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Islamic cult monuments in Mitrovica and its surroundings

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Abstract. The conquest of the Albanian territories by the Ottoman Empire, among other things, brought a new faith (religion), Islam. With the establishment of the Ottoman administration in the cities, the construction of Islamic cult monuments, mainly mosques, tombs and mosques, began. Even the city of Mitrovica did not lag behind in terms of the construction of mosques as the main objects of Islamic worship. The importance of the city of Trepça at that time was also as one of the most developed mining and metallurgical cities, it was chosen to build the first mosque in this region. While the city of Mitrovica was a newer settlement, the construction of mosques began somewhat later than in Trepça. While in the villages, knowing the broken terrain and the difficulties of extending the Ottoman rule in those places, the construction of mosques is much later than in the urban centers. A considerable number of mosques that were once present in Mitrovica and its surroundings are no longer present. What remains of them are only the memories or some photographs of that time that document their existence. On the basis of urban or rural settlements, the architecture of the construction of mosques and other objects of Islamic worship also differed.

Keywords: Cult, Islam, mosque, urban center, village, city.

1. The legacy of the Islamic cult

The end of the century XIV and the beginning of the century XV, for Albania¹ and the Albanians, is a period of great political, economic, social and cultural changes, which occurred as a result of the wars with the Ottomans and the conquests of the country after more than a century of resistance, which culminated in a quarter of a century of battles uninterrupted and heroic under the leadership of our National Hero Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu.²

The establishment of the Ottoman power and its administrative-military apparatus in the lands of the Albanians was preceded by a period of several decades, during which the local feudal lords owned their principalities as vassals of the Sultan. Determining the time and manner of the occupation of the Albanian lands by the Ottoman Turks and in particular the cities, as well as the establishment of military garrisons and civil administration in them, is important to investigate the time of the construction of the Muslim shrines.³

In the medieval artistic and architectural production of the Albanian lands, an important place is occupied by the works of art and architecture of the Islamic sphere. They are related to the rule of Albania by the Ottoman state, therefore they start to appear as early as the end of the 14th century. As everywhere, here too, with the spread of Islam among Albanians, the need arose for the construction of cult buildings. In addition to mosques, there were also architectural objects such as, for example, madrassas, hammams, imarates, etc. Among them, a special value for the history of Albanian architecture of the late medieval period, undoubtedly occupies the mosques.⁴

As works of the Islamic religion, mosques were erected in all the countries where this religion spread, from the Indonesian islands to the Iberian Peninsula. Regardless of the place where they arose, they were built in accordance with the canons of the Islamic cult. All mosques have their functional components: mihrab, minbar, mafil, minaret, etc. But, architecturally, they are not the same everywhere. They also have important differences in their artistic content. The architectural and artistic composition of mosques has been influenced by the cultural level and artistic demands of local populations. In addition to changes in space, mosques have also undergone changes in time. Consequently, the mosques built in the Ottoman Empire present important changes from the shrines built in the homeland of the mosque, in Saudi Arabia, not only in the first centuries of Islam, but also during the time of the Ottoman sultans. Even the mosques built during the years of the Ottoman Empire were not the same everywhere. One usually talks about an Ottoman architecture of

¹ When Albania is mentioned in this period, it refers to all territories inhabited by Albanians in the Western Balkans.

² Aleksander Meksi, "Arkitektura e xhamive të Shqipërisë (shekujt XV - XIX)", Tiranë, 2007, pp. 11, 12.

³ Ibid. p. 12.

⁴ Gjergj Frashëri, Sylejman Dashi, "Zhvillimi i arkitekturës islame shqiptare të xhamive", "Monumentet", Nr. 2, Tiranë, 1986, <http://www.dritaislame.al/zhvillimi-i-arkitektures-islame-shqiptare-te-xhamive/Posted> on 08/05/2012, By Drita IslameHistori.

mosques, but even this definition is not absolute. There are authors who define Ottoman architecture as a Turkish architecture. Even this definition is not correct, because the distinctive features of the Ottoman architecture of the mosque were not worked out by the masters of the Turkish nationality, but by the talents of the Islamicized nationalities of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, even Ottoman mosque architecture is not uniform in itself, as it developed in space and time. In its development, the cultural components of local populations left their mark. For this reason, Islamic art and architecture in Albania (and among Albanians P.H.) although essentially remained Islamic, were not identical to the Islamic art and architecture of other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Under the influence of local factors, Islamic art and architecture in Albania first acquired citizenship and later Albanian features. In relation to this issue, it is necessary to give some historical considerations on the content of Ottoman architecture, Turkish architecture and Albanian Islamic architecture.⁵

The first Turks with whom the Albanians came into contact were mercenary troops in the service of the Byzantine emperor. Thus, in 1338, a unit of about 2,000 people was set in motion from Ajdin by order of Emperor Androniku III towards Albania and returned back to Asia Minor loaded with rich loot.⁶ The earliest entry, proven in historical sources, of a Turkish expedition in the lands inhabited by Albanians is around the year 1380 - 1381,⁷ when the Despot of Ioannina, Thoma Preliubovici, asked for help to protect it from his own population and from the neighbor his, Gjin Bue Shpata, Albanians who were at war with him.⁸ The other Turkish incursion, which is witnessed in the Albanian lands, is that of the year 1382 - 1383, when the Turkish troops, under the command of Timur Tashi, after taking the Monastery, entered the area of Korça, as well as in South Albania, when, in 1382, they managed to add Drinopoja to their hands. Later (year 1385), another expedition, invited by Karl Topia, under the orders of Timur Tashi, entered the field of Savra (Lushnje), where it encountered a coalition of Albanian feudal lords headed by Balsha II, who was killed in this battle.⁹

The incorporation of the Balkan lands into the Ottoman Empire had profound results for both parties in art. The Balkans became the place of the fiercest match between the two opposing cultures of the time and two great cultural spheres, the Christian religion that was cultivated by the Balkan peoples for more than ten centuries, and the Islamic religion, which came from the East.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ J. W. Zinkeisen, "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane në Europë", Hamburg, 1840, p. 192; Musa Musai, "Integrimi i fesë dhe identitetit të muslimanët në Ballkan", Istanbul, 2007, p. 86.

⁷ Peter Bartl, "Myslimanët shqiptarë në lëvizjen për pavarësi kombëtare (1878 - 1912)", përktheu: Nestor Nepravishta, Tiranë, 2006, p.

⁸ "Burime tragimtare bizantine për historinë e Shqipërisë, shek X - XV", përgatitur për botim nga Koço Bozhori, Filip Liço, 246, (Kronika e Janinës), Tiranë, 1975; A. Meksi, Arkitektura, op. cit. p. 12.

⁹ A. Meksi, Arkitektura, op. cit. p. 12.

¹⁰ Gjergj Frashëri, Sylejman Dashi, Zhvillimi, op. cit.

The decisive battle of Kosovo in 1389, west of Pristina, between Mitrovica and Skopje,¹¹ opened the way for the Ottomans to settle in the territories of Kosovo. After the success in the Second Battle of Kosovo, when, in 1448, they gave strong blows to the Hungarian army led by Janos Hunyadi, the Ottomans strengthened their positions even more.¹² At first the Ottomans did not take control of the big cities, but they extended control over the exploitation of ores, which had almost entirely passed into Ottoman hands.

Before it was conquered by the Turks, in 1455, the Turkish influence was felt in it. Since in 1399 Zvečan was the seat of the Turkish headman Feriz, from 1410, Turkish officials fought in Trepça. Eleven years later, according to Jireček's statement, Turkish caddies were present in Pristina, Zvečan and Trepça. The penetration of the Turks into Trepçë is thought to have started in 1436, when a neighborhood of theirs was formed, while in 1438 a (Turkish) derbehana was also formed.¹³

Trepça finally falls under Ottoman rule after the fall of (Artana) Novobërda in June 1455.¹⁴ In this period, we find Trepça in Ottoman documents under the name Trepdschia,¹⁵ where, according to the words of Ottoman chroniclers, there were great riches in it, which were appropriated by the new conquerors.¹⁶

Trepça as a city developed during the Middle Ages and as a source of minerals was the greed of many conquerors and many nationalities to live, work and trade from here. In the century In the 15th century, in Trepça, in addition to the Albanians as the local population, there were also Raguzans, Kotorras, Sassians, Venetians, Ottomans, etc.

With the arrival of the Ottomans in these parts, they brought with them the rite of the Islamic faith, the Muslim one, which was quickly embraced by the local population. We mention the embrace of this new faith as a fact that we do not have information that at the beginning of the arrival of the Ottomans, the faith did not spread violently, as shown for the later centuries. XVII - XVIII.

It is known that at first the Ottomans did not force the subjugated peoples to convert to Islam. This was, as noted, one of the steps of their tactics at the time of penetration and great conquests, but also of stabilization in the conquered countries. All the more, they relied on the institutions and social structures found in the occupied countries and respected them. Also, it is known that Islamic authors willingly emphasize the principle of the Qur'an, according to which no one can force you to convert to religion.¹⁷ The first principle is religious tolerance.¹⁸ However, the Ottomans in many cases after the conquest of large cities, as was the case with the

¹¹ Stanford J. Shaw, "Historia e Perandoris Osmane dhe e Turqisë Moderne", Vëllimi I, Perandoria e Gazinjve, Ngritja dhe rënia e Perandorisë Osmane, 1280 - 1808, Tiranë, 2006, p. 39.

¹² J. Drançolli, Raguzanët, op. cit. p. 154.

¹³ Muhamet Tërnavë, "Qytetet e Kosovës gjatë gjysmës së dytë të shekullit XVI", Prishtinë, 2007, p. 135.

¹⁴ J. Drançolli, Raguzanët. op. cit. p. 154; Shih. Muhamet Tërnavë, Qytetet, op. cit. p. 135.

¹⁵ Josph Von Hammer, "Historija Osmanskog, carstva I", Zagreb, 1979, p. 174.

¹⁶ M. Tërnavë, Qytetet, op. cit. p. 135.

¹⁷ Kur'an, kap. II; 256.

¹⁸ Muhammed Hamidullah, "Hyrje në Islam", Shkup, 1985, p. 138.

conquest of Constantinople, Mehmet II hastily converted the eight main churches of the city into mosques.¹⁹

The spread of the Islamic faith is supported by the construction of monuments in a completely different style from the styles of earlier faiths.

The construction of Islamic shrines, which must have started in the peripheral regions of our country at the end of the century. XIV, extended to the Albanian lands almost throughout the century. XV. However, in the second half of the century XV, the number of mosques built increased with the decline of cities or fortified settlements. Most of them are related to the period of Mehmet II (1451-1481), such as the Hunqari mosque in Delvina, built in the middle of the century. XV, the mosque of Gazi Ali Bey in Vushtrri (middle of the XV century), of Fatihu in the fortress of Kanina (1463-1465), that of Hunqari (or as it is called today the White Mosque) in the fortress of Berat (in the 60s of the XV century), of Fatih in the fortress of Kruja (1478), of Fatih in the fortress of Shkodra (1479), that of Mehmet II in the fortress of Ulcinj (1479), of Fatih in the fortress of Tivar, the mosque of Fatih in the castle of Durrës (built in 1479-1481), of Fatih in Shteppepanje of Elbasan (1479-1480), of Fatih in the castle of Lezha, of Mehmet II in the castle of Podgorica (1479-1480), it in the castle of Jenikala in Dukagjin, etc.²⁰

As a general characteristic of these shrines, it can be underlined that their presence first appeared in cities and strategically protected points. From a typological point of view, they represented simple models, mainly composed of a modestly sized quadrangular hall and a vestibule in front of the entrance. The minarets, located on the right side of the entrance to the hall, were also raised to a modest height in relation to the size of the shrine itself. The Islamic cult buildings of this period, for their very limited function, were realized quickly and, as such, in most cases, did not claim for special artistic values.²¹

The second period of the development of the Ottoman Albanian architecture of the mosque coincides with the exercise in our lands of the centralized state power of the High Gate, with the strengthening of the Islamization process and in parallel with the increase in the weight of the local Islamized population in the social life of the country.²²

These conditions undoubtedly led to the increase in the intensity of the construction of mosques in our lands, both from a quantitative point of view, as well as from the side of the requirements for their artistic quality. The first appearances of the classical Ottoman models of mosques certainly appeared in the regions where Ottoman power was established earlier and were followed by others in the countries that fell under this rule later.

Among the first mosques of this period, we can mention the shrine of Fatihu in Pristina (1461), of Gazi Isa beg in Skopje (1475), the Mbret mosque (of Bayazit II) in Përmet (1494), the Mbret mosque in Elbasan (1492), the one with the same name in Berat in 1492, as well as the Mbret mosque in Shkodër (end of the 15th century)

¹⁹ Shyqri Nimani, "Arnavus, Artistët shqiptarë në Perandorinë Osmane", Prishtinë, 2003, p. 51.

²⁰ Gjergj Frashëri, Sylejman Dashi, Zhvillimi, op. cit.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

named after the reconstruction of 1854-1855 with the name of Selvia, the mosque of Tetova (1495), of I. Mirahori in Korçë (1496), that of Imaret in Ohrid (1493), etc. Of course, the most numerous constructions of Islamic shrines appeared in the c. XVI-XVII, such as, among others, the mosque of Isa beg in Manastir (1508), that of Pazar in Krujë (1533-1534), Muradia (1536-1538) and the Old or Pashallar's in Vlora (around 1540), of Plumb in Berat (1533-1554), of Allajbegi in the village of Burim te Dibra (mid-16th century), the New mosque (1558-1559) and that of Hajdar Kadija in Manastir (1561) of Gazi Mehmet pasha in Prizren (1561), of Sinan pasha in Kaçanik (1594-1595) of Haduni (before 1595), of Naziresha in Elbasan (before 1599), the mosques of Hasan Aga in Rugova, of Gjin Aleksi in Rumanj of Delvina, of Pirinas in Pristina, of Mazhik (Trepça P. H.) in Mitrovica and others built during the c. XVII, the mosque of Ballia in Elbasan (1605-1606), of Sinan Pasha in Prizren (around 1610), the Old or Sulejman Pasha mosque in Tirana (1614), of Tophane in Shkodër (1627-1628), etc.²³

In general, the mosques of this period were built of two types - the monumental type with a covered dome in the central hall, and the basilical type with a roofed hall. In both cases these buildings in our country were provided with arcaded porticoes in front of the entrance to the hall and with a single minaret on its right side. The minarets were already built thin and tall, with a polygonal section, qualities that distinguish those of the "needle" type. Another characteristic of them was the construction of building structures using the stone technique (in most cases), a technique which in the c. XV, XVI and in the first part of the century. XVII, continued to be widely applied by the local tradition in different types of constructions, since the Byzantine period, but now with new plastic effects.²⁴

The first object of the Islamic cult built in Trepçë is the mosque, which is still preserved today, although in a serious condition. It is falling apart day by day without institutional care, so it has been left at the mercy of time.

In the second half of the century XVI, Trepça had its own mining and economic importance. According to the Turkish census of 1566-74, the development of Trepça can be traced in terms of economy as well as its ethnic structure. In support of this book: Trepça consisted of two parts: Trepça Upper and Lower Trepça, or Old Trepça, as it is called in the notebook. Upper Trepça and Lower Trepça had a total of 94 houses of the Islamic religion and 353 of the Christian religion.²⁵ The number of Christian heads of households was nearly four times greater than that of Muslim heads. It is very clear that the number of Muslim believers had increased significantly in the city of Trepça.

Heads of families with Islamic religious affiliation lived in these neighborhoods: 1. The unnamed neighborhood - deciphered with 42 houses; 2. Myezin Hoxha, with 28 houses; and 3. Haxhi Husami neighborhood with 42 houses.²⁶

The heads of Christian families, meanwhile, lived in 19 other neighborhoods, but the number of houses in the neighborhood varied from 3 families to 58 families, the

²³ Pajazit Hajzeri, Church of St. Peter and the Mosque in Trepça, *Jurnal of applied Sciences – SUT, JAS – SUT*, University of Tetova, Tetova, Republic of North Macedonia, 2022, pp. 197 – 201.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ G. Gjini, op. cit, p. 137.

²⁶ Ibid.

largest neighborhood in terms of the number of houses. With this, it is clearly seen that the number of Christians gradually decreased in the neighborhoods where they lived.

Among the monuments of the Islamic cult, in the art of construction, mosques occupy the main place due to their number, value and spread.

Islamic art appeared in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula, in the c. VII, together with the presentation of the Islamic religion. The decisive influence on Islamic art has been, precisely, the new religion, which forbade the figurative presentation of personalities.²⁷

This development of the art in question was made possible, among others, by the ruins, the existing objects of the ancient period.²⁸ Early monuments of Islamic architecture in most cases have not been preserved. On the basis of the choices and decorations, it is argued that they were erected by the masters of Egypt, Syria, and by the Byzantine masters.²⁹

The greater participation of Turkish elements in Islamic civilization can be seen in the new types of mosques that appear in the west of the century. XI. Characteristic of this construction art is the square base and dome originating from Byzantine architecture, apart from that of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.³⁰ After emerging as a new Islamic power and with their penetration into the Balkans, the Ottomans, in addition to other buildings, also built many mosques wherever they set foot.³¹

Islamic art has been manifested in a long period and in a wide space that it has also influenced the artistic expressions of other civilizations with highly developed cultures, sometimes even changing them.³² Islamic or oriental art, first of all architecture, reached our lands after 1371, with the penetration of the Turks. Among the oldest monuments is the mosque of Sultan Murat II in Skopje. In addition to mosques, many mausoleums, bezistans, madrasahs, clock towers, etc. have been preserved.³³

These qualities, apart from changing the works of art, at the same time enriched the Muhammadan cultural creativity with a content, compositional, constructive, architectural, functional, typological, structural, artistic, aesthetic character, understandably with their diversity. Thus, this culture and works of art, and architecture in particular, that developed in the Arab countries, made it different from those that are presented, both in the Arab countries themselves, as well as in India and other Asian countries, Europe, the Peninsula Balkan, namely in the Albanian territories, where Kosovo was also a part.

²⁷ Hivzi Muharremi, "Historia e artit, I", Universiteti i Prishtinës, Fakulteti i Arteve, Prishtinë, 1998, p. 168.

²⁸ Fejaz Drançolli, "Historia e artit", Universiteti i Prishtinës, Fakulteti Filozofik, Departamenti i Historisë, Material në dorshkrim, Prishtinë, 2005, p. 67.

²⁹ H. Muharremi, *His. art. op. cit.* p. 170.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 171.

³¹ Muhamed Mufaku, "Xhamitë dhe mesxhidet e Beogradit, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës", Prishtinë, p. 5.

³² "Si ta njohim artin islam", përkthyer nga Nexhat Ibrahimimi, Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës, Prishtinë, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*

Islamic culture and art also penetrated the territory of Kosovo. The beginnings of constructions and works of art in question can be found after the Battle of Kosovo (1389). Here we are dealing with a sacred work. We are talking about the Çarshi Mosque (Bazar Mosque, now the Murat Mosque³⁴, 1389 - 1440), in Pristina.³⁵

Whereas, from the historical sources in Albania, the earliest mosque that is known to this day was that of Fatihu, built in the fortress of Elbasan in 1466.³⁶ For the conversion of Christian cult monuments from churches to mosques, we have even more detailed information. Such a thing had happened in the first invasion of Shkodra by the Turks in the year 1393,³⁷ an occupation that did not last long, but the church of Saint Stephen, which was located inside the Shkodra Castle, was converted into a mosque. It is thought that the minaret was added to this church in 1405, at the time when the Ottomans had the city of Shkodra in their hands for several years along with Ulqin and Lezha.³⁸

For the construction of the mosques, simultaneously with the conquest of the forts, we also have two source data. In the Fetihname of Kruja, the demolition of churches, the banning of bells and the construction of madrassas and the rule of the Islamic religion are mentioned.³⁹



Among the buildings of the Muslim cult, the shrines are the ones that are preserved in the greatest number, because they have reached our days due to the best level of construction. They are found scattered throughout the territory of the country, always in accordance with the extension in time and space of the process of Islamization of the Albanian population. These are divided into two groups: mosques and mosques.

Figure. 1. Kisha, xhami në Kalanë e Shkodrës

The difference between them lies in the fact that the mosques at the time were called only those in which the Friday religious service (gymsa) is performed and have minber. In terms of construction and architectural formulation, mosques are smaller and built

³⁴ Fejaz Drançolli, "Trashëgimia monumentale në Kosovë", Prishtinë, 2011, p. 99.

³⁵ "Barbaria serbe ndaj momenteve islame në Kosovë, Shkurt '98-Qershor '99)", Monografi, Prishtinë, 2000, p. 67.

³⁶ A. Meksi, op. cit. p. 14.

³⁷ Theodor Ippen, "Shqipëria e vjetër, Studime gjeografike, etnografike, historike", Tiranë, 2002, p. 206

³⁸ Pajazit Hajzeri, Punim Masteri, "Shkodra prej shekullit XI deri në shekullin XV", Universiteti i Prishtinës, Fakulteti Filozofik, Departamenti i Historisë, Prishtinë, 2010, p. 109.

³⁹ A. Meksi, op. cit. p. 16.

with poorer construction materials and, as such, are always covered with roofs with wooden structures and tiles.⁴⁰

The mosque consists of prayer hall, portico and minaret. In the general architectural formulation, the main place is occupied by the prayer hall, with which two others are connected. According to the volumetric planimetric construction of the prayer hall, our mosques are divided into two main groups: those where the prayer hall is covered with a ceiling, under a roof with wooden and tiled structures, and those where the prayer hall represents a unique volume of covered with a dome.

For the middle of the century XVII, a more or less complete picture of cult buildings, including mosques, is given to us by the well-known Turkish traveler Evlia Çelebiu, who in his work, unfortunately still unpublished in the Albanian language, introduces us to the development of constructions, as well as the number of mosques for specific cities of the Albanian lands, even for smaller residential centers. Of course, his travel notes should be looked at carefully, looking for confrontation with preserved material evidence or their remains.⁴¹

In comparison with the mosques built in the second stage and with those of the neighboring cultural environments (Balkan-Ottoman), the Albanian-Ottoman architecture of the mosque gained qualitative differences in several directions: in finding the most rational dimensions, for the planimetric-spatial formulation of the hall, the vestibule of the minaret, in the connection of the mosque with the urban environment where they were built, in the plastic language acquired from the use of traditional techniques, in the chromatic, ornamental and decorative preferences seen in their facades and interiors, etc.

From an urban point of view, another feature of the Ottoman Albanian architecture of the mosque was the consolidation of the coexistence of the binomial mosque-clock tower, within the space of the tower. The presence of clock towers near mosques is noticed in our lands, as early as the second stage, perhaps even earlier than anywhere else in the Ottoman Empire, and the proximity of the Albanian villages to the West must have undoubtedly influenced this issue, as it is the case of the Clock tower near the Skopje mosque (built around the years (1560-1570), or the one near the mosque of Prizren, Elbasan and others later. But, in the third stage, their presence becomes characteristic and in the period of flourishing of Albanian Islamic architecture, the silhouette of the minaret is always accompanied by that of the Clock Tower (Krujë, Shkodër, Berat, Korçë, Prishtina, Pejë, (Mitrovicë, Gjakovë P.H.), Prezë, Libohovë, Durrës, Gjirokastër, Kaninë, Delvinë, etc). As the culminating point of the evolution of the coexistence of this binomial, there is the case of the mosque of Peqin, in which the structure of the tower is connected to that of the mosque. The clock tower has already managed to become here an integral part of the building of shrine.⁴²

The construction of mosques was visible in all the Balkans, where the Ottoman Empire ruled. Such a phenomenon was also present in Slavic states, but the practice of destroying mosques by the Slavs was immediate after the departure of the

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 26.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 26.

⁴² Gjergj Frashëri, Sylejman Dashi, Zhvillimi, Zhvillimi i arkitekturës islame shqiptare të xhamive, "Monumentet", Nr. 2, Tiranë, p. 54.

centuries-old Ottoman occupation. Only in the city of Belgrade, which was under Ottoman rule for about 346 years, there were a very large number of mosques built.

The well-known travel writer Evlia Çelebiu, who visited Belgrade in 1660, says that at that time Belgrade had 100,000 inhabitants, 75% of them were believers of the Islamic religion. Most were Bosniaks, followed by Albanians and a small number were Turks. At that time, Belgrade had 7,000 family bathrooms, 270 mosques, and the same number of mosques for teaching the Koran. Friday prayers were offered in 33 mosques.⁴³

If any statistics are made on the number of religious temples destroyed, based on hatred and religious fanaticism, among yes among the different countries of the world, our Serbian neighbors would surely take the first place.

The Serbs, only at the end of the last century, deliberately destroyed hundreds of mosques in their city. Their capital had two hundred and seventy mosques, while today only one remains; (which in 2004 was also burned P. H.); Pirot had nine large mosques and several mosques, today there are none; Leskoci had eight mosques and ten mosques, today there is only one mosque; Prokupja had five mosques and eight mosques, today there are none; Kurshumlia had three mosques; Vranja had five large mosques, several mosques and six mosques, today there are none.

Here it is worth mentioning that in all the villages of these cities there was at least one mosque. However, all of them were destroyed.⁴⁴ The destruction of the mosques was a patriotic act for the Serbian state, but the exploitation of the poor masses of the population and the violent exploitation of the local population resulted in the work of carrying out the demolition of these monuments in some cases being burdened by the Albanians, since the demolition was violent and the postponement of popular measures for the demolition of these monuments was understandably violent. It is the case with the burning and destruction of the Sarajevo mosque, which had a special architecture and one of the richest libraries in the region.

2. Mosque of Trepça (Mazhiqit)

Before Trepça fell under Ottoman rule, as early as 1410 Turkish officials are mentioned. In 1436, there was a Turkish quarter in Trepçë, and two years later the coin forge was also mentioned.

The construction of cult monuments was immediate, as soon as the Turks are mentioned, the shrines of the Islamic rite are also mentioned. Thus, in Trepça, the ruins of the mosque are still preserved, for which we have different opinions regarding its construction. The mosque is known as the Mosque of Mus Mujedin or Mujedin Hoxha. The well-known researcher J. Osmani points out that the mosque was built in a completely different style from those of the same period in Kosovo. Apparently, this mosque belongs to the century. XIII. Perhaps, J. Osmani assumes, it is related to Sari Salltik - Turkmenistan, who, as a missionary, spread Islamization in 1262, in Rumelia, then to the Bogomils of Bosnia, and then moved to Albania.

⁴³ M. Mufaku, Xhamitë, op. cit. pp. 5, 23.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 19.



Figure 2. Xhamija e Trepçës

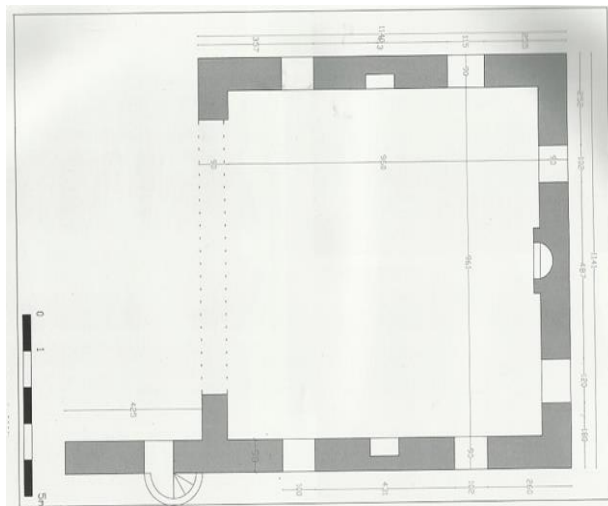


Figure 3. Planimetria e xhamisë

This shows that there were oases of Islamization in the Balkans before the arrival of the Turks.⁴⁵ There are opinions that the Trepça Mosque is the oldest in Kosovo, while from the data obtained by IKMM, the Trepça Mosque was built in 1468.⁴⁶ This data is not taken as very accurate, since no real archaeological excavations have been done yet to ascertain its age. In Mehmet Z. Ibrahimglı's book, *Neval Konuk, Kosova'da...* the Trepça mosque was built in the year 956 Hijri - 1549, while the obelisk (of the grave) found next to the mosque is given, the name of Ramadan bin Osman (1000 Hijri) and the year 1591-1592,⁴⁷ which means that we have reports that the mosque was built in the century. XVI. The obelisk (altar) has a height of 1.70 m. with a perimeter of 1.00 m. In the same book, information is also given about the prayer times that were performed in this mosque, where the

morning prayer, dinner prayer and night prayer (jacia) are specified.⁴⁸

In terms of construction material and construction technique, this mosque has a very precise and careful work. This mosque is built from stone, brick, wood and

⁴⁵ J. Osmani, *Vendbanimet, e Kosovës, Mitrovica, Zveçani, Leposaviqi (Albaniku) dhe Zubin Potoku, Prishtinë*, pp. 90, 91.

⁴⁶ IKMM, lista e monumenteve të kultit islam në Kosovë.

⁴⁷ Mehmet Z. Ibrahimglı, *Neval Konuk, Kosova'da, Osmanlı Mimarî Eserleri, I. Cilt, Atatürk Kültür, dil ve tarih yüksek kurumu Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayinlari, XIX. Dizi-Sayı 2, Ankara*, p. 253.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

connecting material. The walls have different thicknesses, starting from the wall of the prayer hall that reaches the triple 1.30 m, the walls of the vestibule from 1.00 m, to 1.60 m, and dividing the vestibule into two with a wall of 0.70 m.



Figure 5, 6. Motive plastike dhe shkallët e minares

Figure 4. Obelisk

The Trepça Mosque, according to some evidence that can be seen from the foundation, we can conclude that it was built on the foundations of an earlier monument and that it may have been catholic church. The mosque had two walls, the wall of the house it was connected with wooden studs, which reinforced the wall, while the exterior was made of very professionally carved stones. The mosque also had the minaret, which is one of the heaviest parts of the mosque, however, there are some parts of the minaret with a number of stairs that are still being completed. Its part is arranged, however the foundations are on the attacks of the earth, and the parts of the pillars that support the porch are also preserved. The base of the pillar was square with dimensions of 0.70 x



Figure 7. Ambientet e brendëshme të xhamisë së Trepçës

0.70 m, while the upper part of the pillar was octagonal with dimensions of 0.28 x 0.28 m. tapering to 0.25 x 0.25 m. The mosque was created with a very precise construction technique and in accordance with the style of dome mosques. The dome of the mosque has collapsed, and its construction material is clearly visible. The dome weighed on the four sides of the main prayer hall and material plants the construction of the dome is different from that of the walls. The construction material of the dome consists of bricks and binding material.



Figure 8. 9. Fazat e ndërtimit në xhaminë e Trepçës

From the three sides of the mosque where the walls are not destroyed, up to the dome, two pairs of windows can be clearly seen one above the other, which make the environment have enough light. On the right wing and on the left wing, between the windows, there is a closet of the same size as the windows.



Figure 10. Mendohet se është pjesë e themelit të ndonjë objekti tjetër ku u ngrit Xhamia e Trepçës

In the upper part of the window and the closet, the construction stages of the mosque are shown. The windows were arched from above, which is closed, giving it a square shape, the same intervention we have in the closet, which, according to the form, is very similar to the windows. The dimensions of the closet are 195 x 0.90 m. while the windows are rather damaged, making it impossible to accurately measure them.

3. Sarajevo Mosque in Mitrovica

The same practice of demolishing the monuments of the Islamic cult was also



followed in Mitrovica and its surroundings, where many mosques were destroyed. In Banjska of Mitrovica, today ethnically inhabited only by Serbian population, once with a mixed Albanian and Serbian population, the

Figure 11. Mitrovica, xhamia Sarajeva dhe kulla e sahat

are still present near the mosque, which has been destroyed and there is nothing left of this monument cult.

Albanian cemeteries



In Mitrovica, there were a number of mosques that were demolished in different periods of time. The Sarajevo Mosque was destroyed and was never erected again, the facts and photographs during the destruction speak for this.

Figure 12. Xhamia Sarajeva në qendër të Mitrovicës e dogjën serbët në vitin 1926

During the Second World War, the Sarajevo Mosque was bombed, then it was demolished and turned into a warehouse for a long time and was kept closed by the state Serbian occupier, while later it was turned into an object, where games of chance were played, such as: gambling and various lotteries. Afterwards, a decision was made to demolish it and as usual, the Serbs forced the Albanians to do this work with or without payment.⁴⁹

4. Gazi Isa Bey Mosque - Mitrovica

Gazi Isa Bey Mosque - Mitrovica was first built in 1465, and then it was destroyed. The Gazi Isa Bey Mosque was destroyed several times but was also erected again.

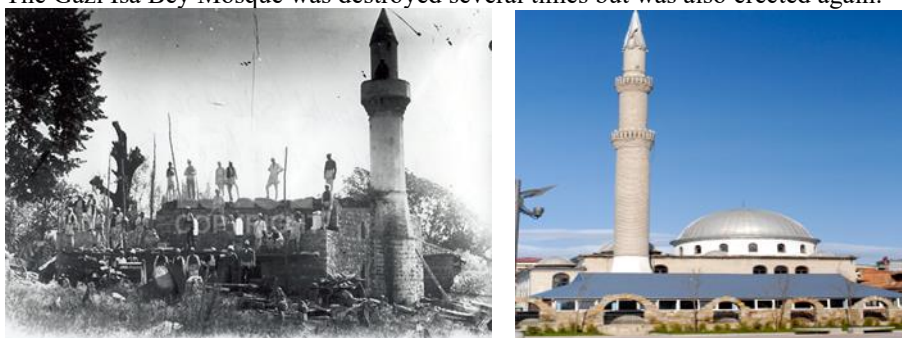


Figure 13. 14. Xhamia duke e rrenuar, Xhamia e Zallit me emer tjetër

The first building of the mosque was in the place called Sheshi i Jasharajje today, right in the old core of the city. Its reconstruction was done in 1725, from where it had also changed its place, after a period, it was still ruined and its second reconstruction took place in 1983/85, but now they had also changed their name from Gazi Isa Bey to Zalli Mosque. During the period of the last war in 1998 - 99, the minaret of this



Figure 15. Xhamia Isa Beg
the two minarets and the central hall.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Pajazit Hajzeri, *Trashëgimia e paluajtshme ndërtimore në Mitrovicë dhe rrethinë*, (Disertacion doktore), Tiranë, 2026, p.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.

5. Ibri Mosque

The Ibri Mosque was one of the oldest mosques in the city of Mitrovica, built in the distant year 1777, and served until May 2, 1999, when the Serbs burned and destroyed it next to the main bridge over the Iber River. The building was burned and then the place was leveled with an excavator, where there are also suspicions of a mass grave.



Figure 16. Xhamia e Ibrit nga Veriu

The Ibri Mosque was one of the oldest buildings in the core of the city in the northern part of Mitrovica, on the banks of the Iber. In many photographs that are preserved even today from that part, the Iber mosque and the bridge over the Iber river are always in focus. The mosque was functional and religious services were held in it until the day of the funeral.

The mosque was built of stone and wood construction material, with two windows on all four sides. From the main road leading to the Bosnian Quarter, the mosque was on the right side and one had to go down 3-4 steps to enter the courtyard of the mosque.



Figure 17. Xhamia e Ibrit duke u djegur

In its composition, the mosque consisted of a prayer hall, a portico and a minaret. The prayer hall occupied the main place, as well as being part of the group of mosques with a ceiling, a wooden roof covered with tiles.

According to the witnesses, in the case of the burning of the mosque, the dead bodies of the killed Albanians were put there, and then they were set on fire. For this reason, the Serbs lost all traces of this monument of the Islamic cult. In order to prove such a thing, research should be done by forensic experts and justice structures on war crimes.

In the city of Mitrovica we have several other mosques, but from later periods. Among them are: Hajji Veseli Mosque which is located in the city, Bajri Mosque in the neighborhood of the city, Shipol Mosque, Ilirida Mosque, Zhabari Mosque, in the suburbs Koshtova i Bobi Mosque, Vinarc Mosque, Kçic Madh Mosque, Mosque in the First Tunnel, etc.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

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