

# HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF THE RAILWAY STATIONS IN THE REGION OF FLORINA/GREECE

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the history and the architecture of the main railway stations in the region of western Macedonia / Greece to show the relationship between the level of economic integration at the important territory – region of central and western Macedonia, during the Ottoman Empire, at the late 19th century (1890-1900). The analysis focuses on two key themes: the long-term spatial evolution of the railway network and the influences to the social, economic and political life on this region.*

**Keywords:** Railway station, Architecture, History, Transport, Florina.

## 1. Introduction

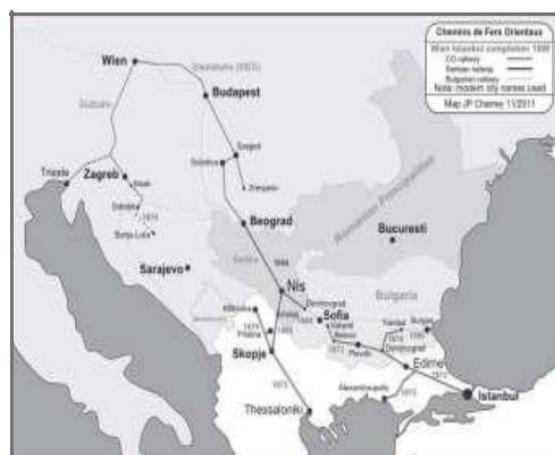
In the nineteenth century, railroads brought a substantial shift in trade and production worldwide. Using the archives on the population of the districts and the railroads in the Ottoman Empire between 1880 and 1900, we examine the relationship between railroad access and economic growth in the local economies of a developing of the cities of Amyntaio and Florina. Our empirical results confirm the population size expansion in the areas affected by railroads. This impact could be connected with economic growth in the Ottoman Empire, leading to higher employment opportunities and fertility rates, based on the arguments of historical research. The paper contributes to the previous literature by offering new items on the topic about how transformation of transport networks induced economic growth in an agricultural economy facing drastic changes at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

### Historical Review

In the early 1880-1890 the decision of the Ottoman Empire was made to build new goods and passengers stations on the road Istanbul/Konstantinopolis - Thessaloniki – Bitola - Central Europe railroad. The buildings and the opening of the further railway lines from east (Asiatic Turkey) to west (European Turkey) were: Thessaloniki –Veroia –Naousa – Edessa –

The region of Macedonia in northern Greece is strongly connected with the history of the railway net and its lines between east (Istanbul/Konstantinopolis) and west, at the late 19th and early 20th century.

Ostrovo – Pateli - Sorovits (Amyntaio) and Florina. (map. 2)



The article includes the history and the architecture of those stations, after the research to the Archives of the railway organization of Greece (OSE), where the most projects and designs are kept.

The advent of the railways symbolized a new age of progress, power and civilization, so the stations also have had a part to play in the policy, the economy and the society with their strategic significance. The technical revolution from the development of the railway stations has changed the life of the people, the architectural landscape and the economic, social and Map. The railway road Istanbul – Europe cultural conditions of the regions where the new railway constructions were built.



Map. 1. Ottoman empire / Macedonia

The buildings and the equipment of the railway net are a very interesting field of research, in the sector of the industrial heritage of the transport nets. Beyond the architectural history of the stations, railway history includes the history of the people who worked and lived there, during the 19th – beg. 20th century, connecting the Ottoman Empire with central Europe. The railway line Thessaloniki – Amyntaio - Florina – Bitola includes 219/ 220 km, with a wide schedule of daily connections, bringing together people, goods and cultures.

The evolution was realized after a research to the national archives, especially in the archives of the train organization of Greece (OSE), where are the projects and the designs of the main stations in Macedonia. We examined 10 buildings at the railway line of Thessaloniki – Veroia – Naousa-Edessa-Amyntaio – Florina. In this paper we show only the station of Amyntaio and Florina.

#### Architecture -Construction



Fig. 1. Railway station of Sorovits (Amyntaio) (1898).

The small stations near the villages Vevi (Banitsa), Xino Nero (Exisou) and Agios Panteleimonas (Patele) were built at the same time (1890-1900), with the same architectural character.

The Sorovits (Amyntaio) station was bigger and situated at a very strategic site, connecting Macedonia with Epirus and Albania. The commercial significance of those regions was very important for the Ottoman Empire, connecting the capital city with the European part of the Empire. As a result, the small village of Sorovits (Amyntaio) became an important station – city where the goods, the passengers and the products of the local territory were expanding to the central Europe. The buildings of the station, according to the historical references, were included two warehouses, one building for the inspector, two rooms for the employments and the guard of the station. They usually had one story with the floor on the level of the loading docks, and the façade fitted with windows and wooden doors.

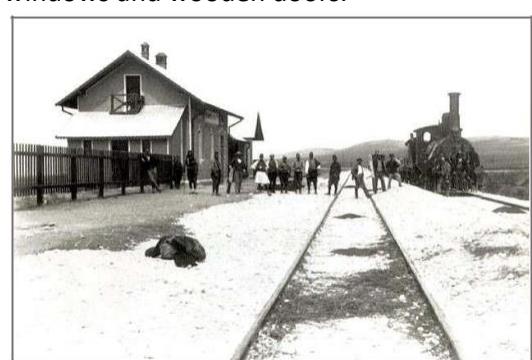


Fig. 2. Railway station of Amyntaio (1900).

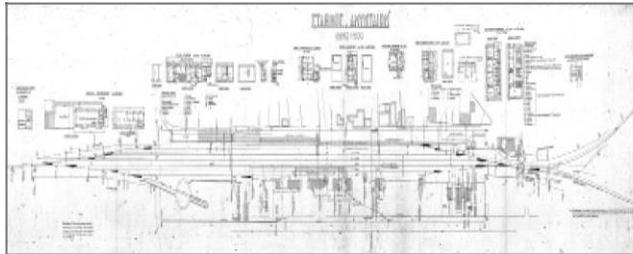


Fig.3. Railway station (Amyntaio)

The station of the city of Florina was designed and completed in 1928-1931, and were constructed by brick, stone and concrete (beton) . The buildings consist on two warehouses, a logistic office, built mostly of brick and stone, covered with roof with tiles. To the main building were adjunct storey slide buildings, as typical example of European presentable architecture of the late 19th century. Parts of the buildings were demolished during 1940-1942, but the most part of the station were survived until the post-war period. (Fig. 4, 5)



Fig. 4. Railway station of Florina (1931)



Fig. 5. Railway station of Florina (today)

The station of the city of Florina (fig. 6) was inaugurated in 1931, although the station of Mesonisi (fig. 7) was the former terminal station before the next stop to the city of Bitola (Former Yugoslavia territory). (Fig. 8, 9, 10).

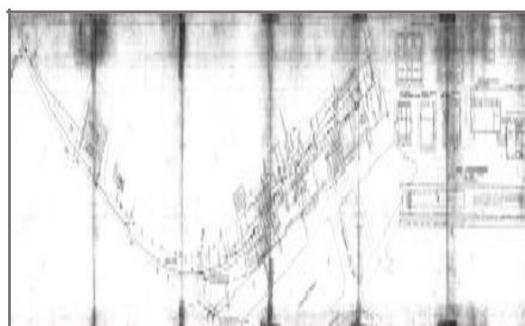


Fig.6. Railway station (Florina)

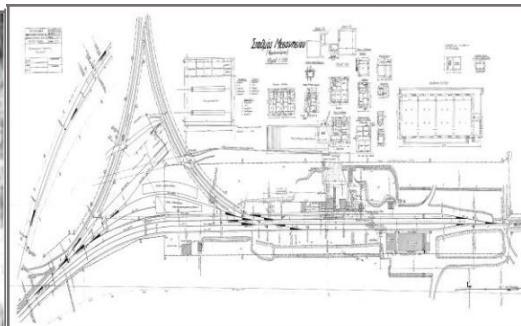


Fig.7. Railway station (Mesonisi /Florina)



Fig. 8. Railway station of Bitola (1894).



Fig.9. Railway station of Bitola (1894).



Fig. 10. Railway station of Bitola (today).

At the book "Railway stations in Greece" there are lots of iconographic records with the view of the stations from the period 1890-1900, representing the old time of the cities where the stations were built.

### Proposals

While railways are considered as a sign of development for countries, the railway structures are part of the industrial heritage of cities. In the Ottoman Empire many railway buildings, constructed between 1880 and 1900, are of the main railroad between the Istanbul/Konstantinopolis, Thessaloniki and Bitola stations. They are also public places having strong resonance in the collective memory. Because of the fast development in technology, they face the threat of losing their function. Conservation of former industrial structures requires, first and foremost, identifying and documenting the distinctive features that make them cultural heritage sites. It is a shared responsibility between public institutions and sectors to identify and protect the distinguishing features of industrial heritage sites. With this awareness, the technical Chamber of Greece (TEE), the department of western Macedonia/Greece,

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integrated researchers work focused on the Railway stations which are part of this district and embody a series of issues.

Meanwhile, the railway buildings are the first industrial heritage buildings built widespread in all countries by the invention of the locomotive. The ones that are still alive today have been re-built or restored in parallel to the developing technology and continued their original functions by the help of new additions adopted on these buildings.

### 2. Conclusion

The objective of this paper is to give information about the very important part of the industrial heritage in Macedonia / Greece, especially of the historical railway buildings of that region. The results of this research may be helpful for the authorities to support the renovation and rehabilitation of those beautiful buildings.