



Cultural Heritage and Gender: On the Traces of Women's Prayer Space in Bitola Mosques

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ABSTRACT

Women's attendance to the mosque affected the structure, essence, and architectural entity of the building in the form of women's prayer space. This research analysed the traces of women's section in historic mosques of Bitola, with an emphasis on development and comparative analysis of it according to cultural heritage and gender issues. Such an inquisitive analysis is important not only for correct preservation interventions but also for the understanding of social, cultural, and religious dimensions of gendered space divisions in mosque activities. Located in south western part of Macedonia, Bitola has a long history including more than five hundred years of ruling under Ottoman Empire. The rapid Islamic predominance in the region had brought about construction of mosques for the believers. Yet, in-situ analysis, oral history, and literature reviews showed that women were separated in the mosques either in their galleries or on the same floor with men but with a partition such as curtains. In addition to those analyses, considering the smaller, separated, or inferior conditions of spaces allocated for women in case study historic mosques of Bitola, there is little indication that mosque attendance today is a frequent practice of women in the city, if not in earlier times.

Keywords: Bitola; cultural heritage; gendered architecture; gendered mosque space; segregation; women's prayer space

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to fully understand the 'gender, religion, mosque, and segregation' issues one must first look at the historical context of the region. It was the late 14th century that Macedonia was to fall under the Ottoman rule up till 1912 (İnalçık 2003, p. 17), and so that the commencement of the transformation of Medieval Macedonia and construction of



Islamic architectural monuments in the country (Çağ 2010, p. 126, Kotzageorgis 2007, p. 129, Council of Europe 2008, p. 100, UNESCO Mission Report 2004, pp. 10, 12). Islam came to the Balkans in the 13th century and Turkish Muslim immigrants from Anatolia settled in Macedonia mainly in the 15th and 16th centuries (Karpát 2004, pp. 446, 524-525). Second largest group of Muslims in Balkans included mostly Bosnian and Albanian converts in the 15th century, and today in Macedonia, majority of Muslims are of Albanian origin (Öktem 2010, p. 8). Yet, it was in 1878 with the Berlin Treaty that Muslims of Balkans began to turn into minorities, and finally in 1913 Macedonia was occupied and divided among Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria (Karpát 2004, pp. 528-529, 643, 656-657). Thus, in late 19th and early 20th centuries Macedonia acknowledged the struggle for national identity building in which religion played a central role (Karakasidou 1997, p. 108).

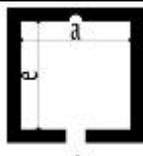
Mostly in 15th and 16th centuries, under Ottoman rule, benefactors funded many mosques with waqf all through the country, which was divided into five districts (UNESCO Mission Report 2004, pp. 10, 12). Among these districts, Bitola was one of the strategically important historic places in Macedonia, located on the bank of River Dragor and at the outskirts of Baba Mountain, some 175 km to the south of Skopje and 70 km to the east of Ohrid (Çağ 2010, p. 27). The city has long attracted the attention of scholars from different perspectives, including its architecture (Bülbul 2011, Çağ 2010, pp. 160-170, İdrizi 2008, pp. 64-78, Pavlov 2001, pp. 23-31, 36-44, 65-66, 73-77, 85-87, 99-100; Momidiç-Petkova 1979, pp. 47-70, Tomovski 1956/57, pp. 29-38). The historic monuments of this settlement, with a several millennium long history, have been subjected to numerous archaeological investigations and repair works (Mihajlovski 2009, pp. 183-188, Petkova et al. 2014, p. 53, Tomovski 1962, pp. 51-56), with the most recent being undertaken in Haydar Qadi Mosque to the north east of the city centre. However, the Islamic religious architecture of the city did not subsequently receive full investigation in term of cultural heritage and gender issues, as well as religious practices and doctrines in the region and their effect on the gendered architectural formation as women's section of the mosques that this research aims to enlighten.

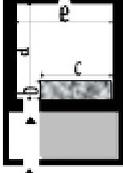
Macedonia, 'the region, having witnessed wars, destruction, and ethnic cleansing', has 'a multi-ethnic cultural heritage of extraordinary value' (UNESCO Mission Report 2004, p. 5). Yet, as Council of Europe (2008, p. 101) pointed out, the importance of the protection of built heritage is not sufficiently recognized by the responsible body; such that of the 10.000-12.000 identified monuments in Macedonia, only 10% are legally protected. In addition, during the ethnic conflict of 2001, rioters damaged fifty-seven mosques (Hacisalihoğlu 2003, p. 443), 15th century Čarši Mosque in Prilep being only one of them

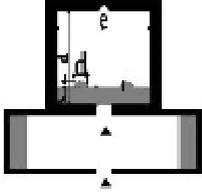
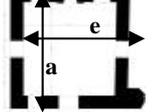
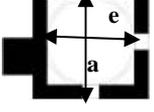
(Unesco 2004, p. 65) and some others were damaged in 1862 fire and 1994 Bitola earthquake (Hacisalihoğlu 2003, p. 443, Pavlov 2001, pp. 29-30, 73, Tevfik 1911, p. 39, Ünlü-Sarı 1996, p. 33).

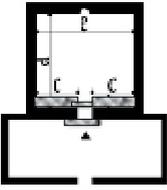
Since the second half of 1990s, and especially after 2009, Turkey and Macedonia have participated in co-operative partnership including cultural issues and preservation of the Ottoman architectural heritage (Bechev 2012, pp. 133, 144, Remiddi 2013, pp. 221, 226). As one of the results of this co-operation, Turkey, Prime Ministry Directorate General of Foundations with the collaboration of Macedonia Republic National Conservation Centre of Skopje and NI Institution and Museum Bitola undertook the restoration work of Haydar Qadi Mosque in 2014, and completed in late 2016. This paper summarizes the survey excavation and investigation results on the traces of women's prayer section in the mosque. In order to do that, the investigation included the comparative analysis of the women's section in terms of their existence, form, dimensions, location, and material in total eight historic mosques of the city (Table 1). In addition to gendered design/architecture/space of mosques by means of physical architectural formation, the study has also investigated the issue of gender segregation in terms of its social, cultural, and religious meaning.

Table 1. Table showing ≈ dimensions of women's prayer space (Wps) and the mosques being studied, as well as photos and typology analysis of Wps (Source of photos and draft/schematic drawings: archives of the author, 2015). Wps, curtain separation maksura for ulama, state officials or for muezzins.

Name/ period/ plan typolog y of mosqu e	Maksura type/ Existence of women's prayer section (Wps)(current condition)	≈ Dimensions					≈ Area (m ²)		Interior photo of the mosque towards women's section
		a	b	c	d	e	Wp s	Mosq ue	
a-Haci Mahmu d Efendi/ HaciBe y Mosqu	 1- Wps does not existent	11, 5	-	-	-	11 ,5	-	132, 25	
		Notes: The mosque does not have a maksura today. Ayverdi and Yüksel also did not show any maksura in the drawing dated 1977 of this mosque (Ayverdi and Yüksel, 2000, 97). Yet,							

<p>e, 16th cc. Square type (S)</p>		<p>considering the niches on the wall, Bülbul (2011, 42-43) mentions the possibility of a maksura on north wall of main prayer hall, repaired latest in 1991. It is ruined and used as a depot –its projects have been prepared.</p>								
<p>b- Hamza Beg Mosque /The Mosque of Three Sheiks 16th cc. T type (T)</p>	 <p>2-Wps with a circular balcony- two-story and narrow width and 3-curtain separation in LCP</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="576 568 1098 663"> <tr> <td>8,90</td> <td>1,48</td> <td>0,48</td> <td>2,00</td> <td>10,3</td> <td>14,00</td> <td>79,00</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: The mosque was restored after the First World War, in 1943, later in 1993, and in 2002. Current wooden maksura might have been constructed during the latest restoration works (Bülbul 2011, 48, 50). Yet, mostly the late comers' portico (LCP), which was probably added in 1798 (Pavlov 2001, 74), is enclosed by a curtain to be used by women during Ramadan and special days. It is in good condition and used as a mosque (in its original function) today.</p>	8,90	1,48	0,48	2,00	10,3	14,00	79,00	
8,90	1,48	0,48	2,00	10,3	14,00	79,00				
<p>c- Hasan Baba/ Kesik Bas Tekke Mosque, 17th cc. Square type (S)</p>	 <p>1-Wps does not exist 3-curtain separation in LCP</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="576 1352 1098 1447"> <tr> <td>6,00</td> <td>1,45</td> <td>4,65</td> <td>-</td> <td>6,00</td> <td>-</td> <td>36,00</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: The mosque does not have a maksura today. Instead, late comers' portico (LCP), closed on four sides and attached to the mosque on the north façade, has been used by women during the Ramadan and special religious days (Veliu 2015). On those days, a curtain is used to enclose the Wps. It is in good condition and used as a mosque (in its original function) today.</p>	6,00	1,45	4,65	-	6,00	-	36,00	
6,00	1,45	4,65	-	6,00	-	36,00				

<p>d- IshakC helebi Mosqu e, 16th cc. Square type (S)</p>	 <p>4-Wps with two circular balconies - two-story and narrow width 5-Wps on east-west of LCP</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="576 232 1102 322"> <tr> <td>14,6</td> <td>2,40</td> <td>1,16</td> <td>2,9</td> <td>14,5</td> <td>39,00</td> <td>212,00</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: The mosque was restored in 1890, 1911, 1947, 1959, (Pavlov 2001, 24) and latest in 2015. Momidiç-Petkova (1979, 54) points out that the current wooden maksura on the north wall of the main prayer hall was an addition of 1911 restoration. In 2015, two other wooden maksuras were added for women on east -west walls of late commers portico (LCP). It is recently restored and used as a mosque today.</p>	14,6	2,40	1,16	2,9	14,5	39,00	212,00	
14,6	2,40	1,16	2,9	14,5	39,00	212,00				
<p>e- KocaQ adi/Ah med Efendi Mosqu e, 16th cc., Square type (S)</p>	 <p>1-Wps does not exist</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="576 965 1102 1055"> <tr> <td>6,79</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>6,75</td> <td>-</td> <td>45,83</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: The mosque has neither a maksura today, nor any researchers mention about the existence of a maksura inside the mosque. Also, because of rather ruined conditioned of the building and because it is full of garage materials it was not possible to document the traces. It is in ruined condition and used as a repair garage today.</p>	6,79	-	-	-	6,75	-	45,83	
6,79	-	-	-	6,75	-	45,83				
<p>f- Paftali Mosqu e 16th cc., Square type (S)</p>	 <p>1-Wps does not exist</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="576 1547 1102 1637"> <tr> <td>5,81</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>5,81</td> <td>-</td> <td>33,70</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: The mosque does not have a maksura today, and most probably never had such a section in that much a small space. First, it was constructed as a mosque, but later it was turned into a tomb and another mosque was built just near to it. Hence, the mosque was often called</p>	5,81	-	-	-	5,81	-	33,70	
5,81	-	-	-	5,81	-	33,70				

		as a tomb (Bülbül 2011, 95). It is ruined and abandoned today.															
g-Yeni/ Qadi Mahmu d Efendi Mosqu e 16 th cc., Square type (S)	 <p>6- Wps does not exist</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>12,</td> <td>1,</td> <td>5,</td> <td>-</td> <td>12</td> <td>-</td> <td>164</td> </tr> <tr> <td>80</td> <td>35</td> <td>49</td> <td></td> <td>,8</td> <td></td> <td>,10</td> </tr> </table> <p>Notes: it was restored in 1793/94, 1890/91, and in 1967/68. Today, the mosque has maksuras above the entrance door for muezzin and Ayverdi and Yüksel (2000, 106) and Tomovski (1956/57, 50)showed two-sided and one-story maksura, built most probably for ulama and state officials, in their drawings dated 1977 and 1956/57. It is in bad condition and under partial restoration- its will-be function is unknown</p>	12,	1,	5,	-	12	-	164	80	35	49		,8		,10	
12,	1,	5,	-	12	-	164											
80	35	49		,8		,10											

2. AN EVALUATION OF GENDERED SPACES IN BITOLA MOSQUE

EvliyaChelebi, a seventeenth-century Turkish traveller, mentioned about the existence of seventy mosques and masjids in Bitola in 17th century (Dağlı et al. 2001, p. 308). Şemseddin Sami (1898, p. 4437) gave this number as twenty-four, and Mehmed Tevfik (1911, p. 39) as thirty-seven in late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, today there are eight mosques in the city, with only three of them are used in their original function, three lie in ruins, one is in bad condition, and one has just been restored to be used as a mosque. These case study mosques belong to the Ottoman single-domed square type, with or without late comers' portico in front of the building. Only Hamza Beg Mosque has a T-type plan reminiscent of early Ottoman period mosques in Anatolia. Except for Hasan Baba Mosque (17th century), all others were erected in the 16th century (Table 1).

In earliest Islamic religious spaces such as Prophet's Mosque in Medina there seems to be no physical division except for a separate door for the entrance/exit of women as indicated in Hadiths (traditions of the Prophet) (Dişli 2015, p. 199, Qadhi 2008, pp. 284, 351, Söylemezoğlu 1954, p. 30). However, if one looks at the current condition of the mosques in Bitola in terms of quality and physical component of women's prayer space, it seems that the mosques have been designed for men, but are used by both women and men. Women tend to attend the mosque especially during the special religious days as Tarawihprayers¹ in Ramadan, and Barat, Mirac, and Regaip Nights, which is also a



common case in the whole Macedonian Islamic context (Repo 2012, p. 185). Predelli (2008, pp. 249, 253) similarly argues that mosques are traditionally 'men's arena' and design of gendered space is the result of 'perception of women as the object of sexual desire'. In situ analysis in case study mosques showed that women make Salât (prayer) behind the curtains, partition screens, and in elevated galleries or in another space as in late comers' portico rather than in main prayer hall (Table 1). As stated in Repo's research, this situation might have been related to 'cultural norm' and 'general mentality' of people that public spaces are reserved for men though there is no prohibition for women in Islam (Repo 2012, p. 184). As an instance in Repo's (2012, p. 184) research on Albanian Muslim women in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hawwa, a Muslim woman from Macedonia explains that 'it's not a shame to go the female to the mosque to pray, but I still have not come to the point to go to the mosque and pray together with them'.

In addition, though from the Prophet's words/Hadiths it is certain that women had the right to attend the mosque ('Do not prevent the maid-servants of Allah from going to Masjid of Allah- but their houses are better for them') (Qadhi 2008, pp. 349-350), as the Mufti of Bitola² stated (April 2015) it is not much common for Muslim women in Bitola to use the mosque during regular prayer times. Though these situations might be related to religious practice/belief and cultural/social norms of Muslim women in the city to some extent, it might also be related to gender inequalities in design and access of mosque interiors. As an instance, in Repo's research, some women emphasize their wish for 'enough places for the prayer, increased availability and accessibility of dedicated spaces', and some other stress their wish for the possibility of women to do wudu before prayer (Repo 2012, pp. 180-181). Women's spaces in Bitola's mosques are of rather recent times built in early 20th century or later rather than original built in elements. This overlaps with the gradual de-Islamization and nationalism period of the region since late 19th century because of wars and population exchanges, a situation reshaping the institutions and sensibilities of Balkan Muslims, which became a minority group (Öktem 2010, pp. 5-6). In 1876, Christian population in the city was three times higher than the Muslim population (Ünlü-Sarı 1996, p. 118). Similarly, Durmuş (2009, pp. 5-7) remarks that early Islamic culture in the region was demolished systematically and consciously with the withdrawal of Ottomans from Macedonia in early 20th century, which in turn affected religious practices.

Another factor affecting the dress, customs, and social practices of Macedonian Muslims in 20th century was the dominance of Albanian Muslim population (Gingeras 2013, pp. 122-123). Deliso (2007, p. 80) points out that as the major Muslim minority of

Macedonia, Albanian Muslims are 'socially conservative, likely to attend mosques, follow religious customs, and tend to cloak and disguise women from the outsiders'. This conservative approach of Albanian Muslims might affect the mosque designs in the region in the form of gender segregation as observable in case study mosques of Bitola. Later, after the collapse of socialist ideology in the region, as Gavrilović (2007, pp. 115-116) mentions Muslim women as a minority group in Balkans preferred separation with their dressing codes/covering for instance, for reasons of 'cultural defence, cultural transition, and revitalization of religion.' Such a protection ideology might be the reason why in Hamza Beg Mosque, women still prefer to use the area in late comers' portico bounded with curtain separation instead of the two-story wooden maksura³ inside the main prayer hall of the mosque (Figure 1a-1b). This ideology also overlaps with the opinion of some of the Muslim women in Macedonia supporting the need for separate prayer spaces within the mosque that women's religious practice demands (Repo 2012, p. 184).

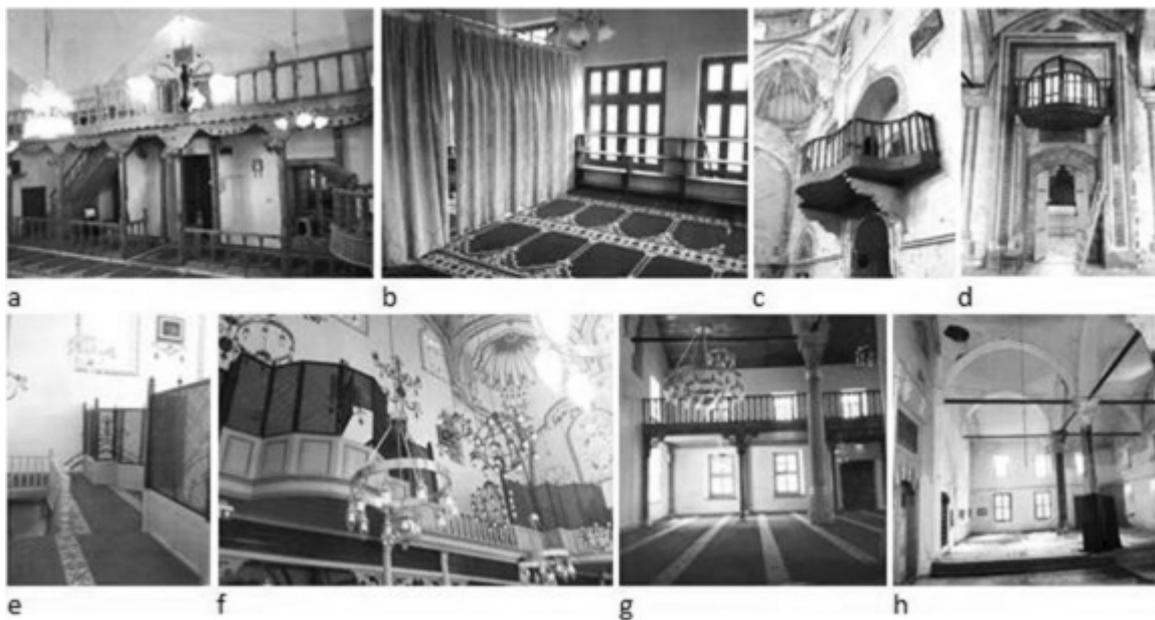


Figure 1. Views from women's prayer space inside the main prayer hall (a) and women's section in late comers' portico with curtain separation in Hamza Beg Mosque (b), maksura for muezzin in Yeni Mosque- a view from the main prayer hall (c) and from the late comers' portico (d), interior (e) and front (f) views of maksura with wooden screens inside the main prayer hall and west side of late comers' portico of IshakChelebi mosque showing women's section (g) and curtain separation with ropes (h) (Sources: (a-g) Archives of the author, 2015, (h) Archives of AyseNerminTaskesen, 2010).

The early mosques were not only the places for worship but also public places to perform a variety of social activities such as education, gathering, and celebrations (Kuran 1969, p. 1, Holmes-Katz 2014, pp. 7-8), hence, restrictions and/segregations of women in the



mosque meant to restrict their participation in public life (Reda 2004, p. 78). However, case studies from different parts of the world showed men's needs rather than women's have been given the priority for the design of prayer spaces inside the mosques (Avci-Erdemli 2013, pp. 113-128, Eskandari 2012, pp. 1-9, Eskandari 2011, Gaber 2014, pp. 1-7, Hoel 2013, pp. 25-41, Hussain 2009, pp. 52-66, Dişli 2015, pp. 196-207, Reda 2004, pp. 78-97, Woodlock 2010, pp. 51-60) with a few exceptions (Aryanti 2013, Aryanti 2012, pp. 177-190).

Partition screens, curtains, ropes, wooden balustrades /grilles/ lattices, balconies, or totally separate praying spaces reserved for women were the primary architectural reflections of gender segregation inside the mosques (Dişli 2015, p. 199). Similarly, in Bitola, women's section has been separated by means of curtains, wooden screens or elevated galleries. Whereas, none of the case study mosques has originally a women's prayer space built at the same date with the mosque itself. Namely, there allocated no separate space for women to pray inside the mosque in their original design integrity, that is back rows of men in the main prayer hall might have been used by women, as in earliest practices in Islam. In Hadiths it is indicated that; 'A woman makes a separate line behind men; men and women do not stand in the same row for prayer in a mosque; and women are to be allowed to leave the mosque before men' (Qadhi 2008, pp. 374, 404, 609). Yet, there are original maksuras for muezzins⁴ erected at the same date with the mosque itself as in the case of Yeni Mosque (Figure 1c-1d) and HaydarQadi Mosque. As Tanman (2003, p. 333) stated in Ottoman mosques it was a common tradition that elevated maksuras for muezzins were located either on mihrap-portal axis or on the northwest corner in main prayer hall. Maksuras for muezzins are elevated wooden or stone platforms used by muezzins in order to repeat the imam⁵ during the prayer, to call the prayer, and to recite a phrase at the beginning of the ritual prayer. In Yeni Mosque there are two elevated wooden maksuras above the entrance portal of the mosque one is looking inside and the other is opening to the late comers' portico. Similarly, in Haydar Qadi Mosque traces of original maksura for muezzin were found on the northwest corner of the main prayer hall, which will be evaluated in detail in following section. As for the later additions of women's sections, they reflect the restrictive zoning ordinances and tendency of hiding women into their own separated areas. Curtains of Hamza Beg Mosque, Hasan Baba Mosque, and wooden partition screens of Ishak Chelebi Mosque (Figure 1e-1f), as well as raised galleries are evidences of such gendered segregations.

Only two of the mosques in Bitola have built women's sections today. Among them, the current wooden maksura of Hamza Beg Mosque might have been constructed during the latest restoration works in 2002 (Bülbül 2011, pp. 48, 50) and the one in main prayer

hall of Ishak Chelebi mosque was an addition of 1911 restoration (Momidiç-Petkova 1979, p. 54) (Table 1). During the restorations in 2015, another two were added on east and west sides of late comers' portico in Ishak Chelebi Mosque, instead of curtain separations (Figure 1g-1h). Though today there are no constructed spaces for women in Hasan Baba and Yeni Mosques, according to old drawings dated 1956/57 and 1977, respectively, in both of them there were one-story wooden maksuras leaning to the north wall of the main prayer halls. Yet, it is not certain whether they were originally designed for women or not. According to Tanman (2003, p. 333) those kinds of one-story maksuras bounded with wooden or stone balustrades in main prayer hall are mostly built for the ulama⁶ or for state officials. Instead, in Hasan Baba Mosque, women again with curtain partition use east side of late comers' portico. In all case study mosques, the maksuras, if exist, are of wooden material, no matter whether they were recent or former additions. In addition, in all of them women have been using the same main entrance with men except for Ishak Chelebi Mosque, which has two separate entrances beneath the later addition women's sections on the east and west sides of late comers' portico. In addition to above mentioned evaluation of gendered spaces in Bitola mosques, both architectural and archaeological traces give insightful evidence in terms of the designed gendered divisions inside the mosques, which the following section will discuss in detail by means of HaydarQadi Mosque case.

2.1 Traces of Maksura and Women's Section in HaydarQadi Mosque

Qadi Haydar Efendi built Haydar Qadi Mosque in 1561-1562 according to its inscription panel above the entrance portal. The mosque was restored in 1890, abandoned and destroyed during the withdrawal of Ottomans from the city (Tomovski 1956/57, p. 36) in 1912 and restored again in 1957/58 and in 1960/61. The mosque was used as the depot of NI Institution and Museum of Bitola until 2014, when its last restoration was commenced. Both original first period maksura for muezzin, built at the same date with the mosque itself, and later addition/extension women's section of the mosque are not existent today. According to Ayverdi and Yüksel (2000, p. 99) maksura of the mosque might have been destroyed during the transformation of the mosque to a depot. Based on the two wooden cantilevered beams on the north wall of the mosque and the door opening reached from the minaret, the maksura must have a second floor (Figure 2a-2b-2c). Similarly, according to its approved restoration projects, the mosque has a two-floor, one-sided maksura on the northwest corner of the main prayer hall, with the dimensions of 1.47*4.30 m. It was also verified with the latest excavations inside the mosque in early 2016 during which two-stone foots with $\approx 0.48*0.48$ m dimensions were unearthed beneath the $\approx 0.14-0.17$ m concrete layer above the original brick covering of the main prayer hall (Figure 2d).

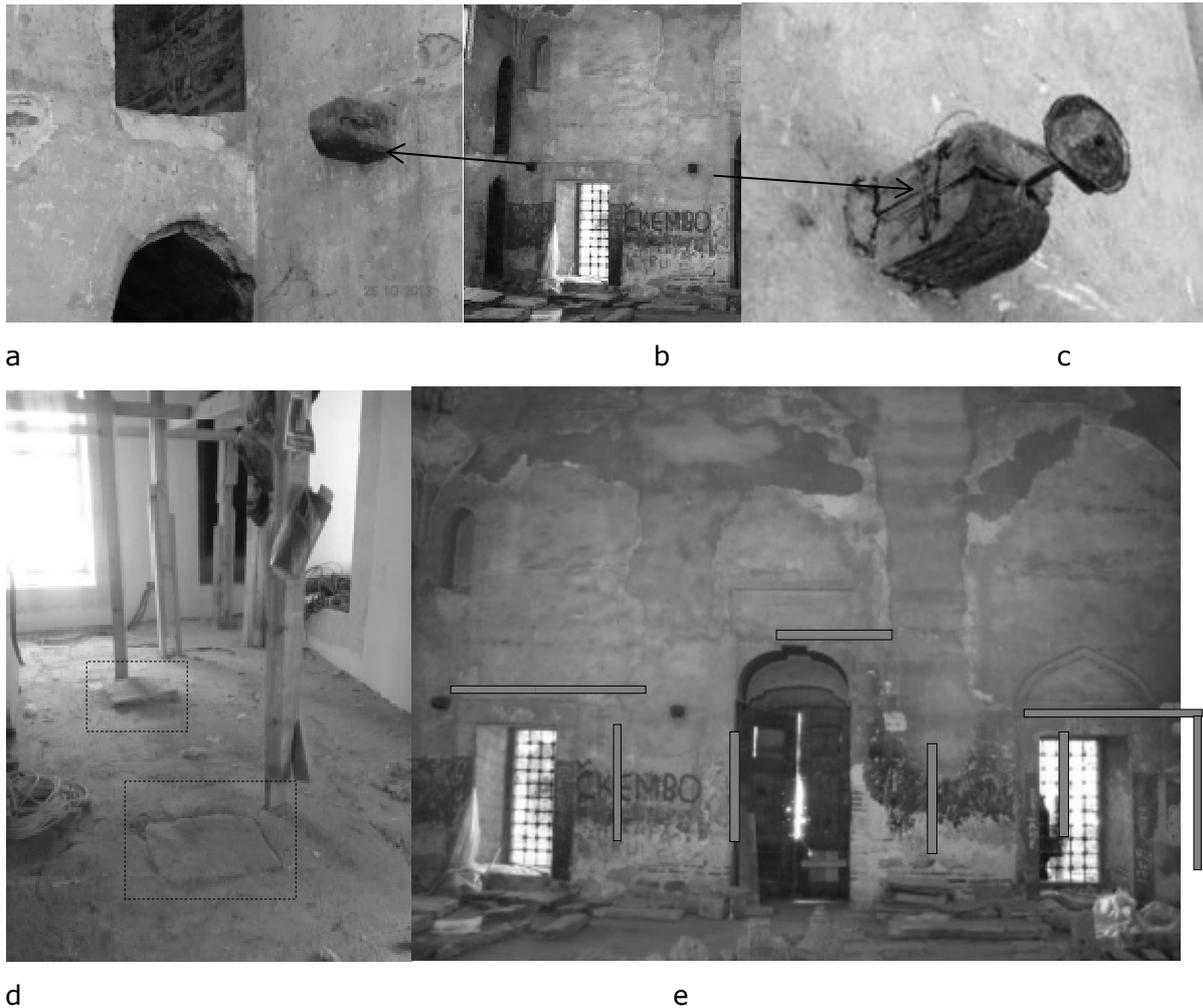
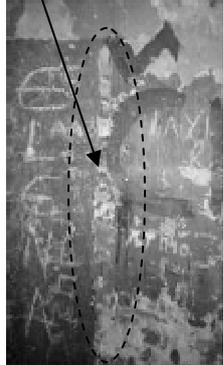
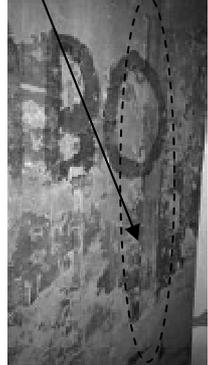
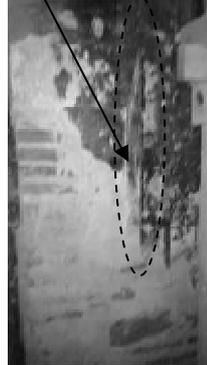
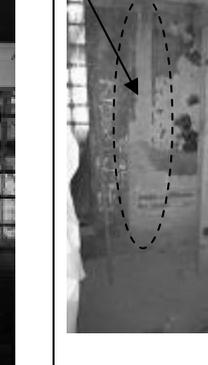
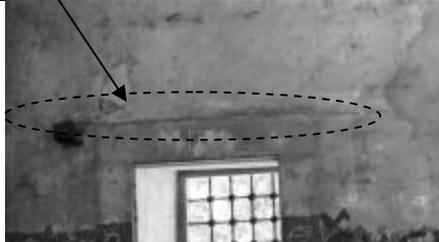
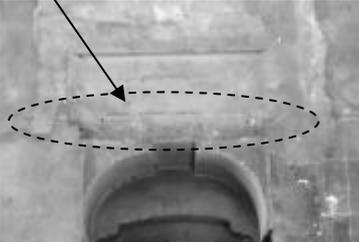
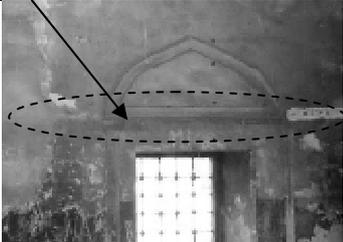


Figure 2. Traces of original maksura in Haydar Qadi Mosque- wooden beams (a, b, c) and door opening (a, b) to the second floor of the maksura, stone foots, and (d)interior North facade of the mosque with the traces of wooden beams and pillars shown with grey colour (Sources: Archives of Ayse Nermin Taskesen, 2013, 2016).

In addition, during the restoration of Haydar Qadi Mosque in late 2014, traces of wooden beams and pillars were encountered on the interior north wall of the mosque pointing out the addition of a later period women's section running the whole width of the north wall (Figure 2e, Table 2). Those faint traces were in the form of successive, permanent paint change on the wall surface with the width of ≈ 0.10 m and with varying heights (Table 2). Since the traces of beams are not at the same level, this second period women's section might have a raised central part above the entrance door.⁷ Considering those traces, in late 2014, small-scale survey excavations were undertaken, aiming to find stone foots of possible wooden pillars. The survey excavation uncovered small pieces of areas ranging between 0.20 - 1.69 m² and depth of which varies between 0.13 - 0.30 m with well-preserved brick floor remains and stone foot traces. The preliminary test excavations as

well as a close inspection on the north interior wall of the mosque offer the potential for linking stone foots of wooden pillar traces immediately adjacent to the north wall and have disclosed the traces of later addition/second period women's section of the mosque.

Table 2: Photos showing the traces of vertical wooden pillars (P1-P5) and horizontal wooden beams (B1- B3) leaning to the north wall of the mosque (Source: Archives of the author (P1-P5), 2015 and Archives of AyseNerminTaskesen (B1-B3), 2013).

Traces of vertical wooden pillars belonging to the possible women's section				
P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
				
Traces of horizontal wooden beams belonging to the possible women's section				
B1	B2	B3		
				

Above-mentioned exhaustive architectural and archaeological investigations undertaken in Haydar Qadi Mosque support the argument that; when it was built the mosque had an original one-sided elevated maksura on the northwest corner of the main prayer hall. In consideration of Ottoman architectural design, it was most probably designed for muezzin rather than women. Yet, recent traces also showed that at a later period the first period maksura was extended/ or a new one added through the whole width of the north wall, which might have been allocated for the usage of women.⁸ Those findings can be interpreted as the transformation of a more unified, un-divided prayer space into a more constructed/bounded one in terms of the designed gendered divisions inside the mosque. Hence, latest excavations and research in Haydar Qadi Mosque are important demonstrating the development of such gendered boundaries in the city.



3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This brief overview examined the development of women's prayer space in Bitola mosques from the point of gender-space or gender-architecture relationship. In light of the above both material and textual sources, the research results indicate that existent mosques of Bitola have either no women's space in their original condition or the current ones were later additions in different periods. As Kahera et al. (2009, p. 81) stated, 'Muslim women elsewhere acknowledge the feeling of isolation embodied in the impractical reasoning why they are relegated to a basement or an anteroom', which is also a valid situation in the case study mosques of Bitola. Smaller or inferior conditions of spaces allocated for women might be the indication and reason of less frequent attendance of women to the mosque activities in the city today. Though those factors are relevant for the rare attendance, 'the willingness of women and opportunities to give time to religion' are the other factors for Muslim women in Macedonia affecting to attend to mosque activities (Repo 2012, p. 180).

Furthermore, privacy requirements in Islamic culture play an important role in gendered space divisions inside the mosques. As an instance, wooden screens of IshakChelebi Mosque keeping women from the gaze of men, and curtain separators of Hamza Beg and Hasan Pasha Mosques might have been the usual outcomes of these privacy requirements. Yet, as pointed out in Repo's (2012, p. 184) and Gavrilović's (2007, pp. 115-116) researches, those physical boundaries might have also related to protection ideology and 'cultural defence' of Muslim women as a minority group. While these boundaries conceal female body, at the same time restrict her seeing, hearing of prayer leader, and feeling of the whole mosque space (Hussain 2009, p. 55). Considering the later addition and/or extension of women's prayer spaces as in the cases of HaydarQadi, Ishak Chelebi, Hasan Baba, and Hamza Beg Mosques, it can be interpreted that while Bitola mosques exhibited a singular undivided space for the whole community when they were first constructed, they were designed with gendered space division as a later tradition. Among the eight case study mosques, Hacı Mahmud Efendi, KocaQadi, and Paftali Mosques do not have a bounded space for women, and the others are known to have one, added in early 20th century or later, exhibiting the hierarchical gender segregation in the mosques. Today, in consideration of two more wooden women's section addition with two separate entrance doors in late comers' portico of IshakChelebi Mosque during the latest restorations, such segregation seems to increase even more, excluding women totally from the main prayer hall and emphasizing the women's secondary positions in mosque design.



In the case study mosques, it is also found that women mostly attend mosque during the Ramadan or in special religious days and they prefer to pray behind the curtains even there is a wooden women's section inside the main prayer hall. Those findings can be interpreted either as the general outcome of the religious/cultural practices/privacy requirements of the community in Bitola or as the obligatory preference of women in order to prevent/protect themselves from the men's arena because of the disapproval of being in the same space. As McGuire (2008, p. 108) stated the mosques in Macedonia were very 'male-dominated areas' which was also exemplified in Repo's (2012, p. 180) research that women had to struggle internally, to enter the mosques. In addition, Gingeras (2013, p. 137) states that 'some men attempt women to stay at home' by further asserting that 'religious reactionaries' were the real enemies of the women. The situation today is quite similar in Turkish society, as the former inhabitants of the region. In her research on women and mosque in Turkey, Ramazanoğlu (2013, pp. 19-23) exemplifies the inferior conditions of women's spaces and how women congregation are often offended by male users.

Understanding this religious, cultural and social intricacy as well as recognizing the mosque as a social space for the believers irrespective of their gender is significant in the increase of women's attendance to the mosque and in designing mosque interiors without gender discrimination.

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NOTES

1. The optional prayer performed in the month of Ramadan after the Isa /night prayer.
2. This information became public to the author during conversation with Bitola Mufti PlumiVeliu in April 2015. During her conversations with Muslim women in Macedonia, Repo (2012, pp. 178-185) similarly points out the rare attendance of women to the mosque.
3. Maksura is an area in a mosque screened off or partitioned off (Dişli, 2015, p. 198).
4. Muezzin is the caller of Muslims to mosque for daily praying.
5. Imam is the prayer leader.
6. Ulama were Muslim theologians and scholars.



7. Such examples are quite common especially in Kosovo mosques such as Peč, Kuršumlija Mosque (built in 17th cc.), Peč, Fatih/Bajrakli Mosque (built in 15th cc.), Priština, Sultan Mehmed II. Mosque (built in 15th cc.), Priština, Sultan Murad/Čaršija/Fatih Mosque (built in 15th cc.), Priština, YašarPašha Mosque (built in 19th cc.), Peč, Bulazade Mosque (built in 16th cc.), Peč, Defterdar Mosque (built in 16th cc.), Peč, Taftali Mosque (built in 19th cc.).

8. In Macedonia similar mosque examples with the whole width of the maksura through the north wall are Strumica, Banjica Mosque (built in 17th cc.), Debar, Hûnkar Mosque (built in 15th cc.), Tito Veleš, Kumsal/Hadzi Ibrahim Mosque (b.unknown), Bitola, IshakChelebi Mosque (built in 16th cc.), and Resne, HadziRamazanSubasi Mosque (built in 17th cc.).

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