

Turko-Islamic Art In Kosovo and the Balkans and the Destroying of Mosques In Kosovo After The Final War (1998-1999)

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Abstract

This piece discusses the architectural, cultural, and religious influence of Turkish culture on the major cities of Kosovo as well as the major cities of the Balkan region as a whole. The destruction of the mosques after the Final war of Kosovo. Destroyed and damaged Islamic monuments throughout the Kosovo conflicts (1998-1999). Many Kosovar-Albanian cultural objects were destroyed and damaged throughout the era of Slavic occupation of Kosovo, specifically during the war era of the Final war of Kosovo (1998-1999). Being that Kosovo was a part of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman architecture definitely influenced Kosovar/Albanian architecture. After World War II, Kosovo fell into Yugoslavian communist control, who had plans to modernize the general architecture of the communist country in a way to create more of a sense of urbanity to residential areas and city property as a whole. These architectural measures being taken were to rid the residential settlements of Ottoman architectural influence. To the communists, the Ottoman architectural design and style was known as "old fashioned" and not "modern".

Keywords: Mosque, culture, destruction/destroyed, Islam, religion, history, monuments, architecture

Opening

In terms of cultural heritage, Kosovo is characterized and influenced by a large number of architectural features from many different cultures that throughout different historical periods, have developed in almost all the cities of Kosovo. A characteristic of the Turkish-Islamic art style, which plays an enormous role in the development of architecture and various fields of art not only in Kosovo but also Balkan countries as a whole as well as countries in and around Europe and the Balkan region, would be the establishment of facilities; numerous architectural objects ranging from the hammam bathhouses to one of the most attractive and monumental ones: mosques, in terms of different architectural styles. This style brings a respective freshness and reflects upon paintings, sculptures and general architecture which will essentially be adopted as an ornament as a motive of expression.

The word "islam" means "obedience"; Muslims are those who devote themselves to worshipping Allah, the One and Only. According to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), all Muslims are saints and they are brothers, all members of one family or community. The specific feature of Islam and its primary nucleus is the synthesis of ethnic and universal elements. The religion of Islam has opened its doors to all, without considering their race, color, and culture. It was a national religion oriented in Arabia from which it spread to the four corners of the world.

The most renowned examples of Islamic architecture in the Kosovo region are the mosques, hamams, bridges, tombs, tekkes, clock towers and many others.

Particular attention should be paid to the many architectural monuments and mosques that stand in all the city centers of Kosovo. Mosques have architectural monumentality that is presented from the city of Prishtina to Peja that deeply encompass a large number of cultural- historical heritage sites.

The mosque of Sultan Mehmet Fatih (conqueror) in Prishtina, which according to the inscription located on its portal, was built in the year 1460-61, is one of the most important and valuable Ottoman buildings. The Carshia Mosque (now the Mosque) in the center of Prishtina, was built by Sultan Bayezid immediately after becoming the victor of the infamous Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Made entirely out of stone, the mosque's minaret stands out, including at the pointed peak, made of carved stone, which undoubtedly presents as an indication of construction in the areas where Islamic architecture stands out.

As a city, Prizren has a plethora of architecture that includes different styles of buildings, but especially Islamic based/influenced, starting from dwelling/residential houses to the numerous ducats extending from all sides of the town where the river Lumbardhi forks into two. On the east side of the city stands the fortress, with its ancient majesty. However to the south, with its grand monumentality and architectural beauty, is the Sinan Pasha Mosque, located in the busiest part of the city, standing out from the inside. In the mosque, we find the inscription "Xhenet misali" (resembles paradise). It was built in 1615-16.

On the other side of the river Lumbardh stands the Hammam of the city of Prizren, the restoration of which has been done and is quite functional, except for the tourist destination of the facility that serves many tourists who come to visit the Islamic-cultural objects and historical heritage. Today, the hamam is used as a gallery, where exhibitions and cultural events are organized.

In the south-western city of Gjakova was also erected the Hadum Mosque, in the year 1592-93. In addition to its specific architectural solution, it stands out for its interesting pictorial decoration through walls with stylized landscapes and cypress trees.

A considerable number of Islamic objects are in the picturesque city of Peja, where mosques stand out as some of the most famous structures of Islamic architecture in Kosovo such as the Bajrakli Mosque, Kurshumli Mosque, Hammam Mosque, etc.

The Bajrakli mosque is based on the architectural complex that was influenced by multiple old Islamic architectural structures. It's considered to have been built in the second half of the century. Its large dome, vital minaret and three small domes really depict the Islamic influence.

The Hamam mosque is built near the hammam. It is very old and has only one inscription preserved: the construction indicator year, which was 1861.

Mosques in Tirana:

- Et'hem Bey Mosque is a mosque that was built in Albania by Mulla Bey from Petrela around the end of the 18th century.
- Mulla Bey, who laid the foundations of the prayer building, managed to finish even the corners and the dome of the mosque. However, Bey couldn't experience the embellishments and paintings in this mosque: he passed away in 1807. The mullah's son, Hajji Et'hem Bey, rich in knowledge and position, managed to complete the minaret of the mosque. He decorated the mosque with paintings, built the ceiling and portico, and thus completed the mosque in 1830-31.

Mosques in Skopje:

Skopje and many other cities in Macedonia as also distinguished by a number of large Islamic objects that stand out in the busiest places of the city squares:

- The stone bridge, which ranks among the first objects from the historical monuments of Skopje, built in the 15th century.
- Skopje Castle, located on a hill, which dominates the entire city of Skopje.
- Kurshumli Hani, is a part of a bazaar where you can eat and shop. It is one of the oldest places in Macedonia. The Kurshumli Hani is now an archeological museum.
- The Hammam of Daut Pasha is an art gallery
- The Mosque of Isaac Bey



Fig.1. The diverse mosque of Tetovo

- The builder of the mosque, Isaac Bey, was the commander of the Turkish army stationed in Macedonia, based in Skopje.
- He was the son of the famous Jigit Pasha.

The Larme Mosque-Tetovo

- Popularly known as the Pasha mosque, located near the river Shkumbin in the old part of the city of Tetovo.
- The mosque was built in 1495 and was rebuilt and expanded from the ground up in 1833 by Abdurrahmon Pasha, son of Rexhep Pasha, who were the great defenders of Tetovo, who also had great adoration of art.
- We understand all this data from the inscription preserved on the entrance to the mosque as well from the tomb mark which is preserved in the turbine built in the courtyard of the mosque.
- These famous pashas who acted in Tetovo in the first half of the 14th century, built and rebuilt the city castle and the Baba Teqen Arabs.

Mosques in Sarajevo

- The Ali Pasha Mosque in Sarajevo was built in 1561. The mosque was built by Hadim Ali Pasha beg Budim in 1560-61, at the time of the Paschal of Bosnia rule. The mosque is built based off of the classic influences of Istanbul.
- Ali Pasha, originally from Sarajevo, wrote in his will that near his grave, should a mosque be erected by the means of his Waqf. He died in 1557, four years before this mosque was erected.
- The Ali Pasha Mosque was declared the national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005.

Gazi Husrev Beg Mosque, or Beg Mosque in Sarajevo

- In terms of size and attraction, this mosque is one of the most popular mosques out of all the Islamic architecturally influenced structures in the Balkans.
- Built in 1530.
- The mosque was built by Gani Husrev Bey, ruler of the Bosnian Sandzak.

Destruction of mosques in Kosova

Islamic monuments damaged and destroyed during the Kosova Conflict (1998-99).

During the period of Yugoslav rule in Kosova, the architectural heritage that belonged to Kosovar-Albanians was shown to be institutionalised contempt decades before the most recent war of the 20th century. Many ethnic Albanian cultural sites in Kosova were long destroyed during the period of Yugoslav rule and especially during the Kosova war (1998-99), which constituted a war crime that violated Hague and Geneva Conventions. During the war, 225 out of 600 mosques in Kosova were damaged, vandalized, or destroyed, along with many other Islamic facilities. In addition, 500 traditional stone Albanian towers and three of the four centers of urban maintenance of the Ottoman period in the cities of Kosova was severely damaged, resulting in great loss of traditional architecture. Public libraries of Kosova, in particular 65 of the 183 existing libraries were completely destroyed. 900,588 volumes were lost while Islamic libraries suffered damage resulting in the loss of rare books, manuscripts, and other important collections of literature and culture. Archives of the Islamic community of Kosovo with data that included 500 years were also destroyed. During the war, Islamic architecture was considered Albanian property for paramilitary forces and military. The destruction of non-Serb architectural influence was an integral part of methodical and planned ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosova.

Kosova, being a part of the Ottoman Empire for about five centuries, had many examples of Ottoman architectural influences. After World War II, Yugoslavia was ruled by communist authorities, who implemented plans for the modernization of the architectural landscape and the design of urban settlements. These measures were aimed at changing the appearance of settlements that were considered to have elements related to the Ottoman period. According to the Yugoslav communist leaders, there were elements that were quite "old-fashioned". Starting in the late 1940's, the architectural style of Kosova's main urban centers began to be destroyed, mainly by the local government, as part of urban modernization schemes. During the 1950's, this process was undertaken by the Institute of Urban Planning

(Serbo-Croatian: Urbanistiki zavod) of Yugoslavia, with the most well-known example in Kosova of the socialist modernization project of Prishtina. The Ottoman Bazaar of Prishtina contained 200 shops, divided into blocks for crafts and artisan society, owned by Albanians. There is a mosque that is surrounded by the bazaar: this complex was expropriated in 1947 and destroyed by labor brigades known in Albanian as the "Popular Front" and in Serbian as " Narodni Front".

The Bazaar of Prishtina, with the construction of new buildings and destroyed buildings and undestroyed buildings.

In 1952, the Yugoslav government established the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Kosova, in charge of dealing with issues related to cultural heritage in Kosova. After World War II, in communist Yugoslavia, only one monument the Ottoman period had the status of a cultural monument, and that monument was the Tomb of the Sultan Murat. While the status of state protection has been given mainly to church buildings Serbian Orthodox in Kosova. The criteria for listing mosques as historical monuments were way more restrictive than for Serbian Orthodox architectural structures. Buildings that had status received fundings for restorations, while numerous mosques from the Ottoman period were not protected or renovated during this time without the supervision of the institute, which often resulted in damage to original architectural elements. On the eve of the first major event of the Kosovan War, only 15 of the 600 mosques of Kosova had the status of historical monumentality, while Serb-Orthodox churches, cemeteries, and monasteries had the status of historical monumentality, even though more than half of the mosques in Kosova date from the Ottoman period, ie from the 14th to 15th century.

A house destroyed with a damaged mosque near in a village in Kosova, 1999.

The Kosovan war was a liberation war of Albanian fighters, mainly from the ranks of the Kosova.

Liberation Army (KLA), fighting against Serb paramilitary and military forces during the years 1998-1999, a war that ended with the military intervention of North Atlantic



Fig. 2. A mosque destroyed in a Kosovo village in 1999

Treaty Organisation (NATO). During the war, Yugoslav Serb forces put up targeting various state archives and buildings, museums and libraries; Islamic libraries, Muslim schools, and tekkes.

Before the war, the reserve collection consisted of numerous copies of library publications in the National Library in Pristina, held for use within Kosova for libraries and others which were destroyed in a paper factory in Lipjan by order of the Serbian director of the library. During the war, 65 (one third) of Kosova's 183 public libraries were fully accessible. 900,588 volumes were destroyed. The school libraries of Kosova were also destroyed during the war. In 1999, several cultural archives and collections were moved from Kosova to Serbia, such as the archive of the Institute for the Protection of the Monuments of Kosova, was removed from the building of the institute in Prishtina by the employees of the Ministry of Interior of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav-Serbian Ministry of Justice stated that the removal of public records from Kosova to Serbia in 1999 was "to prevent Albanian separatists destroying, or falsifying (them)". Some municipal registers of Kosova were also burned at the places where they were held.

The central historical archive of the Islamic community of Kosova contains data of the community for the past 500 years, in which was burnt on June 13th, 1999 by Serbo-Yugoslavian police after a ceasefire and just hours before the arrival of NATO peacekeepers in Pristina. In Gjakova, the Bektashi tekke of Axhiz Baba was burned in May by Serbo-Yugoslav soldiers with incendiary grenades fired from the shoulders and resulted in the loss of 2,000 books and 250 extremely rare manuscripts, such as a 12th century Persian manuscript. The Hadum Suleiman Aga Library (founded in 1595) in Gjakova was burned on March 24th by Serbo-Yugoslav soldiers, resulting in the loss of 1,300 rare books and 200 manuscripts written in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and the Albanian and Arabic alphabet together, with regional archives of the Islamic Community that included documents up to the 17th century. In Peja, the library of the Attic Madrasa had been burned with only the outer walls remaining, resulting in the loss of 100 manuscript codes and 2,000 printed books. (Attic Theological School Madrasa in Ferizaj dating from the Ottoman period

was burned and its remains were bulldozed. The Museum of the League of Prizren in Prizren was also destroyed by grenades fired by the Serbo-Yugoslav police during March of 1999.

The Serbian cross symbol with four Cyrillic "Cs" engraved on a building during the war in Kosova, 1999.

After the war, in August of 1999, reports by the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) documented that 155 mosques were destroyed in Kosova, based on refugee accounts. According to the Islamic Community of Kosova, the duration of the war has resulted in the damage, destruction and collapse of 217 mosques, 4 madrasas, and 3 tekkes. Of the 498 active mosques in Kosova, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has documented that 225 mosques have been damaged or destroyed by the Serbo-Yugoslav army. Through the duration of the 18 months of counter-war, the Yugoslav-Serb army in 1998-99 inside Kosova resulted in 225 casualties (or one third) out of 600 mosques, which were vandalized or destroyed. Some Islamic objects were damaged within the context of the fighting.

Mosques and other Islamic buildings in some urban neighbourhoods and villages became the only targets of violence against architecture. In the conclusion of an attack on a village and the flight of the population from villages, towns, and cities, attacks on mosques, other Islamic buildings and architecture were widely undertaken by the Yugoslav-Serb army. Attacks in some cases consisted of the downfall of mosque minarets; the tops of minarets were removed by artillery fire, explosive devices were placed inside minarets and in mosques, mosques were flattened by bulldozers, many fires were started, as well as many other attacks of violence. Vandalism of mosques, anti-Albanian and anti-Islamic vandalism, with the graffiti of facades with images and text, even in some instances, anti-Albanian and pro-Serbian inscriptions were carved into the walls of mosques. Inscriptions left on the mosque by the Yugoslav-Serb army often had the words "Kosovo je Srbija" (Kosova is Serbia), "Srbija" (Serbia), "Mismo Srbi" (We are Serbs), while the most common graffiti was a cross with four Cyrillic Cs in each corner, which is a Serbian national symbol. An in-depth study by Doctors for



Fig. 3. Destroyed mosque in skenderaj, Kosovo 1999

Human Rights for Kosovar-Albanian refugees, found that Albanians were often not present to see the destruction of Islamic architecture due to their escape. These events were also confirmed in reports from human rights organisations on the activities of the Yugoslav-Serb forces and their victims who were targeted and focused on achieving such destruction. In some, there were occasional witnesses to these attacks on historic monuments.

Mosques with exploded minarets in Skenderaj, Kosova 1999.

There was also vandalism of the Albanian-Catholic churches in Kosova. The Saint Anton's Catholic Church in Gjakova was severely damaged by Serb-Yugoslav soldiers. Serbo-Yugoslavs in Pristina expelled nuns and priests and installed aircrafts radar in the belfry, which resulted in the NATO bombing of the church and surrounding houses. Whereas 500 (or 90%) of the tower dwellers, which belonged to the

families of prominent Albanians, along with historic bazaars, were targeted. Three of the four centers that were well-preserved Ottoman urban buildings in Kosovar cities, were severely damaged by resulting in great loss of traditional architecture. The struck architecture suffered irreplaceable damage. Destroyed and damaged monuments were often in relatively quiet areas, which proves that the damage done was intentional and not as a result of military exchanges of war. During the war, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 70,000 homes in Kosova were destroyed.

The destruction of Kosova's historic architecture took place in the context of the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign, which followed a pattern similar to one that occurred in Bosnia and deteriorated, due to efficiency lessons learned from this conflict. Destruction of non-Serb architectural objects was a methodical and planned component of eth-



Fig. 4. View of a city destroyed during the 1999 Kosovo war

nic cleansing in Kosova. Harvard University researchers, Andrea Herscher and Andras Riedlmayer point out that the destruction of individual houses and properties, except the historic architecture, of course all the Kosovar-Albanian population was targeted as a defined cultural entity during the war.

Cultural heritage after the war in Kosova

After the war in Kosova (1999), there were reports from journalists and refugees about the destruction of Kosova's cultural heritage and the need arose to investigate these allegations and to document damages. The United Nations (UN) established civilian administrations in Kosova, however one of its agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Culture (UNESCO), which deals with cultural heritage issues, had no plans to undertake such an activity. Andrea Herscher and Andras Riedlmayer have conducted research, raised funds and three months after the war end-

ed in 1999, went to Kosova in October and undocumented the damage done to cultural heritage institutions and buildings. With completion of the field research, their findings and documentations were placed on a database and a final report was written with copies provided to the Department of Culture. The UN Mission in Kosova and the Office of the Prosecutor which presided over the UN tribunal for war crimes in The Hague.

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic

At the trial of Slobodan Milosevic (2002-2006), the Yugoslav-Serb president during the war in Kosova (1999), the ICTY indictment against him referred to methods of persecution against Kosovar Albanians to "make unbridled systematic destruction, on purpose damage to their religious communities and cultural monuments". Prosecutions at trial tried to prove Milosevic guilty of these actions and events, Milosevic claimed that Kosovar-Albanian heritage sites,

in addition to Orthodox monuments and religious sites were damaged by NATO bombings. Yugoslavs on several occasions claimed that NATO destroyed the monuments, however the investigation team led by Andras Riedlmayer, found them intact, such as two Ottoman bridges and Sinan Pasha mosque. Investigators acquitted NATO of responsibility, in addition to damaging the roof of the village mosque and an abandoned Catholic church which was damaged through an airstrike after a nearby military base was hit by a missile. Reports Riedlmayer made in court concluded that the towers and a third of the mosques were damaged and destroyed, with three urban centers of the Ottoman period destroyed by fires of intentionally lit. The report also noted that the Yugoslav Serb army, the paramilitary forces and police and in some cases, Serb civilians had carried out those attacks, according to eyewitnesses. Riedlmayer found that the Yugoslav-Serb forces used two as a basis for action, the Catholic church, in which international law is forbidden. The investigative team stressed that the destruction and damage of Kosova's heritage sites took place during the war of the year 199 through ground attacks and not air strikes. With the weeks remaining before the end of trial, no court decision was reached due to Milosevic's death in March 2006.

After the war in Kosova. View of a city destroyed during the Kosova war, 1999 .

The destruction of numerous Serbian churches took place in a post-war environment done by some Albanians, who considered this architectural heritage as revenge against the government of Milosevic and his military forces for the violence committed during the war in Kosova (1998-1999). The Serbian government has used such attacks as a base to ask the United Nations to allow its police and armed forces to return and preserve historic monuments in Kosova. The request failed and the post-war attacks on Serbian cultural heritage are used by Serbian cultural institutions to divert attention from attacks on Albanian cultural heritage done during the war. These institutions reported on the damage done after the fight against the Serbo-Orthodox heritage and produced reports that were accepted by international

cultural heritage institutions as neutral and objective assessments.

In the world, little awareness of concern has emerged about the cultural heritage to which belongs to Kosovar-Albanians, which many things associated with that were damaged during the war. The Serbian government only admitted it once that Albanian cultural objects had been damaged within the context of an assessment of NATO war crimes, which included airstrikes on several ethnic Albanian historical monuments. Little legal attention to the severely damaged Islamic heritage has occurred despite ICTU documentation of destroyed and damaged mosques of Kosova. There have been reluctant to acknowledge the damage done to the cultural heritage of Albanians in Kosova by the international community. Its humanitarian mission in Kosova to provide for its populations and the issue of damaged culture has been set aside towards a focus on "reconstruction" of Kosova. The Islamic Community of Kosova since 1999 through funding from various sources, is engaged in the reconstruction of 113 mosques damaged by the war in Kosova. A total of 211 war torn mosques in Kosova have been rebuilt through contributions from donors and local communities, non-governmental agencies and foreign governments, as assistance from some Islamic countries especially Turkey and Arabic nations. Islamic charities entered Kosova and rebuilt Ottoman-era mosques destroyed during the Arab/Persian-Gulf War and were responsible for the destruction of centuries- old religious complexes and mosques under the "reconstruction" period. Journalists in Kosova reported that the assistance to local communities was dependent on them and allowed special Islamic charities to rebuild local mosques. Libraries, cemeteries, and mausoleums that were centuries old were subjected to destruction by Islamic charities, who considered then to be "idols". Assistance came from Western institutions for the reconstruction of mosque, as well as from the Italian government who rebuilt two mosques in Peja and Harvard University, who rebuilt a mosque of importance in Gjakova. Kosovar Jews also financed the reconstruction of a mosque in Gjakova.

Protection, restoration and reconstruction of monuments and architectural stylings of Islam has not received much

interest from Kosovar state authorities in contrast to architecture belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Conclusion

The destruction of Kosova's historic architecture took place in the context of the Serbian campaign ethnic cleansing, which followed a pattern that occurred in Bosnia and deteriorated, due to efficiency lessons learned from this conflict. Destruction of non-Serb architectural objects was a methodical and planned component of ethnic cleansing in Kosova. Religious architecture in the Balkans has always had the influence of inciting various wars. From this conclusion came the result historical politics and incitement to inter-religious and national hatred.

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