

# Ottoman until proven otherwise

## Mutations of the Behram-beg mosque in Tuzla, 1540–2021

---

Ajla Bajramović (University of Vienna)

**Abstract:** *How do we understand authenticity when discussing a building that went through several different construction phases? Is only its initial and intended state considered 'original'? Can local memory influence its perceived authenticity? Using the Behram-beg mosque in Tuzla as a case study, this paper seeks answers to these questions by examining transformations the mosque experienced since its construction in 1888, followed by interventions around 1895, in the 1960s and since 2018. It also addresses the newly uncovered wall decoration from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the change in the object's cultural significance brought about by the ongoing restoration/reconstruction project.*

The story of the Behram-beg mosque will be told in two parts. After a brief discussion of the persistence or rediscovery of Ottoman architecture in Bosnia, the first sections will discuss the mosque's history since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with a focus on the present building's construction around 1888 and a major intervention of ca. 1895. The second part of the paper takes place in the present. It will revolve around the implementation of the mosque's reconstruction project of 2018 and the results of an empirical study, conducted by the author in 2022, with the goal of using the object as a case study for a better understanding of transformation versus authenticity. It questioned whether a building can ever *be*, or rather *stay* unchanged.

What we will find is that there is no simple or straightforward answer to these inquiries. As discussed in the paper's final part, there appears to be a significant difference between the objective and subjective ways of looking at the Behram-beg mosque. The objective point of view is, at least in their own perception, usually coming from fields of architecture and art history, in which the building's authenticity is determined solely by hard facts stated by experts who

are able to properly identify, date, and categorize the object in question. The subjective point of view is usually taken by the local population and formed on the basis of (oftentimes suggestive and/or outright fabricated) collective memory and oral history.

## The long shadow of Ottoman Bosnia

For more than four centuries, specifically from 1463 to 1878, Bosnia was ruled by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> This greatly impacted the area's cultural and religious development – with Islam becoming the region's dominant religion. The conversion to Islam of the Bosnian population did not occur instantaneously, but rather at a moderate pace and variable rate, brought about by the economic and political stability the Ottoman Empire established upon its arrival, as well as the urbanization of the land.<sup>2</sup> By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many settlements, such as Sarajevo, the capital city, and other larger towns such as Banja Luka, Travnik, and Tuzla, had evolved into typically Ottoman provincial urban centers with mosques, *medresas*, *mektebs*, *hamams*, and trading markets.<sup>3</sup>

Since the end of the Ottoman period, the building typology of Bosnian mosques went through different phases – only to, interestingly enough, make a full circle and return to Ottoman archetypes. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, wooden mosques with a steep hipped roof and a minaret rising from it represented a typical traditional type of a neighborhood or *mahala* mosque.<sup>4</sup> The steady urbanization of Bosnia also saw more representative mosques in selected city centers. Their building typology was more recognizably Ottoman, and they were larger and built of solid material, with a prominent portico and a pencil shaped minaret. They could either have a hipped or tented roof or a central dome, rarely supported by semi-domes. In Tuzla, the Jalska and Čaršijska mosques are examples of such a mixed traditional/monumental type (Fig. 1&2), built of solid materials but lacking a dome.<sup>5</sup>

---

1 Malcolm (1996), p. 11; pp. 43–4.

2 Kadrić (2017), p. 277.

3 Malcolm (1996), p. 68.

4 Jahić (2019), p. 6. A great example of such a neighbourhood mosque in Tuzla is the Džindijska mosque (a.k.a Husein Čauš mosque) from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

5 Hadžimehanović (1982), pp. 114–26.



Fig. 1–2: Tuzla, Jalska and Čaršijska mosques. Sources: Photograph by Ajla Bajramović (2018) and Karić (2008), p. 24.

Under Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia (1878–1918) there was an attempt to change the urban and religious landscape of the country. When it came to mosques, the most familiar Ottoman mosque type was questioned in favor of mosques in a new Orientalizing style.<sup>6</sup> The main case study of this paper, the Behram-beg mosque, is a prime example of that new style, and will be discussed at length in the following pages. After the period of Habsburg rule ended and the Kingdom (1918–41) and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–92) were formed and dissolved, there was yet another shift in the visual appearance of Bosnian mosques.<sup>7</sup> Next to a handful of modernist mosques, a neo-Ottoman aesthetic has triumphed since the 1960s, most likely due to its

6 Like Hartmuth's, this paper forms part a project that received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. 758099 – project "Islamic Architecture and Orientalizing Style in Habsburg Bosnia, 1878–1918", 2018–2023, PI: Maximilian Hartmuth. Information on the project's goals and achievements, as well as output papers and presentations, can be viewed on the project's official website: <https://ercbos.univie.ac.at>.

7 Malcolm (1996), pp. 161–3.

recognizable and simply achieved monumentality. Today, in almost every corner of Bosnia one can stumble upon a simple, usually white, rectangular building with two rows of windows, a pencil minaret, a dome or a hipped roof, and few decorative elements whether in- or outside of the mosque.

Between the Ottoman era and today are several influential historical periods, and yet, according to a 2013 census, the majority of the Bosnian population (52 percent) identified with the Muslim faith.<sup>8</sup> This points to the fact that the amalgamation of 400 years of Ottoman rule and Bosnian identity could not be so easily overwritten by the events of the past century. This bond is still visible to this day, as it is expressed through carefully cultivated cultural, political, and touristic relationships between Bosnia and Turkey.<sup>9</sup> It is, perhaps, also for this reason that no specifically *Bosnian* mosque type or style developed in recent times. A simplified version of Ottoman forms remains the preferred norm throughout the country, in which many mosque projects were also Turkish-funded. So, instead of a de-Ottomanization, it could be said that Bosnia is currently experiencing a re-Ottomanization, perhaps even a form of Turkification. This particular phenomenon is a central topic to this paper, as it aims to use the Behram-beg mosque to inspect the contemporary construction of a, in this case at least, inaccurate idea of Ottoman heritage in people's collective memory.

## The architectural history of the Behram-beg mosque

### The Ottoman period building(s), 1540–1871

Not much information on the state of the mosque prior to the Habsburg period is available. Next to 'Behram-begova', the mosque was also known amongst the people as the *Atik* (old) or *Šarena* (colorful) mosque. It is referred to as *old* since the first written sources, dating it back to around 1540, which insinuate that it was Tuzla's first mosque.<sup>10</sup> Yet, it is not known who built it or how it looked like

---

8 U.S. Department of State, 2016 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bosnia and Herzegovina. Available online: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2016-report-on-international-religious-freedom/bosnia-and-herzegovina/> (Last accessed September 2020).

9 Karić, Rašidagić & Aydın (2021), p. 104.

10 Hadžimehanović (1982), p. 119.

at that time. At some point during the 17<sup>th</sup> century a certain Behram-beg is said to have settled in town. He purchased the land on which the old mosque stood, rebuilt it, added a *medresa* nearby, and founded a *waqf* (Bosnian *vakuf*) to support them. These new objects survived for almost 200 years, up until the Tuzla city fire of 1871 when both the mosque and *medresa* burned to the ground.<sup>11</sup> It was not until 1888 that both were rebuilt, now under Habsburg supervision. The questions that arise are why that process took so long, and why the two objects were rebuilt by the new administration in the first place.

### The Habsburg-period rebuilding of ca. 1888

Wishing to establish effective state regulation and adequate supervision over waqf-owned lands, the Habsburg government founded the Waqf Commission (*Vakuf-Commission*) in 1883.<sup>12</sup> This meant that all *waqfs* in Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under the control of government-appointed opinion-leaders of the Muslim community. Most likely, the Behram-beg mosque and *medresa*, as they belonged to the Behram-beg's *waqf*, were rebuilt under the supervision of the mentioned commission, explaining why governmental architects and engineers were involved with these objects in the first place. According to an article published in an Austrian engineers' journal in 1888, reporting on a study trip in May of the same year, the new mosque was attributed to an Austro-Hungarian engineer named Franz von Mihanović (sometimes also spelt Mihanovich). It was then described as a "newly built" creation styled on "Arabic models."<sup>13</sup> Important to mention is that the Behram-beg mosque was the first mosque in Bosnia rebuilt in the newly fashionable Orientalizing architectural style. This means that it not only transformed its own visual appearance in comparison to the previous two models, but it also influenced a whole generation of Orien-

11 Kreševljaković (1991), p. 98.

12 Donia (1981), p. 23.

13 Kortz (1888), p. 321. The article describes the Behram-beg mosque as follows: „Hierauf wurde die schön gelegene neue Dzamja (Moschee) in Augenschein genommen, welche, nach arabischen Vorbildern vom Kreis – Ingenieur Herrn v. Mihanovich projectirt, durch ihre zierliche Architektur und geschmackvolle Farbenzusammenstellung einen angenehmen Eindruck macht. Das bescheidene Budget für diesen Bau – die Kosten sind mit fl. 10.000 veranschlagt – wird durch einen Beitrag der Landesregierung und freiwillige Spenden gedeckt.“

talizing buildings in Bosnia. But why pursue such a significant project in the small industrial town of Tuzla?<sup>14</sup>

With the arrival of Austro-Hungarian rule, a shift in Bosnia's urban landscape of the country occurred. Next to promoting industrialization and improved infrastructure and transportation systems, the new administration started building in a particular, Orientalizing style of architecture, mostly directed toward the Muslim population of Bosnia, with the goal of both accepting and exoticizing the country's 'Oriental' tradition. Its stylistic vocabulary reveals diverse Islamic influences.<sup>15</sup> There are certain Orientalizing architectural elements used so often that they became known as markers of the style, such as the banded façade, inspired by Mamluk *ablaq* masonry, and horseshoe shaped and multifoil arches and windows, inspired by the Islamic architecture of al-Andalus and the Alhambra in particular.<sup>16</sup> By employing the Orientalizing style on various religious, administrative, and residential objects throughout Bosnia, the administration's goal was most likely to broadcast tolerance toward Muslim traditions and preserve Bosnia's evocative alterity.<sup>17</sup>

That may have been the primary reason the Waqf Commission allocated the money and the means to rebuild the Behram-beg mosque after the city fire, but it still does not explain its monumental appearance. According to photographic evidence dated to shortly after 1888, this was a large square building with a dome, a portico, and a minaret attached to the western corner (Fig. 3). The mosque's façade was wrapped in horizontal bands, most likely originally painted in the colors of ochre and crimson. Its intricate wooden portico was composed of Alhambresque arcades with multifoil arches and an S-shaped shed roof.

---

14 Hadžibegović (2004), p. 187. Located in northeastern Bosnia, Tuzla is both the capital of a canton as well as the region's largest town. During the Ottoman period, it was a smaller settlement mostly dealing with salt mining as well as crafts and trade. Under Austro-Hungarian rule, Tuzla became a regional industrial center, which is a role it fulfills to this day.

15 For a more substantial overview of the implementation of the Orientalizing style in Habsburg Bosnia, see Hartmuth (2018).

16 For a more substantial overview of the European Orientalizing architecture, see Koppelkam (2015).

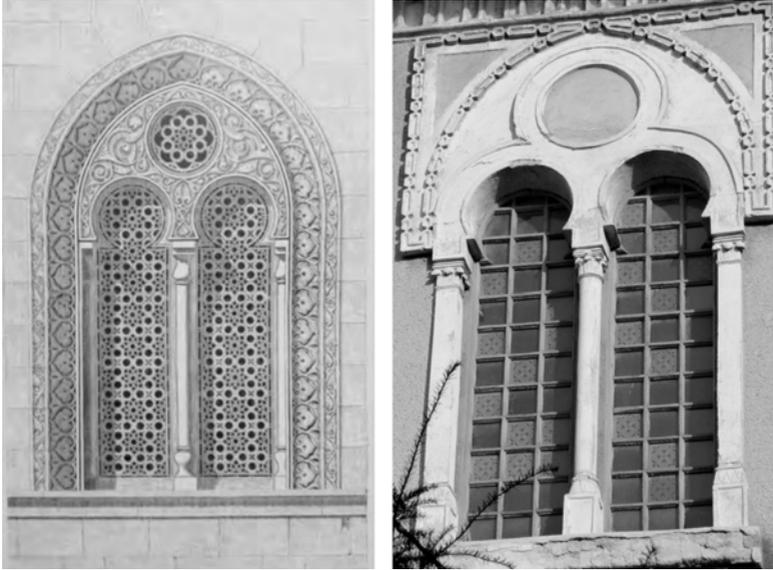
17 Bajramović (2021), pp. 101–9.



*Fig. 3: Tuzla, Behram-beg mosque, historic photograph, dated prior to 1895. Source: Family archive of Srećko Škrobić, used with permission.*

An architectural element that was up until that moment nonexistent in Bosnian building vocabulary, and interestingly enough never repeated since, is the Orientalizing minaret in a square base. Its platform was topped with a bulbous cupola surmounting several wooden multifoil arches carried by thin cast iron rods. The dome of the Behram-beg mosque was a standalone hol-

low dome featuring a thin tambour decorated with a stucco band and several small window openings. The dome's wooden frame was most likely covered with sheet metal. Its shape resembled more the Orientalizing domes of the Elephant House in Budapest's zoo or the Potsdam-Sanssouci steam engine house than it resembled typical domes in Istanbul.



*Fig. 4–5: Comparison between the drawing by Franz Schmoranz depicting a detail of the mausoleum window from the Qalawun complex (from Ebers 1879, p. 290) and photograph (by the author, 2021) of the biforate windows of the Behram-beg mosque in Tuzla.*

Upon closer inspection of the Behram-beg mosque's outer appearance, one may wonder where Mihanović got the inspiration for such an object. One possible theory is that he must have been acquainted with or had purposefully sought out the available literature on the topic of Islamic architecture (of Cairo and al-Andalus, that is), and succeeded in getting his hands on publications by the architects and engineers Julius Franz Pasha, Max Herz Pasha, and/or

Franz Schmoranz.<sup>18</sup> From the example of Schmoranz's illustration showing a detail of the mausoleum window in Cairo's Qalawun complex and subsequently published in Georg Ebers' *Aegypten in Bild und Wort* (1879), we may infer that it served as a direct inspiration for the windows of the Behram-beg mosque (Fig. 4–5). Their similarity suggests this was a medium through which knowledge of Islamic architecture reached Austro-Hungarian architects and engineers operating in Vienna, Budapest, or Bosnia.

### A major intervention ca. 1895

At some point before 1893, when a photograph shows a domeless mosque, the dome of the Behram-beg mosque must have been damaged and then dismantled. The reason for this is most likely the unwelcoming climate of northeastern Bosnia, with frequent rainfall and snow compromising the light dome construction. Since the mosque's interior appears to have remained unscathed, it is safe to assume that the dome did not collapse but was rather purposefully taken off. According to the construction documentation from 1895, the dome was ultimately replaced with a hipped roof (Fig. 6). The same year several other changes to the outer appearance of the mosque transpired. Instead of the portico's thin columns supporting the multifoil arches and a shed roof, a larger, much sturdier, construction was implemented. The new portico maintained a vaguely similar form, but was carried on massive square pillars supporting horseshoe arches and a smaller half-tented roof with three slopes rising to a peak. Nothing on the adaptation plan indicated that the portico was going to be altered, nor is this change explained in any of the written sources. However, there is a possibility that the original porch suffered damage along with the dome, or during its dismantling. On the other hand, it is also probable that it was upgraded to a sturdier material in order to prevent it from suffering the same fate as the dome. The banded façade first remained unchanged, as photographs from after the intervention show. By the 1930s, however, the entire facade was covered in white or beige paint (Fig. 7). The reason for the overpainting of the colored stripes could not be ascertained.

---

18 Ibid., pp. 9–19.

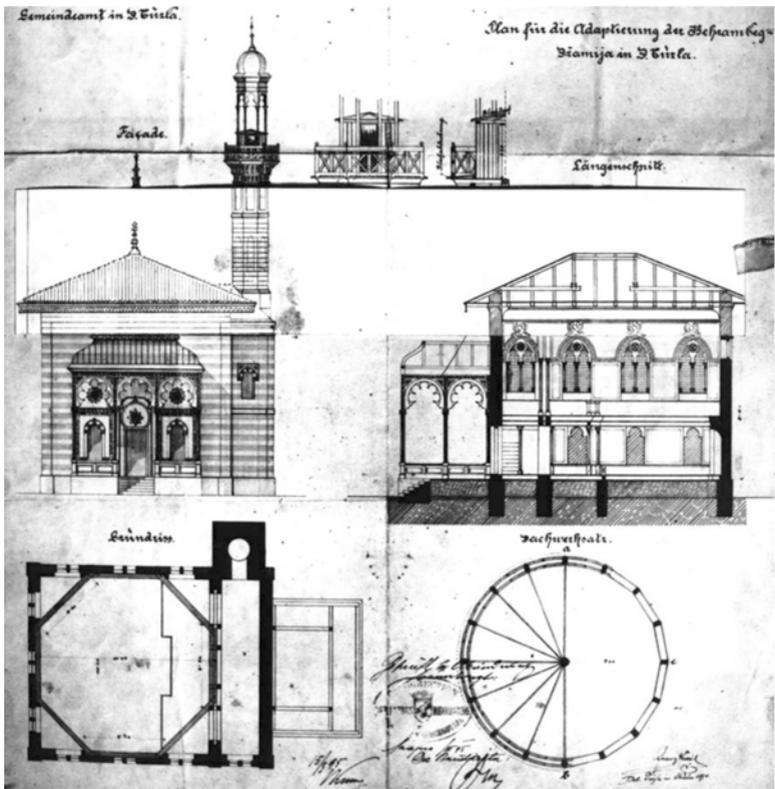


Fig. 6: Plan documentation of the 1895 adaptation project showing the solution for a new hipped roof. Adapted from Krzović (1987), p. 50.



*Fig. 7: A postcard image of the Behram-beg mosque in the 1950s, without the banded façade and with a new portico. See Bajramović (2021), p. 189.*

### Excursus on decorative layers recently uncovered

Since the major intervention in 1895, the Behram-beg mosque remained mostly unchanged. Due to a lack of maintenance and general interest in the upkeep of religious objects during the Yugoslav period, it was left without any major repair or restoration work since the 1960s, when the mosque was equipped with electricity and the interior wall decoration was covered with wallpaper.<sup>19</sup> The lack of care caused it to start deteriorating, to the point of its roof and portico collapsing as well as the façade chipping off, exposing the rubble masonry underneath. It was not until 2018 when the mosque was finally approved for a major restoration project. During the project's initial phases, the interior of the building was inspected and the layers of wall paint

19 Vesković (2016), pp. 1–2.

in some parts of the mosque were stripped one by one. If the dome was indeed taken down purposefully, this suggests that the interior wall decoration from 1888 would still be preserved – and it was. However, what was unexpected was identification of another layer of wall decoration, most likely belonging to the adaptation phase of 1895.<sup>20</sup>

Having an overview of these three layers is interesting for two reasons. One, their historical existence had not been established thus far. Two, their existence raises the additional question of which of them should be restored. Both impact the heritage object's perception.

The third, last applied layer, which dates back roughly to the 1960s, consists of a basic wallpaper with a repetitive pattern of light blue squares with dark blue and violet floral ornaments, placed throughout the ground and biforate zones of the mosque. On the biforate window axis, there is a horizontally placed sequence of painted blue circles inscribed with calligraphy. There are nine of them in total, two on the *mihrab* wall, four on the southwestern, and three on the northwestern wall, placed directly underneath each upper window from the central prayer area.

The second layer of wall decoration most likely dates to the adaptation phase of 1895. According to the conservator's report, retrieving this layer was problematic because the wallpaper was applied over it without a coat of protective adhesive, making it difficult to separate the two.<sup>21</sup> However, they did manage to isolate a single decorative band from the ground level. It shows an intricate arabesque-like ornamentation in blue, yellow, and red, with a black background. Judging by the uncovered band itself, it is difficult to accurately say what kind of decoration it was and what it actually represented.

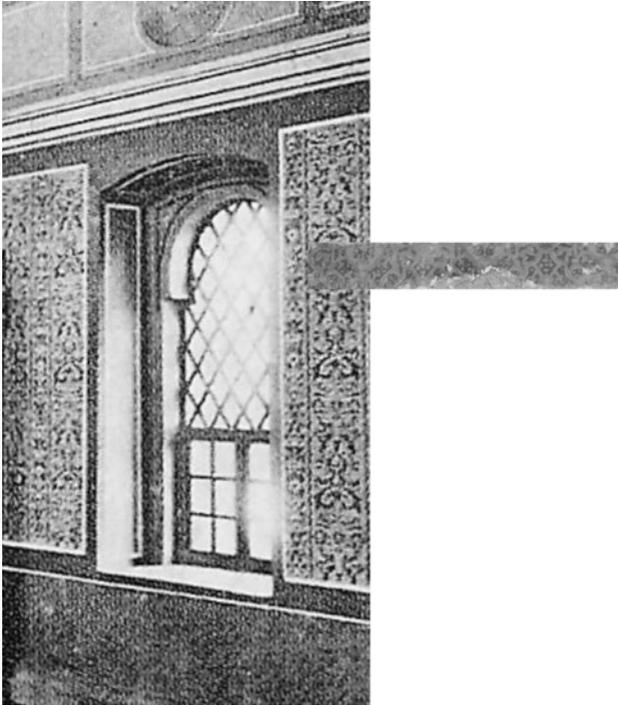
In an attempt to corroborate the thesis that this layer indeed belonged to the adaptation of 1895, I compared the isolated band to a postcard from Tuzla dated to 1899. It is titled "Innerer Theil einer Moschee" (inner part of a mosque), and, comparing the shapes of the windows and the wooden *minbar*, it can be established that it indeed depicted the Behram-beg mosque. On the postcard, only a segment of the ground and biforate zone is visible. The wall decorations of the ground floor consisted of large square panels placed between the windows and filled with intricate ornamentation. As far as I could discern, interchanging narrow and wide vertical bands of repetitive ornamental/decorative

---

20 I would like to thank Mr. Elmedin ef. Avdibašić and the *Medžlis Islamske zajednice Tuzla* for making these documents available to me.

21 Vesković (2016), p. 29.

and vegetal motifs were painted, visually matching the band of wall decoration isolated in 2018. Considering that the band was only the second of three layers of wall paint and that a very similar vegetal pattern can be seen on a postcard from 1899, when the Behram-beg mosque had already lost its dome, portico, and banded façade, the singular band from the ground floor can tentatively be dated to 1895 (Fig. 8).



*Fig. 8: Photo manipulation comparing isolated band of the second layer of wall decoration and the interior depicted on the 1899 postcard. See Bajramović 2021, p. 53, 160, 195.*

Lastly, the first layer of the wall decoration was fairly easy to uncover for the conservators, as it was painted on wet plaster.<sup>22</sup> Due to the fact that this

22 Ibid.

particular painting technique was used, it is most likely that this layer dates back to 1888, when the mosque was initially rebuilt. The colors used were predominantly orange, red, and blue. On the ground level area, underneath the singular band of the second layer, there seems to be a similar vertically shaped arabesque-like ornamentation, painted in blue and orange. The shapes are outlined with a fine black line and show stylized *fleur-de-lis* motifs (Fig. 10). However, in contrast to the second layer, these shapes look rather one dimensional and naïve in their execution.



*Fig. 10: Isolated decorative band from the ground zone, showing a fleur-de-lis motif belonging to the first layer of wall decoration, 2016. Source: Vesković (2016), Fig. 30.*

From these findings it can be concluded that there are no major differences in the mosque's wall decorations between the two layers from the Habsburg period. The most obvious distinction is the difference between the color schemes. The first layer favored warmer colors, whereas the second layer seemed to be decorated in cooler tones of black, blue, and red. Other than this, most of the decoration applied during the adaptation phase in 1895 simply followed the already existing layout from 1888 and altered the motifs minimally (the lily motifs changed into a more intricate floral ornamentation). By looking at the lo-

cations of painted elements, as well as the original decoration's general theme, it can be said that during the adaptation phase the already existing decorative setting was only refreshed.

With these layers uncovered, the question arose of how to preserve and present them to the public. The official wording used in the 2018 project to describe the process the mosque is going to go through is *rekonstrukcija* (reconstruction).<sup>23</sup> Its goal is to attempt to restore the building's original appearance, which was either demolished or severely altered. But what is 'original'?

### The future of the Behram-beg mosque's past

Since the reconstruction project began, a Facebook page called "Atik Behram-begova – Šarena džamija" posts semi-regular updates on the project's progress.<sup>24</sup> In some of the published images showing the mosque's interior it is noticeable that some parts of the interior wall decorations are covered with protective planks, whereas some are left exposed. It is unclear why this is so, and whether the uncovered parts will be completely repainted. Should it be decided to preserve the first layer of wall decoration, from 1888, does that mean that the second layer, from 1895, would be completely eradicated? In addition to the interior renovations, the outer façade has been stripped down to the masonry, the large portico and the minaret were completely removed, and a wooden faux dome has been installed – all with the goal to revert the Behram beg mosque back to its Orientalizing state. This is a look no living person would have witnessed, since the mosque was only shaped like that for a few years between ca. 1888 and ca. 1895.

To make matters even more confusing, this reconstruction project is actually funded through a donation from the *Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü* (Turkish Directorate General of Foundations) to the *Vakufska direkcija islamske zajednice*

---

23 News article updating the process of the mosque's reconstruction, published by the web portal of the Media Center of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina: <https://www.preporod.info/bs/article/29137/poseban-arhitektonski-izraz-rekonstrukcija-sarene-dzamiije-u-tuzli-se-privodi-kraju> (Last accessed November 2022).

24 The Facebook group "Atik Behram-begova – Šarena džamija" is accessed through <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076164667038> (Last accessed February 2023).

*Bosne i Hercegovine* (Waqf directorate of the Bosnian Islamic society).<sup>25</sup> Thus, a Turkish governmental institution that manages *waqfs* dating back to the Ottoman Empire donated money to a project the goal of which is to reconstruct an Austro-Hungarian mosque inspired not by Ottoman architecture but rather by the architecture of Islamic Spain and Cairo.

To be sure, the object itself was built on the land owned by the Behram-beg *waqf*, but the shape into which the mosque is being returned must be credited to Austro-Hungarian efforts. This fact is carefully omitted, from most secondary and internet sources, as well as from the large panel placed in front of the building site informing bypassers of the Turkish Directorate's involvement in the project (Fig. 9). Should this be read as a claim for ownership over its Orientalizing look or as a rebranding of the mosque as Ottoman? Several generations of locals consider the mosque's original shape to be the one with a tented roof, massive portico, and pale façade. Its originally more heavily Orientalizing version is not widely known outside academic circles. Due to the lack of general awareness of the architectural history of not only this object but most buildings erected in Bosnia for use by Muslims during the Austro-Hungarian period, a further disassociation between the Behram-beg mosque and the Christian-connoted Habsburg empire is fostered. And why would anyone question it? The mosque's name clearly identifies it as belonging to the Ottoman heritage, which seemingly explains the Turkish involvement in its reconstruction. Upon the project's completion, a person with a trained eye might be able to recognize the Orientalizing elements as likely non-Ottoman. But what about ordinary citizens? What, if anything, does the Orientalizing version of Behram-beg's mosque mean to them?

In the spring of 2022, I conducted a survey to investigate the degree of local historical awareness of the Behram-beg mosque's architecture. 100 people participated,<sup>26</sup> of which 50 were teenagers (between fourteen and eighteen years of age) attending the High School of Applied Arts and Architecture in Tuzla,

---

25 This information is made public on the official website of the Institute for the Protection and Use of the Cultural Natural and Historical Heritage of Tuzla (*Zavod za zaštitu i korištenje kulturno historijskog i prirodnog nasljeđa Tuzlanskog kantona*): <http://bastina.ba/index.php/bobovac/40-zavod/vijesti/655-u-toku-su-radovi-na-rekonstrukciji-behram-begove-dzamiye-u-tuzli> (Last accessed January 2019).

26 I would like to thank Amina Šečić and Amra Delalić for their help in conducting the survey.

and the remaining 50 were employees of the Municipality of Tuzla, with an age range from 28 to 60.



*Fig. 9: Current state of the Behram-beg mosque with the Turkish flag in front. Source: Photographed by Ajla Bajramović in January 2023.*

The survey consisted of four questions, with three optional answers provided for the first three and an open answer for the fourth. The first question asked participants to locate the object in Tuzla's urban area, with three choices. The second one asked when it could have been built, whether in the Ottoman, Habsburg, or Yugoslav periods. The third question asked the participants why they think the mosque came to be referred to as the 'colourful' one: because of its colourful interior, because of a once colourful façade, or for other reasons.

The fourth question then asked the participants to compare two images, one showing the pre-reconstruction state (thus without dome and striped façade) and one showing the reconstruction project (with reconstructed dome and repainted façade). They were then invited to choose which of the two versions better befits Tuzla's urban identity and briefly explain why.

71 percent responded that they think the mosque dates back to the Ottoman period; 64 percent stated that the reconstructed Orientalizing version would fit better with the urban identity of the town. Almost all of those (36 percent) who argued for leaving the mosque in the shape it was in for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wanted this for the sake of “preserving its authenticity,” or something to that effect, whereas some of the arguments for its new, Orientalizing look were that it is “simply prettier,” “looks more important,” “looks unique,” or “has a better construction.”

Interestingly, a handful of people wrote that they would find the Orientalizing version of the mosque very fitting, as it would stylistically fit well with the entrance portal to the Behram-beg *medresa*, thus recognizing the stylistic similarity of the two buildings.

The Behram-beg *medresa* had, as the name suggests, also belonged to the *waqf* of Behram-beg.<sup>27</sup> In 1892 it was decided that a building that must have perished early was to be rebuilt at a cost of 16,000 forints, which would be collected from taxes and donations.<sup>28</sup> The “new *medresa*” was officially opened on 29 December 1893.<sup>29</sup> This was a polygonal single-story building with a colossal entrance portal, inspired by the Mamluk architecture of Cairo. In 1907 the *medresa* expanded: a floor was added and surmounted by roofs replacing an earlier crenellation. It remained in this altered state until 1974, when it was demolished due to land subsidence, having previously served as a school of medicine.<sup>30</sup> Curiously, the monumental portal was rebuilt in a smaller version in its 1893 appearance after the demolition, as a reminder of the *medresa*'s existence. One of the biggest fallacies of this portal is its red and yellow banded facade, with the lintel and parts of the trilobed niche painted blue (Fig. 11–12). None of the original period photographs depicting the madrasa (Bosnian *medresa*), from both 1893 and 1907, show any indication of its being banded.

27 For an in-depth analysis of the Behram-beg *medresa*, see Bajramović (2021), pp. 55–62.

28 *Bošnjak*, 2 (1892), p. 3.

29 *Bošnjak*, 1 (1894), p. 3.

30 This information is available as part of the official finding declaring the Behram-beg *medresa* a national monument by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Text available online: [http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id\\_struct=6&lang=1&action=view&id=3295](http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=6&lang=1&action=view&id=3295) (Last accessed December 2020).



Fig. 11–12: Current entrance portal to the Behram-beg madrasa and image from undated postcard. See Bajramović 2021, p. 207, 210.

The participants in the questionnaire who responded that the Orientalizing Behram-beg mosque would tie mosque and *medresa* together and make a sort of ensemble, are most likely not aware that the *medresa*'s portal was never banded and that this feature was added in the 1970s, most likely with the idea of giving the *medresa* a more 'authentic' Oriental look, in comparison to its original monochrome façade. By doing so it would be much easier to link the entrance portal to its religious function, especially because the rest of the building is missing and the only reference to its function can be given through its visual appearance. So, in the case of the *medresa*, the exaggerated Orientalizing style was used to communicate function rather than representing the historical period during which it was initially erected. On the other hand, the Behram-beg mosque is being reconstructed in a style which has little to do with clarifying the buildings' function, as everyone is aware it is a mosque, and has rather more to do with creating an impressive ensemble of buildings in the same peculiar style, with the potential to become a touristic sight of Tuzla.

Nevertheless, in both of them the Orientalizing style was used under false pretense, in a manner that has nothing to do with establishing authenticity. The *medresa* was indeed originally built in the Orientalizing style, with its monumental portal, but by adding the banded façade, the Orientalizing style was amplified and the portal lost its authentic look. The mosque, albeit under the Turkish flag, is being restored back to its Orientalizing version. The works have so far shown little regard to conserving the interior decoration, if the lack of isolation from exterior elements is an indicator. Using the Orientalizing style as a common denominator to (re)create narratives which have little in com-

mon with the actual building history of these objects tells us that, in Tuzla at least, this style is not viewed as an architectural phenomenon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about by the Austro-Hungarian authorities, but rather as a decorative costume that a building can wear to seem more exotic, and therefore more attractive (Fig. 13–16).



Fig. 13–16: Collage showing the different versions of the Behram-beg mosque. Sources: see above (Fig. 3, 7, 9); last image courtesy of Elmedin ef. Avdićbašić.

## Conclusion

Since the local population's knowledge of these two buildings' architectural history is already very limited, people can be easily persuaded into associating the banded façade, *muqarnas*, and multifoil arches with something 'pretty', 'unique', or 'important'. Yet, this was not considered authentic to Bosnian architectural heritage. None of the people who stated as their preference in the survey the Orientalizing version of the mosque actually considered that particular look as the original one. Has the idea of something like this ever existing in Tuzla become unfathomable? Is it easier to see it as Ottoman, flaunting a familiar look, having a familiar name, being 'reconstructed' by a familiar country? If we take away the conventional idea of originality and look at the peculiar situation we have here, the original shape of the mosque is something unfamiliar to the people. It will be foreign to people who have prayed there for years, for tour guides who now must incorporate it to their city walk differently, as well as for locals who pass by every day. They may think of it as new, but not relatable. If we look at it objectively, after a century, the Behram-beg mosque is reverting to its authentic exoticizing look. If we look at

it subjectively and through the eyes of current developments and Tuzla's residents, the reconstructed, re-Orientalized Behram-beg mosque will become a symbol of novelty instead of authenticity.

## Works cited

- Bajramović, Ajla. *Orientalizing architecture in Northeastern Bosnia under Habsburg Rule (1878–1918)*. Unpublished master's thesis, Universität Wien, 2021.
- Donia, Robert J. *Islam under the Double Eagle: The muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1878–1914*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- Ebers, Georg. *Aegypten in Bild und Wort, dargestellt von unseren ersten Künstlern, I*. Stuttgart/Leipzig: Hallberger, 1879.
- Hadžibegović, Iljas. *Bosanskohercegovački gradovi na razmeđu 19. i 20. stoljeća*. Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2004.
- Hadžimehanović, Refik M. "Ljetopis tuzlanskih džamija," in: *Takvim*, ed. Hadži Seid Smajkić. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1982, pp. 110–2.
- Hartmuth, Maximilian. "Amtssprache Maurisch? Zum Problem der Interpretation des orientalisierenden Baustils im habsburgischen Bosnien-Herzegowina," in: *Bosnien-Herzegowina und Österreich-Ungarn, 1878–1918: Annäherungen an eine Kolonie*, eds. Ruthner Clemens & Scheer Tamara. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2018, pp. 251–68.
- Jahić, Edin. "The neighbourhood mosque with wooden minaret in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century: Four examples of restoration in Tuzla region," *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture XXXVI/1* (2019), pp. 1–22.
- Kadrić, Sanja. "The Islamisation of Ottoman Bosnia: Myths and matters," in: *Islamisation: Comparative perspectives from history*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pp. 277–95.
- Karić, Amir. *Tuzlanske džamije: fotomonografija*. Tuzla: Medžlis Islamske zajednice, 2008.
- Karić, Mirsad & Rašidagić & Eşref Kenan & Aydın, Recai. "Perceptions of Bosnian students on Turkey and Turkish culture," *Adam Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi XI/2* (2021), pp. 101–24.
- Koppelkam, Stefan. *The imaginary Orient: Exotic buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe*. London: Edition Axel Menges, 2015.
- Kortz, Paul. "Bericht über die Studienreise im Mai 1888," *Wochenschrift des Österr. Ingenieur- und Architekten – Vereines XIII/ 36* (1888), pp. 321–7.

- Kreševljaković, Hamdija. *Izabrana djela II: Esnafi i obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463–1878)*. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1991.
- Krzović, Ibrahim. *Arhitektura Bosne i Hercegovine, 1878–1918*. Sarajevo: Umjetnička galerija Bosne i Hercegovine, 1987.
- Malcolm, Noel. *Bosnia. A short history*. New York: NYU Press, 1996.
- Vesković, Esad. *Elaborat o istražnim radovima na slikanim dekoracijama Behrambegove (Šarene) džamije u Tuzli*, unpublished report, 2016.