

For other uses, see Bajrakli Mosque.

The Bajrakli Mosque (Serbian: Бајракли џамија, romanized: Bajrakli džamija; named in Turkish as Bayraklı, bayrak is Turkish for "flag" and Bayraklı means "with flag") is a mosque in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. It is located in Gospodar Jevremova Street in the neighbourhood of Dorćol. It was built around 1575, and is the only mosque in the city out of the 273 that had existed during the time of the Ottoman Empire's rule of Serbia.

During the occupation of Serbia by the Austrians (between 1717 and 1739), it was converted into a Roman Catholic church; but after the Ottomans retook Belgrade, it was returned to its original function.

It was damaged after being set on fire on 18 March 2004, during that year's unrest in Kosovo, in violent protest to the burning of Serbian churches in Kosovo,[1] but it was later repaired.[2]

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History[edit]

Out of former more than 200 mosques and many small Islamic places of worship the so called mesdžid,[3] the Bajrakli Mosque in 11, Gospodar Jevremova Street is the only remaining and active example of Islamic religious architecture in Belgrade. It is situated on a slope towards the Danube River, near the junction with Kralja Petra Street. Once it dominated in the atmosphere of mostly ground floor houses in the busy commercial and craft town district of Belgrade, the so-called Zerek.

Descriptions of Belgrade of the 17th century were preserved by Ottoman travel writer Evliya Celebi in which he vividly described the appearance of the town in the period of Turkish rule, with various buildings of Islamic architecture. In the second half of the 19th century the Bajrakli Mosque was described by historians and travel writers Konstantin Jireček, Giuseppe Barbanti Brodano, as well as by archaeologist and ethnologist Felix Kanitz. It is assumed that today's Bajrakli Mosque was built on the place of an older mosque, probably in the second half of the 17th century, as the endowment of the Turkish ruler Sultan Suleiman II (1687—1691). It was originally named after former renewers, Čohadži-Hajji Alija's and later Husein Ćehaja's mosque, while the current name was given in the late 18th [4] or in the early 19th century. In it, as in the main mosque, there was the muvekit, the man who calculated the exact time of AH according to the Islamic calendar (which began in 622, i.e. in the year of Hijra, the year during which the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina) occurred to determine sacred days, regulated clock mechanism and put the flag on the minaret, to signal the simultaneous beginning of the prayer to other Islamic places of worship in the town of Belgrade. Between 1717 and 1739, during the Austrian rule, it served as a cathedral Catholic church, but its original function

was renewed in 1741 when the Ottomans returned to Belgrade. The mosque was renewed in the 19th century by the rulers of the Obrenovic dynasty, Prince Mihailo and King Aleksandar Obrenović.

In 1868, The Minister of Education and Church Affairs was ordered by Prince Mihailo Obrenovic to choose one of the existing mosques and enable it for the performance of Muslim religious rites, when besides the mosque was repaired even the courtyard building next to it. The Minister of Education and Church Affairs sent to the State Council of the Principality of Serbia a document dated May 10, 1868, with the following content: "In order for Mohammedans, who are on their business in Belgrade, not to be without religious consolation, His Excellency ordered the one of the local mosques to be repaired for their place of worship. Due to this high order, "Bajrak" mosque was chosen as the most appropriate one and the Minister of Construction as at my request sent the professional people to examine the same mosque, and a house next to it, where the mullahs will reside...." By the Decree of Prince Mihailo Obrenović from May 1868, The Minister of Education and Church Affairs was authorized to "give to khoja 240, and a muezzin 120 talirs a year", and the servants of the mosque had even income from real estate - waqf property. The first imam and the muezzin at the Bajrakli Mosque were appointed in 1868.

Between the two world wars, the mosque was restored even by the Municipality of Belgrade, when in 1935 it was protected for the first time by the Regulation on the Protection of Antiquities in Belgrade. The restoration was performed several times and after the Second World War by the National Committee of the City of Belgrade and by the Cultural Heritage Preservation and Scientific Research Institute and, from the mid sixties of the 20th century even by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Institute of Belgrade. After the recent damage in 2004 conservation works on rehabilitation and restoration of stone facades with the restoration of window openings were carried out.

Architecture[edit]

The architecture of the mosque belongs to the type of one-storey cubic building with a dome and minaret. With massive walls and small openings, it was built of stone, and some segments were carried out in brick and stone. The building has the square plan, while the octagonal dome is supported by oriental domed arches and niches -trompes, with modest decoration of consoles. The number of windows on the facades is uneven, while the one is located on each side of the tambour of the dome. Dome supporting elements and all the openings on the building end in characteristic ogee oriental arches. Minaret - a thin tower with conical roof, with a circular terrace at the top, from which the faithful are called to prayer by the muezzin - is located on the northwest exterior side. Opposite the entrance, in the interior of the mosque, there is the most sacred space - the mihrab, a shallow niche with elaborate vault decoration, set in the direction of the holy city of Mecca to the southeast, while the raised wooden pulpit (minber or mimbar) is set to the right of the mihrab, in the south-west corner. Above the entrance, there is a wooden gallery (mahfil) from which one can come to the serefa, terrace on the minaret.[5]

Interior decoration of the mosque is very modest. The walls are without plaster with shallow moldings, rare stylized floral and geometrical motifs and calligraphic inscriptions of verses from the Muslim holy book Koran, then with the names of the first righteous

religious leaders caliphs, as well as of the God's i.e. Allah's magnificent properties and names written in Arabic letters on a specially decorated carved panels levhas. At the entrance to the mosque there was an arched arcade porch with three small domes. There is a fountain for prayer washing in the yard, as well as uncompleted religious school (madrassa) with the library. The Bajrakli Mosque is the main Islamic cultural center in Belgrade. Today is a bit hidden in the environment of higher housing units in Gospodar Jevremova Street.

Because of its antiquity, rarity, preservation of the original purpose and representativeness of religious architecture and Islamic culture, in 1946 was placed under state protection as a cultural monument, and in 1979 was declared cultural monument of great value (Decision, "Official Gazette of SRS" No. 14/79).[6]

Gallery[edit]

The exterior of the mosque Bajrakli

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