

# **SELECTED MUSLIM HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND SITES IN BULGARIA**



**United States Commission for  
the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad**

**2010**



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FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD**

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

WARREN L. MILLER  
CHAIRMAN

March 12, 2010

## Message from the Chairman

One of the principal missions that United States law assigns the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is to identify and report on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe associated with the cultural heritage of U.S. citizens; especially endangered sites. This report should enable Americans of Bulgarian origin to connect with their past. I hope it will also lead to preservation of sites.

The Commission strives to especially recognize endangered sites and monuments of groups who have suffered neglect and suppression of their cultural heritage due to ethnicity or religion. This report identifies and discusses sites and monuments associated with Muslim heritage in Bulgaria, where the Muslim community is the country's largest minority. It reports on a selection of important and representative sites, including mosques, cemeteries, and pilgrimage sites, many of which rank among the most significant religious, historic, and artistic monuments for Muslims, and also for all of Bulgaria. They include some less known sites and many world-class architectural achievements.

Another mission of the Commission is to seek assurances from foreign governments regarding the protection and preservation of cultural heritage properties. I am pleased to note that the Governments of the United States and Bulgaria entered into a Commission-negotiated agreement regarding the protection and preservation of certain cultural properties in 2002. The agreement covers the sites identified in this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren L. Miller'.

Warren L. Miller  
Chairman

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Front cover photo: Former Mosque of Sufi Mehmet, now Church of the  
“Sedmochislenitse” Sofia, Graf Ignatiev Street

## **Acknowledgements**

In 2003, Professors Mark Stefanovich and Evelina Kelbetcheva and students of the American University in Bulgaria collected historical information which formed the basis of the introductory section of this report. During the following two years Stephen Lewis conducted research.

The project was organized and overseen by Samuel D. Gruber, then Research Director of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. He was assisted by Justin Rhea. Commission Executive Director Jeffrey L. Farrow and Program Manager Katrina A. Krzysztofiak also assisted at all stages of the survey and in the preparation and publication of the report. Commission Chairman Warren L. Miller and Commission Members Ned W. Bandler and Michael Levy were also involved.

Appreciation is additionally expressed to former U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria James W. Pardew and the staff of the United States Embassy in Sofia.

## About This Survey and Report

The following report summarizes activities and findings on behalf of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad during the course of selecting, visiting, and reporting on architectural monuments and sites associated with the Muslims in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The report includes information on Muslim monuments in Bulgaria and explains their historical and architectural significance. Some of the material was prepared by Professors Mark Stefanovich and Evelina Kelbetcheva of the American University in Bulgaria in 2003. Additional material was prepared by Stephen Lewis, as part of a field survey of selected sites in the country.

Mr. Lewis prepared a database of sites. From this information, he arranged a series of itineraries, which allowed examination and documentation of almost 50. These included selected Sunni mosques, present and former heterodox *tekkes*, and selected Sunni and heterodox mausoleums and cemeteries.

Mr. Lewis based his initial list on his earlier work on the subject. He also made use of material presented to him by the late Nikola Mushanov, a restorer of Muslim architecture in Bulgaria. Mr. Mushanov's restoration projects include two sites covered in this survey: the mosque at Samokov and the Imaret Mosque at Plovdiv. Most important, Mr. Lewis used writings of Prof. Dr. Machiel Kiel (formerly of the University of Utrecht and the Netherlands Oriental and Historical Institute, Istanbul), an expert in the history and architecture of the Ottoman Balkans. For additional information, Mr. Lewis turned to Bulgarian researcher Lyubomir Mikov, whose writings have since formed the basis for a book, *Izkustvoto na Heterodiksните Myusyulmani v Bulgaria (Art of the Heterodox Muslims in Bulgaria)*, Sofia, 2005.

From all of the sites, Mr. Lewis identified, he and Commission staff chose a small but representative selection of Sunni and heterodox sites in certain regions of the country to visit. The large and important Rodope mountain region and the far southeast of the country were, however, not visited. The survey does not cover ethnic-Turkish and Slavic-Muslim (Pomak) minority sites.

Whenever possible, Mr. Lewis attempted to inspect the interior as well as exterior of each monument visited.

The historical information provided on most Muslim monuments came from Mr. Lewis's previous research and expertise. Comments on the condition of all monuments are based in most cases, unless otherwise indicated, on Mr. Lewis's own personal observations and/or on discussions with local caretakers and building administrators.

A good example of this last type of information gathering can be seen from Mr. Lewis's account of his visit to Belogradchik in northeast Bulgaria, a town famous for its dramatic rock formations and the Ottoman citadel that still towers over the town. During his stay,

Mr. Lewis found that local hoteliers considered the restoration of the town's derelict mosque to be an important element of strengthening the local tourism infrastructure. His conversations with hoteliers led him to a meeting with the town's mayor, who had gone so far as to obtain a power of attorney from the Mufti in Sofia and restoration plans from the National Monuments Commission. The mayor had also located specialized craftsmen in Edirne in Turkey and was in the process of searching for sources of financial support. Although the town now has a negligible Muslim population, residents were aware of the history of the mosque and legends associated with it. They considered the structure part of the community's patrimony. This sort of information suggests that even when the condition of some monuments is poor, the cultural, social and political framework may exist to improve the situation.

## Historical Background on Bulgaria's Muslims

Muslims are Bulgaria's largest minority group, a heritage of the country's five centuries as part of the Ottoman Empire. The population is mostly divided into two major groups: Muslims of Turkish origin and Bulgarians who converted to Islam between the 15<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A very small number of Muslim Tatars also live in Bulgaria. In terms of indicators of ethnicity, the Turkish language and Islam are the two most notable, although the majority of Muslims are bilingual.

The history of Islamic presence in the Balkans is intertwined with political and social overtones. In spite of the enormous literature and documentation (from modern Turkey, the Balkan countries and the West) there remains much prejudice and little agreement about the process of Islamization. On the other hand, with little disagreement all Orthodox Balkan peoples see the presence of the Ottomans in terms of the "other." For almost five centuries the Muslim Ottomans were the ruling elite, but this changed with the establishment of the Balkan nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now the Muslims become minority subjects of controversial and often coercive policies and treatment. Some sources give the number of Bulgarians in 1868 as 2,582,385 and Muslims as 3,913,354, with one-third of the Muslims not of Turkish origin. Other scholars believe that Muslims in Bulgaria in 1868 only number one-third of the total population, with the number of Turks between 400,000 and 800,000. In the 1920s there were about 600,000 Turks in the country.

Between the time of the proclamation by Ataturk of a new Turkey and the end of the Second World War, another 130,000 Bulgarian Turks departed for Turkey. Parallel with the modernization trend of Kemalist Turkey, in Bulgaria Muslim cultural, educational, and sporting clubs are united in one national association under the name of Turan with a newspaper in Turkish. At this time, the elected Bulgarian governments accorded the Turks a national minority status with accompanying legal rights including the right to immigrate. There were 25 Turkish language newspapers by 1925. National minority status helped to increase the number of Turks between 1920 and 1934 by about 100,000 people, in spite of local Turkish patriots who worked to increase emigration to Turkey. By 1946, there were officially registered 938,418 Muslims, out of which 675,500 were identified as ethnic Turks. Based on the census of 1965, there were 746,755 Turks or 9.08% of the total population. Although under the post-Second World War constitution of Bulgaria during the Communist Party dictatorship period all minorities were accorded equal rights, the reality was quite different. (Stoyanov 1998.)

After taking power in Bulgaria following the Second World War, the Communist regime actively engaged in atheist propaganda. It may be that as a partial compensation for the suppression of religious traditions and traditional lifestyle and rituals, the authorities granted greater freedom of expression to the ethnic communities. At this time, private education was terminated and the education of Bulgarian Turks fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education. The Turks were granted a weak form of cultural autonomy, e.g., a primary school subject could be taught in Turkish. There were three institutions to train teachers. More than ten national and local newspapers were published



in Turkish. A state-owned radio broadcasting station was established for the Turkish minority.

In the 1950s, promulgations against the Turkish Bulgarians intensified discontent, mostly because of the collectivization of the land and a ban on reading the Koran. At the end of the decade, Turkish secondary schools were ultimately closed down. This was followed by a fundamental change in the curriculum of state-owned and run Turkish primary schools. The number of Turkish language newspapers was converted to the Bulgarian language to serve a readership with a Turkish origin. In 1964, the government initiated a series of attempts to force Turkish Bulgarians to change their names. The first effort began in the Rhodope Mountains. A later and more successful attempt was made with Pomaks (a Slavic-Muslim minority) in 1972-74.

An effort was made during the winter of 1984-85 with Turkish Bulgarians throughout the country to eradicate the self-identity of Bulgarian Muslims, as well as the religious and ethnic uniqueness of Bulgaria's largest minority, the Turks. The state employed various forms of coercion: intimidation by local administrators, economic blackmail, and naked force. In the cases of organized resistance authorities opened fire and people were killed. The army and militia cordoned off isolated regions and areas of mixed populations. Thousands of members of ethnic Turkish communities were arrested, and often sent to prison camps. All of this took place under secrecy. Speaking Turkish was now forbidden. So were the practicing of religious traditions, rituals and dress. Even Sofia University did not escape the long arm of the government; the Department of Turkish Studies was closed. Muslim cemeteries were bulldozed and the names of the deceased were changed in the municipal councils and records. Any remains of religious symbols were eradicated and replaced by newly created rituals. The authorities went so far as to destroy the medical records of the chronically ill. This "regenerative process" reached its culmination in the summer of 1989 with the mass exodus of 360,000 Bulgarian Turks to Turkey.

As a result of the collapse of the Zhivkov regime in November 1989, 120,000 ethnic Turks returned to Bulgaria. On December 29, 1989, near the very end of the Communist era (the Communist Party gave up one-party rule in February, 1990), the State Council proclaimed that all Turks who wished their names restored would be allowed to do so. By the spring of 1991 60,000 availed themselves of this choice. Despite hopes for change in the post-Communist era, and especially following elections in June 1990, severe economic conditions in Bulgaria from 1990 to 1997 still prompted between 30,000-60,000 Bulgarian Turks to leave the country for Turkey in search of new livelihood. Experts estimate that for the period 1989-1996, the total number of immigrants from Bulgaria to Turkey was close to 400,000. According to the last census taken in Bulgaria in 1992, the total population of the country was 8,472,724. Of this number, 85.1% defined themselves as Bulgarian and of these only 78,242 identified as Muslim. A greater number 822,253 defined themselves as Turks and of these, 98.8% were Muslims. The census counted 287,732 Roma, of whom 39.2%, (112,923) identified themselves as Muslim.

## Types of Muslim Monuments in Bulgaria

The most important Islamic monuments from the time of the Ottoman rule are: mosques, *mescit* (small mosques), *tekkes* (buildings designed specifically for gathering, often integrated with a *türbe*), *türbes* (tombs or memorials to the dead to be viewed from the outside) and cemeteries. Many monuments have been the subject of investigations by historians, linguists, epigraphers, and architects, but they have never been considered together as an example of related cultural heritage sites.

Many of the inscriptions on these monuments which mostly consist of commemorative texts, chronograms, dates of consecration, and names of donors, their functions, and their merits - have been studied, but few have been published.

Since the arrival in the Balkans of the Ottoman Turks in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, gradual cultural, religious, political, and demographic changes have taken place. Most important was the Islamization of public space through the construction of sacred buildings like mosques, *tekkes*, *türbes*, as well as non-religious structures like *caravanserai* (inns), *hamams* (baths), fountains, bridges, aqueducts, and arches. Another process associated with the arrival of the Ottomans in the Balkans was the conversion of Christian monuments into mosques, which had already begun in Constantinople with the conversion of the great 6<sup>th</sup> century church of Saint Sophia and continued later in Bulgaria with the Patriarchal cathedral in Veliko Turnovo in 1396 and many other large churches in the Balkans. There is some evidence of intentional destruction of Christian monuments, but this contention is controversial and not accepted by all scholars.

In contradistinction to the centuries-long Arab tradition, the Ottoman tradition was considered new and still-developing at approximately the time of the incursions into the Balkans and Europe. Islamic art and architecture is divided into three periods: the first and main period comprises the time from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and is considered to be the “fluorescence.” The second is the 17<sup>th</sup> century, called by some “the period of inertia,” and the third is the 18<sup>th</sup> and part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when European influence was beginning to be felt.

The most prominent Ottoman architect is Mimar Sinan (1490-1588) who is reputed to have built around 360 structures throughout the empire. He is said to be responsible for 81 large mosques and 50 smaller ones (*mescit*), 55 schools of theology (*medrese*), 19 *türbes*, 17 *imarets* (soup kitchen), three hospitals (*darusifa*), seven aqueducts, eight bridges, 17 inns (*caravansery*), 32 palaces, and 33 baths (*hamam*). Among his masterpieces are the Sehzade and the Suleymaniye mosques in Istanbul, and, the Selimiye mosque in Edirne. In Bulgaria, Sinan’s name or those of his close associates are related to the building of the Bania Bachi and Imaret Mosque in Sofia (the latter being the Church of the Seven Saints today) and the Mustafa Pasha Bridge on the Marica River (Antonov 2001.)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Empire began its slow decline, art monuments were increasingly influenced by Western European styles. This especially includes the

beginning of the floral style; associated with the reign of Ahmed III, when Baroque and Rococo motifs became very popular throughout the Ottoman Empire.

There are three main sects in Islam: Sunni, Shiite and Khariji. The Sunni are regarded as the orthodox practitioners of Islam, while the Shiites are the non-Orthodox followers of Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law. The Kharijis practice the strictest observance of the moral precepts. Orthodox Islam is represented in the Balkans by many impressive monuments, especially mosques, but there is also a widespread, broad-based presence of non-Orthodox Islam in Bulgaria represented primarily by the *türbes* and the *tekkes*.

### **Tekkes**

Although the majority of the *tekkes* belong to non-Orthodox Muslims, research in the Central Rhodope mountains has shown that Sunni Muslims also built several well-known *tekkes*, such as the Yenni Han Baba and the Saru Baba (Ivanova 2002a), and it is to this group that the majority of the *tekkes* in Bulgaria belong.

*Tekkes* are built for dervishes (an individual treading a Sufi Muslim ascetic path known for their extreme austerity and poverty) and are usually part of a complex of mosque and *türbe*. The majority of the *tekkes* are located in Eastern Bulgaria, in the northeast around the modern districts of Razgrad, Targovishte, and Shumen, and in southeast around the districts of Kardjali, Haskovo, and Stara Zagora. *Tekkes* are located in villages because Orthodox Islam was represented in the major cities. The most complete list of *tekkes* in Bulgaria has been compiled by N. Grammatikova. (Grammatikova 2001) It should be noted that during the beginning of the name-changing process for the Pomaks in 1972, the Orthodox *tekkes* of Yenni Han and Sura Baba in the Central Rhodope Mountains were bombed twice. Today the local community - both Muslim and Christian has restored the structures. (Ivanova 2002a.)

*Tekkes* are the major religious monuments for the non-Orthodox groups. The best-known non-orthodox group is called the Alevi. (Mikov 2002) But the term Alevi represents the condition after the unification of many non-orthodox Islamic groups. The Alevi in Bulgaria refer to themselves as Babai, Bektashi, and Kizilbas. As quoted in Grammatikova, "We believe that by the time of the emergence of the Sefevid state many of the Türkmen tribes were already connected with Shiite Sufi mystical orders. The two main groups among the *kizilbas* in Bulgaria, and in Northeastern Bulgaria in particular, still in existence, are the Babai and the Bektasi. The presence of the name of the latter shows that they had some organizational links with the Bektasi Order. Apart from the Bektasi of the *kizilbas* community there is yet another branch of the Bektasi in Northeastern Bulgaria. Dervishes inhabited some villages near the tekke of Demir Baba. In the past, the majority of them were linked to Bektasism, but during fieldwork we find also traces of Naksibendi and Kadiri groups in the Razgrad region." (Grammatikova 2001)

## **Conclusions: Significance of Monuments Visited**

Several of the sites included in this study are monuments of international importance in the fields of art and architectural history, Balkan history, and the history of the Ottoman period, e.g. the Mosque of Şerif Halil Paşa at Shumen, the Mosque of Ibrahim Pasha at Razgrad, and the three major heterodox *türbes*.

Other sites are examples of important historical turning points and cultural and art historical transitions, e.g., between Byzantine and Ottoman styles (Imaret Mosque at Ikhtiman) and between Eastern and European styles and concepts, as in the case of the Ottoman Baroque (Mosque of Şerif Halil Paşa at Shumen).

Still other sites provide examples of genres both important and minor, e.g., the T-shaped Imaret Mosque (Ikhtiman and Plovdiv); the Bursa-style Ulu Camii (Plovdiv and Sofia), the emergence of the characteristically Ottoman domed-cube mosque (Stara Zagora, and Kyustendil), the Ottoman Külliye or mosque-*medresse*-hospital-library complex (Shumen), the seven-sided heterodox Muslim mausoleum, a form unique to within the boundaries of present-day Bulgaria, the wooden mosque with its roots in Seljuk Anatolia (Golyam Porovets and Belogradchik), and the Turkic tradition of carved wooden ceiling decoration (Buinovitsa and Belogradchick), with its origins in Central Asian nomadic tents.

### **Insights Into Urban History**

Many sites covered in the survey provide insights into the history and growth of the cities, towns, and villages in which they are located, as well as insights into the history and ethnography of all of Bulgaria. For example, the fortress-like Mosque and former Külliye of Ibrahim Paşa (Razgrad) symbolizes the emergence of Razgrad as a purpose-built Ottoman city strategically sited as a fortress of Sunni Islam and imperial power, in the midst of a region heavily populated with heterodox Muslims seen by the Ottoman Sunni establishment as sympathetic to reform and anti-authoritarian movements such the uprising centered around Sheikh Badr-i-din in the fifteenth century. The present condition of the mosque also bears witness to later historical conflicts. The portico was destroyed by the Russian army during its incursion into the Ottoman Balkans during the 1820s and the marble columns that supported the portico were taken to Russia as war booty. The present derelict state is the inheritance of anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish policies of the Bulgarian government during the 1970s and 1980s.

The poor state of the Fetih Mosque at Kyustendil also provides direct insight into the history of the town. The mosque is subsiding and literally cracking in two due to having been built atop a fragment of the old Roman walls of the city either a symbolic sitting revealing the hubris of the mosque's founders or the more neutral result of the relocation of the town from a defensive hillside location to an open plain location characteristic of the Pax-Ottomanica.

## Historical Background

In *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, F.W. Hasluck described the phenomenon of appropriation (peaceful as well as warlike) of individual holy places by successive waves of peoples, religions, and secular powers. The land comprising what is now Bulgaria was part of the home ground for Hasluck's study, and a number of the sites included in the survey illustrate the processes he described:

- The Türbe of Demir Baba at Sveshtari, located near a famed Thracian burial site as well as atop ruins of what possibly was a Thracian holy place.
- The present-day Tekke at Momino and the abandoned Tekke of Kidemli Baba at Grafitovo near Nova Zagora, sited on strategic hilltop locations offering panoramic views suitable both to contemplation and to defense. Such hilltops are traditional for pre-Christian holy places and Christian monasteries as well as for *Dervish tekkes*.

Each of these sites also features sacred springs, rocks, and trees that fit into the mythologies of the waves of religions that have appropriated the sites. The obvious lesson of this is that “national” traditions are not simply the products of single peoples but rather are accretions of the traditions of various peoples. In many cases, the holy places and histories of peoples that claim land as their unique property and patrimony were also holy places and histories of the last people to do so and might even wind up being the holy places of the next!

The survey also includes two classical Ottoman mosques that were converted into Bulgarian Orthodox churches during the early years of the independence of modern Bulgaria (Sofia and Uzundjovo) as well one early Ottoman mosque later converted into a museum (Sofia).

## **A Diverse and Pluralistic Society**

As in the cases of many of the countries that are products of 19<sup>th</sup> century national independence movements, the name given to the country of Bulgaria is identical to that given to its dominant ethnic group a coincidence that since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has placed members of other groups living in the country in subsidiary or ambiguous positions.

As in most single-nationality-based countries, the dominant group within Bulgaria has tended to strengthen its identity and augment its position through the standardization and imposition of its language and through the voluntary or forced emigration of other groups this further heightening the ambiguity of minority group members still present in the country.

All citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria are entitled to call themselves Bulgarian by nationality but not all citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria are Bulgarians in terms of their ethnicity, language, or religion. (Note: According to the constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church enjoys a special relationship to the nation and its people.)

Within Bulgaria, such “other Bulgarians” invariably are viewed both in the popular mind and in the political arena as peripheral or even threatening to the country's identity and future, despite the entry of Bulgaria into the European Union. (Note the recent strong electoral performance of the anti-foreign, anti-minority *Ataka* party.) Even amongst more tolerant Bulgarians, “non-Bulgarian” citizens of Bulgaria are often seen as tolerated guests (“our Turks,” “our Jews,” “our Gypsies”), despite the centuries or even millennia that their forebears may have lived in the country. (Even today, for example, the Movement for Rights and Freedom political party, which represents a primarily Muslim, ethnic-Turkish, Pomak, and Roma constituency, is referred to in popular speech and in the media simply as “The Turks,” sometimes with - although often without - intended malice.)

In the past, processes of marginalization of minorities in Bulgaria have even been taken to extremes that defied international law and standards of morality, e.g., the early-1940s Nazi-inspired, anti-Jewish “Law for the Protection of the Nation” and the 1980s “Regeneration” campaign aimed at erasing Muslim and Turkish religious and cultural identity and coercing Muslim and Turkish citizens of Bulgaria into either taking on Bulgarian ethnic and religious identity or emigrating. Note that a portion of the Muslim and Ottoman architectural patrimony of Bulgaria was razed as part of the “Regeneration” campaign.

The monuments covered in our survey point to the history, contributions, and legitimacy of Muslims, Roma, and those ethnic-Bulgarians who profess religious faiths other than Bulgarian Orthodox Christianity. The light that these monuments shine on the history and legitimacy of “non-Bulgarians” within the Republic of Bulgaria is crucial to the country’s cohesion.

## **Changing Demographics**

Depending how one interprets recent census data, as many or more than one out of every seven citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria falls outside of the category of Bulgarian-speaking, ethnic-Bulgarian members of, or believers in, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Over the years to come, the numbers of such “non-Bulgarian” Bulgarians are bound to increase, mostly due to differentials in birthrates among the country's ethnic and social groups. Another spur to the diversity of the population could result as large numbers of the approximately 10% of all Bulgarians who live outside of the country intermarry abroad and eventually return to the country with non-Bulgaria spouses and children. More important, entry into the European Union will bring immigration, including Asian, Middle Eastern, and African economic emigrants and Western corporate and bureaucratic expatriates and retirees.

## **Minority Monuments as Levers for Changing National Consciousness and for Supporting Economic Development**

The monuments covered in the survey point to other themes in Bulgarian history and to another dimension of national identity – namely that national identity can be forged not only out of isolation and homogeneity but from heterogeneity and the economic and cultural threads that connect countries with the outside world.

The histories of the sites show that Bulgaria, like other countries, can be conceived of as a locus of international trade, travel, and cultural contacts and of routes of migration – and not simply as a homogeneous fortress nourished by its own exclusive national roots. A good example is the location of an immense and finely-built Mosque. Uzundjovo is a small settlement which once served a role far beyond its size. During the Ottoman period, Uzundjovo was the site of an important international fair and the turn-off point from the main road from Istanbul and Edirne to Sofia and Belgrade and onto the road northward through Romania and to L’viv (Ukraine) in what was at the time greater Poland. It was a lynchpin in the international trade in furs and silks, connecting the famed entrepôts of silk at Bursa with rich sources of fur in the Russian hinterland.

## Considerations and Recommendations for Muslim Cultural Monuments

Since 1989, there has been an upsurge in Muslim religious and cultural activities throughout Bulgaria. One prominent activity has been the restoration of some mosques and the construction of new ones. As this survey and other reports indicate, most mosques presently in use are now in good to excellent condition. Still, some important monuments, such as the historic Bajrakli Djami in Samokov, are in need of some repair and maintenance. Some of the walls of this site have begun to buckle due to shifting of the terrain.

The following additional monuments are possible candidates for preservation projects based on the significance of their history and architecture, and on their location and condition.

### *Sunni*

1. Ikhtiman Imaret Camii. This monument, presently in a near-ruined state, is internationally recognized as an important site in both Ottoman and architectural history. While complete restoration of the monument would be very costly, the money needed to protect the monument from further decline would be much less. Priorities include fencing, covering, and clearing the monument.
2. Ibrahim Pasha Camii, Razgrad. Restoration of the monument's interior is needed.
3. Mosque, Belogradchik. Muslim life came to an end in Belogradchik long ago, but the hoteliers and local government are aware of the importance of the restoration of the town's single remaining local mosque to the town's overall attractiveness and tourism infrastructure. (Belogradchik is the most important tourism center in northwest Bulgaria and a popular weekend and holiday destination for residents of Sofia.) Plans are underway for the restoration of the mosque's once-exquisite wooden ceiling and only the absence of funding stands in their way.
4. Muradiya (Cumaya) Camii, Plovdiv. This important early Ottoman monument set in the very center of Plovdiv suffers from cracks in its domes and walls that are of more than cosmetic significance. The structural integrity of the monument has been severely damaged by earthquakes and, worse, by the irresponsibly conceived and implemented excavations of adjacent Roman ruins.

### *Heterodox Muslim*

1. Kidemli Baba. This unique *tekke* ensemble converted into a Christian chapel is in need of intervention.



2. Türbe Ak Yazılı Baba. This important monument requires urgent work to prevent ongoing water damage and exfoliation. The former *meydanevi* (meeting hall) at the site is also worthy of consideration.

## List of Surveyed Muslim Sites

Ada Tepe	Tekke of Kidemli Baba Sultan
Belogradchik	Mosque of El Haj Hüseyin Ağa
Bogdantsi	Mosque
Bogomil	Türbe
Brestovene	Mosque
Buinovitsa	Mosque
Dupnitsa	Mosque of Ahmed Beg
Golyam Porovets	Mosque
Gotse Delchev	Karadje Djami; mosque of Mehmed Bey
Haskovo	Mosque (Eski Camii)
Haskovo	Mosque (Çarşı Camii)
Ikhtiman	Mosque (Imaret Camii)
Kyustendil	Mosque (Fetih Mehmet Camii)
Kyustendil	Former Mosque (Ahmed Beg Camii)
Lovech	Mosque
Momino	Tekke
Obrochishte	Tekke of Ak Yazili Baba
Pazardjik	Mosque (Kurşun Camii)
Plovdiv	Cumaya Camii (Friday Mosque)
Plovdiv	Mosque (Imaret Camii)
Plovdiv	Mosque (Orta Mezar Camii)
Razgrad	Mosque of Ahmed Beğ
Razgrad	Mosque of Ibrahim Paşa
Russe	Mosque (Sayid Paşa Camii)
Samokov	Bayrakli Mosque
Shumen	Mosque of Şerif Halil Paşa
Shumen	Kilek Mosque
Shumen	Tatar Mosque
Shumen	Clock Tower Mosque (Sa'at Camii)
Sofia	Roman Wall/the Old Wall (Musalla)
Sofia	Mosque (Banya Bashi Djamiya)
Sofia	Former Mosque of Sufi Mehmet
Sofia (Kniazhevo)	Türbe of Sofiavi Bali Effendi
Sofia	Muslim (Roma) Cemetery
Stara Zagora	Mosque (Eski Camii) (The Old Mosque)
Stara Zagora (Bogomilovo)	Tekke
Suvorovo	Mosque (Kozludjanska Camii)
Sveshtari	Tekke of Demir Baba
Turgovishte	Mosque (Sa'at Camii)
Unundjovo	Former Mosque (Mosque of Sinan Pasha)
Yasenkovovo	Mosque

**Nova Zagora** (15 kms southeast of the city, near villages of Grafitevo and Omarchevo)  
**Tekke of Kidemli Baba Sultan**  
**Ada Tepe (Turkish for “Island Hill”)**

This is one of the four remaining great *türbes* and former *tekkes* of what is now Bulgaria as well as one of the great Ottoman monuments of the Balkans. The other great *tekkes* in present-day Bulgaria are Demir Baba, Osman Baba, and Ak Yazılı Baba.

The *tekke* is located atop a high wooded ridge rising from the midst of a plain approximately fifteen kilometers south of the city of Nova Zagora. The closest villages are Grafitevo and Omarchevo. The site consists of a *türbe* (mausoleum of Kidemli Baba), the remains of a *meydanevi* (meeting hall for the *cem*, a worship service), and traces of other structures comprising a traditional heterodox Muslim monastery. The *türbe* was constructed sometime in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the *meydanevi* may have been added later.

Kidemli Baba, a Dervish saint with legendary links to Hadi Bektash Veli (founder of the Bektashi order), was, possibly, a Dervish warrior or settler involved in the conquest or colonization of Bulgaria. According to local legends, Kidemli Baba received a large land grant in the area and, after his death, Sultan Mehmet I ordered that the taxes of seven surrounding villages be devoted to the upkeep of the *türbe* and *tekke*. Evliya ascribes the building of the *türbe* and *tekke* to Sultan Mehmet I.

The *meydanevi* might have been damaged during the repression of the Dervish orders following the disbanding of the Janissaries in 1826 and was possibly restored sometime thereafter. The *türbe* was restored during the 1960s under the aegis of the Bulgarian National Monuments Commission. The interior of the *türbe* was severely vandalized some years later; robbers broke open and emptied the grave of the saint. The monument seems to have been appropriated as an informal or heterodox Orthodox Christian shrine or chapel sometime around the year 2000.

Today, the *meydanevi* is a ruin. The *türbe* is surmounted by a cross and appears to have been appropriated as an informal or heterodox Orthodox Christian shrine or chapel.

The site is accessed via a rutted, dirt road. It is set in an open plateau atop the summit of a wooded ridge. Constructed with a marble exterior, a brick and plaster interior, a rubble coated plaster *tambour* (a circular structure wall), and a tiled roof, the *türbe* is an outstanding work of the early Ottoman period. Elements characteristic of the period include the surmounting of the main structure and masking of the dome within a *tambour* of plastered rubble rather than the fine marble work of the exterior walls themselves. The *türbe* is a seven-sided domed structure, a shape associated with Hurufi - and Bektashi-related mausolea. It is preceded by an enclosed and domed rectangular portico. Seven-sided structures are difficult to build with precision. Each of the walls of the *türbe* appears to average about three meters in width. The enclosed portico is approximately four by four meters on the interior. Within the main chamber, the open and exposed grave of the saint measures approximately one meter by three meters, with more than one meter in depth.

The *Meydanevi* (meeting hall) is built at the edge of the plateau. The impressive height and mass of the structure can still be seen from the severe slope at the very edge of the plateau. The remaining walls of the seven-sided structure were constructed of well-executed cloisonné of large shaped stones and precisely laid bricks. The original roof (no longer extant) was probably made of wood, conical in shape, and supported by a central wood post. The seven walls each appear to average about eight meters in width with a diameter of about 15 meters.

The condition of the *türbe* is quite sound. There are some traces of dampness on the interior walls. As mentioned above, the sarcophagus and grave of the saint were broken open and gutted. The interior walls have recently been painted green and white. On the exterior, a number of marble blocks are broken or have been removed. On the southern side of the exterior, the marble facing is clean; on the northern side it is covered with lichen. On both sides, vegetation appears to be sprouting between the blocks in a number of places. The entranceway to the portico has been defaced with spray-paint graffiti. The *meydanevi*, however, is a complete ruin. Large sections of its eastern-most walls (i.e. those hanging over the precipice) remain standing.



**Lateral view of southern side of monument from the summit on which it is set. Note the fine quality and precision workmanship of the marble facing. Some cracks and missing pieces are evident but, otherwise, the exterior walls have survived the centuries well. The tambour atop the marble walls is made of rubble coated with plaster, a technique that helps us date the monument to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The tambour was renewed during the restoration of the monument during the late 1960s.**



**View from the head of the grave through the vestibule to the interior. The niches to the left and right of the entrance now house makeshift, seemingly Christian shrines.**



**The *meydanevi* is built at the end of a precipice.**

## **Belogradchik**

### **Mosque of El Haj Hüseyin Ağa**

This mosque is located in the city of Belogradchik's main street. Built for El Haj Hüseyin Ağa in 1757-58, it is a reconstruction of an earlier mosque. Someone decoratively painted over the door and *mihrab* (a niche in the *qibla* – a wall that indicated the direction of Mecca) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the tile roof was restored to protect the walls and interior from moisture. The site is now derelict. By law, the mosque is under ownership of the Central “Myuftistvo” of Sofia, but in practice, the mosque belongs to the Belogradchik Museum and the Municipality of Belogradchik.

The mosque is situated along Belogradchik. It consists of a rectangular basilica with protruding eaves and a wood columned porch. The exterior was constructed of rough provincial stonework periodically leveled with interspaced wooden beams. The mosque formerly had a magnificent carved wooden ceiling that was removed sometime in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building measures approximately nine by 12 meters.

Belogradchik (little Belgrade) is characterized by its spectacular, soaring rock formations and as such has been a strategically important citadel location throughout history. The citadel above the town is from the late Ottoman period but contains surviving elements from many periods before. This mosque was the main mosque of the town, which huddled below the heights of the fortress (the present-day town center is located on a lower level). The mosque was famed for its magnificent carved wooden ceiling, which was still intact during the 1970s. At present, nothing remains of the carved ceiling elements within the mosque itself; a small portion is preserved in the local museum.

The exterior is stable, though the interior is gutted. The town agrees that the interior should be restored but funds were lacking at the time of our survey.

**Bogdantsi (Deli Orman region)  
Mosque**

Still in use, this mosque is located in the village of Bogdantsi (Ottoman name: Abdulköy), located in the Deli Orman region, on the main road from Ispirih to Razgrad. It was built on the foundation and basement of an older structure in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (according to experts, in the 1860s; according to locals, the 1840s). A portico was awkwardly walled-in at a later date. According to other researchers, the mosque once had a free-standing wooden minaret topped with a “birdcage-like” balcony. This has since vanished. The current minaret consists of a poorly executed metal “birdcage”-topped concrete pole reached by a jerry-rigged metal assembly.

This is a well-made, basilica-shaped, pitched roof mosque built of carefully cut local stone. It was designed as a rectangular plan-type with the main entrance on the long side. Its measurements are approximately 8.5 by 13 meters. The portico adds about five meters to the length of the structure.

Examination of the exterior shows severe buckling of the walls, possibly due to a poor foundation and shifting soil, a common problem in northeast Bulgaria. Walls need to be reinforced, the gutters should be replaced, the roofing redone, and the foundation may need stabilization.



**Oblique view from left. Note bricked-in portico, improvised access to minaret, cracks and buckling at left front corner, and laying of brick in an attempt to shore up wall.**

## **Bogomil Türbe**

Harmanli-Elkhovo Road

This now-abandoned site is located on the outskirts of the village of Bogomil (Ottoman name: Tekke) in southeast Bulgaria. It was originally the mausoleum of a holy man of one of the Dervish orders and, thus, the spiritual “centerpiece” of a former *tekke*. The *türbe* is octagonal and thus was most likely associated with orthodox, Sunni tradition. There is evidence of several attempts to patch up the exterior walls and shore up the portico at some point. Also, the original dome seems to have been covered with reinforced concrete.

From the Ottoman name of the location, it is obvious that the mausoleum was once part of a complete *tekke*. Also, such a stately mausoleum would never have been built in isolation. The octagonal, single-domed Ottoman structure is preceded by an open *baldachin*-like (canopy) portico. It was built with cut stone interspersed with wooden courses. The quality of the stonework attests to the wealth of the patron of the site and the importance of the mausoleum, saint, and former *tekke*. The *türbe* measures roughly eight meters in diameter and the portico covers about three square meters.

This site testifies to the presence of orthodox as well as heterodox orders in Bulgaria. It provides evidence of Muslim and Turkish traditions in a region now devoid of Turks and Muslims.

The interior has been gutted and there is some fairly advanced exfoliation of the stone exterior. Also there is no tin roofing (original roofing material would have been lead) over the dome with a 20<sup>th</sup>-century concrete cover. Otherwise, the structure itself appears sound. Still, the roof and the interior and exterior walls require conservation. This monument has exceptional aesthetic value but it is in need of a complete restoration including removal of the unsightly concrete elements emplaced to stabilize the portico.



**Lateral view. Note alternate placement of upper and lower windows.**



## **Brestovene (Deli Orman region)**

### **Mosque**

This mosque is located in the village of Brestovene (Ottoman name: Kara Ağac), in the Deli Orman region, on the road from Russe to Ispirih. According to local sources, construction commenced in 1852 and the mosque was consecrated in 1876. The portico was built later and walled in in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The minaret was also built at a later date. The mosque was superficially restored during the 1990s. It still serves its original function.

In addition to the mosque, the plot also contains a simple structure that once housed a *medresse* but is now used as a shed. Another simple two-roomed structure has a small room for winter prayer and facilities for making coffee and tea. Vestiges of a cemetery are also visible. The mosque is set in a large plot accessible from the street through a well-kept garden. It is an extremely well-made basilica-shaped, pitched roof structure built of carefully cut local stone. The main entrance is on the long side of the rectangular building. The interior features a wooden roof and wooden ribbed dome. It is very well decorated and maintained. The mosque measures approximately 13 by 15 meters. The portico adds about eight meters to the length.

The village has remained mostly Turkish and Muslim Roma since Ottoman times. Bulgarians live in a separate *mahalla* (a basic unit of religious organization where a Muslim community supports a single mosque). As in most of rural Bulgaria, the population is aging and mosque attendance is dwindling.

The overall condition of the building is quite good. There is some evidence of dampness on the interior and exterior of the walls as well as some shifted stones possibly due to past earthquakes.



**Entrance through walled-in portico.**



Rear of mosque. Note faux columns and capitals.



Mihrab and minbar. Note wooden roof and dome.

## **Buinovitsa (Deli Orman region) Mosque**

This still-active mosque constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century is located in the village of Buinovitsa (Ottoman name: Taşkin), in the Deli Orman region, a few kilometers off the road from Shumen to Silistra. This site is fenced-in and accessible from an unpaved side street in the village.

The square sanctuary is preceded by a two-story, partially enclosed portico. The structure's cream colored stone and the precise expert cutting of the stone blocks is typical of many of the village mosques in the region. It also features an unusually fine wooden interior with a beautiful traditional Turkish wooden ceiling. The building's measurements are approximately nine by nine meters. The portico almost doubles its length.

The village remained primarily Turkish following the independence of Bulgaria. Half of the population of the village fled to Turkey in 1989 following the culmination of two decades of officially directed and popularly supported persecution of Muslims in Bulgaria. Today only a few, mostly elderly Muslims remain.

At first glance, the mosque appears to be in decent, albeit shabby, condition. A closer inspection of the walls reveals serious shifting of the stone blocks out of alignment. A very strong smell of dampness is present inside the mosque.



**Exterior. Note shifting of stone blocks near the front of the left lateral wall of the sanctuary. Also note the inclined fireman's ladder-like stairway to the minaret. Minarets of many urban and rural mosques in Bulgaria were ordered torn down or were forcibly razed during two decades of officially directed and often popularly supported anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim campaigns during the 1970s and 1980s.**

## **Dupnitsa**

### **Mosque of Ahmed Beğ**

Located in the city of Dupnitsa, this mosque was built by Ahmed Beğ in the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century (M. Kiel). It underwent some restoration during the 1960s. Dupnitsa was known as Stanke Dimitrov during the communist period and Dubniçe during the Ottoman period. Dupnitsa evolved from village to town early in Ottoman times. This building dates from the earliest period of the development of Ottoman Dupnitsa. It is the main Ottoman structure surviving in the city and the only reminder of the Muslim life of what was for centuries a predominantly Turkish town. The mosque is also an integral part of the cityscape of Dupnitsa.

The mosque is a single, free-standing building with an attached *türbe*, situated on an open terrace area on the bank of the Bistritsa River. The terrace is supported on the side of the river by a retaining wall. The open space in front of the mosque appears to be used as an open toilet by passersby. The area behind the mosque comprises the present-day town square.

The location of the mosque and *türbe* adjacent to a small river underscores the likelihood that the building was part of a complex. Indeed, the bridge currently spanning the river next to the Mosque was constructed during the interwar period as the replacement for the original Ottoman bridge built by the founder of the Mosque.

The mosque is comprised of an Ottoman cube surmounted by a dome. The entrance is preceded by a three-domed portico. The cube measures 15m square around the exterior, while the depth of the portico measures five meters, and the cube of the Türbe measures 3.5 by five meters.

The building's architectural style is a provincial version of classical Ottoman. The double drum ensures a high dome, and the numerous windows in the walls and the lower and higher of the two drums ensures lightness. The stonework is rough and evidently the work of local Bulgarian craftsmen versed in local post-Byzantine tradition.

From the 1960s on, the former mosque was used as an art gallery. It still served this function as of 1998, but its current use is unknown.

The mosque appears to be in good condition. Superficial examination indicates no need for major work.



**Mosque seen from the terrace.**



**Rear of mosque from main city square. Note semi-attached *türbe* of founder on the right.**

## **Golyam Porovets (Deli Orman region) Mosque and Cemetery**

Located in Golyam Porovets (Ottoman name: Kokarca-i Kebir, colloquial name: Büyük Kokarca), in the Deli Orman region, south of Ispirikh, the mosque was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cemetery appears to predate the mosque by as much as several centuries. In a recent restoration, the mosque foundation was reinforced and attempts were made to shore up the walls with a brick footing and concrete buttresses. A concrete and metal minaret has been added. The mosque has not been in regular use since being supplanted by the village's new mosque.

This is a rare, intact example of a traditional wooden mosque. It is set in a large open plot on a side road in the village. At one time, a larger complex may have existed at the site. Surviving elements include a small wood-paneled structure that once served as the village *mehtep* (elementary school for Islamic children) and the remains of a cemetery. A new and larger mosque has been built within sight nearby, relegating this one to secondary status.

This is a very well-preserved, almost square, traditional wooden mosque. It features a preceding portico, a tiled roof, a flat ceiling, and a “birdcage-on-pole” minaret. The *mihrab* is set in a distinctive external apse. The interior dimensions are approximately 10 by nine meters with a floor to ceiling height of four meters.

The interior walls show evidence of dampness. The brickwork at the foundation and the newly poured concrete buttresses suggest past and potential future instability of the walls, possibly due to shifting soil, which is a problem endemic to the region.



**Oblique view to front of mosque from right.  
Remains of cemetery in foreground.**



**Lateral view, right side. In the foreground,  
the remains of the cemetery. At the far left,  
the former *mehtep*. Note the older wooden  
buttressing of the wall of mosque and more  
recent brick and concrete reinforcement at  
the base of the wall.**

## Gotse Delchev

### Karadja Pasha Djami (Mosque of Karadja Pasha/Mehmed Bey)

Located in the city of Gotse Delchev, formerly called Nevrokob, this partially collapsed mosque was built in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the son(s) of Dayi Karaca Bey, an important Ottoman official. The fenced-in ruin is set in a rubbish-filled lot at the intersection of two streets. The site is surrounded by chain link and barbed wire fencing affixed to concrete posts. Access is awkward. Part of the lot is used as a vegetable garden.



Lateral view with *minaret*.

The structure was designed as a characteristic Ottoman cube surmounted with a dome via transitional elements. It's characterized by robust but unrefined cloisonné work of the walls incorporating both uncut and partially dressed stone. The transition of dome to cube is accomplished through large triangular curved pendentives typical of the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Also, the transitional drum is unusually high. Its dimensions are 10.5 by 10.5 meters, with a height of at least 10.5 meters.

The mosque was built by an important Ottoman family whose name is connected with the construction of other monuments. At the time of construction, Nevrokob was a flourishing commercial and administrative settlement at the center of an iron-mining district. In the centuries following, the town declined. Today, it is a very pleasant and clean small city.

Following the Bulgarian conquest of Nevrokob and the rest of present-day Bulgarian Macedonia in 1912, local Muslims were pressured to flee, thus depriving the monument of any remaining constituency, and the monument has been in a state of progressive physical collapse ever since. The remains of the mosque were declared a national 'monument of culture' in the 1970s but no action to conserve or restore the building has been taken since. According to a rusted sign at the site, the structure is owned by the Archeological Institute and Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia.

The mosque needs extensive stabilization work.

## Haskovo Mosque (Eski Camii)

Located in the city of Haskovo (Ottoman name: Hasköy), this mosque was constructed in 1394-95, probably by Saruca Paşa. The dating of this mosque to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century is confirmed by the presence of the original Ottoman dedicatory plaque at the entrance to the structure. However, the mosque has been rebuilt in full or in part numerous times over the course of the last 600 years and it is difficult to determine exactly what parts of the mosque are original. Nonetheless, the overall size, proportions, and simplicity have probably remained the same. The mosque was built prior to the emergence of Hasköy as a flourishing town.



The mosque is situated off a main road and accessed through a closed courtyard. It is an austere and unadorned rectangular structure with the main entrance on the long side. The exterior is covered with stucco. The mosque was once part of *vakif* (an endowment for Muslim charitable purposes) that contained amongst other buildings the Hamam of Haskovo, one of the largest and most beautifully decorated in Bulgaria. It was dynamited and razed during the 1960s despite local protests.

The building appears to be in sound condition.



## **Haskovo Mosque (Çarşi Camii)**

This mosque is located in the city of Haskovo (Ottoman name: Hasköy). Built in 1775-76, it was fully restored during the first half of the 1990's after being gutted some years earlier when an arsonist set fire to it.

The mosque is situated in the historic, partially preserved *çarşi* (shopping district) at the very center of Haskovo. The rectangular building is entered through a portal in a row of 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings abutting on one side of the mosque, which also contains the offices of the regional mufti of Haskovo and its surroundings. The exterior is covered with hewn local stone, typical of many of Bulgaria's surviving late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> century mosques. Much of the exterior was left unfinished during restoration so as to expose the original stonework. The perimeter measures approximately 15.5 by 14 meters.



**Entranceway to the mosque is through a portal (center, above) set in a 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial building. The entrance to the offices of the local Mufti is through the doorway to the left of the portal surmounted by a blue sign.**

## **Ikhtiman Mosque (Imaret Camii)**

This mosque is located in the city of Ikhtiman (Ottoman name: Filibe). The building was constructed during the last quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a *zaviye* (Islamic religious school), *imaret* (soup kitchen), and mosque combined. According to early unpublished writings of Professor Machiel Kiel, the mostly likely person to have founded and built the site was Mahmud Beğ, son of Mihaloğlu Ilyas Beğ, the latter a warrior with a documented historical connection to Ikhtiman.

During the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the combined *imaret-zaviye*-mosque was modified to serve as a mosque alone. Walls separating the lateral rooms from the vestibule of the mosque were removed, transforming the structure from one comprised of four separate, functionally differentiated spaces into a single, T-shaped mosque structure. A freestanding minaret (extant until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) was also added. *Imaret/zaviye/mosque* combinations were features of Ottoman infrastructure during the early periods of expansion of Ottoman rule. Later, once such buildings ceased to serve frontier-related roles of lodging as well as prayer, many were remodeled into mono-functional, T-shaped sanctuaries.

During the 1970s, the Monuments Protection Commission of the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture completed plans for a full restoration of the Imaret Camii, but the plans were never implemented. Today the site is an abandoned ruin. The building is in a state of ongoing collapse, and the interior is littered with garbage left behind by squatters.

The monument stands on a large, concrete paved lot at the rear of an elementary school near the center of Ikhtiman. Built of roughly-dressed stone and original handmade bricks, the structure is a classic T-shaped imaret mosque of the style associated with the city of Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. One enters the building through a doorway in the center of the façade into a central domed vestibule. The barrel-vaulted mosque sanctuary is positioned directly behind the vestibule. One lateral domed chamber is positioned to the left of the vestibule and a second to its right. Such T-shaped structures are rarely found in Europe outside of the city of Edirne (the second Ottoman capital) in European Turkey. Other examples include the imaret mosque in Plovdiv and the imaret mosque at present-day Komotini in Greek Thrace.

One of the many distinctive elements of this mosque is its barrel-vaulted sanctuary, as opposed to the domed sanctuary usually seen on T-shaped mosques. The façade features lively, albeit roughly executed brick and stone cloisonné work. The combination of rough materials and attention to exterior decoration is an important feature of this monument. The attention to decoration could be interpreted as a momentary overlap in Byzantine and Ottoman styles. The robust nature of the workmanship could point to the hands of local craftsmen. Of note on the interior is the differentiation of the floor level between the vestibule and the other chambers. Examination of the door and inner walls of the monument shows that the ground level at the site has risen over the centuries and that a portion of the height of the monument is hidden below the present-day ground level. The floor level of the vestibule was at ground level at the time of construction and the lateral

chambers and sanctuary were elevated a meter or more above ground level (as at the Imaret Camii at Plovdiv). There is a possible *oculi* (circular opening) in the domes of the lateral chambers. A hole in the dome of one of the chambers could be a collapsed section but its nearly perfect form suggests that it might have been an oculus. There are traces of an open portico that once attached to the original structure as well.

The monument measures roughly 17 meters in width along its façade (i.e. the top of the T shape) and roughly 11.5 meters in depth from the center of the facade to the rear or *mihrab* wall of the sanctuary (i.e. the vertical axis of the T). It is best understood, however, as comprised of four chambers; the interior of each measuring approximately five by five meters.

This is an important monument dating from the very first years of Ottoman expansion into Bulgaria. Its execution betrays interplay between several cultures and civilizations. Its style reveals much about the nature of Ottoman infrastructure and the ways of life on the expanding frontier. Its presence reveals the past importance of present-day Ikhtiman, a caravan stop during Ottoman times.

The monument is in terrible condition. It has been in an accelerated rate of decline in recent years, mostly in terms of the enlargement of wall openings and ongoing disintegration of the barrel-vault. For the moment, the façade appears sound despite signs of subsidence.

In the short run, priorities include cleaning its interior and immediate surroundings, and that the monument be fenced in and covered to protect it from rain and snowfall, and the intentional and accidental depredations of trespassers. Cleaning away shrubs and grass would ensure that roots cause no additional damage to the brickwork.



**The Imaret Camii at Ikhtiman stands in the midst of a large paved lot. The houses at the right rear of the photo are part of the Roma quarter of Ikhtiman.**



**Rear view. At the center: the rear or *mihrab* wall of the mosque sanctuary. Note that its window opening is original. At the right: The left-hand chamber. Note large holes knocked through the walls of the chamber.**



**Interior. The sanctuary. Note the partially collapsed state of the barrel-vault and the buckling of what remains of the left-hand side of the vault at its juncture with the *mihrab* wall.**

## **Kyustendil Mosque (Fetih Mehmet Camii) (Mosque of Mehmed the Conqueror)**

Located in the city of Kyustendil (Ottoman name: Ilidja Küstendil), this mosque was built sometime in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Sultan Murad II. Until approximately 30 years ago, the mosque was still used by Kyustendil's diminished Muslim population (most Muslims having left Kyustendil soon after Bulgaria's independence from Ottoman rule). Beginning in the late 1970s, the mosque was threatened with destruction by both city planners seeking to widen the thoroughfare that runs directly in front of the mosque (and through the site of its long-vanished courtyard and a *şadravan* (a fountain used for ablutions) and by ultra-nationalists during Bulgaria's hysterical anti-Turkish campaigns of the 1980s. Today, the mosque is abandoned. No restoration has been undertaken, but internal scaffolding was erected during the early 1990s to support the dome and stabilize the walls. Also, a seemingly recent concrete footing has been added to support the drum of the dome due to instability caused by the crumbling lateral walls. The building is owned by Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture.

The monument stands along the main traffic thoroughfare of Kyustendil. Built of cut stone and brick, it consists of a domed cube preceded by a portico. The complex stone and brickwork of the shaft of the mosque's characteristically tall and slender minaret is comprised of hexagonally cut stones mounted on their sides and surrounded by sets of six bricks. Including the portico, the exterior measures approximately 20 by 15 meters. The interior of the sanctuary measures approximately 12 by 12 meters.

This building is a prime example of the first generation of large Ottoman mosques in the Balkans. The construction of this mosque was the core element in the creation of Ottoman Ilidja Küstendil and the basis for the present-day city of Kyustendil. Previously, the town had clustered around the Byzantine fortress on the heights above the present-day city. It is one of only two remaining former mosques in the town.

The monument is in very poor condition. Uneven subsidence and vibrations of passing traffic have led to unstable walls that in turn have compromised the integrity of the dome. The masonry is deteriorating and crumbling. The building would need a major restoration, including a possible injection of concrete foundation under the building and the creation of a lightweight concrete shell to support the dome.



**Oblique view from right. Mosque fronts on the main traffic thoroughfare running through Kyustendil.**

## **Kyustendil Former Mosque (Ahmed Beg Camii)**

This mosque is situated over the site of former Roman baths and adjacent to the present-day bathhouse in the city of Kyustendil (Ottoman name: Ilidja Küstendil). It was built in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Between the First and Second World Wars, the minaret was razed and the mosque was used as a depot by the Bulgarian army. The building was restored during the Communist party dictatorship. It now functions as a satellite museum gallery of the Kyustendil Museum.

Constructed of brick and stone cloisonné, the building is a domed cube with a half-dome extension comprising a balcony and an internal vestibule, preceded in turn by an open portico. The former mosque is an unusually tall and graceful structure. The windows in the high walls and twelve-faceted dome contribute to the brightness of the mosque's light and soaring interior.

The interior of the main sanctuary measures approximately 11 by 11 meters. The half-domed balcony extension is approximately six meters deep and the open portico is about five meters deep.

The condition is very good, although there are signs of moisture penetrating the half-dome.



**Oblique view from right side showing the setting of the monument above the site of the Roman baths of Kyustendil (Roman Pautalia). The present-day bathhouse, the core of which is Ottoman, is located little more than a dozen meters opposite the front of the portico, i.e. just to the left of the area contained in the photo.**



**View of *qibla* showing massive arches and pendentives that support the walls of the sanctuary. The soaring interior is well illuminated by windows penetrating three of the walls and the twelve facets of the drum of the dome.**



## Lovech Mosque

Located in the city of Lovech (Ottoman name: LofCa), this mosque was built in 1756-7 for Hadji Huseyin Aga. Lovech was largely destroyed during the Russian bombardment of the town in the Russo-Turkish war and the mosque was severely damaged. It was rebuilt sometime following the independence of Bulgaria. The mosque is still in use, though only a handful of Turkish Muslims remain in Lovech. The community does not maintain an imam or *hodja* (a Muslim school master).

The rectangular building is situated in a fenced-in yard. Constructed of roughly cut stone of various varieties, the stone-walled, flat-roofed structure is a typical Bulgarian mosque, although it is slightly large for one of its type. It measures approximately 16.5 meters wide by 11 meters deep.

This is the one remaining mosque in a town that was once home to many. In Ottoman times, Lovech was a largely Muslim town in a predominantly Muslim pocket in an otherwise overwhelmingly Christian part of Bulgaria. As local village names such as Pavlikeni attest, in medieval times the population of the region included Bulgarian adherents of Paulician sects, many of whom later converted to Islam, thereby augmenting the Turkish Muslim population of the region. At the end of the Russo-Turkish war, Turks fled Lovech en masse, leaving the town in a demographic crisis that took decades to overcome. Many Bulgarian-speaking Muslims remained in the region.

The building appears stable from the exterior.



**Oblique view of façade and entrance.**

## **Momino Tekke (Kizane Tekkesi)**

This site is located in the village of Momino (Ottoman name: Kizantekke), several kilometers northwest of Turgovishte. According to analysis of an inscription at the site by Prof. Kiel, the present complex is a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction of an earlier structure. The original complex may have been destroyed during the repression of the Janissaries and heterodox orders in 1826.

The *tekke* appears to be in a continuous process of rebuilding and modification; indication that this is a living site and that it is an aggregation of functions rather than of architectural monuments. Recent modifications include a completely new *baldachin*, (an identical replacement of the former *baldachin* which had been destroyed by fire) and a new building that serves as both *türbe*, enclosing the graves of saints venerated at the complex, and the *meydan* (meeting hall) for the *cem* (convocation). Originally a *tekke*, the site is now a place of convocation, pilgrimage, and celebration. It is owned by the local community. The village of Momino is solidly Bektashi.

This is a rare example of a complete and functioning *tekke* (Dervish lodge or monastery) in a traditional setting: a secure high location with a stunning panoramic view. It is located on the main road just prior to the village when driving from Turgovishte, and it is entered through an unlocked gate. The complex is comprised of a *türbe*, *meydan for cem*, *imaret*, lodgings, and *baldachin*. The five simple oblong structures are made of mud-brick and/or baked brick, stone, wood, and tile, and their style and layout is traditional to the local villages. They range in length from about 15 to 30 meters with an average width of about five meters (the newest structure is wider).

As mentioned above, the present site is a living monument and possibly the last complete *tekke* ensemble in Bulgaria. The presence of heterodox Islam within what is now Bulgaria is as old as the history of Turkic and Muslim presences in the region. Heterodox Islam played a role in the spread of Ottoman power and the shaping of a tolerant, open, and egalitarian Muslim ethos in Bulgaria and throughout the Balkans. Almost 15 percent of the approximately 7.5 million inhabitants of Bulgaria identify themselves as Muslims. It is possible that about half of the Muslims of Bulgaria come from heterodox traditions. Most Christian Bulgarians are totally unaware of heterodox Islam and thus of the beliefs, traditions, and culture of almost one out of every twelve of their fellow citizens. In part, this is a result of the disregard and condescension towards Muslims and Islam shown by the majority of Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. It may also be partly a function of the concentration of heterodox traditions and sites in rural areas in the predominantly Turkic southeast and southwest of the country. Also, persecution of heterodox orders during early and late Ottoman times – from the suppression of the revolt of the followers of Sheikh Bedreddin, to the suppression of the Janissaries in 1826 – led to a tradition of dissimulation amongst heterodox Muslims. In recent times, however, a number of Bulgarian scholars have devoted years of study to documenting and understanding heterodox Muslim traditions, some doing pioneering work, including work relating to the history and traditions of the present site.

The condition of the site is quite good.



View southeast over the lower half of complex as seen from the porch of new building housing the grave of the saint and the meeting room for *cem*. On the left is the area for slaughtering animals for feasts and supplications. At the center is the rear of the structure containing lodgings. The new wooden *baldachin* is at center-right. Turgovishte is visible in the far distance.



New structure. The room containing the grave is at the left, the meeting room for the *cem* is at the right. The style of the building is a modern take on traditional local styles.

**Obrochishte (near Balchik)  
Tekke of Ak Yazili Baba**

This *tekke*, established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is located in the village of Obrochishte, located near Balchik. The site originally functioned as a mausoleum and ceremonial meeting hall comprising the main elements of a heterodox Muslim *tekke*. The mausoleum still contains the grave of the saint and attracts local as well as Turkish tourists and pilgrims. It is a major work of Ottoman art and is the most complete classical *tekke* remaining in Bulgaria.



**Türbe of Ak Yazili Baba. Note enclosed portico with setbacks at left and right to form an irregularly-shaped hexagonal transition drum between dome and walls. Also note the tall heptagonal main chamber and its lack of transitional drum. Also interesting is the difference between the fine ashlar at the lower levels of the walls of the main chamber and the rougher stonework above.**



**Grave of the saint in the context of the walls of the mausoleum chamber. Note the height of walls and high placement of windows.**

The *meydan evi* (a hall for devotional ceremonies) is roofless and derelict, but the presence of an improvised stage and scattered chairs and lights indicates that it is also being used for performances. Recent restoration work was performed on the lead paneling of the mausoleum dome, but as interior dampness indicates, it was not successful. There are cracks in the interior walls that appear to have been unsuccessfully patched, as seepage is still evident. A sign at the site reports that the fencing that surrounds it to keep out grazing livestock was recently rebuilt by the Beautiful Bulgaria Project, a joint program of the UNDP and Bulgarian Ministry of Labor to provide work and training through the restoration of architecturally worthwhile façades. The site is a Bulgarian “Monument of Culture.” The owner is probably the Ministry of Culture via the regional museum in the nearby town of Kavarna (Asen Salkin, director).

The monument is located in one of Bulgaria's major tourist zones between the picturesque seaside town of Balchik and the beach resorts of Albena and Golden Sands. The site is less than an hour-drive from Varna. The precinct of the former *tekke* contains a *türbe* and *meydan evi*, plus a late 20<sup>th</sup> century imitation of a traditional baldachin. The entrance to the precinct is off the main road to Varna – Durankulak (BG-RO border crossing).

Both structures are Ottoman in style, and feature seven-sided main chambers preceded by rectangular vestibules. The main chamber of the mausoleum is taller than others of its type characterized by minimal transitional elements from the dome to the walls. The existence of a relatively intact ceremonial hall at the site is unusual. Most were destroyed after 1826. The structures comprising the former *tekke* were built with cut stone. The main chamber of the mausoleum measures approximately nine meters in diameter, while the vestibule measures about 5.5 square meters. The main chamber of the ceremonial structure measures approximately 25 meters in diameter and the vestibule measures roughly 10 by 14 meters.

The condition of the mausoleum has deteriorated rapidly over the last decade. The exterior stonework shows extreme exfoliation and the interior dome and walls show signs of dampness and water damage. Intervention is needed to prevent this well-preserved monument from deteriorating rapidly. The ceremonial hall would benefit from being cleaned and conserved, and possibly by recreating its original (seven-faceted) conical wooden roof over the main hall and a similar roof over the vestibule.



**The *Meydan Evi*. Façade of the enclosed entrance gallery is visible at the far right; the remains of the seven-sided minaret-like chimney of the hearth of the main chamber is visible behind the tree at the left. Originally, the main chamber had been covered by a high conical wooden roof and the vestibule by a similar roof. These roofs were destroyed and the chimney of was damaged long ago, possibly (this requires verification) by a Russian artillery bombardment during the Russo-Turkish war of the 1870s. At the time, Russian and Bulgarian artillery indeed considered it sport to bombard minarets of mosques.**

## **Pazardjik Mosque (Kurşun Camii)**

This mosque is located in the city of Pazardjik (Ottoman name: Tatar PazarCik). It was built in 1667-68 for Nazir Mehmed Ağa, a treasurer of Vizir Gürce Mehmed Paşa. There are massive external buttresses shoring up the walls that might date to as early as the late-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Tatar Pazardjik was founded in the early years of Ottoman rule when nomads from eastern Anatolia were forcibly resettled in the area. The city later flourished as a major stop on the caravan route from Istanbul and Edirne towards Europe. It was also the center of a region known for intensive rice cultivation during the Ottoman period. For much of its history, Tatar Pazardjik boasted an Ottoman urban infrastructure that rivaled that of many larger cities. It was home to mosques, *tekkes*, baths, and one of the greatest khan complexes in the empire, that of Ibrahim Pasha. All of these monuments (with the exception of the present monument) were demolished in the intermittent cultural “ethnic cleansing” that took place over the 110 years between Bulgaria’s independence during the 1870s and the government fomented anti-Turkish campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s.



**Overall view.**



**Lateral view from street.**

The mosque is entered through a walled-in courtyard. The entire structure is somewhat squat and undistinguished in appearance, except for its graceful, soaring minaret. The building consists of an Ottoman square, preceded by an unusual closed, triple-arched, slanted-roof portico, instead of the multi-domed roof that is characteristic of this period. The dome of the sanctuary is supported by a windowless octagonal drum. The walls and drum were constructed of brick and roughly cut stone with plaster finish. The dome is lead-covered and the portico is roofed with tile. The irregular square sanctuary measures roughly 11 by 12 meters (exterior measurements). The portico runs the width of the building and is approximately five meters deep.

The mosque was partially restored during the 1970s. The exterior structural walls of the sanctuary are shored up by massive improvised-looking buttresses that have been in place since as early as the late-18<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, casual inspection indicates at least one recent major crack. The problem is either or both of the following. The mosque appears to

have been of a comparatively inferior design and execution, especially for a 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman structure in an important provincial center. Also, because the mosque was built on sandy soil, possibly without an adequate foundation, it is likely that it has been affected over the long term by continuous soil subsidence.

## **Plovdiv Cumaya Camii (Friday Mosque)**

Built in the 1420s-30s during the reign of Sultan Murad II, this mosque underwent a complete reconstruction in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (as noted by the inscription over the entranceway). It also received a major renovation in 1908. In the 1990s, the wood-fronted shop galleries surrounding the entranceway were renovated and a lateral doorway was opened.

One approaches the main entrance (opposite the *mihrab*) via a flight of stairs from street level because the mosque was built on a slope, requiring construction of an artificial terrace. The stairway affords entrance from the pre-existing *çarşı*. The structure consists of nine-domed *ulu-camii* with weight-bearing exterior walls and four immense weight-carrying interior piers, each set at the interstices of the domes. There are several other distinctive elements to this building. These include an interior fountain located under the middle dome of the first row of domes from the entranceway, a wooden *mafil* and other appurtenances from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and interior decorative painting from the late Ottoman period. The structure's dimensions are 40 meters by 30 meters, with a height of 13 meters (measured to the top of the highest dome).

The Plovdiv Cumaya Camii is one of the few examples of monumental multi-domed, pier-supported *ulu-camii* structures in the Balkans. The Cumaya Camii and the former Friday Mosque of Sofia (converted to the National Archeological Museum) are the only examples of the *ulu-camii* style in Bulgaria. For six centuries, the mosque has comprised the major axis and center of Plovdiv. Throughout the Ottoman period, it epitomized the importance of the city. The construction of the mosque coincided with the stabilization of Ottoman power in the Balkans, i.e. the conquest and pacification of Serbia and the ending of internecine struggles with the Ottoman Empire. It also marked the resurrection of Plovdiv, a city that had been damaged and impoverished in the Byzantine-Bulgarian wars.

The building is superficially in good condition, but it faces some severe structural problems. Subsidence of the front right pier and right lateral wall has led to severely cracked arches and domes. Due to the sloping landscape, the mosque was built on an earthen works terrace and this increases its vulnerability. Cracks in the structural elements and domes of the mosque appeared during the 1928 earthquake at the city of Harmanli. The next threatening event took place in the 1970s, when Bulgarian archeologists uncovered and permanently exposed a Roman amphitheater adjacent to the mosque. This led to subsidence of the terrace and resultant instability of walls and piers at the right side of the mosque.

The mosque is one of a small group of monuments covered by a bilateral Bulgarian-Turkish monuments preservation agreement.





**This angle shows part of the excavated Roman amphitheater. Excavation exacerbated a subsidence problem that threatens the structural integrity of the mosque. The execution of the excavation during the 1970s may have been as much as a political statement to diminish the stature of a “Turkish” monument as it was scientific in its motivation.**



**Interior.**

## **Plovdiv Mosque (Imaret Camii)**

This mosque was built in 1444-5 for Şihabuddin Paşa, who was Beylerbey of Rumelia at the time. The structure originally served as a combined mosque and imaret, but sometime during the course of the Ottoman period it was modified to function as a mosque alone. The transition included a number of interior structural and design changes. A major restoration of the mosque was undertaken during the 1960s under the direction of the late Nikola Mushanov. Amongst the major achievements of the restoration was the excavation of the floor of the central entrance hall to its original position at ground level, approximately one meter below the elevated level of the sanctuary and lateral rooms.

The mosque is located in a courtyard surrounded by metal fencing and entered through a locked gate. Preceded by a multi-arched portico, the structure is a T-shaped imaret-mosque made of mostly brick and stone. It contains a central interior courtyard chamber, a prayer sanctuary on its main axis, and two lateral rooms that originally served as lodging spaces for travelers. An octagonal mausoleum containing the grave of the founder is located adjacent to the main T-shaped building. The courtyard in front of the mosque contains a number of Ottoman gravestones. Both the mosque and the *türbe* are visible from the surrounding streets. The approximate overall dimensions of the building, including the portico are width, 26 meters, and depth, 25 meters.

This mosque is one of the great T-shaped mosques of the Ottoman world, even rivaling those of Bursa. It is one of only several such structures in the Balkans; others can be found in Edirne, present-day Komotini in Greece, and, in a decrepit state, in the Bulgarian town of Ikhtiman, once a caravan stop on the road from Plovdiv via Pazardjik to Sofia and on to Serbia and Central Europe. The building of such a structure in Plovdiv in 1444 (the same year as the defeat of the Crusaders at the Battle of Varna) shows the wealth and stability of Ottoman Filibe at the time. The location of the building near the banks of the Maritsa river gives insight into the layout of the early Ottoman Filibe, i.e. along the axis between the present monument and the Ulu or Cumaya Camii of Plovdiv, the latter located at the foot of the hill that had contained the fortifications of the pre-Ottoman town (Ottoman rule enabled the construction of non-walled cities in a region that had been devastated by decades of war between Byzantium and the Bulgarian principalities).

The mosque appears to be in quite sound condition, testimony to its builders and to the work of the late Nikola Mushanov, completed four decades ago.



**Façade from street. Note mass and severe geometry of the portico. Also note the covered oculus atop dome the dome of the central vestibule. The *türbe* of the founder is visible at the far right.**



**Sanctuary as seen from central vestibule. Note the Turkish-triangle decorations along the drum under the dome and the large *muqarnas* (a type of corbel, which is a piece of stone jutting out of the wall to support any weight resting on top of it)-decorated pendentives.**

**Plovdiv  
Mosque (Orta Mezar Camii)**

This 16<sup>th</sup>-century mosque has not served its original function for many years. At some point it fell into private ownership and has served as the dining room of a succession of restaurants ever since. The roof of the dome shows signs of restoration. The overall condition of the building appears quite sound.

The former mosque is accessed through a nondescript early-20<sup>th</sup> century building. Its design consists of an Ottoman cube surmounted by a dome and an octagonal transitional drum. The simple but elegant structure was constructed of roughly hewn stone and some brick. Its diameter measures roughly 12 square meters.

This is one of only three mosques remaining in a city that once boasted dozens. Its location near the Maritsa is indicative of the spread of the city during Ottoman times.



**Oblique view showing adjacent building through which the former mosque is entered.**

## **Razgrad**

### **Mosque of Ahmed Beğ**

Built in 1542, the Mosque of Ahmed Beğ is located just outside of the center of Razgrad. Razgrad is located on the southern edge of the once impenetrable, now agricultural Deli Orman region (Turkish for “Wild Forest”; “Ludagorska” in Bulgarian). It is an important urban center in northeast Bulgaria, a part of the country with substantial ethnic-Turkish Sunni Muslim and Alevi populations. At present, it is the only mosque still functioning in the city. The Ibrahim Paşa mosque is empty and its interior partially gutted. All other mosques that still existed in Razgrad a half century ago were razed during the decades that followed as part of either 1950s and ‘60s urban redevelopment or of conscious attempts to rid Razgrad of vestiges of its once heavily Muslim and Turkish character.

This is an important monument from the period of initial growth of Ottoman Razgrad. The mosque is set in a small, fenced-in park in front of the portico and paved precinct along the left-hand lateral wall. Constructed mostly of sandstone, with some brick and tile, this is a solid and mostly unadorned early -16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman structure. It has solid stonework and minimal but beautiful stone carvings on the base and balcony of the minaret. The exterior of the sanctuary measures approximately 12 by 12 meters, while the interior measures about 10 by 10 meters.

The mosque is preceded by a rather prosaic 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosed portico that was built to replace an original triple-domed open portico. The baroque-like crown surmounting the minaret is also a later addition. The dome partially collapsed during the earthquake of 1977 that partially destroyed Bucharest, Romania.



**Frontal view of portico. The enclosed portico is divided into two rooms - the room on the left houses the office of the Mufti of Razgrad, the room on the right appears to be used for diverse purposes.**



Interior, facing the *mihrab*.

Ahmed Beğ was a Sandjakkbey, a slave of Sultan Suleiman, and a poet and sybarite of Albanian origin who ended his days as a Dervish.

The monument is under ownership of the “Muftistvo” of Razgrad. Overall, it is in good condition. The stonework shows some signs of dampness and shifting of blocks. There is also dampness and peeling of paint on the interior walls.

## Razgrad Mosque of Ibrahim Paşa

This mosque was constructed in 1616 for Hadım Ibrahim Paşa, a vizier of Sultan Suleiman. The original domed portico of the mosque was razed and replaced with a closed wooden structure sometime during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most likely following the independence of Bulgaria and the accompanying retreat of Muslim worship into privacy. The wooden portico was removed sometime after the 1970s. Ownership of the mosque was returned to the “Muftistvo” of Razgrad but the mosque remains derelict because the Muftistvo does not have the funds to restore and maintain it.

This is possibly the largest, most impressive and architecturally most sophisticated remaining 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman monument anywhere in the Balkans, outside of the former imperial capital at Edirne. The mosque is set in a large public square carved out of the traditional center of Razgrad during the latter years of the Communist Party period at the cost of such important monuments as Razgrad’s Ottoman Hamam (bathhouse). It consists of an Ottoman dome on a cube, with a twelve-sided tambour resting on an octagonal transitional drum created by recesses in the four corners of the building.



Interior as seen through a partially opened window lattice to the right of the entrance. Even this narrow angle of view tells us much about the mosque’s interior. At the far rear we see a stately *mihrab* and the light, open effect provided by the closely spaced and ornately decorated square and arched windows. Closer to the front is a narrow, graceful wood column supporting the *mafil* balcony.



Façade and right lateral wall. The profusion of windows on wall and tambour provide light to the interior and turn the fortress-like walls of the mosque into filigree.

The monument's stonework is masterly and precise. The sheer, fortress-like lateral and rear walls are transformed into latticework by four stories of arched windows. The slender minaret of the mosque and the capped turrets mounted on its four corners give the building a soaring, upward-thrusting appearance that balances the severe geometry of its walls. The exterior of the sanctuary measures almost 20 by 20 meters and the interior measures about 16 by 16 meters.

The condition of the exterior appears quite good but for some signs of dampness and intermittent spacing between the ashlar (masonry) blocks. The exterior appears to require some conservation of the ashlar and some cosmetic work on the scars left on the façade from the inexpert removal of the original open portico. Reconstruction of a portico based on expert's conception of the original could be achieved. The floor of the mosque has been gutted and partially excavated. The interior needs substantial restoration.



## Russe Mosque (Sayid Paşa Camii)

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there were thirty mosques in Russe. In 1909, there were nineteen. By the early 1970s, there were four, and today there are two: the Sayid Pasha mosque and a new mosque that stands about five hundred meters away.

This mosque site is located in the city of Russe (Ottoman name: RusCuk). It dates from the late-18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. Judging by the newer appearance of some of the building's features, it appears to have undergone renovations since its original construction.



**Mosque is on the second story of the structure. Modern shops occupy the former carşi on the ground floor. Wall perpendicular to the façade encloses the portico which is entered through the rear of the structure.**



**Mihrab and minbar. Note eclectic, partially neo-gothic, decorative elements surrounding mihrab.**

The mosque is situated on the corner of a main street and a side street. The entrance is through the large yard and playground at the left side of the structure when facing the *qibla* wall (the rear when viewing the structure from the boulevard). The *qibla* wall faces the side street. This unique two-story plan structure is complex. The building has a somewhat irregular external footprint due to its setting at the corner of a curved boulevard and straight side street.

The exterior displays a mix of European and Ottoman motifs typical in Bulgaria beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The sanctuary has a wood and tile roof with a wooden dome and ceiling on the interior. The mosque proper is on the second story and the ground floor is a *çarşi* (traditional gallery of retail shops); the rent of which constituted, and may even still constitute, a source of revenue for the mosque. Some experts describe the mosque as having a *bedesten* (domed masonry structure built for storage of valuable goods) on the bottom floor. The interior of the sanctuary measures approximately 15 by 15 meters. The sanctuary is preceded by a two-story enclosed portico measuring approximately 15 by 4 meters. The dome spans almost the full length and width of the interior. The shops of the *çarşi* no longer have the uniform look they would have had originally, nor the shutters and eaves that would have been standard when the mosque was first constructed.

A little more than 10 meters from the rear of the mosque is a building housing students of Russe's *medresse*. This building appears to date from the late-19<sup>th</sup> or early-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The building is in good condition, but there is some evidence of dampness in the walls.

## Samokov Bayrakli Mosque

The original structure was built in the 15th century, but the present building is from the mid-nineteenth century, built on the site of the earlier mosque(s) which had been enlarged or rebuilt several times over the previous four centuries. The present structure was built by Mehmed Husrev Pasha and it incorporates parts of the walls of the past ones. The Muslim population of Samokov practically disappeared following the Russo-Turkish War and Bulgarian independence late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the past years, the mosque has operated as a museum.

The name Bayrakli comes from the Turkish word for flag. A green flag was displayed from the minaret of the original Friday Mosque to indicate to the other mosques of the town that it was time for the muezzins to issue the call to prayer.

The building underwent a major restoration during the 1960s by Bulgarian architect and devotee of Ottoman architecture Nikola Mushanov. The most recent renovation took place in 2001 (during which fragments of Jewish tombstones were incorporated in the paving of the portico).



**Oblique view of front. Note second story over portico. This space housed the mosque's former *medresse*.**



**Portico, painted decorations at entranceway.**

The structure is comprised of a cube with four free-standing interior columns seemingly supporting the small interior dome. From the exterior, however, it is obvious that, unlike classical ottoman domed monuments, this mosque is actually a pitched-roofed cube surmounted by a small, centrally placed round drum that is covered with a circular-tiled roof. The interior dome, thus, is decorative rather than structural, thereby permitting the use of such slender columns and a transitional zone comprised of delicate, vestigial pendentives.

At its exterior, the mosque is preceded by a large columned portico, which, due to the location of the mosque on a slope, is in turn preceded by a broad stairway. The portico is topped by a single-story structure that once contained the *medresse* of the mosque. Entry to the former *medresse* is via stairs at the right of the portico. The form and decoration of the mosque show a fusion of Ottoman and late-Rococo influences of a type typical of Turkish decoration and of the so-called Bulgarian National Revival style it inspired. The slender columns, seemingly floating oculus-like wood and plaster interior dome, and the gracefully minimal Turkish triangle pendentives reflect this style, as does the lavishly painted interior. The mosque's spirally-striped minaret could be described as Rococo "neo-Seljuk." The estimated measurements of the building are 14 by 14 by 14 meters. The portico and *medresse* are an estimated 14 by 8 meters.

This mosque is a rare example of the so-called Bulgarian-revival style (a style which actually is no more than the local version of the structural and decorative traditions of 19<sup>th</sup> century Turkish "Hayat Ev" houses and mansions found from Albania to central Anatolia), and it is uncommon to find a Bulgarian mosque with such a strong Rococo character. Amongst 19th century mosques in Bulgaria with painted interiors, this one certainly is the most sophisticated and lavish. The mosque is a reminder of the Turkish past and former wealth of Samokov, as well as of the fruitful symbiosis of Turkish and Bulgarian cultures in late Ottoman times that, in turn, shaped the art of soon-to-be-independent Bulgaria.

Today, the mosque is a rarely visited museum without a local Muslim constituency. Most Bulgarians who know the mosque view it more as part of their own national patrimony rather than as an example of Muslim culture because of its so-called Bulgarian-revival style and the fact that the craftsmen who built and decorated it were Christian Bulgarians.

The building was recently restored, but still shows obvious signs of dampness and leakage on the interior and exterior walls.



**Interior towards entranceway. Note small but elegant wooden *mafil* and laticework windows from *medrese*.**

## Shumen (Ottoman: Shumla) Mosque and complex of Şerif Halil Paşa

This Mosque is a world-class Ottoman structure, and the largest and possibly most refined Ottoman mosque in Bulgaria, as well as an excellent example of the art of the French-influenced, neo-Baroque “Lale” (Tulip) period. It was built under the aegis of Şerif Halil Paşa, a native of Shumla who rose to become deputy to the Grand Vizier, in 1744-45, but the architect is unknown. The complex was erected on the site of a previous mosque built by the grandfather of Şerif Halil Paşa.

A major restoration was underway at the time the site was visited.



**The complete complex of the Mosque of Şerif Halil Paşa as seen from the rise on which Shumen’s Ottoman clock tower stands. On the right, the mosque itself, showing the *qibla* wall. On the left, the domes and chimneys of the *medresse*. At the left rear, the elevated twin-domed library of the mosque. On the left front corner, the original discretely-placed toilet facilities. The simple structure on the far-right housed a *mektep*. The road in the foreground is built on the filled-in bed of the Bokluca River, indicating the traditional river-side setting of the Külliye.**

The mosque comprises the core of a traditional Külliye (complex) also containing a *madrasah* (traditional Islamic school) library, and *mektep*. In accordance with tradition, the complex was sited next to a river, the Bokluca Brook, which served as the axis of the development of Shumla throughout the Ottoman period. The mosque and complex of Şerif Halil Paşa is the only remaining and fully intact Külliye in Bulgaria. The site is accessed from the street through a gate into a small courtyard preceding the mosque, and right into the courtyard of the *medresse*.

The Ottoman mosque is a typical dome-on-cube structure, with a galleried *medresse* arranged around a central courtyard containing a fountain. There is a library surmounting the peripheral wall. The complex was designed with a typical Kulliye layout. The interior and exterior of the Mosque are characteristic of the early stages of late-period Ottoman Baroque. The estimated measurements of the interior are 20 by 20 meters, and 25 meters high. The courtyard of the *medresse* is estimated to be 22 by 30 meters.



**Interior: Right lateral wall of mosque. Size and number of windows not only lights up the interior but also gives walls a gossamer, filigree-like appearance typical of the Ottoman Baroque. Note Baroque inspired decorations including non-Turkish capitals on columns and decorative placement of smaller columns upon larger even though actual structural support is provided by arches and pendentives.**

## Shumen Kilek Mosque

This mosque is located in the city of Shumen (Ottoman name: Shumla). It was constructed in 1729-30 and still serves as a mosque.

The mosque is a simple, stone, square structure preceded by a now-plastered and closed wooden portico. It has a flat ceiling and tiled roof typical of minor urban mosques during the Ottoman period. It is accessed from the street into a narrow walled courtyard. The interior of the mosque measures approximately 13 square meters; the portico is three meters deep, and the courtyard of the *medresses* is approximately 22 by 30 meters.

The building appears to be in fair condition despite some buckling of the walls and staining due to dampness.



Lateral view from street. Note *qibla* wall at left and enclosed portico at right.



Interior towards *mihrab*.



## **Shumen Tatar Mosque**

The Tatar Mosque was the last mosque built in Ottoman Shumen and possibly in Ottoman Bulgaria. It was built for the inhabitants of the Tatar Mahalle (quarter) of Shumen, the Tatar refugees who arrived in Shumen after the Crimean War. The quarter grew on previously undeveloped land in a valley to the north of the city. Today, although partially ringed by Soviet-era housing developments, the quarter still maintains its rural character.

This mosque was designed by Rifat Paşa and constructed in 1869-70 and it still serves its original function.

The site is accessed from the street and pathways that wind between houses in this village-like neighborhood. The stone building has a flat ceiling and a tiled roof typical of minor urban mosques during the Ottoman period. It was built with a rectangular floor plan with the main entrance on the long side. The estimated measurements of the interior are 13 by 10 meters. The portico is about three meters deep. The sheds built on to the ends of the portico make it wider than the mosque itself.

The building appears to be in sound condition.



**Rear (*qibla*) wall of mosque. Note unusual 'bird cage'-like balcony of minaret.**



*Mihrab and minbar.*

## **Shumen Sa'at Camii (Clock Tower Mosque)**

Built in the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century, the original wood-domed, ashlar-walled cubic mosque has since been razed, but the clock tower remains and appears to have been restored.

The clock tower consists of four elements: a rectangular ashlar base, an octagonal shaft of brick and/or wood, an open wooden lantern, and a metal conical dome. There is a fountain at the base of the tower with characteristic Ottoman baroque decorations. The mosque measured approximately 13 square meters. The base of the tower is approximately 4.5 square meters at ground level. The total height of the tower is about 18 meters.



**The Clock Tower. The Clock Tower Mosque was located behind and to the right of the tower, just outside the frame of the photo. Note the fountain at the base of the tower. The six holes just above the fountain were sockets for wooden beams that had once supported a wooden eave that protruded out over the fountain.**

The construction of the clock tower and mosque marked the 18<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the Turkish quarter of Ottoman Shumla southward onto the rise above the Tomboul Mosque. The clock tower itself is a symbol of the approach of the modern period and also of increasing influences from the West. Later, as Bulgarian nationalism arose, Bulgarians took local clock towers as a symbol of their own European, non-“oriental” nature and orientation, forgetting that clock towers in Bulgaria were Ottoman Turkish innovations.

At the time of the Russo-Turkish war and the subsequent independence of Bulgaria, Shumen was 70 percent Muslim. Although many Turks and Turkish-speaking Roma remain in Shumen today, approximately 70% of Shumen’s Turks fled the city between the

Russo-Turkish war and 1881. At the close of the Ottoman period, there were 47 mosques in Shumen. By 1925, the number had dropped to 40, by 1959 to 15; and by the 1970s, to nine. Today, only three functioning mosques remain. Two abandoned, partially destroyed mosques that were standing in the 1990s now appear to be gone. In large part, the near disappearance of the mosques of Shumen can be ascribed to demographic change and to the usual ravages of twentieth century urban growth and urban planning. However, in Shumen as in all of Bulgaria, a history of rabid nationalism and intimidation of the Muslim population took a toll, most recently the destruction of two-thirds of Shumen's remaining mosques during the 1980s. The Clock Tower Mosque was amongst those needlessly razed. Now the mosque site is a weed-filled lot.

The tower appears sound and the clock chimes still work. They are regularly adjusted by a specialist from the municipality.

## Sofia

### Roman Wall / The Old Wall (Musalla)

Located in the Lozenetz Quarter of the city of Sofia, the *Musalla* (place for prayer used during festivals such as Ramadhan) was constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on a rise not far from the boundaries of 16<sup>th</sup> century Sofia. It is now under the ownership of the Sofia Municipality and/or Bulgaria Ministry of Culture.

The *musalla* is a semi-enclosed *mihrab* and *minbar* (the raised platform from which an imam addresses the congregation) for outdoor prayer by large numbers of Muslims, including encamping soldiers. It was built in the classic Ottoman style with typical stone and brick cloisonné work. Now there is a single remaining wall of a roofed structure partially open on the front wall (opposite the *qibla*), to allow the *mihrab* and *minbar* to be viewed from outside. The structure is 6.5 meters wide, and nine meters high, and the depth of the remaining wall is 1.2 m. The original length is unknown. The wall is set in an open space amidst apartment blocks containing an outdoor fruit and vegetable market and semi-permanent kiosks with shops.

This feature of Ottoman Sofia was for many years referred to as a “Roman” as part of an attempt to sweep away the history of Muslim Bulgaria. Even today, it is officially named “the Old Wall,” a name that denies its origin and centuries-long function as a Muslim place of prayer.

The Old Wall is being well conserved.



**Front of remaining wall. Originally, the wall was the rear, *qibla* wall of the structure. A *minbar*, probably of wood, would have stood at the right of the window next to the *mihrab*.**

## Sofia

### Banya Bashi Djamiya (Mosque of the Central Bath)

This building is located at the center of contemporary Sofia - which is also the historical core of the city - next to the city's main source of mineral water and surviving late-nineteenth century bath house structure. It was originally built in 1570, restored during the 1970s and nicely renovated around 2000. This is the only functioning mosque remaining in Sofia, and it is in good condition.



Façade.



Interior facing *mihrab*.

The mosque is an example of the classic Ottoman dome on a cube with transitional drums. The interior transition from dome to cube is accomplished via four half-domes, each set at the intersections of the four walls; four arches, one at the center of each of the wall; and by a total of eight pendentives, each interspersed between half-dome and arches. The mosque is preceded by a three-domed portico and has two *mihrabs* imbedded in the façade for the prayers of late arrivals. A lateral portico has been bricked in, but still stands. Until a few years ago, it was used as the main entrance to the mosque and contained faucets for ritual washing before prayers. The interior and exterior show influences of the school of Mimar Sinan. The mosque is a fine example of a provincial application of classical Ottoman style and technique. The exterior of the cube measures roughly 20 or more square meters, and the interior roughly 19 meters.

Due to its central location not far from several of the older (former) orthodox churches in Sofia, residents of Sofia sometimes ascribe an imaginary significance to the proximity of the mosque to the early-20<sup>th</sup> century orthodox church of Sveta Nedelya and to the city's early 20<sup>th</sup> century Central Synagogue, referring to this grouping as a 'magical' or 'spiritual' triangle, despite the disparate dates of construction of the three houses of worship. Bulgarians also speak of the proximity of the three monuments as a symbol of Bulgaria's traditions of tolerance, even though the current ideal of tolerance has not always been respected.

**Sofia, Graf Ignatiev Street**  
**Former Mosque of Sufi Mehmet, now Church of the “Sedmochislenitse”**

This church was formerly a mosque located the eastward edge of Sofia during Ottoman times, along the road leading from Sofia southeast toward Samokov.



**Oblique view showing entranceway/bell tower and vestibule of church and original cube and dome of mosque. Towers and corners, cupolas and arches over lateral entrances, crinolined arches around dome, etc. obscure original clean lines of mosque.**

The building dates from 1548, but was abandoned during the final years of Ottoman rule. In the years between the Bulgarian uprising of the 1870s and the Russo-Turkish War, the buildings of the Kulliye were used during as a military depot and as a detention center for imprisoned Bulgarian nationalists. In the first years of the 20th century, the Mosque was converted to a church. In the course of the conversion, the exterior was radically modified, obscuring the simplicity of the original structure. Most obviously, a new and monumental bell tower and entranceway were built in place of the former Ottoman portico. Also, a hole was blasted in the *qibla* wall to eliminate the *mihrab* and make way for the construction of a large external apse (as a result, the present-day church points southeast toward Mecca rather than east towards the rising sun as do most orthodox churches). The interior of the present-day church maintains the soaring spaciousness (albeit not the light) of a classical Ottoman mosque.

The mosque is said to be built from a design by Mimar Sinan. A tablet on the wall of the church vestibule says that the structure was built by Hodja Sinan, a Bulgarian Janissary from the town of Shiroka Luka. In truth, Mimar Sinan was indeed a Janissary of Christian origin but was mostly likely an Armenian from the east of Anatolia. What the tablet correctly reports is that the dome of the former mosque is one of, if not the, largest domes in the Balkans. The church is under ownership of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and was fully restored in the years following the fall of the Communist Party dictatorship. Sinan's first project, the Bridge of Mustapha Pasha near Edirne, is just within the Bulgarian side of the present-day Bulgarian-Turkish border in the present-day town of Svilengrad.

The original building was an Ottoman cube surmounted by a dome with two drums to enable transmission of weight from dome to weight-bearing walls. The original portico of the mosque was removed during conversion. The Banya Bashi Mosque is the closest approximation in Sofia to the original appearance of this building.

The current building exemplifies a modified cross-plan, i.e., a lateral vestibule leading to the square sanctuary and protruding apse. The original cube section has an estimated length, width, and height of 23 meters.

The church is in excellent condition.



**Sofia (Kniazhevo)**  
**Türbe of Sofiavi Bali Effendi**

This site is located in Kniazhevo, a suburb of Sofia off the slopes of Mt. Vitosha alongside the mountain pass road from Sofia to the Struma valley. Originally constructed in 1553, the classical Ottoman *türbe* (mausoleum) houses the grave of Sofiavi Bali Effendi, a famed Helveti poet, teacher, and sheikh. The Ottoman *türbes* and associated *tekkes* were intentionally destroyed by Bulgarians following the Ottoman surrender and Bulgarian independence during the Russo-Turkish war of the 1870s, but the tomb appears to have been left intact and was covered by a simple mud, brick, and tile roofed house sometime after the destruction of the *türbe*.



**Structure covering grave of Sofiavi Bali Effendi.**



**Rear of structure showing position in yard behind the Orthodox Church of the Profit Elijah.**

An Orthodox church was built adjacent to the grave in 1888 in an attempt to claim the site for the religion, and obliterate memories of Islam. To reinforce its symbolism of Christian power and Muslim defeat, the church's small graveyard contains graves and monuments to the memory of Bulgarian soldiers fallen in the Balkan wars. Interestingly, the church bears the name of Profit Iliya (Elijah). It is common for Christians in Bulgaria to refer to *türbes* and the remains of former *tekkes* as graves of Saint Iliya. During the early 1990s, an arsonist attempted to set fire to the simple house covering the grave. The building was scorched but remained intact and it was later rebuilt or completely restored. The church was restored as well.

The *türbe* is accessed through the grounds of the Church of Profit Iliya. It is a simple rectangular structure with ceramic roofing tile and inexpensive mass-produced glazed tile for interior decoration. Its estimated measurements are 6.25 meters by 7.5 meters with an interior height of four meters to the peak of the roof.

The site is a place of pilgrimage and beseechment for Muslims and especially Roma (Gypsies) who visit the site each year on the Orthodox Christian name day of Profit Elijah.

The building has been recently restored.

## **Sofia Muslim (Roma) Cemetery**

This burial place, favored by Muslim Roma, is located within the Central Cemetery of Sofia. The oldest gravestone in the Muslim section that can be identified was that of a Roma woman who died in 1928. Most of the other graves are post-World War II. There are also increasing numbers of graves from the post-Communist Party period, a large proportion of which are quite ornate. Older graves in the cemetery may have periodically been cleared away.

The Muslim section is located at the far end of the Central Cemetery between the Jewish and Catholic sections. Bounded by several of the main roads through the Cemetery, the crowded rectangular plot has few pathways. Many of the stones are carved, etched, or have photographic cartouches, not only of the deceased, but of their horses, carriages, cars or musical instruments. A large percentage of the stones are marked with a Bulgarian phrase that translates as: "A last gift from his/her children." The site measures approximately 160 by 100 meters.

Graves from later decades show a preponderance of Bulgarian rather than Muslim names. This reflects either or both the pressure on Roma Muslims beginning in the 1950s to adapt Christian Bulgarian names or the emerging role of the cemetery as a resting place for Roma of both faiths.

The site is somewhat overgrown.



**A grave of a Syrian Muslim reaffirms the official Muslim identity of the cemetery.**

## **Stara Zagora Mosque (Eski Camii) (The Old Mosque)**

This mosque is located in the city of Stara Zagora (Ottoman names: Eski Zağra, Zağra Eskicesi, Zağra Eski Hisar). It was built in 1409 for Hamza Beğ, a scion of an important Ottoman family at the time and an important figure in Ottoman frontier wars and wars of succession. Today the structure is derelict. It is the only remaining Ottoman or Muslim monument in Stara Zagora and possibly is the only remaining trace of the town dating prior to 1876. Stara Zagora was largely destroyed by a conflagration caused by the Russian bombardment and invasion of the city during the Russo-Turkish war. Following the independence of Bulgaria, whatever remained of Stara Zagora was razed and built anew, based on a rectangular-grid-plan street layout.

The round shape of the windows in the tambour, a form associated with the Ottoman baroque, suggests that the mosque may have undergone substantial renovation sometime late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A partial restoration was carried out in the 1970s, during which the portico was opened up (it had been bricked in after the independence of the Bulgaria and the flight of almost all of the city's Muslims). As part of the restoration, the mosque's minaret, (a late-19<sup>th</sup> century copy of its original minaret) was razed. The original minaret had been destroyed during the Russian bombardment and invasion of Stara Zagora in 1876. Adjacent buildings and a warren of alleyways were also cleared away at the time of the restoration, freeing the structure on all four sides. The site is owned by the Municipal Museum of Stara Zagora.



**Frontal view of mosque. It is possible that the three domes over the portico are the product of later (possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century) renovation. The six-pier, five-arch design of the portico ordinarily would suggest the presence of five domes, one over each arched space.**



**Close-up of piers. Note that the piers are of brick. Also note the high-quality of the cloisonné work and that the portico and sanctuary are of a single piece. Signs of excavation work are visible in the foreground.**

The monument is situated with its rear (*qibla*) wall abutting on the main boulevard of the city, which is presently a pedestrian walk. It is an early Ottoman domed cube preceded by a domed portico. The sanctuary was constructed of cloisonné, the portico is cloisonné with brick piers, and the domes are lead-covered. This structure represents an important step forward in Ottoman architecture; the transition from T-shaped to single-chamber, single-domed mosques occasioned by greater mastery of the construction and support of large domes (ref. Mehmet Fetih Camii, Kjustendil). The brickwork piers supporting the dome are typical of structures of the period (see the Imaret Camii at Plovdiv, which also features brick piers and which, other than the derelict Imaret Camii at Ikhtiman, is the only remaining T-shape mosque in Bulgaria). The presence of such an innovative structure at Stara Zagora suggests the importance of Rumeli to the Ottomans and the vibrant role of early “European Turkey” within the Empire. The exterior of the sanctuary measures approximately 20 by 20 meters and the portico runs the full width of the sanctuary with a depth of a little over six meters.

Stara Zagora was also an important center of Evangelical Protestant missionary and educational activity in Bulgaria during late-Ottoman time -- despite the fact that no pre-1944 Evangelical-related buildings still exist in the city.

Based on an exterior examination only, the structure appears to be in good condition.

## Stara Zagora (village of Bogomilovo) Tekke

This *tekke* is located in the village of Bogomilovo, a few kilometers south of Stara Zagora -- and today, in effect, a suburb of Stara Zagora. Bogomilovo and Bogomil (Beloved of God) was a Bulgarian name given to many *tekkes* and sites of *tekkes* following the statutory Bulgarization of Turkic place names in Bulgaria beginning in the 1930s. But the old Austrian and German staff maps of Bulgaria show the site of the present-day village as Tekke and the classic glossary of place name changes (Koledarov-Michev) also gives the name as *tekke*. The actual name of the Tekke is unknown.

The date of construction of the *tekke* is also unknown, but the grave of the saint is certainly from the Ottoman period and the remaining fountain is also most likely Ottoman. The *tekke* was possibly destroyed during the repression of the Dervish orders following the disbanding of the Janissaries in 1826 and the present-day house-like structure containing the grave is certainly modern. The Bogomilovo Tekke now functions as a *türbe*, meeting space and fountain.



**The *tekke*. A monument from the Communist Party period can be seen on the far left.**



**Fountain in foreground. Heterodox sites are usually located at strategic sites with panoramic views. In the background: a view over the plane of Thrace. At the right, the back of the local Orthodox church, a measure of the traditional importance of the site.**

The former *tekke* now consists of a brick and stucco house-like structure serving as a *türbe* (and possibly meeting hall) and a fountain. The site is located in a classic *tekke* setting: a strategic high spot with a panoramic view and the presence of a traditional plane tree.

The *türbe*/meeting structure measures approximately 14 by six meters and the fountain measures roughly two meters by one meter. It is still a living shrine while the monumental mosque at Stara Zagora is derelict.

Stara Zagora, once a primarily Turkish city, became almost entirely Bulgarian following the flight of Turkish Muslims in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war. But small numbers of Turkish and Muslim Gypsies (Roma) remained in surrounding villages and they presumably would have frequented this site. Note too, however, the presence of a Bulgarian Orthodox church located a short distance from the site.

The site is in adequate condition. The *türbe*/meeting house appears well maintained.

## **Suvorovo Mosque (Kozludjanska Camii)**

This mosque is located in the town of Suvorovo, which is 30 minutes west of Varna on the highway to Shumen. Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the interior was partially restored (painting and plastering) around the year 2000. The walls of the portico are of far rougher-hewn stone than the massive, finely cut, and precisely placed stones comprising the exterior wall of the sanctuary proper, suggesting that the enclosed portico may be a later addition built to replace an original open portico. Walling-in porticos was common after 1876 as remaining Muslims sought privacy and security in newly-independent Christian Bulgaria.



**Oblique view facing front of mosque.**



**Rear view also reveals quality of stone work and double tambour with corner "wings" covering interior half-domes.**

The mosque is located in a large enclosed courtyard with a locked gate on the main street of Suvorovo. The structure is a typical Ottoman domed cube preceded by an enclosed portico. The large sandstone blocks used to construct the building probably came from nearby quarries. The walls are unusually heavy, measuring approximately 1.2 meters in thickness. The transition from walls to dome is accomplished by eight arches and pendentives. Half domes in the corners of the interior lend support to the dome. The sanctuary measures approximately 12 by 12 meters. The enclosed portico runs the full width of the mosque and has a depth of about five meters.

The monument is in good overall condition.



## **Sveshtari Tekke of Demir Baba**

The site consists of a *türbe* and the remains of the Tekke of Demir Baba. It is located in the city of Sveshtari (Ottoman name: Mumcilar), west of the town of Ispirikh in the region of Razgrad. The site is situated at the base of a ravine, not far from Sveshtari's famed complex of Thracian tombs. The present *türbe* appears to date from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The historic Demir Baba probably lived some centuries earlier; thus, it is likely that the present *türbe* was built to replace an earlier structure. Originally, the site was probably used as a place of pilgrimage and lodging rather than as a full-fledged *tekke*. Today, the Tekke of Demir Baba is one of the major heterodox Muslim pilgrimages sites in Bulgaria, and is the focal point of heterodox Islam in northeast Bulgaria. Owned by the regional museum at Ispirih, it is one of five religiously significant and architecturally excellent Ottoman *türbes* in the country.

The complex was restored in 2004, financed by veteran Bulgarian politician Ahmed Doğan, head of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms political party (DPC), the primary constituency of which is the country's Muslim and ethnically Turkish populations. The primary focus of the project was the replacement of the domes and roofing and the repair of exfoliated stone.



**Picture of the *türbe* taken during a visit to the site in July 1995.**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Türbe of Demir Baba is the most important structure at the site. The complex consists of a walled enclosure containing the *türbe* and a simple rustic structure that had served as lodging for *dervishes* and visitors during the latter years of the history of the site. The complex also contains characteristic features of Bektashi sites such as a fountain, stones with holes through which articles of clothing can be passed to ensure blessings, and a variety of religious and folk symbols cut into the interior of the stone wall.

The site is accessed via a long stairway from the plateau above the ravine down to the base of the ravine. The *türbe* consists of three elements: a square vestibule, a slightly irregular heptagon-shaped main chamber containing a grave of the saint, and a short, barrel-vaulted interconnecting passage. The *türbe*'s vestibule measures approximately four by four meters, while the barrel-vaulted connecting chamber measures two by two meters, and the main chamber is approximately seven meters in diameter.

Prior to restoration, the dome over the main chamber of the *türbe* had been hemispherical and the dome over the vestibule a heptagonal "cone." The latter form, a seeming imitation of the conical domes of Seljuk mausoleums, which were numerous in eastern Anatolia, is an anomaly in Ottoman funerary architecture. Both of the domes were made of sheet metal applied over wood frames. They are most likely early 20<sup>th</sup> century replacements for domes destroyed by fire or leakage.

The nearby *imaret/mezdan* structure, a typical 18<sup>th</sup> century Turkish farmhouse, is two-storied and rectangular in shape. Including the porch, it measures approximately seven by five meters. The complex is set within an irregular heptagon enclosure.

The structure was built in the Ottoman style with characteristics (including the style of transition from the dome to the walls of the main chamber) that suggest construction in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The heptagonal shape of the *tekke* is associated with Bektashi and Hurufi-related mausoleums; the number seven being significant in Hurufi teachings.



Oblique view of the *türbe* from right.



Approach to complex. Gateway at left; rear of *imaret/mezdan* structure at right.

## Turgovishte Mosque (Sa'at Camii)

This site is located in the city of Turgovishte [Ottoman name: Eski Cuma (Cuma-i Atik)] and was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The portico was later enclosed, probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The interior has been repainted.



**Oblique view from within the courtyard of the mosque showing bricked-in portico, cut stone wall and straightforward octagonal drum housing the dome. A part of the modern eave of the *şadravan* is visible at the left.**



**Interior facing *mihrab*. Note low reaching squinches and pendentives and corner half domes.**

The mosque is situated in a courtyard which also contains a *şadravan* and outbuildings. The site is located on a side street in what appears to have been the historical core of the city in the center of Turgovishte. It derives its name from its (former) proximity to the clock tower of Turgovishte which is no longer there.

The solid, well-built, single-domed mosque is typical of later provincial Ottoman mosques in its stolid, somewhat squat appearance. In the interior, this is embodied in the oversized, low-reaching pendentives that cause the roof and dome to seem to press down on the observer. The almost square sanctuary is preceded by a portico. The exterior of the octagonal drum of the dome is simple and straightforward. Inside the mosque, the diameter of the dome spans almost the full length and width of the building. The dome rests on half domes, each set in the corners of the interior and on the resulting pendentives

and squinches. The interior measures approximately 13.5 square meters with walls almost one meter thick. The portico is approximately 7.5 meters deep.

There is some evidence of dampness in the walls. There are crack lines in the dome, although it is unclear whether these are superficial or deep.

**Uzundjovo**  
**Former Mosque (Mosque of Sinan Pasha)**

This site is located in the village of Uzundjovo (Ottoman name: Uzunca Ova). The Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha originally had it built as an Ottoman mosque at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the structure was converted to the Church of the Mother of God in 1906. After being converted to a church, modifications included a surmounting of the dome with a smaller crucifix-topped onion dome and the creation of a cruciform roof by adding four barrel-vaulted elements to each of the four alternate sides of the octagon transitional drum. In addition, a new entrance-way was built into a former ground-level window on the left side of the building and a large opening was knocked into the former *qibla* wall for the addition of a rectangular recess and semi-circular apse. A large iconostasis was added to the interior.



**Oblique view from side. Note the doorway cut into right-most of the three ground-level windows on the left of the building. Also note apparent vulnerability to seepage of buttressing piers on lateral wall.**



**Original entranceway.**

Set in an open plot measuring roughly 150 meters by 50 meters, the structure is a stark but classic Ottoman domed cube with an octagonal transitional drum, preceded by a triple-domed open portico. This had been one of the largest Ottoman mosques in Bulgaria. It is part of a former complex which included an immense *caravansary* (an inn that provides accommodations for caravans) that was razed sometime prior to the Second World War. Other than the former mosque, the only element of the complex still extant is a part of the former monumental gateway to the mosque precinct. The exterior of the sanctuary measures roughly 19 square meters, plus a 5.5-meter-deep portico running the full width of the building. The plot is partially fenced in to keep out grazing livestock.

During the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Uzunca Ova was developed by Ottoman Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha. He first constructed a large *caravansary*, an *imaret*, a *hamam*, and other buildings, and, a few years later, this immense mosque. Despite the presence of such infrastructure, Uzunca Ova never developed into an important urban settlement. By the eighteenth century, however, Uzunca Ova had emerged as the site of one of the major annual fairs in the Balkans and, due to its location on the conjuncture of major westward and northward roadways, an important staging area in the silk-for-furs trade between Bursa and Lemberg. During the mass exodus of Turks from post-independence Bulgaria, the village was left to Bulgarian settlers and the mosque was converted to a church. An interesting anomaly: Uzundjovo is one of the few settlements in Bulgaria to retain its Turkish language name (Uzunca Ova, “long field”) after statutory mass changing of settlement names during the 1930s. Turkish Uzunca Ova is a literal translation of the original Byzantine Greek name of the settlement.

The building’s condition appears fair. The tin roofing covering the dome (the original material would have been lead) was probably recently repaired or replaced.

**Yasenkovo (Deli Orman region)  
Mosque**

In the village of Yasenkovo (Ottoman name: Cukurköy), this mosque is located in the Deli Orman region, south of Ispirikh. Its appearance suggests it was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Inscriptions on some remaining gravestones around the mosque, however, date to earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indicating a possible earlier mosque. In other villages such as Bogdantsi, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century mosques were built on the foundations of an earlier structure. The same may have happened here. The pattern may be due to the extensive destruction wrought during the Russo-Turkish war of the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in what is now northeast Bulgaria.



**Portico. *Şadravan* visible at left.**



**Oblique view, right and *qibla* walls. Note placement of stones to create pediments and architraves in relief. Also note recently emplaced gutters and drain pipes.**

The mosque is set in a large plot alongside the main road of the village. It is accessed via a gateway on the main road. The plot also contains a *şadravan* and the remains of a cemetery. The almost square, stone sanctuary is preceded by an enclosed portico. It features subtle and expertly implemented exterior decoration of a type, according to experts, typical of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It has cream-colored stone, and the precise cutting and placement of stone blocks that is typical of the region. The *şadravan* has a traditional polygonal form. The interior is covered by a flat wood ceiling. The building

measures approximately 15 square meters. The portico adds about four meters to the length of the ensemble.

The minaret dates to 1960s. The mosque and portico were repaired and repainted during the early 1970's, prior to the start of government orchestrated anti-Muslim persecutions in Bulgaria later in the decade. The portico, *şadravan* and garden appear well cared for. The exterior of the mosque shows evidence of attempted superficial repair as well as the presence of new gutters and run-off pipes, suggesting that there previously had been leakage into the interior that may have since been obviated.



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