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MEDIEVAL BITOLA AFTER 1018: THE CULTURAL HORIZONS OF THE YENI MOSQUE

The knowledge acquired so far on the medieval history of Bitola is indeed modest. In the last decades, however, significant progress has been made through the systematic archaeological research in and around the Yeni mosque and the subsequent processing of the discovered material. Naturally, the medieval written sources have always been kept in sight, but in this period the auxiliary discipline of sigillography made a remarquable appearence.

The first archaeological investigations of medieval Bitola were initiated within the framework of the project entitled "Localization of medieval Bitola", under the leadership of PhD Tome Yanakievski¹, and in the period between 2004 and 2010 further research was conducted under the leadership of the councilor-custodian archaeologist Gordana Filipovska-Lazarovska, yealding the remains of about four Christian basilical edifices and a mosque edifice.² Five horizons correspond to four basilicas and an older mosque on the foundations of which was built the new. The phases of construction of the church are defined by the architecture, the masonry, the chemical analyses of the mortar used in the construction,³ as well as by the stratigraphic analyses.

The fifth, historical horizon. The main building of the Yeni mosque is located on the right bank of the river Dragor, in the area where the Ottoman Pekmez pazarı with the Clock tower was, nowadays park area. The mosque is a part of the cultural heritage of the town and inside the protected central town

¹ Т. Јанакиевски, Убикација на средновековна Битола, Битола 2003, 90-91.

² Г. Филиповска-Лазаровска, *Јени џамија во Битола*, Македонски археолошки преглед, (Скопје 2008), 316-320.

³ The analyses were conducted in the chemical laboratory of the National institution - State institute for the protection of the monuments of culture in Skopye, by Lidiya Chukovska (Physical and chemical analyses of mortars from the archaeological investigations in Yeni cami, Bitola, april 2005).

area. The base of the main building together with its immediate surrounds extends over 480 m² and was constructed during the rule of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, in 1558/9⁴, by the order of the founder, the judge Mehmed Efendi. Over the entrance of the modern mosque a marble plaque has been preserved, with an inscription mentioning the reconditioning of the mosque in 1308/1890-1, when the northern portico was rebuilt and expanded, keeping its six domes to this day. Marble tombstones from the graveyard, whose inscriptions were struck off, served as paving material for the mosque's yard.⁵

The architecture of this mosque is very similar to that of the main mosque of Bitola, the Ishak Çelebi mosque, built 45 years earlier and representing a preliminary phase between the Early Ottoman style of Edirne and the Classical Ottoman style. It has a prayer hall of 12.78 m and a dome of 19 m, and a minaret that is 39 m high. The walls were constructed with stone of a darker yellow nuance than that of the Ishak Çelebi mosque, with a dome mounted on an octagonal drum by the means of squinches on a square base. The portico is 14.2 m long and 10 m wide, and it is covered by two rows of three domes.⁶

The first archaeological horizon. Already in the first excavation period (2003-2005), the oldest building on this spot was detected. A medieval wall was discovered in 2008 and the altar space was unearthed in 2010, with the dimensions of the church much larger that it was previously thought. The width discovered so far is 19.3 m, which bears on the type and purpose of the church. But of key importance is the discovery of the northern wall of the central nave of the church in the northeast angle of the Yeni cami, which reshaped the entire context and indicated a much larger edifice than previously thought.7 To the east it ends with an apse, unearthed in the last excavation period (2014-2017), which was round on the inside and three-sided on the outside. The most important discovery in this period after the altar outside of the wall of the Yeni mosque is the prothesis of the church basilica.⁸ The proportion of the apsidal space expanded, but it was executed with a different type of grey-white mortar than that of the altar itself, pointing to a possibly different building phase. The prothesis, whose northern wall continues towards the west, is built out of stone, brick and mortar in the opus mixtum, but with a transition to the opus cloisonné. The walls had both, an outer and an inner facade. The northern wall of the prothesis is 1.09 m wide, the southern wall connected with the central apsis is 1.58 m. In the construction were primarily used large river stones that were layed in three horizontal rows. Limestone was used for filling the gaps between horizontal rows

⁷ Г. Филиповска-Лазаровска, Извештај од ископувањата во Јени Џамија 2009, НУ Завод и музеј-Битола 2009.

⁴ М. Тефик, *Кратка историја битољског вилајета*, Братство XXVII, превод Г. Елезовиќ. Београд, 1933, 212; К. Томовски, *Цамии во Битола*, Зборник на Техничкиот факултет, (Скопје 1957), 50; К. Балабанов, А. Николовски, Д. Ќорнаков, *Споменици на културата на Македонија*, Скопје 1980, 197.

⁵ Р. Петкова, З. Павлов, *Османлиски споменици*, Македонско културно наследство, Скопје 2008, 12;

⁶ Р. Михајловски, *Битолската Јени џамија во светлината најновите археолошки истражувања*, Patrimonium.MK, 3-4, 5-6, (Скопје 2009), 186.

⁸ Financed by the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Macedonia.

of whole bricks for stabilizing the line of the wall. Decorative oval grout was applied around the river stones, then both faces of the wall were shaped with plaster of a red color, due to the great presence of crushed and grounded brick, and finally the outside was limewashed. This first phase can be dated on the basis of its architectural similarities with a number of churches, first of all the basilica in Churlina, Serbia,⁹ as well as the cathedral temple on Kale Bair, north of Bitola,¹⁰ and also that at the village of Krupishte, near Shtip.¹¹ The interval from the 7th to the 10th century works best for such an *opus mixtum*.¹²

Movable finds have been unearthed as well, including clay pottery and building ceramics. For the earliest phase there are no remnants of a necropolis. This is the period of the settlement in the time of Heraclius (610-641), Boris I Michael (852-889), Simeon I the Great (893-927), then the years of Samuel's tsardom, that of Gabriel Radomir and of John Vladislav. During their rule Bitola was an important fortification, headquarters and temporary imperial seat (basileia). During the excavations there were found fragments of mural paintings with smooth, monochromatic gypsum plaster and an intense colouring of dark green, red and blue. Another type of fragments from a fresco painting were unearthed, decorated with geometric and floral ornaments painted in yellow, ochre and brown color, which probably belong to all three phases.

The second archaeological horizon. The church walls of this period are distinguished from those of the previous by the simple fact of the *opus cloison-né*. The horizontal fillings between the stone and the brick help determine when the construction of the second edifice began.¹³ The binding material is lime mortar with a white-grey color and pieces of broken brick. There are numerous indications that here in the 11th century was located the town church. Many fine fragments of mural paintings must be from this phase. A spear top was found and dated in the period from the 10th to the 14th century, which points to a military presence in the building and its surrounds.¹⁴ This edifice probably belongs to the period when the town had become a center of Byzantine administration, as well as an episcopal center after the conquest in 1018.¹⁵ For the Byzantine

⁹ М. Ракоција, *Палеовизантијска базилика у Ћурлини и генеза куполних цркава*, Ниш и Византија 16, (Ниш 2017), 121-133.

¹⁰ Г. Филиповска, П. Србиновски, *Резултати од истражувањата на локалитетот "Кале" Битола во 1978 година*, Macedonia Acta Archaeologica 6, (Скопје 1980), 111-121.

¹¹ Б. Атанасоски, Околу проблемот на датирањето на катедралниот храм во село Крупиште-Штипско, Balcanoslavica 37-38, (Prilep 2010), 74-91.

¹² J.-P., Adam, Roman Building – Materials and Techniques, London 1994, 319.

¹³ Dated according to M. Ракоција, *Црква у Горњем Матејевцу код Ниша*, Саопштења XXII-XXIII, (Београд 1991), 20.

¹⁴ С. Стојкоски, *Средновековно копје од "Јени Џамија" – Битола*, Зборник на трудови на НУ Завод и музеј Битола 20, (Битола 2017), 122-130.

¹⁵ In 1018, immediately after the death of Tsar John Vladislav at the siege of Dyrrachium, the leaders of the townships of Morosdvisd, Liplyan and Bitola traveled to the fortress of Mossynopolis in order to surrender the townships' keys to the Byzantine Emperor Basil II as an ultimate act of submission. Thus, the fortress and the town of Bitola were preserved from any further demolition that could have followed, like that of the palace of Gabriel Ra-

military and tax administration the rich region of Pelagonia and the junction on the Via Egnatia were of vital importance and an imperial tax collector, a *kourator* was appointed in Bitola. In 2007 Werner Seibt¹⁶ published a preserved bilateral seal with inscriptions on both sides: + K($\delta \rho \iota$) $\epsilon \beta(o \eta) \theta(\epsilon \iota) \tau \langle \hat{\omega} \iota \rangle \sigma \langle \hat{\omega} \iota \rangle$ $\delta o \delta \lambda \omega \iota \Pi \epsilon \tau \rho \omega \iota (\pi \rho \omega \tau o) \sigma \pi a \theta[a \rho \iota \omega \iota] / \kappa(a \iota) B(a \sigma \iota \lambda \iota \kappa \hat{\omega} \iota) \kappa o \nu \rho(a \tau o \rho \iota) B \eta \tau \delta \lambda(\eta \varsigma)$ $\kappa a \iota H \gamma \iota \beta a (\tau o \upsilon) \tau a \iota \Pi a (\rho \delta \omega \iota)$. The seal belongs to the imperial kourator, protospatharios Peter (Pardo), who was the chief financial administrator of Bitola and of the road fortification of Gyavato in the period between 1018 and 1030.

The demolition of the earliest building may have taken place during the conquest of the town by the Byzantines in 1018, or in the time of the Archbishop Leo I (1037-1056), who succeded the deceased John of Debar (1018-1037).¹⁷ In 1040 the Byzantine Emperor Michael IV the Paphlagonian (1034-1041) introduced payment of the taxes in money instead in goods, which incited the insurrection of Petar Delyan (1040-1041).¹⁸

¹⁶ W. Seibt, Ένα μυστηριώδες μολυβδόβουλο των αρχών του 11. αιώνα στα Ιωάννινα: ΚΟΥΡΑΤΩΡ ΒΗΤΟΛ(ΗΣ) ΚΑΙ ΗΓΙΒ(ΑΤΟΥ), ΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ Β', Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Συμποσίου για τη Νικόπολη (11-15 Σεπτεμβρίου, Πρέβεζα 2007, 583-586.

¹⁷ Pelagonia, with the junction on the Via Egnatia and the pass of Gyavato, was of key importance for the Byzantine military and tax administration. An imperial military officer was appointed in Bitola, one that functioned both as a tax and a judicial administrator. This high official, bearing the title of imperial curator, came from the circles close to the Emperor. At the same time, the Emperor Basil II conducted reforms in the ecclesiastical institution, and according to the second chrysobull published in 1020, the bishop of Bitola was a suffragan of the archbishop of Ochrid, administrating the diocese around the townships of Pelagonia, Prilep, Debreshte and Veles, with 15 clerics and 15 serfs. И. Снегаров, *История на Охридската архиепископия*, Том 1, София 1924, 162. Following this chrysobull, one can conclude that Pelagonia and Bitola were two separate settlements in this period.

¹⁸ Pelagonia was an imperial military base, mentioned by the Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates for Komnenian times, but the western Byzantine army also had military logistic centers at Kypsela and Serdika. P. Magdalino, The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180, Cambridge 1993, 166, fn. 226, 196; Р. Петкова, Битола во XIV и XV век, Битола низ вековите 3, (Битола 2000), 21-25; Р. Михајловски, Прилози за убикацијата на средновековните крепости на Пелагонија и Битола, Зборник на трудови на НУ Завод и музеј Битола 20, (Битола 2017), 130-135; Idem, Circulation of Byzantine seals as a contribution towards the location of medieval Bitola, Niš i Vizantija 14, (Ниш 2015), 575-579; Idem, Heraclea, Pelagonia and medieval Bitola: an outline of the ecclesiastical history (6th-12th century), Folia Archaeologica Balcanica 3, (Скопје 2015), 442. In his travelogue, William of Tyre, who was an emissary of the king of Jerusalem, Amalrich, wrote that he met the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos in 1153 in the province of Pelagonia, in the town of Bitola (... in provincia Pelagonia, in civitate quae vulgo dicitur Butella). A History of Deeds done beyond the Sea, by William Archbishop of Tyre, transl. E. Babcock and A. C. Krey, vol. II, New York 1943, 347-349. It seems that in this period, the Byzantine administrative center and the seat of the bishopric were located in Bitola. Т. Томоски, Градиштето на средновековната Пелагонија, Македонија низ вековите: градови, тврдини, комуникации, Скопје

domir a few years earlier. The region of Pelagonia was included in the recently formed Byzantine theme of Bulgaria, with its central military fortress on the Kale of Skopye, governed by a Byzantine governor. С. Пириватрић, *Самуилова држава, обим и карактер*, Београд 1997, 120-129; S. Antoljak, *Samuel and his State*, Skopje 1985, 115-125; R. Mihajlovski, *A collection of medieval seals from the fortress Kale in Skopje, excavated between 2007 and* 2012, Byzantion 86 (Leuven 2016), 265.

This archaeological horizon continues after 1081, in the epoch of the Byzantine dynasty that started with Alexios I Komnenos, builder of the military base of Pelagonia, and ended with the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204. Only one Pelagonian bishop is known from this period, namely bishop Stephanos of 1150.19 Burials appear already in this phase, with the expected east-west orientation. During the whole length of the archaeological excavations (2004-2017) were discovered a total of 40 such graves. Some were integrally preserved, but there were also dislocated bones in the upper layers. The deceased were children aged from a few months to three or four years, as well as adult women and men aged between 20 and 56 years.²⁰ They were buried outside of the church edifice as well as inside, and some just over the demolished southern wall and over the wall of the southern apsis. Two Byzantine lead seals were also unearthed, belonging to lost letters that had been sent to the civil or church administration. Somewhere here may have been the office or the archive where the correspondence was kept, always in connection to the town church, maybe even the episcopal seat of Bitola/Pelagonia.²¹ The first of the two discovered seals is that of Theodore the vestarch, with the Theotokos holding Jesus on her chest. On the reverse there is an inscription in six lines: + Θεοτόκε βοήθει Θεοδώρωι βεστάρχωι τῶι Σ... (Mother of God, help Theodore vestarches of S...). Theodore the vestarch was a high court dignitary of the 11th century. The second Byzantine seal belongs to George Manganes and dates from the period after 1088 and towards the first half of the 12th century. St. George is represented on the obverse and the damaged, but still readable text is on the reverse: Αθλητά, σῶιζε τὴν γραφὴν του Μαγγάν[η] (O Athlete, preserve the writings of Manganes). He was promoted to the rank of proto-proedros - chief president, dikaiophylax and questor of the Council in the Blachernae palace that was held in 1094, and later a personal secretary of the Emperor.

An exclusive discovery is that of a preserved rare metal pendent (enkolpion), a sort of miniature icon $(3.5 \times 4 \times 0.6 \text{ cm})$ that was most probably worn on the chest of a high-ranking church official. It is highly probable that it had another part, thus forming a diptych. On the obverse are two integral figures of St. Basil and St. Nicholas and on the reverse those of the warrior-saints St. George and St. Theodor (Tiron?). The figures were executed by ingraving with elementary stylized lines. According to the proportions, the position of the figures, the details and the entire iconography, they are closest to the Komnenian

^{1999, 40.}

¹⁹ Mihajlovski, Heraclea, Pelagonia and medieval Bitola..., 446.

²⁰ The age of the deceased was determined through an anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains conducted by the anthropologist PhD F. Velyanovska and M. Velkovska (postgraduate student), employed at the Museum of Macedonia in Skopye.

²¹ Idem, Circulation of Byzantine lead seals..., 575-579.

style and can be dated to the 11th century.²² The pendent has been wrought out of silver sheet with guilding, with an application of the *niello* technique in the representation of the hair of the saints.²³

The third archaeological horizon. This is the period after the restoration of Byzantine rule under the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282), following the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259, which took place south of Bitola.²⁴ This phase is rich in clay pottery, frescoe fragments, glass, coins and other objects of everyday use. Remains of metal ornaments and buttons were unearthed, dated clearly in the 14th century,25 belonging to clothes found in situ in the intact grave No. 6. The fragments of pottery and the relative intactness of the necropolis corroborate the dating. The Christian graves with offerings from this period are cut through the buildings of the earlier phases. Fragments of a painted glass lamp were found, then a cup from the 13th or 14th century, as well as some fragments of common pottery and luxurious table ceramics decorated in the sgraffito technique, dated to the period between the 12th and 15th century. The excavations also yielded three coins, of which two are Bulgarian imitations of the first half of the 13th century, while the third is a silver coin of the Serbian ruler Stefan Urosh I (1243-1272).²⁶ These are helpful primarily in the dating of the demolition of the second and of the beginning of the construction of the third edifice. By consequence, the final demolition seems to have occured in the 14th or in the 15th century.

This phase is best represented in the south anex of the basilica, which is inside the Yeni mosque. The church building got another phase of extention, as well as a developed necropolis. The *opus cloisonné* reappears in a different variety and with a dissimilar white-red color of the mortar. In the third edifice the intensity of the brick in the mortar is increased. The southern wall of the second edifice was built over the southern wall of the first edifice, while the inner face of the southern wall of the third edifice is glued to the wall of the first and the second edifice, thus giving a total breadth of the wall of 1.17 m. The breadth of the eastern wall of the second edifice overlaps the breadth of the wall of the third edifice and is 0.7 m. The applied *opus cloisonné*, besides being constructive and decorative, also possesses a coloristic effect. In the eastern provinces, in seismically unstable regions, this opus was widely used and characteristic for the ecclesiastical edifices constructed in the periods between the 11th and the 14th by the Byzantines, but it was also used in the period of Ottoman rule.

The fourth archaeological horizon. The last phase of the church was built in order to extend the function of this sacred place, and that building is not as

²² И. Талевска, Проект за конзервација и превентивна заштита на сребрена икона од X-XI век пронајдена при археолошки ископувања во Јени Џамија Битола, НУ Завод и музеј – Битола 2011.

²³ R. Newman, J. R. Dennis, E. Farrell, *A technical note on niello*, Journal of the American Institute for Conservation 21/2 (1982), 80-85.

²⁴ R. Mihajlovski, *The Battle of Pelagonia, 1259: a new look at the march routes and topography*, Byzantinoslavica 64, (Prague 2006), 275-284.

²⁵ Д. Милошевић, *Накит од XII до XV века из збирке Народног музеја*, Београд 1990, 186.

²⁶ Р. Марић, Студије из српске нумизматике, Београд 1956, 74.

representative, being built out of stone bonded with mud filling. In the troubled times of the 14th and 15th century,²⁷ the church was probably abandoned, and later, on this traditional holy place and with the existing building material was constructed the mosque. Over the central apsis of the sacral edifice in 2017 was discovered a wall that goes in a parallel direction to the mosque, constructed of stone bound with white lime mortar, and rounded at the end of the portico. One can assume that the wall belongs to an auxiliary edifice of an earlier phase of the Yeni mosque, attached to the northeast side of the portico, or maybe it was an older open mosque portico.

Towards a new phase of research. The medieval level of habitation around the Yeni cami was about three meters lower than that of the modern town, and the geological investigations show that the terrain was often flooded because of the proximity of the river Dragor, whose river-bed remained unregulated until late Ottoman times. It is evident that first the earliest building was flooded,²⁸ then the church of stone and mud, and finally the oldest phase of the mosque. Therefore, it is still difficult to imagine the reason for constructing a sacral edifice on such unstable soil.

In the course of the previous excavations (2003-2010) were defined five cultural horizons, each with its own stratigraphic composition, but during the excavations of 2017 the 20th century intrusions down to the graves of the second horizon were obvious. This is the result of a number of building interventions, then laying modern underground infrastructural installations and using the open space as a temporary rubbish dump.

The architectonic parts discovered so far are a southern wall of an annex, an apsis of an annex, a part of a southern wall of a central nave, a part of a northern wall of a central nave, a central apsis of an altar, an apsis and a northern wall of a prothesis. The architectural definition of the buildings followed a basilical model from late antiquity, while the use of a different composition and color of mortar in the three different church phases defines them as a red mortar phase, a white-grey mortar phase and a red-white mortar phase respectively. It seems that the central space was totally destroyed, probably during the construction of the first mosque, and the rubble used as an isolation layer beneath. This archaeological site with a sacral edifice, possibly basilica or cross-shaped church with a dome and a necropolis, offers significant material evidence for the existence of the episcopal town of Bitola from the 11th century, and is of inestimable importance for the medieval history of the town. As the excavations continue, albeit slowly, it is certain that still many confirmations and surprises await the team.²⁹

²⁷ Т. Чепреганов, Историја на македонскиот народ, Македонија под Османлиска власт од XIV до крајот на XVIII век, Скопје 2008, 128-131.

²⁸ According to the investigations of Goritsa Stefanovska, geologist from the Geoinstitute in Skopye, the first building is flooded with a water surge from the river of Nizhopole, allegation based on the revealed earth and mineral increment in that stratum.

²⁹ Acknowledgments to Zoran Altiparmakov, Slave Stojanov and Dimitar Lazarevski for the drawings, photos and computer editing, as well as to Jovica Grozdanovski for the translation and the rearrangement of this contribution.

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Археолошка ископавања у периоду од 2003 до 2018 године, око Јени џамије (1558-59) у Битољу су допринели расветљавању средњевековне историје овог града. Нова џамија је била изграђена на темељима старије џамије, на локацији напуштене и разрушене цркве. Пронађене су четири фазе хришћанског базиликалног објекта са бројним налазима. Датовање је изведено на основи архитектуре, грађевинских техника, хемијских анализа малтера и стратиграфских анализа. У првој фази (7. до 10. века, опус микстум) око прве цркве нема трагова некрополе, али има фрагмената керамике и фресака. У другој (10. до 14. век, опус клоазоне) око цркве се појављују гробови, али и многи налази, керамика, фрагменти фресака, врх копља, два византиска оловна печата и један метални енколпион са фигурама светаца. Трећој фази (13.-14. век, другачије опус клоазоне) припадају гробови око проширене црквене зграде, са фрагментима керамике и фресака, једно стаклено кандило, чаша, неколико монета и металних дугмади. У четвртој фази (14.-15. век) настаје прелаз од једноставне цркве обновљене блатом и каменом у прву, мању џамију. Ископавања ове фасцинантне целине се настављају, очекујући нове налазе и резултате.



Fig. 1 The situation after the excavations of 2005 with the phases determined through chemical analyses of mortars.

Сл. 1 Ситуација у 2005. години, археолошка ископавања са фазама градње које су добијене хемиским анализама малтера.



Fig. 2 Coin of Stefan Urosh I (1241-1272). Сл. 2 Новац Стефана Уроша I (1241-1272).















Сл. 7 Археолошка ископавања у 2017. години, сонда 1, североисточни профил



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- Fig. 9 North-east angle of the outside of the central apsis of the church's altar.
- Сл. 9 Северо-источни спољни угао централне олтарне апсиде.

Fig. 8 The Christian sacral edifice with its apsidal elements cut through by a more recent wall belonging to the complex of the Yeni mosque (excavations of 2017).

Сл. 8 Хришћанска грађевина са апсидалним елементима, пресечена новијом зидном преградом у функцији Јени џамије. (Ископавања у 2017 години)



Fig. 10 Interior of the prothesis. Сл. 10 Унутрашьост проскомидије.



Fig. 11 The eastern exterior opus of the central apsis of the altar.

> Сл. 11 Источни, спољашни опус централне, олтарне апсиде.



Fig. 12 South-east wall of the prothesis. Сл. 12 Југоисточни зид проскомидије.



Fig. 13 Northern wall of the prothesis. Сл. 13 Северни зид проскомидије.





Сл. 16. Оловни печат Теодора вестарха, XI век.







Fig. 17 The seal of George Manganes, 11th C. Сл. 17 Оловни печат Георгија Манганеса, XI век.





Fig. 18 The enkolpion, 11th C. Сл. 18 Енколпион, XI век.





