



THE ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS IN KOSOVO DURING XVI – XVIII CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to shed light on the construction of architectural monuments in Kosovo as early as the XVI-XVIII centuries, especially Islamic architecture. This style of construction, influenced by the eastern part of the continent, had its own construction features, which set it apart from other constructions built before Islam. Those features reached Albanian areas after the Ottoman Empire conquered them. This type of architecture expressed religious aspects in mosques and prayer facilities, but bridges, markets, shrines, and other objects were also constructed. The research results indicated that Ottoman architectural features were influenced by local traditional elements. A specific model was produced and used in all Albanian areas under Ottoman rule. Secondly, over time numerous objects were built following this model. As a result, cities and lives were changed. A comparative research methodology besides analysis and synthesis was followed to elaborate this paper, using relevant literature.

KEYWORDS: Monuments; architecture; religion; Islam; Kosovo.

INTRODUCTION

"The Ottoman Empire's conquest and rule in the Balkans for five centuries, specifically in present-day Kosova (1389 / 1462-1912), left behind many architectural and cultural objects. These constructions of religious, public, and residential character, which were realized in Ottoman style and intertwined with local elements, enriched the mosaic of artistic and creative expression of the local inhabitants. Unfortunately, much of this material culture did not survive. Although years and climate conditions played their part, humans caused the greatest damage. Aside from that, state institutions never treated this creativity with high historical, cultural, artistic, religious, and environmental value. Especially during the XX century, institutions responsible for protecting cultural heritage sites always and intentionally neglected them" [1]. Albanian researchers believe Islamic architecture in Kosovo had more traditional elements during the Ottoman period. It is distinct from other examples of the Empire, and since its beginning, it has been Kosovo's Albanian heritage. Thus, Professor Fejaz Drançolli, an art historian from the University of Prishtina, in his work "The Ruining of the Albanian Tower," published in 2004, emphasizes that the autochthonous elements of Islamic architecture in Kosovo are dominant and that despite the influences from the artistic developments of the Ottoman Empire, they present an element dominant to define the style of this architecture. Professor Drançolli presented his thesis about this architecture's style and

originality. He stated that the Islamic architecture of Kosovo developed during the Ottoman period is special and forms the style of Islamic Kosovar architecture.

A more integrated opinion is presented by a researcher and professor from Albania with several years of experience in restoration Aleksander Meksi. In his book "Architecture of the Mosques of Albania (c. XV - XIX), published in Tirana in 2007, he first emphasizes that Islamic architecture is among the most precious cultural assets of the Albanian people. As far as the Islamic architecture of Albania and Kosovo developed during the Ottoman period, he thinks that in its first stages, mainly during the centuries XIV and XV, it was brought by the Ottoman armies and architectural prototypes which were completed in the countries from where the Ottoman armies came, which were accomplished by military masters in our country, in Kosovo [2]. Another Albanian author, the Ottomanologist Nehat Krasniqi, in his monograph "The Development of Albanian Culture with oriental influences from the XVIII Century to the Beginning of the National Renaissance," published in Prishtina in 2017, provides information from the XIV century onwards. According to this author, the mosques built were the first in Albanian architecture [3]. According to the researcher, these mosques can be divided into two types: with a dome and with wooden or tiled roofs.

The paper aims to present a more detailed study beyond previous publications. Although relevant, they

are limited to brief explanations rather than in-depth analyses. Moreover, the goal is to raise awareness of the importance, preservation, and promotion of architecture and its role in the historical, cultural, and religious heritage of the Ottoman style in the Albanian area. Finally, the paper aims to present this architecture to a broader audience.

METHODS

The research covers architectural monuments as objects of study and a primary source of information. The aim is to highlight the history, structure, location, and types of Islamic architecture over the centuries we deal with, through methods such as analysis and synthesis. Further, the comparative method has enabled the author to compare architecture in various locations in the Albanian area, noting the types. In addition to the monument as an object of study, there are direct and indirect literature sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kosovo is situated in the Balkan Peninsula and covers an area of 10.887 square kilometers with an estimated population of more than two million [4]. Most of the 90% are Albanian. Like many other countries in the Balkans, Kosovo was primarily Christian during the pre-Ottoman period. Islamic monuments in Kosovo are commonly associated with the Ottoman arrival in 1389 and their establishment in Kosovo in 1459 [5]. Once conquering Kosovo, the Ottomans established their administration and shaped the conquered territories according to their culture and traditions. Mosques, hamams (public baths), and madrasas (schools) were among the most significant sites that the Ottomans built. Ottoman architecture offers rich content composed of social, public, and traditional buildings focused on religion, particularly the Islamic tradition [6]. Construction of the Islamic cult, namely the Ottoman style, began in Mazgit (1389 to 1461) with the Tomb of Sultan Murat. In Kosovo, we have three imperial mosques whose donor was Sultan Mehmet II Fatih. Two mosques built by this donor are in Prishtina and one in Peja. In Prishtina, we deal with the Çarshi Mosque [7], as well as the Great Mosque from the years 1461 - 1462, while in Peja is the Bajrak Mosque or Çarshi Mosque from the years 1461 - 1472. Another mosque, as a historical, cultural, artistic, and religious work, is that of Koca Sinan Pasha, built in 1594/95 [8]. In the decoration of mosques with paintings, the Islamic-Albanian, or Kosovar, baroque style prevails. There are many geometric figures from the plant world, arabesques, and Quranic quotes. These works include a modification of local elements that the Albanian masters skillfully implemented in the architecture of mosques in Kosovo. At the same time, it should be noted that the rich experience and tradition of construction have made the craftsmen or the builders easily able to cope with the constructive - architectural and artistic solutions of the monumental

works realized during the Ottoman occupation in Kosovo [9].

Several factors influence the concept and definition of the style: nature, geography, social and economic factors, and the compositional scheme itself. A distinctive feature of classical monumental mosques in Albania and Kosovo is that they were built where previously there was a local market specific to Albanian cities at the time.

The sacred objects belonging to the mosques of the Islamic-Albanian style group, where Ottoman-Islamic influences are naturally and undoubtedly observed, are characterized by the compositional scheme or floor plan with a quadrilateral base at right angles to the porch and minarets. The minaret is always, in southwest view, built entirely of stone or metal mixed with stone and brick. This constructive architectural element has a square or polygonal base and emerges from the perimeter wall from the foundation. Therefore, it is one with the object. Moreover, every sacred construction of this type is always directed toward Mecca. This orientation is determined by the Mihrab, which is located inside the mosque. The Mihrab is located opposite the gate of the building in the middle of the southeastern wall of the mosque, in the form of a niche (opening in the wall). The sherefe also determines the orientation.

It should be noted, regarding the Mihrab, in this aspect, the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren, built in 1615, is an exception [10]. With its architectural beauty, exterior, and interior, and with the visual experience of the magnificent height of the dome and the minaret, built at 4.50 m above street level, this object of Islamic worship is among the most magnificent in the Balkan Peninsula [11]. In this work, the Mihrab, as a constructive-architectural and functional element, is not deepened, like a niche in the wall, as it appears in other constructions, but, from the foundation, it emerges from the wall in the apse shape of a rectangular quadrilateral. Mihrab is on the front wall of the apse with its characteristic features. The same thing, as far as the Mihrab is concerned, is found in the Red Mosque in Peja. This mosque was built in 1775. Additionally, the Mihrab of the Mosque of Sinan Pasha has side windows. In contrast, the Red Mosque Mihrab has no openings or windows [12].

BUILDINGS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN KOSOVO

Before dwelling on the specifics of the constructions, it is imperative to emphasize the importance of these creations in the Ottoman Empire. Architecture is the main genre of Islamic art. It is because human figures were prohibited in the Islamic religion. As a result, figurative painting did not find application in Islam as in the Western world. This specificity was also transmitted in Ottoman art [13]. Architectural buildings were an integral part of the Empire. Mosques, especially, had religious and charitable character, but also urban development.

The Sultan, as well as prominent personalities in the Empire, dedicated their wealth to mosque

construction, namely architectural complexes. Osman Gazi (ruled 1299-1324) initiated the waqf tradition in the Ottoman Empire. Waqf means devoting property to the public welfare. His property was devoted to schools, mosques, houses, etc. [14]. This tradition was followed by other sultans, who built complexes under their names. The complex consisted of sacred and profane architectural objects. Apart from their primary function, the accompanying facilities of the mosque, such as meyteps, madrassas, libraries, hammams, popular kitchens, hospitals, inns, etc., also collected funds for the mosque's operation. Thus, foundations and endowments began. Through endowments, longevity, and maintenance of mosques, religious, educational, and cultural activities were ensured.

This applied form had a substantial effect on the Empire's urban development. Ottoman cities developed mainly through architectural constructions. Moreover, the political, military, administrative, economic personalities, etc., who had created wealth in the service of the Empire, were required to donate a part of it. This was for construction and endowments. It occurred after Istanbul's conquest (1453) when Sultan Mehmet II, in addition to building it himself, ordered his subordinates to build complexes in different neighborhoods of the city. As a result, Istanbul experienced rapid growth and urban development in the Ottoman style. Such practices for city development can be traced back to the cities of Iznik and Bursa. This methodology found application in every corner of the Ottoman Empire. Albanian lands, specifically Kosovo, were also affected by this. However, one must consider the space and time when objects and architectural complexes, both religious and public, were built [13]. Therefore, when talking about Ottoman construction, we cannot overlook the place, time, and donor of the construction. The buildings built in Bursa and Iznik before Constantinople's fall differ from those built after its conquest (1453). At the same time, it should be noted that buildings built in large centers vary from those in smaller cities. For example, a mosque constructed in the Balkans is distinct from one constructed in Ottoman territories in the Near East. Likewise, the Sultan funded objects differently than viziers, pashas, or other personalities.

The Ottoman Empire's Corps of architects was created in the XVI century. This institution built all Empire constructions. However, it should be remembered that the Empire extended to three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa). Despite centralization, the buildings at the periphery of the Empire did not have the same treatment as those in the center. Likewise, the influences that resulted from different cultures interweaving should be mentioned. Such a case is the Ottoman architecture of the Balkan people. In this case, local building traditions were interwoven into the newly developed Islamic and secular cult art. This was named in the art of the Ottoman style.

OTTOMAN-STYLE BUILDINGS IN THE BALKANS

Alongside the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, numerous construction activities as mosques, baths, madrasas, caravanserais, bridges, and other facilities, were undertaken. Ottoman religious monuments were built in Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, etc. [15] Several major cities, such as Thessaloniki, Skopje, Plovdiv, Sarajevo, etc., gained new views, that is, of the Ottoman oriental style. This change also happened in the cities of today's Kosovo, such as Prishtina, Peja, Vushtrri, Prizren, Gjakova, Kaçanik, etc.

Clock towers were another type of public facility that marked the correct time. All big cities in Kosovo (Pristina, Prizren, Mitrovica, Gjakova, etc.) had a clock tower in the bazaar, while Peja had two [16]. However, in terms of importance, architectural, constructive, artistic, aesthetic values, etc., these constructions are more modest compared to those of large centers, such as Istanbul and Bursa. We also find differences if we compare the constructions of prominent Balkan administrative centers such as Skopje, Sarajevo, etc., with smaller centers: Gjakova, Tetova, and other similar cities. Mosques, madrasas, and hammams were the main constructions in the XIV and XV centuries. Some larger complexes built by the Sultan or vizier often included imarets.

One of the earliest mosques in the Balkans is the Ulu Mosque in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. It was originally built in the XIV century (1363 - 1364), and another building was built on the foundations of the original mosque by Sultan Murat II in the XV century. The mosque has a horizontal layout and is covered by more than one dome and archway. It was built with stones wrapped in bricks, according to the cloisonne technique. This technique was also applied in some mosques in Albania (Korçë, Elbasan) and partially in some constructive walls in the Hammam of Prishtina. The floor plan of Ulu Mosque in Plovdiv has three naves. The main central nave is wide and covered with a dome. The two main naves are covered by a vault. So, in this object, the influence of the Bursa school can be observed, but also elements of Byzantine style architecture and art. Another mosque built at the end of the fourth decade of the XV century, specifically in 1438, is that of Isa Bey in Skopje. This mosque is also under the influence of the Bursa school. It belongs to the type of mosque with side openings. These spaces, on occasion, served as hostels for dervishes or religious missionaries. The mosque of Isa Bey, in the compositional scheme, contains an open hall covered by five domes and an elongated central space that is covered by two domes. Vaults cover the mosque spaces on both sides. The first example of this construction typology is the Mosque of Orhan Gazi, built-in 1334 in Iznik. These two types of mosques, with horizontal extensions and side spaces, were built in prominent Balkan cities [13], such as Plovdiv and Skopje. We do not find similar types in today's Kosovo. In Kosovo, we mainly deal with one-space, central, vertical mosques covered with domes or roofs. The

monumental, classical buildings, covered by domes and preserved today, contain the typological and stylistic development of Ottoman art with local elements. These works were sometimes performed by local master craftsmen. [13]. These unknown folk masters had long experience in cult building construction. They were well-versed in building systems and techniques, building materials, masonry structures, and stone decorations. Mosques were built according to natural, social, and economic climatic factors in harmony with the environment where they were built. Later architectural achievements, such as the old bazaars built around mosques, were adapted and did not exceed the cult object's height. Consequently, the cities developed oriental views and urbanism.

BAZAR MOSQUE OR STONE MOSQUE

This mosque represents the first imperial building in Kosovo. It is located in the historical area, the core of Ottoman Prishtina. Bayazit laid the foundations in honor of his father, Sultan Murat I. The works continued during Mehmet I and Murat II's rule but were not finished until Sultan Mehmet II Fatih in 1461. The mosque has a quadrilateral composition scheme. It consists of a prayer hall, a porch, and a minaret. These are stylistic, characteristic features repeated in all dome-covered mosques in Kosovo. The prayer hall is covered with a dome. The dome stands on the pendentive and is illuminated by three rows of windows [13]. The mosque minaret is on the right side. It consists of the base, the upper part of the base, the body, the sherefe, the cover, the Kyla, and ends with alem. We also find alem in the central hall dome. [13]. In the interior of the prayer hall, among others, these architectural and functional elements stand out: the Mihrab, which occupies the position on the main wall of the mosque, deepened, which shows the direction in which Muslims should turn their faces when praying [17]. The element in question is oriented toward the Qibla or Kaaba. The minaret has the same direction and orientation. On the right, beside the Mihrab, is an object where sermons take place during holy days. To the left of the Mihrab is the Kursi which occupies a place on both sides of the northeast walls. The Mahfil, or women's gallery, is also in the mosque's interior. On the ground floor is the muezzin gallery. In addition to the mentioned elements, this gallery is characterized by pictorial decoration created using secco techniques. The motifs are geometric figures, plant life, architectural elements, and Quran quotations. An applied painting of the prayer hall is completed by motifs highlighted with a rosette on the cupola. There are decorative paintings on the dome of the pendant mosque, prayer hall walls, and around the windows. The graphic elements, although repeated, are not monotone. This is despite the tones of colors such as blue, violet-green, ocher, and light blue background with their soft contrasts give life and light to the prayer hall. The mosque is enhanced and decorated by fine relief plastic artwork in addition to applied paintings. The mentioned decorations are presented as plastic

decorations on the main member portal, the Mihrab in the shape of stalactites, the pillars of the Mahfil, the sides of the crowns of the constructive walls of the sherefe, as well as the profiles of the windows and their arches made of red bricks that stand out with direct contrasts from the gray color of the stones of other parts of the mosque wall. Decorative motifs without figuration are a common feature of cult objects as well as historical mosque decorations in Kosovo. The decorations had artistic values that simultaneously raised the importance of cult objects. [13].



Figure 1. The Great Mosque in Prishtina [13]

In addition to the Bazaar Mosque, built around 1420 [18], the Great Mosque was also built. This mosque is known as the King's Mosque or the Fatih Mosque (Figure 1). It was built in the historical area or core of old Prishtina, near the Bazaar Mosque. These two Islamic religious buildings are separated by the Jashar Pasha Mosque. This mosque is located between the two buildings that make up the complex of the closest mosques in Prishtina. It is the largest mosque in Prishtina. There is a prayer hall, a porch, and a minaret, just like at the Bazaar Mosque (Figure 2). The hall is covered with domes raised in the pendentive technique and system. This is identical to the Bazaar Mosque, where four rows of windows illuminate the prayer hall. The first order has square windows, while the other orders and the mosque drum are lit by arched windows. The porch is open and covered with three small domes. The minaret is located on the right side of the mosque. It has identical elements to the Bazaar Mosque but is more elegant and ends with a Kylah of wooden construction wrapped in lead. This was distinguished from the Kylah of the Bazaar Mosque, which is entirely made of stone (Figure 3). Likewise, the masonry technique differs from the Bazaar Mosque. Here we are dealing with the quadratic method, not Mahfil. As for the pictorial and plastic decorations, the motifs are identical. Here too, we deal with elements of the plant world, figurative, geometric, and architectural motifs, and quotes from

the Quran. All these decorative elements cover the interior walls. We also have paintings on the porch of the mosque, as well as above the main gate. In this painting, there is an inscription that indicates the building donor as well as the time of construction.

BAJRAK MOSQUE OR BAZAAR MOSQUE

In addition to the mosque in Prishtina, we have another mosque in Peja with Sultan as a donor. It is the Bajrakli Mosque or Bazaar Mosque. It was built by Fatih in 1462-1472. It is the largest mosque in Peja and the only one covered with a dome [19]. This historical mosque also features a compositional scheme identical to those two mosques in Prishtina [13]. It consists of the prayer hall, the porch, and the minaret. We have three rows of windows in the prayer hall: the first row has arched windows, the second row has arched windows, and the third row has arched windows, as well as an oculus. The porch is open and covered with three small domes. Like the mosques mentioned above, the minaret is located on the right. The walling structure is different because it is mixed with stone and brick. So, we have the quadratic technique and "opus mixtum". The interior is characterized by architectural and functional elements mentioned in these two buildings in Prishtina. The difference lies in their technique realization and structure. Likewise, in this classical monumental mosque, we have pictorial and plastic decorations, which are identical. This is because they adhere to Islamic religious rules and norms.



Figure 2. Bazaar Mosque – Peja [20]

The three mosques represent the first monumental works of the Ottoman-Islamic cult style in today's Kosovo, with local Albanian elements. Based on what was mentioned above, we can conclude that the compositional, architectural, functional, and decorative schemes are identical. But, of course, there are differences in the technique and system of crossing the dome, pictorial and plastic decorations, and their size and height. Another characteristic of mosques is that they were built near an open market. This was a characteristic of Albanian late medieval towns. So, the market, the mosque, and the bazaar were the beginning and the first characteristics of the

development of cities of the Ottoman period on the Albanian territory and in Kosovo in particular. Within the area of the mosques were also cemeteries of the city's famous personalities. In addition to the sacred buildings, hammams, fountains, imarets, libraries, madrasahs, etc., were built.

It should be noted that of the existing cemeteries, only those of the Bajrak Mosque in Peja exist. Even the environments around the objects in question have been lost, except the Peja Mosque. Historical mosques in Kosovo are among the first examples of architectural construction with a central dome of the Islamic cult in the territory in question and beyond. Of course, compared to the mosques built by the same donor or other sultans in large centers such as Edirne, Istanbul, Bursa, etc., they are modest and characteristic of the Ottoman provinces. However, for the place and time they were constructed, they are monumental and dominated by the buildings and spaces where they lay. They were built in the XV century [13].

Before focusing on the restoration measures in the minaret of the Hadum Mosque in Gjakova, built at the end of the XVI century, we think we should briefly discuss and familiarize ourselves with the monuments of Gjakova and surroundings. We have seen many values of spiritual culture in Gjakova and its surroundings, starting from early historical periods. This material culture was part of the treasure collection of Albanian monuments. The existing heritage in question is presented to us in different forms, as traces or works preserved to some extent. They have mostly remained in their environs and Gjakova itself. The Albanian ethnocultural heritage and these surviving buildings show historical rises and fall. They express the originality and qualities of identified and unidentified local masters and artists [21].

In this period, the Hadum Mosque was constructed. The mosque was built by Hadum Suleiman Efendi – Hadum Aga in 1594-1595. According to tradition, the mosque was built on Jak Vula's field. That's where the city's name comes from. It is interesting to mention that the foundations were laid, and the Hadum Mosque was constructed. There was a marketplace.



Figure 3. The Stone Mosque in Prishtina [13]

This is a characteristic of Albanian cities not known in Turkish Ottoman cities. The market, the Hadum Mosque, the monumental hammam, and the old Gjakova Bazaar in the XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX centuries played a significant role in Gjakova's urban-architectural character. The Hadum mosque consists of a prayer hall, a porch, and a minaret. The graves of the famous Gjakova family members are located around the mosque [21].

Stone was used for this aerial facility. The inner walls are plastered with bricks. As for the plastic decorations, this work is distinguished by profiled openings, modest pillars, and stalactites. In addition, it has ornaments on the minaret parapet [22]. Most of the monuments of Islamic-Ottoman architecture in the Albanian territories mentioned above were built by our ancestors before the Austro-Ottoman war (1683-1690) [22].

CONCLUSIONS

Ottoman rule in Kosovo was associated with new construction styles. The entire structure and construction were of a special type compared to earlier construction. However, there was a variability even in the architectural works of the rest of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, there was original Albanian authenticity. Despite borrowing from both sides, these structures were unique from the West and East. Based on the information above, we conclude that most Kosovo mosques were constructed in the major Kosovo cities of the time, including Prishtina, Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, and Kaçanik. These objects have the same architecture but small differences, such as windows or other distinguishing features.

According to what was mentioned above, the buildings' compositional, architectural, functional, and decorative schemes are identical. Of course, there are differences in the technique and system of crossing the dome, pictorial and plastic decorations, and their size and height. Another characteristic of mosques is that they were built near an open market. This was a characteristic of Albanian late medieval towns. So, the market, the mosque, and the bazaar were the beginning and the first characteristics of the development of cities of the Ottoman period in the Albanian territory and Kosovo in particular. Mosques also had city cemeteries where famous figures were buried. In addition to the sacred buildings, hammams, fountains, imarets, libraries, madrasahs, etc., were built.

It should be noted that of the existing cemeteries, only those of the Bajrak Mosque in Peja exist. Even the environments around the examined objects have been lost, except the Peja Mosque. Historical mosques in Kosovo are among the first examples of architectural construction with a central dome of the Islamic cult in the territory in question and beyond.

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