

TOPOI OF THE URBAN SPACE IN PLEVEN – HISTORICAL PARALLELS AND CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS

ТОПОСИ НА ГРАДСКОТО ПРОСТРАНСТВО В ПЛЕВЕН – ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ПАРАЛЕЛИ И СЪВРЕМЕННИ АСПЕКТИ

Градоустройственият план на град Плевен от падането му под османска власт до края на XVIII в. е все още слабо проучен и доста от въпросите са дискуссионни. Темата е разработвана от неголям брой историци, като всеки един от тях малко или много е акцентирал върху отделни части на градското пространство, но никой не е задълбочил изследването си, за да постигне една реконструкция на цялостния османски облик на град Плевен. Моето експозе не претендира за изчерпателност на проблема, но наред с публикуваното до момента съм се постарал да представя топосите от онова време, наложени върху съвременната карта на града. На база сведенията от пътешественици, историци, архитекти и археолози съм провел и лични теренни проучвания, както и беседи с плевенски жители, родени през 20-те години на миналия век.

В проучването си съм установил местоположението на повече от десет джамии при съществуваща в момента само една, местоположението на отдавна изчезнал метох към Рилския манастир, местоположението на западната крепостна стена на унищожения от кърджалиите манастир „Св. Георги“ в Кайлъка, местоположението на унищожената еврейска синагога, местоположението на голямата турска баня, местоположението на част от махленската структура от онова време и др.

Османският облик на град Плевен започва да се променя непосредствено след Освобождението, като не мога да посоча точна хронология. Със сигурност се знае, че една от последните промени е събарянето на Куршум джамия през 1934 г. Въпреки че градският облик на Плевен е изцяло променен, паралелът между минало и настояще е актуален и би могъл да се доразвива при по-нататъшни задълбочени изследвания.

Ключови думи: градско пространство, Плевен, османски период, обществени сгради.

The city plan of the town of Pleven from the time of its fall under Ottoman rule until the end of the 18th century is poorly studied and there still are many controversial issues about it. Not many historians have worked on this topic and each one has focused on specific parts of the urban area but nobody has expended his research to achieve an overall look of the Ottoman town of Pleven. My expose is not exhausting the problem but along with the publications made so far I have tried to represent the topoi of that time imposed on the contemporary map of the town. I have also carried out personal fieldwork based on information from travellers, historians, architects and archaeologists as well as interviews with citizens of Pleven born in the 20s of the previous century.

When and how Pleven fell under Ottoman rule is still a subject of scientific debates but all who have studied the subject are in agreement with the fact that the conqueror of Plev-en was a descendent of Mihaloglu family. Due to this fact, the descendants of this mighty and powerful Ottoman family ruled the town and some of the nearby villages until the Liberation in 1877. Mihaloglu family had a great contribution to the demographic and economic devel-

opment of Pleven and over the centuries managed to make it the centre of Muslim culture in this part of the Ottoman Empire.

The first provided information on the recovery of the settlement life in Pleven is received from the oldest preserved Ottoman tahrir of Nikopol district – an idjmal of 884 on Hijra (1479/80) consisting of ten Christian and nine Muslim households. It has been proved that in the early years of the Ottoman rule there were two settlements with identical names – the town of Pleven (Dolni Pleven or Down Pleven) and the village of Gorni Pleven (Upper Pleven) that later on grew and were united as one settlement (*Fig. 1*).

The founder of the Ottoman urban appearance was Gazi Ali Mihal bei who established a waqf in 1496. The first building constructed by him was probably a fortified palace on which foundation is set the current Historical Museum. According to architect Simeonka Dekova-Brakalova, (“Pleven. Historical and Contemporary Development”) the Ottoman conquerors have settled closely near it (*Fig. 2; Fig. 3*). The second step of Gazi Ali Mihal bei was the construction of the big Friday Mosque – Kada Mosque, situated on the place of the today’s mausoleum and another smaller mosque near Balaklia Cheshma (*Fig. 4; Fig. 5*). According to the Waqfname from 1496 the mosque had a madrasa and a mekteb. In the vicinity was built an imaret and a large Turkish bath. According to Maria Atanasova (a historian from Pleven who was born in 1924) during the construction of the so called Singing Fountain in the Town Garden remains of an adobe wall were found and this is exactly where to my opinion stood the imaret. The large Turkish bath was situated in the southern part of the mausoleum’s fence crossing the today’s Vazrajdane Square and part of the newly built branch of Raiffeizen Bank. During the excavations in the foundations of the bank, ceramic tubes that were part of the hypocaust of the bath were found but unfortunately, they were quickly laid with concrete by the developers. The size of the bath can be judged from an old photograph from 1909. The building itself was destroyed from 1906 to 1912 (*Fig. 6; Fig. 7; Fig. 8*). There was a synagogue with a Jewish school to the southeast of Kada Mosque. The Jewish and the Turkish shops were situated in the area where today is the Central Post Office, “Katia Popova” Hall and the Public Health Center (*Fig. 9; Fig. 10; Fig. 11*). The fortified Kervan Saray was standing on the site of the current building of Pleven Municipality. It was described by Evlia Chelebi in the 17th century in the Passional of Sophronii Vrachanski and there is also a very detailed description in a letter from the 19th century to Felix Kanits by the traveller Dr. La Brus (*Fig. 12; Fig. 13*). Until 1934, when it was destroyed, there was the large Sjuleiman Bei Mosque in the north-western end of “Vazrajdane” square known as Kurshum Mosque. The officers’ club, known as DNA, was built in its place. Mrs. Atanasova remembers she and her sister used to climb the stairs of the minaret of this mosque on their way out from the town bath (the current “Svetlin Rusev” Gallery) in the end of the 20s and the beginning of the 30s of the 20th century. The Archeological Society established in March 1903 used to expose the artefacts found in Kailaka area. These artefacts were stolen by the occupying Romanian troops in 1913. According to Yurdan Trifonov there was a waqf inn next to the mosque that together with the workshops closed the north-western part of the town centre and the bazaar built by Gaazi Ali Mihal Bei. Further down to the north were the Turkish tabashki (tailoring) workshops, which adjoined one of the Bulgarian neighbourhoods (*Fig. 14; Fig. 15; Fig. 16*).

I have localized the existence of a dozen mosques so far given the fact that the historical records show a greater number. Evlia Chelebi who visited Pleven in the middle of the 17th century points out the existence of seven mosques, six functioning tekkes and unspecified number of zaviets without mentioning locations. The mosques identified by me are the already mentioned Kada Mosque and the smaller one next to Blaklia Cheshma built by Gaazi Ali Mihal Bei; Kodja (the large) Sjuleiman Bei Mosque; another Kjachuk (the small) Sjuleiman Bei Mosque – with unknown location (*Fig. 17; Fig. 18; Fig. 19*); the existing mosque on “Rousse” boulevard – headquarters of the regional mufti; the large mosque described by Yurdan Trifonov on which foundations “Dimitar Konstantinov” grammar-school was built – the current professional high school for clothing and textile “Hristo Boiadjiev”; Zvezdelin Tsonev describes three mosques – one next to Balaklia Cheshma (most probably the above mentioned Gaazi Ali Mihal Bei mosque), the second next to the current “Vasil Levski” grammar-school near the house of the teacher Doncho Vachev and the third next to the church “Sveta Troitsa”; Maria Atanasova remembers there was a mosque on “Kiril i Metodii” boulevard to the right side in the direction to the Medical University; and another two mosques that are part of the background of a picture painted during the War of Liberation. One of them was situated to the east of the fortified wall of Mihal Bei Saray and there are tombstones in its yard. The other one can be seen in the distance behind the saray in west direction to the current “Liberation” quarter (i.e. IX district) (*Fig. 20; Fig. 21*).

The Bulgarian neighbourhoods (mahallas) were at least two – the above mentioned Gorni and Dolni Pleven (Upper and Down Pleven). Their location might be assumed by the existence of the nearby necropoleis one of which is the current Gornoplevenski Cemetery and the other one was destroyed during the construction of the railway station. The churches existing at that time and still remaining are two: “Sveti Nikolai” Church and “Sveta Paraskeva” Church. Their architecture from this period cannot be ascertained because they probably were destroyed and rebuilt many times and their last restoration was in 1833–1834 (“Sveti Nikolai” Church) and in 1870–1871 (“Sveta Paraskeva” Church) (*Fig. 22; Fig. 23*). Besides these two churches, there were two monasteries near Pleven. One of them is described by Yurdan Trifonov and Nikola Mavrodiev as “Sveti Georgi” Monastery in Kailaka area. Ivan Danov revealed and described the foundation of the monastery church during excavations in the beginning of the 20th century. In the beginning of the 30s of the 20th century, these remains were destroyed. Using the description given by Yurdan Trifonov and Simeonka Brakalova in January 2011 I found remains of the west fortified wall of the monastery that was destroyed by the kardjali in the end of the 18th century (*Fig. 24; Fig. 25; Fig. 26*). The other monastery’s name was “Sveti Nikolai” – information about it comes from Olga Todorova who worked for the Russian National Archive for Ancient Acts – Moscow, Russia. Reference to it comes from the first half of the 17th century but unfortunately, there still are no data on its location. A convent of the Rila Monastery was founded in Pleven in the end of the 18th century located on the site of the current Narkoop (after the Liberation the building of the convent was bought by Anastas Pophinov – a revolutionary and an associate to Vasil Levski) (*Fig. 27*).

There are data about the existence of a Jewish society from the time of the king Ivan Asen II according to Yurdan Trifonov. Later in 1376 Jews from the town of Budim (Hungary) who were expelled from King Ljudovik I the Great also settled in the town of Pleven since there lived their counterparts from earlier. At the end of the 15th century, Jews expelled from Germany and known as “Ashkenazim” settled in Pleven and from Spain and Portugal came the so called “Sephardim” Jews. Despite the differences in their cults, they soon got united and built a common synagogue described in the text above (*Fig. 28; Fig. 29; Fig. 30*). There were two Jewish necropolises at that time – one was destroyed during the construction of the current University Hospital and the other one still exists in the south-eastern part of the town. According to the memories of some old citizens of Pleven in the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish community inhabited a neighbourhood located in the space among “Resen” Street (behind the Courthouse) to “Sredna gora” Street in the south and to “Musla” Street near the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the east. The Jewish quarter separated the two Bulgarian quarters and practically surrounded the space that was not occupied by the Turks around the Synagogue.

The only remains from the Ottoman appearance of Pleven are the mosque near Chifte Cafene and the churches “Sveti Nikolai” and “Sveta Paraskeva”. Although the public image of Pleven has completely changed, the parallel between the past and the present is relevant and could be further developed by an in-depth research.

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Fig. 1

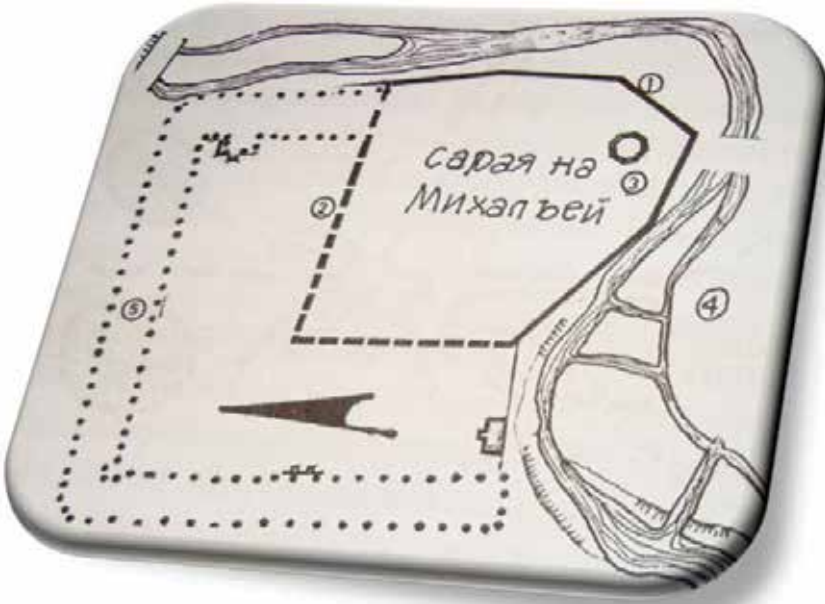


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Джамията на Гаази Али бей, строена през XIV век – една от най-представителните сгради за периода. Рисунка правена по време на боевете 1877 г.

Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

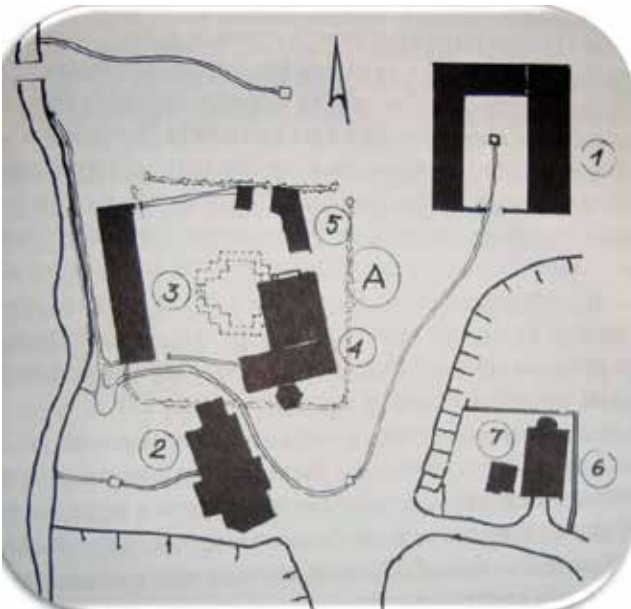


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

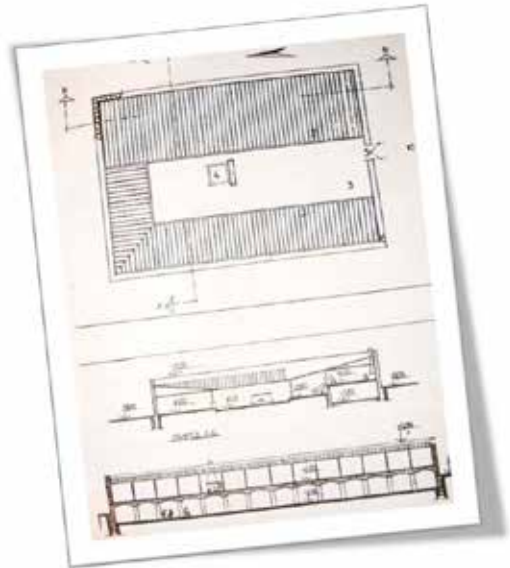


Fig. 12



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30