

THE REUSE OF BYZANTINE SPOLIA IN THE GREEN MOSQUE OF BURSA

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ABSTRACT

Publications on the Green Mosque, built by Sultan Mehmed I the Çelebi, mention the use of spolia from the Byzantine period but do not give information on the definition or location of these pieces. Therefore, this paper points out the spolia from the Byzantine period used in the Green Mosque, a well-studied topic in the Ottoman architecture and is well known thanks to its inscriptions, and evaluates the pieces.

The Green Mosque of Bursa was built at a time when the Ottoman State had recently evaded invasion by Timur and the following fights for the throne and struggled to prove itself. It is believed the Green Mosque of Bursa was used both as a mosque and an administrative building, and spolia pieces on the way to the mahfil (loge) are significant. No similar type of spolia was used in other parts of the structure. Financial reasons and aesthetic concerns are important factors in the reuse of construction materials from various periods for similar or alternative functions. Aesthetic concerns were not disregarded in the stone works from the Byzantine period used in the Green Mosque of Bursa. However, it was not solely due to aesthetic concerns that these pieces were used. Considering the relationship of the area where the spolia was used with the mahfil and its public attributes, it may be suggested that it was an intentional preference of the Ottoman State and Sultan Mehmed I to use materials from a powerful predecessor empire, the Byzantine so that they could prove themselves.

Stone works from the Byzantine period reused in the Green Mosque are Corinthian and composite capitals, columns and Attic column bases. These stone works, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries, are among widespread examples of the Early Byzantine Period.

Keywords: Bursa, the Green Mosque, Byzantine, architectural sculpture, spolia.

BURSA, YEŞİL CAMİ'DE BİZANS DEVŞİRMELERİNİN YENİDEN KULLANIMI

ÖZ

Sultan Çelebi Mehmed tarafından yaptırılan, Yeşil Cami ile ilgili yayınlarda Bizans dönemine ait devşirmelerin kullanıldığından bahsedilmekle birlikte bu parçaların tanımı veya konumlandırılmasıyla ilgili herhangi bir bilgi verilmemektedir. Bu nedenle; Osmanlı mimarisi içinde çok çalışılmış, kitabeleri sayesinde oldukça iyi bilinen bir yapı olan Bursa Yeşil Cami'de kullanılan Bizans dönemine ait devşirme parçalara dikkat çekerek, parçaların değerlendirmesi bu çalışmada ele alınmıştır.

Bursa Yeşil Cami, Osmanlı Devleti'nin Timur istilasından ve sonrasındaki taht kavgalarından yeni kurtulduğu, kendini yeni yeni ispat etmeye çalıştığı bir dönemde inşa edilmiştir. Cami işlevinin yanı sıra bir idari yapı olarak da kullanıldığı düşünülen Bursa Yeşil Cami'de mahfile çıkışta kullanılan devşirme parçalar dikkat çekicidir. Bu alan haricinde yapının başka hiçbir yerinde bu tarz devşirme parça kullanılmamıştır. Farklı dönemlere ait yapı malzemelerinin aynı veya farklı işlevlerle yeniden kullanılmasında ekonomik nedenler ve estetik kaygılar ön plandadır. Bursa Yeşil Cami'de kullanılan Bizans dönemine ait taş eserlerde estetik kaygılar göz ardı edilmemiştir. Ancak bu parçaların kullanım nedeni salt estetik kaygılar değildir. Devşirme parçaların kullanıldığı alanın, mahfile ilişkisi ve kamusal özelliği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda Osmanlı'nın ve dönemin sultanı I. Mehmed'in kendini kanıtlama arzusuyla kendinden önceki güçlü bir imparatorluğun (Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun) malzemesini kullanması bilinçli bir tercih olmalıdır.

Yeşil Cami'de yeniden kullanılan Bizans dönemi mimari plastik eserleri; korint ve kompozit sütun başlıkları, sütunlar ve attika tipinde sütun kaideleridir. 5. - 6. yüzyıllara tarihlenen bu taş eserler, Erken Bizans döneminin yaygın örnekleri arasında yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bursa, Yeşil Cami, Bizans, mimari plastik, spolia.

This paper examines the location and purpose of use of architectural sculptures reused in the Green Mosque of Bursa, especially through their locations, and defines stone works from the Byzantine period.

Except for four columns, column bases and column capitals used inside the Green Mosque, spolia was used in the marble coverings on the building's facade. Publications on the Green Mosque of Bursa mention the use of stone works from the Byzantine period (Gabriel 1958: 86; Yücel 1965: 31-35; Ayverdi 1972: 56; Yalman 1984: 40; Tanman 1996: 132). However, there is no information on the definition of Byzantine period stone works inside the building. In his publication on column capitals from Late Antiquity, Kautzsch briefly mentions the column capitals in the Green Mosque (Kautzsch 1936: 126-127, 130). Another publication that addresses the spolia used in the Green Mosque is a postgraduate thesis (Yosunkaya 2007: 29).

Stone works from the Byzantine period were used in a longitudinal rectangular space after the entrance (Fig. 1-2). The mosque has a tabhane-type plan. The space with the spolia opens to tabhane chambers on the northeastern and northwestern corners of the building. Also, there are openings to the mahfil upstairs from inside windows of the space. There are two spolia column bases, columns and column capitals each in front of these windows. Almost all publications investigating the architecture of the structure emphasize that this space is constricted and does not quite require these spolia columns. It is interesting that statically unnecessary pieces were used.

The Battle of Ankara in 1402 and the following Interregnum (1402-1413), which was spent with fights for the throne, and the siege of Bursa by the Karamanids later (1413-1414) put the Ottoman State through a difficult period. The Ottoman State recovered when Mehmed the Çelebi assumed singlehanded administration. Sultan Mehmed I the Çelebi ordered the Green Mosque to architect Hacı İvaz Pasha. The construction began in 1413 and was completed in 1419. The Green Mosque was built on a tabhane-zawiya type plan, and it was a multifunctional public structure as a prayer house, an administrative building, a court, and a place of Ahi activities (Eyice 1962-1963: 3-80; Çetintaş 1958; Tanman 1996: 128).

Ayverdi states that rich tile decorations in the structure indicate the revival and power of the state during the reign of Mehmed the Çelebi (Ayverdi 1972: 48; Ayverdi-Yüksel 1976: 31). Inscription of the building also emphasizes that the building was a structure of prestige (Gündüz 2011: 162-163). The use of the building both as a mosque and an administrative office- especially in tabhane and mahfil sections- gives new meaning to the rich decorations. Columns and column capitals, which are not statically required but only carry a part of the mahfil floor, were positioned in the space meticulously. These stone works mark the entrance to sections allocated to administrative affairs and they were used as decorative elements (Çetintaş 1949: 9) and it must have been an intentional preference to use materials from a predecessor empire, the Byzantine, for the Ottoman State to prove itself. The use of Byzantine stone works in the building also supports the

powerful political image of Mehmet the Çelebi, who deemed himself “the Sultan of the East and the West” (Gündüz 2011: 154-155).

Definition and Assessment of Architectural Sculpture Pieces

Composite Capital (Fig. 1, 3)

H. 55 cm, D. 40 cm, 70 cm in abacus width

Calathos of the composite capital is decorated with fine-toothed acanthus leaves, carved with the openwork technique as eight pieces in two rows. There is a volute in each corner of the capital with palmette rows between volutes. Base ring of the calathos is decorated with fine, small, curved leaf.

Composite Capital (Fig. 1, 4)

H. 55 cm, D. 40 cm, 70 cm in abacus width

Calathos of the column capital is decorated with fine-toothed acanthus leaves, carved with the openwork technique as eight pieces in one upper and one lower row. All faces of the capital are decorated with floral rosettes of stylized abacus fleuron. There is a volute in each corner of the capital with palmette rows between volutes. Base ring of the calathos is decorated with fine, small, curved leaf.

Corinthian Capital (Fig. 2, 5)

H. 50 cm, D. 40 cm, 65 cm in abacus width

Calathos of the column capital is decorated two rows of acanthus leaves. There are five acanthus leaves on the lower row. The leaves are in the “acanthus mask” order. The upper rows feature four large-toothed acanthus leaves, positioned with the corners of the capital as center. Helices extend in a band from corner to corner **and emphasize the** abacus fleuron.

Corinthian Capital (Fig. 2, 6)

H. 60 cm, D. 45 cm, 70 cm in abacus width

Calathos of the capital is decorated with large-toothed acanthus leaves in the “acanthus mask” order, connecting to eight petals in the upper row and six petals in the lower row. There are helices forming simple spiral curves on the corners. Helices on two corners meet each other between an abacus fleuron extending towards the calathos and the acanthus leaf in the center of the top row.

Column Bases (Fig.7)

Plinthus of all four column bases are not fully visible due to the modern wooden floor laid on the original floor. The two bases in the east of the entrance were preserved better and are identifiable. Both bases have a torus (convex moulding) and a trapezoid-cut moulding. This type of bases is a variation of Attic type column bases.

There are composite capitals of two spolia marble columns to the east of the entrance (Kautzsch 1936:126, 130, cat. no. 400 and 407). The capitals are identical in technique and patterns. Composite capitals in the Green Mosque of Bursa are a version of the composite column style that was commonly used after the mid-5th century (Zollt 1994: 209-221; Kramer 1998: 56-57; Betsch 1977: 204-206).

Capitals from the Ioannes Theologos Pelekete Monastery in Zeytinbağı, Trilye, (Mango – Ševčenko 1973: 248, fig.49; Ötüken 1996: 193, taf.35,4; Pralong 2003: 261, pl.VII,145), capitals brought from Hamamlıkızık to the Bursa Museum (Mendel 1908: 113-114, fig.68-69, cat.no.120-121), capitals in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums with the inventory numbers 105 and 2376 (Kautzsch 1936:126, taf.25, cat.no.395; Mendel 1966: 537-538, cat.no.741; Fırath 1955: 27), the capital in the yard of the Hagia Sophia Museum with the inventory number 185 (Zollt 1994: 214-215, abb.22, taf.45) and a capital from Mustafa Kemal Paşa (Ötüken 1996: 193, taf.35,5) are similar samples of the composite column capitals at the Green Mosque of Bursa. These capitals feature long, slim leaves and detailed drill work engravings of leaf borders, and have analogs belonging to - which are also the stylistic characteristics of - the mid-5th century or the second half of the 5th century.

One marble and one granite column to the west of the entrance have Corinthian capitals (Kautzsch 1936: 89, cat. no.262-263), both of which have “acanthus mask” designs. In the Acanthus mask decorations, the lobes of adjacent leaves adjoin to form the impression of a mask through illusory luminous effect.

A Corinthian capital falls into Group IV of Pralong's Corinthian capital typology based on helice design (Pralong 2000: 85-87, fig. 7b) and “lyre type” Corinthian capitals according to Betsch's categorization (Betsch 1977: 217-219). Capitals with the inventory numbers of 2314 and 3181 in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (Pralong 1993: 141, fig. 9, 13) and the capital in the yard of the Hagia Sophia Museum with the inventory number of 228 (Zollt 1994: 193-194, cat.no.556) are parallels of this column capital.

The other Corinthian capital falls into Group 7 of Kautzsch's categorization (Kautzsch 1936: 61-62). Betsch calls this type of capitals “roofed-over” (Betsch 1977: 219-221). The capital with the inventory number of 201 in the Hagia Sophia Museum (Zollt 1994: 163, cat.no. 449, taf.40; Barsanti – Guiglia 2010: 85-86), and the capitals with the inventory numbers of 2629 and 2630 in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (Mendel 1908: 455-456, cat.no.1222 and 1223; Zollt 1994: 165-166, cat.no.456, 459) are analogs.

Both Corinthian capitals are observed among the pieces produced in and exported from Proconnesus workshops. Corinthian capitals found in excavations of stone work carrying cargo ships that sunk offshore Marzamemi, which appear to have been imported from Proconnesus (Kapitän 1969: 126-127; Kapitän 1980: 81-84), and capitals in the Ravenna S. Apollinare Nuovo Church, which were dated to the end of the 5th century to the early 6th century (Deichmann 1974: 131-135), are similar. Corinthian capitals reused at the Green Mosque can be dated to the end of the 5th century and to the first half of the

6th century through examples from the capital city and Anatolia as well as analogs produced in and exported from the Proconnesus workshops.

Spolia column bases are in the Attica type. This type of bases was common in the Early Byzantine period and can be dated to the 6th century. Parallels are bases in Gölyazı, Bursa (Ötüken 1996: 152-153, 162-163, cat.no. BM10a, BM10b, BM10m).

Corinthian and composite column capitals, columns and Attic bases reused in the entrance of the Green Mosque are among commonly used architectural sculpture examples of the early Byzantine period of the 5th and 6th centuries. It may also be considered that the stone works meticulously used on the way to the mahfil and nowhere else in the Green Mosque, which was a prestigious building of its time, had an ideological meaning.

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Fig. 1. Columns to the east of the entrance. **Fig. 2.** Columns to the west of the entrance.



Fig. 3. Composite capital.



Fig. 4. Composite capital.



Fig. 5. Corinthian capital.



Fig. 6. Corinthian capital.



Fig.7. Attic-type column bases