

Fani Gargova

The Central Synagogue of Sofia

Westernization, Urban Change, and Religious Reform

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Note on Transliteration and Spelling

Bulgarian is transliterated according to the official transliteration rule passed by the Bulgarian government in 2009 and adopted by the UN in 2012, with the exception of common spellings for places and names. Names are transliterated according to how they have been Romanized by contemporaries or in common scholarly literature. All other names are transliterated according to the standards given above.

All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Dates before the change to the Gregorian calendar in April 1916 are given according to the form in use at the time, which was the Julian calendar. Where necessary, the date is also given according to the Gregorian system.

Currencies and values are given as per original documentation without converting them to current currencies, since in most cases it was not possible to determine an appropriate conversion system.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this book is to reconstruct the context of the construction of the Central Synagogue in Sofia, Bulgaria, and to present the role that the building and its architecture—including location, size, spatial understanding, interior arrangement and furnishings, appearance, and stylistic elements—played for the local Jewish community and their relationship to majority society. By putting the structure in all its architectural specificities at the center of the inquiry, this study contributes to an understanding and knowledge of the social, political, and cultural reality of Sofia's Jews at the turn of the 20th century. This is also achieved by examining the Central Synagogue through the lens of the changing urban character of the Bulgarian capital, including the effects of transformations in Sofia's demographic makeup. A fundamental premise is that the building of Sofia's Central Synagogue reflected a specific historical and social context, whereby its architecture and its context had reciprocal effects on one another.

The Central Synagogue of Sofia is the perfect case study for such an endeavor (Figs. 1, 2). It is a large structure with a dome, well visible in the cityscape and built in the social, commercial, and religious center of the Bulgarian capital. Its period of construction from 1905 to 1909 coincides with a heyday of monumental new structures in the center of Sofia, as well as a heightened sensibility for the significance of architecture as an expression of identity, whether a supposed 'national', religious, or worldly one. The architect of the synagogue, Friedrich Grünanger, was an active participant in this capital-building project and he remains one of the main protagonists of Bulgarian architecture at the turn of the 20th century. Also the local Jewish population was in the process of a profound social and religious transformation under the guidance of the chief rabbi of Bulgaria at the time, Marcus Ehrenpreis, a transformation that was also spurred by a rise of Zionism among Bulgarian Jewry. Not least important was the presence of the Bulgarian king and queen at the inauguration of the Central Synagogue on 9 September 1909, which validated the structure also beyond the context of the Jewish community. Thus, it is a building where several spheres—political, social, and religious—intersect both internally and externally, and, consequently, are inscribed and made apparent.

The Central Synagogue lends itself to exploring a variety of central questions, questions that can reveal important facets of the role of monumental synagogue architecture in shaping Balkan Jewish communities. Why was this large synagogue structure built? Was it a community necessity or did it aim to serve mainly other purposes? How was it realized? Who was responsible for the construction? Which members of the community were to frequent the new synagogue? Why was it built in such a central and visible location?

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Who was supposed to notice the structure? Can its appearance be categorized or analyzed? Does its appearance have a particular significance? What does the building reveal about the Jewish community of Sofia? And in turn, what does it reveal about the city of Sofia?

Until now, most of these questions have never been asked; others have been answered in earlier scholarship only rudimentarily. Indeed, to date the Central Synagogue has received little scholarly attention. Only two articles have been specifically dedicated to the building. The first, an article published in 1989 by Yosif Avramov, relied mainly on two primary sources, both of fundamental importance for writing the history of Sofia Jewry: the memoirs of Avram Davitchon Levi and Avram Moshe Tadjer's history of Bulgarian Jewry, with its special focus on Sofia.[1] Consequently, much of Avramov's article was concerned with the history of the synagogue and the significance of its inaugural event for Bulgarian Jewry. In the greater narrative, architecture played only a subordinate role. The second article, published in 2011/2012 by Joseph Conforti, traces the history of Sofia Jewry from 1878 until the construction of the Central Synagogue and its inauguration, seeing this as a kind of apex in the local Jewish history.[2] While Conforti describes the architectural elements of the synagogue in detail, he remains content with stating that the Central Synagogue was modeled on the Türkische Tempel in Vienna, and that the overall stylistic elements were derived from Byzantine models and Islamic architecture, in particular the Alhambra.

Carol Krinsky's chapter on Sofia in her seminal work *Synagogues of Europe* represents the first contribution to the architectural history of the Central Synagogue. In many ways, it is still the most relevant treatment of the building in the broader context of synagogue architecture.[3] Though riddled with inaccuracies and incorrect information in terms of the historical and topographical background of the Central Synagogue,[4] her observations concerning the structure are noteworthy. She raises the question of the necessity of the Central Synagogue, given that not all Sofia Jews were Sephardim and that the local Jews had established a habit of gathering in smaller groups. She also tackles the critique that was expressed by contemporaries concerning the necessity of such a lavish building when funds were much needed for the schools or the care of the elderly in the Sofia Jewish community. According to Krinsky, the synagogue seems to be a monument to the community leadership of the time, namely, a group of rich and influential men. This also accounted for their ability to employ Grünanger and receive permission to build on such a central property. She notes Davitchon Levi's wish for the

1 Tadjer 1932. – Davitchon Levi 1940. – Avramov 1989.

2 Conforti 2011–2012.

3 Krinsky 1985, 183–186.

4 At the time the book was written, there was practically no information available on Bulgarian Jewry or Bulgarian synagogues in any language other than Bulgarian or Judeo-Spanish; moreover, Krinsky was unable to visit Bulgaria prior to writing her book.

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Sofia building to be modeled on the Viennese Sephardi Synagogue, but remarks on the different situation of the lots, whereby the Vienna building stands at the back of a courtyard and the one in Sofia is a large free-standing synagogue. She points to the Central Synagogue's elaborate details and that its ground plan probably derived from Byzantine sources. Finally, she concludes that the synagogue's appearance may have been meant to seem indigenous and not only Jewish.

The most in-depth description and analysis of the Central Synagogue can be found in Elko Hazan's 2012 *Concise Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities and Their Synagogues in Bulgaria*.[5] He gives a precise description of the location and the lot, and also refers to the Central Synagogue being modeled on the Viennese Sephardi Synagogue, noting the "striking resemblance […] especially with its central dome spatial concept, as well as with the majority of its interior details, the greatest difference being the fact that the former had no facades […]".[6] Hazan claims that the diameter of the synagogue dome is the single largest dome in Bulgaria, and that the Central Synagogue was the second largest synagogue in Europe after Budapest's Dohány Street building.[7] He compares the spatial layouts of the Sofia and Vienna buildings, also mentioning the administrative premises and the small prayer hall, as well as the original heating system and the synagogue's access to the sewer system. Hazan agrees with the secondary literature that subsumes the Central Synagogue under the "post-Byzantine Romantic trend" of the time, but also points out the multitude of Orientalist decorations inside and outside, and that the overall visual impression of the exterior recalls a 'Moorish' style.[8] According to Hazan, the stucco decoration on the exterior also includes the "Secessionist touch" of Grünanger, making it overall eclectic, whereas the interior "is almost thoroughly consistent with the traditional Sephardic stylistics of the epoch […]",[9] with an imposing dome and gallery space. He remarks on the location of the Torah Ark and bimah at the eastern end of the space, describing their appearance in detail, as well as that of the candelabra and the large chandelier. Overall, Hazan's observations are the most in-depth published to date, but as will become apparent, many of his conclusions on the spatial, contextual, and stylistic features of the building are erroneous.

Other studies on Jewish or general Bulgarian heritage and architecture of the turn of the 20th century that also mention the Central Synagogue have proven mostly superficial

5 Hazan et al. 2012, 138–151.

6 Hazan et al. 2012, 139.

7 This is a stark overstatement for the entire European region; however, it is likely that the Sofia structure, as a whole, including its administrative premises, was the largest synagogue in the Balkans; cf. chap. 6.

8 Hazan et al. 2012, 141. In particular, "by the finials of the two chimneys to the east [sic!] that invoke associations with oriental minarets".

9 Hazan et al. 2012, 143.

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or popularized for the general reader.[10] In the past, this has led to misleading information being perpetuated, or the building being arbitrarily categorized within the general architectural trends of the period, without closer attention to the actual broader context.

To provide the necessary context of synagogue architecture, the present study has profited enormously from the great number of publications on synagogues over the last half century and the ever-increasing interest in the synagogue, both as architecture and construction task and as a social and religious space. Stipulated by the context of the Sofia Central Synagogue, comparisons have been limited to the European region, including Turkey, and thus exclude the large number of monumental structures in the United States, Northern Africa, and Israel. Even though the Western Sephardi diaspora could also be regarded as part of the greater context for a narrative on the Bulgarian majority Sephardi community, as will become apparent, the Eastern Sephardi realm in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the Balkans, formed a largely coherent group that remained separate from other Sephardi diasporas. And while there are cases of other colonial and hegemonic structures exhibiting similar characteristics to those in the Balkans—an example being the impact of the Alliance Israélite Universelle on local Jewish communities in Northern Africa[11]—such comparisons would blur the focus on the building of the Central Synagogue and, thus, its contextual specificities. Arguably, since the architecture of synagogues is highly adaptable to local conditions, such wide-ranging comparisons would be misleading unless a direct relationship is provided in the sources, Vienna being a case in point.

When looking at publications on European synagogues, a drawback is often their focus. Many are too broadly conceived, with overviews of synagogues in large geographical areas, and with a historical perspective going back, in some instances, to antiquity.[12] However, for the largest part these publications are only concerned with synagogues within the borders of a particular modern nation state or a specific region, rarely historical. This often creates arbitrary, anachronistic boundaries, or inhibits proper contextualization or analysis of references and conditions.[13] Nevertheless, these publications have been a

10 Harbova 1999, 207–208. – Doytchinov et al. 2002, 70–71. – Yokimov 2005, 57–58. – Mineva-Milcheva / Aleksandrova-Koeva 2006, 113–116. – Raychevski 2008, 149–155. – Raychevski 2009, 51–56. – Trankova / Georgieff 2011, 50–55.

11 See, for instance, Bismuth-Jarrassé / Jarrassé 2010 on the transition during the French protectorate of Tunisia from traditional community structures and buildings to larger synagogues with representative exteriors.

12 Wischnitzer 1964. – Krinsky 1985. – Jarrassé 1991. – Gruber 1999. – Jarrassé 2001. – Cohen-Mushlin / Thies / Narkiss 2010. – Gharipour 2017.

13 Examples, excluding articles, include Hammer-Schenk 1981. – Genée 1987. – Jarrassé 1997. – Frojimovics / Komoróczy 1999. – Karač 2000. – Parik / Cabanová / Kliment 2002. – Borsky 2005. – Gauding / Cohen-Mushlin 2008. – Kadish 2011. – Klein 2011. – Epstein-Mil 2017.

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vital contribution to our knowledge about European synagogues, indeed, in many cases about buildings that no longer exist. Still, there is a lack of research or publications on many structures, particularly in the Balkans. Since these would represent the immediate context of the Central Synagogue of Sofia, this remains a central desideratum.[14]

The literature on particular aspects of the synagogue as a building, such as the changes incurred as a result of the reform movement, help us dig deeper into the specifics of synagogue architecture.[15] Notably though, most of these publications are only concerned with synagogues in the German-Jewish sphere. Similarly, publications on individual architects have helped delineate the role of the architect in shaping synagogues as monumental public structures.[16] Studies on individual buildings, such as the prominent Dohány Street and Wagner synagogues in Budapest, are valuable for in-depth comparisons.[17] Finally, a number of edited volumes and journal articles have started filling the gaps, such as understudied communities, or exploring new avenues of inquiry. Among other things, a few publications have begun to pay attention to individual aspects of the synagogue as a building.[18]

The questions that form the core of this book concern various matters, including the interplay between architecture and societal developments; tensions between a community or certain factions within a community and its leadership; the specific contribution of the architect; or the implication of budget on a building's appearance or the choice of material and techniques. A model for tackling this kind of inquiry has been Saskia Coenen Snyder's *Building a Public Judaism*,[19] since here the aim is to understand the role that the Sofia Central Synagogue played in and for the community, not merely the commonly recurring questions of style or identity, but rather practical and direct

14 Halperin 1986. – Alok / Mitrani 1992. – Stavroulakis / DeVinney 1992. – Streja / Prager 1997. – Keribar / Güleryüz 2008/a. – Keribar / Güleryüz 2008/b. – Zack / Jarvis / Kahraman 2008 are helpful for an overview. With the exception of Messinas 2013 and to some extent Hazan et al. 2012, these publications are quite superficial, most presenting collections of basic information and photographs of varying quality. The field is changing rapidly, however, with a number of studies that focus on individual buildings. See, e.g., Rajner 2021. – Stojsavljević 2021.

15 E.g., Cohen-Mushlin / Thies 2012. – Brämer / Przystawik / Thies 2016.

16 See, for instance, Klein 2009. – Tanaka 2009. – Bäumler 2012. – Przystawik 2015. – Brämer et al. 2021.

17 Müller 1992. – Klein 2008.

18 See Cohen-Mushlin / Thies / Narkiss 2010. – Gromova / Heinert / Voigt 2015. – Kessler / Kienlin 2015. – Gharipour 2017. – Kravtsov 2018.

19 Coenen Snyder 2013. This is not to suggest that other studies ignore these questions. For instance, Hammer-Schenk 1981, though enormously broad in its scope, manages to bind such considerations into its history of 150 years of German synagogues. Another example, Jarrassé 1997, contextualizes French synagogues within the political debates and climate of the time, the power structures of the consistorial system, as well as the immediate urban surroundings and material innovations.

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choices and goals, whether conditioned by community cohesion, the immediate urban surroundings, or the available budget.

The history of Bulgarian Jewry at its zenith during the transitory period from Ottoman rule to integration into the Bulgarian nation state and until the late 1930s is largely unwritten, given that most literature about the Jews of Bulgaria focuses on the Second World War and the interplay of the various factors that led to the decision not to send the approximately 48,000 Jews living on Bulgarian soil to the Nazi concentration camps. While this episode is commonly referred to as the 'saving' or 'rescue' of the Bulgarian Jews, these terms are misleading, given the fact that ca. 11,000 Jews from the Bulgarian-annexed territories of Macedonia and Thrace were indeed sent to Treblinka. The self-affirming but oversimplified narrative of the 'saving' of the Bulgarian Jewry by overemphasizing the role of individual governmental figures or the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, depending on the agenda of the author, remains highly problematic as well.[20]

For the period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bulgarian Jews are touched upon in general examinations of Sephardi Jewry in the greater context of the Eastern Sephardi world from the 15th to the 20th centuries. Here, the Jews of Bulgaria are of special interest due to their early adoption of political Zionism and their rejection of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.[21] The autobiography of Gabriel Arié represents a notable exception.[22] Similarly, of great value is the recent critical edition of Avram Moshe Tadjer's history of the Bulgarian Jews.[23] The richness of Jewish life in Bulgaria at the turn of the 20th century can also be implicitly deduced from recent efforts to identify and catalogue surviving Bulgarian Jewish books, especially those written in Judeo-Spanish.[24] However, the implication or premise conveyed in these publications that all Bulgarian Jews were

20 Cf. Bar-Zohar 1998. – Ilel / Paunovski 2000. – Todorov 2001. – Taneva / Gezenko 2002. – Taneva / Gezenko 2005. – Gezenko et al. 2013. This narrative is slowly being deconstructed, for instance, most recently by Ragaru 2020.

21 Levy 1994. – Benbassa / Rodrigue 2000. – Levy 2002. – Rozen 2002. – Benbassa 2003. – Rodrigue 2003. – Rozen 2005. – Cohen / Stein 2014. A special emphasis in the study of Eastern Sephardi Jewry has recently been on Thessaloniki; see Mazower 2006. – Halevi 2012. – Rodrigue 2014. – Naar 2016/a. – Naar 2016/b.

22 Benbassa / Rodrigue 1998.

23 Ayala 2017. Tadjer's original text in Judeo-Spanish was published in 1932. A recent popular translation into Bulgarian by Leon Benatov (Tadjer 2019) has made Tadjer's account more widely known. Tadjer's is one of several early publications on the Bulgarian Jews. While these need to be taken with a grain of salt, nonetheless, they report on events and developments that happened during the authors' lifetimes and thus remain important first-hand accounts. See also Rozanes 1923/a. – Rozanes 1923/b. – Mezan 1925. For a recent discussion of these texts, see Gargova 2021/b.

24 Collin / Studemund-Halévy 2005. – Studemund-Halévy / Collin 2005. – Studemund-Halévy / Collin 2006. – Collin / Studemund-Halévy 2007. – Studemund-Halévy / Collin 2007. – Collin / Studemund-Halévy 2009.

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Sephardi Jews, with only cursory mention of the Romaniote or Ashkenazi minorities, begs critical attention.[25]

While there are a number of wide-ranging historical studies on Bulgaria's Jewry, nonetheless their focus is also strongly anchored in the Second World War. Moreover, most are quite tendentious or semi-scholarly.[26] Notable exceptions are the studies of Zvi Keren on individual communities,[27] and a few publications from other disciplines that also help complete the picture.[28] Joseph Conforti's recent dissertation on the leadership of the Bulgarian Jewry from 1878 to 1913 fills many gaps and represents the most detailed account and analysis of the topic for the period central to this study.[29]

Finally, several recent publications explore the development of urban planning and architecture in Bulgaria with a special focus on the capital Sofia around the turn of the 20th century.[30] While these works provide good general overviews—as do a plethora of articles analyzing individual buildings and initiatives[31]—a detailed examination, for instance, of the architectural debates at the turn of the 20th century or the reasoning behind stylistic considerations is still a desideratum. The attempt in chapter 2.3 of this volume to accurately contextualize the Central Synagogue is a first step toward filling this gap.[32]

This volume relies heavily on several theoretical concepts. Most fundamental is the concept of Orientalism as brought forward by Edward Said in his seminal publication.[33] Said defines Orientalism as, first, "an academic one" in terms of Oriental studies, second, as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made

25 This complexity derives also from the fact that such categorization is not as straightforward in the case of Bulgaria as in other places. Ayala 2017 addresses this issue, since it is a basic aspect of the identity of her protagonist. Only Fabrikant 1993 and Fabrikant 1995 deal with the Ashkenazim in Bulgaria. In-depth studies of the old Ashkenazi community, the new Ashkenazi community, and the Romaniote community in Bulgaria are still missing.

26 A major issue is the often overtly Zionist point of view distorting these accounts. Romano / Ben / Levy 1967. – Kashales 1969. – Tamir 1979. – Fol 2000. – Raychevski 2008. Although they are collections of biographies and do not presume to be scholarly studies, Arditti 1969. – Arditti 1970. – Arditti 1971. – Arditti 1973 manage to assemble a substantial amount of material.

27 E.g., Keren 1996. – Keren 2011. – Keren 2013. – Keren 2014.

28 Haskell 1994. – Koen 2008.

29 Conforti 2012, which compliments individual articles on the topic, such as Ilel 1987. – Botusharov 1988. – Parousheva 1995. – Roshkovska 2009.

30 Kotsev et al. 1998. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001. – Doytchinov / Ganchev / Stoyanova 2002. – Yokimov 2005. – Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2009. – Stoilova 2016.

31 See chap. 2.

32 Bakalova 2012, 291–292 touches briefly on this question. Ada Hajdu worked on this question during a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study Sofia in 2014, however, she was able to publish only some of her findings before her untimely passing; see for example Hajdu 2022.

33 Originally published in 1978, here cited after Said 2003.

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between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'", and, third, "taking the late eighteenth century as a […] starting point […] as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient".[34] Fundamentally Said's work is about representations of an imagined 'Orient' as a 'backward', 'inferior', 'unchanging', and homogenous opposition to Europe—understood solely as Western Europe—which enables Western hegemony, including imperialism and colonialism, over the actual 'Orient'. Of interest for the discussion of the Central Synagogue are the forms taken by these representations or imaginations and their extent—including the notion being adopted in forms of self-Orientalizing.

Said's concept of Orientalism is applied here not only to the Islamic East, as in Said's case, but also to the people who in the 19th and early 20th centuries were commonly understood as the 'Orientals within' the Western world, local Jewish populations.[35] The discussion about the interrelatedness of the concept of the 'Orient' and the perception of the Jewish people, including Jews often embracing their own Othering as 'Oriental', has gained increased attention since the publication of Ivan Kalmar's and Derek Penslar's *Orientalism and the Jews*.[36]

Said has been amply criticized for oversimplifying the complex relationship between the 'Orient' and the 'West'. Nevertheless, especially in the field of architectural history, Said's Orientalism has provided a useful tool for questioning, decoding, and contextualizing the multitude of buildings with architectural vocabulary codified as non-Western. This has enabled thinking that goes beyond the mere notion of style.[37] Similarly, it has provided an important impetus for exploring Orientalist discourses in the 'East' and in regions once considered as belonging to the 'Orient' by revealing their underlying mechanisms.[38]

In the context of synagogue architecture, looking at style from this perspective is of particular importance, especially given that—from the beginning—the conscious

34 Said 2003, 2–3.

35 Said, in reaction to criticism that he had ignored or dismissed the Jewish reality, not coincidentally also argues that "Orientalism and modern anti-Semitism have common roots". Cf. Said 2003, xviii.

36 Kalmar / Penslar 2005. See also Malinovich 1999. – Bar-Chen 2005. – Brunotte / Ludewig / Stähler 2014. – Cohen 2014. – Shahar / Schwartz / Salaymeh 2017.

37 This is most relevant for the dichotomy, long upheld, of historical versus changeless styles; cf. Rabbat 2018. However, awareness of Orientalism as a concept has not prevented many recent scholarly projects from avoiding Orientalist pitfalls; see, e.g., Giese / Varela Braga 2016. – Hartmuth / Rüdiger 2021.

38 Born / Lemmen 2014.

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'Oriental' style was primarily associated with Islamic architecture.[39] In the 19th and early 20th centuries, architects, art critics, and commissioners were all particularly vague about how the style was to be called. Using designations such as 'Arab', 'Moorish', 'Mohammedan', or 'Saracen', one thread common to all these terms is their implicit racism and the understanding that the style is supposedly 'Oriental'.[40]

Current scholarship persistently refers to this style as either 'Moorish' or '(neo-)Islamic'.[41] This is problematic for several reasons. Both terms fail to acknowledge the complexity of either the artistic outcome or the historicist phenomenon. In particular, the term '(neo-)Moorish style' suggests a homogeneous origin and an all-encompassing simplicity of the formal variety.[42] Not least, 'Moorish' also has a pervasive racial undertone, ranging, especially during the 19th century, from associations with 'barbaric' Arab rulers to 'primitive' Africans.[43] Throughout this book, the generally eclectic style that drew from a wide variety of buildings considered 'Oriental' will be referred to as having an 'Oriental' style or Orientalist style. Though wider in scope, this terminology can be used to position Orientalist synagogues in the broader context of 19th- and early 20th-century Orientalist architecture, which has also been largely associated with entertainment or leisure. At the same time, it recalls the implicit discourse on Orientalism.[44]

Closely connected to Orientalism was the neo-Byzantine trend of the same period, not least because of the geographical overlap of the territories of the former Byzantine and Ottoman Empires.[45] But while related, it was also quite distinct in the range of its

39 This was amply shown by Künzl as early as 1984. However, in her seminal survey, which tackles the question for the first time, she makes no reference to Said, and fails to encompass the complexity of the meaning of Orientalism as it is employed other than using it for a stylistic analysis and describing it as an 'influence'.

40 See, for instance, Förster 1859, 14. – Vecsey / Gál 1876. – Der sephardische Tempel 1888. For a broader discussion of this terminological issue, see Rabbat 2012.

41 Of the many such examples, see, for instance, Künzl 1984. – Kalmar 2001. – Bush 2004. – Klein 2009. – Wilke 2021. Künzl's study was ground-breaking and to some extent, it initiated the current discourse on the topic. Kalmar's article, on the other hand, has recently become the go-to reference on the topic, although this is problematic given the article's focus on the social context and its almost exclusive reliance on texts.

42 See for instance Danby 1995, which subsumes under the term 'Moorish style' all Islamic art and architecture from Spain to India and from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, as well as all Orientalist appropriations of the various artistic products of those regions.

43 This is most obvious in 19th-century Orientalist art, which frequently employs Alhambresque or 'Moorish' Andalusian architecture as a backdrop for 'savage', 'uncivilized', 'primitive', or sexualized scenes. See Nochlin 1989, 33–59. – Diederen / Depelchin 2010.

44 See Depelchin 2012 on the preference of using Orientalism or Orientalist in this context. Cf. Koppelkamm 1987 on the nature of buildings displaying an Orientalist style.

45 On Byzantium in the Orientalist discourse, see Cameron 1992. – Cameron 2003, and more recently Stouraitis 2022, 19–47.

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connotations. Notwithstanding negative associations such as decadence, the legacy of the Byzantine Empire was interesting and relevant for Western Europeans because of its association with a supposed original or 'primitive' Christianity. It, therefore, occupies a space between Orientalism and medievalism, between a spatial and a temporal Othering.[46] As such, the style was used in a wide variety of new buildings, often as a marker of an imagined 'pure' Christianity with strong nativist undertones.[47] The Byzantine revival had the largest impact in Russia, which saw itself the heir to the Byzantine Empire, as well as in the Balkan nation states that emerged in the 19th century, which considered their identity as legitimate successors of their respective medieval Christian Orthodox kingdoms and empires.[48] Especially the context of the Balkan nations and their constructed or imagined identity are crucial for the present study.[49]

Developed in part from Said's critique, Maria Todorova has applied his concept to a comparable but ambivalent region, coining the term Balkanism for a specific imagination of and attitude toward the Balkan region.[50] Todorova traces how Western scholarship created the notion of the Balkans as applying to the entire peninsula. By the turn of the 20th century, this notion was widely accepted, and by the First World War, it had acquired a thoroughly political and negative connotation best exemplified by the derivative term 'balkanization'.[51] However, the actual geographical extent comprised by the term Balkans remains an issue of definition. Usually it is the context that determines whether the Balkan region applies only to the former Ottoman European territories, or whether it reaches further north.

At the core of Todorova's critique is the concept that Balkanism is a set of prejudices and stereotypes about the Balkans and its people which have shaped and still shape the political discourse of that region. The idea is intricately connected to Said's Orientalism, in that these stereotypes are part and parcel of the five-hundred-year Ottoman sovereignty over the territory. Moreover, both Orientalism and Balkanism are essentially a

46 Cf. the characterization of medievalism in Bildhauer / Jones 2017, 10 as "nothing else, in fact, than a temporal equivalent of the more familiar discourse of Orientalism". See also Ganim 2005.

47 See, e.g., Berger 2003. – Bullen 2003. – Nelson 2004. – Taroutina 2012. – Bogdanović 2016. In the applied and fine arts, Byzantine models could be completely detached from the religious aspect and act as modernist inspirations; cf. Betancourt / Taroutina 2015. – Wilhelm 2022.

48 See Kallestrup 2002. – Stoilova / Yokimov 2002. – Kadijević 2005. – Savelev 2005. – Delouis / Couderc / Guran 2013. – Popescu 2013. – Ignjatović 2014. – Ignjatović 2016. – Kadijević 2016. – Merenik / Simić / Borozan 2016. – Minea 2016. – Kallestrup et al. 2022, among others.

49 Cf. also Mishkova 2023.

50 Originally published in 1997, the updated edition of Todorova 2009 is referred to here.

51 Todorova 2009, 21–37. In contrast, the term southeastern Europe, which was popularized starting in the 1930s, especially in Germany, was connected to a highly politicized worldview meant to further Nazi ideology as well as claims in the region; cf. Mishkova 2019.

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form of Othering—the fundamental mechanism underlying these discourses. However, as Todorova points out, the difference is that the Balkans are "culturally constructed as [Europe's] 'other' within"[52]—a construction not unlike that of Jews supposedly being the 'Asians' or 'Orientals' of Europe.[53] Another substantial difference between Orientalism and Balkanism in this framework is the characterization of the Balkans as predominantly Christian. Todorova acknowledges processes of Othering within the Balkans, not exclusively from outside, however, she describes these as part of a process of constructing national "self-identities" vis-à-vis an imagined 'Oriental' other.[54] In this, she borrows Milica Bakić-Hayden's concept of "Nesting Orientalism".[55] Similarly, Todorova "emphasizes the extent to which the outside perception of the Balkans has been internalized in the region itself".[56]

A crucial aspect of Balkanism is the characterization of the region and its people(s) as being neither European nor 'Oriental', but somewhere in between. It has remained 'barbarian' and 'uncivilized', supposedly not having inherited any of the positive aspects of the West or the East. One of Todorova's examples for this point is the introductory passage to *The Soul of the East*, a travelogue by Marcus Ehrenpreis.[57] Todorova was not aware of the fact that Ehrenpreis was not just someone who had visited the Balkans. Originally from the Habsburg Empire, he was, in fact, the chief rabbi of Bulgaria for fourteen years and thus lived in Sofia for a substantial part of his life. He mastered both Bulgarian and Judeo-Spanish, and had extensive experience dealing with the local situation.[58] He was a central protagonist in the construction of the Central Synagogue and thus in the present study. Despite his experience in Bulgaria, in his 1926 book, he characterizes the Balkan people using Balkanist stereotypes:

> The Orient is already in evidence at the Masaryk railway station in Prague. Not the real Orient of the Azhar at Cairo or the one of Haifa's street cafés, but that variant of the East known as Levantinism; a something, elusive of definition—the body of the East but without its spirit. It is a crumbling Orient, a traitorous deserter from itself, without fez, without veil, without Koran: it is an artificial, trumpery New Orient which has deliberately broken with its past and renounced its ancient heritage. […] The confused din, clumsy perspiring figures, false front of civilization which stops at the shirt-collar, odour of cheap cosmetics, yellow-backed,

52 Todorova 2009, 188.
53 Cf. Kalmar / Penslar 2005.
54 Todorova 2009, 20. Her examples include the Othering of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the processes within former Yugoslavia.
55 Bakić-Hayden 1995.
56 Todorova 2009, 39.
57 Ehrenpreis 1928/a. Originally published in Swedish in 1926.
58 Cf. chap. 3.6. below.

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> pinchbeck French literature—all this is the Levant. One is suddenly sucked into a whirlpool of strange, shouting, gesticulating, haggling, bustling people. There is something eccentric in their conduct, they are overloud, too sudden, too eager. […] The Levantine type in the areas between the Balkans and the Mediterranean is, psychologically and socially, truly a "wavering form," a composite of Easterner and Westerner, multilingual, cunning, superficial, unreliable, materialistic and, above all, without tradition. This absence of tradition seems to account for the low intellectual and, to a certain extent moral, quality of the Levantines; it is as if they were parentless, thrown entirely upon their own experience and abandoned to their proper poverty or the crumbs from strangers' tables. […] In a spiritual sense these creatures are homeless; they are no longer Orientals nor yet Europeans. They have not freed themselves from the vices of the East nor acquired any of the virtues of the West. The mixed-breed Levantine lacks patriotism in our interpretation just as he lacks a language that is his alone.[59]

It is necessary to note that the Balkan Jewish population is largely invisible in the Balkanist discourse. As a minority in the region, the Jews are slipped into a position of the double 'Other'. And while the Balkans are perceived as neither European nor 'Oriental' or 'Asian', the local Balkan Jewish population fits this dichotomous portrayal of oppositions even less—even though, conveniently, they were recurrently confronted with both prejudices.

Todorova's study has sparked an enormous amount of recent contributions to the study of the Balkans and of Balkanism.[60] However, critique has also recently been expressed in the fact that while the debate on Balkanism draws on political, journalistic, and literary sources, it almost completely excludes the academic discourse.[61] In addition, work on the Balkans has recently focused on the nation-building process—political, ideological, discursive, and artistic—of the 'balkanized' states.[62] This corpus of scholarship has benefited from a general scholarly interest in nationalism, the nation, and the role of memory in its construction. It has been sparked by Benedict Anderson's seminal book *Imagined Communities*.[63]

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59 Ehrenpreis 1928/a, 11–13. The same passage with other selections are cited in Todorova 2009, 125.

60 Cf., for instance, Bjelić / Savić 2002. – Džihić / Maurer 2011. – Daskalov / Marinov 2013. – Daskalov / Mishkova 2013. – Foteva 2014. – Couroucli / Marinov 2015. – Daskalov / Marinov 2015. – Daskalov et al. 2017.

61 Mishkova 2019.

62 See, for instance, Daskalov 2004. – Todorova 2004. – Weber 2006. – Trencsényi / Kopecek 2007. – Mishkova 2009. – Ersoy / Górny / Kechriotis 2010. – Baleva 2011. – Davidova 2012. – Stamatopoulos 2015. For a basic exploration of architectural studies in light of Balkanist discourses, see Born 2014. For a special focus on the local Jewish population, see Rozen 2002. – Rozen 2005. – Rozen 2008. – Catalan / Dogo 2016. – Hansen-Kokoruš / Terpitz 2021.

63 Anderson 1983. There is no doubt that Todorova's study was deeply inspired by Anderson's work, as evident in the similarity of her book's title to Anderson's concept.

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In the present volume, the theoretical frameworks of Orientalism, Balkanism, and nationalism are closely intertwined. They are apparent in the hegemonic power relations of the historical, social, urban, communal, and architectural contexts of the Sofia Central Synagogue, and thus condition the building's appearance, function, and significance. Therefore, these discourses resonate throughout the following chapters. In response to these theoretical frameworks, the terms 'Orient', 'Oriental', and 'national' will be set in single quotation marks to indicate their constructed nature and the discourse that is always implicit when considering these seemingly stable, monolithic concepts. Similarly, concepts that derive from such an uneven, hegemonic, or biased perception of the 'Orient', the Balkans, or the Bulgarian geographic area and the local people, such as 'cultivated', 'backward', or 'clean', are also marked with single quotation marks. Also set in single quotation marks are the terms 'Turkish' or 'Turks' when primary sources of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are imprecise, since it is important to distinguish these people from the actual Turkish nation state and its citizens. Some such sources seem to refer interchangeably to local Muslims and a Turkish ethnic minority, the latter also imprecisely determined based on a person's officially registered mother tongue. In neither case do these terms denote the actual citizenship of the person in question.

The present study is divided into two sections and eight chapters. Section one contains chapters two to four, which cover the contextual frameworks; section two, composed of chapters five to seven, presents a close reading and interpretation of the structure of the Sofia Central Synagogue. Chapter eight provides a short summary and concluding remarks. In addition, the volume includes an appendix with an English translation of the speeches given at the inauguration of the Central Synagogue.

Chapter two examines the urban context of Sofia from 1878 until the First World War in its changing character from an Ottoman town to the capital of the young Bulgarian nation state. It traces the various stages of urban regulation, the main protagonists involved—including the architect of the Central Synagogue, Friedrich Grünanger—and the role that architecture and its appearance played in this process. In order to situate and interpret these developments, the evolving discourse in the Bulgarian architectural and engineering press on the Bulgarian 'national' style is presented. This discourse is also examined from a broader international perspective. The structures erected in Sofia in this style are then examined in their context, with consideration of the urban fabric and spatial significance. A special focus is on the monumental buildings immediately surrounding the Central Synagogue.

After laying out the general urban context of the synagogue building, chapter three examines the history of the local Sofia Jewish community, as well as their social, political, communal, and urban contexts. It first presents the Jewish quarter and its structure and synagogues as part of the Ottoman urban fabric, then examines the changing reality of the Jewish topography after 1878 and, from the 1890s onward, the resettlement of the

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majority of the Jewish population to a western suburb called Yuch Bunar. The role of the Alliance Israélite Universelle as the major force in the educational and social emancipation of the Jewish population of the entire Eastern Mediterranean is then analyzed, not only with regard to its contributions, but also its meddling in community matters. Also addressed is the changing demographic of the Sofia Jewish community through the arrival of Ashkenazi Jews, as well as the resulting internal tensions and the latter's important contribution to the early adoption in Bulgaria of the Zionist movement. These were all crucial factors that shaped the tenure of Chief Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis from 1900 to 1914. It was in this period and under Ehrenpreis' guidance that the Central Synagogue was constructed with the help of Avram Davitchon Levi, at the time the head of the Central Synagogue construction committee. A lengthy passage is devoted to Ehrenpreis' modernization and reform initiatives, which had a profound impact on Bulgarian Jewry, as well as his struggles with internal and external opposition.

Chapter four provides the background of the Central Synagogue's architectural solution, presenting the development of synagogues as a space and construction task in the vernacular context, as well as in the context of Western and Central Europe hegemony. Starting with a portrayal of the local Ottoman synagogue building type as it is known, it is shown that following 1878, synagogues in Bulgaria gradually departed from this tradition entirely. This was also the case for the Sofia Central Synagogue. In exchange, German and Habsburg models were adopted. For more background, these synagogue models are explored, as are the theoretical and ideological foundations of the 'Oriental' style synagogue. Special focus is given to the Sephardi Synagogue in Vienna, the so-called Türkische Tempel, since written sources state that it served as a direct model for the Sofia Central Synagogue. This is followed by an analysis of the immediate local context, namely, synagogue structures in Bulgaria and especially in Sofia after 1878. Finally, two buildings in the Balkans built at the same time as the Central Synagogue are examined as direct comparisons.

Having laid out the urban, historical, social, and architectural contexts, the second section of the volume focuses on the Central Synagogue building. Chapter five discusses all known information and primary source material related to the history of the initiative to build the Central Synagogue, as well as to its actual construction. It also offers a detailed account of the building's inauguration, including organizational aspects, intended impact, and press coverage. Also examined are Jewish and non-Jewish reactions to the structure and the inaugural event.

Chapter six provides a detailed description of the Central Synagogue's structure, starting with the location and size of the lot and the ground plan. It provides details about the exterior elements and overall appearance, then moves to the interior, with a description of the administrative wing and the main prayer hall. This description is based on observations made *in situ* after the most recent large-scale renovation of 2008–2009,

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as well as based on the survey materials made between 1989 and 1994 in preparation for the building's first comprehensive renovation. These consist of plans, sections, elevations, and other details. There are three versions of these restoration project documents. The initial project material of 1989, a second revised version of 1992, and additions from 1994 were provided to me by the late Vasil Kitov, the leading architect of the restoration work.[64] The plans approved by the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Sofia are still preserved in the offices of the Central Synagogue, where I was allowed to consult them.[65] The original plans of the synagogue by Friedrich Grünanger are lost. If any plans were preserved in the synagogue's archives, then they were destroyed by the bombing of Sofia between November 1943 and March 1944, which also hit the synagogue and the library of the Jewish council on Maria Luiza boulevard.[66] The Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Sofia municipality also does not hold any material related to the Central Synagogue building. It is unclear if the estate and papers of Grünanger were preserved by his family after his death. Only Grünanger's testament is kept in the Salzburg archives, the city where Grünanger died.[67] When it was not possible to determine whether the current state of the building reflects its original appearance or plans, old photographs and postcards have been used to verify open questions.

Finally, chapter seven integrates the contextual considerations set forth in section one with the architecture and known background of the Central Synagogue building. This analytical synthesis is structured according to the description of the building, gradually revealing the intricate layers of significance and function that are embedded in its architecture.

64 These are cited as Kitov 1989. – Kitov 1992/a.
65 These are cited as Kitov 1992/b.
66 See Studemund-Halévy / Collin 2005, 585–586.
67 Cf. chap 2.4.4.

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PART I

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2 The Urban Context of Sofia

The Sofia Central Synagogue in both its appearance and its significance is deeply interlinked with its immediate urban context, as well as with the changing nature of Sofia's urban fabric around the turn of the 20th century. At that time, the city of Sofia was in the process of redefining itself, transitioning from an Ottoman town to a modern European capital.[1] In this respect, 1878 was not only a watershed moment for the country, it was also the year that changed the cityscape of Sofia for good. It also marks the beginning of a reorganization and profound structural changes for the Bulgarian and particularly Sofia Jewish community. Suddenly, Bulgaria's Jews were no longer part of a larger network of Ottoman Jewish communities. They had to redefine themselves within the scope of the new national borders.[2]

2.1 The Urban Context of Sofia in 1878

After a period of internal Bulgarian revolution against Ottoman sovereignty, culminating in the so-called April Uprising of 1876, the Great Powers, in particular Russia, took note of the Bulgarian cause, which became a pressing political issue.[3] Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1877 and managed to achieve a hard-won yet steady victory by the winter of 1877/1878, when Sofia was captured. A peace treaty between the Russian and Ottoman Empires was signed in March 1878 in San Stefano, just outside modern-day Istanbul. Dictated by Russia, it promised a Bulgarian homeland that would encompass a territory from the Danube to the Aegean Sea and from Ohrid to the Black Sea. Not coincidentally, this territory was reminiscent of the largest extent of Bulgaria during the Middle Ages. It also covered the territory of the Bulgarian Exarchate, and thus was understood as being populated by 'ethnic' Bulgarians (Fig. 3).[4] However, fearing Bulgaria having an overly powerful Russian ally in a strategically important location, Britain and

1 Cf. Stanoeva 2010.

2 Benbassa / Rodrigue 2000, 89–95.

3 The history of Bulgaria as given here is for contextualization, and thus is only touched upon in a greatly summarized and rather superficial manner. The portrayal here is mainly based on Statelova / Grancharov 1999, 10–289. – Crampton 2005, 76–140. – Crampton 2007, 96–189. – Chary 2011, 35–52.

4 The Bulgarian Exarchate represented the *de facto* Bulgarian autonomous Orthodox Church, which gained its independence from the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate only in 1870 after having been

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Austria-Hungary pushed through a revision of the Bulgarian territory in Berlin in July 1878. This new Berlin Treaty stipulated a Bulgarian state confined to the area between the Danube and the Balkan mountain range, and the region of Sofia. Bulgaria would become an autonomous principality under Ottoman suzerainty but ruled by a Christian prince. The area south of the Balkan Mountains, called Eastern Rumelia, would remain under the control of an Ottoman governor. Russia would administer the autonomous Bulgarian principality until a suitable prince, approved by the Great Powers, could be found.

When the Russian army captured Sofia from the Ottomans in January 1878, they encountered a partly destroyed town of 11,694 inhabitants.[5] The vast majority of the 'Turkish' Muslim population of ca. 9,000 people had left their homes on the eve of the Russian army's arrival, abandoning a large area to the north, east, and south of the city (Fig. 4). At that time, the western part of Sofia was inhabited by the Christian Bulgarian population, whereas the Jewish population was confined to the city center. The earliest census also counted a significant Roma population of 757 people, some cohabiting the city center together with the Jewish population. The majority of the Roma, however, were pushed to the northern outskirts of the city, beyond the grounds of the Muslim cemetery.

Sofia's spatial distribution echoed the organization of the city according to the Ottoman mahala structure, with separated neighborhoods—in most cases, organically grown—for the distinct communities. For the most part, these communities were ethno-religiously organized. The street systems within the mahalas were seemingly unstructured and public squares entirely missing, except for a central market square, which held a leading position in the social order and cohesion of the city. As a capital of an Ottoman province, the Rumelia Eyalet, Sofia had undergone urban reorganization in the 1860s to 1870s, after the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms. This provided for the establishment of arterial roads leading in the direction of other important urban centers in the Balkans. Specifically, these included the roads toward Thessaloniki to the south; Istanbul to the east; Ruse to the northeast; Lom and Vidin to the north because of their strategic location along the Danube; and Niš and Belgrade to the northwest (Fig. 5).[6]

In 1878, the townscape of Sofia was dominated by the great visibility of the city's mosques and the central clock tower, as well as the importance of the public baths.[7] However, once the Russian army captured Sofia, the city underwent a fast-paced transformation. First, the retreating Ottoman army and population set a considerable number of buildings on fire, which destroyed at least part of the northern, eastern, and southern

abolished by the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century; cf. Boneva 2010, 1028–1058. See also Lilova 2003. – Detrez 2010. – Lilova 2010.

5 DA Sofia f. 1k op. 2 ae. 1727, 99.

6 Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2000, 465–466. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 31.

7 See, for instance, most recently Peychev 2015.

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areas of the town. Second, as soon as the Russian provisional administration of Bulgaria was set up in Sofia, the Russian army took immediate action to destroy the Ottoman Muslim appearance of Sofia by blowing up seven mosques as early as December 1878.[8]

The first national assembly of the Bulgarian principality was held in Veliko Tarnovo in February 1879.[9] As the historic capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom of the Middle Ages and thus laden with symbolic meaning, Veliko Tarnovo would have also been the obvious choice for the official capital of Bulgaria. However, Sofia's strategic, logistic, geographic, and not least, demographic advantages were, at this point, well established. The Bulgarian Marin Drinov thus convinced the Russian provisional administration to set up its capital in Sofia for precisely these reasons. He also convinced the Bulgarian assembly that Sofia would be the right choice as the new capital.[10]

First, it lay at the crossroads of the roads between Vienna and Constantinople, as well as the Aegean Sea and the Danube. This location facilitated its connection to the growing European train network. Its situation on a plain also ensured that the city had sufficient space to grow, particularly eastward and westward, along the axis of the plain. Sofia was also close to the political rival Serbia. Moreover, it was closer than Veliko Tarnovo to the region of Macedonia, a territory that was claimed to be rightfully Bulgarian, particularly after the redefinition of the Bulgarian borders in the Berlin Treaty. If Bulgaria were to reclaim its territory according to the San Stefano Treaty, Sofia would be located in the center of the state. Lastly, the fact that the majority of the Muslim population had left Sofia gave the new Bulgarian government a sense of security that the new capital would not be threatened by resistance or uprisings.[11] This last fact also had the convenient effect that much of the property in Sofia was abandoned and thus at free disposal to be demolished, which would enable the municipality to carry out extensive rebuilding and thus erase the Ottoman appearance of the city's urban fabric.

The first national assembly also decided on the Bulgarian constitution. Dictated by the Great Powers and international organizations, the constitution was quite progressive for its time, granting, for example, equal rights to all minorities and establishing compulsory primary level education for all children, including girls.[12] It also stipulated that Bulgarian Christian Orthodoxy would become the official state religion, a strategic decision that aimed at envisioning a greater Bulgaria that encompassed the territory of the Bulgarian Exarchate. However, this created a quasi-hierarchy of citizenship, of belonging to the Bulgarian nation, effectively undermining the equal rights provision.

8 Crampton 2007, 428.
9 Crampton 2007, 96–101.
10 Petrov 2000.
11 See also Kirin forthcoming.
12 Konstitutsiya 1879.

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Finally, the assembly elected Alexander Battenberg to become the first prince of the Bulgarian state. Battenberg was related to the British, German, and Russian royal houses. He was most favorably received by the Bulgarian people since he had served in the Russian army in the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War.

The government's immediate goal for Sofia was to make it a European capital. The Russian provisional administration had already been of service to that cause in 1878 by commencing to demolish houses abandoned by the Muslim population as well as mosques to the east of the city, as can be seen in a topographical map drawn by a Russian army topographer in 1879 (Fig. 6). This map serves as a snapshot of the advanced state of 'clearance' of the eastern area of Sofia. The government also hired the architect and engineer Václav Kolář[13] to oversee the creation of a first cadastral plan of Sofia, which formed the basis for the first drafts for a comprehensive urban regulation plan. Work on the first regulation plan continued through 1879 and was finally approved by the municipality in December of that year, and by Prince Alexander Battenberg in April 1880.[14]

The plan (Fig. 7) laid out a vision for Sofia that was to leave only a few streets and monuments intact. These included the so-called Konak, the residence of the former Ottoman governor of the province, which was henceforth used as the residence of the Bulgarian prince; the surviving churches, which were provided with accompanying squares; the mineral baths; and a scattered number of mosques. As a whole, it was planned to eliminate all the winding streets and typical arrangements of the mahalas around small central courtyards, and to replace them with straight streets drawn along a grid plan. The overall layout of the main arterial roads as designed during the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms were, in their general orientation, retained. They were however straightened and enlarged to form boulevards. Those boulevards were to merge at two crucial places in the city: the metropolitan church, Sveti Kral,[15] forming the historical and religious center, and the princely residence. It was planned to drain the arms of the Vladaya River that cut through the city as well as the swampy areas around the river branches. Lastly, a grand circular boulevard was planned to run along the boundaries of the city, imitating the urban planning concept of a ring road or beltway, most famously realized in Vienna's Ringstraße and Gürtel, or the Boulevard périphérique in Paris.[16] This orientation on Vienna in the design of the ring road should not be underestimated. It would, however, be misleading to see the solution in Sofia as an insular instance of

13 Kolář is often called Antonin Kolar, Adolf Kolar or Adolf Vaclav Kolar in scholarly literature, see, e.g., Kotsev et al. 1998, 37. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 146.

14 Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2009, 15.

15 Later the church became known as Sveta Nedelya.

16 Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 40–41. – Doytchinov 2010, 188.

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a famous example being copied. For major urban centers throughout the Balkans, the concept of ring roads or beltways has been a popular solution.[17]

Also foreign architects and engineers were hired to carry out these radical visions of urban change. In 1881, the Bulgarian government passed a law that only academically trained architects, engineers, and other professionals were allowed to practice those occupations.[18] This left an enormous void in terms of available professionals, since until then Bulgarians had learned and practiced their crafts according to the traditional apprenticeship model. As a consequence, academically trained foreign specialists had to be appointed for all qualified occupations. One of those specialists was Friedrich Grünanger, the architect credited with designing the Central Synagogue of Sofia.

Grünanger was born on 25 January 1856 in Sighișoara, Romania, at that time Schäßburg in Habsburg Siebenbürgen, into a German-speaking Protestant family. He moved to Vienna to study at the Technical University in 1876 and then changed to the architecture class of Friedrich Schmidt at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1877. He seems to have never officially finished his studies, since he left the Academy in 1879 to take up work in the recently independent Bulgarian state.[19] Grünanger quickly made a name for himself through his involvement in the construction of a school in Razgrad and the princely palace in Ruse. He became the chief architect of the city of Razgrad in 1883, and the following year, 1884, the head architect in the Ministry for Public Buildings, Streets, and City Planning. In this capacity, Grünanger became a powerful figure in architectural development in Bulgaria as a whole, and in Sofia in particular.

Licurgo Amadey became "ingenieur de la Ville"[20] and was helped in this role by Venceslav Roubal. Under their supervision, the plans for the city were refined further and went into effect in September 1881.[21] Changes in the urban fabric, however, were slow. This can be clearly accounted for by the high turnover in the municipal administration, which resulted in a lack of clear vision and leadership.[22]

In the first period, the municipality focused on the eastern area of the city, where the new governmental center was to be established. The building of the prince's residence was tackled as the first major initiative as soon as 1880, and its completion was celebrated

17 Cf., for instance, Doytchinov / Đukić / Ionită 2015. – Hárs / Kókai / Orosz 2017.

18 Stern 2008, 152. – Yokimov 2009, 44–45.

19 Stern 1993, 321.

20 According to his signature on the regulation plan of 1881. See also Stoilova 1999.

21 Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2009, 16–17.

22 From 1878 to 1888, a total of eleven individuals served as mayor of Sofia, none of them longer than 18 months and most for a period of less than a year. This changed with the election of Dimitar Petkov as mayor in September 1888; he remained in office for five years. This enabled him to direct major changes in the city administration. Cf. Kotsev 2000, 216–220. For Petkov's importance in the development of Sofia, see also below, chap. 2.2. and 3.2.

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with a ball on New Year's Eve 1883.[23] For this, the Ottoman Konak was remodeled to fit the needs of a modern European ruler. Viktor Rumpelmayer together with Václav Kolář, both from the Habsburg Empire and trained in Vienna and Prague, designed a palace according to the prevailing Habsburg tradition.[24] The free-standing building was surrounded by a palace garden on all sides and had two wings with corresponding stately façades (Fig. 8). The main entrance was situated at the center of the southern wing, which opened toward the garden. It was accentuated by a protruding balcony, which also functioned as a roof over the driveway. The western wing was the representative façade toward the city center and was visible along the axis of the Tsar Osvoboditel and Dondukov boulevards. It had a slightly higher median risalit with high tripartite windows. Stylistically, the palace was dominated by a neo-Renaissance strictness and clarity of form, with occasional neo-Baroque details, primarily found in wrought iron elements.

The other structure that was immediately addressed was that of the National Assembly. In February 1884, the Vienna-born architect Konstantin Jovanović was commissioned to draw up the plans for a building that was to have space for 320 delegates and 600 audience members.[25] Construction began in the summer of the same year, with the building already in use by 1886, although further improvements to the building continued until the early 1890s. For this structure, not only the architect came from abroad. Most of the materials and furnishings were also ordered from the Habsburg Empire and Germany.[26] Similar to the palace, this resulted in an appearance entirely dictated by Central European taste and understanding of the building's function. This was also related to the fact that Friedrich Grünanger was responsible for overseeing the construction of the representative building.[27]

The National Assembly is a large free-standing structure whose original ground plan was roughly a square (Fig. 9). A higher, protruding central part housing the main assembly space is surrounded by lower auxiliary spaces on all sides. The main entrance is reached by means of a ramp and through a central risalit on the southwest side, facing Tsar Osvoboditel boulevard. Its overall appearance is quite austere and closed. The door openings and the many windows are placed at regular intervals in the façades. The neo-Classical design is further reinforced by an overall lack of decoration, the only exception being a number of kylixes and amphorae marking the edges of the roof parapet. These are

23 Karakashev 2009, 32.

24 Ganchev 2009, 18–19.

25 Jovanović is better known for the large number of important buildings shaping the appearance of Belgrade, such as the Serbian National Assembly and the Serbian National Bank; see Kotsev et al. 1998, 25–27. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 134–137.

26 Nenov 1899/a, 21–23.

27 Friedrich Grünanger 1930, 2.

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references to classical Greece, underlining the historicist understanding of the National Assembly's importance for a modern democracy.

Like the palace, the National Assembly is also located on Tsar Osvoboditel boulevard, less than five hundred meters to the southeast, thus proudly marking the other important pillar of the newly independent Bulgarian state (Fig. 7). Together, those two buildings defined the Tsar Osvoboditel boulevard as the center of the governmental district from which all future urban and architectural developments of the official authorities was to radiate. As a consequence, in the next two decades, all ministries and the embassies of the Great Powers were constructed near that boulevard.[28] The palace and the National Assembly were also enlarged and altered to fit the needs of the growing administrative apparatus of the Bulgarian state.

Both buildings exhibit a 'Europeanism' that was unknown in Sofia prior to the 1880s. As such, in the beginning they stood in stark contrast to the surrounding architecture, which had a predominantly local, Ottoman, or transient character, both formally and with regard to the materials. Most were simple and low one-story wooden structures, with only the mosques and churches standing higher (Fig. 10). The new government buildings in decisively Western European styles, such as neo-Renaissance or neo-Classical, emulated above all prominent Habsburg models. Their solidity in terms of building materials also stood in contrast. These features were dictated by their function, as well as by the government's aim to define Bulgaria as a European country.[29] Most of the architects were recruited from the Habsburg Empire. They acted as cultural translators of their own familiar traditions to a place that was hoping to strip itself of any association with its Ottoman past.[30] With the two most important buildings for the government of the young state, the palace and the National Assembly, this process had only started.[31] When Dimitar Petkov became mayor of Sofia in 1888, the changes intensified, with many new buildings serving a multitude of new functions being built in the prevailing European historicist styles of the late 19th century. Friedrich Grünanger was on every committee for the various new public buildings and thus he played a significant role in shaping the urban appearance during that era.[32]

28 Stanoeva 2014, 184–185.

29 On the neo-Renaissance as the 'Viennese style' and the neo-Baroque as the Austrian 'national style' of the 19th century, cf. Pogacnik 2018, 110–111.

30 Cf. Stanoeva 2013. – Stanoeva 2014.

31 The third large building, basically completed by 1888, was the so-called State Printing House. Its Habsburg architect Friedrich Schwanberg designed it with similar neo-Renaissance characteristics. The large structure was located behind the National Assembly and next to the planned Ring boulevard. Other large buildings that dominated the early cityscape of Sofia were military barracks. Cf. Lavov 2000, 491. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 190.

32 Nenov 1899/a, 22.

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In the meantime, Bulgarian politics were highly unstable. The liberal party had separated internally into two factions, of which one, led by Petko Karavelov, won the 1884 elections. Karavelov saw to it that both the Bulgarian National Bank and the Bulgarian State Railways were put under Bulgarian state ownership.[33]

Another watershed event came in 1885. The local administration in Eastern Rumelia was strategically mostly in the hands of Bulgarians. An independently composed 'Committee for Union' was formed to convince them to stage a coup, which was carried out in September of 1885. Prince Battenberg then went to Plovdiv and accepted the unification of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia (Fig. 11). In reaction, Russia withdrew its support for Bulgaria, including all of its high-ranking military officials. With Bulgaria increasing the size of its territory, Serbia and Greece demanded territorial compensation. Taking advantage of the military vacuum, Serbia crossed Bulgaria's northwest border in November of 1885. But the Bulgarian army now contained soldiers from the Principality as well as Eastern Rumelia and was able to defeat the Serbians.

Battenberg failed to use the momentum of the unification to his advantage, however, and after much discontent and a military coup backed by Russia, he abdicated the throne in September 1886. Provisional regency was assumed by Karavelov, Stefan Stambolov, and the latter's brother-in-law. Stambolov made it his priority to have the National Assembly find and select a new prince. Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was elected the new Bulgarian prince. Russia refused to recognize him, and convinced the other Great Powers to follow suit.

Ferdinand appointed Stambolov as his prime minister and together they achieved some notable successes in late 1888 and early 1889. Britain, Germany, and Austria-Hungary agreed to lend Bulgaria sums of money, giving Bulgaria important leeway and the capacity to acquire a part of the railway, which implied that they regarded Bulgaria an independent and recognized state. Another notable achievement of Ferdinand and Stambolov was convincing the Ottoman Sublime Porte to officially grant the Bulgarian Church the bishoprics of Macedonia, which eased revolutionary efforts to unify Bulgaria with Macedonia, as well as the internal tensions between the Bulgarian Church and the Catholic prince. The 'Macedonian question' had regularly recurred since the revoking of the San Stefano Treaty, also due to the large number of Macedonian refugees who fled to Bulgaria in its wake, and an overall endeavor to regain these territories. Among the Macedonian refugees were also a good number of Jews, who settled in Sofia and formed their own neighborhood and synagogue.[34]

33 The construction of the railway system was one of the most important, contested, and politically and economically intertwined issues of the young Bulgarian state; cf. Dantchoff 1917.

34 See chap. 3.2. below.

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Notwithstanding these successes, Ferdinand was not internationally recognized, even after his marriage to Princess Marie-Louise Bourbon Parma and the birth of a son, Boris.

2.2 The Tenure of Mayor Dimitar Petkov and the Creation of Yuch Bunar

The groundwork for establishing Sofia had already been firmly laid when Dimitar Petkov was elected mayor of the city in 1888. The country had been independent for a decade. Petkov's tenure saw a great acceleration of what until then had been slow change. During his five years in office, most reminders that Sofia had once been an Ottoman city were completely removed, demolished, restructured, or repurposed. For the Jewish population of Sofia, however, the most lasting imprint of Petkov was the creation of the neighborhood called Yuch Bunar.

In July 1887, building of the new neighborhood of Yuch Bunar was approved, with houses for "homeless people".[35] It was planned to be a highly modern neighborhood based on a grid system, with a regular layout of slightly elongated blocks alternatingly bordered by several large boulevards and narrower residential streets (Fig. 12). A square the size of three blocks close to the center of the neighborhood was to be reserved as a park, envisioned as a central gathering space for the residents. The word deliberately used to describe this neighborhood, for the 'homeless', is of great significance, since it was the first step in redefining the status of the people who were given lots in the new neighborhood.

In reality, Yuch Bunar was approved in order to resettle the population living in the center and northern central part of Sofia, areas that the city authorities had not yet touched, even though they had been at the heart of the urban master plan. As soon as Petkov took office, the 'clearance' of these areas of Sofia was adamantly pursued. The majority of former inhabitants were paid a minimal sum for the lots where their homes and shops had been, lots that subsequently became very valuable. In return, they received a lot in Yuch Bunar. However, their financial means did not allow the construction of proper homes.[36] The majority of the people affected by these measures were the Jewish residents of Sofia, whose neighborhood had been in the city center around Saint George Church. Their mass resettlement to Yuch Bunar soon made this new neighborhood

35 Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2009, 17.

36 Legal disputes regarding the unjust expropriation of many of the families involved carried on well into the beginning of the 20th century; see, e.g., the minute book of the Sofia municipal council of 1903, DA Sofia f. 1k op. 1 ae. 83, or of 1907, DA Sofia f. 1k op. 1 ae. 87, among others.

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known as the Jewish quarter.[37] The other demographic group that was disproportionally affected were the Romani people and the very poor. Many of these people had lived in the northern part of the city.[38] Very few of the systemic problems involved in the creation of Yuch Bunar were addressed by the municipality officials, including the conscious exclusion of large parts of the population—the Jewish, the Roma, and the poor—from the central representative part of the Bulgarian capital. These were problems that persisted through the next half century.[39] At the level of urban planning, the reality of an emerging 'ghetto' was conveniently masked by the appearance of a well-regulated, modern, urban neighborhood conforming to a rationalized and functionally structured 19th-century understanding of urban space (Fig. 12).[40]

Simultaneously, in the central part of Sofia, the old Ottoman-era structures were being quickly torn down to make way for grand new representative boulevards, which were to display, to Bulgarians and foreign visitors alike, that Sofia was the capital of a European state. The focus of this phase of urban renewal lay above all on the future Maria Luiza boulevard and its extension southward, Vitoshka street, as well as Dondukov and Knyagina Klimentina boulevards, which all intersected at the most important square in the city, Saborni square, where Sveti Kral Cathedral stood (Fig. 7). The importance of creating imposing boulevards out of those arteries was reinforced in 1888 with the opening of the Sofia Central Train Station, located to the north of the center on the Ring road at the beginning of Maria Luiza boulevard.[41]

With the completion of the train line through Sofia, the city at once ceased to be a remote Balkan town. The city was henceforth connected to all European metropolises through the transcontinental railway later called the Orient Express. The building of this train line linking Paris to Istanbul had been begun before Bulgaria's independence. The Ottoman section was largely financed by a German-Jewish aristocratic financier, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, who was also an important philanthropic figure for the Jewish community in the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean region due to his major financial support, among other things, of the Alliance Israélite Universelle.[42] Bulgarian support for

37 For more on Yuch Bunar as the Jewish neighborhood and the issues involved in its creation, see chap. 3.2. below.

38 Georgiev 1979, 34.

39 Georgiev 1979, 34–36. See Yakimova 2013, 277, on how this character of Yuch Bunar persisted well into the second half of the 20th century. To date, this has also been little addressed in research on the urban image of Sofia, further reinforcing the invisibility of these groups in scholarly literature.

40 On the organization of space according to European models in Bulgarian urban planning of the time, see Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 34–37. – Doytchinov 2010.

41 Danchov 1928, 379.

42 Pleas for financial help were regularly sent to Baron de Hirsch and his wife, Clara de Hirsch, by the Bulgarian Jewish communities; see AAIU Bulgarie IV B 103. – AAIU Bulgarie IV B 104. – AAIU Bulgarie IV B 107. On Baron de Hirsch, see, most recently, Lehmann 2022.

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the continuation of the railway project was stipulated by the Berlin Treaty. During the early politically turbulent years of the independent Bulgarian state, the railway project was, in fact, a complex and highly important diplomatic issue, involving many negotiations on concessions, ownership, and control.[43] Sofia benefitted greatly from this expanded infrastructure, since the city became a necessary stopover on train journeys to or from Istanbul, thus putting the young Bulgarian capital on the map for European travelers.

Given these fundamental changes and Sofia's aspiration to become a modern and progressive European capital, the municipality was keen on developing the main routes into the city and then on to the government and wealthier neighborhoods, located to the southeast. Every person arriving in Sofia—especially foreign political officials—was to be routed along magnificent boulevards with beautiful vistas of Vitosha Mountain, through a well-designed square at the cathedral, and finally past the imposing palace with its manicured garden.[44] For this, the entire Jewish quarter that had stood for centuries had to be destroyed, since it lay at the intersection of the future Saborni square and Maria Luiza and Dondukov boulevards, all at the heart of the urban plans (Fig. 7). The area further north along Maria Luiza boulevard had already been largely cleared, since it had formerly been populated by the majority Muslim population that fled Sofia in 1878. At this point, the municipality did not merely move to destroy the largely ephemeral architecture, such as the wooden houses of the population. Starting in 1888, the heart of the Ottoman infrastructure, which had insured the socio-economic and religious cohesion of the city was rapidly dismantled. This included the entire commercial district with its covered markets and other commercial structures, smaller baths, and Muslim religious buildings including religious schools. For the first decade of the Bulgarian state, these solidly built, centuries-old structures had continued to serve either their original designated function or, as needed, various new practical ones.[45] However, they were considered a reminder of the Ottoman past, neither in line with the planned European appearance of Sofia, nor the route of the streets according to the urban master plan. In addition, dismantling them could be financially advantageous. Since formerly 'Turkish' Muslim property had been appropriated by the Bulgarian government, the highly valuable building materials, such as the bricks, could bring additional income if sold or be reused for other new structures.[46]

Soon, new apartment buildings, two to five stories high, were erected at a fast pace along the major boulevards in the successively available lots (Figs. 13, 14). Their appearance imitated the common structural and stylistic features of buildings in the new

43 See Dantchoff 1917, 1–40.

44 Cf. Stoilova / Yokimov 2001.

45 Stanoeva 2014, 182–184. On the Jewish ownership of some of the covered markets called *bedesten*, see chap. 3.1. below.

46 Cf. CSA f. 159k op. 1 ae. 154.

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working-class neighborhoods of Vienna, Berlin, and Paris, where in the late 19th century, industrialization had made it necessary to create rows of apartment buildings lining the newly regulated streets to provide housing for ever growing populations.[47] The limited budget and fast building pace commonly associated with these construction endeavors relied on creating an impressive appearance with limited means. Buildings were decorated with mass-produced stucco elements, primarily to frame openings, highlight roof cornices, or mark functionally distinct parts of the structure. For the most part, the historicism employed for these buildings conformed to neo-Classical, neo-Renaissance, or neo-Baroque stylistic concepts, blended however in a rather eclectic manner.

The Sofia apartment buildings lining the new representative boulevards followed these same practical considerations and stylistic specificities, intentionally copying the examples in prominent European metropolises. Here, too, a great number of buildings were erected within a short period of time, occasionally while old structures within the same block were still in the process of being torn down (Fig. 14). Mass-produced windows and stucco elements in representative European styles were used to liken Sofia to a modern European and hence 'worthy' capital city. These new structures also eventually assumed some of the functions of the Ottoman-era commercial district. However, as opposed to the Orientalist stigma that Ottoman Sofia carried of being 'chaotic' and 'dirty,' the new buildings were 'orderly,' 'clean,' and 'contemporary', displaying large windows for commercial purposes at the ground-level, as well as shops and sidewalk cafés.[48]

At the same time, the affluent and the social, governmental, and military elite settled in the southeastern part of Sofia, in close proximity to the state authorities. Not coincidentally, this was as far as possible from the emerging quarter of Yuch Bunar for the poor. The elites were eager to display their social status with villas and mansions that followed the style of the remodeled royal residence, a blend of neo-Renaissance and neo-Baroque. Here again, a predominantly conservative Europeanism prevailed that clearly displayed the direction the leading personalities of the young country were adopting. Only around the turn of the 20th century did the private house become a preferred medium for architectural experimentation and display of individual taste.[49]

In the case of both the large apartment blocks and the private houses, the similarity in appearance to French or Habsburg solutions was not coincidental, even beyond the conscious demand for Europeanizing the Sofia cityscape. Not only did the law of 1881 prevent local professionals from carrying out any construction without academically

47 Cf. Csendes / Sipos 2003, 38–40. – Kos / Rapp 2004. – Abrihan 2013. – Weigl 2014. – Nierhaus / Orosz 2018.

48 Yokimov / Stoilova 2007. – Neuburger 2013, 37–38.

49 Yokimov 2000.

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trained foreign professionals,[50] during this early period these foreign architects and engineers were also almost exclusively of Austro-Czech origin. Not only did they quickly learn Bulgarian because of their common Slavic roots, they could also rely on an ever-growing network of Czech expats who had taken up important positions within the young Bulgarian state. Some had become ministers, while others took advantage of the absence of modern infrastructure to establish the first breweries and factories.[51]

One Habsburg emigrant who stood out during this era was Friedrich Grünanger. Prince Ferdinand made him his official court architect and commissioned him with the extension of his palace in Sofia. Grünanger carried this out in 1894–1895 together with Nikola Lazarov (Fig. 8). In addition, Grünanger designed a large number of private mansions.[52] Grünanger was fluent in the common Western European historicist styles because of his studies with one of the preeminent representatives of historicism in Vienna, especially of the neo-Gothic style, Friedrich Schmidt. This gave Grünanger the flexibility to adapt the style of his buildings in Bulgaria to the prevalent taste of the time as well as the requirements of the commissioning patron. His first commission in Bulgaria, a school in Razgrad, was in a neo-Gothic style; the palace and private mansions were all neo-Renaissance or neo-Baroque (Fig. 15).[53]

Given the lack of modern production facilities or the needed knowledge in Bulgaria, all construction materials were at this time imported from Habsburg, French, or Belgian manufacturers, where goods were mass-produced for the local construction markets in those countries. It is likely that they were sold abroad at higher prices. Few commissions from foreign manufacturers were custom designed or specially produced for the Bulgarian market. The exceptions were primarily materials for specific public monuments (such as the one commemorating the Bulgarian national hero Vasil Levski, the two bridges marking the entrances to the city center from the north toward the train station and from the southeast toward the governmental district), or for the buildings of affluent clients

50 Cf. chap. 2.1. above.

51 Curta 2013, 377–388.

52 On Grünanger's life, career, and works, see Friedrich Grünanger 1930. – Stern 1993. – Kotsev et al. 1998, 22–24. – Doytchinov / Ganchev 2001, 119–128. – Doytchinov et al. 2002, 135–136. – Yokimov / Stoilova 2008, 75–76. – Trier 2009/a, 363.

53 See also Yokimov 2000, 476–478. His personal style of preference seems to have been neo-Baroque, since he designed his retirement villa in Salzburg, the so-called Villa Hedwig in that style as late as 1909. The information on the dating of the Villa Hedwig or, as it is also sometimes called, Grünanger Villa was provided by Dr. Peter Kramml, then-manager of STADT:SALZBURG Magistrat, Stadtarchiv und Statistik, via e-mail on 12 July 2016.

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who could afford special designs.[54] The practice of importing construction materials continued into the early 20th century, even after Bulgarian factories had been established.[55]

When Konstantin Stoilov from the newly formed Nationalist Party became prime minister in 1894, he addressed these economically important issues with a first push for industrial modernization. A bill was passed the same year giving substantial financial benefits to the mining, metallurgy, textile, and construction industries if they built their own needed infrastructure in Bulgaria, and favouring industries within Bulgaria for local commissions.[56] The bill facilitated the establishment of construction companies such as Georgi Mimidi i Sie, later the ceramic company Izida, which was founded in 1893 as the first such Bulgarian company in order to compete for the commission for the sewer pipes of Sofia.[57] Tariffs were also raised on imports to support the local industries.

A curious fact about this first construction heyday in Sofia is the complete absence of any church building initiatives, and, moreover, the destruction of several smaller churches, including Sveti Nikola Mali, Sveti Arhangel, Sveta Bogoroditsa Prechista, all of which fell victim to the urban renewal project.[58] The only church that was erected immediately after 1878 was the three-aisled basilica Sveti Spas, whose three high domes over the central nave gave Sofia a visible Christian landmark (Figs. 16, 17). It was begun in 1879 and inaugurated in 1883.[59] Its site and appearance are, however, completely unconnected to any of the municipality's urban planning efforts. The church was erected by the master builder Georgi Novakov Dzhongar as an almost exact copy of the Sveti Nikola Church in Štip, Macedonia, also designed by Dzhongar and built in the 1860s.[60] Dzhongar may have been the last traditional master builder active in Sofia before the law of 1881 was enacted.

The absence of projects for any new church buildings within the urban master plan is of special importance due to how aggressively the predominantly Muslim appearance of Sofia, whose cityscape had been dominated by mosque minarets, was eradicated. In addition, while the Bulgarian constitution was progressive in establishing freedom of religion, it also defined an official state religion, Christian Orthodoxy, therefore putting

54 Yokimov 2000. – Ivanova / Ganev 2010.

55 Cf., for instance, the records on the commission for the iron construction of the Central Market Halls; DA Sofia f. 1k op. 3 ae. 206.

56 This bill facilitated the building boom laid out in chap. 2.4. below.

57 See chap. 2.4. and 3.6.

58 Cf. the map in Zheleva-Martins / Farkov 2009, 31.

59 Ivancheva / Stoilova 2010, 299–300. Here a postcard photograph by Dimitar Karastoyanov is published on which the church is identified as a "cathedrale". There is, however, no other evidence that Sveti Spas acted as such. The new structure incorporated a smaller, likely medieval church within the space of its apse and bema, and was therefore not completely new.

60 Ivancheva / Stoilova 2010, 302. The intention behind this curious repetition may have been to strengthen the notion of sacred Bulgarian geography, which also included the Macedonian territories.

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