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*The Church of Hagia Sophia in Bizye (Vize): Results  
of the Fieldwork Seasons 2003 and 2004*

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**L**OCATED IN TURKISH THRACE on the southwestern slopes of the Strandža mountains (Yıldız Dağları), the ancient city of Bizye (modern Vize) is well known not only as a place of exile during the early Byzantine period, but also as the home and cult center of St. Mary the Younger, a pious woman of Armenian origin who died there in 902 and was subsequently buried in the city's cathedral.<sup>1</sup> Relying on an inscription recorded by Georgios Lampousiades, the region's superintendent of antiquities during the Greek occupation of Thrace from 1920 to 1922, Cyril Mango was the first to suggest that the Byzantine church still standing on the acropolis of Vize, now known as Ayasofya or Süleyman Paşa Camii, should be identified as Bizye's Byzantine cathedral and location of the saint's first tomb as mentioned in her *Life*.<sup>2</sup> Citing similar cross-domed churches such as Dereağzı in Lycia, Mango concluded that the former church of Hagia Sophia at Vize may well pertain to "the period of Byzantine expansion in the Balkans in the late eighth and ninth centuries, a period that is...very poorly represented in terms of architectural monuments, but which <m>ay also have produced St. Sophia at Salonica."<sup>3</sup> While the building's imposing size of circa twenty-five by twelve meters seems to support Mango's hagiographical arguments for identifying the church as the city's Byzantine cathedral, his dating of the structure to the eighth or ninth century has not remained unchallenged. When Semavi Eyice published the results of his survey of Byzantine monuments in Eastern Thrace, he compared

1 For information on the history of the city, see E. Oberhummer, "Bizye," *RE* 3.1 (1897): 552; A. Th. Samothrakis, *Λεξικὸν γεωγραφικὸν καὶ ἱστορικὸν τῆς Θράκης*, 2nd ed. (Athens, 1963), 104b–106b; and *ODB* 1:292–93. Additional information has been provided by V. Velkov, "Die thrakische Stadt Bizye," in *Studia in honorem Veselini Beševliev* (Sofia, 1978), 174–81; J. Jurukova, *Griechisches Münzwerk: Die Münzprägung von Bizye*, Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur der Antike 18 (Berlin, 1981), 1–8. For a summary account, see F. A. Bauer and H. A. Klein, "Die Hagia Sophia in Vize: Forschungsgeschichte – Restaurierungen – Neue Ergebnisse," *Millennium* 1 (2004): 407–37, esp. 407–10. On the church of Hagia Sophia, see most recently idem, "Die Hagia Sophia (Süleyman Paşa Camii)

in Vize: Bericht über die Arbeiten im Jahr 2003," 22. *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Ankara, 2004), 2:31–40 and "Vize'de Ayasofya (Süleyman Paşa Camii): 2004 Yılı Çalışmaları Raporu," 23. *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Ankara, 2005), 2:337–50.

For early references to the city as a place of exile, see Socrates Scholasticus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen, GCS, n.s., 1 (Berlin, 1995), 244; Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen, GCS, n.s., 4 (Berlin, 1995), 254–55. For Maximos the Confessor's exile in Bizye, see *Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia*, ed. P. Allen and B. Neil, CCSG 39 (Turnhout, 1999), 49. See also P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002), 72–73.

For the *Life* of St. Mary the Younger, see *BHG* 1164, *AASS Novembris*, 4 (Brussels, 1925), 692–705, as well as the English translation with introduction by A. Laiou in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot, Byzantine Saints' Lives in English Translation 1 (Washington, DC, 1996), 239–89, with further bibliographical references. For the presumed date of Mary's death, see T. Pratsch, "Das Todesdatum der Maria (der Jüngerer) von Bizye (*BHG* 1164): 16. Februar 902," *BZ* 97 (2004): 567–69.

2 "The Byzantine Church at Vize (Bizye) in Thrace and St. Mary the Younger," *ZRVI* 11 (1968): 9–13.

3 *Ibid.*, 13.

the architecture of Ayasofya to that of the domed basilicas of Arta and Mistras and concluded that it likewise must have been built in the thirteenth or fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Since the publication of Mango's and Eyice's studies, scholars have remained divided over the question of dating the church. While Eyice's typological arguments have been accepted by Nazan Yavuzoğlu and James Morganstern, other scholars like Yıldız Ötügen, Robert Ousterhout, and Vincenzo Ruggieri have followed Mango's lead and argued for a late eighth- or early ninth-century date of the church.<sup>5</sup> A more recent study by Ayşegül Kahramankaptan and Özkan Ertuğrul even argued for two distinct building phases: one in the tenth century, still visible in the basilican structure of the ground floor, and another in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, in which the galleries and the dome were added.<sup>6</sup>

The apparent difficulties in establishing even an approximate date for the construction of the church at Vize indicate not only the restrictions of comparative architectural analysis but also the limits of our knowledge and understanding of the building's physical makeup. Since the structure has suffered dramatically from decades of neglect, vandalism, and a recent, heavy-handed restoration conducted under the supervision of the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü, a joint archaeological survey project has been established by the authors of this report to examine thoroughly the building's fabric and to document comprehensively the various architectural spolia scattered around the site. The first fieldwork campaign at Vize, carried out during July and August of 2003, aimed at providing accurate plans for the ground and gallery levels of the church as well as detailed longitudinal and transverse sections.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a catalogue of architectural spolia—some incorporated in the fabric of the present structure, some scattered inside and outside the building—was compiled, fragments measured, photographed, and

4 "Trakya'da Bizans devrine ait eserler," *Belleten* 33 (1969): 325–58, esp. 331–32.

Eyice repeated his arguments in two later articles: "Les monuments byzantins de la Thrace turque," *CorsiRav* 18 (1971): 293–308, esp. 293–97, and "Ayasofya'lar," *Ayasofya Müzesi Yıllığı* 11 (1990): 1–17, esp. 15–17, with an English translation at 18–37: "The other 'Ayasofyas'."

5 Yavuzoğlu, "Vize'deki Bizans eserleri" (MA diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1975), 10–21; Morganstern, *The Byzantine Church at Dereazı and its Decoration*, Istanbul *Church Mitteilungen*, Beiheft 29 (Tübingen, 1983), 84 n. 254; Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (Milan, 1985); Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes on the Monuments of Turkish Thrace,"

*AnatSt* 39 (1989): 121–49, esp. 138; Ruggieri, *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582–867): Its History and Structural Elements*, OCA 237 (Rome, 1991), 233; V. Ruggieri, *L'architettura religiosa nell'Impero Bizantino (fine VI–IX secolo)* (Messina, 1995), 132–35. A somewhat more cautious position is taken by H. Buchwald, "Lascarid Architecture," *JÖB* 28 (1979): 261–96, esp. 296 n. 99, who nonetheless favors an early date.

6 "Vize'den tarih fişkiriyor," *Mozaik* 1 (1995): 18–33, esp. 28 and 31.

7 Feridun Dirimtekin was the first to provide a rough ground plan and an elevation drawing (north façade) for the church. See F. Dirimtekin, "Vize'deki Ayasofya Kilisesi (Süleyman Paşa)," *Ayasofya Müzesi*

*Yıllığı* 3 (1961): 18–20, pl. 1, with an English translation at 47–49: "Church of St.-Sophia (Süleyman Paşa) at Vize." A somewhat more accurate plan for the ground floor and gallery level of the church was provided by Semavi Eyice in 1969: "Trakya," res. 4 and 5, repr. in his "Monuments," fig. 1, and "Ayasofya'lar," res. 9.



Fig. 1 Vize, Hagia Sophia, exterior from west, 2003 (this and all unattributed photos by the authors)

drawn for publication.<sup>8</sup> The second season of fieldwork at Vize, supported by a Dumbarton Oaks project grant, was conducted during June and July of 2004 and resulted in a photogrammetric evaluation of the building's exterior façades as well as a preliminary examination of the remains of an earlier ecclesiastical structure.<sup>9</sup>

### *History and State of Preservation*

The Byzantine church commonly known as Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) or Süleyman Paşa Camii is situated within the confines of the fortification walls on the southwestern slopes of the acropolis of Bizye (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> Both its size and commanding presence overlooking the Thracian plain seem to indicate that it was once the city's principal place of worship, presumably Bizye's cathedral.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the early history of Bizye's Christian community and their cathedral.

8 See photographs below, esp. figs. 5–6. The site's architectural spolia have previously been mentioned only in passing. See most recently Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138. Responsible for the cataloguing of architectural spolia during the 2003 fieldwork campaign were Roberta Casagrande, MA (Columbia University, New York) and Dr. Kirstin Noreen (Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge).

9 The remains were partly uncovered on the south, north, and east sides of the present building during the Vakıflar restoration. The brick foundations of a large semicircular apse to the east were first described by Ötügen and Ousterhout, who identified it as "the eastern end of an early Christian church" and suggested that "the present building was constructed on the site of its predecessor." See Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138–39.

10 On the fortifications of Vize, see Eyice, "Trakya," 336–37, and "Monuments," 299.

11 See Mango, "Byzantine Church," 12 (n. 2 above); Eyice, "Trakya," 327, and "Monuments," 293; Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138.

SS. Severos and Memnon are said to have suffered martyrdom in the city along with their companions, but it remains uncertain when the first Christian church was established there.<sup>12</sup> Known as a place of exile already under emperor Valens, Bizye has been an episcopal see since at least 431.<sup>13</sup> However, the date of the cathedral's dedication during the Byzantine period remains unknown. The *Life of Saint Mary the Younger* simply refers to it as “καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία,” and while the building's modern Turkish name Ayasofya Camii may well preserve the memory of a previous Byzantine dedication, the present association with Holy Wisdom cannot be traced back further than the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The other Ottoman name associated with the building, Süleyman Paşa Camii, may hint at an early conversion into a mosque, since a Süleyman Paşa, son of Orhan Gazi and brother of Sultan Murad I (1362–1389), is known to have led the Ottoman conquest of Eastern Thrace.<sup>15</sup> But if the mosque was indeed named after him, it must have been dedicated to his memory, as he died in 1357, well before the capture of Bizye.<sup>16</sup> Another possibility is that the mosque was named after Hadım Süleyman Paşa, the governor of Rumeli who died in 1548 and is known for his founding of mosques in Edirne and Ferecik.<sup>17</sup> The most likely candidate to have converted the Byzantine church of Bizye into a mosque, however, might be yet another Süleyman Paşa, namely a grandson of Gazi Mihał, who died around 1500.<sup>18</sup> But given the lack of more precise historical information, the identity of the mosque's founder and precise date of its conversion may never be known.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, a short reference in the *Seyāhatnāme* of Evliyā Çelebi, who visited Vize in 1661, may indicate that the church was adapted to Muslim worship soon after the capture of Bizye under Mehmet the Conqueror in 1453.<sup>20</sup> While there are no written documents that would help to elucidate the

**12** H. Delehaye, “Saints de Thrace et de Mésie,” *AB* 31 (1912): 161–300, esp. 192–94.

**13** *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1981), 1.41; 2.44; 3.57; 4.42; 5.46; 6.42; 7.52; 8.66; 11.86; 12.92; 14.73; 15.127; 16.84; 18.113. For the bishops of Bizye, see R. Janin, “Bizya,” in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* (Paris, 1912–), 9:44–46.

**14** BHG 1164, *AASS Novembris*, 4 (Brussels, 1925), 697, 699; Talbot, *Holy Women*, 267, 272 (n. 1 above). S. Ioannidis, *Ιστορία τῆς Βιζύης ἀνατολικῆς Ὁράκης, Ἐταιρεία Ὁρακικῶν Μελετῶν* 33 (Athens, 1954), 14 (written in 1886). See also N. Bapheidis, *Ἀρχεῖον τοῦ Ὁρακικοῦ λαογραφικοῦ καὶ γλωσσικοῦ Ὑπασταροῦ*, ser. 2, 19 (1954): 193–212, at 198.

**15** Eyice, “Ayasofya'lar,” 16 [35].

**16** Bizye was first captured by the Ottomans in 1368 but later returned to Byzantine rule (probably in 1411). It was once again captured by the Ottomans in 1453. On the history of the conquest, see F. Babinger, *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte der Türkenherrschaft in Rumelien* (Brünn–Munich–Vienna, 1944), 54 and 60; M. T. Gökbilgin, *XV–XVI asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa livası* (Istanbul, 1952), 6; A. Bakalopoulos, “Les limites de l'empire byzantin depuis la fin du XVe siècle jusqu'à sa chute (1453),” *BZ* 55 (1962): 56–65, esp. 59; Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 10 with n. 5 (n. 2 above). On the transfer of the metropolitan see to Mesembria, see F. Miklosich and I. Müller, *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi*, vol. 1, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani 1315–1402* (Vienna, 1860), 500.

**17** See Eyice, “Ayasofya'lar,” 16 [36]. Hadım Süleyman Paşa's foundation of the mosque at Ferecik has been called into question by E. H. Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimarsinin ilk Devri* (Istanbul, 1966), 201.

**18** This identification is first given by G. Lampousiades, “Ὀδοιπορικόν,” *Thrakika* 9 (1938): 65 and has been accepted by Dirimtekin, “Church of St. Sophia,” 47 (n. 7 above); Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimarsinin*, 201; Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 10; Eyice, “Ayasofya'lar,” 16 [36].

**19** On the identification of Süleyman Paşa, see Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 10; and Eyice, “Trakya,” 327, and, “Ayasofya'lar,” 15–16 [35–36] (both n. 4 above).

**20** Ed. Z. Danişman (Istanbul, 1970), 9:241.

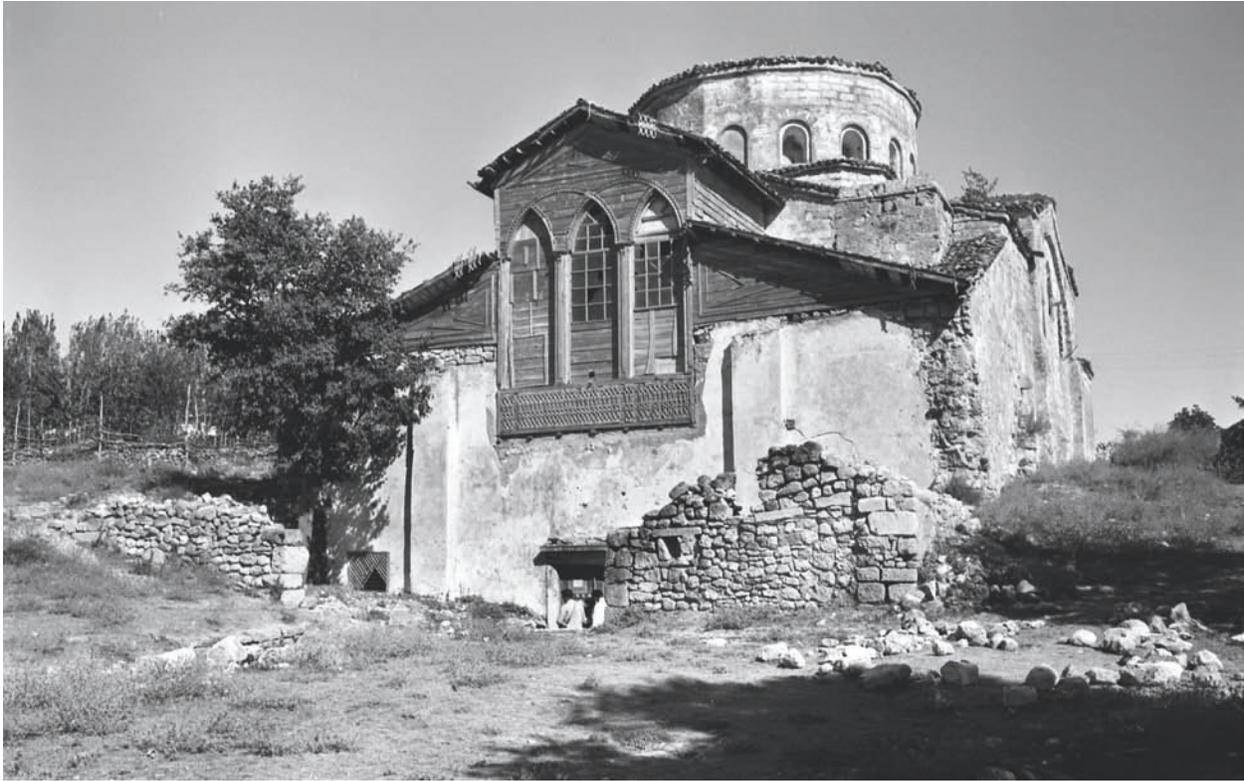


Fig. 2 Vize, Hagia Sophia, exterior from southwest, ca. 1960 (photo: C. Mango)

history of structural modifications and restorations in Ottoman times, the building seems to have served as the city's principal mosque well into the twentieth century. Its decline started only around 1912, when its minaret was destroyed by Bulgarian troops during the First Balkan War.<sup>21</sup> In the decades that followed, the mosque seems to have slowly fallen into disrepair, since the Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü considered its restoration already in 1952/53.<sup>22</sup> The plan, however, was never carried out. About a decade later, the mosque ceased to function as a house of worship for the community of Vize (fig. 2).<sup>23</sup>

Judging from photos taken by scholars during the 1960s and 70s, the profanation of the mosque led to the building's accelerated deterioration, which came to a halt only in 1979, when the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü finally authorized the long-planned restoration of the mosque.<sup>24</sup> While well intentioned, this restoration campaign

**21** The minaret can still be seen in the earliest published photographs of the Ayasofya from 1890 and 1906. See A. K. P. Stamoules, "Ἀνέκδοτα βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα ἐν Θράκῃ," *Δελτίον Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας*, ser. 2 (Athens, 1926), 3:62, fig. 1; Lampousiades, "Ὀδοιπορικόν," 65; R. M. Dawkins, "The Modern Carnival in Thrace and the Cult of Dionysus," *JHS* 24 (1906), 193, fig. 2. It is no longer visible in the

photograph published in 1913 by K. H. Škorpil, "Arkheologicheski bielielzhki ot Strandzha-planina," *Izvestija na Bălgarskoto Archeologičesko Družestvo* 3 (1912/13): 241, fig. 139.

**22** Eyice, "Ayasofya'lar," 17 [36–37].

**23** Eyice (ibid.) relates that in 1961 the imam made his call for prayer standing on a mound outside the church and then performed his prayers alone for lack of

a congregation.

**24** Documents and receipts pertaining to the restoration campaign are housed in the archives of the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü.



Fig. 3 Vize, Hagia Sophia, exterior from east, 2004 (photo: R. Rosenbauer)

resulted in some unfortunate interventions and led to the destruction of valuable archaeological evidence inside and outside of the church. Due to financial difficulties and complaints from the Vize Belediyesi, work was eventually abandoned in 1983 and the restoration of the building was left partly unfinished.<sup>25</sup> As far as can be ascertained from what is visible today (fig. 3), the restoration work that was carried out under the supervision of Erol Çetin of the İstanbul Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü followed three main objectives: (1) the removal of earth that had washed down from the hill of the acropolis for centuries and had built up around the church to a maximum height of over ten meters at its eastern end (fig. 4);<sup>26</sup> (2) the restoration of the building's "original" appearance on the exterior, which involved the opening of three tympanum windows on the north and south façades to their (presumably) original size, as well as the repair and pointing

**25** There is no official written or photographic documentation of this campaign. The only information that exists concerning the Vakıflar restoration is a letter dated 17 August 1987, of the restorer-architect Erol Çetin, cited by Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138–39 (n. 5 above), as well as letters and receipts kept in the archives of the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü.

**26** Photographs taken prior to the Vakıflar

restoration show the extent of earth accumulation, especially on the building's south and east façade. See Mango, "Byzantine Church," figs. 1 and 2. The removal of earth was accompanied by the building of large retaining walls on the north, south, and east sides of the church. The excavated material was moved to the area west of the church, where it was piled up to create large mounds.



Fig. 4 Vize, Hagia Sophia, exterior from east, ca. 1960 (photo: C. Mango)

up of joints between brick courses and stones on the building's north, south, and east façades;<sup>27</sup> (3) the restoration of the building's "original" appearance on the interior, which involved the removal of the raised Ottoman marble and opus sectile floor as well as the replastering of much of the unpainted wall surfaces, corner piers, and tympanum arches over the south and north galleries (figs. 5–6).<sup>28</sup>

While the Vakıflar restoration succeeded in slowing the deterioration on much of the building's exterior façades, the abandonment of the project left the narthex open to the elements, thus heightening the danger of its collapse.<sup>29</sup> Even more regrettable than the discontinua-

**27** Prior to the Vakıflar restoration the size of the windows was much reduced, as can be seen in a photograph published by Cyril Mango; *ibid.*, fig. 1, and Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, fig. 134 (n. 5 above). The decision to point up the joints between brick layers and stones seems to have been guided by the discovery of original fill in the lower portions of the walls, since the restoration work mimics the original technique. Traces of the original fill can best be seen in the lower areas of the north and east façades.

**28** Before the Vakıflar restoration the nave and side aisles of the church were paved

with white marble and raised to a slightly higher level than the narthex, which was also paved with marble. Reused fragments of a Byzantine opus sectile floor were found incorporated into the marble floor both in the nave and in the narthex. For a description of the floor prior to its removal, see Dirimtekin, "Church of St. Sophia," 47–48 (n. 7 above), and Mango, "Byzantine Church," 10, who assumes that the marble floor was raised during the Ottoman period. Drawings of the specimen of opus sectile fragments found in Ayasofya have been published in Eyice, "Trakya," res. 105 (n. 4 above). When the restoration campaign was halted in 1983,

the marble floor panels were left dispersed in front of the church.

**29** It is unknown if the nineteenth-century wooden muezzin's gallery on the second floor of the narthex was removed during the Vakıflar restoration or if it had collapsed earlier. Photographs taken in the late 1960s show it dilapidated yet still largely intact. See Mango, "Byzantine Church," fig. 3; Eyice, "Trakya," res. 2.



Fig. 5 Vize, Hagia Sophia, interior toward east, 2003 (photo: R. Rosenbauer)

tion of the project, however, is the loss of valuable archaeological information from the undocumented removal of earth outside and excavations below the original Byzantine floor level inside the church. On the exterior, for instance, numerous sculptural fragments of liturgical furnishings seem to have been uncovered during the restoration campaign.<sup>30</sup> Some more lavishly decorated fragments were subsequently brought to the archaeological museums in Edirne and Tekirdağ, where they were rediscovered during the summer of 2004; the rest remained scattered in front of the building's western façade.<sup>31</sup> They were probably taken into the narthex and piled up between the minaret and the blocked southern entrance into the narthex in 1995, following an architectural survey and cleaning campaign conducted by Özkan Ertuğrul of Trakya Üniversitesi in Edirne.<sup>32</sup> While the exact findspots as well as the circumstances that led to the discovery of these spolia remain unknown, other archaeological discoveries are more clearly attributable to the Vakıflar restoration, the most significant being the

<sup>30</sup> Since they are not recorded by Dirimtekin, Mango, and Eyice, it must be assumed that these architectural fragments were uncovered during the Vakıflar restoration. They are first, but only briefly, mentioned by Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes,"

138 (n. 5 above).

<sup>31</sup> The fragments in Edirne were identified on the basis of photographs found in the archives of the Edirne Kurul; those in Tekirdağ, by the director of the museum during a routine visit in June 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Two fragments of a parapet slab featuring a carved cross were first published in Kahramankaptan and Ertuğrul, "Vize," 29 (n. 6 above).



Fig. 6 Vize, Hagia Sophia, interior (photo: U. Peschlow)

uncovering of the brick foundations of a semicircular apse and the remains of walls extending to the north, south, and west, which presumably relate to a previous ecclesiastical structure on the site.<sup>33</sup> The semicircular apse and the walls extending to the north and south have been left essentially intact, but they remain exposed to the elements. The walls extending to the west, on the other hand, have been reused as foundations for the large retaining walls that now flank the building's north and south façades.<sup>34</sup>

In the interior, the undocumented removal of the marble and opus sectile floor in the nave and narthex and its replacement with a concrete floor may be considered even more devastating, since it destroyed not only a privileged burial in front of an arcosolium in the third bay of the south side aisle, but also ten to fifteen other burials in the narthex.<sup>35</sup> The loss of the narthex tombs, which were first mentioned by Savvas Ioannides in the late nineteenth century, is particularly regret-

33 See Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138–39 for a brief discussion of these remains.

34 Not mentioned by Ötügen and Ousterhout, the walls that extend westward presumably formed the foundations of the side aisle walls of the previous structure.

35 As mentioned above, the only record

of the work is contained in a letter by the restorer-architect Erol Çetin. According to this document, the bodily remains found during the restoration were reburied in front of the building. See Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138–39.

table, since they might have contained evidence to date more securely the Byzantine church.<sup>36</sup> This at least is suggested by the discovery of a lead seal found allegedly on the chest of the body buried in front of the arcosolium tomb. This seal can be identified by its inscription as having belonged to Theodoros Dekapolites, a well-known legal figure in tenth-century Constantinople.<sup>37</sup> While Ousterhout has accepted the seal as supporting evidence for a ninth-century date of the present structure, the lack of any written or photographic documentation of the find makes it impossible to verify the archaeological record and to substantiate any claims relating to the burial.<sup>38</sup>

It is likewise regrettable that Özkan Ertuğrul's cleaning of the narthex in 1995 seems to have remained equally undocumented. According to his summary account in the popular magazine *Mozaik*, the removal of earth in the narthex resulted in the temporary exposure not only of a well-preserved fresco of a figure in prayer but also of the very inscription first published by Lampousiades and later interpreted by Mango as relating to St. Mary the Younger. Both fresco and inscription seem to have fallen off the wall shortly after their discovery and are no longer extant.<sup>39</sup>

### *Preliminary Results of the 2003 and 2004 Fieldwork Seasons*

As this summary account of the history and state of preservation of the former church of Hagia Sophia at Vize may indicate, a thorough documentation and analysis of the structure is not only long overdue, as recently remarked by Ousterhout and Ötügen, but has become a pressing issue after both the heavy-handed restoration in the early 1980s and more recent interventions. Given the presumed—and as yet unvalidated—importance of the structure as a key monument in the history of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture, the archaeological survey project that was begun in 2003 and continued in 2004 set out to document the building in its present state and to recover any information that might help to elucidate the history of the church and its decoration in Byzantine and Ottoman times.

36 See Ioannidis, *Ιστορία*, 14 [= Bapheidis, *Ἀρχαίον*, 198 (both n. 14 above)]; see also Mango, "Byzantine Church," 10, n. 6.

37 The inscription reads: + Θεο/τόκε β[ο]ή/θει τῶ σ[ῶ] / δ[ού]λῳ Θ[ε] / οδῶρῳ (obverse) + πατρι/[κ]ίτῳ καὶ κ/[ο]ιταίστωρ[ι] / [τ]ῶ Δεκα/πολίτ[ῃ] (reverse)—"Theotokos, help your servant Theodore, the patrikios and quaestor Dekapolites." On Theodore Dekapolites, see *ODB* 3:2043 with further references. On tombs in Byzantine churches and their decoration, see most recently

U. Weißbrod, "Hier liegt der Knecht Gottes...": *Gräber in byzantinischen Kirchen und ihr Dekor (11. bis 15. Jahrhundert)*, Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 5 (Wiesbaden, 2003).

38 See Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," 138; R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, 1999), 164, 210. The whereabouts of the seal are unknown, but a photograph of it has been published by Ötügen and Ousterhout, "Notes," pl. XXXIIIa.

39 A. Kahramankaptan and Ö. Ertuğrul, "Vize," 28–29. Two fresco fragments allegedly found in the church during a recent restoration campaign by the Vakıflar (see postscript) may be identified as the ones described by Ertuğrul. They are now kept in the Kırklareli Museum.

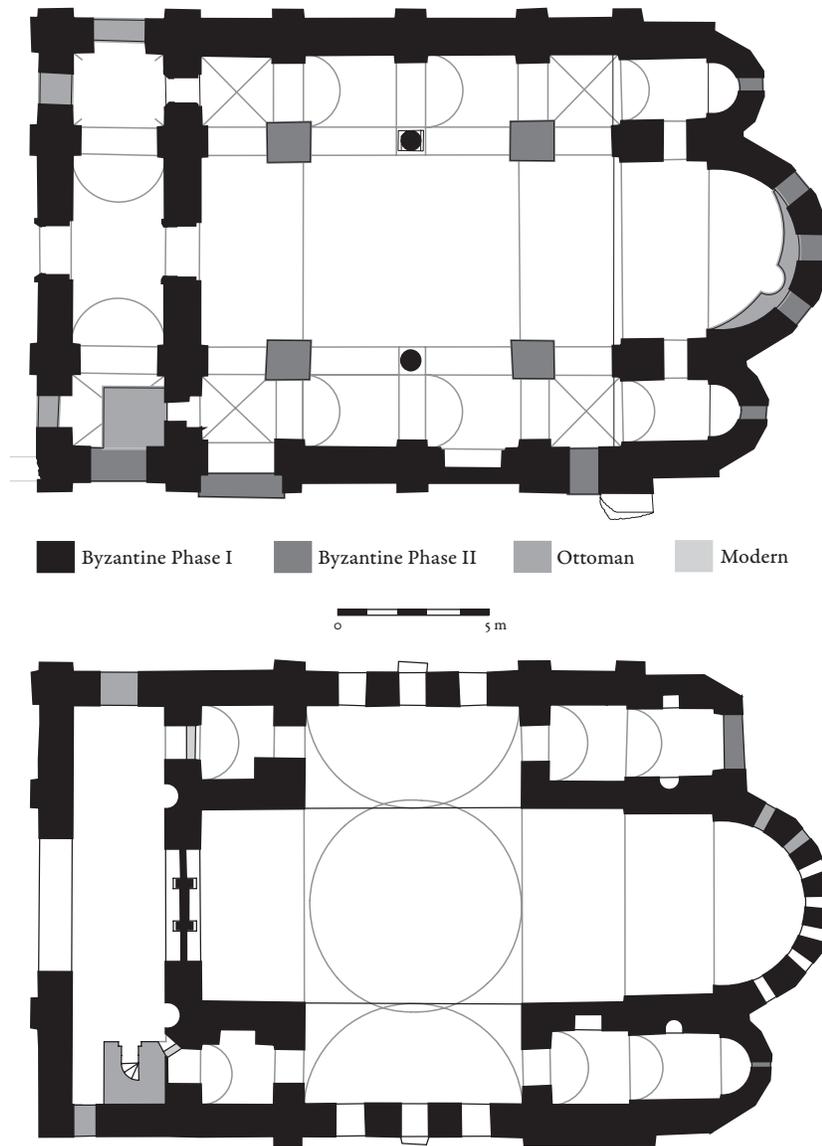


Fig. 7 Vize, Hagia Sophia, ground and gallery plan (drawings: R. Rosenbauer)

In addition to conducting a thorough photographic survey of the building, the primary goals of the 2003 fieldwork season were to establish a catalogue of surviving spolia on the site and to provide accurate plans and sections for the church. The latter was achieved by using the tape-measure system in combination with reflector and reflectorless tachymetry.<sup>40</sup> The ground and gallery plans that resulted from this survey (fig. 7) update and correct those published earlier by

<sup>40</sup> The data thus collected were verified directly on-site with the program CAPLAN (version 1.5), developed by Cremer Programmentwicklungs-GmbH, Munich ([www.cpentw.de](http://www.cpentw.de)), further processed with AutoCAD (release 2002), and finally laid

out using Adobe Illustrator (version 10.0.3). This work was directed by Ralph C. Rosenbauer, MA (Universität Bern).



Fig. 8 Vize, Hagia Sophia, transverse sections with views to east and west (drawings: R. Rosenbauer)

Dirimtekin and Eyice, both of whom surveyed the structure before the lower parts of the building's eastern end were exposed during the Vakıflar restoration.<sup>41</sup> In addition, longitudinal and transverse sections (figs. 8–9) were provided to complete the archaeological record of the extant structure and to visualize the building's elevation and overall proportions. Where possible, the plans and sections indicate apparent changes in the building's structure and identify distinct phases of construction and restoration. The chronology of these phases should be considered preliminary and will need to be reassessed when the survey of the building has been completed. A few general observations on the building, however, are worth pointing out already. Abrupt changes in the stone- and brickwork of the central dome (fig. 10) as well as the blocking of eight of originally sixteen windows on the north side, for instance, seem to indicate a partial collapse and rebuilding of the sixteen-sided structure in Byzantine or Ottoman times. While it remains uncertain if the assumed collapse of the dome prompted the reinforcement of the four columns or piers that originally carried the weight of the dome on the ground level of the naos, the damage to the church—

<sup>41</sup> Dirimtekin's groundplan, hardly more than a sketch, omits a number of important details, for instance the north and south entrances into the narthex, the base of the minaret, both arcossolia tombs in the south side aisle, and the small niche in the south wall of the diakonikon. Eyice's groundplan is more accurate, but he, too, omits an

important detail: the arcossolium in the westernmost bay of the south aisle. Eyice's gallery plan also omits a number of details: a square and a rounded niche in the eastern chapel of the north gallery and the irregular shape of the small chapel to the west.

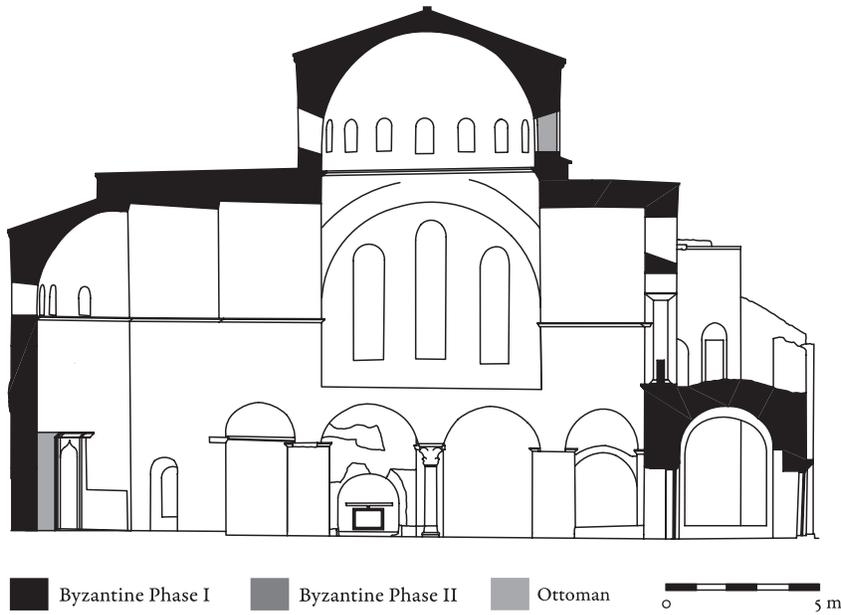


Fig. 9 Vize, Hagia Sophia, longitudinal section toward south (drawing: R. Rosenbauer)

Fig. 10 Vize, Hagia Sophia, dome from east



presumably the result of an earthquake—seems to have been extensive.<sup>42</sup> This at least is suggested by evidence for a complete rebuilding of the northeastern gallery chapel and the upper parts of the northern half of the central apse, which now lacks two of its originally seven windows.<sup>43</sup> On the lower level, the central apse once featured three large windows, which were subsequently blocked, most likely by an increased accumulation of earth at the eastern end of the church.<sup>44</sup> Small irregularities in the outer skin of the side apses further suggest that these, too, once featured windows on both the ground and gallery levels.<sup>45</sup> Other changes to the building's original fabric are clearly visible on the exterior of the south façade. At some point in the Byzantine period, an arcosolium tomb was added in the westernmost bay of the south side aisle. Unlike the arcosolium in the third bay of the south aisle, which forms an integral part of the wall and thus an integral part of the original building, the western arcosolium was clearly an afterthought that involved not only the partial opening of the south wall but also the addition of a reinforcement wall on the exterior (fig. 11).<sup>46</sup> A still-puzzling feature is the blocked archway and an adjacent wall fragment that protrudes southward at the eastern end of the south façade (fig. 12). It may be assumed that the archway once connected the diakonikon with an adjacent room or chapel to the south, but this claim cannot be verified at present.

In the interior, the removal of the Ottoman marble floor during the Vakıflar restoration exposed fragments of the original Byzantine floor in the sanctuary and the corners of the side chapels (fig. 13). Furthermore, a row of greenish marble blocks was uncovered, which once defined the limits of the sanctuary (fig. 14). Traces of dowel holes



Fig. 11 Vize, Hagia Sophia, south façade, detail of reinforcement wall behind west arcosolium

42 A reinforcement of previously existing piers or columns has been assumed by Eyice, “Trakya,” 329; idem, “Monuments,” 275 (both n. 4 above); Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 9 n. 2. Ötügen and Ousterhout, “Notes,” 142 suggested a late Byzantine date for these reinforcements based on the piers, which have a decorative technique that uses incised lines to highlight the mortar fills between bricks and stones. Y. Ötügen, “Bizans duvar tekniğinde teknik ve estetik çözümler,” *Röleve ve Restorasyon Dergisi*

(1988), cited as being in press by Ötügen and Ousterhout, “Notes,” 142 n. 91, was not accessible to us.

43 The gallery chapel on the north now lacks its former five-sided apse. After its presumed collapse, it was rebuilt with only a flat wall at its eastern end. Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 10, assumes that the rebuilding of the chapel took place “during the Turkish period.”

44 Brick arches on top and a continuous row of ashlar blocks on the bottom clearly

define the size of the original windows. The use of smaller, more irregularly placed stones in the upper fill seems to indicate that the windows were closed over time rather than all at once.

45 The narrow window that once opened in the eastern apse of the south gallery chapel is only faintly visible on the exterior, but largely preserved on the interior.

46 This has already been observed by Ötügen and Ousterhout, “Notes,” 139.

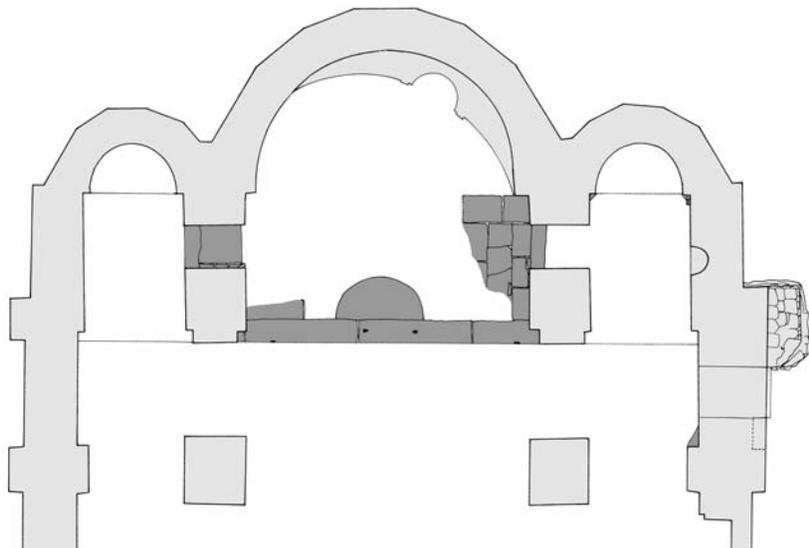


Fig. 12 Vize, Hagia Sophia, south façade, wall protruding south with blocked archway



Fig. 13 Vize, Hagia Sophia, diakonikon, fragment of original marble floor

Fig. 14 Vize, Hagia Sophia, sanctuary with original floor tiles and templon stylobate (drawing: R. Casagrande)



and markings on the marble blocks suggest that they once must have formed the stylobate of a templon screen. A central doorway about one meter wide can be reconstructed on the basis of dowel holes and traces of wear, which left the marble considerably more polished in the center than in other areas.

Fragments of the Byzantine *opus sectile* floor (fig. 15), previously described by Dirimtekin, Mango, and Eyice as having been reused in the Ottoman marble floor, were recovered during the 2003 fieldwork campaign together with other Byzantine spolia in the southwest corner of the narthex.<sup>47</sup> Among the more prominent pieces found in the narthex were parts of an ambo (figs. 16–17), fragments of a lintel with a central cross (fig. 18) that resembles closely those that can still be found in situ, and various fragments of a marble screen decorated with crosses in double relief (fig. 19).<sup>48</sup> A comprehensive catalogue of the site's spolia, which relate to the decoration of both the extant Byzantine church and its predecessor, is currently underway and will be published upon completion.<sup>49</sup>

Work on the church continued during the second season of fieldwork in 2004 with a thorough cleaning of the brush and dirt that had accumulated for twenty-five years in the corridors flanking the north, south, and east façades (fig. 20). The cleaning, which was not only a prerequisite for a photogrammetric evaluation of the exterior façades of the building but was also expected to yield new information about the structure partially excavated during the Vakıflar restoration, led to the discovery of the remains of two walls that run parallel to the north and south aisles of the extant building (figs. 21–22).<sup>50</sup> In the early 1980s, these walls were used as foundations for the large retaining walls that now flank the church on both sides. As the orientation of the walls closely corresponds with that of the apse found to the east of the present structure, it might be presumed that they formed part of a

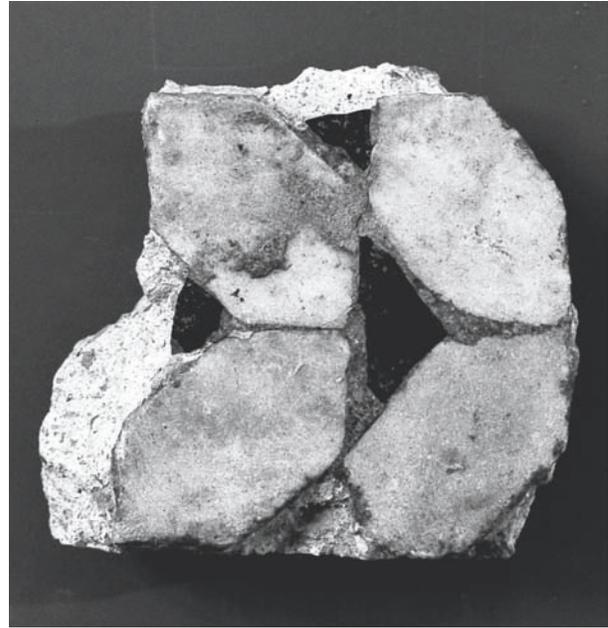


Fig. 15 Fragment of Byzantine *opus sectile* floor

*opposite page*

Figs. 16–17 Fragments of an ambo (drawing: K. Noreen and R. Casagrande)

Fig. 18 Fragments of a lintel

Fig. 19 Fragments of a marble screen

Fig. 20 Vize, Hagia Sophia, south corridor after cleaning in 2004

Figs. 21–22 Vize, Hagia Sophia, south and north corridors, detail of wall belonging to previous structure

47 For earlier references to the *opus sectile* floor fragments, see Dirimtekin, “Church of St. Sophia,” 47 (n. 7 above); Eyice, “Trakya,” res. 105; Mango, “Byzantine Church,” 10. After the Vakıflar restoration, the fragments were seen and summarily described by Kahramankaptan and Ertuğrul, “Vize,” 32 (n. 6 above).

48 Ötügen and Ousterhout, “Notes,” 138, mention the fragment of an ambo along with an Ionic impost capital as lying to the west

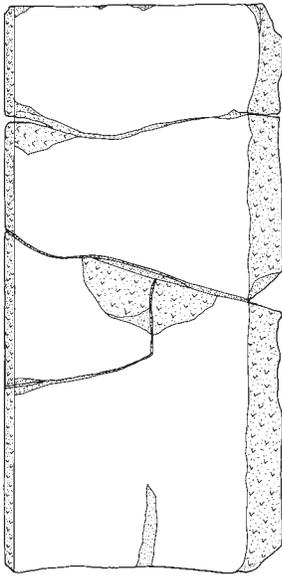
of the building with numerous other spolia. They were probably removed from this area and taken into the narthex for safekeeping after the survey conducted by Özkan Ertuğrul in 1995.

49 It is hoped that the complete catalogue of architectural spolia found on the site as well as in local museums will not only provide an inventory of liturgical furnishings associated with the present and previous churches, but also help to narrow down—

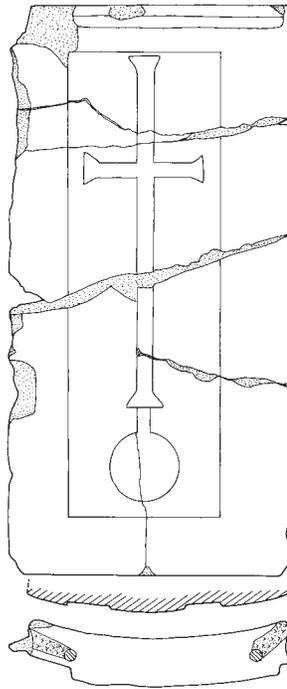
through an analysis of the spolia reused in the fabric of the present building—the approximate dates of construction for the two churches.

50 At its western end the south wall rises to a height of about 0.30 m and consists of two layers of ashlar blocks topped by a band of three to four bricks with wide mortarbeds. The north wall consists of larger ashlar blocks and incorporates sections of worked bedrock.

16

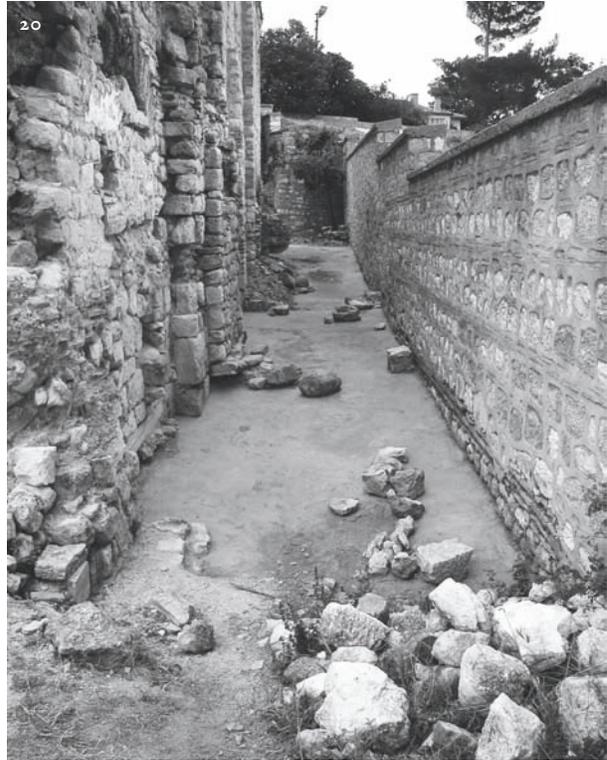


17



0 25 cm

20



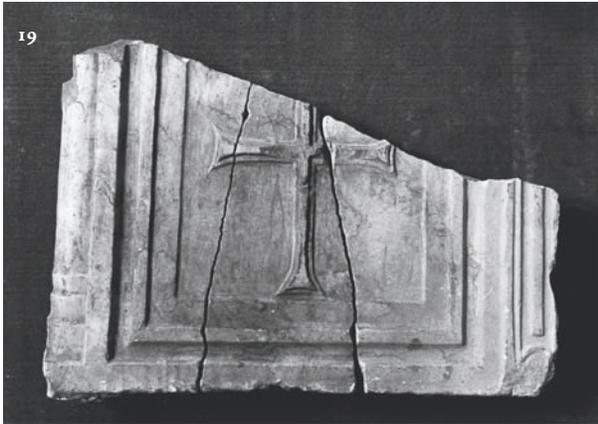
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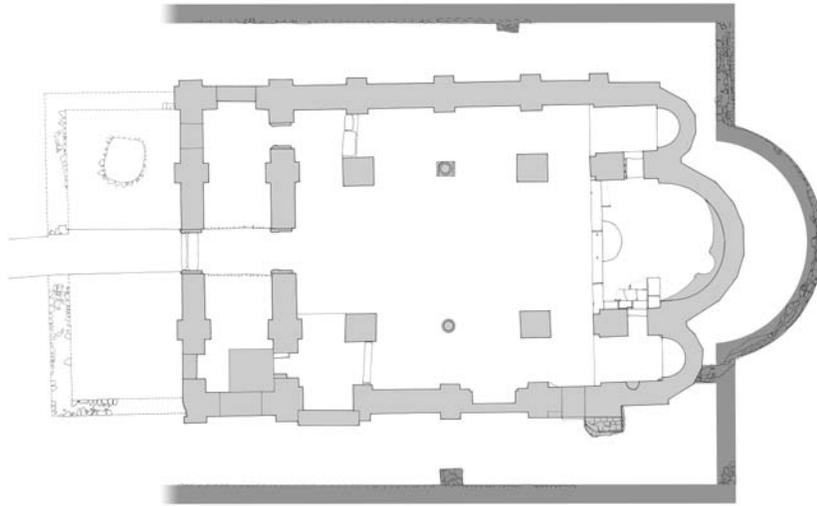


Fig. 23 Vize, Hagia Sophia, ground plan with remains of previous structure (drawing: R. Casagrande)

basilican structure that preceded the present church. The cleaning of the corridors and the main apse of this building allowed for the first time the drawing of an accurate plan of the remains of this structure (fig. 23), previously recorded in a sketchy drawing by Yıldız Ötügen and Robert Ousterhout.<sup>51</sup>

The primary goal of the 2004 fieldwork campaign, however, was to conduct a thorough photogrammetric evaluation of the four façades of the building. Using a combination of traditional and innovative architectural survey techniques, i.e., reflector and reflectorless tachymetry in combination with digital photography, it was possible to render undistorted planimetric views of the building's main façades (fig. 24).<sup>52</sup> Instrumental in our effort to survey the large—and partly inaccessible—structure in a timely manner was the use of a reflectorless theodolite in combination with a semi-professional digital camera and the software PhotoPlan.<sup>53</sup> The computer-generated views thus created of the four façades were printed out, checked against the fabric of the building and hand drawn stone by stone.<sup>54</sup> In a final step, the stone-by-stone drawings served to determine and record the various phases of construction, reconstruction, and restoration of the building.

In addition, a topographical survey has been started to render the acropolis of Vize with its Byzantine city walls and surviving ecclesiastical structures in a single plan as well as in a three-dimensional digital model.<sup>55</sup> The first step in this project was an exploration of the plateau

51 "Notes," 139, fig. 5.

52 This work was conducted under the supervision of Ralph C. Rosenbauer, MA, and Auguste Waldmann, MA.

53 Theodolite: Leica TCR 1105 XR. Camera: Nikon D 70. The software is an AutoCAD plug-in developed by Kubit

GmbH, Dresden ([www.kubit.de](http://www.kubit.de)).

54 This work was coordinated by Roberta Casagrande, MA, and Meredith Fluke (both of Columbia University). Very able support was provided by Kristian L. Hansen (Columbia University).

55 A second, much smaller church or

chapel has been discovered south of the church of Hagia Sophia during roadwork. While this structure has been partly excavated and its apse mosaic transported to the museum in Tekirdağ, it has remained unpublished.

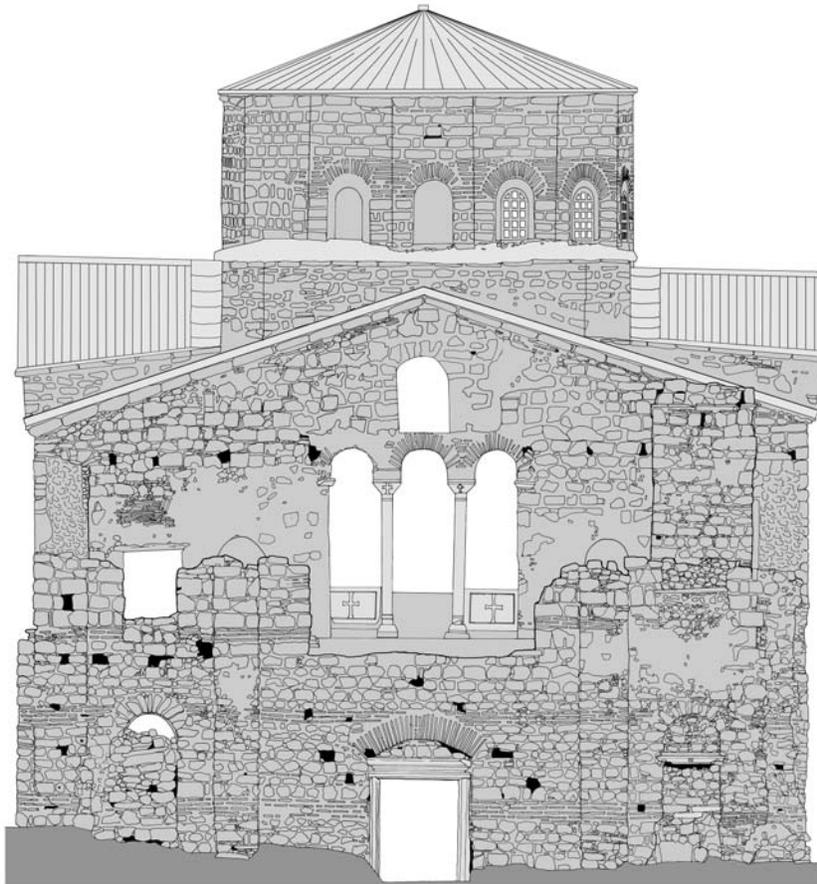


Fig. 24 Vize, Hagia Sophia, west façade (drawing: R. Rosenbauer and R. Casagrande)

on which the church of Hagia Sophia and its predecessor were built (fig. 25).<sup>56</sup> An extension of the landscape model is planned for one of the next fieldwork seasons as it will not only help to determine the spatial relationship between the church of Hagia Sophia and a smaller church or chapel to its south, discovered during roadwork, but also facilitate a reconstruction of their exact location on the acropolis in relation to the surviving system of walls and fortifications of the Byzantine city.

Unfortunately, fieldwork in Vize in 2005 was hampered by the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü, which did not initially grant the necessary permission for us to continue our survey and restoration project. Instead, the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü hired a private company to execute those restoration measures we had advocated in our previous two survey applications with the Department of Antiquities in Ankara. Despite an offer to cooperate with the authorities in Edirne and to oversee the restoration work that was to be executed, the necessary work permits were not granted until September 2005, which resulted in the cancellation of the 2005 fieldwork season.

An application to continue fieldwork in Vize in 2006 has been submitted with the Department of Antiquities in Ankara. Unfortunately,

<sup>56</sup> This work was conducted by Stephanie Chasaign and Jelena Delić (both of the Universität Zürich).

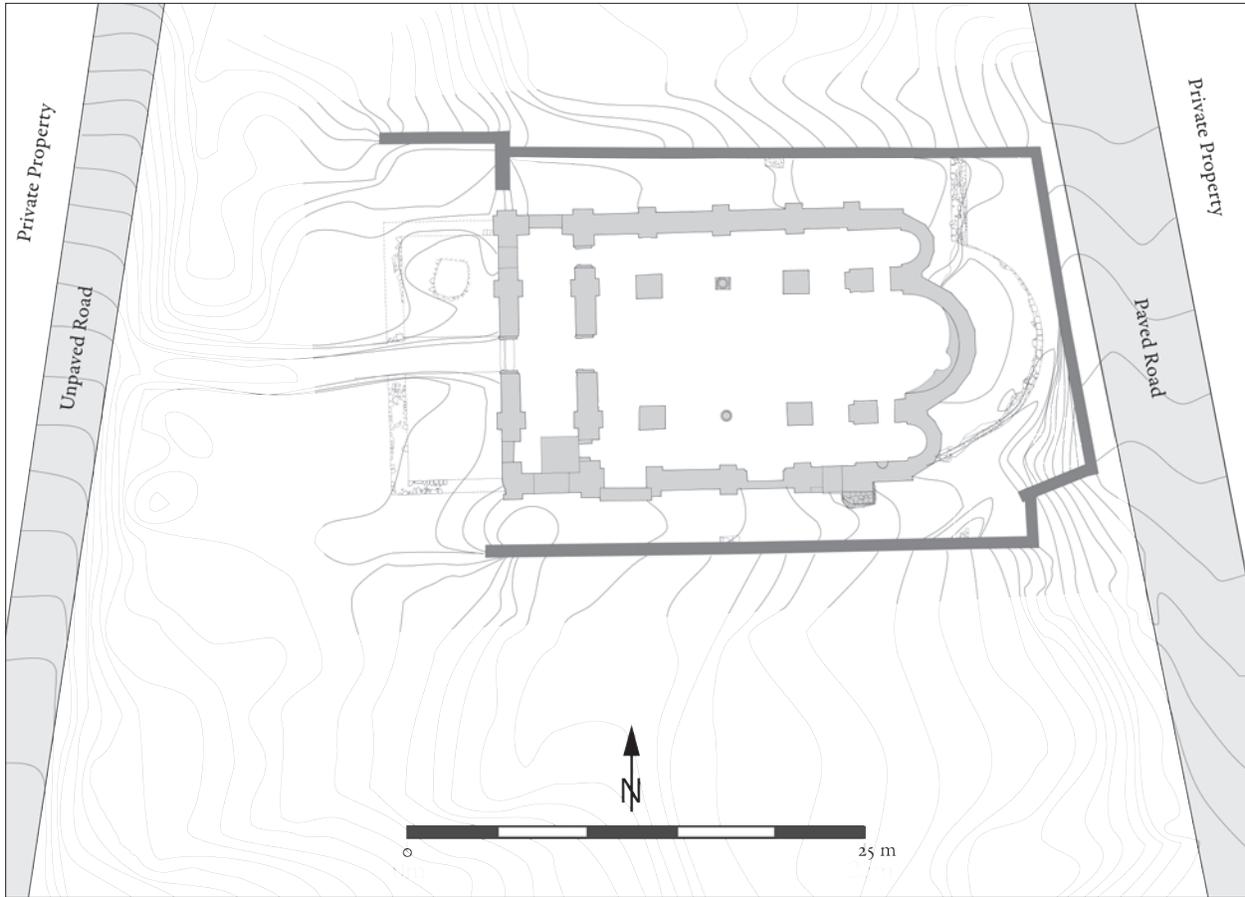


Fig. 25 Vize, Hagia Sophia, site plan  
(drawing: R. Rosenbauer)

the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü has meanwhile started its own restoration project on the building. In May 2006, a team of workmen was seen conducting restoration work on the building's west façade without supervision by an archaeologist or architect.<sup>57</sup> Given the devastating results of the first Vakıflar restoration campaign in the early 1980s, it can only be hoped that the current project will not once again result in the destruction of valuable archaeological evidence.

—*Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich*  
—*The Cleveland Museum of Art*

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<sup>57</sup> The work was observed by Dr. Alessandra Ricci and a group of doctoral and postdoctoral fellows from the Center for Anatolian Civilizations at Koç University.



### *Postscript*

In late June 2006, the Department of Antiquities in Ankara informed the authors of this report that permission to continue survey work at the Gazi Süleyman Paşa Camii in Vize could not be granted due to ongoing restoration work by the Edirne Vakıflar Bölge Müdürlüğü at the site. The full extent of the work carried out between May and August 2006 did not become apparent until a recent visit to Vize in late September 2006. By that time, all four façades of the building had been re-pointed, the roof retiled, windows replaced, and a new minaret reconstructed above the foundations of its predecessor (Fig. 26). These measures, which must be regarded as a renovation rather than an attempt to restore and preserve an important architectural monument, have once again resulted in a loss of historic substance and archaeological evidence: the re-pointing of the brick façades has effectively destroyed the fabric of the building, especially in the area of the southwestern arcosolium and the southeastern archway. What remained of the narthex vault has been destroyed and rebuilt with cinderblocks. In the interior, the concrete floor of the previous Vakıflar restoration was removed and replaced by a new concrete floor. Fragments of floor mosaics belonging to the earlier basilica were uncovered (and later

Fig. 26 Vize, Hagia Sophia, exterior from southwest, 11 August 2006 (photo: S. Westphalen)

covered again with concrete) both in the interior of the building and the ambulatories to the north and south. Whether these archaeological remains were appropriately documented by Özkan Ertuğrul and a team of students from Trakya Üniversitesi in Edirne, who were allowed (by the Vakıflar?) to conduct archaeological excavations on the site, is uncertain. The decision was also made to remove a large amount of accumulated earth in front of the building's western façade. The excavation of this area resulted in the discovery and removal of eighteen burials, several architectural spolia, and a set of walls still visible prominently in Mango's photographs (see Figs. 2, 25), whose date and function had not yet been clarified. Whether or not the finds that resulted from this excavation were adequately documented remains unclear. Due to the intervention of Nalan Güven of the Kırklareli Museum, the excavated architectural spolia and other materials are now preserved in the museum in Kırklareli. While a future documentation and publication of these spolia may help to clarify some aspects of the history of the two buildings that occupied the site, the loss and destruction of their archaeological context is regrettable.