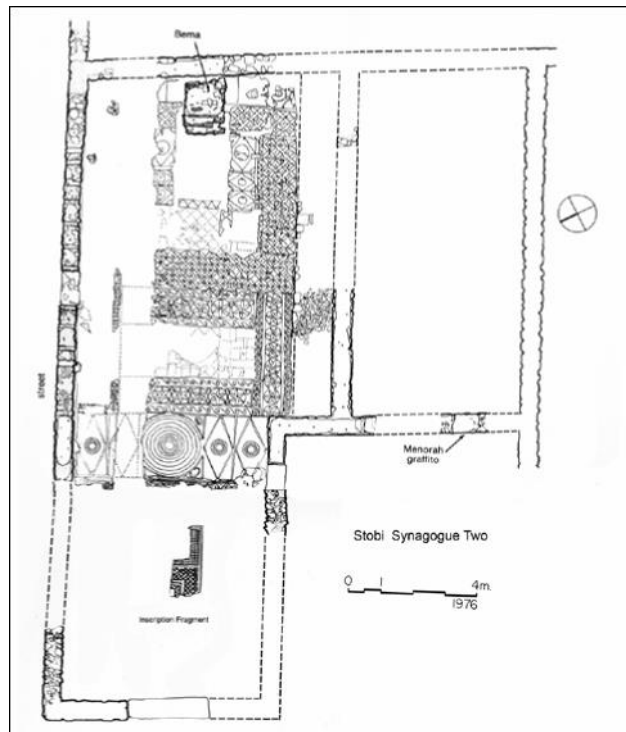


SYNAGOGUE FLOORS FROM THE BALKANS: RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS¹

Constantine's Edict of Toleration, the 1700th anniversary of which occurs this year, granted rights to Christians and initiated the series of events that saw Christianity mandated as the official religion of the Roman Empire by the end of the fourth century. The process begun by Constantine and continued by Theodosius eventually associated Christianity with Roman citizenship and adversely affected the status of Jewish communities.

Fig. 1 Plan of Stobi Synagogue 2 with mosaic floor. After Moe, with additions by the author

Сл. 1. План синагоге 2 у Стобију са подним мозаиком. По Моу, са допунама аутора.



¹ My participation in the *Niš and Byzantium Symposium XII* was supported by the Harold E. Berg Fund of the Colorado College Art Department.

Their decline can be documented by studying the remains of several synagogues identified in the Balkans.² The archaeological record provides evidence of a once-flourishing group that eventually disappears altogether, their synagogues either abandoned or replaced by Christian churches. The mosaic floors of three Balkan synagogues provide valuable insights into this process: Stobi,³ Plovdiv⁴ (ancient Philippopolis) and Saranda⁵ (ancient Anchiasmos).

The discovery of the lengthy and detailed Polycharmos inscription at Stobi in the 1930s was the first concrete indication of the presence of Jews in the region.⁶ When the inscription was discovered reused in the east colonnade of a

² Information on them (except Saranda) has been compiled by Hachlili. R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden 1998); and L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven 2000). Two synagogues in Greece have been identified on Delos and Aegina. The latter synagogue has two phases, the second of which has a mosaic floor with inscriptions. J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum I* (Vatican City 1936), nos. 722-723, 522-523. Synagogues at Corinth and Thessalonica are specifically mentioned in the New Testament. Evidence for diaspora synagogues in the Balkans, including Corinth, Thessalonica and Mursa also comes from inscriptions. L. Feldman, "Diaspora Synagogues: New Light from Inscriptions and Papyri," S. Fine, ed., *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (New York and Oxford 1996), 49. Frey also publishes many individual Jewish inscriptions from the Balkans. Frey, 487-526. A more complete list in D. Noy, A. Panayotov, H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis I: Eastern Europe*, (Tubingen 2004).

³ D. Moe, "The Cross and the Menorah," *Archaeology* 30 (1977), 148-157; J. Wiseman and Dj. Mano-Zissi, "Excavations at Stobi, 1970," *American Journal of Archaeology* 75 (1971), 406-411; *Idem*, "Excavations at Stobi, 1971," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76 (1972), 408-411; *Idem*, "Excavations at Stobi, 1972," *American Journal of Archaeology* 77 (1973), 391-393; *Idem*, "Excavations at Stobi, 1973-1974," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 1 (1974), 146-148; J. Wiseman, "Stobi, A City in Ancient Macedonia," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 3 (1976), 293-296; *Idem*, "Stobi in Yugoslavian Macedonia: Archaeological Excavations and Research, 1977-78," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 5 (1978), 392-395.

⁴ A recent summary of the Plovdiv synagogue is found in A. Panayotov, "The Jews in the Balkan Provinces of the Roman Empire: The Evidence from the Territory of Bulgaria," *Negotiating Diaspora*, J. Barclay, ed., (London 2004), 38-52; C. Danov and E. Kesjakova, "A Unique Finding—an Ancient Synagogue in the City of Plovdiv," *Annual of the Social Cultural and Educational Association of the Jews in Bulgaria* 19 (1984), 210-226; E. Kesjakova, "Антична синагога във Филиппопол," *Археология* 31, no. 1 (1989), 20-33; *Eadem*, "Nouveaux pavements de mosaïque à Philippopolis," *La Mosaïque gréco-romaine IV* (Paris 1994), 165-170. C. Danov, "Neues auf der Geschichte von Philippopolis und Altthrakien in der Spätantike," *Römische Geschichte, Altertumskunde und Epigraphik: Festschrift für A. Betz*, E. Weber and G. Dobesch, eds. (Vienna 1985), 107-123; C. Koranda, "Menorah Darstellungen auf spätantiken Mosaikpavimenten: Untersuchungen zur neugefundenen Synagogue in Plovdiv," *Kairos Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* 30-31 (1988-1989), 218-228

⁵ M.-P. Raynaud, E. Nallbani, G. Foerster, E. Netzer and K. Lako, "Une synagogue transformée en église à Saranda Albanie," *O Mosaico romano nos centros e nas periferias: originalidades, influências e identidades: Actas do X Colóquio Internacional da Associação Internacional para o Estudo do Mosaico Antigo (AIEMA), Museu Monográfico de Conimbriga, 29 de Outubro a 3 de Novembro de 2005* (Lisbon 2011), 687-701.

⁶ J. Petković, "Ископавања у Стобима 1931," *Старинар* n.s. 7 (1932), 81-85; *Idem*, "Стоби 1932," *Старинар* n.s. 8-9 (1933-34), 169-173. Frey, no. 694, 504-507. J. Petrović, "U Stobima Danas" *Glasnik Zemaljskih Muzeja u Sarajevu* (1943), 499-500. Petrović also publishes a bronze stamp with a menorah and the name Eustathios that he states was found in the House of Peristeria. Later authors say that it was found in or

basilica's atrium, its connection to the architectural remains was not altogether clear, especially as it was found together with obviously Christian architectural sculpture. The inscription provides information about the physical arrangements of the synagogue and the terms specified by its patron, Polycharmos. It specifies a triclinium and tetrastoon and formalizes an arrangement in which Polycharmos and his heirs live above the synagogue complex. This arrangement is not exceptional as synagogues usually comprised not only a meeting hall but other features as well, such as an atrium or open court, sometimes equipped with a source of water like a fountain or well, a dining hall, study rooms, storerooms and living quarters for functionaries of the synagogue.

Excavations carried out by the Stobi project in the 1970s clarified and published the phases of the synagogue,⁷ although there is still confusion in the secondary literature.⁸ A synagogue probably dating to the second century had wall frescoes that repeated the name Polycharmos, so it is certain that the column inscription goes with that building and is presumably contemporary with it.⁹ Thus, a prosperous community of Hellenized Jews lived in Stobi at least that early, possibly even earlier. The synagogue was located on high ground at some distance from the impressive Roman city center; its location became more central as the late antique city shifted farther to the south and west.¹⁰

The synagogue was rebuilt and decorated in the fourth century (Synagogue Two). Its mosaic floor made it possible to reconstruct the interior arrangements of the meeting room (Fig. 1).¹¹ The decoration parallels the tendency to embellish synagogue buildings with mosaic floors that can be observed throughout the Roman world and particularly in the Holy Land at this time.¹² It coincides with a period of peace and prosperity in the first half of the fourth century during the reigns of Constantine and his sons.

near the synagogue. Noy, et al., 72. For an extensive discussion of the inscription see M. Hengel, "Die Synagogeninschrift von Stobi," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 57 (1966), 145-183; W. Poehlman, "The Polycharmos Inscription and Synagogue I at Stobi," B. Aleksova and J. Wiseman, eds., *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi III* (Titov Veles 1981), 235-248; Noy et al., 62-71. A. Panayotov, "The First Jewish Communities in the Balkans and the Aegean," C. Popov and A. Tenchova, eds. *Gedenkschrift für Professor Velizar Velkov* (Sofia 2009), 485-487.

⁷ See above note 3.

⁸ S. Fine, "The Menorah and the Cross: Historiographical Reflections on a Recent Discovery from Laodicea on the Lycus," E. Carlebach and J. Schacter, eds., *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations in Honor of David Berger* (Leiden 2012), 31-50. (The synagogue was not converted into a church, as Fine says, but a church was built over it.)

⁹ Poehlman suggests a date of 163 for the damaged date on the inscription, that records Polycharmos' donation of his house for Synagogue One. Poehlman, 244-246, rather than the 3rd century date suggested by Hengel. See above note 5.

¹⁰ J. Wiseman, "Archaeology and History at Stobi, Macedonia," C. McClendon, ed., *Rome and the Provinces* (New Haven 1986), 38, 41.

¹¹ R. Kolarik and M. Petrovski, "Technical Observations on Mosaics at Stobi," J. Wiseman and Dj. Mano-Zissi, eds., *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi II* (Belgrade 1975), 66-75.

¹² At least partially as a reaction to the construction and embellishment of Christian churches after the Peace of the Church. S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (Princeton 2001), 289.

The mosaic floor in the main part of the meeting hall was colorful, but rather crudely executed with irregular tesserae laid out in simple patterns (Fig. 2). The walls were decorated with fresco and stucco. The overall effect of the interior was lavish and colorful; it was oriented towards a platform on the east side that must have held the Torah shrine. A graffito of a menorah was incised into the wall plaster of a subsidiary room leading to a residential complex on the south.

At some point after the installation of the first floor, much finer mosaic was laid along its west edge (Fig. 1). This represents either an expansion or remodeling of the building with floors by a new and superior group of mosaicists. Fragments of additional fine mosaics were found at higher levels farther to the west of the meeting hall indicating that a structure, such as an atrium, was built there. A partly preserved inscription was incorporated into the fine mosaic that would have been just outside the main entrance to Synagogue Two (Fig. 3). It was probably a donor inscription, as this is the most frequent type of mosaic inscription on synagogue floors.¹³

These mosaics have been known for a long time, but the recent discovery of another inscription during conservation of the western annexes helps to understand them (Fig. 4).¹⁴ The inscription, engraved on a circular piece of marble, was found face-down in the south corridor of the atrium. It reads Ἀλέξαν/ δρος φρον/ τεῖστης/ νεέοσεν/ τὸν περίπα/ τον τῆς ἁγίας/ συναγωγῆς/ εὐλογία πάσιν. (Alexander phrontistes renewed the corridor (walkway) of the holy synagogue, blessings to all.) "Phrontistes" is a term that occurs in many other Jewish inscriptions and is understood to refer to a curator or overseer of the synagogue.¹⁵ This inscription provides evidence that the Jewish community continued to flourish, and that the congregation had the means to sponsor major improvements to the synagogue. The marble inscription plaque must have been prominently displayed. The fine mosaics at the west end of the meeting room and in the atrium were probably part of this donation.

The fine mosaics are identical in materials and technique to mosaics found in the Stobi "Casino" (actually a residence)¹⁶ and very close to mosaics from the second phase of the Early Church - the first Episcopal Basilica, which

¹³ Seen also in the Plovdiv synagogue, as well as diaspora synagogues at Apamea, Sardis and many in Palestine. L. Feldman, 51-55. See Schwartz, 280-287 on the significance of synagogue inscriptions.

¹⁴ Ž. Vinčić and M. Buzalkovska-Aleksova, "Прилог кон проучувањето на еврејската синагога во Стоби," *Syntaxis* (<http://arheo.com.mkonline> publication of Macedonian classical philologists) 2-3 (2003) n.p. I owe this reference to Carolyn Snively. An inscription recording the donation of a synagogue vestibule, likewise on a circular white marble plaque, from Mantinea (Greek Arcadia) is listed by Frey, no. 720, 520. Noy et al., No. Ach 54, 196-197.

¹⁵ Feldman, 60; Levine, 410. A form of the word is seen in the synagogue inscriptions from Aegina. Frey, nos. 722-23, 522-23. Noy et al., Nos. Ach 58-59, 206-210. Phrontistes is not a cognomen as assumed by Vinčić and Buzalkovska-Aleksova. The letters EXA preserved in the mosaic inscription, could be from the name Alexander.

¹⁶ Another partially preserved inscription was found in the Casino mosaic. Kolarik and Petrovski, 75. The building was identified as a residence by Hemans. F. Hemans, *Late Antique Residences at Stobi, Yugoslavia*, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Boston University 1986), 156-162.



Fig.2 Detail of the coarse mosaic floor of Synagogue Two, Stobi.

Сл. 2. Деталъ грубог пода са мозаиком синагоге 2, Стоби.



Fig.3 Detail of the fine mosaic floor of Synagogue Two, Stobi, showing partially preserved inscription.

Сл. 3. Деталъ финог пода са мозаиком синагоге 2, Стоби, са приказом делимично очуваног натписа.

can be dated to the early fifth century.¹⁷ It seems that the same workshops were hired by Jews and Christians, as both communities enhanced their sanctuaries, perhaps in competition with each other.

Eventually, however, Synagogue Two was replaced by a Christian basilica, termed the Central Basilica. The church has a *terminus post quem* of 457-474 a.d., the date of the latest coin below its floor.¹⁸ Its identity as a Christian church is clear from the presence of a cross-shaped reliquary crypt found at the site of the altar.¹⁹ Archaeological evidence suggests that the synagogue building was intentionally destroyed. For example, the lack of roof tiles in the debris indicates that the roof was removed before the walls were taken down. Large fragments of stucco molding and wall fresco in good condition were found in the ruins. The Christian takeover of the synagogue site was apparently intentional and systematic.²⁰ It cannot be connected to Theodosius' visit to the city in 388, however.²¹ Efforts to associate the destruction of the synagogue with the presence of Theodosius at Stobi in 388 and his edicts against various heresies²² are untenable, not only

¹⁷ R. Kolarik, "Mosaics of the Early Church at Stobi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 303.

¹⁸ Stobi Coin number 71-165, an issue of Leo, was found beneath the floor of the narthex. Other fifth-century issues were found beneath the floor of a room south of the atrium, including Stobi Coin 78-546, a mid-fifth century issue. These coins were read after earlier discussions of the date of the Central Basilica, which had dated it earlier. See excavation reports cited in note 3; Kolarik and Petrovski, 75. For further discussion see below.

¹⁹ Moe, 156-157.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 157; J. Wiseman, "The City in Macedonia Secunda," *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin: Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole française de Rome (Rome 12-14 mai 1982)*, (Rome 1984), 296-301.

²² *CTh* 16.4.2 and 16.5.15; Moe, 157. The connection was questioned by C. Snively,



Fig.4 Alexander inscription found in the atrium of the Central Basilica, Stobi. After Mikulčić, *Stobi* (Skopje 2003)

Сл. 4. Александров натпис пронађен у атријуму централне базилике, Стоби. По Микулчићу, Стоби, (Скопље 2003.)

because the edict did not mention the Jews, whom Theodosius is known to have protected, but also because the church dates as much as a century later.²³

The Central Basilica was constructed over the main meeting hall of Synagogue Two. Its floor was raised more than a meter and a half above the synagogue floor, presumably to compensate for the slope of the terrain and keep the entire church complex at the same level. The atrium of the church, however, is at roughly the same level as the western rooms of the synagogue, parts of which may have been incorporated into the new Christian setting. South of Synagogue Two were annexes, which evidently served as auxiliary spaces for the Jewish community. They were remodeled into a residence connected to the Central Basilica, the House of

Psalms, with elaborate Christian mosaics.²⁴ It is unclear whether the fine mosaics that decorated the west rooms of Synagogue Two would have remained visible in the atrium of the church, however. The marble inscription was found face down re-used as a paving stone. Was this simply a practical matter or an intentional gesture? The Polycharmos column was found reused in the northeast corner of the colonnade in the atrium of the basilica.²⁵ It could simply have been unearthed and reused by the Christians or it may have been reused already in Synagogue Two, perhaps as evidence of the original deed, and reused yet again in the church. If the inscription were visible to the Christians who expropriated the site, its presence in the atrium of the church could hardly have been neutral.²⁶

The mosaics from a synagogue at Plovdiv (ancient Philippopolis) in Bulgaria, likewise show several phases, extending over a century or more (Figs. 5-7).²⁷ It was discovered during a salvage excavation; there is no specific evidence of the circumstances of its destruction. The synagogue's walls were in-

The Early Christian Basilicas of Stobi: A Study of Form, Function and Location, unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (University of Texas 1979), 71-72. Also K. Hattersly-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture Between the Fourth and Early Eleventh Centuries AD with Special Reference to the Towns of Byzantine Macedonia* (Thessaloniki 1996), 45-46.²³ See above note 18.

²⁴ Kolarik and Petrovski, 92, with earlier bibliography.

²⁵ See above, note 6.

²⁶ For a discussion of Christian appropriation of Jewish inscriptions, Fine, 31-50. For a discussion of other churches built over synagogues, see below.

²⁷ See above, note 4.

completely preserved, but it was clearly rectangular in shape. The decoration was focused on the south end (facing Jerusalem). There a monumental seven-branched golden menorah was depicted in yellow and ochre tesserae accompanied by a partially-preserved lulab, a festive palm-branch, which is carried and waved on the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). The panel was framed with a triple braid. On either side were fields of geometric decoration consisting of paired peltae and alternating with quatrefoils, the colors were primarily black and white. Three inscriptions identified donors. The inscriptions on the two side panels were identical, "From the funds

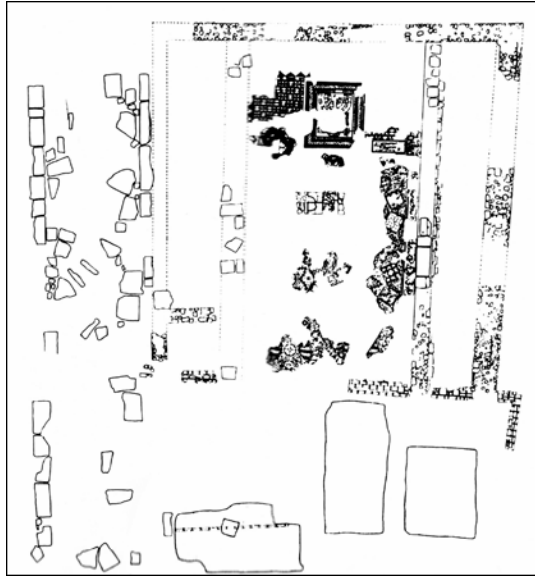


Fig.5 Plan of the Plovdiv Synagogue indicating location of the mosaics. After Kesjakova, 1989.

Сл. 5. План синагоге у Пловдиву који показује локацију мозаика. По Кесјаковој, 1989.

given due to the care Cosmianus, whose name is also Joseph, arranged and decorated (the synagogue is understood) blessings to all."²⁸

The workmanship of the central panel with the striking menorah image is much finer than the flanking panels of geometric ornament. The letters of the partially preserved inscription also differ in form. The excavator, Kesjakova, believes that the geometric panels date to the Severan period, and the Menorah panel was added later.²⁹ A more likely explanation has been proposed by Koranda who sees them as contemporary work of two different hands. He compared the menorah image to the fourth-century images of menorahs from Hammath Tiberias and other sites and suggested that the mosaic was executed by an artist familiar with Jewish symbolism, perhaps from the East.³⁰

The geometric panels and their frames, are strikingly similar to the group of fine mosaics from the early fifth century at Stobi. The motifs and even the layout with two flanking panels of geometric decoration in the Plovdiv synagogue are comparable to the layout of the mosaics in the Early Church at Sto-

²⁸ C. Danov and E. Kesjakova, 212. A discussion of the names in the inscriptions, especially the use of by-names, is found in Panayotov (2004), 46-52. See also D. Noy, et al., 38-48.

²⁹ Kesjakova, 1989, 28-31. *Eadem*, 1994, 168-169. The Plovdiv menorah is included in R. Hachlili, *The Menorah, The Ancient Seven-Armed Candelabrum: Origin, Form and Significance*, (Leiden 2001), 78, 357, but she dates it to the sixth century.

³⁰ Koranda, 221-224. The Hammath Tiberias mosaic was originally dated to the early fourth century, but a late-fourth-century date seems more likely. K. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge 1999), 189.

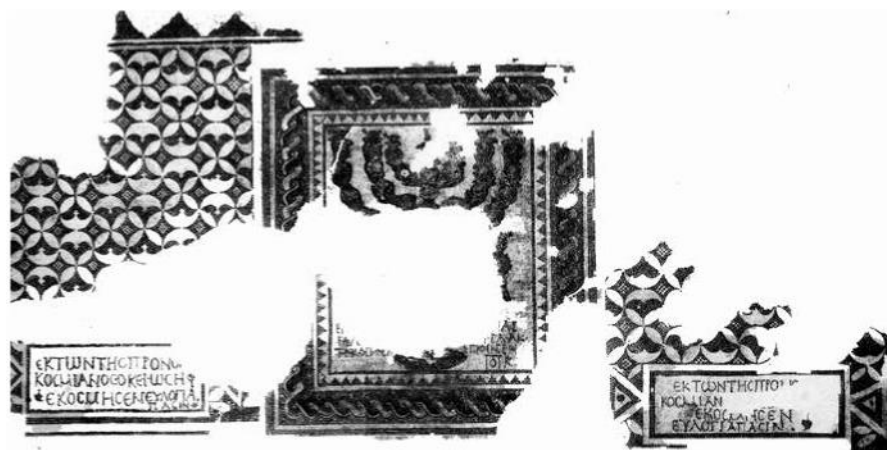


Fig.6 Detail of the mosaics of the Plovdiv Synagogue. After Kesjakova, 1994.

Сл. 6. Деталъ мозаика синагоге у Пловдиву. По Кесјаковој, 1994.

bi, where panels of similar ornament were placed around a cross-shaped area of *opus sectile* (that left impressions in the mortar).³¹ The Stobi mosaics of the Early Church are also comparable in technique to the fine mosaics added to Synagogue Two. The use of peltae and quatrefoils, triple braids and wolf's tooth borders are very similar to those at Stobi. While the patterns are common, their similarities suggest that the mosaics are probably roughly contemporary and that the Plovdiv floor dates to the later fourth or early fifth century.³² It seems possible that they might even have been executed by the same mosaic workshop.

A second poorly-preserved mosaic floor of polychrome geometric patterns was laid later in the Plovdiv synagogue, probably in the late fifth century or sixth century.³³ It is not clear whether the building remained a synagogue. It may have been converted to a church as was the case with several diaspora synagogues at this time.³⁴ Since the Plovdiv site was discovered by accident, and much evidence was lost, it has not been possible to determine its eventual fate. No subsequent building over it was reported.

The situation is quite different in the synagogue complex from Saranda (ancient Anchiasmos) in Albania (Figs. 8-11).³⁵ Mosaics were first discovered there in the 1980s in a Christian basilica.³⁶ There were clearly several phases in

³¹ Kolarik, "Early Church," 297, 303, figs. 1, 6, 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 303-304. The possibility of a later date based on the form of the names is also suggested by Panayotov (2009), 481.

³³ Kesjakova, fig. 11; Danov and Kesjakova, 225-226, fig. 6. Kesjakova dates the second mosaic to the fifth century. It corresponds to changes in the architecture as well.

³⁴ See below.

³⁵ Raynaud, et al. 687-693.

³⁶ K. Lako, "Bazilika paleokristiana e Onhezmit," (Albanian with French resumé) *Iliria* (1991), 123-187.



Fig.7 Detail of the menorah panel from the Plovdiv Synagogue.

Сл. 7. Детаљ плоче са менором из синагоге у Пловдиву.

this rather complicated mosaic in which various fields of decoration were arbitrarily juxtaposed (Fig. 9). As the complex in the middle of downtown Saranda was further investigated, the discovery of a menorah image on the mosaic floor of an adjacent room made it clear that at some point this complex had included a synagogue (Fig. 10).³⁷ Subsequent detailed investigation of the mosaics by a French-Albanian-Israeli team clarified a complicated series of alterations to the floors in the main hall.³⁸ When the building was transformed into a church new sections of mosaic were simply added to the earlier synagogue floor.

The building sequence is complex. Several mosaics belonging to an earlier building or buildings of undetermined function underlie parts of the complex. A later room with the depiction of a menorah belonged to the first phase that can definitely be associated with a synagogue. The synagogue was subsequently expanded into a larger hall. Mosaics were laid in this space, including images of animals and birds, as well as a badly damaged image identified as a depiction of the temple as seen in synagogues from Palestine.³⁹ Finally the synagogue hall was converted into a Christian church, probably in the fifth century, when an apse-like structure and large sanctuary space were added. Some of the earlier

³⁷ E. Nallbani, "Une nouvelle synagogue de l'Antiquité (tardive?) identifiée à Saranda (Albanie)," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 8 (2003), 167-172.

³⁸ Raynaud, et al. 687-693; G. Foerster, K. Lako, E. Nallbani and E. Netzer, "Sinagoga e Sarandes (Anchiasmos) ne Antikitetin e Vone," (Albanian with French resumé), *Candavia* 1 (2004) 32-48; Idem, "Synagogue Complex Revealed at Sarande Albania," *Minerva* 15,1 (2004) 4-5.

³⁹ Raynaud, et al. 691, fig. 14.

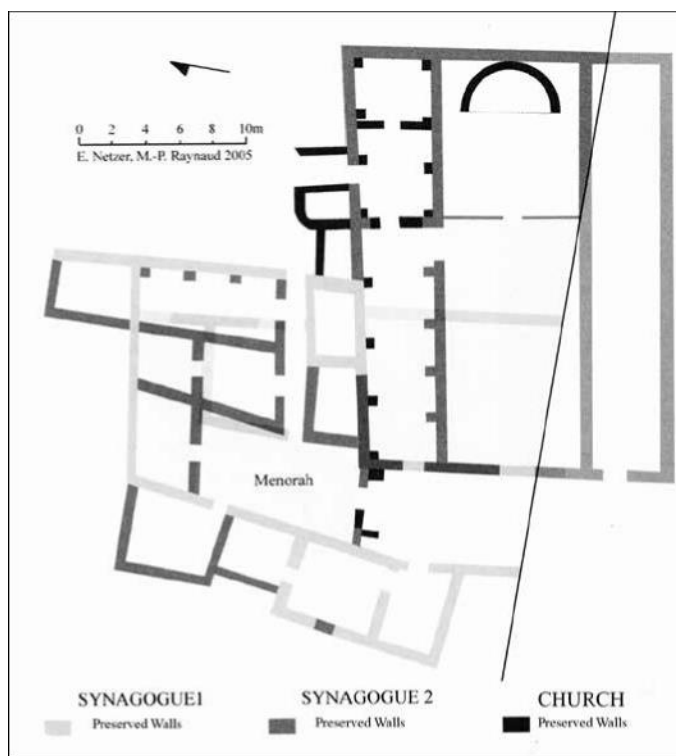


Fig.8 Plan of the church and synagogue from Saranda. After Raymond, et al. with additions by the author.

Сл. 8. План цркве и синагоге из Саранде. По Рејмонду, ет ал. са допунама аутора.

mosaics belonging to the second phase of the synagogue, not including the menorah panel, evidently continued in use in the church. Other fields of mosaic, one with an overtly Christian theme of deer flanking a vine filled vessel were added (Fig. 11). A dedicatory Christian inscription was placed just inside the door.⁴⁰ This transformation dates to the sixth century. The circumstances behind the repurposing of the synagogue are unclear, but little time seems to have passed between the Jewish and Christian phases. The Christians may have evicted the Jewish community, taken over the building, remodeled it into a church and reused parts of its floor. It is also possible that the Jews had abandoned the synagogue building or converted. The church in turn was destroyed at the end of the sixth century as Slavic invasions ended urban life at Anchiasmos.

The mosaic floors of these synagogues therefore inform our understanding of the history of the Jews in three late antique Balkan cities. By the fourth and fifth centuries, earlier at Stobi and perhaps elsewhere, elaborate synagogues were constructed in the heart of these cities by prosperous Hellenized Jewish communities. This parallels the construction and decoration of diaspora synagogues in Asia Minor and elsewhere in the empire. By the late fifth to sixth centuries in the case of Stobi and Saranda, the synagogues were replaced by or remodeled into Christian churches. The construction of a church literally on top of a synagogue at Stobi and the reuse of parts of a synagogue as a church at

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 692, fig. 20. The mosaic floor of the church was laid in diverse sections, perhaps at different times. The authors identify three phases of Christian decoration.

Fig.9 Overall view of the mosaics of the church and synagogue at Saranda. After Raymond et al.

Сл. 9. Општи изглед мозаика цркве и синагоге у Саранди. По Рејмонду, ет ал.



Saranda demonstrate intentionality and probable hostility to the Jews on the part of the Christian congregations of these cities. The synagogue sites were literally replaced by churches as the New Law was believed to replace the Old. In neither case is it possible to determine the precise date or circumstances of the changes, although neither seems to have taken place before the late fifth century. The process is repeated elsewhere in the Late Roman Empire. Churches were built over synagogues in Gerasa/Jerash⁴¹ (in modern Jordan), Apamea⁴² and probably other sites. The destruction and/or re-purposing of the synagogues at Stobi and Saranda are clear examples of what Wharton terms the “erasure” of synagogues.⁴³

⁴¹ A. Wharton, "Erasure: Eliminating the Space of Late-antique Judaism," L. Levine and Z. Weiss, eds., *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Supplementary series no. 40 (Portsmouth RI 2000), 201-206.

⁴² B. Brenk, "Die Umwandlung der Synagoge von Apamea in eine Kirche: Eine mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie," *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann* (Münster Westfalen 1991) *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* Ergänzungsband 18, 1-25.

⁴³ Wharton, 195-214.



Fig. 10 Detail of the menorah panel from the synagogue at Saranda. After Raymond, et al.

Сл. 10. Деталъ плоче са менором из синагоге у Саранди. По Рејмонду ет ал.

The archaeological record is supplemented by written sources. Early church fathers like John Chrysostom in the East and Ambrose in the West vilified the Jews and focused particular hostility on synagogues as sites occupied by demons, and where Christ was denied. In the course of the fourth through sixth centuries synagogues were destroyed not only in Gerasa and Apamea, but also Antioch, Callinicum, Edessa, Milan, Ravenna and Constantinople.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, emperors made attempts to protect synagogues against such depredations.

The relationship between the increasingly Christian state and the Jews in late antiquity is complex. It is difficult to draw clear connections between the evidence provided by archaeology and written sources.⁴⁵ Clearly the process initiated by Constantine and continued by Theodosius began to associate Roman citizenship with orthodox Christianity. Inevitably, the Jews were marginalized. Already under Constantine the rights of Jews to exercise authority over Christians were limited.⁴⁶ Nevertheless numerous legal

edicts recognized the rights of the Jews to control the affairs of their communities and condemned the Christian destruction of synagogues.⁴⁷ Over time they reveal an increasing hostility to the Jews, however.

Some of the edicts are addressed by emperors specifically to Prefects of Illyricum and thus could be related to events in the Balkans. An edict of Arcadius issued in 397 to Anatolius, the prefect of Illyricum, reflected conflicts between Christians and Jews. "Your Excellent Authority shall order the governors to assemble in order that they shall learn and know, that it is necessary to repel the assaults of those who attack Jews, and that their synagogues should remain in their accustomed peace."⁴⁸ Edicts issued on behalf of his successor, Theodosius II, indicate that problems were ongoing. An edict issued in 423 to the Prefect of the East read partially as follows:

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 206-7. Brenk 19-24.

⁴⁵ The imperial edicts relevant to the Jews are conveniently assembled with translation and commentary by A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit and Jerusalem 1987).

⁴⁶ Edict of Constantine the Great, 21 October 225. Linder, 138-144.

⁴⁷ Earliest in 393, *CTh.* 16.8.9, Linder, 189-191. Discussion in F. Millar, "Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora," J. Lieu, J. North and T. Rajak, eds., *The Jews among Pagans and Christians* (London and New York, 1992) 116-119.

⁴⁸ *CTh* 16, 8, 12; Issued June 17, 397. Linder, 197-198. Another edict addressed to



Fig.11 Deer and vines, detail of the mosaic of the church at Saranda. After Raymond et al.

Сл. 11. Јелен и винова лоза, детаљ мозаика цркве у Саранди. По Рејмонду, ет ал.

It seems right that in the future none of the synagogues of the Jews shall either be indiscriminately seized or put on fire. If there are some synagogues that were seized or vindicated to churches... they [the Jews] shall be given in exchange new places, on which they could build, that is to the measure of the synagogues taken....No synagogue shall be constructed from now on, and the old ones shall remain in their state.⁴⁹

Other edicts showed even stronger hostility, forbidding Jews from holding public office and reducing the privileges of the Jewish Patriarch in 415.⁵⁰ Further restrictions and the reiteration of the prohibition of building new synagogues were declared in a law of 438 by Theodosius II that grouped Jews, Samaritans, Pagans and Heretics together.⁵¹

The synagogues discussed here do not seem to have suffered damages during the fourth and earlier fifth centuries and were apparently not the examples that provoked the edicts. The floors of Stobi Synagogue Two were extended, and presumably the synagogue was enlarged and remodeled. The floor of the synagogue at Saranda was embellished. Both seem to have survived well

Philippus, Prefect of Illyricum, by Honorius on August 6, 420, makes the same point. Linder revised the dating of the edict, *Ibid.*, 283-286.

⁴⁹ *CTh* 16.8.21 Theodosius II to Asclepiodotus, Prefect of the East, February 15, 423. The points made in this edict were repeated in a second edict to the same official two months later. *CTh* 16.8.26 on April 9, 423. Linder, 287-295.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 267-272. The office had ceased to exist by 429.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 323-337.

until the late fifth or early sixth centuries. Jews continued to be marginalized in the sixth century, although synagogues did continue to be built in the Holy Land. In the Balkans, however, the evidence of the synagogue mosaics from these three sites indicates that Jewish life effectively ended there by the sixth century. Ultimately, after the Persian wars under Heraclius in 632 all Jews in the Empire were ordered to convert.⁵²

Рут Коларик
ПОДОВИ СИНАГОГА СА БАЛКАНА:
ВЕРСКЕ И ИСТОРИЈСКЕ ИМПЛИКАЦИЈЕ

Процес који је покренут Константиновим Едиктом о толеранцији 313. године наставио је Теодосије који је повезао хришћанство са римским држављанством крајем века. Проучавање подних мозаика у три балканске синагоге у Стобију, Пловдиву (древни Филипополис) и Саранди (древне Анхиасмос) показује како су последице хришћанске моћи утицале на статус јеврејских заједница. Археолошки запис пружа доказе о некадашњим синагогама у пуном процвату из IV века, које су до VI века биле замењене хришћанским црквама. Синагога Два у Стобију, изграђена у IV веку, имала је подове са живописним мозаицима постављеним у две фазе. Каснија фаза повезана је са преправкама које су документоване недавно откривеним натписом. Крајем V или почетком VI века хришћанска базилика, Централна базилика, саграђена је на остацима порушене синагоге. У Пловдиву у Бугарској под синагоге са приказом меноре вероватно датира са краја IV или V века. Овај мозаик је касније замењен геометријским плочником. У Саранди у Албанији комплекс синагоге такође је обухватао под украшен менором. Пошто је синагога била повећана постављени су нови фигурални мозаици. На крају је синагога замењена хришћанском црквом. Делови пода са мозаиком раније синагоге једноставно су били поново употребљени у цркви и замењени хришћанским сценама и натписима. Доказ мозаика у синагогама у ова три балканска налазишта показује да је живот Јевреја тамо ефективно престао да постоји негде у VI веку. Археолошки доказ повлачи паралелу са референцама на Јевреје у царским едиктима у касном IV а посебно у V веку. Цареви су бранили јеврејске интересе од хришћанских разарања, али су постепено органичавали права Јевреја, забрањујући им да буду у државној власти и да граде нове синагоге.

⁵² Heraclius' Edict of Baptism, issued around 632. N. de Lange, "Jews in the Age of Justinian," M. Maas, ed., *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge 2005), 420.