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Mosques within a Process of Ottomanization in the City of Mytilene – Greece

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present the construction of Ottoman identity through the establishment of mosques in the city of Mytilene, Greece. The author uses the historical approach to show how a specific kind of building (religious) can change its particular function as the generating conditions have dramatically changed. Taking into granted that the organized built urban space is a part of the so-called social product which along with demographic data, institutions and ideologies constitutes the social superstructure, The author bases the analysis on how the particular history of an ethnic group settled down in a new place is perceived through its spatial structures. Based on the author's fieldwork in the urban area of Epano Skala, the former Ottoman quarter of Mytilene, the author tries to show how a different ethnic and religious group used space to declare its specific identity.

Introduction

Before the modern era of adaptation and expansion most Christian cities under the Ottoman rule possessed common features of plan and architecture, arising from the needs, customs, laws, economy and aesthetic principles of Muslim society. The Ottomans used to construct a recognizable urban form in cities they conquered. These practices can mostly be understood as two separate, yet overlapping patterns of change especially in newly conquered cities with a population dominantly Christian in order to settle the Ottoman identity. [1]

The author defines «Ottoman identity» a very specific kind of visibility given to Ottoman foundations in urban spaces. Islam and Muslim way of living are part of that constituted identity. In areas that had been dominantly ideologically Christian, the Ottomans effected significant changes in buildings and their spatial arrangements, thereby fabricating an Ottoman identity[1]. This practice can be analyzed in two interrelated interventions, one external relating to the skyline image with the erection of minarets, and one to spatial and architectural relationships along streets and over areas forming the skeleton of permanent structure supporting Ottoman Muslim practice. [2]

Sources

The author tries to describe the life and the city of Mytilene during a visit to the island.[1,p. 23] The accounts of the visit give independent evidence concerning life. The life and the city of

[1] I will use the term «Ottoman» to define the state formation of Muslim Turks.

Mytilene in the first centuries of Turkish presence, will be based and analyzed on European travelers' accounts. From about 1400 onwards, a stream of visitors focussed on topographical descriptions. Concerning Greek sources, information are very restricted, because the codes (archives) of the Metropolis of Mytilene registering the main events from 1576 on were burnt during the great fire that devastated the city in 1851.[3,4] Few information have been saved thanks to Stavrakis Anagnosti that had studied the code before its destruction.[5]

The analysis is based on the visual remains that can be seen in the area. The author depended on census data and walked around taking notes about the diversity of the existing mosques, soliciting information from the Ministry of Culture and documenting visual observations with slides. The author looked on the existing bibliography and borrowed sketches from the technical section of the Town Hall of Mytilene. This presentation does not constitute a history based on written sources but, instead of a text, evidences deduced after examining the spatial structure of the city.

Last but not least, the author used the results of interviews and questionnaires among families and specially old inhabitants of Mytilene[2]. The interviews provide valuable details about descriptions and traditions concerning the city and its mosques.

The Spatial Structure of Mytilene

Historical Background

Mytilene is the capital city of Lesbos, an island at the east of Greece opposite the Turkish coast. At the beginning the city was situated on a small island having two ports at each side. By the time the island joined the land and the isthmus separating the northern from the southern port became the market place (Figs. 1 & 2). The settlement of the inhabitants started from the area round the northern port.[6] In 1355 Lesbos was given as a dowry from the Byzantine Emperor John V Palaeologus to the Genoa Domenico Gatellusi. This family governed the island until 1462 paying poll taxes to the Sultan.[7] Before September 14th 1462, when Muhammad II conquered Lesbos after 15 days of siege, Mytilene was a prosperous city owing much of its wealth to the commercial activities of the Genoa fleet [3] Though no documentary materials survive which describe the process systematically, the existing chronicles give a clear overall picture of the upheaval [4].

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[2] After request to the Municipality of Mytilene I received a list with the names of all the refugees still alive in 1997 and living in the city. Most of them shared gladly with me personal memories and information.

[3] When in 1403 the king of Castille Henry III sent three representatives to Tamerlan, one of them was the Knight Ruis Gonzales de Claviho who described the expedition in his diary that was published in 1582 in Seville and in 1782 in Madrid. It was published in English by Guy Le Strange under the title *Embassy to Tamerlan*, London 1928. Claviho finds the city of Mytilene well built and prosperous. The houses cover the slopes of a hill that enters into the sea on one side while on the other side there is a great port. A mighty wall with many towers surrounds the city.

[4] The chronicle of the conquest is described by Leonardi Chiensis, Latin Archbishop of Mytilene (1444-1462) in his work «De Lesbo a Turcis Capta, Epistola Pio Papai II Missa. It was published by Charles Hops, Regimonti 1866. Second edition under the title *Chronicles Graeco-Romanes*, Berlin 1873, pp. 359-366.

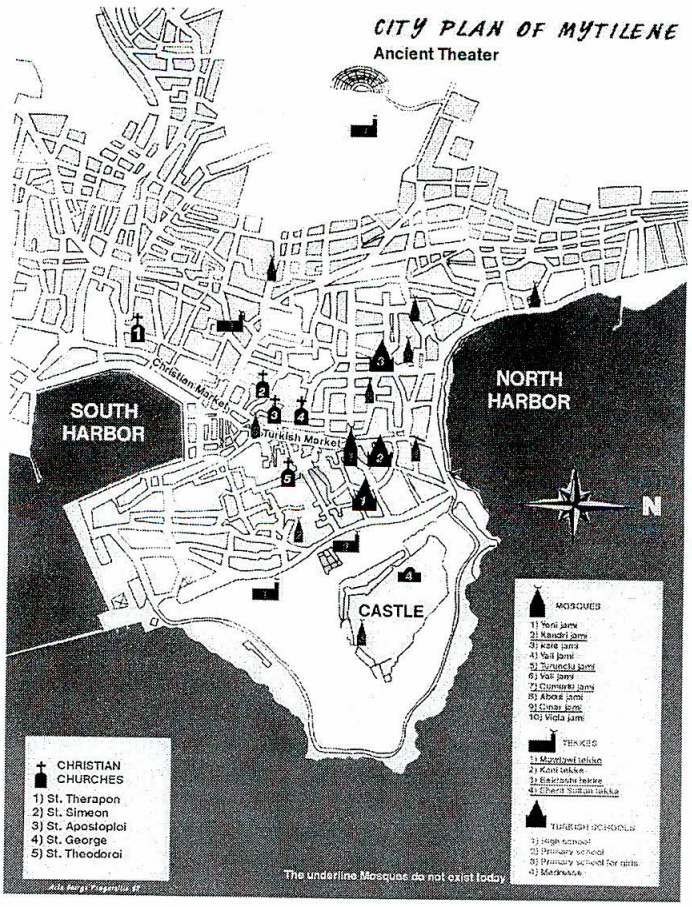


Fig. 1: City plan of Mytilene.



Fig. 2: Panoramic view of Mytilene.

Muhammad II left behind him a guard of 200 soldiers and 300 janissaries that occupied the newly conquered castle forming in this way the first core of Muslim population. The city of Mytilene was extended at that time around the castle. In the following centuries Turks established their dominion over the island. This first core inhabiting the inner castle came out and occupied the northern part of the city around the port and near their cemeteries. Round this area a burgeoning community was created giving a specific character to the city.[7]

Relations between ethnic groups in Ottoman society tended to ignore regional divisions and those based on wealth and livelihood, for more important was the common bond based on religious identity (the so-called millet system), the feature of Ottoman social organization and administration which reflected and reinforced their own cultural conceptions.[8]

The first turning point in the history of the city is the middle of the 18th century with the end of piracy. From that moment a wind of progress blew to the island and commercial activities started to take place. In the beginning of the 19th century the Imperial Decree named Hati Sherif of Gulhane (1839) and some years later Islahat fermani (1856), with which the Sultan proclaimed the equality of all citizens on the Ottoman Empire and assured their rights of property, led to a developing economy and to the construction of most public buildings in the city. Migrants and merchants who had settled in and around the city ended the physical and social isolation which marked the first three centuries and most European countries established consulates and commercial societies.[9, p. 165] Mytilene was again an important port linking Smyrne with Constantinople and Alexandria with Piraeus and Thessalonique. Although the 19th century was marked by many natural plagues (earthquakes, heavy winters that destroyed the olive harvests, fires etc.), it also led to the rebuilt and reconstruction of the city.

Physical Background.

The Ottoman applied a specific pattern to the internal transformation of Mytilene as well as of other cities where Christian populations predominated. Ottoman urban space was articulated on already existing urban space. The process involved the building or establishing of mosques complete (jamis in Turkish) with their institutions and distinctive minarets throughout the city.

In this way the external or skyline image of the city was transformed by the erection of the Sultan's jami (major Friday mosque and associated foundations) on the highest or most visibly prominent site. This jami used to be a domed structure flanked by a distinctive Ottoman style minaret, a pencil-shape tall shaft with a conical top, and a series of balconies and tiers. The mere presence of a tower on the skyline of the conquest city was thus a difference which underscored a change in practice. That the new tower was a minaret from which the muezzin called «Allahu akbar» -God is most Great- five times a day reminding Muslims to pray, signaled a significant ideological shift within the city as a whole, as well as the new use of the transformed or newly built structures. It was a recognizable identity for both Ottomans and Muslims, that linked the major cities within the ottoman empire.[10]

Sometimes, when the major Christian structure, also usually located on the highest point, was intact, it was transformed into a jami.[11, p. 485] Sometimes mosques served to mark out

the perimeter of the building as a whole; at others they cluster more closely to identify and exalt the sanctuary or as it is in the case of Mytilene the outer limits of the Muslim quarter[5].

In addition to these major institutions were added smaller prayer spaces and places of gathering, prayer and discussion known as *tekkes* often understood as dervish lodges. These smaller institutions, like the major mosque foundations, had attached graveyards in which ottoman style tombstones indexed the rank of the deceased and the existence in the life of the institution and its role in the society.[12]

What enabled graveyards to play such a role in Ottoman urban practice was that the Ottomans place graveyards prominently within the urban core, unlike Christian practices where graveyards were put outside the city walls and tombs inside the city were generally placed inside churches. Thus the graveyards were readily visible to all who walked by. All of these spaces, large and small, covered or open, served as communal spaces in the life of the Ottoman City.[6]

Close by was the bazaar, in which trades and crafts were segregated, and in which some merchants, especially those dealing in cloth, were accommodated in specially-built halls. It was the most important place of the city. The pattern of commercial activity was tied to the spatial organization of the community and to the practice of mixing land used. The actual production and storage of artifacts occurred almost in front of the shops, although some workshops were immediately to the rear of shops fronting on the main streets.

Commercial activities also included small grocery stores, bakeries and dairies which were the daily needs of the neighborhood as well as providing meeting places for the women's informal daily contacts. Other important facilities which intensified social life within the locality were fountains, taverns, cafes[7].

Here, also, were *khans* or *caravan serais* (hostels) for the use of visiting traders, and also *medresses* or schools, where young men were taught Islamic theology and law. Round the bazaar, the built-up area was essentially residential (apart from smaller mosques and baths) and was composed generally of one-storied houses, entered from the street through a doorway. Life in Mytilene was lived indoors, with the outside world excluded. The life of the street was ugly and distasteful. The interior of the town presented a melancholy contrast to its very inviting aspect at a distance. Mean, ragged-looking houses, with projecting windows of wood, nearly meeting at the top, and obscuring the light, obstructed every other view. This quarter was basically formed by small mud or wooden houses in a contiguous

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[5] Another form of social organization apart form family and guild links was the neighborhood of «quarter». The quarter was and area inhabited by a homogeneous population with respect to religion, national origin, occupation and income etc. A. Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans, Dissolving Images*, Penguin books, London 1993.

[6] In Mytilene, cemeteries were incorporated within the city's network and integrated in the residential area. See A Galland *Journal pendant son sejour a Constantinople* (1673-3) published by Ch. Schefer, Paris, 1881, v.2 p. 158. Galland visited a khan by the northern harbor. From there on and up to the castle he saw the Turkish cemeteries. J. Morrit (1772-1843) visited Mytilene in 1794 and wrote about the Turkish nobility houses that are wooden with painted ceilings and tilted roofs, the upper floor full of skylights and near their cemeteries. J. Morrit, *The letters*, London 1914, p. 135. A century later Mary Walker visited the island twice in 1886 and in 1897. She talks about the peaceful coexistence of both religions, Walker gives us evidence of the existence of a small tekke at the north-west of the city.. M. Walker, *Eastern life and scenery with excursions in Asia Minor*, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania, London 1886.

[7] Very important for the understanding of the Islamic city was the work of Sh. Cantacuzino ed., «Architecture in continuity», *Building in the Islamic world today*, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Aperture 1983.

row separated by cobblestone roads[8]. But round the north harbor and up to the castle, rambling Ottoman mansions covered the slopes of the hill surrounded by beautiful gardens and fountains. Rich houses had an upper floor, with a screened balcony protruded.[13]

The total absence of the grid system made the whole area to be intersected by crooked, narrow lanes. The streets were laid down with misshapen blocks, presenting all manners of sharp angles above and void spaces between. In some places narrow sidewalks, about a foot wide, run along the houses, but they were so rugged and intercepted by steps and other impediments, that it was always easier to keep in the middle of the street. This street plan was well-adapted to a population used domestic animals for transport. Its compactness mitigated climatic extremes. Certain districts were reserved for the Christian that formed the vast majority of the population. Here domestic architecture in no way differed from the rest of the city, but there were churches instead of mosques. But in order for a city to prosper, there is an urge need for its defense against enemies. A castle, at the most commanding point along the periphery, provided a residence for the governor and quarters for the garrison. During the last centuries, life security and freedom of a city was mainly based on its walls[9]. By the middle of the nineteenth century almost 12.000 people lived in Mytilene among them 3.000 Turks. Most of their houses were shabby and flimsy, quickly built and easily destroyed by the fires and earthquakes, which plagued the city. The disastrous fire in 1850 destroyed most of the mosque complexes and houses; the mosques were restored in a classical style quite unlike its original austere form. Another earthquake in 1867 caused even more widespread devastation.[4] Since then on, a new era for constructions started.

Today the appearance of the old section of the city is not so much altered. Streets are now asphalted but the absence of trottoirs is felt. Although many old houses are replaced by new block of flats they still reveal clear patterns in the organization and use of space. Indeed pressure on space is visibly evident to any passer-by; protruded extensions of the upper floor, development of the vertical dimension, room extensions annexed pavement space. Although many of the houses are not of solid construction, they have endured continuous occupation for more than a hundred years.

The market is still nowadays the main street crossing the city from the north to the south harbor. The northern part of the street was crossing the former Ottoman quarter while the southern part was the Christian sector of the city. Today the northern part is left to decline but there are still visible the small workshops and groceries. In an attempt to maintain the unique color of the area, the Municipality of Mytilene has launched a restoration program in order to revive the old market by repairing first of all the old buildings' facades, rearranging the area and attracting cultural activities by creating cultural centers through the restoration program the old Turkish market and of the existing mosques.

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[8] In 1816 the French topographer and publisher Ambroise Didot (1790-1876) visited Mytilene three years after the great fire that devastated the city. Mytilene is now a large village with narrow and dirty streets. Only 700 Greek houses and 400 Turkish still exist and all Consulates have abandoned the island. A. Didot, *Notes d'un voyage dans le Levant (1816-7)*, Paris 1826, p. 368. The same remarks also made by the English diplomat to Constantinople W. Turner (1792-1867) that visited the island the same year. W. Turner, *Journal of a tour in the Levant*, London 1820, v.2, p. 296.

[9] The castle of Mytilene was probably built round the 6th century but its present appearance is mainly based on the Genoa Gatellusi family that governed the island from 1355 to 1462 before the Turkish conquest. Since 1462 the Turks fortified the castle by adding a row of walls to the north part and a series of bastions and ramparts. Since 1972 the castle was under constant restoration. Today the visitor can see in the interior of the castle, the medressa (a Law and Religion school), the remains of the barracks, the arsenal, a religious man's hermitage as well as the prisons. The Low Castle, the main Turkish construction, surrounded about 80 houses from which only few are still up as well as their Turkish hammams (baths) in St. Paraskevaidis, The castle of Mytilene, Mytilene 1990.

Description and location

The process of building or establishing of mosques complete with their institutions and distinctive minarets throughout the city was the first task of the Ottomans. These mosques were established near the thresholds of the urban area and especially to the boundaries of the Muslim neighborhood. We have to insist to the fact that these Muslim constructions were necessary to support Muslim life as the place of teaching Muslim values and Muslim customs to children and adults and to serve as magnets to attract Muslim populations.

Mytilene City Mosques

Since the late-nineteenth century Western influence on the urban fabric of Mytilene, transited indirectly by European merchants and foreign citizens, had caused an almost total change in the urban context of jamis. While early mosques had been very simple and austere structures, the new urban jamis had been conceived as extrovert monuments, occupying a whole city block as defined by the four roads of a gridiron plan[10]. The architects of this period were mostly from non-Muslim minorities[11] and better prepared to adopt and introduce Western ideas.

Concerning the mosques of Mytilene nothing systematic has be written yet. A few details come from foreign travelers' reports and historians of the epoch telling that during the previous century The first testimony dates from 1686 and is referred to the existence of two mosques inside the castle of Mytilene.[14, p. 341] In 1867 the city had six or seven mosques and two or three ones inside the castle. Half of them were destroyed during the earthquake of 1867.[12] Later on, most of them were restored while five new ones were built. [5, p. 48]

The vice consul of Austria and Hungary in Mytilene Bargili says that in 1873 Mytilene had 14 mosques owing 1/3 of the land (wakf).[15, p. 244] This is the same number that Gravier is referring to.[16, p. 127] By the end of the 19th century about 20 jamis and tekkes existed.

In 1890 the German archaeologist R. Koldewey visited Lesbos and left rich and valuable information concerning the city of Mytilene at its peak as well as a map with the exact location of many of the mosques[13]. Another valuable source is the book of P.I. Samaras, *Mosques and tekkes of Mytilene*, published in 1945 in which he gives a list of the Ottoman religious building that he witnessed during the second decade of the 20th century as well as some photos of them. Specific details concerning dimensions, material and location were found in the archives of the Exchange Property Office[14]. The whole research was also based

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[10] In 1830 the English priest to Smyrne J.Arundel writes in his book, not without jealousy about the beauty of Yeni jami wishing that it would be a Christian temple(!) in J. Arundel J. *Discoveries in Asia Minor*, London 1834, v.II, p.330.

[11] According to oral traditions the most talented foremen were of Greek origin namely Tambakeras who built the Mosque in Messagros and Yannis Demiris form Eressos in P.I Samaras, *Mosques and tekkes of Mytilene*, ibid., p.6.

[12] In 1867 the French geologist M. Fouque came to Mytilene to write down the damages caused by the earthquake. 1.500 houses out of 2.500 were destroyed. Fouque counts 10 mosques within the city each of them having its own property in land (wakf). M. Fouque, «Rapport sur les tremblements de terre de Cephalonie et de Metelin en 1867» in *Archives des Missions Scientifiques*, v.IV.

[13] This map is found today in the Archives of the Classical Antiquities Office in Mytilene.

[14] It was an institution founded after 1924. In order to fulfill the settlement needs of the refugees, it confiscated the Muslim property (houses, land, mosques) and then shared them to refugee families according to their respective property in Asia

on interviews of old inhabitants as well as on refugees from Asia Minor who still remembered details from their stay in them.

Before proceeding to the description of the most representative mosques of this period, something should be said of the building materials. The two basic traditional materials are stone and tiles coming from inland or from the opposite coast. Most famous are the light red stones from the carries of Mystegna (Lesbos) as well as the brownish ones from the carry of Sarmousakli in Asia Minor. Stone is used for foundations and walls as well as for stairs, and door and window frames. The upper part is made of tiles. Apart form these materials, iron was also used to strut, skylight and bar construction.

The majority of the mosques and tekkes described here do no longer exist. In the respective map, we tried to give their approximate location based on a combination of oral and written sources.

Kale jami

Kule or Kale or Mehmet jami appears with its high minaret in all postcards of the beginning of the century. It was the oldest jami of Mytilene built by Muhammad II in 1462 or according to other sources a century later[15]. It was situated inside the castle opposite the main gate. It was built near the remains of the ancient temple of Demeter,[17] converted into Christian church under the Genoa rule and finally into this mosque[16]. Five marble stairs led to the cobblestone yard. Its transept had ten marble pillars in front and two in each side. The dimensions of the jami were 12,50 m width, 17,50 m length. [18, pp. 19&20] The interior was painted in green. Today only the Mihrab still stands up facing fearlessly time.

Vigla jami

Vigla jami dates at the end of the 19th century and constituted one of the most beautiful and well-built mosques of the city (Fig. 3).[19] According to the tradition, it used to be a Christian chapel dedicated to St. John or to St. Nicholas (Fig. 4).[17] It was built after the

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Minor and to their needs. The archives of this Service give valuable information concerning the topography of Mytilene as house or shop location was based on neighboring and not on the grid system.
According to the first registrer book after page 140 and in an annexed part it is referred that the Exchange Property Office auctioned eight mosques of total value 2.520.000 Drs. on 5 May 1926.

[15] The English archaeologist Charles Newton that stayed in Mytilene as vice-consul of England visited the castle in 1852 and he referred about the existence of the two mosques built in it round 1462. Newton Charles, *Travels and discoveries in the Levant*, London 1865, 2 vls. According to some articles published in the newspaper of Smyrne «Amalthia» Kale jami was built in 1573 (980E), *Amalthia* 18/1-3-1907. This source is also confirmed by De Burgo, a catholic priest of Pope Clement I who published in Milan in 1686 his book «*Viaggio di cinque anni*» where he gives many details about the topography of the city. Mytilene has two ports, the old one (northern) and the new one (southern) while the city is located in the middle. The castle is beautiful on a promontory controlling the two ports. This castle is surrounded by two rows of walls and 28 towers, it also contains two mosques and 8 barracks for the janissaries of the garrison. De Burgo, *Viaggio de cinque anni in Asia, Africa, Europa del Turco* Milano 1686, vol. 2, p. 341.

[16] Ottomans used to build their mosques in places that were already sacred or to convert churches into mosqeus, turbes, dervish tekkes. See Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, Oxford 1929, I, pp. 3-118. That is why among the building material we can find pieces of ancient marbles as well as epigraphs in S. Charitonidis, *Epigraphs of Lesbos*, Athens 1968, p.67

[17] According to Leonardi Chiensis, at the same location there used to be the church of St. Nicholas that the Ottomans converted into a mosque. in I. Deli, *The Gatellusi in Lesbos*, Athens 1901, p. 64.

earthquake of 1867. It is an one floor stone building and belonged to the Muslim community. Its dimensions are 9.40 x 11, 50 x 9.50 m. In the middle of the roof there was a dome decorated with sayings from the Koran. The light was entering from the windows and the skylights. The minaret was situated in the northwest side.

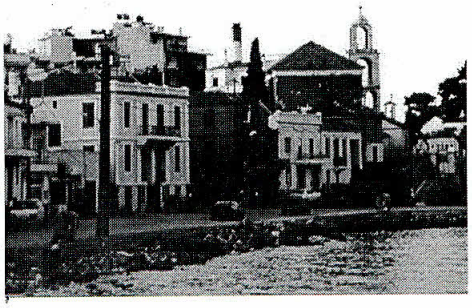


Fig. 4: Vigla Jami as St. Nicholoas church Ph. M. Komarianou.

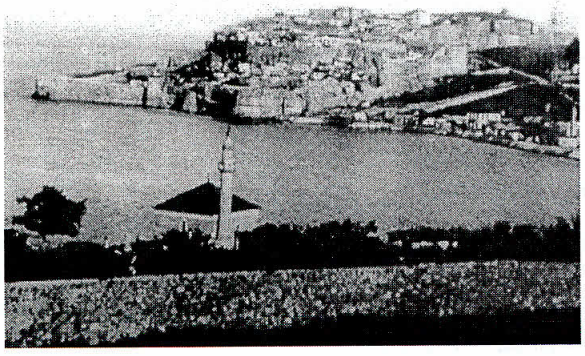


Fig. 3: Vigla Jami and the Castle arch, Stratis Anagnostou

Vali jami

Vali Jami is also one of the oldest in Mytilene.[20] It had different names such as Valizaade, Validine, Validezade jami. It is situated in the area of Epano Skala near the seaside.[21] It is a stone one-floor building. Its dimensions are 10 x 11.5 m. while it is 6.80 meters height. Marble stairs lead to the transept whose roof has been collapsed. Near the stairs there used to be a marble fountain -nowadays in the yard of the archaeological museum. In the middle of the north wall and above the door an epigraph written in old Turkish writing says that the jami was founded by Hassan Bey Abat in 1615. It should be one of the oldest mosques in town destroyed by the disastrous earthquake of 1867 and restored later on. The minaret of 15m height is situated in the North West Side. Above the balcony a conical top ended with a crescent. Besides the base of the minaret there is still the entrance of the upper galleries[18].

Valide jami has been also qualified as a preserved monument by the Byzantine antiquities office. The plans for the moment propose the upkeep of its minaret that collapsed during the heavy winter of 1991-2.

Yali or Deniz jami

Near Valide jami and marking the beginning of the Turkish market and the limit of the Turkish cemetery[19] to the sea there is Deniz (Sea) or Yali jami (Figs. 5 & 6).[22] It was a

[18] Vali jami belongs today to the Ministry of Culture and precisely to the Office of Byzantine antiquities that is housed in the island of Chios that is why it was difficult for me to get the permission to visit the interior.

[19] In the Exchange Property Office the Ottoman cemeteries had the following registration numbers: 4710/883, 4711/884, 4714/885, 4713/886, 4714/887, 4715/885, 4716/889, 4717/890 and 4718/891. In almost all cemeteries there is a reference concerning the existence of barracks to house refugee families and their shops. These barracks remained there until 1958 when the Municipality of Mytilene expropriated the land, Act 11/8-2-58 of EDPP, order 49957/4-4-58.

property of the Muslim Community and was built round 1880. It is an one story building made by Sarmousakli stone, with a tiled and tilted roof. It marked the beginning of the Turkish market and its dimensions are 9,50 x 14 m. and its height is about 7 m. It also marked the end of the Turkish cemeteries to the sea. In the northeast was the entrance of the upper galleries while in the NW was the minaret that collapsed in 1939.[23, p. 18] The transept is raised from the ground and above the entrance there is an marble epigraph praising the mercifulness and power of God and confirming that this mosque had replaced an older building of 1767 destroyed by the earthquake of 1867 [20]. The interior must have been exquisitely painted as we can see from the part of the ceiling that is still visible.

Cumurlu jami

It was a small jami with a small minaret about 200 m. west from Vali jami. It belonged to the Muslim Community. It was a square building with a large yard (300 m^2) which contained a well and a beautiful fountain. The minaret was 6 meters high. This jami was demolished in 1937 [21].

Turunclu jami

In the west part of the great Turkish Hammam and opposite the Turkish Primary School for girls was Turunclu jami.[20, p. 95] In 1935 it was bought by the entrepreneur Mr. Athineos that gave us details about how it looked like. It was a small square building (12 x 12 x 4,40 m), its transept was open in front with wooden columns. There were two windows at the two sides of the door. The interior was lit by barred windows the oval shaped skylights. Today at the same location there is the factory of Mr. Athineos.

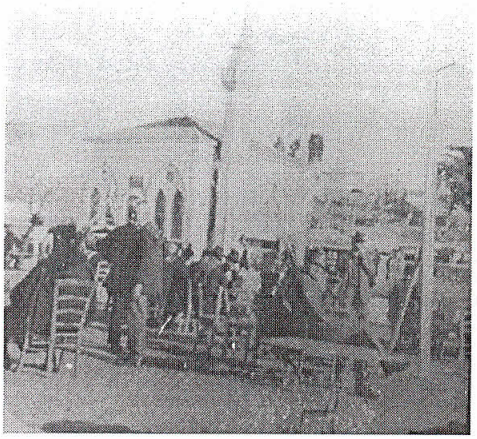


Fig. 5: Yali Jami arch. Stratis Anagnostou



Fig. 6: Yali Jami Ph. M. Koumarianou

[20] According to and article in the newspaper «Amalthia» of Smyrne, Vali jami was built in 1622 (1030E). «*Amalthia*», 18/1-3-1907.

[21] The description of the jami is based on Mrs. Sifakis' interview. She bought the plot and the jami and she had her house built up at the same location.

Cinarli jami

One of the oldest and richest mosques of Mytilene and the second in size was Cinarli jami.[25, p. 132] It was built at the end of the 18th century and rebuilt after 1867. It was at the west part of the city owning a large number of assets (wakf)[22]. It was a large building (14,50 x 12,20 x 7m). Its Mihrab was more that 4 meters high. Old inhabitants still remember that in the middle of the ceiling there was a large rosette and gypsum floral decoration in green background. Behind the mosque there was a cemetery, the premises of the Hodja and a large fountain. It was demolished in 1931 and in the same location there is today the National Kinder garden (1934) [23].

Abdul or Kulu jami

It was the poorest of all mosques of Mytilene situated at the beginning of the Turkish market. It was at the first floor of a small building turned in 1912 in a police station. It was about 8 x 10 m. Today it is a private dwelling. According to the tradition that the owner narrated to me its minaret was built at the end of the 19th century but collapsed without apparent reason. The Turks considered it a bad sign and they did not rebuild it. On the base of the minaret they put a canopy from which the muezzin called for the prayer.

Yeni jami

The greatest mosque of the 19th century in Mytilene prevailing in the middle of the former Turkish market was Yeni jami[24], the New Mosque (Fig. 7). It was built by the famous tax collector and governor of Mytilene Mustapha Aga Koulaxiz[25] some years after the Greek resurrection round 1825. It belonged to the Muslim Community of Mytilene. The building was made of stones, its roof covered with tiles. Its dimensions were 16,70 m width, 17,30 m length and 12 m height up to the roof without calculating the height of the dome. With the transept it had a total length of 22 m. It was a well-built mosque with Greek style pillars. All windows were arched apart form the windows of the upper galleries that were rectangular. All of them had marble frames and iron bars.

The Turkish tradition gave emphasis on the dome. Yeni jami displayed a pronounced centrality of plan so as to create an inner space as extensive and unified as possible. The dome was the middle of the tiled roof. It was a wooden construction, unique in the Balkan Peninsula supported by four Greek style columns, fortified by iron struts and covered outside with lead boards. The dome inside was set in lime mortar. The interior decoration was rich with floral and geometric designs. Green was the prevailing color.[18, p. 16] All this area was lit by windows arranged in obedience to a carefully calculated diffusion of light.

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[22] The wakf is the key economic institution underlying the vitality and effectiveness of Muslim expression, the economic endowment of religious and social foundations in S. Vryonis, *The Decline of medieval Hellenism*, ibid., p.352.

[23] Act 32 of 21/Jan/1931. Committee of the National kinder garden.

[24] Until about 1968 there were wooden shelters in the yard of the jami that were demolished according to the law concerning Preserved Historical Monuments.

[25] Kulaxiz died in 1835. See P. Samaras, *The Kulaxiz family*, Mytilene 1946, p. 16 and also Register book of the Hospital of Mytilene, no. 23.

The lighting of the mosques was also assured by qandils (mosque lamps). Apart from them the only other furnishing commonly found in it, was some kind of floor covering [26].

An external stone staircase led to the upper galleries where used to be the women's place. Its balcony was separated by the rest of the sanctuary by a wood latticework. This sufficed to screen the occupants from the other worshipers but allowed them to see and participate in the Salat. The minaret was about 30 m height. It collapsed during the heavy winter of 1937.

The yard of Yeni jami constituted a symbolic and functional center within the area of most commercial activities, for the jami is situated in the middle of the street market. The yard had two entrances. A west one facing the market, with an iron gate supported by two pillars of Sarmusak stone. In the east side there is the second entrance used mainly by women. Beside the doors there were the ablution fountains. In the north side of the yard there was the habitation of the Mufti (law man), the primary Turkish school as well as auxiliary premises.

The vast courtyard sufficed to proclaim the essentially public nature of the building. It quickly became the nerve center of the burgeoning Muslim community, where worship was conducted, public announcements made, meetings held, parades reviewed, cases tried and councils convened. Apart from the mosques described here there were another smaller ones as well as tekkes that collapsed demolished some years ago.

Kandri tekke

The first one was called Derghahi jami and it was the tekke of the Kandri Muslim[27]. It was situated opposite the Turkish governor siege and contained Obelisks and Turbes[28]. Above the entrance there was a marble epigraph saying that this jami replaced an old one collapsed during the winter of 1867.

Sherif Sultan tekke

It was at the west part of the city near the ancient theater. It was built by Sultan Abdul Hamit and was considered one of the most sacred mosques of Mytilene. The English traveler Mary Walker that visited Mytilene in 1886 says that Abdul Hassan Ben Hassan (or Epin Hassan) was Sherif (Governor) of Makkah and died exiled in Mytilene. The traveler found the tekke abandoned and neglected.[26, p. 198]

Kani tekke

It was a Muslim Mescit opposite the Turkish Senior High School.[5] It was a small building (10,80 x 8,45 x 3,20 m) with a dome like the medresse of the castle. Beside the building there was the house of the Hodja. Today the tekke is used as a private dwelling.

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[26] Details about the interior decoration of Yeni jami as well as of the other mosques come mainly from interviews among old inhabitants of the neighborhood and from Greek refugees that still remember the interior.

[27] Exchange Property Office, vol. 1, number 889, p.97.

[28] The last reference about the existence of the tekke as well as details about its cemetery is in the book of F.Dimou, *History of Lesbos under the Turkish occupation*, Mytilene, 1931, pp. 62-63. We suppose that after that date the Kandri tekke was demolished.



Fig. 7: Yeni Jami – Interior Ph. M. Koumarianou

Function and Adaptation

Specific constructions such as mosques linked to ideological and political circumstances that are the occurrences of the past, were widely used to fulfill a number of functions related to specific socio-cultural conditions that generated them and to support particular state structures. These constructions in a different socio-cultural and ideological environment must assume another role and adopt their use to the new status quo. That is why they get naked of all the elements reminding the previous state that may be considered to be provocative. In this atmosphere of war hostility, pain, bitterness, refugeeness, mosques were deprived of many characteristics that reminded the new comers of their Ottoman past, and lost great part of their significance in an attempt of homogenization within the new social and cultural space.[13]

A characteristic example is the conversion of Vigla jami to its previous function as a Christian church. As already mentioned, after 1923 many refugees families found shelter for many years in the mosques. In 1928 the Bishop of Mytilene, Iakovos, applied a recent law according to which the Church could use the exchange property and namely the mosques to serve the religious needs of the refugees. His aim was twofold: first to preserve from further damage the building and second to comply with the common sense and restore the mosque to its previous function, that means to re-convert it into a Christian church. The process involved the demolishing of the minaret and the erection of a bell tower without changing orientation to the building. In 1929 the mosque became St. Nicholas church maintaining the same religious function but with a different congregation.

The dismemberment of these buildings from their previous role and the reorientation of their traditional introverted religious form to an extroverted secular function is due to the particular religious, geopolitical, and cultural circumstances of the last period. In fact the

new role of the Ottoman religious building within a Christian context, is today the result of a long synthesis of a number of cultural interactions and adaptations.

In order for these specific buildings to be preserved, they have to be integrated into a context of cultural and historical heritage. The aim is dual: Yeni jami is situated in the middle of the area called Epano Skala in the north of Mytilene that was at once the commercial center of the city until the moment that the «interior» or south port replaced the northern one round 1930. After the arrival of the refugees the main commercial and cultural activities were gathered to the south where there was the Christian core of the Muslim city. The former Ottoman quarter inhabited since 1923 by refugee families was neglected and left to decline, the shops until recently abandoned, the mansions empty and the area suffered by an economic decline. In an attempt to avoid congestion round the south port and in order to maintain the city's unique and traditional character, a great part of cultural and commercial activities should be transferred to the northern part. As a result the revival of the old market is expected to occur.

In this respect the Municipality of Mytilene decided to exploit the monumental richness of the area in order to face the multiple cultural needs of the people of Mytilene. The first monument to restore is Yeni jami.

The Ministry of Culture qualified in 1956 for the first time Yeni jami as a preserved historical monument[29]. In 1979 the Municipality of Mytilene decided to put in value the monument and invited the architect Mr. Constantine Mylonas to submit a first proposal for its preservation[30]. Almost 20 years later when funds were raised, the same architect with the help of the expert in ancient monuments Mr. Kostas Zambas submitted the final proposal that is about to be applied[31].

The layout of the mosque presents a rectangular frame with a dome supported by four columns. The main characteristic of this mosque is the absence of arches in the interior and round the dome and that is because the dome was a light wooden construction covered outside with lead boards.

The restoration work comprises three stages: first to protect the jami from further damage, that means to prevent it from further decay and to consolidate the remaining parts by applying supportive or adhesive materials to the fabric of the building in order to ensure its structural integrity and durability; second to restore the original concept of the monument with respect for the original material, the historical evidence and the original design. Restoration may cover replacement of missing or decayed part, the cleaning of the building, and anastylosis; and third to rehabilitate the use of the building to a similar function and to modernize it with adaptive alterations for contemporary functions.

The inner damage of Yeni jami started in about 1951 when the dome collapsed. As a result the interior of the mosque became victim of the weather conditions. There is a great number

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[29] The act of law that protects certain categories of objects, including historical places is Law 1469/50. See Voudouri D., (1992), *The protection of Cultural Heritage in the Perspective of United European Market*, EKEM Papazissis, Athens.

[30] Yeni jami was for many years victim of political decisions. In 1956 it was qualified as preserved monument. Some years before the last qualification the Municipality of Mytilene decided to take serious measures to protect the monument as explained above.

[31] The Vice-Mayor of Mytilene Mr. Makidis gave me the opportunity to study and to take photos of the restoration plans of Yeni Jami submitted to the Municipality of Mytilene by Mr. C. Mylonas.

of cracks, some of them penetrating through the whole depth of the wall; others, though very deep, only appear on one side. These cracks are primarily due to the many alterations in the use of the mosque according to the needs of the different occupants living in it; this resulted in structural deficiencies in the walls. Weathering also affected the stones, bricks and mortar of the external walls, resulting in their decay. The first task for the restoration study was to perform detailed scientific study aiming at documenting the state of the building. Especially the deteriorated status of the roof and walls necessitate the immediate erection of temporary shelters until the restoration of these parts began. The new building will serve as municipal library.

Conclusion

Today Mytilene can in no sense be regarded as a closed community, nor are there any visible boundaries «on the ground» which could serve to designate different areas as discrete units. Unlike the situation at an earlier period in its history, Mytilene seems to have fully integrated foreign elements into its cultural milieu. But the historic center of the city keeps its unique character chiefly as a commercial area and then as a residential one and, despite extensive changes through time, several sections exist where the original ottoman area is still discernible and where the vast majority of the people are of Asia Minor descent.

Despite overall integration into the life of the city, the heart of the oldest section still lay at the junction of two main roads, one constituting the main arterial route and the market place at the same time, the other crossing the old city from one part to another, and keeps its particular characteristics.

The author suggests the following: There is vital need for the study, preservation and restoration of the ottoman monuments and their integration within the everyday life of Mytilene.

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المساجد في منظور التحور العثماني
في مدينة ميتيلين– اليونان

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ملخص البحث: الهدف من هذا البحث هو عرض تكوين الشخصية العثمانية من خلال التداخلات الفراغية، وبشكل أدق من خلال بناء المساجد في مدينة ميتيلين في اليونان. لقد حاولنا اتباع طريقة تاريخية وأن نظهر كيف أن نوعا" محددا" من المباني - المباني الدينية في حالتنا – يمكن أن يغير وظيفته الخاصة عندما تتغير العوامل المولدة بشكل كبير. وبافتراض أن الفراغ المبني المنظم هو جزء مما يطلق عليه الناتج الاجتماعي والذي يشكل مع المعلومات الديموغرافية السكانية والمؤسسات والتوجهات الفكرية مايسمى بالهيكل الاجتماعي الرئيسي، سوف يعتمد تحليلنا على فكرة أن تاريخا" خاصا" لطائفة ما استقرت في مكان جديد يمكن فهمه من خلال التداخلات الفراغية. وبالاعتماد على التجربة العملية الحقلية في المنطقة العمرانية " ايبانو سكالا " والمعروفة بأنها الضاحية العثمانية السابقة في مدينة ميتيلين. سنحاول أن نوضح كيف أن أقلية عرقية ودينية استعملت الفراغ كي تعبر عن هوية معينة.