. Archival research revealed that 1413 buildings were constructed in Macedonia during the Ottoman period. The Republic of Macedonia's Cultural Heritage Conservation Council listed 225 buildings (107 as historic edifices, 118 as cultural heritage). 118 buildings remain unlisted (İbrahimgil, p. 10-11)¹.

A significant number of the Ottoman period buildings in Macedonia has been lost or survived as ruins. One of the primary reasons for this is the high maintenance costs owing to the decay of buildings caused by issues such as lack of proper drainage of rain water. On the other hand, many buildings were abandoned due to mass migrations of Muslim populations. One other important reason is the development facilities of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of which many buildings in town centres and on new road routes were demolished. In addition to these, there are many disasters which troubled on this region. Only those in Skopje reveal the level of damage: the 1555 earthquake, the 1689 town fire instigated by the Austrian army, Vardar River floods in the 18th and 19th centuries, the 1908 market fire, and finally the 1963 earthquake caused significant damage to historic buildings (Bogoyavic, 2008, p. 32). Another reason for the major damage to village mosques in rural areas is intentional demolishing to build new mosques. Other times, repairs that border on total reconstructions cause these buildings to lose their historic identity. Finally, historic buildings were especially targeted during the civil war in 2001, and many mosques in Bitola, Prilep, Stip and Kavadarci fell victim to arson attacks –there were similar losses during the Balkan wars in the area close to the Bulgarian border, an area that continuously changed hands. Even after more than 20 years, these building in town centres remain in ruins.

Other than the considerably damaged Ottoman buildings in Macedonia, there are those, mostly in Skopje, that were repaired and therefore survive. Primarily in the Skopje market, buildings such as the Bedesten, Sulu Han, Kapan Han, Davut Paşa Han, Kurşunlu Han, Post Office, and Governor's Office are still in use today, as well as bridges and residential buildings. Many restoration facilities continue today, initiated by institutions of the Turkish Republic, including TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, General Directorate of Foundations etc., run in coordination with the universities and conservation councils of the Republic of Macedonia. The primary objective is to restore mosques in Skopje that are in need of urgent interventions – lately there are works in other cities and rural areas.

¹ Mehmet İbrahimgil "Balkan Ülkelerinde Türk Kültür Mirasının günümüzdeki mevcut durumu", file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Balkan%20%C3%9Ckeleri%20Bildirisi.pdf (26.06.2016)

Ottoman buildings are mostly situated in the major town of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. One of the earliest settlements is in the fortress, where excavations have revealed prehistoric inhabitancy. The fortress, consisting of an inner fort, is dated to the 6th century. Evliya Celebi, who provided significant information about the fortress, said that it had 70 pentagonal-planned towers and three gates. Both Evliya Celebi and an inscription panel attest to a repair during the reign of Murad II in H. 850/M. 1446. Tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*) demonstrate that the fortress was repaired on numerous occasions in the 15th and 16th centuries (Ozer, 2006, p. 219-224). The building was considerably damaged during the 1963 earthquake and was subsequently reconstructed almost entirely. Large blocks of stone in the foundation level are understood to be from the earlier building period while the rough cut and rubble stone parts belong to the Ottoman period, during which time the square-planned BayramPasa Tower was added to the centre of the southern wall.

The largest Ottoman cemetery in the town is known to have been the Karşıyaka Cemetery belonging to the Muslim population –it was destroyed due to new development work. In other historic cemeteries (Gazi Baba, Haydar Baba, Hindi Baba, and Tütünsüz Baba etc.) the number of Ottoman tombstones is minimal while the cemeteries of Gazi Ishak Bey and Isa Bey mosques still contain a few Ottoman tombstones.

One of the memorable but no longer extant buildings of Ottoman Skopje was the Burmalı Mosque (Eyice, 1963, p. 22; Ayverdi, 1957, p. 1-57). which was built by Karli İli Mehmet Bey. It was demolished in 1925 to build a military guest house. According to its inscription panel, which was close to the Taş (Stone) Bridge on the Vardar River, the mosque was constructed in 1495. Distinct with its roof and minaret, the remains of this mosque are in the Islahhane Park today. Other than this building, there are other mosques that are no longer extant –Fatıhi Paşa Yiğit Bey, İbni Payko, Faik Paşa, Muradiye, Yelen Kapan to name a few. One of the earliest surviving monuments is the Sultan Murad Mosque built in 1436, which was part of a *külliye*. The mosque forms an ensemble with a madrasa, school, two *türbes* and a clock tower. The building was constructed on a high hill and was enclosed within a wall. It was repeatedly repaired following fires, and finally after the 1963 earthquake, however, the deep cracks in its walls and damaged timberwork need urgent repair (Photo 1; İbrahimi, 1989, p. 39).



Photo 1: The relics of Burmalı Mosque in Islahane Park

Another early Ottoman building in Skopje is the Ishak Bey (also known as Alaca due to the tiles in its *türbe*) Mosque, which is also part of a *külliye*. The reverse T-planned mosque was enlarged in the 16th century but sustained major damage in the 1963 earthquake. The latest restorations could not erase the traces of this damage, and the current state of its walls and roof necessitates further interventions. Furthermore, the repairs are inharmonious with the original form of the building owing to the technical knowledge of the time they were carried out.

One of the earliest known mosques in Skopje is the Gazi Isa Bey Mosque. Built in 1470, according to its *vaqf* records, the mosque was the main building of a *külliye*. The reverse T-planned mosque was damaged in the 1963 earthquake, leaving its *son cemaatyeri* (place of last assembly / porch) destroyed with cracked walls and domes, and also causing the cone of the minaret to collapse. The panoramic paintings and decorative elements lost their original features during subsequent repairs. Deep cracks are still visible today.

Another large mosque is the one built by the *vezirs* of Bayezid II in 1504, which was affected by the 1689 fire. Its roof and *son cemaat yeri* were renewed subsequently. Although the building has buttresses to prevent the walls from expanding, it also has deep cracks that require urgent repair.

There are many other buildings in similar states: either in precarious physical condition or devoid of their original features due to restorations. One example is the Mustafa Paşa Mosque (1492), which has been restored by the joint commissions of Turkey and Macedonia. The smaller-sized Dükkançik Mosque, built in 1550, was damaged in the 1963 earthquake, leaving only one façade standing. The building has since been restored and

is open to worship. The *türbe* of the Ottoman author and poet Aşık Paşa, who was the *kadı* of Skopje and died in 1571, is in the Gazi Baba Cemetery and was destroyed during the 1963 earthquake. Lately, this *türbe* too has been restored. Another early Ottoman building is the Arasta Mosque, which was a ruin until recently, but has been by the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality. Restorations of smaller mosques damaged in the earthquake continue.

Besides institutional initiatives, there are other restoration facilities carried out through the support of private individuals. Among those are the Gazi Ishak Paşa Türbe and the PaşaYiğit Bey Türbe, both restored thanks to Şarık Tara, whose family originally comes from Skopje².

Republic of Macedonia's second-most important town after Skopje is Bitola. The Ahmet Şerif Mosque (1849/50) located in this town is used for residential purposes today. Another building in the Old Turkish Market is the Hacı Mahmut Bey Mosque, which according to Evliya Çelebi was built in 1565. It was restored in 1876 but was damaged during World War I. Together with its ruined madrasa, the mosque requires restoration. Built in 1530 and still retaining its original decorations, the Hoca Ahmet Efendi (Koca Kadı) Mosque is used as a warehouse. The 16th century İsa Fakih Mosque is used as a garage. The early 16th century Paftalı Mosque is another dilapidated building and was converted into a *türbe* when a new mosque was built adjacent to it when it could no longer accommodate its worshippers. Hamza Bey Mosque, which researchers date to the 16th century, is one of the restored buildings and is open to worship. Hasan Baba Mosque and its *türbe* are dated to the 17th century, however we believe the construction date to be earlier. It has been restored. Hatuniye Mosque (1905) is also intact (Tomovski, 1956-7, p. 29-60).

Haydar Kadı Mosque is one of three large-scale mosques in the town centre and its inscription panel states that it was built in 1561-2 (Photo 2). The double-minaret mosque has a square-plan that transitions into a drum through squinches. The building was damaged during the Ottoman retreat from Monastir in 1912 and its minaret collapsed as a result of artillery fire. It is being restored by the General Directorate of Foundations. Another large mosque is the Ishak Çelebi Mosque. According to its inscription panel, the building was restored in 1506-07. It was restored in 2016 by TİKA and is open for worshippers. Opposite the clock tower in the town centre of Monastir, there is the 16th century Kadı Mahmut Efendi (Yeni) Mosque. (Photo 3) It was under threat during the 2001 civil war. The building was not transferred to the Macedonian Muslim Authority on grounds that the lower levels of the building, exposed during excavations conducted in the vicinity

² Macedonian authorities informed us during our site visit in 2015 that İki Mosque and Kurşunlu Han were going to be restored by the T.R. General Directorate of Foundations.

and foundation of the mosque, contained remains of various periods. It remains closed to public. There are 16th century tiles on the interior walls. The Dört Ayak (Four Pier) Türbe was damaged during the atrocities of 1994. The baldachin-type building is in the run-down Ottoman Cemetery immediately opposite of the well-kept Jewish Cemetery (Bülbul 2011, p. 80-130; Seçkin, 2006, p. 112-115; Pavlov, 2001, p. 30-50; Mihajlovski, 2010, p. 351-366; Ayverdi, 1981, p. 80-110).



Photo 2: Haydar Kadı Mosque



Photo 3: Manastır New (Yeni) Mosque

Many Ottoman buildings survived in Ohrid as a result of its Muslim population. Among these, Zeynep Abidin Paşa Mosque/Tekke, Sinaneddin Yusuf Çelebi Türbe and Voska Hamam were restored by TİKA. There are ten more mosques, including Hacı Turgut (1446), Haydar Paşa (1456), Ali

Paşa, and Emin Mahmud Paşa. The restoration work at Kuloğlu Mosque compromised its original features. Other than the remains of the fortress and traditional houses in Ohrid, the only surviving Ottoman building in the inner fortress is the Sinaneddin Yusuf Çelebi Türbe –the Imaret Mosque was demolished to build the St Clement and Panteleimon Monastery. In Struga, very close to Ohrid, there are the Hayati Hasan Baba Türbe and the Mustafa Çelebi Mosque (Eyice, 1965, p. 137-145).

In Gostivar, where a considerable number of Muslims live, the Yeni (New) Mosque and Ebubekir Paşa Mosque were badly restored and their original forms no longer survive. The clock tower is the only building that retains its original features.

In Tetova (Kalkandelen), the Alaca Mosque (known as such due to the panoramic paintings and decorations in its interior) and *türbe*, and the Isa Bey Hamam adjacent to them were restored and retain their original features. The bridge, on the other hand, is hard to distinguish, as it was covered with asphalt. Other mosques in this settlement are badly restored and no longer retain their original features. The Harabati Tekke was built in a wide area, however its *türbe* was burned down during the atrocities. There are plans for an excavation followed by restoration (İbrahimi, 1985, p. 54-59; Bülbül, 2015, p. 205-228).

Of the two mosques in Strumica, the Orta (Middle) Mosque is in a better condition. The Hünkar Mosque, hamam, and *türbe* in the Banica village are dilapidated but their large scale in a rural area is worth noting (Kiel, 2012, p. 191-193).

There were three known mosques in Prilep. The Orta Mosque was demolished during new development work while the Çarşı (Market) Mosque was burned down during the Civil War –although listed, it remains a ruin and is used as a dump. The other mosque, han and hamam are in ruins. The clock tower preserves its original form (İbrahimgil, 2002, p. 1173-1181; Photo 4).



Photo 4: Prilep Market (Çarşı) Mosque

Another important settlement is Stip. There is a 16th century mosque (Hüsamettin Paşa Mosque) on the prominent hill overlooking the town. (Photo 5) There were plans to convert this mosque into a church but this move was prevented by the Muslim community. Although the building is in a dangerous state due to large cracks in its walls, political tensions concerning the use of religious buildings prevent its restoration. There is also a large bedesten, Kadın Ana Mosque, Radovis Tekkes, and a clock tower in this town.



Photo 5: Stip Hüsamettin Pasha Mosque

Debre is a town on the Albanian border. There is the Takke Mosque, Bayram Bey Mosque, both still in use, and there are two hamams, one of which is still in use while the other is in ruins. The other important building in Debre is the Hünkar Mosque, which dates back to the reign of Sultan

Mehmed I. It has a wide *hazire*, which is quite dilapidated, and a polygonal baldachin-type türbe that is one the verge of collapse.

In Köprülü (known today as Veles), there are only the Fazil Ahmet Paşa Mosque (victim of an arson attack in 1994) and the clock tower. In the center of Konche, a small settlement, other than a mosque there is a türbe on the outskirts of the town in an agricultural field. It belongs to Pranko Lazarat, the father of Evrenos Bey. Its vicinity was once a stopping point with accommodation but today only the guard house (*karakol*) and the türbe remain (Kılıç, 2012, p. 87-99; Photo 6).



Photo 6: Pranko Lazarat Tomb (Türbe)

Among the surviving Ottoman buildings close to the Macedonian-Bulgarian border, in Berovo there is the Mehmet Bey mosque, which has largely lost its original features, and a tower, while in Delchevo there is the Fatih Mosque, and in Kochani there is the Mahmud Ağa Mosque. In Krive Planka, the Bayram Paşa Mosque, which was built in 1633 according to its inscription panel, is the only remaining Ottoman building. The tower houses and bridges largely survive in the town of Kratovo, known for its gold and silver, which was once the location of the Ottoman mint. There are no remaining religious buildings and the hamam is in serious disrepair (Photo 7). The Tatar Sinan Bey Mosque (Photo 8) in Kumanovo was damaged during the civil war and survives with inharmonious additions to the original building. Kaçanikli Mehmed Paşa Mosque in the village of Tabanovce, immediately to the north of Kumanovo, is a domed building dating to the 16th century and is in ruins (Kiel, 1976, p. 153-196; Photo 9).



Photo 7: Tatar Sinan Bey Mosque



Fotoğraf 8: Turkish Bath Relic in Kratovo



Photo 9: Tabanovce Mosque Relic

In Macedonia, the greater damage has been in the villages rather than in towns or in municipal settlements. In the villages, historic mosques could not be used after the migration of Muslim populations and the subsequent settlement of Christians, and therefore most were either demolished or left abandoned. For example in the Gabrovo Village in Delchevo, the Muslim population migrated to Izmir and Istanbul, while the new settlers were Macedonian Christians (Photo 10). The mosque in the village square turned into ruins while the inscription panel (1224/1809-10) on its minaret was placed on the adjacent fountain. Again in Delcevo, in the village of Star Istevnik, there is another ruinous mosque. The decorative elements of its *mihrab* are repeated in the interior and *mihrab* of the mosque of Delchevo's Trobotiviste Village, which is one the best preserved village mosques in this region. The women's section, which has repeating decorative patterns made using a template, can be reached through an L-shaped timber staircase on the side of the *mihrab*. In Delchevo's Zvegor Village only the minaret remains of the village mosque. The Demirhisar Mosque is dilapidated owing to the relocation of the settlement. Kochana Istibanja Village and Vilovo Village mosques are in ruins. In Murtino-Bansko, only the minaret remains of the Tekke Mosque which used to be within the Muslim cemetery. In the villages of Çalıklı, Dedeli, and Gökçeli in the Valandovo region, where Turkish people used to live, the mosques no longer retain their original features. There are many abandoned villages, mosques and Muslim cemeteries in the predominantly Turkish area of Zhupa, where in Kodjajik TIKA reconstructed a house for the memory of Ali RizaBey, the father of Atatürk. Eğla Mosque, built for Bekir Bin Salih in 1205/1790, is in a better condition and has an inscription panel. In areas where Albanian Muslims used to live, the mosques have been demolished to make way for new ones or were badly restored. There are very few buildings that are well preserved. In Krushevo's

Presil and Sazdevo villages, and in the villages of Bacista and Stromista in Zajac, the mosques have been fully renewed (Photo 11; Photo 12).



Fotoğraf 10: Inscription of Gabrovo Mosque



Photo 11: Inscription of Eġla Mosque



Photo 12: Relic of Eğla Mosque

As a result, it can be said that, in a region that was under Ottoman rule for 520 years, numerous buildings were lost, especially in town centres, owing to development activities and square designs of the former Yugoslavian Federation. In later periods, immigration towards Turkey left rural areas devoid of Muslim populations, which meant that historic mosques were abandoned and gradually turned into ruins. The civil war after 1991 damaged mostly Ottoman buildings and even today they remain the cause of political tensions, preventing their restoration. Restoration facilities include those carried out in Skopje by the Macedonian/Yugoslavian authorities using UNESCO funding. More recently, TIKA has made valuable contributions in coordination with Macedonian authorities and many buildings were saved. Many institutions, municipalities and private individuals in Turkey also support the restoration works.

Notes:

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