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### The Architecture of Tetova between the end of the 19th century and the World War Two

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## **The Architecture of Tetova between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the World War Two**

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**Abstract.** The time period between the late 19th century and World War Two is known as a period of markant transformation in the Ottoman Empire. These changes influenced the city of Tetova in all aspects, such as political, economical, sociological, and architectural.

The goal of this paper is the presentation of different architectural styles in the city of Tetova during the above mentioned time period. The breaking point of the so- called 'traditional style' in architecture, in order to leave place for the 'new' one, is another tantative of the work. The traditional way of building was very acute during the rise of 'europianisation' of architecture at this specific time in Tetova, regardless of style influences that were coming from Europe. The first part of the paper tends to explain the power, and at the same time, the authoritative influence of the building tradition during the process of applying different style elements that were coming form Europe. This moment represents the first part of the transformations in the architecture of Tetova during this time. The second part of the work catches the moment when styles already dominated the architectural work executed in Tetova. We were aware that tradition it is not always able to leave marks on the new architectures of the 20th century. Architects were able to correctly apply elements of different architectural styles in their works, and that is why buildings of this time were more correctly formed in an architectural way. Through the architectural expression, the 'europianisation' of Tetova is noticable.

**Keywords:** history of architecture, architectural styles, Tetova, Macedonia.

### **1. Introduction**

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the aspect of architecture is presented by buildings, the style of which is known as *traditional*, *oriental* or *national*. Such a naming divergence started to lose the character only after the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after a radical change in the Turkish administration. This change made it possible to slowly lose the influence on the architecture of the city of Tetova, and give space to Europeanization. Construction slowly eliminated the traditional elements in buildings, that is, in the form and size of plans, function, method of shaping the volume, construction materials and decoration, while trying to replace them with elements of the European architecture, whose application would even be a requirement of present time. The separation journey from the traditional way of building was not without obstacles.

### **2. The historical context of the development of Tetova between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the WWII**

The discussion about the architecture of Tetova, for the above-mentioned period, cannot be elaborated without explaining the historical context in which Tetova marked its development. The

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought some positive changes in the region, which had positive effect even on the architectural formation of the city itself. The adoption of regulations, such as Hatisherif of Gjilhan and then Hatihumajuni in 1856, and later on with the Young Turk Revolution, presented a high act of freedoms for the population in these regions under the Ottoman Empire. Although most of these promises remained on paper and were never realized, they had a positive effect towards the prosperity of the city, among others in the field of architecture.

The following changes in the city were important in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: at first, there was a high concentration of population in the city as a result of which followed an expansion of the urban skin. New suburban areas were created under the influence of this factor, and then a rapid development of trade was achieved, while artisans and guilds began to get rich and what was more important for that time, a mini-layer of bourgeoisie was created, while as such would play an important role in the city, in the administrative aspect as well as in the socio-political context.

Another movement that is noticed is the great migration of population for a better life to the West, and this means that this path was taken even from a large number of builders from various local architectural schools, who while exercising their craft in the West, they were introduced there to the culture of construction. While the created mini bourgeois layer was ordering future works—initially residential homes, these masters were builders of these objects, with a culture acquired while working in the West. Merchant movements in the Orient as well as in the West made it possible that the “culture” gained in both directions of their movements to be expressed as an architectural language in the buildings demanded to be built in Tetova.

Thessaloniki and Constantinople (Tsargrad) were initially the closest cities with Tetova, which almost for everything, and even for construction and architecture, were taken as examples to be followed. The connection of Tetova with these cities becomes closer when the Vardar river was navigable (1859) for the carriage of goods. Furthermore, a positive movement towards the prosperity of the city was when the first lines of telegraph office were established in Macedonia, that date back to the 60s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the city itself progressed a lot when the railway in Tetova was connected with the Skopje-Thessaloniki railway on one side, and a little later with that of Skopje-Mitrovica, which means that Tetova through these links had a connection with the Orient, as well as with the West, an extremely important element in “reading” the architectural expressions that had occurred in the city, certainly influenced by these two links. Besides Thessaloniki and Constantinople, merchants kept connections with Vienna, Munich, Lyon, etc., cities with high level of culture even in architecture. The transfer of one part of this culture is seen as a priority for the mini bourgeois layer created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Tetova. Through these movements, Tetova during this period managed to become the third most important city in the Macedonia of that time, immediately after Skopje and Bitola.

Under these conditions, it appears that Tetova is neither totally Oriental, nor totally Western, and it is somewhere in between, on one side trying to reach the West, and on the other side is still strongly tied with the Orient. This can be seen while studying the creation of architecture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The process of reading the created architecture during this period leaves an impression of a “war” in the city itself, where the mixture of the Oriental and Western elements, slowly but in an unchangeable way, had entered the creation of architectural expression of the city.

The transformation of internal affairs in the Turkish society developed according to the West European proposals, in the cities of Macedonia would create buildings, which not only based on their functions, but also based on the styles that present, began to belong to the corpus of European style. Tetova marks an example.

### 3. Architectural expressions and problems of style

The long time under the Ottoman Empire rule created a clear way of architectural expression even in Tetova, such as in the entire territory of the Balkans. This means that the created architecture, and here it initially refers to residence objects constructed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is with clear

planning, functional and constructing elements, as well as with aesthetic and decorative elements, almost in the level of being conventional elements in use, that can be treated as elements of a regional style applied to create the architecture in Tetova. On the other hand, in buildings with public-religious character (like hammams, mosques, shrines, medreses, tekkes, bezistans, etc.), the above-mentioned elements to create the architecture were already canonized, even for a long time. The canonization mentioned in residential buildings is being closely referred to this type of objects, which means that the stylistic elements were strictly defined and their application has been precisely known to form their volume, shape, size and decor, as well as to express their function, monumentality and power (both religious and state).

The elements used to come to the presentation of the architecture of these buildings in this period are the following: the plan tends to have as regular form as possible, the symmetry is tentatively the key element in the formation of the plan and volume (though not always), the plan regarding the size is not extraordinary, the function of living space, even the mixture of multiple functions in an object, is accomplished traditionally and without any attempted changes. The volume usually follows the form and size of the plan, which means that there are no innovations even in this element. The building materials and constructions are mainly traditional ones, with which the local craftsmen maneuver easily, where the buildings' covers were constructed in a traditional way, in terms of the form as well as the application of materials. It is important to note that these elements applied in the buildings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, even in the buildings of residential character, on the one hand, have been recognized as elements of the "oriental" style, and on the other hand, of "national" or "traditional" character. The latter comes more as a definition of architectural expression by the natives, who had the opportunity their creations (which means buildings of residential character) to be divided as their "own" compared to buildings of religious and administrative character, such as the hammams, mosques, shrines, medreses, tekkes, bazistans, etc., that all the time were determined as "foreign", i.e., oriental and do not carry the national character of the natives in any way. (Figure 1, 2, 3)



Figure 1, 2, 3: Late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses in Tetova, "national", "traditional" or "oriental" style.  
(Source: K. Elezi)

The movement of people, specifically for the bourgeoisie layer created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the cities of the Orient, such as Thessaloniki and Constantinople, or even those of the West, such as Vienna, Leipzig, Munich, Lyon etc., made it possible for the new rich people of the city to learn another character of construction in countries outside the Balkans, at least from the external appearance. Hereof, we have witnessed the interest that the same architectural expression has been transferred to new buildings of the city, primarily of residential character. It should be noted here that even builders, who had migrated to bigger cities, have had the chance to do construction works, from which they had learned a lot in terms of applying new elements. Thus, the new buildings were required to look different from what was known as a building "tradition". They avoided the symmetry applied until then, while the ground floor height, or the ground floor and the first floor height increased – a demand of the investor – where the building materials were modern – reinforced concrete, steel, etc., – while construction elements would change as well, such as the object covers

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that began to be built with new materials, that required new forms of the completion of the construction as well. (Figure 4, 5, 6)



Figure 4, 5, 6: The new buildings were required to look different from what was known as a building “tradition”. (Source: K. Elezi)

In this context, it should be noted the import of architectural elements such as: columns, chapter, crowns, decorative elements, motifs applied for decorations, the beam as an element, window frames, etc., which are mainly found originating from Thessaloniki, or Bucharest, Vienna, Lyon, etc. In different combinations, most of these elements are multiplied during their use as decorative elements in the facade. In Tetova, objects that in their functional and decorative structure contain different elements of borrowed styles to complete the building process begin to be created from these complex influences, which ultimately complicated the “reading” process of the created architecture because it cannot simply be defined as a style from where the applied elements have originated. The origins of the borrowings are numerous. The diversity of these combined elements, which is present in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shows the real possibility that different styles have had to influence the creation of the architecture in the city. With the presence of these new elements, the process of changing the tradition was expected to give the first results; an architecture which could not easily be read because of the above-mentioned problems, but that definitely was parting from what was known as architecture of “*oriental*” or “*national*” style.



Figure 7, 8, 9, 10: The process of changing the tradition, decorative elements in the façade of the new buildings (Source: K. Elezi)

The definition of the complex architectural morphology and gradual changes in the architectural expression as well as the specifications of styles in the applied decorations demonstrate good knowledge of styles imported from abroad to create the “new” architecture in the city. In such a situation in the Ottoman Empire, the complexity of the rise of new buildings based on the old building tradition, while incorporating new stylistic elements, presents a good opportunity of creating new architectural aesthetics. Romanticism as an element expressed in architecture is not to be ignored in this case. However successful the knowledge, borrowing, transformation and interpolation of

elements from Europe in the first buildings of the city is, builders and their traditional way of building were the reason that prevented the immediate disconnection with the old building tradition. The new buildings still bear the stamp of the old tradition, and based on this we can see that we are still far away from the total separation from the past in terms of constructions. (Figure 11, 12, 13)

Figure 11, 12, 13: Architectural morphology and gradual changes in the architectural expression.



(Source: K. Elezi)

Forms borrowed from Europe are found to be reeducated on the basis of personal attitudes or national requirements. The romantic character is found to be expressed, for example, in the frieze applied under the roof crown, with a continuation created by putting the same window in the wall of the building, with the application of the shell as a decorative element in the facade, or from the use of decorative elements motivated by styles from the past. These are constructed objects hard to be read based on the program of style that had been applied to those buildings, for an almost a rare reason, especially in the buildings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century where there is a good presentation of the rules and elements of a style borrowed from Europe. Relying on different styles, free mixing of elements, forms, decorations and re-affirmation of elements from the national building tradition, the use of the traditional (national) repertoire cannot present a rule of an applied style in buildings for which we are talking about, but present a well-known approach created with a permanent fusion and transformation of building experiences inherited from previous generations. (Figure 14, 15, 16)



Figure 14, 15, 16: Transformation of building experiences inherited from previous generations.

(Source: K. Elezi)

In conclusion, builders who were “educated” with the repertoire of combining “traditional” elements in new buildings initially failed to be free of these influences, and while applying the elements of the European styles they found it hard to create a totally new architecture. The synthesis of well-known old elements by the local builders themselves with elements of new styles borrowed from Europe failed to be created; thus, the final creation in construction still presents a nostalgic return to what is known as folkloric and new architecture, which is still linked with the old one.

The Europeanization of Turkey in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century required building different objects of administrative character. These objects not only began to have an influence on changing the profile

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of the city itself, but they simultaneously gave details about the imperative of time in architecture. The new objects in function were objects of Turkish public administration, schools, hospitals, libraries, railway stations, etc. While residential buildings were built by local builders, who in most cases had built same buildings in different countries of Europe, for objects of public-administrative character foreign architects were engaged, such as Austrian, German, Polish, Russian, and later Serbian.

The powerful European influence in architecture came through these architects. In new objects that had to be built, it was noticed an even more powerful architectural expression in terms of applying the style in architecture. The strictness of expressed elements was extremely large, compared to residential buildings, to which the access was more flexible. Significant differences are noticed when compared to residential buildings: they have more expressed plan size, the form of plan is new – not treated until then or at earlier times, the function is new, the volume of buildings is “foreign” for the region, while the external appearance of the buildings with all elements expresses the “new” in buildings, as an imperative of time. European influences in Tetova are noticed in the appearance of the city as well as in the construction of new buildings through which it is clearly seen the tendency of transition from an oriental city to a new one, modern and European. The new objects, which were mentioned above, are built based on this style. At first, while attempting to modernize the architecture we find eastern and western styles to complement each other, effects of European eclecticism that appear here in a retarded manner, that penetrate through Thessaloniki and cities in the north, reaching the construction culmination and the external appearance of buildings. In the facades, we can see a typical classical articulation with horizontal division with profiled crowns and vertical divisions with pilasters with decorated chapters. Around windows we can notice implemented frames, while in facades we can see neoclassical tympanums used as decorations, implemented baroque attics, and numerous pseudoclassical and pseudobaroque decors implemented in windows, balconies, stairs and columns. (Figure 17, 18)



Figure 17, 18: European influences in Tetova, while attempting to modernize the architecture.  
(Source: K. Elezi)

Influences are increasingly pronounced in the external appearance of the buildings, in facades, rather than in the essence– the function. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there is a broader choice of decorative elements in facades, a choice that shows the return of applying European experiences. In this way, the same transition of the elements of style in architecture becomes available and the same is applied in buildings of residential character, as well as with different functions.

The fading process of traditional architecture which reached its peak in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was successful under the influence of permanent European trends, while accepting eclectic methods of compiling elements, of the baroque as well as of the renaissance.

A great gathering of architects is noticed while presenting the values of the new style, especially regarding the volume and facades of the buildings. We can find elements such as decorations, pilasters, asymmetry, parts of curves, with a word, this is a combination of elements of baroque and renaissance, all of which are found under the expression of city “Europeanization”, i.e., creating the “new” as an imperative of time. (Figure 19, 20, 21)



Figure 19, 20, 21: Creating the “new” type of architecture as an imperative of time. (Source: K. Elezi)

#### 4. Types of buildings, and the description of the most expressive examples

The wide range of examined objects in this study brings to a general conclusion in terms of buildings of this time, that the European influence on the profile of buildings’ architecture in Tetova in this period can be proven with the exposure of stylistic forms, as well as of the elements and decorations applied from various European styles. While calculating the number of buildings and “reading” the stylistic elements in them, we come to a general conclusion that in Tetova the new buildings can be classified in two main groups: the first group consists of buildings recognized by many assessors as “transitional”, while the second group consists of “important” buildings, those that need to introduce the Europeanization in architecture in a powerful way through architecture.

The first group consists of early buildings of the period until the 19th century, mainly of residential character, which were requested by the newly created bourgeoisie layer that in order to develop trade connections they have had the opportunity to move to different cities, such as Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Leipzig, Lyon, Munich, etc., and their demands in terms of architecture took the observed buildings as example in those cities. On the other hand, builders who had to build them were migrants in different countries for some time, which means that they were already introduced to new elements that had to transfer to them the new buildings. (Figure 22, 23, 24)



Figure 22, 23, 24: Escape from the tradition building, escape from the “national” style. (Source: K. Elezi)

A general characteristics, which follows the buildings of this group is that builders who have built the “*traditional architecture*” earlier, or that which was known as “*national style*” in architecture, were builders of new buildings, which means that radical changes in the expression of the new architecture could not be expected. It was difficult to expect the same builders to make a radical change— to escape from the tradition of building, as they had built the earlier buildings in Tetova. While the objects of worship and those of public character had a canonized form and function, as well as construction and volume, that means, even if the same buildings were built with the same



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characteristics, the new residential buildings would be characterized as “transitional” because they failed to make radical changes compared to those of the past. The form changed only slightly, mainly with an increased dimension, where the function remains the same, and eventually with increased height, but it cannot be said that the volume undergoes significant changes that need to be mentioned. Thus, we notice that the “traditional” had a powerful influence on construction, although it was requested to build with new elements. This leads to the conclusion that for some time builders with respect to architectural expression would use the old methodology and approach. The Europeanization of buildings in Tetova in this case is seen only with the attribution of new elements to the old ones. For example, on the edges of buildings, instead of boards there is a profiling of columns, containing corrugations, then profiled base, modified chapter, somewhere even architrave with different decorative elements. A part of the buildings have facade decorations, like window frames, later with decorated entrances. Baroque and renaissance have managed to have an impact on the builders’ memory, who tried with their mastery to transfer elements of these two styles to some extent even to early buildings in Tetovo. Only by recalling our “memory” influenced from the west, we can see that builders did not manage to synthesize elements of the past tradition to create the new, but on the other hand, they did not have even the necessary preparation to transfer the elements of a certain style that attempted to introduce in their work. As a conclusion, it can be said that in these objects there is a finishing of old buildings with stylistic elements poorly imitated, or better to say,



finishing of building tradition with European appearance. (Figure 25, 26, 27)

Figure 25, 26, 27: First step to the Europeanization in architecture. (Source: K. Elezi)

Later, buildings of this group started to embrace the most important elements of borrowed styles that had to be presented in Tetova. Thus, in the ornamental-decorative repertory, the facades of the buildings were enriched with more original elements, such as columns, corrugations, chapters, beams, decorations originating from the flora and fauna. Artists were then careful even in tracking the exact proportions of these elements, later with a clear articulation of the final composition. The repetition of elements to lead to the final composition of facades has been kept under control, whereas there were cases when the elements repeated often, but failed to be redundant during the application. In the aspect of composition, it is generally a high quality building, which means that the ratio of plans as well as the volume tends to reach stable sizes; neither one nor the other dominates as in the early buildings. The compositional layout is of the highest level. Part of the composition is the horizontal as well as the vertical division of the facades of the buildings, a logical division where usually there is an attempt the proportions to be balanced. The volumes that are used are well kept as well, where we can see their controlled combination, which means that the rules of composition of their volumes are attempted to be kept under control.

Decorations are up-to-date, in terms of precise transfer to those buildings. The tentative of transferring proportions, accuracy and all the elements in their original sizes can be noticed in all buildings. This is due to the desire to have buildings resembling to the originals as much as possible. In the aspect of decoration, we can often notice color, which is vivid and polychromic. Leaving out the white color (element of the building tradition or a “traditional” style) means that builders have already left the past in terms of construction, and they are increasingly closer to the Europeanization of buildings. Based on the examples of the 20s and 30s in Tetova, we can see that the style reached

its maximum power in the architectural expression in Tetova during this period. Such a pace of construction continued for at least the next 30 years. (Figure 28, 29, 30)



Figure 28, 29, 30: New façade details that decorated new buildings. (Source: K. Elezi)

The second group consists of buildings that compared to the first category differ in many aspects. These are objects where we initially find the treated “Europeanization” of the Empire in many aspects. Functionally, these are buildings not constructed before, with a demand to construct public objects, post-telegraph offices, prisons, theaters, officer’s houses, etc. Their plan is significantly bigger, as requested by different functions, compared to residential homes.

The form is more complex, from which follows a more complex volume of its final treatment. The form of construction is mainly connected to the new function, while the moderate Turkish administration demanded the creation of new plans, which were not daily routines of that time. The same dilemmas appeared for the volume as well, but they did not last too long, because the demand for such buildings with “European” style was always growing in cities that pretended to quickly escape the oriental characteristics and to be more comfortable with that of Europe. (Figure 31, 32, 33)



Figure 31, 32, 33: A deep compositional balancing into new buildings. (Source: K. Elezi)

The part of new materials that gradually started to get implemented, such as the concrete, steel, glass, where the advanced constructive aspect gets noticed, increasingly replacing the traditional, should be mentioned as well. The cover, as in the form as well as in material is almost completely new, because depending on the stylistic elements that are used (baroque or renaissance), it differs from a simple roof set geometrically in buildings of residential character, always built by local builders.

These objects, unlike those of the first group are buildings not built by local builders, where for their completion foreign architects get involved, such as Austrian, German, Polish, and later Russian and Serbian architects. Their engagement as professionals is linked with the progress of the architectural expression of these buildings. The applied stylistic elements do not belong to the “transitional” category anymore, but as professionals we find elements, as in function as well as related to handling

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the facades, from which the used elements are borrowed, or better, of the style that is supposed to be used in these buildings.

A deep compositional balancing can be noticed in constructed objects, achieved with the application of the symmetry in the facade. Even the position of the entrance is influenced from the symmetry almost in every object. Openings are in balance with the symmetry of the building, as well as with their compositional achievements in the facade. Windows have well-exposed frames around them, and in most cases they are excessively decorated. This means that the builder has improved in all aspects.

The horizontal and vertical division is deep and clear, and it even makes us be persuaded about the extraordinary correctness of the use of elements of style. The cantilever extension with balconies or with volumes in new buildings emphasizes the progress in the construction aspect as well as in the use of new materials, concrete and steel. To these details we see that the influence of “traditional” on the construction process is totally lost, which means that the influence of old constructions in new buildings cannot be detected if there is still an influence. This can be counted as a progress of the builders in recognizing new materials as well as the construction techniques. (Figure 34, 35)



Figure 34, 35: Influences from different architectural styles in buildings in Tetova. (Source: K. Elezi)

The elements of the styles are cleared of elements’ “retardation” in use, which means that architects are more mature with their application to new buildings. The influence of eclecticism that can be noticed in terms of a certain city, while there is some influence from baroque and renaissance, presents evidence that the wish to be a part of the context of European culture could not have stopped the influences of foreign styles – all of them have had to be introduced to the buildings of the city, and this should belong to architects and their preferences for any of the applied styles in the buildings of the city. Such a rationalization would also apply to “choose” decorative elements used to define the final appearance of the facades of the object. Due to the scale of using numerous original elements as well as the luxuriance of decorations in facades, we come to a conclusion that the degree of the formation of stylistic elements applied in the buildings of Tetova is of the highest professional level. The “traditional style” or also known as “national” is gradually replaced by the “European”, despite that in the vocabulary of most assessors it would be recognized as a style originating from Thessaloniki or Serbia. The Europeanization of the Empire in Tetova can also be followed through these buildings, which through the architectural expression make it possible a part of Europe to be read even in Tetova.

## Conclusions

1. The period we refer to proves that the traditional concept of thinking for the creation of architecture is broken through the creation of architecture, elements and psychology of which change with the

new concept, the European one. We can say that through architecture we have managed to Europeanize a part of the Balkans that until the time was oriented toward the Orient.

2. Buildings in Tetova prove that architecture stands, if not ahead, then by all means besides politics, and here we find the realization of political twists even through architecture. Architecture is the reflection of political events in the country, beside economically and cultural ones.

3. Architecture meets the *Zeitgeist* requirement, although a bit late, but always for obvious reasons these delays occur. The “folkloric” architecture is replaced with the “European” one.

4. The problems of style, their appearance, way and power of presentation, prove the same developments and approaches in the architecture of countries of the region, which does not make today’s Macedonia that special. Transformations made to the borrowed styles speak of a local adaptation and powerful individualism.

5. The material culture of this time is an evidence of the processes of numerous directions, such as economic, political, cultural, and of developments in directions in culture, art and architecture, therefore this wealth should have been preserved, which had stalled, and moreover it is being destroyed. Today, an extremely small number of these objects can evidence the architecture of that period.

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