



cilt  
**3**

# BALKANLarda İSLÂM

## MİADI DOLMAYAN UMUT

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**ISLAM IN THE BALKANS  
UNEXPIRED HOPE**

GÖNÜL FETHİNDEN ZİHNİYET TEMSİLİNE  
FROM THE CONQUEST OF HEARTS TO THE  
REPRESENTATION OF MENTALITY

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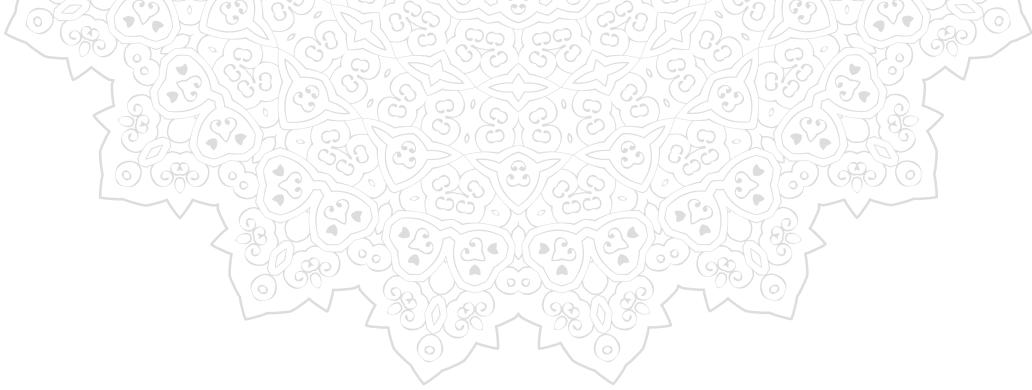
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# The Architecture of Mosques in Albania During the 15<sup>Th</sup> to 19<sup>Th</sup> Centuries

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Prof. Dr., Prime Minister of Albania (1992-1997)

## Summary

Muslim places of worship hold a considerable place within the architecture of Late Medieval (15-19 centuries). They are found throughout the territories inhabited by Albanians, serving as clear evidence to an historical period of the Albanian people and to architecture and buildings in particular. Studies on them have contributed to a better understanding of buildings of the period, their level and spread, as evidence to various historical phenomena.

They belong to a long period of which other types of buildings are preserved as well, making the architectural view of the time more complete thus making it easier to understand many of its aspects. From buildings initially encountered in centers where the presence of the conquerors was real, with the beginning of widespread conversion to Islam, during the 17-18 centuries Islamic temples were being built everywhere and were becoming a characteristic element in the architectural and urban physiognomy of every settlement.

During the 16-17 centuries mosques became decisive objects in the making of town centers. They were built in the most active part of the town, near the bazaar and other specific public buildings, or within architectural complexes along the mentioned objects or other religious buildings (Berat, Delvinë, Gjirokastër, Elbasan). In time, other mosques were also built within the town centers (Berat, Elbasan, Tirana). In all towns other mosques were built alongside the big ones, smaller and modest of size and architectural features, mainly in neighborhoods inhabited by Muslims. In villages too mosques were built which, apart from exceptions, were simple, small, and of no architectural pretension.

According to their architectural typology, Albanian mosques belong to two traditional categories: those with a dome-covered single hall and those covered with a wooden roof and tiles. Mosques of the second type were built immediately after the conquest, for their convenience in building (Shkodër, Krujë, Berat, Elbasan, Kaninë). In many cases churches were also converted to mosques (Shkodër, Lezhë, Durrës, Krujë). After the situation stabilized and towns began to recover, more significant buildings were being built, the earliest of which are of the wooden-roof type, while the first dome-covered mosques seems to be that of Mirahor in Korçë (1496).

Studies on the architecture of the most prominent mosques show that the models for them were borrowed from architectural prototypes built in Turkey and according to the traditional Islamic architectural forms that were brought by the conquerors and executed by Albanians under the supervision of foreign architects who came with the conquerors, whose belief and culture were still unknown to the ideology of the local people. So were also unknown to local masters the Turkish buildings in particular and those Islamic in general. In time, within the architectural repertory of those centuries (16-19), the Muslim religious buildings came to have a significant place within the totality of period's buildings, assuming their own original local architectural physiognomy as well as a fixed typology.

Regarding the development of building in time we can discern a number of periods which in certain cases are interwoven.

The first period includes the establishment of Turkish garrisons in Albanian castles which were not otherwise left to local vassals, from 1417 to about 1490 at the beginning of the reign of Beyazid II. The second period starts with the building of Mirahori Mosque in Korçë until the end of the 16-th century. The third period should be

considered the 17-th century during which Muslims made up the majority of population in towns. The fourth period consist of the first 30-40 years of the 18-th century during which there was a great demand for mosques due to widespread conversion to Islam. The fifth period starts with Tanzimat reform until the Independence, during which most buildings are public engineering ones alongside the restoration of old mosques or of those that were damaged during the rebellion. The sixth period is that between the Independence and the Second World War, with new buildings out of any tradition and of no value. In this spirit of periodical categorization we could add a seventh period, the one after 1990 which has seen many buildings in no local or modern architectural spirit, although the financial and technical means weren't lacking.

## Arnavutluk'taki Cami Mimarisi

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### Özel

**G**islam inancına ait yapılar Geç Ortaçağ (15 ila 19-uncu yüzyıllar) mimarisi içerisinde azımsanamayacak bir yer tutuyorlar. Arnavutların yaşadığı tüm bölgelerde bulunup, Arnavut milleti tarihine ve özel olarak mimariye ve yapılara dair bir dönemin şahitleri konumundadırlar. Bu camilerin araştırılması, dönemin yapılarını, seviyesini ve yayılışını daha iyi anlamaya yardımcı olmuş, bunlar da bir vesika niteliğiyle türlü tarihi olgulara şahitlik etmiştir.

Söz konusu yapılar uzun bir döneme aittir. Bunlar dışında aynı döneme ait başka türden yapılar da mevcuttur ki bu durum dönemin mimarisine dair manzarayı daha da tamamlayarak birçok yönünün daha iyi tanınmasını kolaylaştırmaktadır. Başlangıçta imparatorluk idaresinin varlığının somut olduğu merkezlerde görülen yapılardan, İslamiyet'in ülke çapında yayılmaya başlamasıyla, 17. ve 18. yüzyıllarda İslami yapılar neredeyse her yerde inşa edilmeye ve her yerleşimin mimari çehresinin özgün unsurları olmaya başlar.

16. ve 17. yüzyıllarda camiler şehir merkezlerinin en faal kısımlarında, pazar veya başka hususi kamu yapılarının yanında, bunlarla veya başka dini yapılarla birlikte (Berat, Delvine, Gjirokastër (Ergir), Elbasan'da olduğu gibi) mimari külliyyeler içerisinde inşa edilecek belirleyici unsurlar olmaya başladılar. Hatta zamanla, sayılarının artmasıyla, şehir merkezleri içinde başka camiler de inşa edilir (Berat, Elbasan, Tiran). Ayrıca bütün şehirlerde, büyük camilerin yanı sıra, özellikle Müslüman mahallelerde, mütevazı boyut ve mimarilerde başka camiler, özellikle mescitler de inşa edilir. Bunun dışında tabi ki köylerde de birkaç müstesna dışında sade, küçük ve mimarı açıdan iddiasız camiler de inşa edilir.

Mimari tipoloji açısından Arnavutluk'taki camiler iki geleneksel gruba ayrılır: kubbeli tek mekânı ile ahşap ve kiremitli çatılı. İnşaat kolaylığından dolayı fetihle beraber ilk olarak bu ikinci türde camiler inşa edilmiş (İşkodra, Krujë (Akhisar), Berat, Elbasan, Kanine), bazen de kiliseler camilere dönüştürülmüştür (İşkodra, Lezhë (Leş), Durrës (Dıraç), Krujë (Akhisar)). Durumun istikrarlaşması ve şehirlerin yeniden kalkınmaya başlamasıyla, önemli yapılar inşa edilmeye başladı. Bunlardan en eskileri ahşap çatılı türdendir (Elbasan, Berat). İlk kubbeli caminin ise Korçë'daki (Görice) Mirahor Cami (1496) olduğu sonucuna varıyoruz.

En önemli camilerin mimarisine dair araştırmalar bunların inşası için modellerin Türkiye'de inşa edilen özgün mimari örneklerden ve İslami mimarinin geleneksel şekillerinden alındığını gösteriyor. Bu yapılar fatihlerle beraber gelen yabancı mimarların yönetimiyle yerli insanlar tarafından inşa edildi, çünkü fatihlerin ne inancı ne kültürü henüz yerli halkın ideolojisinin bir parçasıydı ve ne özelde Türk yapıları ne de genel olarak İslam'ı yapılar yerli ustalar tarafından bilinmekteydi. Zamanla, bu asırların (16-19) mimari dağarcığında Arnavut topraklarındaki Müslüman inancına ait yapılar dönemin yapıları bütününde önemli bir yer tutar ve orijinal yerli bir çehre ile yerleşik bir tipolojiye kavuşur.

Yapıların zaman içerisindeki gelişimi bakımından, bazı durumlarda birbirine geçen birkaç dönemi ayırt edebiliyoruz.

Birinci dönem Arnavutluk kalelerinin yerel vasallara bırakılmayıp Türk garnizonlarının oralarda yerleşmesini kapsar, yani 1417 yılından, I. Beyazıt sultanının başlangıcına, yaklaşık 1490 yılına kadarki dönemi kapsar. İkinci dönem Korçë'da Mirahor Cami'nin inşa edilmesiyle başlar ve 16. yüzyılın sonuna kadar devam eder. Üçüncü dönem olarak Müslüman halkın şehirlerde çoğunluğu tem-

sil ettiği 17-nci yüzyıl sayılmalıdır. Dördüncü dönem geniş çapta bir İslamlamışma sonucunda camilere büyük talep olduğu 18-inci yüzyılın ilk 30-40 yıldır. Beşinci dönem, kamu ve mühendislik binalarının çoğunlukta olduğu ve isyan sırasına zarar gören eski camilerin yenilendiği, Tanzimat ile başlayıp bağımsızlığa dek devam eden dönemdir. Altıncı dönem, tamamen yeni, gelenekte hiç olmayan ve hiçbir değer taşımayan yapıların inşa edildiği bağımsızlıktan İlkinci Dünya Savaşı'na kadarki dönemdir. Bu dönemde ayırmaya devam edeceksek, yapıların sayıca çok olduğu ancak mali ve teknik imkânlar olmasına rağmen ne yerel bir tarzda ne de zamanın mimarisine uygun olduğu 1990 yılından sonraki yedinci dönemini de sayabiliriz.

## Introduction

The study of Islamic religious buildings in Albania, which in all their diversity occupy an important place in the built architecture between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, has enabled us to better understand the Ottoman period in Albania, the buildings of that time, the quality and the extent of their spread, as well as the historical phenomena such as the process of Islamisation of the Albanian people, the beginning of the country's economic growth and, in particular, its cities.

Their study begins with Leon Rey and Hasan Ceka in the 1930s, to be continued by the work of the Albanian Institute of Cultural Monuments, under the guidance of Burhan Strazimiri and Aleksandër Meksi in the 1960s – 1980s, followed by that of Sulejman Dashi and Gjergj Frashëri in the 1980s – 2000s. In addition, the very valuable contribution of the Dutch researcher Machiel Kiel holds an essential place.

An important work on the Turkish-Arabic inscriptions in Albania was the study of Vexhi Buharaja, whose work was cut short by the notorious “ideological and cultural revolution” of 1967 in Albania, when many of the religious monuments suffered an almost irremediable blow from the regime.

For the study of these buildings, the historical records of the travellers who visited the territories inhabited by the Albanians over the centuries are of particular interest. First among them and the most important is undoubtedly the 17<sup>th</sup> century Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, who, in his *Seyahatname*, Volume VIII, describes in great detail the Albanian areas, the life, the people and the buildings. Of tremendous interest are the records of the Turkish archives, alongside the documents of considerable interest held in the Albanian Central State Archive.

The first contacts of the Albanians with the Arab world took place in the early medieval centuries. The oldest evidence found in the historical sources belongs to the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when an expedition of Saracens advances into Dalmatia, conquering along the way the castles from Budva to Kotor, and later Ragusa. They stayed there for 15 months and left when they learned that the Byzantine fleet sent by Emperor Basil (867-886)<sup>1</sup> had set sail against them. Such plundering incursions of the coast, stretching all the way to Corfu, were recorded later again in 1031, as Cedrenius<sup>2</sup> writes. From that time we have inherited in Albania two toponyms: *Saraqinopolis* near Shkodra, and *Saraqinishit* near Gjirokastra. Also the mention of Butrint at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> century speaks for trade contacts between the Arab countries and the Albanian coastline population<sup>3</sup>. Of interest too is the presence of two toponyms from the invasions of the Pecheneg – Cuman peoples: *Kumanovo* (an Albanian town in Macedonia) and *Kumani* (a village in the district of Fier).

1 *Burime tregimtare bizantine për Historinë e Shqipërisë, shek X-XV*, prepared for press by K. Bozgori-F.Liço, Tirana 1975, p. 21 - 22 (Constantino Porfirogenito, *De administrando Imperio*, 127).

2 *Ibid*, 39, (Georgius Cedrenius – Joannes Stylitzes, *Opera II*, 411).

3 Ibn Haukan, *Kitabi surat al-ard*, ed. J.H.Kramer - G.Wiet, Paris 1938-1943, mentions the port of Butrint (Badhrant) in front of Otranto (Adhrant), as well as the No. 8 in the map. The publishers are of the opinion that these data belong to year 988.

To better understand the construction of mosques on Albanian soil during this period, it helps to know the circumstances of the historical events as well as the economic and social developments of the country between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The establishment of Ottoman rule and its administrative and military apparatus on Albanian lands was preceded by a period of several decades during which the local lords ruled their principalities as vassals of the Sultan.<sup>4</sup> The earliest documented foray of a Turkish expedition into Albanian-inhabited territories is around 1380 when the Despot of Ioannina, Thoma Preljubović, called on the Turks to counter the Albanians who were at war with him<sup>5</sup>. Another documented incursion of the Ottoman troops on Albanian lands is that of 1382-1383 when the Turks, under the command of Timur Tash, after storming Manastir (Bitola), crossed into the area of Korça and south Albania, managing to capture Drinopojja<sup>6</sup> too. Later (1385), another Ottoman expedition, allegedly invited over this time by local lord Karl Topia, and led again by Timur Tash, entered the plain of Savra (near today's Albanian city of Lushnja), where they took on and defeated a coalition of Albanian feudals led by Lord Balsha II, who himself was killed in battle.<sup>7</sup>

Thus begins a long period of Ottoman incursions all over Albanian territory: once the local feudal vassalage was secure the Ottoman troops retreated. The Albanian princes, to safeguard their possessions and rule acknowledged vassalage to the Sultan. This practice normally included sending over local troops when required to help the Ottoman army, paying an annual tribute, and handing over as hostage-guarantee their children at the court of the Sultan, or other Ottoman dignitaries.<sup>8</sup> When favourable historical circumstances would go their way, the local lords would rebel and regain their independence. In such a state of affairs, we cannot talk about Islamic cult constructions until the full Ottoman conquest of Albanian territories and the establishment of its feudal-military regime in its cities. Even when Ottoman garrisons were established during this period they were generally temporary and once the invaders were defeated and thrown out, their buildings were destroyed. Important and lasting buildings start only when the Ottoman rule was complete.<sup>9</sup>

4 Selami Pulaha, *Pronësia feudale në tokat shqiptare*, Tirana, 1988, p. 29.

5 *Burime tregimtare...*, p. 246 (The Chronicle of Ioannina).

6 About the region of Korça see: *Lufta shqiptaro-turke në burimet osmane*, prepared for press by Selami Pulaha, Tirana, 1978, p. 128 (Idris Bitlisi); about Drinopojja see: *Burime tregtare.....*, p. 247.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 S. Pulaha, *Pronësia ...* p. 30.

9 About this topic see: *Reth arkitekturës së xhamive të shekujve XV-XVI në Shqipëri*, Monumentet 1, Tirana, 1978, p. 163-169; as well as the literature dealing with this subject matter.



Fig. 1. Albania

The earliest Albanian territories invaded by the Turks, which were followed immediately by the establishment of Ottoman administration, were the regions of south-eastern Albania, which included the provinces of Korça, Përmet and Konica. The time of this development can be deduced from the capture of Manastir (Bitola), circa 1383, and Ohrid in 1394. According to Selami Pulaha, Sultan Bayezid I established standard Ottoman administration in these areas in 1392.<sup>10</sup> To support this evidence we have the *defter* (registers) of Korça, Përmet and Konica of the years 1431-2, when for some timars of the Korça region it is clearly

10 S. Pulaha, op.cit. 30.

stated “*that they are from the time of Sultan Bayezid*” (1389-1402)<sup>11</sup>, whereas for the province of Përmet we find such statement only once.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the province of Përmet was not occupied concurrently with Korça, but a little later.

Albanian coastal cities, seeing the danger coming from the Ottoman expeditions threatening their independence, sought to get protection from the Republic of Venice. This was in keeping with the interests of the local feudal lords, who, this way, hoped to escape Turkish chains while being at the same time vassals of the Sultan. Venice managed to seize the city of Durrës in 1392;<sup>13</sup> took Topiaj and Lezha in 1393 from the Dukagjini family,<sup>14</sup> and captured Drisht and Shkodra in 1393 from the House of Balsha.<sup>15</sup>

The fall of Albanian cities in Ottoman hands, [after a temporary withdrawal linked to the 1402 campaign of Tamerlane in Anatolia], coupled with the establishment of the administration (*Kadi*), garrisons (*Subaşı*), and the *timar* system is well known in historiography.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in 1415 the Turks managed to capture Kruja,<sup>17</sup> in 1417 Berat<sup>18</sup> and Vlora,<sup>19</sup> while in 1418 Gjirokastra.<sup>20</sup> The advance of the Ottoman conquests in the valleys of central Albania greatly expanded the space where the *timar* system was established. We learn this from the corresponding entries in the history of each *timar*, in the registers of the years 1431-2 (835 *hijri* calendar), where we gather information about the registrations carried out between the years 1419 to 1421 during the reign of Sultan Mehmed I Çelebi in the Balkans (1413 – 1421).<sup>21</sup> From these records we learn that the lands between the regions of Mat and Tchameria were included in the *Arvanid Sanjak*, which comprised not only those lands which between the years 1419 – 1421 were under the *timar* system, but also the new territories that were occupied by Isa Bey Evrenoz after the suppression of the 1431 uprising under the leadership of Gjergj Arianiti. Immediately afterwards in 1431-2 the new land registry was established and this gives us data not only about the *Arvanid Sanjak*, but also detailed in-

11 *Basvekalet arsivi, Defteri vilajet-i Gorice ve Premed ive Konice, maliyeden mudever, defter nr.231*, p. 29, 79, 83, 88, 104, 107-110.

12 *Ibid*, p. 42. Whereas for the others it is said that “*they are in existence from the time of the dear departed Sultan*”, meaning Sultan Mehmed I Çelebi (1402-1421).

13 Luan Malltezi, *Qytetet e bregdetit shqiptar gjatë sundimit venedikas*, Tirana, 1988, p. 54. “*A little earlier, in 1388, they had taken the watchtower of the Port of Durrës...*” *ibid*.

14 *Acta et Diplomata res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia collegunt et digeserunt*, L. de Thalloczy, C. Jirecek, E. Sufflay, vol. II, Vindobonae MCMXVIII, II, doc. 501; L. Malltezi, *op.cit.* p. 58.

15 *Acta et Diplomata res Albanie...* Vol. II, doc. 526; L. Malltezi, *op.cit.*, p. 61. Meanwhile we have to mention that Shkodra and Shirgji were captured by the Ottomans in 1393 and held until 1395.

16 Machiel Kiel, *Ottoman architecture in Albania 1385-1912*, Istanbul, 1990, p. 18

17 *Historia e Shqipërisë*, Tirana, 1959, p. 248.

18 N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV siècle*, Paris 1889, seconde serie, p. 160-161 (note on entry date 26.08.1417).

19 *Historia e Shqipërisë*, p. 248.

20 *Burime tregimtare...*, p. 314, note nr. 69, (The Chronicle of Tokon).

21 H. Inalcik, *Hicri 835 tarihli, Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, Ankara 1954, *timars* 1, 26, 55, 86, 103, 147, 165, 216, 228, 276, 311, 324; S. Pulaha, *Pronësia ...*, p. 32.

formation about the lands of Korça, Përmeti and Konica regions, all already now included in the Ottoman state.<sup>22</sup>

The invasion of northern and the north-eastern Albania by the Ottomans (as evidenced by land records of the year 1467, held for the Kastrioti's family region, and the records of the year 1485 for the Sanjak of Shkodra) reintroduced and extended the timar system to almost all Albanian-inhabited lands.<sup>23</sup> Following the death of Skanderbeg, in 1478 the cities of Kruja and Lezha fall into Ottoman hands,<sup>24</sup> while Shkodra falls a year later in 1479.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the whole country, with the exception of the city of Durrës and its immediate surroundings came under Ottoman occupation. Durrës was captured on 17 August 1501<sup>26</sup> and the Ottoman occupation, in the annals of Albanian historiography, was completed in 1506 with the fall of the Lezha-island.<sup>27</sup>

Until 1466 the *Arvanid-ili* province was a separate administrative unit spread in 9 vilayets: Kanina, Berat, Tomorricë, Skrapar, Korça, Pavllokurtik, Çartalos, Kruja and Gjirokastra. It appears that Vlora was the center of this sanjak from 1431 to 1466. With the foundation of the city of Elbasan in 1466, the newly recreated Sanjak of Elbasan included also the provinces of Shpat and Çermenika, and, after 1501, those of Durrës. By now the southern Sanjak of Vlora had a clear identity with the regions of Përmet, Pogon, Tepelena and Gjirokastra all included in it. Besides these we have the Sanjak of Ohrid, which included the regions of Dibra, Kruja, Mati, Prespa, Biloshti, Kolonja, Opari and Tomorrica, followed by the Sanjak of Shkodra, created in 1479, which included Podgorica, Peja, Bihori, Prizren and Montenegro. Over time we have frequent changes of borders of these provinces and their territorial spread.<sup>28</sup>

The dynamic of the Ottoman conquest of Albanian lands begins with the campaigns that ensure the subordination and vassalage of the local feudals (followed by their Islamisation), and ends with a full conquest, the establishment of the Ottoman garrisons, and the inclusion of the occupied Albanian territories into the timar system. It helps us too in determining the time when the Islamic constructions commenced.<sup>29</sup>

The earliest mosque known to date from historical sources was that of Fatih, built within the Castle of Elbasan in 1466.<sup>30</sup> However, recent research has brought

22 M. Kiel, *Ottoman...*, p. 18.

23 S. Pulaha, *Pronësia ...*, p. 35.

24 Marin Barleti, *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*, Tirana, 1982, p. 58, p. 89.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

26 *Dokumente për historinë e Shqipërisë, 1479-1506*, II, 1499-1506, (prepared for press by I. Zamputi), p. 448-449.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 299 (doc. 231)

28 M. Kiel, *Ottoman ...*, p. 20

29 A. Meksi, *Rreth...* p. 165. About the methods and dynamics of Ottoman occupation see: H. Inalcik, Ottoman methods of conquest, *Studia Islamica* II, Paris, 1954, p. 103-129.

30 Gjergj Frashëri, Sulejman Dashi, *Zhvillimi i arkitekturës islamike shqiptare të xhamive (probleme të periudhizimit)*, *Monumentet* 2, Tirana, 1986, p. 55.

to light the fact that “[within] the fortress of Kruja, the church within the tower was adapted to use half of it for housing and half of it as masjid (mosque)”.<sup>31</sup> This evidence is found in the defter of the Arvanid Sanjak covering the years 1431-2, in the pages listing the properties of the Kruja kadi.<sup>32</sup> Korça and Përmet are mentioned a little later; additional notes in the official registers point out the timars of the Imam of Korça and Imam of Përmet,<sup>33</sup> clearly showing organized Islamic communities. Of interest is the hypothesis of Machiel Kiel on the possibility of an Islamic shrine being built during the first invasion of Shkodra in 1393.<sup>34</sup> However this claim needs further evidence.

We have two data sources which provide evidence of the establishment of the invaders’ mosques simultaneously with that of the construction of their castles. In the *Fetihname* of Kruja we read about the destruction of churches, the prohibition of the bells ringing, the construction of *madrasas* and the rule of Islam.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in the account of the capture of Shkodra by the Turks in 1479 the chronicler clearly speaks about the conversion of churches into mosques.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 2 The Mosque in the Shkodra Castle. Built around 1479. View from the south-west.

The Ottoman occupation, as noted earlier, brought, in general, major changes in the political, economic, social and cultural conditions in Albanian inhabited territories, and in particular in Albanian cities. Many of them (Shkodra, Lezha,

31 A. Meksi, *Rreth...*, p. 163.

32 H. Inalcik, *Hicri...*, (timar no. 287).

33 *Basvekalet...*, p. 18-19 and p. 106.

34 *Lufia...*, p. 392.

35 *Ibid*, Mehmet Neshri p. 217, Sollakzade p. 259.

36 M. Kiel, *Ottoman ...*, p. 285.

Durrës, Berat, Vlora, Gjirokastra, etc.) were turned into garrison, religious and administration centres; others (Shurdhahu, Drishti, Danja) were reduced to villages, never managing to recover their former statuses. This is clearly evidenced by the records of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The situation of the country begins to change during the 16<sup>th</sup> century when cities grow into their economic and social roles; the number of residents in them and in the villages around them increases, resulting in a regeneration of productive capacity. The economic development and growth of the villages in turn leads to an increase of the economic activity in the cities; gradually the cities becomes the focus of their respective hinterlands, key focal points for regional and inter-regional trade, and on occasions for trade from further afield.<sup>37</sup> Data comparing the records of 1431 with those at the beginning and the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century illustrates this fact well.<sup>38</sup>

With the full onset of Ottoman rule in 1506 a major survey to register the captured lands began; it was repeated again in 1520. It included in the books also those towns, villages and provinces that previously were not included in the timar system. This latest registry triples the number of *timar-s*, *ziamet-s* and *has-es* compared with 1431–32. Albanian lands continued to be involved in four sanjaks: those of Shkodra, Ohrid, Elbasan and Vlora. During the reign of Sultan Suleiman I, The Lawgiver (1520–66), following the reorganization of the territories of the Empire Albanian lands were included in the *Eyalet* of Rumelia, divided into 9 sanjaks. From the Sanjak of Shkodra the provinces of Kosovo were cut out, to be included in the Sanjak of Prizren, whilst the provinces Dukagjini and Peja were also cut out and formed the new Sanjak of Dukagjini, bordering on the east with the Sanjak of Skopje and Sanjak of Vuçiterna. The southern provinces of Gjirokastra, Delvina and Tchameria were removed from the Sanjak of Vlora to form the Sanjak of Delvina, while the Sanjaks of Ohrid and Elbasan remained unchanged. The population of these sanjaks reached 517,000, of which 15,000 were Muslims.

In terms of land ownership, the militarised feudal rulers were the largest landowners in Albania at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the seven sanjaks of Albania had 120 ziamets and 1624 timars (five times more than in 1431–32). With time there was a growing phenomenon: certain feudal lords started adding an increasing number of timars to their lands, often a disturbing development to the central government, because, this way they reduced the government's military power. Meanwhile, alongside this, the phenomenon of fiefdom expansion, the buying and assembling lands, was on the rise too. These properties were worked and looked after by *çiftçi* farmers/labourers.

<sup>37</sup> Zija Shkodra, *Esnafët shqiptarë (shek.XV-XX)* Tirana, 1973, 20; Selami Pulaha, *Qytetet shqiptare nën regjimin feudal ushtarak osman gjatë shekujve XV-XVI*, *Monumentet 1*, 1984, p. 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25. M. Kiel, *op.cit*, pg. 20.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century centralized power was gradually being replaced by the power of the lords of the sanjaks, who often forced their will over those of *Kanun-name* (literally: “book of law”). Such developments led in turn to the emergence of a greater concentration of property and power, a trend culminating in the creation of the large *pashalik*-s of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> (the pashaliks of Ali Pasha Tepelena and Bushati Family in Shkodra come to mind). After the victorious campaigns against the large Albanian pashaliks the implementation of reforms began, amongst which the most important was the abolition of the feudal-military system. A new administrative division came about, which created pashaliks of a smaller size; now their governors reported directly to the Sublime Porte. Following this, the territories inhabited by Albanians were distributed in nine pashalik: those of Manastir (Bitola), Ioannina, Shkodra, Prizren, Peja, Prishtina, Skopje, Vranje and Leskovac. However, the historical uprisings against the Tanzimat reforms forced Istanbul again to change the structure and set up of the administrative divisions, creating greater ones. In 1836, the Albanian territories in the context of this reform were part of the Elayet of Manastir (Bitola), whose governor carried the title *Vali of Rumelia* and included the pashaliks of Prishtina, Skopje, Vranje, Leskovac and Nis. There was also the Elayet of Ioannina, which included all the southern Albanian regions as well as the pashalik of Thessaly, the latter reporting directly to Istanbul.

In order to strengthen central government, in 1864 the Sublime Porte undertook another administrative reform; elayets were replaced with *vilayets*. They were divided into *sanjaks*, *kaza*-s and *nahyie*-s. Towards the end of the century (1888) the Albanian lands were included in four vilayets; the Vilayet of Shkodra (including the sanjaks of Shkodra and Durres), the Vilayet of Kosova (including the sanjaks of Skopje, Prizren, Prishtina and Novi Pazar), the Vilayet of Manastir (Bitola) (including the sanjaks of Bitola, Korça, Elbasan, Dibra and Selfije) and the Vilayet of Ioannina (including the sanjaks of Ioannina, Gjirokastra, Berat and Preveza). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they numbered 2,354,200 inhabitants.

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The building of Islamic religious edifices in Albania is closely related to the process of Islamisation of the population, a phenomenon that continued throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule at different rates and rhythms. Such an event had considerable impact for the country's development. Ottoman administration and garrisons were established, Muslim believers and religious preachers appeared once the military campaigns reached their objective, and this led to the construction of new religious shrines.

The acceptance of vassalage forced the local lords to send their children to the royal court of the Sultan as *iç oglan*, or to the great feudal Ottoman lords as *gulam*

– effectively in both cases hostages.<sup>39</sup> Consequently these children converted to Islam and gradually integrated themselves into the timar system. As a result, they could inherit the properties of their families, but did so now as members of the Ottoman feudal class. With this new status they also ensured the Islamisation of their farmers.<sup>40</sup> In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century these vassal local lords owned 42.6% of the feuds in south-eastern Albania, and 25.6% in the Arvanid sanjak.<sup>41</sup> Later, following the full occupation of the country and the suppression of resistance, they gradually disappear. They either fled, or became part of the Islamised population serving, in the process, as nuclei for the Islamisation of large masses of local population.

During the initial period of occupation, besides the Islamised local feudal lords, there are also a large number of *timarli* Christians who descend from the former feudal Albanian families and who continue still to own parts of their former estates. Thus, in 1431-2 in the Arvanid Sanjak they own about 16% of timars, while in the provinces of Korça, Përmeti and Konica 27.9%.<sup>42</sup>

In the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century we also witness the process of Islamisation of Christian *Sipahis*, who by converting to Islam try to secure their economic, social and political status in the midst of a military-feudal class belonging to a centralised Ottoman state. Accordingly, Islamisation brought with it also the strengthening of the Ottoman feudal class in Albania. After the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there are no more Christian Sipahis. In addition to the above-mentioned groups, there is a third group of feudal lords comprised of persons coming from Anatolia. In 1431, they accounted for 30% of timarli owners in the Arvanid Sanjak.<sup>43</sup>

It is interesting to note that at the time of the establishment of the Ottoman rule in Albanian territories we also find timars owned by the dignitaries of the church such as the Metropolitan of Berat,<sup>44</sup> the bishop of Kanina,<sup>45</sup> the bishop of Kruja,<sup>46</sup> the bishop of Drinopoja,<sup>47</sup> and the bishop of Korça.<sup>48</sup>

Until the complete occupation of the country, the Turks kept a cautious stance on religious issues. In late 15<sup>th</sup> century Islamisation was an isolated occur-

39 Peter Bartl, *Myslymanët shqiptarë në lëvizjen për pavarësi* (1878-1912), Tirana, 2006, p. 16-17. Ferit Duka, Feja dhe shoqëria në hapësirën shqiptare, periudha osmane, in *Shekujt osman në hapësirën shqiptare (Studime e Dokument)*, Tirana, 2009, p. 42.

40 *Ibid*, 43.

41 S. Pulaha, *Qytetet.*, table p. 26-27.

42 S. Pulaha, *Pronësia...*, p. 42-43.

43 H. Inalcik, Od Stefana Dušana do osmanskog Carstva-Hrisčanske spahije u Rumeli u XV veka i njihovo poreklo, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju u istoriju Jugoslovenskih naroda pod turskon vladavinom*, III-IV, 1952-1953, Sarajevo, 1953, 361-38; S. Pulaha, *Pronësia ...*, p. 44.

44 H. Inalcik, *Hicri 855 ...*, timars no. 148, 148, 162, 186, 200.

45 *Ibid*, timar no. 100.

46 *Ibid*, timar no. 299.

47 *Ibid*, timar no. 30.

48 *Ibid*, timar no. 3/a.

rence.<sup>49</sup> The local population was almost totally Christian (136 Muslim homes out of a total of 54,630) and those few Muslims can be found mainly in the sanjak of Shkodra, and to a lesser degree in the sanjak of Kosova.

According to Ottoman records, during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Islamisation of the Albanian population goes on at a slow pace. This is shown clearly in the study of Prof. Thëngjilli,<sup>50</sup> who shows that less than 10% of native Christians do embrace the religion of the invaders, resisting in numbers the conversion to Islam. Of interest to my thesis are the developments and dimensions of this process at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, in particular in Albanian towns and villages. Ottoman records show us that the population of the cities at this time is 62% Christian, 38% Muslim. Kosova's towns differ slightly from this average with 54% Christian and 46% Muslim. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many of the main cities of Albanian show significant change. Shkodra, Stelush, Sfetigrad and Petrela have 100% of their residents converted to Islam; Peja 90%, Berat 60%, Tepelena 50%, Kruja 63%, Elbasan 79%, Gjirokastra 23%, Prishtina 60%, Skrapar 87%, Prizren 56%, Korça 21%, Peqin 79%, Ndraq 88%. Kavaja and Delvina however have only 4%, Këlcyrë 2.4%, Lezha 1.3%; Vlora, Himara, Tërgovishta and Përmeti do not have a single Muslim resident.<sup>51</sup>

Albanian villages were generally Islamised at a slower rate. In total about 2% of Albanian villages were Islamised in 1530, and about 10% by the end of the century. The rhythm of change is uneven, not the same in all places. Thus, there are higher rates of conversion in the Elbasan area (26/1%), followed by Dukagjini (21%), and slightly less so in Ohrid (16.8%).<sup>52</sup>

Yet, all these data indicate that, “*by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup>, beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we can not speak of a mass conversion to Islam, as was the case in Bosnia, but only of a partial conversion to Islam of the Albanian population.*”<sup>53</sup> However, the 17<sup>th</sup> century marks a massive spread of Islam in Albanian territories as shown by numerous studies based on the data provided by the missionaries of the Catholic Church for Northern and Eastern Albania (ie, the Catholic Albanians), as well as the *jizya* tax records for the rest. This very detailed material, which covers a number of years, helps us analyse in detail religious change across the population of Albanian towns and villages.<sup>54</sup>

49 Petrika Thëngjilli, *Shqiptarët midis lindjes dhe perëndimit 1505-1839*, Vol.I, Fusha Fetare, Tirana, 2002, p. 17.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

51 The data regarding the Albanian towns, cities and provinces inhabited by Albanians were taken from S. Pulaha, *Popullsia shqiptare e Kosovës gjatë shek. XVI-XVII*, Tiranë 1984, p. 651-659. Of interest are the data given by P. Thëngjilli, *Shqiptarët midis lindjes dhe perëndimit 1505-1839*, vol. I, Fusha Fetare, Tirana, 2002, p. 17, where we read that during the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Albanian lands there were 54,680 Christian households and only 130 Muslim ones. S. Pulaha *Qytetet ...* p. 25-27. P. Thëngjilli, *op.cit.*, p. 33, says that at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century only 9,5% of households were Muslim.

52 P. Thëngjilli, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

54 Data about Catholic Albania (North and Middle Albania) can be found in *Relacione mbi gjendjen e*

The evidence has shown that the rate of conversion of Christians to Islam was greater in cities than in villages. About the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century we witness massive conversions to Islam in northern, north-eastern and middle Albania.<sup>55</sup> Even in southern Albania, where the only source of data is the records of *jizya* tax from which we learn about the changes, and about a sharp drop in the number of caravanserais and inns, I am of the opinion that besides the acts of fleeing, hiding and leaving the country, the main reason for this is the process of Islamisation.

From the analysis of the above data we draw a key conclusion that the Muslim population at the 17<sup>th</sup> century stood at about 70%. The process of Islamisation of the Christian population continues later uninterrupted, but at slower rates, and, as already noted, not evenly spread. It was different for different provinces, and uneven between towns and villages.

The two great pashaliks who ruled almost autonomously - the Pashalik of Shkodra (1757–1831) headed by the Bushati family and based in Shkodra, and the Pashalik of Janina (1787–1822) headed by Ali Pasha Tepelena and based in Ioannina - adopted a policy of tolerance towards their Christian population, obviously in the interests of these rulers themselves. During their rule, in a series of regions including Shkodra and Kolonja and some others, there were villages where the Christian population grew.<sup>56</sup> But, with the decline and fall of the two great pashaliks the process of Islamisation steadily continued apace.

Generally speaking, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the religious communities are more or less stabilized: but by now most of the Albanian population had converted to Islam.<sup>57</sup>

The conversion of the Albanian population to Islam is a phenomenon that has held the interest of various scholars. They have tried to explain its causes and specifications, as well as the differences from other Balkan peoples. The matter has been studied continuously in many aspects from many scholars<sup>58</sup> amongst whom we can mention Spiridonis Vrionis, Stavro Skëndi, Aleksandar Loposić,

*Shqipërisë veriore dhe të mesme në shek. XVII*, prepared for press by I. Zamputi, Vol. I, 1610-1634, Tirana, 1963, Vol. II, 1634-1654, Tirana, 1966; P. Bartl, *Quellen und materialien zur albanischen geschichte im 17. und 18. jahrhundert*, München, 1979; P. Bartl, *Albania Sacra, geistliche Visitationsberichte aus Albanien, 1. Dizocese Alessio*, Wiesbaden, 2007, 2. *Erzdiözese Durazzo*, Wiesbaden 2001.

55 P. Thëngjilli, *op. cit.*, p. 59-62.

56 Ibid, p. 97-98.

57 Ibid, p. 97-98.

58 About this topic see also: G. Stadtmüller, Die islamisierung den Albanen, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, N.F.3, 1954, p. 404-429; S. Vryonis, Religious changes and patterns in the Balkans, *Aspects of the Balkans, Continuity and Change*, The Hague-Paris 1972, p. 167-168; S. Skendi, Religion in Albania during the ottoman Rule, *Südost Forschungen*, XV-1956, p. 316-318; A. Loposić, Islamisation of the Balkans, Some general considerations, *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh 1979, p. 49-57; N. Filipović, Osvert na pitanje islamizacije, Balkanu pod Turcima, *Godišnjak XIII/11*, Sarajevo, 1976, p. 385-415; S. Rizaj, The islamisation of the Albanians during the XV and XVI centuries, *Studia Albanica*, 2, 1985, p. 127-131; *Relacione mbi gjendjen e Shqipërisë veriore dhe të mesme në shek. XVII*, prepared for press by I. Zamputi, Vol. II 1634-1654, doc. 28, p. 93; Sh. Zefi, *Islamizimi i shqiptarëve gjatë shekujve*, Prizren, 2011.

Nedim Filipović, Skënder Rizaj, Peter Bartl, Selami Pulaha, Petrika Thëngjilli, Ferit Duka and Shan Zefi.

Researchers have rightly pointed out that Albanian nobility, from the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century, was the first group to accept the change of religion, when those vassals to the Sultan were forced to send one son as hostage to his court.<sup>59</sup> When the country was invaded these nobles constituted the beginnings of the Islamised Albanian population.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note here that the Ottomans temporarily allowed Christian timarli holders, this being as much a strategy tool for their integration into the timar system as a sign of religious tolerance.<sup>61</sup> With the thorough Islamisation of Albania's feudal class, once their resistance was broken during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there are no more Christian timarli holders, and this created the right conditions for the massive penetration of Islam into the Albanian population.<sup>62</sup>

The Islamisation of the local population initially occurred in cities which immediately after the conquest became the administrative, economic, political and cultural centres, as well as the religious seats for the clergy of the invaders. The Islamisation of the cities followed the steady Islamisation of its citizens aided by the arrival of the newly Islamized peasants moving to cities. To explain this process a number of factors is of importance and the researchers mentioned above list them in great detail; however, particular subjective factors such as the political, military, religious, economic, judicial, cultural and collective psychological traditions of the Albanians on occasions have been overestimated.<sup>63</sup>

During the first period of Ottoman invasion international indifference towards this happening was not without its significance aided, in north-eastern Albanian territories by the maltreatment of Albanians by the Serbian church. Of great influence were also economic factors such as a heavy tax on every Christian family as well as numerous other obligations, burdens and charges on them. Other important factors were the violence against Christians and church structures; the destruction of Christian shrines or their conversion to mosques; the ban – by the Ottomans – on repairing and refurbishing existing churches and on building new ones; the lack of religious services; the forgetfulness of Rome about its Albanian Catholic flock during the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the foreign clerics; the opposition to crypto-Christianity; and the termination of the Patriarchates of Peja in 1766 and Ohrid in 1767, responsible for the Orthodox Albanian believers in north-eastern, middle and south-eastern Albania.

59 P.Bartl, *Myslymanët shqiptarë...* p. 16-17.

60 F. Duka, op. cit. p. 43.

61 *Ibid*, pg. 43.

62 *Ibid*, pg. 43.

63 These factors and their analysis by other authors are dealt in great detail by P. Thëngjilli, *op. cit.*, p. 117-305.

Additional factors were at play too, such as the establishment of military garrisons in the cities, where Janissaries, Sipahis and colons served (although the latter, as shown by the Ottoman defters, were few in the territories inhabited by Albanians); the hurried Islamisation of the feudal class in order to save their properties and estates; the eagerness of citizens to convert in order to serve in the administration and army so they could get a foothold in the power ladder; and also the conversion of professional craftsmen in order to practise those crafts that were the monopoly of Muslims.

Other ways and factors which influenced the spread of Islam in Albanian territories also included the various enforcements and the “*volunteering*” processes in order to get benefits; the levying of taxes; the economic restraints and disadvantages; crypto-Christians; the acceptance of the Bektashism; mixed faith marriages; conversion to Islam to escape slavery and violence; and employment of Christians for Muslim employers.

Therefore conversion to Islam of Albanians is the result of a number of factors which did not occur uniformly in time, were not the same in different provinces, and were conditioned by a number of ethno-psychological factors, themselves not the same in all regions. Yet, not all were converted, not everyone was suppressed, and escapes and mass migrations to Italy, Greece and elsewhere, were frequent. However, closely related to the process of conversion is the construction and dissemination of new faith’s religious shrines in the territories inhabited by Albanians.

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Muslim religious buildings, mosques, *tekkes* and *madrasas*, as well as other buildings of a new typology associated with the Ottoman occupation, such as *hammams* and caravanserais, occupy a prominent place in the repertoire of the late medieval buildings in Albania between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They can be found everywhere in the territories inhabited by Albanians, and, alongside fortifications, dwellings, churches and the like, they provide clear and multifaceted material evidence of a period in the history of Albanian people, and in particular their architecture and constructions. Their study has enabled us to understand better the late medieval buildings, their scale and range, as well as historical phenomena such as the beginning of the economic growth of the country and, in particular, its towns, which, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>64</sup> were gradually included in the multinational urban fabric of the Ottoman Empire.

The study of preserved buildings, alongside other data (census registers and fiscal data), shows that during the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a significant growth in the economic and social role of the cities, an increase in the number of city

<sup>64</sup> Z. Shkodra, *op.cit*, p. 28-29.

residents, and a regeneration of productive forces. This was noted also in the villages. Comparison of the records of 1431-2 with those at the start and at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century makes this very clear. An example of this is the city of Berat, which at those times numbered respectively 175, then 406, and at the end of the century 1094 homes.

Spread almost all over Albania, Islamic religious buildings are an important architectural element. They belong to a long historical period, and alongside buildings of other denominations and functions help to complete the architectural landscape of the times. By becoming important, sometimes even defining, elements of the architectural and urban physiognomy of each residential centre, town or village during the period in question they help us understand better certain historical aspects of those times.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries mosques were built in the most active parts of town centres, close to the market and other public buildings, singularly or in complexes, as seen in Berat, Delvina, Gjirokastra, Elbasan. As time goes by, their number increases within the city centres, whilst other mosques get built (see Berat, Elbasan, Shkodra, Tirana). We also note that in all towns, along with major mosques, we find smaller mosques of the *masjid* kind, modest in size and architectural treatment, mainly in the neighbourhoods of the city inhabited by the Muslims. Mosques were built everywhere for the converted. Those of the villages are simple, small and of unassuming architecture. It is rare to find mosques of high architectural value built in small centres. One case in point, however, is the Mosque of Alay Beg built at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century in Burim, a small town, which constitutes an exception and is the result of the special brief of the patron.

The mosques of Albania can be grouped architecturally in two traditional categories: those with a single prayer hall covered with domes, and those covered with flat wooden roofs and tiles, where *masjids* belong. The study of surviving exemplars and the records of those travellers who have visited Albania over the centuries shows that immediately following the invasion, mosques were first built with flat wooden roofs and tiles, due to ease of construction (see Shkodra, Kruja, Berat, Elbasan, Kanina). Cases when the existing churches were transformed into mosques are evidenced in Shkodra, Lezha, Durrës, Kruja.

Once the situation was stabilised and cities started their recovery important mosques of dome-covered prayer halls were built, some of which are preserved even today. Typologically they are part of the larger group of domed mosques belonging to an older type, whose style precursors can be found in the Alaeddin Bey Cami in Bursa, built in 1335;<sup>65</sup> the Yeşil Mosque (Turkish: Yeşil Cami, “Green Mosque”) in Iznik, built in 1349;<sup>66</sup> the Mehmet Çelebi mosque in Iznik again,

<sup>65</sup> K. Aptullah, *op. cit.*, p. 181, fig. 1-2.

<sup>66</sup> S. K. Yetkin, *op. cit.*, p. 66, note 1; H. Gluck - E. Diez, *Die Kunst der Islam*, Berlin 1925, p. 247, p. 554.

built in 1400;<sup>67</sup> and the Ilyas Bey Mosque complex built 1404<sup>68</sup> and situated in the ancient city of Miletos (Balat, Aydin). These mosques are characterized by a small central volume covered with a dome, an architectural type used increasingly sparingly in Istanbul during the classical period of Turkish-Ottoman architecture.

The first dome-covered mosque built on Albanian lands seems to be the Mirahor Mosque in Korça (1496). It was commissioned by Ilias Bey, Mirahor (General of Cavalry) of the Ottoman Empire and is well known for its architecture and forms. It did serve as a model for many other mosques of this kind built later in different cities such as Vlora, Berat, Elbasan and other cities of Central Albania, developing increasingly along the way a blend of original form with local features. The Lead Mosque in Shkodra, built according to the models of the classical period, is a fine work of architecture but is an exception. Mosques of this type were difficult to build and couldn't be built just anywhere and/or by anyone.



Fig. 3. Muradie Mosque in Vlora. Middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century. View from the south-east.

**The Mosque of Ilias Bey Mirahor (Xhamia e Iliaz Bej Mirahorit)**<sup>69</sup> in the city of Korça, according to the late inscription of 1872 – 1873 found above the entrance, was built/commissioned in 1495-6 (901 *hijri*) by Ilias Bey, born in Panarit, Korça district, Mirahor of Sultan Bayezid II (1481 – 1512).<sup>70</sup>

67 K. Aptullah, Basic Space and Form Concept in Early ottoman mosque architecture, *Atti del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Arte Turca*, Naples, 1965. p 81; M. Kiel, *Ottoman ...*, p. 164-166.

68 S.K. Yetkin, *L'architecture turque en Turquie*, Paris, 1962, p. 77-79, fig. 22.

69 A. Meksi, *Ndërtimet...* p. 196-198.

70 P. Pepo, Dy dokumente mesjetare mbi Shqipërinë. Berati i Sulltan Bajazitit II dhe vakufnameja e Mirahor Iliaz Beut, *BSSSH*, 3, Tirana, 1956, p. 289. Regarding the activity of Ilias Bey Mirahor we know that he

The mosque is a classic example of its kind and consists of the prayer hall, the three-parted portico and the minaret. The prayer hall is square in plan, measuring 9.6 x 9.6 metres, covered by a spherical dome, resting on squinches in the corners, which, for the first time in Albania, appear in their full form. The entrance to the prayer hall is made through the gate on the north side. In the southern side there is the *mihrab* decorated with stalactites in the upper part and surrounded by a rectangular frame. On the *mihrab*'s right there is a wooden *mimber* that, through some steps, leads to the preacher's stand. The prayer hall has a unique interior space, which is illuminated by a large number of windows located on the sidewalls and at the octahedral base of the covering dome. The windows are placed in three tiers, one above the other.



Fig. 4. Ilias Bey Mirahor Mosque in Korça. 1495-1496. View from the north.

The Ilias Bey Mirahor Mosque is an architectural achievement of multiple values. It has a harmony of forms lined up in the vertical direction, a complete balance between walls and the voids of the windows, a unique interior space, a full unity between interior and exterior, architecture and structure, which reveals simultaneously both the architecture and the structure of the building. Despite

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converted the church of Saint John, in Studion, Constantinople into a mosque (H. Ethem, *Nos Mosquées de Stambul*, Stambul, 1932; G. Schlumberger, *La siège, la prise et le sac de Constantinople par les turcs en 1453*, Paris 1915, p. 323).

the relatively small size, the mosque is a monumental building. The Ilias Bey Mirahor Mosque was a *külliye* type complex that included also the *türbe* (mausoleum) existing still today, the *hammam*, an *imaret* (soup kitchen) and the *madrasa* (religious school).<sup>71</sup>

**The Lead Mosque (Xhamia e Plumbit)** in Shkodra is the largest mosque preserved in Albania and the only one representative of the classic Ottoman period.<sup>72</sup> Mehmet Pasha Bushati, as the inscription reads, commenced the building of the mosque in 1773-1774 (1187 *hijri*).<sup>73</sup> It is of a compound style and consists of a prayer hall with the mihrab, two porticos on the north and south sides, and an enclosed courtyard on the west side. The prayer hall has a square plan, measuring inside 9.17 x 9.17 metres. On the south side there is a rectangular area, fully connected with the prayer hall where the mihrab is situated, an unusual arrangement in Albanian mosques, encountered also in the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren, built in the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>74</sup> The prayer hall has a spherical dome built with bricks, which rises above the drum with the help of squinches in the corners. The squinches are built in stone and connect to each other with stone arches, protruding slightly from the walls.

An important component in the architectural formulation of the building is the porch-courtyard, on the north side, built simultaneously with the mosque. Rectangular in plan, it has 14 cross-vaulted domes, spread all over the four sides, creating an open courtyard in the middle. Typologically the Lead Mosque in Shkodra was inspired by classic style Turkish-Ottoman mosque examples, built during the preceding two centuries in Istanbul in order to impress the visitor. This has come about by the particular requirements of the patron, conditioned also by the political circumstances of the time.

71 P. Pepo, *op. cit.*, p. 181. M. Kiel, *Ottoman ...*, p. 166.

72 Machiel Kiel shares the same opinion in *Ottoman...*, p. 231. These are the Sehzade Mosque built in 1548, S.K.Yetkin, *op.cit.* p. 121-123, fig. 35, tab. LXXI; Süleymaniye Mosque (1550-57), *ibid*, p. 123-127, fig.36, tab. LXXXI-LXXXII; Selymie Mosque in Ederne (1569-1575) *ibid*, p. 127-128, fig. 37, tab. LXXIV-LXXXIII; Sultan Ahmed Mosque (the Blu Mosque) (1616), *ibid*, p. 128-130, tab. LXXXIV-LXXXVII; the first ones are works of Koca Mimar Sinan, whereas the last one is the work of Sedefkâr Mehmet Ağa from Elbasan. The closest comparison with this kind of dome-covered mosque can be made with the Nur-u Osmanie Mosque in Istanbul (1756), where the pendente-raised dome is held on four big arches. This mosque, with clear baroque influences, marks the end of the classical Turkish –Ottoman style. *Ibid*, p. 133-135, fig. 40, tab. XCI-XCII.

73 V. Buharaja, *Mbishkrimet...*, M.Kiel, *Ottoman...*, p. 233. According to the inscription we learn that this mosque was repaired by Mahmud Berberi in the years 1863 – 1864 (1280 *hijri*).

74 H. Redzic, Pet osmanlijkëh potkupolnik spomenika na Kosovu i Metohija, *Antikitete të Kosovës e Metohisë*, 1961, p. 93, fig. 3.

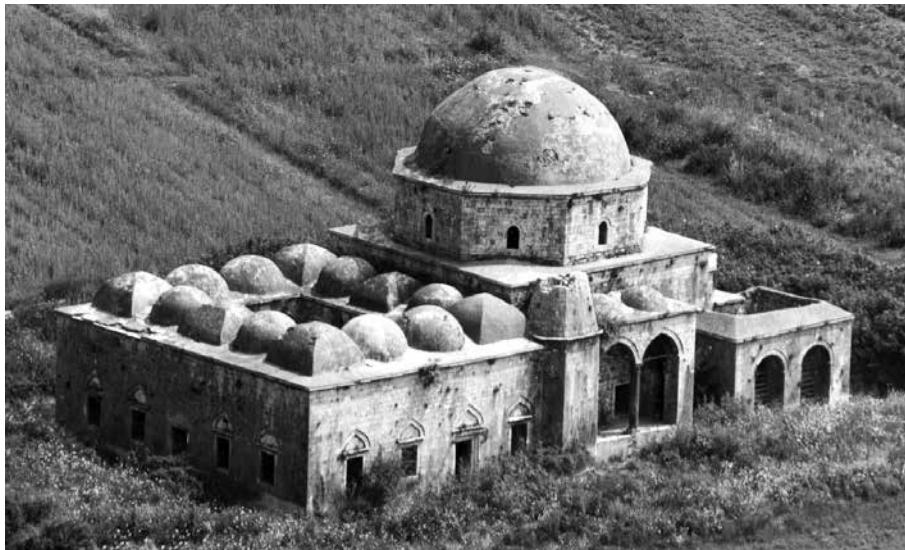


Fig. 5. The Lead Mosque in Shkodra. 1773-1774. View from the Shkodra castle.

However, similarities with sultanic mosques are to be found only in the overall brief for prayer hall, porch, courtyard and side porches. The rare scheme for the prayer hall conforms to local traditional form, covered with a dome resting directly on the sidewalls. It differs from the classic type mosque schemes that due to their considerable size must use also pillars and/or pilasters, and adapts to the norms to which the local believers were used.

**The Mosque of Et'hem Beu (Xhamia e Et'hem Beut)**<sup>75</sup> in Tirana is found in the middle of the city with the Clock Tower adjacent to it. The Mosque and the Clock tower is a complex of a high importance to the city of Tirana. The preserved inscriptions<sup>76</sup> tell us that its construction started in 1793 – 94 (1208 *hijri*) paid for by Molla Bey from Petrela. By 1820-1821 (1236 *hijri*), the inscription shows, the painting of interiors and exteriors is complete. Haci Et'hem Bey, the son of Molla Bey in 1823 continued the building of the portico, the minaret and the paintings of the portico, as the inscription in the outer portal tells us.<sup>77</sup>

75 L. Rey-H. Ceka, La mosquée de Ethem Beu, *Albania* 5 (1935); A. Meksi-Gj. Frashëri, Arkitektura dhe restaurimi i xhamisë së Ethem Beut në Tiranë, *Monumentet* 14, Tirana, 1977, p. 125-132, Tab.I-VIII.

76 L. Rey- H.Ceka, *op.cit.*, p. 65-66; K. Frashëri, Vështrim mbi zhvillimin shqipëror, arsimor e kulturor në Tiranë deri në mesin e shek.XIX, *Arsimi Popullor*, 4-1964, p. 65. V. Buharaja, *Mbishkrimet...* M. Kiel, *op.cit.*, p. 253-9, gives the inscriptions in full along with their translation in order to determine the patron and the time of the construction. Of interest is the information given about the writer of the second inscription dated both 1208 *hijri* and 1236 *hijri* above the entrance of the porch by a poet named Suzi.

77 K. Frashëri, *op.cit.*, p. 66-68.



*Fig. 6. Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana. 1793-1823. View from the east.*

In terms of architecture the mosque has a prayer hall, a portico and a minaret. The prayer hall is square in plan, measuring 10.50 x 10.45 metres. As a volume it is a domed cube. The dome rises standing on squinches. Five windows on each side, arranged in three rows, light the interior: two for each of the lower levels and one on top.

The mosque's interior is characterized by the unique overall volume of the cube topped by the dome, fully lit by the windows. The dimensions of each are gently balanced and by making full use of the squinches in the corners, and the passages of the sharp arches alongside the walls, they transit into each other rather peacefully. The mural paintings of the cupola and the upper part of the walls simultaneously unify and differentiate these two volumes. The restrained interior decoration, the size of the minbar and mahfil make this space both personal and warm for the visitor.

There is a rather refined compatibility of the exterior with the interior. From the portico one has the possibility to explore different views from different viewpoints. The gaze, ever rising, passes from the porch, to the dome's volume and ends at the top of the graceful minaret. The portal is a component of note with

well-designed proportions, resting on a high plinth. All these elements create a complete whole where each volume is in balance with the other.

Mosques with flat wooden roofs and wooden ceilings are more numerous in Albania than domed ones. A reason for this is that they are far easier to build. As typology they originate from the earliest mosques featuring hypostyle halls with many columns. In general the major Seljuk mosques, and the great mosques (*ulu cami*) are characterised in this way, with the interior space simplified by a reduction in the number of columns.<sup>78</sup>

The first mosques built by the invaders in our country are of this type and their profusion shows them to be a permanent choice in Islamic religious buildings here. They are typified in small shrines and neighborhood *masjids*, but, as we shall see, also in some important buildings.

The wooden roof mosques are the oldest surviving examples we have and can be found in Elbasan, Shkodra and Berat. These early constructions of unassuming architecture, built in main centres, belong to the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512), and are often called The Mosque of the Ruler (Xhamia Mbret). They show the importance the Ottomans paid to the Islamisation of the country<sup>79</sup> through religious conversion and the introduction of Islamic culture.

A second important conclusion is that the country's economic upturn begins at this time. With these old types of mosques a long series of buildings begins all over Albanian lands, which will develop along the way. It should be remembered however that the type of mosque being built depended on one hand on the requirements and economic means of the patron and/or religious community, and the on the other by the skills of the builders and the construction period.

**The Mosque of the Ruler in the Castle of Elbasan (Xhamia mbret në Kala të Elbasanit)**<sup>80</sup> is the largest and the oldest Islamic shrine of the city. Initially we know it from the description of Evliya Çelebi who calls it the Mosque of Gazi Sinan Pasha,<sup>81</sup> a rather large building, yet old and squat. Çelebi tells us that the four walls of the prayer hall were filled with beautiful poems written by travellers from Turkey, Arabia and Persia. Çelebi himself left a note in 1670. The mosque was badly damaged during the 'cultural revolution' of 1967, when the very valuable minaret was torn down; the interiors were destroyed and painted over, made almost unrecognizable.

78 S. K. Yetkin, *L'architecture...* p. 64-66; K. Aptullah, *Basic Space ...* p. 181.

79 Z. Shkodra, *Esnafet....*, p. 48.

80 A. Meksi, *Ndërtimet...* p. 193-194.

81 *Evliya Çelebi...*, p. 169-171. I am of the opinion that this person might be the *Kapudan Pasha* (Admiral) of the Ottoman navy, who during the expedition of Bayezid II in 1492, with 300 ships was moored along the Albanian coastline. However, this theory needs further evidence.

The mosque consists of a prayer hall, porch and minaret. The prayer hall is rectangular in plan, with interior dimensions of 11.52 x 12.35m and covered with wooden roofs. To facilitate the construction of the roof, alongside the transverse longitudinal axis of the building, three wooden pillars were erected to support the horizontal beams of the roof, a feature that according to M. Kiel is quite rare.<sup>82</sup> One enters from the portal in the northern wall. Once inside we find the mahfil on wooden structures. Opposite the entrance is the mihrab; the minbar is made of wood and stands tall on the right of mihrab, built on a slightly higher floor. The hall is illuminated by 14 windows set in two rows on three walls, and only one at the bottom of the northern wall. The hall is covered with a wooden roof that has four drains, is covered in local country tiles and displays broad eaves. The masonry is built in cloisonné: two vertical bricks alternating with two horizontal ones. The space in-between masonry is plastered over with a thin layer of plaster that covers rather well the rough-hewn stone wall underneath.



*Fig. 7. Mosque of the Ruler in Elbasan. End of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. View from the south-west.*

This mosque is of particular interest to researchers because it is the only format that preserves the old mosques' blueprint for building, much more so than any other mosques of the initial phase of Turkish invasion.

<sup>82</sup> M. Kiel, *Ottoman ...*, p. 115. Kiel reports that the other mosque of this kind is to be found in Turkish Thrace: the Mosque of Sultan Murad II in Uzunköprü. *Ibid.*

In setting the time of the mosque's construction around 1492, we based our view on the name "Ruler" and Çelebi's claim that it was built during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512).<sup>83</sup> It is known that from June 1492 to mid-winter the sultan remained in Albania, and then returned to Istanbul.<sup>84</sup>

**Suleiman Pasha Mosque (Xhamia e Sulejman Pashës)** in Tirana, referred to as the old mosque and around which the core of the city was formed, was built in 1614 by the founder of the city, Suleiman Pasha Bargjini.<sup>85</sup> It was burned during World War II. We know the mosque from photographic documents, paintings and engravings of the time, as well as from an approximate plan of the building. The Old Mosque consisted of a prayer hall, porch and minaret. The prayer hall was rectangular,<sup>86</sup> covered with a timber roof and had a wooden ceiling. To enter the hall you used a single entrance on the north side, facing the mihrab, which was semicircular and covered with stalactite work in the upper part. Numerous windows in two and three rows lit the hall. The lower windows were rectangular, the upper ones ended with Ottoman pointed arches. The interior was completely painted and lit from the wealth of stained glass windows set in plaster frames. The interior was made even more attractive by the decorated walls, painted ceilings, and the windows.

An important element was the porch. It was two-storied porch surrounded by a structure of glass-covered arcades which once were all open downstairs and had latticework on the top floor. Semicircular arches rested on stylized capitals and stone pillars. The upper parts of the prayer hall as well as the lower arcade were decorated with floral motifs and paintings showing cityscapes.

The minaret consisted of an octahedral foundation, the shaft with 16 lateral sides, and the protruded balcony with four rows of stones carved into a triangular shape. The minaret was the distinguishing feature of the building. Judging by the forms used and the unique elements it had I am of the opinion that the architecture of the mosque of Suleiman Pasha demonstrates multiple connections with local and vernacular architecture.

83 Even M. Kiel, judging by the name, thinks that the mosque was built during the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See: *Aspects of ottoman-turkish architecture in Albania*, Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art (1975), Budapest 1978. p. 543.

84 M. de Hammer, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, Vol.4, Paris, 1836, p. 32-34.

85 Gj. Frashëri – S. Dashi, *Zhvillimi...* p. 56.

86 K. Frashëri, *op.cit.* p. 65.



Fig. 8. Suleiman Pasha Mosque in Tirana. Built in 1614. View from the west.

**The Mosque of Bachelors (Xhamia e Beqarëve)**<sup>87</sup> in Berat is located at the lower part of the Mangalem neighbourhood. The mosque served the Order of the Bachelors of various guilds in the city. Being an association of unmarried craftsmen the Order also conducted the service of night watch and keeping law and order in the area of city's bazaar.<sup>88</sup> According to the inscription the mosque was painted in 1827-28 (1243 *hijri*).<sup>89</sup>

The mosque is built on a sloping site and it consists of two volumes under the same roof. The main volume on the south side has a portico made of three arcades and three galleries underneath. In the north side there is an arcaded hall with an open porch. In the prayer hall one enters through the northern porch reached by walking up a pathway starting at a lower level than the porch itself. The entrance features a carved stone portal with a rectangular window on its upper part. The prayer hall is an irregular rectangle in plan, measuring 11.25 x 9.63 metres and 11 x 10 metres in its extremities. After extensive restoration work the hall was covered with a renovated ceiling. The prayer hall is divided into two by a triple

<sup>87</sup> A. Meksi, Restaurimi përforcues në xhaminë e Beqarëve në Berat, *Monumentet*, 19, Tirana, 1979, p. 93-99, fig.1, tab. I-II; A. Meksi, *Ndërtimet...*

<sup>88</sup> Z. Shkodra, Problemi i kallfës në sistemin e esnafëve shqiptarë, *B.U.SH.T. S.SH.SH.* 1, Tirana, 1967, p. 13.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

arcade resting on two wooden columns. The mihrab, a typical semicircular cut into the mihrab wall, is found on the southern side.



*Fig. 9. The Mosque of Bachelors in Berat. Built 1827-8.*

To know better the building and its interesting history are the data given to us by Vexhi Buharaja and confirmed by Kiel, extracted from the mosque's inscription. The writer of these verses is the poet Arif Hikmet, who was also a *Kazasker* (military Chief Judge) of Rumelia (*Rumeli Kazaskeri*).

The study of most important mosques shows that initially their building followed architectural blueprints built earlier in Turkey in accordance with traditional forms of Islamic buildings. They were built by local craftsmen under the direction of foreign architects who came with the invader. As a result, these foreign architects' faith and culture did not belong to the mindset of the local population, whilst the local craftsmen lacked knowledge of Islamic construction typology in general and Turkish architecture in particular. With time, given the country's economic development and its involvement in the life of the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic buildings in Albanian territories take an important place in the architectural repertoire of 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an original, local, physiognomy and a fixed typology.

In many aspects, due to the use of a new typology in volume and plan, as well as the specific character of the building conditioned by the religious function, the architectural accomplishments contrast clearly with those of a previous period. On the other hand, gradually these buildings develop an increasing resemblance to other local buildings, increasingly using more elements of local architectural

language. Those models and elements from Turkish-Ottoman style, which had similarity with the local architecture and construction idiom, were preferred. Albania, as Kiel writes,<sup>90</sup> was a border region and the best buildings from its second period are closer in spirit to the empire's classical style. However, this changes during its fourth period when the power of the empire's capital was on the wane, and what is built here is in a completely Albanian original key.

Internally and externally, the wooden roof mosques in their early period were built close to vernacular architecture. In the major mosques in Berat, Elbasan and Gjirokastra the interior columns are conditioned by structural necessity, not by specific spatial requirements. Meanwhile, small mosques, especially of the *masjid* type, differed from the local dwellings only by the addition of minaret and porticoes. Nonetheless, the domed mosques, from the first case in Korça, were built after the old examples of Turkish-Ottoman architecture. In my opinion the listed examples (prominent amongst them the Ilias Bey Mirahor mosque) became blueprints in Albania for mosques of this type and which, in general, included a number of features that may now be considered traditional.

These features include: the overall volume of the cube on the exterior; the triangular pitched roofs sloping in the corners; the low positioning of the dome drum; the presence of the porticoes; three rows of windows (those of the porch are rectangular). On the exterior the presence of a straight frame on the outer walls which gets narrower on the upper part is noticeable, as in Vlora, Rusanj and Gjirokastra; fully developed drums as seen in Korca, Vlora, Elbasan and Shkodra; the gradual narrowing upwards of the drum as seen in Tirana, Kavaja and Burim, as well as the ending of the walls with a horizontal cornice as seen in Shkodra and Peqin. Other architectural elements that follow formulaic design are the windows, the entrance portals, the squinches in the corners, the minber, the mafl, the mihrab, and so on.

On the exterior, minarets played an important role. They became not only a distinctive element of mosques, but also of towns. Free from the formulaic arrangement of the mosque, many of them have elegant lines and proportions and connect gracefully with the mosque, as seen in the Mirahor Mosque, the Muradie Mosque in Vlora, the Lead Mosque in Berat, and Haci Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana. The transition from the basement to the shaft and onto the balcony is an element of note. They were built according to characteristic tastes and forms of the time, lower in the first period and taller and slender subsequently. With the exception of the Red Mosque (Xhamia e Kuqe) in Berat minarets are to be found always on the right side of the mosque. Albanian mosques usually have just one minaret and a balcony; an exception is the single minaret of the Old Mosque in Permet with two balconies.

Especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, decorative work in Albanian mosques usually avoids the monochromic treatment the Turkish-Ottoman

90 M. Kiel, *op.cit.* p. 292.

mosques employ. This is manifest initially through the *cloisonné* technique, and then through the painting of porches and stone carvings on doors, windows, mihrab and capitals. The capitals are initially simple, but later floral décor is added, as seen in Tirana, Shkodra and Peqin. In Tirana and Peqin we also find carved stones with architectural foliage, a sign of willingness to enliven the flat colour sidewalls with treated stones.

In the following centuries the use of mural painting (Tirana, Berat), and the treatment of the porches with *chiaroscuro* (Tirana, Berat, Kavaja, Peqin, Elbasan) bring these mosques closer to the architecture of the time. The external treatment follows local tradition, its reflections on form and colour, something that over the course of time advances to a scheme, as observed from the way the mosque building process develops from the Mirahor Mosque in Korça, to Haci Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana.

The interior of the most prominent shrines was given plenty of light, the walls were often painted with ornate floral patterns and they had stained glass windows. On some occasions painting was reserved only for the dome and mihrab. Equal attention was paid to the decorative treatment, the carving or colouring, of the wooden elements of the mosque such as müezzin's mahfil, minbar, interior columns and, in particular, the wooden ceilings. All these helped in the revitalisation of interior space. By now the design of interiors had a clear distinction compared to the period prior to occupation. Once inside the prayer hall the space is fixed, unique, immediately understood from the believer, or even the visitor, and fully reflected on the outside of the building's volume.

Almost all Albanian mosques have porticoes. Their initial designs followed the Ilias Bey Mirahor Mosque format which followed established Istanbul models. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, we notice the transition from small to larger prayer halls covered with wooden structures, as seen in Kavaja, Berat, Tirana and almost anywhere. However, other elements such as minarets, mihrabs and mahfils, follow traditional forms of Muslim architecture, even if distinctive care for them is noticeable in terms of size, proportions and decorations.

Of interest to this essay is the study of wall building techniques and structural designs. Preserved Islamic shrines show that at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century they were built using techniques and elements known by local builders and often employed in the neighbouring territories that belonged to the same architectural idiom. From the architecture of 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries elements such as domes and vaults, sawtooth frames, graded window arches, and, above all, construction techniques for external walls alternating stone and brick were borrowed, the latter rarely used in Turkey. These elements are found both in the cities (Korce, Berat, Elbasan, Vlora, Durrës), as well as in towns (Burim).

In the course of time many of these elements are neglected, such as the walls built using the *cloisonné* technique being replaced in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with common stone walls. Increasingly in important buildings in Shkodra, Berat, Tirana and Peqin, the stone used was carved and chiselled, a clear sign of a good level of economic development, particularly noted at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, most mosques were built with roughly hewn stones, plastered over and whitewashed, and the late buildings were less durable.

Increasingly, new structural elements such as sharp and pointed arches, pendentives, fully circular domes, stalactite work (*muqarnas*) in the pendentives and mihrab were used. The use of the pointed arch, the hallmark of Turkish-Ottoman architecture, in the porticoes, doors and windows of the earliest mosques, though distinctive, is a formal, not decisive, element. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it gets replaced by the circular arch, widely used then in vernacular architecture, the building of Christian shrines,<sup>91</sup> in defensive constructions, structural engineering and so on, which indicates settled local masters and established building workshops.



Fig. 10. The Mosque of Peqin. Built 1822-3. View from the west.

To date we don't have clear evidence of who these builders and craftsmen were. We know that they were organised in workshops and guilds, and, in some

<sup>91</sup> A. Meksi, P. Thomo, Arkitektura pas bizantine në Shqipëri, *Monumentet*, 11, Tirana, 1976.

cases, run by real architects or a *Mimar aga* (Turkish for chief architect) as understood from the evidence in Berat, Shkodra, Elbasan, Vlora and Gjirokastra.<sup>92</sup>

We also know that in Berat there were fountains (çeşme) built by architect Kasim Ağa (Turkish: Mimar Kasim (1570–1659),<sup>93</sup> in Elbasan by architect Se-defkâr Mehmet Ağa (about 1540 - 1617),<sup>94</sup> and in Vlora Koca Mimar Sinan built the stronghold inside the castle.<sup>95</sup> The Albanian nationality of the first two certainly is irrefutable.

In terms of architectural level and structural evolution over time the mosques in Albania can be categorized in many ways. I share the views expressed by M. Kiel<sup>96</sup> as well as S. Dashi and Gj. Frashëri who distinguish several periods, which on occasions also integrate with each other.

**The first period** is defined by the establishment of the Turkish garrisons in Albanian castles, beginning in 1417, if not earlier, until about 1490, at the beginning of Bayezid II's reign. Following the invasion and the establishment of the administration and military garrisons in existing or newly built castles there is a need for Islamic shrines to be used by the new residents. During this first period mosques were usually built inside the castles on their turrets, also often converting the castle's church into a *mesjid*. Generally they are simple, in a rectangular plan, without any architectural pretension or decorative treatment of note, covered with wooden roofs and tiles; the minaret was the only component that connected the building with Islam. Not much remains of them due to building materials used, the hurried nature of their construction, but also because they were gradually replaced.

**The second period**, as M. Kiel shows,<sup>97</sup> begins with the construction of the Ilias Bey Mirahor mosque in Korça and continues until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Converted administration dignitaries, or local feudal lords endow the mosques of this period. They are built according to the forms and methods of classical Ottoman style, which, according to Kiel,<sup>98</sup> came through Ottoman-occupied Macedonia, an essential crossroads linking Istanbul to other major centres of the Empire where the presence of Turkish colons was significant. The newly introduced administrators, the successors of converted Albanian feudal families, and other local Albanians with significant positions in the Ottoman administration were the disseminators of Ottoman architecture in Albania. Kiel rightly notes about this period that, in Albania, this was an imported art alien to the natives. With regards to technique local traditions continue: chiselled stone in the north and cloisonné in the south.

92 Evliya Çelebi..... p. 103, 31, 163, 137, 71.

93 Evliya Çelebi..., p. 117.

94 Evliya Çelebi..., p. 117.

95 Evliya Çelebi..., p. 137.

96 M. Kiel, *Ottoman*..., p. 285-292.

97 M. Kiel, *Ottoman*..., p. 285. *Evliya Çelebi*..., p. 22, 63. Z. Shkodra *op.cit.* p. 269.

98 M. Kiel, *Ottoman*..., p. 292.

**The third period** covers the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during which the Muslim population grows to a majority in Albanian cities and the communities of believers need more shrines. The new buildings do not follow strictly Ottoman tradition; they are numerous and, in the main, a drop in the architectural values is noticeable. The new patrons were not only those who became rich in Albania but also those who made a career within the vastness of the empire, as was the case of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha in Berat, or Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha in Peqin.<sup>99</sup> During this period we notice the building of not only a great deal of religious shrines but also of other related genres of Ottoman architecture.<sup>100</sup>

**The fourth period** includes all of the 18<sup>th</sup>, and the first 30-40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period as a result of the large-scale Islamisation of the local population there is an increased demand for building new Islamic shrines. Different from other parts of the empire, it is at this time that a new building style emerges in Albania.

The local builders, who worked in all genres of architecture, built in the spirit of local tradition, displaying all influences and borrowings that this tradition had absorbed over the centuries. While in other parts of the Balkans people repaired the existing mosques, it is now as new mosques were being built in Albania, that we have the emergence of a new characteristic style.<sup>101</sup> The patrons and builders are members of local society, of great pashaliks, feudal lords, local aristocracy and guildsmen.<sup>102</sup> Kiel thinks that this is a local architecture of distinct provincial features and not always Ottoman, the work of local masters.<sup>103</sup> It combines the tradition of 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century architecture with oriental Ottoman Turkish ornaments, and baroque influences in engravings and paintworks. It can be found everywhere in mosques, masjids, madrasas and monasteries, wherever Albanians live.

**The fifth period** begins with the Tanzimat reforms in the 1840s and goes up to the country's Declaration of Independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912. This period is dominated by the construction of public buildings and the restoration of old or damaged mosques. Several mosques were newly built but of low value.

**The sixth period** covers the period just after the country's independence until World War II. There is a raft of new buildings of no value using new construction materials and techniques, impervious to tradition.

99 *Ibid, Ottoman...*, p. 292.

100 A. Meksi, *Ndëritimet....* M. Kiel, *Ottoman...* S. Dashi, *Kullat mesjetare të sahatit në vendin tonë, Monumentet* 12, Tirana, 1976, p. 101-108. V. Shtylla, *Banjat e mesjetës së vonë në Shqipëri, Monumentet* 11, p. 1976, p. 119-137.

101 M. Kiel, *Ottoman...* p. 290.

102 M. Kiel, *Ottoman...* p. 292.

103 M. Kiel, *Ottoman...* p. 291.

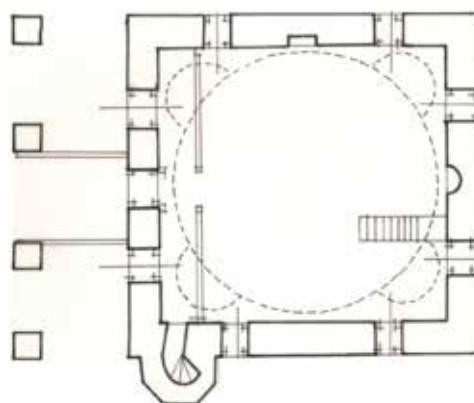
To such periodisation as proposed by M. Kiel I would add a new period, **the seventh**. This new period covers all activity after 1990 up to date, during which, despite financial and technical means not being an issue, we have numerous constructions made in haste, neglectful of *genius loci*, short of architectural values and oblivious to contemporary techniques.

The study of Islamic religious buildings in Albania, not only mosques, clearly shows that this is the architectural creation of a border province. As noted by Kiel, the best works, though few in number and small in size, belong to the classic period of Ottoman architecture. He is surprised to find them in an area so remote from the main centres of artistic creativity, chief among them Istanbul.<sup>104</sup> The majority of these buildings are constructions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, corresponding with the existence of great Albanian pashaliks, when the unifying force of the Empire was on the wane.

Currently available studies from Albanian and foreign scholars covering the architecture between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have added a great deal to this fascinating field. However despite all the achievements and interesting results, further research it is necessary. Joint field research into mosques built during the periods in question, and research into the archives to obtain comprehensive historical documentation such as building permits and construction timescales, names of patrons and names of builders are essential. Only this way will we achieve a more complete understanding of the architecture of the mosques in the territories inhabited by Albanians during the late Middle Ages.

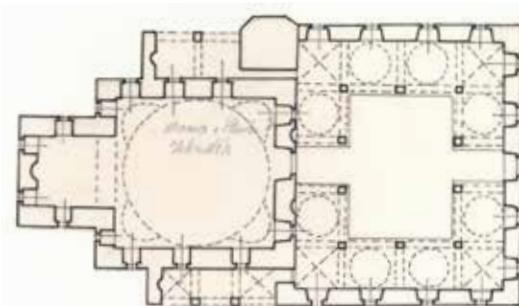
## APPENDIX

### Plans for some of the mosques described in the essay

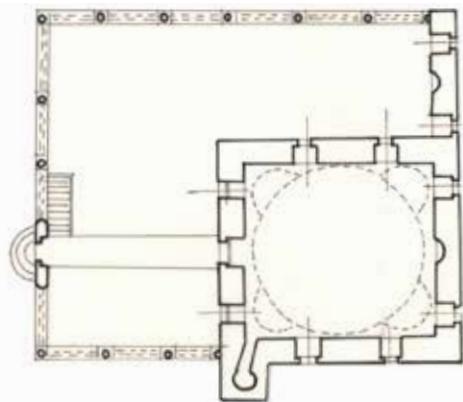


<sup>104</sup> About these problems see my essay: Probleme dhe aspekte të arkitekturës së xhamive në Shqipëri, *Kultura Islame*, 73, Prishtina, 2004, p. 43-50.

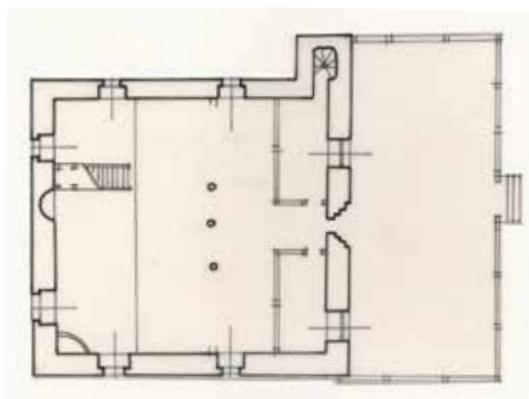
*Plan of the Ilias Bey Mirabor Mosque in Korça.*



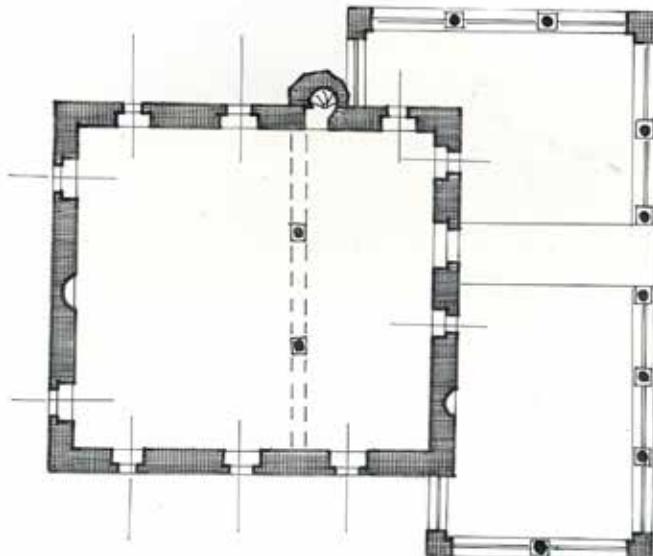
*Plan of the Lead Mosque in Shkodra.*



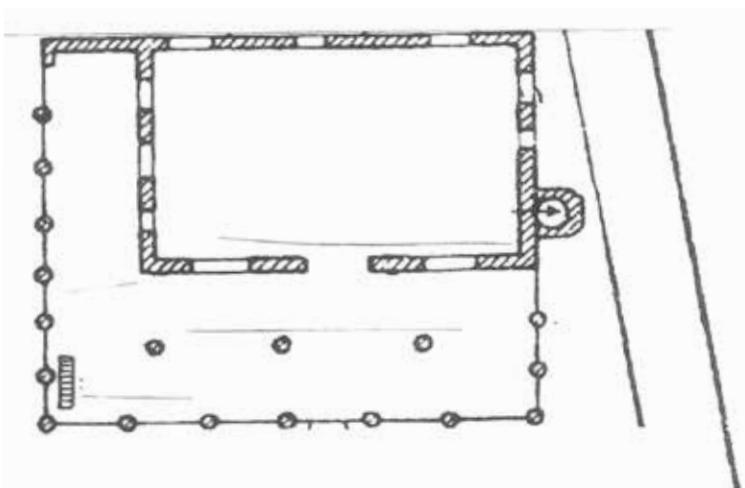
*Plan of the Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana.*



*Plan of the Elbasan Mosque in Elbasan.*



*Plan of the Mosque of Bachelors in Berat.*



*Plan of the Suleiman Pasha Mosque in Tirana. Destroyed during the Second World War in 1940s.*