



An Interpretative Rehabilitation of a 16th-Century Mosque: The Case of Turali Bey's Mosque in Tuzla

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Abstract

Renovating a historic building for continuous use is a complex assignment that necessitates a professional approach and extensive knowledge, especially if there is insufficient information about the original form or, at the very least, the most recent intervention. The paper analyzes the 16th-century Turali Bey Mosque in Tuzla, its original appearance and typology, subsequent alterations, and the reasons that influenced the last renovation. A shortage of data slowed the research process significantly.

Only a 19th-century drawing depicts the mosque's earlier and most likely historical appearance. Besides that, the only contribution was given by Kreševljaković in 1941 with the short description and drawings. During the construction of the nearby road in 1896, the municipality government carried out the necessary works to retain the building in use. The mosque was then upgraded, resulting in a change in shape and appearance. In 1997, the state Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical, and Natural Heritage conducted research, conservation, and restoration work. Based on the results of research work, the architectural design implied interpretive rehabilitation of the building in 2012. The authentic parts of the mosque, such as the walls with windows, *mihrab*, entrance portal, and the minaret, were reconstructed. The remaining elements, whose original appearance could not be confirmed, have been interpreted in a modern manner while preserving the traditional values of the mosque design at the time.

1. INTRODUCTION

Renovating a historic building for continuous use is a complex task that necessitates a professional approach and extensive knowledge, especially if there is insufficient information about the original form or, at the very least, the most recent intervention. Several factors influence the method of renewal and the approach taken. These could include the building's historical significance, physical condition, intended purpose, etc. First and foremost, it is critical to determine if these buildings are national properties. Such works generally require preservation or restoration following legal provisions. Another significant factor is the physical condition of the property, for example, the degree of integrity of the material before the renovation. If the materials are recognizable, and if the existing characteristics indicate the historical significance of the building, then preservation is an appropriate method of restoration. However, if the building requires more extensive repairs, alterations, or additions to an existing or new purpose, then rehabilitation is a more suitable method. It's also vital to examine whether the building will be used for the same purpose as before or for something entirely different. Some historic buildings can be adapted to the new purpose without disturbing the historic character. Certain types, such as religious buildings, mainly retain their original function but may require some modifications for normal functioning.

This paper analyzes the Turali Bey Mosque in Tuzla, its original appearance and typology, subsequent alterations, and the reasons that influenced the approach to the last renovation. Although restoring the original appearance may be rational and expected, we believe that the interpretative rehabilitation of a historic building can be justified in specific circumstances due to a lack of data on the original appearance.

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If that information was available, restoration or reconstruction would be possible if the treatments improved the functionality and intended purpose.

This research study comprises three sections. The Turali Bey Mosque's historical setting, historical architecture, and typology are explored in the first section. The second portion focuses at a significant intervention in the late 19th century that resulted in a modification of the original appearance. The final section describes the second, final intervention, which also marks the start of the third phase of creating the shape of this historic structure.

2. TURALI BEY MOSQUE IN THE PAST

2.1. Historical Context

It is generally accepted that the area of Soli (Tuzla) definitely fell under Turkish rule in 1512, although Handžić claims that the Tuzla area was probably conquered at the same time as Srebrenica and Zvornik in 1460, earlier than the final fall of the Bosnian Kingdom in 1463 [9]. The origin of Tuzla relates to saline sources that have been exploited since Roman times. The exploitation of salt springs in the Ottoman period largely initiated the development of two kasabas – Gornja and Donja Tuzla.¹ The wider region was part of the Zvornik Sancak, the Ottoman administrative unit established between 1477 and 1483.² Compared to nearby towns, such as Zvornik, Gračanica, Brčko, or Bijeljina, Donja Tuzla developed faster, which finally contributed to moving the seat of the governor from Zvornik to Tuzla in 1851.

The late medieval town Sol (*Donja Tuzla*) had been fortified with wood before the Ottoman conquest, and for the first time, it was identified in Turkish sources from 1463 as *Agaç Hisar* (Wooden Town) [9]. Compared to stone fortified medieval towns in the region, such as Zvornik, Teočak, and Srebrenik, only Donja Tuzla was known as “wooden.” Although it was a significant place in northeast Bosnia, it has never had a monumental Ottoman structure. One can search for reasons within political, economic, or material circumstances. However, one of the most obvious causes could be the lack of a nearby good quarry, and as a consequence, the underdeveloped stone masonry tradition. Furthermore, because the Tuzla region was likely densely forested, the carpentry skill has advanced significantly.

The kasaba of Donja Tuzla has regularly expanded since the beginning of the 16th century. It comprised nine mahalles at the end of the 16th, while three more developed at the beginning of the 17th century. Their titles are often related to the benefactor of a mosque or masjid that the settlement developed around. There were seven mosques and one masjid before the end of the 16th century, whereas three mosques and one masjid were founded before 1644 [9]. A wooden pitched roof covered each of the buildings. We can be sure that hardly three mosques had a stone minaret before 1600. Those were Hadži Hasan Mosque (between 1548 and 1573), Jalska Mosque (*Kızlar cami*) (before 1600), and Turali Bey Mosque (before 1572), which is the subject of this paper.

The Hadži Hasan Mosque measures 12×12m externally. The pitched roof is fitted over the spacious and bright prayer room. It has rubble stone walls about 65cm thick with 20 large windows. Since it was surrounded by shops (*çarşı*) from the beginning, it does not have a yard or a cemetery. That is why it is rather called the “Čaršijska” mosque. For that reason, its floor is quite elevated in relation to the surrounding terrain. During the restoration in 1874, the three-bay porch, arched entrance frame, and mihrab were made in the Turkish Baroque style. Its minaret is the most harmoniously shaped in Tuzla.

The Jalska mosque measures 10×11m externally and stands under the pyramidal roof. It was constructed of 70cm thick brick walls with 21 arched windows. A stone-built minaret standing on the west corner is

¹ Donja Tuzla developed rapidly and grew into one of the most important towns in northeast Bosnia. More about this see Adem Handžić, *Tuzla i njena okolina u XIV vijeku*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 207, (1975).

² In the 16th century, Zvornik Sancak spread over northeast Bosnia and west Serbia, thus including 31 nahiye, 21 in Bosnia, and 10 in Serbia (Ibid. 43).

modeled on Turali Bey's example. It is remembered that it used to have a brick dome under the roof. The three-bay porch has four round brick columns with three ogee arches supporting the lean-to roof.

The oldest mosque in Donja Tuzla was built soon after 1533 in the Atik mahalle. The prominent location at the highest place in the center of the *palanka* indicates an evident relevance of the mosque, which is, in early records, mentioned as Časna ("The honorable", or *Atik*) Mosque. It was founded soon after 1533 for the military crew and a small Muslim population. No reliable sources give precise information on its original appearance. However, given the scarcity of suitable stone for masonry in the Tuzla area, we can assume that the Atik mosque was likely built of mud-brick (*kerpiç*) and wood, and with wooden or with no minaret at all [8].

As previously stated, the shortage of quality stone quarry in the Tuzla area is one of the reasons of the limited presence of ashlar masonry. That is why each mosque in Tuzla was plastered inside and outside. Due to extensive renovations in the 19th century, none of those mosques have retained their original appearance.

2.2. Turali Bey Mosque Before the Last Rehabilitation

Almost all of what we know about Turali Bey's mosque and its creator comes from Kreševljaković's 1941 report. It includes details regarding the endowment's time and setting in Tuzla, as well as information from Turali Bey's foundation (*vakufnama*, *vakfiye*) [13]. Turali Bey was one of the numerous notable 16th-century benefactors (*vakıf*) who established endowments in what is now Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slavonia, and Serbia. Until 1572, he was unquestionably a Sancak Bey of the Smederevo Sancak [13]. His endowment mentions three mosques: in Ilok, Čačak, and Tuzla, the last of which is still extant. At this view, it is clear that the mosque in Tuzla was constructed before the foundation charter was recognized in February 1572 [13]. It was built in the second part of the 16th century in a mahalle that was outside the town's (*şehir*) boundaries [9]. The historical look of the Turali Bey Mosque (Figure 1) [5] can be seen in a drawing by Leo Arndt,³ which dates from his stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last decade of the 19th century. It's hard to say for sure when the drawing was done. A steep pyramidal roof with front eaves continuing over the entrance porch is apparent in the drawing. Because the roof slope appears to be steeper than it was before the last intervention, it's logical to assume it was originally covered with a wood board (*šimla*, *tahta*). A wooden porch with five bays and six posts, as well as a tall minaret built of cut stone, are also depicted in the drawing. It is difficult to say with certainty how closely its appearance on the drawing matched the original state. Given that occasional replacements of worn-out materials were usual, one can presume that the mosque's essential form has not been altered.

³ A German illustrator and etcher (1857-1945)

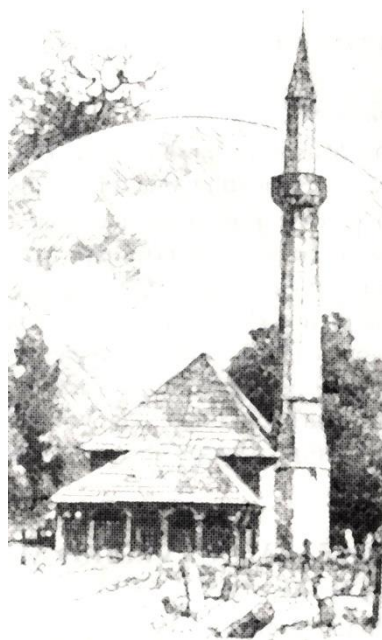


Figure 1. Turali Bey Mosque: drawing by Leo Arndt [6]

However, several old tombstones are seen on the drawing and were probably removed during the construction of the nearby road. Furthermore, the *türbe*, which was built in the same year that the mosque was upgraded, is not seen in the drawing. As a result, it is obvious that Arndt's drawing shows the mosque's state not long before the extensive alteration. What happened in the meantime? During the intensive construction development of Tuzla, the local authorities of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy filled the terrain to level the road near the mosque in 1896 [4]. That is why extensive work was then carried out so that the mosque could be used. Since the level of the mosque remained about 1.5m below the level of the new road, the walls were upgraded and the surrounding terrain was filled in. The old lower windows were walled up and the new ones were formed approximately at the level of the original upper arched windows. The entrance portal and *mihrab* have most likely been raised to a new level. Only the minaret has not been rebuilt, as indicated by a comparison between Arndt's drawing with Kreševljaković's façade. The porch and wooden roof have also been rebuilt.

There is no information about the mosque for the next forty years. Given the Great War and the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, it can be assumed that there were no significant changes. The most important review of Turali Bey's mosque is given by Kreševljaković in 1941 [13]. In the illustrations provided by Kreševljaković, the mosque is almost square in plan, with external dimensions of roughly 12×12m (Figure 2). The walls were approximately one meter thick built of coarse rubble stone masonry and plastered on either side. Except on the entrance side, where there were only two, there were four rectangular windows in the walls (Figures 3, 4). In front of the mosque, there was a five-bay wooden porch resting on ten pillars, which was known to have been dismantled in the years following World War II. The pillars were connected by decorated wooden arches and a modest timber balustrade (*tahta parmaklik*) (Figure 5). The mosque and the porch were both covered in a pitched timber roof with curved clay tiles (*čeremit, kiremit*) [13]. A special feature of this mosque is the interior wooden dome made within the roof structure. It is depicted in cross-section drawings within the roof framework. Although there is no evidence that it existed before, given that such domes were built in several mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina [2], there is no reason not to accept that it was an integral part of the original design. The interior hemispherical dome measures around 6 meters in diameter. It was made of wood and covered with boards, reed, and finally plastered and painted. The minaret of dressed stone rises on the northwest corner, as it has been prevalent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were also wooden *minbar* and *kürs* (*čurs*) inside the mosque, as well as the balcony (*mahfil*) standing on four pillars which were reached by stairs on the west side.

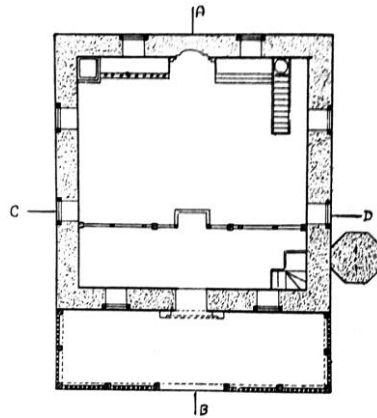


Figure 2. Turali Bey Mosque plan according to Kreševljaković (1941)

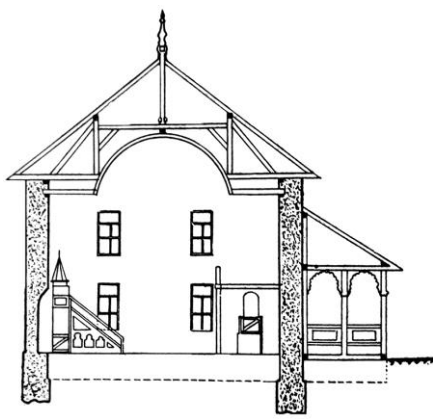


Figure 3. Turali Bey Mosque section A-B according to Kreševljaković (1941)

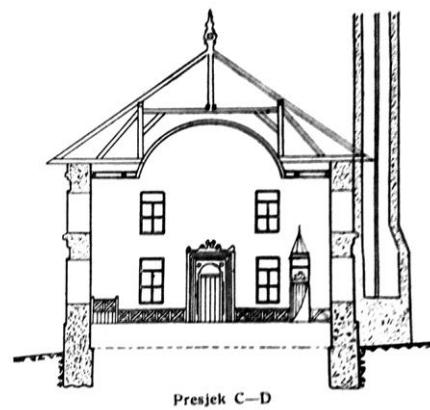


Figure 4. Turali Bey Mosque section C-D according to Kreševljaković (1941)

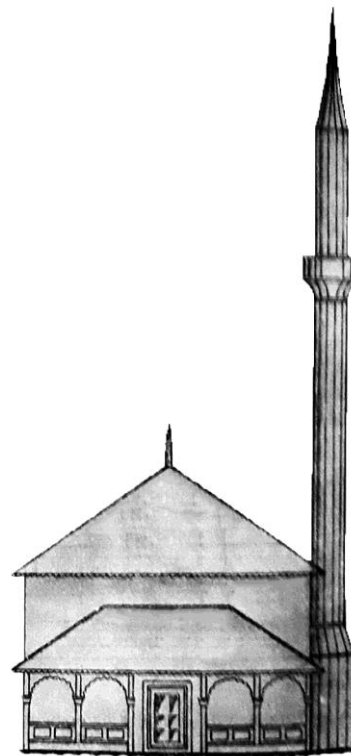


Figure 5. The front elevation of Turali Bey Mosque according to Kreševljaković (1941)

The Turali Bey Mosque was only known to have been refurbished in 1967-8 during the Yugoslav period (1945-91) [8]. The mosque's walls have been plastered and painted, the wooden parts within have been painted, and windows and doors have been replaced. Perhaps the northern corner of the mosque was partitioned off at the same time for the purpose of ablution. Although necessary, this has degraded the integrity of the interior. Likely, more serious work was not done in the next three decades. One of the significant activities that led to the final renovation of the Turali Bey Mosque is a Project of research, conservation and restoration work done in 1997 by the Institute for protection of the cultural, historical and natural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina [5]. The research works were carried out in several stages. The terrain was excavated in some spots to determine the original state of the walls and historic windows. The old paving stone tiles under the former porch were found at a depth of 1.45m. The stucco was fully scraped off the façades (Figure 6) when the old upper windows' arches (*kemer*) were uncovered (Figure 7). To determine the state and nature of the material used, the plaster was also removed from the *mihrab* and the entrance portal partially (Figure 8). The cracks have been recorded in the plaster of the walls and ceiling inside (Figure 9). It has been also found that the minaret deviates significantly from the verticality and requires utmost attention. Finally, the Turali Bey Mosque was designated as a National Monument by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments in 2005.



Figure 6. The rear elevation after the stucco removal (Photo by Edin Jahić)



Figure 7. Uncovered arch over the original upper window (Photo by Edin Jahić)



Figure 8. Mihrab during the research works (Photo by Edin Jahić)

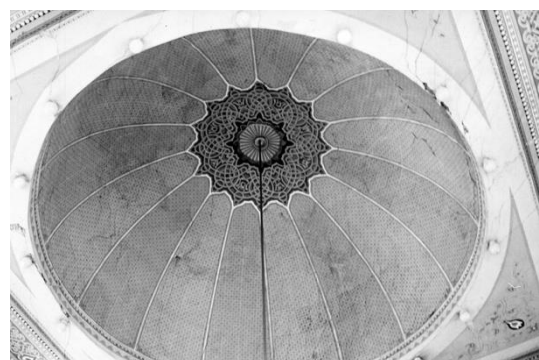


Figure 9. View of the interior dome (1988) (Photo by Edin Jahić)

2.3. Typology of Turali Bey Mosque

If one puts the Turali Bey Mosque in the context of the Ottoman heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is possible to draw a parallel with many similar monuments to understand its architecture in more detail. Whether the founder himself demanded such a form of the mosque is not known for sure. As previously mentioned, a mosque with ashlar masonry and possibly a stone dome is unlikely to be expected in Tuzla. Given that a similar concept is not found in other mosques in Tuzla, it is possible to summarize that the builder was well acquainted with the typical building forms of the 16th century in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

No mosque in Tuzla is similar to Turali Bey Mosque, which is not the case in other major places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the Ottoman period, mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina were generally single-unit structures with a porch in front of the entrance. The roof shape is the first thing that distinguishes them apart. Aside from 36 domed mosques, the majority of which were erected in the 16th century, an enormously larger number of mosques have a pitched roof [2]. The latter varies depending on whether the minaret is made of stone or wood. According to figures from 1933, Bosnia and Herzegovina had roughly 223 mosques with a pitched roof and a stone minaret [2].

Mosques with pitched wooden roofs have a square or slightly elongated rectangular plan. They mostly have a porch with sofas in front of the entrance. The minaret is almost necessarily on the right of the entrance on its pulpit (*küip*). Two types of pitched roofs predominate in this type of mosque. The first has a single hip roof over the mosque along with the porch. The second form consists of a higher pyramidal roof over the walled room while a lower pitched roof covers the porch. Turali Bey Mosque undoubtedly belonged to the latter one. This type of mosque is more widespread in Herzegovina than in Bosnia [10]. Typical examples are the Mosque of Dervish Pasha Bajezidagić, Roznamedži Ibrahim Efendi Mosque (Figure 10), and Neziraga Mosque in Mostar, Junuz Čauš Mosque in Konjic (before 1579), Sultan Bayezid Mosque in Nevesinje (before 1512). It is typical for mosques in Herzegovina that roofs were covered with stone tiles (*ploča*), while in Bosnia curved clay tiles (*čeremit*, *kiremit*) and wood board (*šimla*) prevailed. The wooden dome in the roof structure is a unique feature of mosques with a pitched roof. This kind of dome can be found in just a few mosques. A few of them are Tabačica Mosque and Šarića Mosque in Mostar [10], Junuz Čauševa Mosque in Konjic, Handanija Mosque in Prusac, and Ferhadija Mosque in Tešanj.



Figure 10. Roznamedži Ibrahim Efendi Mosque in Mostar. An example of mosque with pyramidal roof over the square prayer room and pitched roof over the porch.
(Source: Hasandedić, 2005)

2.4. The Latest Rehabilitation Works

Since the mosque was closed for use for several years, the Islamic Community in Tuzla initiated activities to rebuild the mosque. The works were completed in 2012 and the new Turali Bey Mosque was opened in 2013 (Figure 11). The basic idea of the designer⁴ was based on the establishment of the level of the terrain that existed before 1890. In front of the entrance is a stone-paved plateau with two access ramps (Figure 12). The level of the walls has been restored to its original condition. Thus, the lower parts of the walls were excavated and the upper parts, which were subsequently upgraded, were now removed. The walls are plastered and whitewashed both inside and outside. The windows have the same arrangement: eight rectangular walls on the lower level and six smaller arched windows on the upper level. The interior floor has been restored to the original level. The mosque is now topped with a new pyramidal roof of somewhat reduced dimensions, but with no eaves. The upper ends of the walls hide the gutters. A modern porch with sofas is placed in front of the entrance. An old refurbished entrance portal has been reinstalled, but this time without painting. The sloping roof above the porch is supported by four wooden pillars and two massive walls containing fountains for ablution. Instead of clay tiles, the roof surfaces are lined with non-corroded sheet steel. Since it deviated from verticality, the minaret was rebuilt in exactly the same shape and height (Figure 13). Inside the mosque, a modern *mahfil*, *minbar*, and *kürs* were installed. The roof construction contains a dome of the same shape as before. The old refurbished *mihrab* was reinstalled in the *kibla* wall, but with no painted decoration (Figure 14).

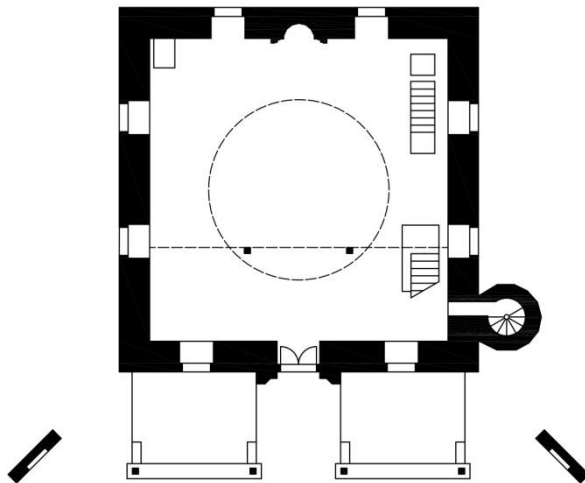


Figure 11. Floor plan of Turali Bey Mosque after the rehabilitation 2012 (Drawing by E. Jahić)



Figure 12. Front view of Turali Bey Mosque showing the new porch (Photo by Edin Jahić)

⁴ Prof. Zlatko Ugljen and Husein Dropić (Architecture studio “Ambijent” Tuzla)



Figure 13. Street view of Turali Bey Mosque showing the porch and minaret
(Photo by Edin Jahić)



Figure 14. Interior of Turali Bey Mosque showing the reconstructed mihrab and the new minbar
(Photo by Edin Jahić)

3. ANALYSIS OF POSSIBLE RECONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

It is evident from the description of the Turali Bey Mosque's past that very little useful information has been preserved about its architecture. The situation is similar to many other monuments of the Ottoman period, especially in the case of changes caused by fire, wear, deterioration, or other damage. Most mosques were written about only at the end of the 19th century. Whether the Turali Bey Mosque was destroyed in the great fire of 1871 is not mentioned at all. It is generally known that the 1896 renovations altered the mosque's look and were the consequence of Tuzla's intense development. Except for the removed wooden porch, the mosque's exterior and interior have remained unchanged since then. As a result of all of this, the question of how the Turali Bey Mosque could be renewed and if the last approach to the intervention was the most appropriate arises.

The most straightforward approach would have been to refurbish the existing walls, roof, interior, and minaret, as well as to construct an approximate imitation of a wooden porch. The restored appearance would not be authentic, but it would reflect the image of the mosque from the late nineteenth century and would be the closest to the appearance remembered by the people and users at the time. A complete reconstruction of the original, or at least an approximate old appearance, is another option. This intervention would have been possible if the authentic appearance had been retained or if other relevant information about the original appearance had existed.

The former roof shape and entrance porch have practically vanished from the minds of a few elderly citizens. So far, no photograph has been found that confirms the authenticity of the appearance. Excavation of the surrounding landscape, restoration of the prior height of the walls, and the original positions of the old windows would all be required for a complete renovation. The recent restoration of the stone *mihrab* and entrance portal demonstrated that the known parts could be restored. However, the previous appearance of the roof and, in particular, the wooden porch, could only be conjectured. The minaret's appearance is

real, but due to its inclination, it would have to be rebuilt, which was eventually done during the rehabilitation in 2012 (Figure 15).

For the reasons stated above, the designer did not decide on a consistent reconstruction after conducting research work. The authentic parts of the mosque, such as the walls with windows, the *mihrab*, the entrance portal, and the minaret, were recently rebuilt with the utmost care. Other parts, whose original appearance could not be confirmed, have been interpreted in a modern manner while preserving the traditional values of mosque design at the time.

The roof's altered shape without eaves is noteworthy at first glance, which may spark a debate given that eaves are ubiquitous in Bosnia. Inside the roof structure, however, a dome with the same shape and size has been restored. When it came to the original roof, assuming it was initially wood, the designer did not have any reservations about its protection and longevity, and therefore he chose sheet metal. The new porch has also been interpreted in a way that fulfills the traditional purpose while also improving on the original configuration. Specifically, the architect created two niches with fountains in the wall supports of the porch canopy, avoiding the previous ablution corner of the mosque.

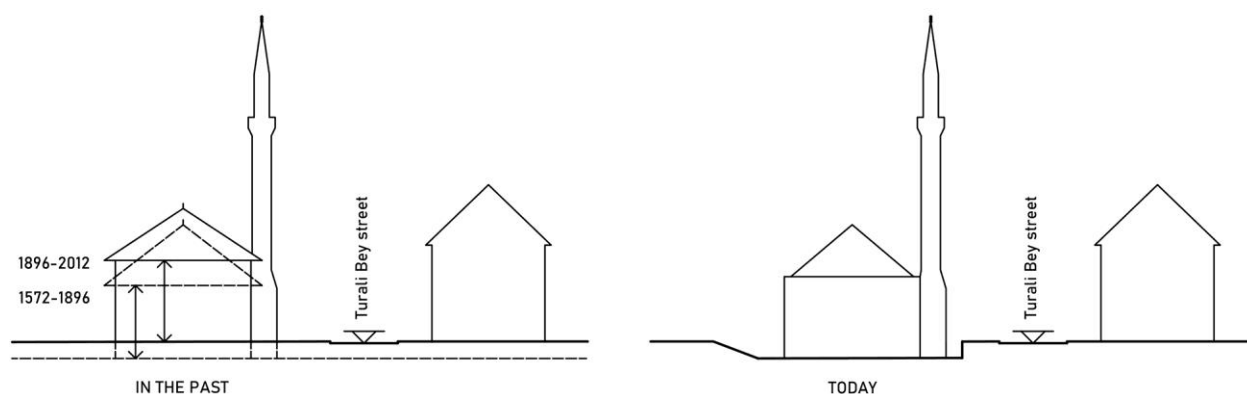


Figure 15. Positions of Turali Bey Mosque in the past and today

4. CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, restoring historic structures for long-term usage is certainly a complex and delicate operation. Except for one insufficiently clear drawing, no valid information about the likely previous appearance of the Turali Bey Mosque in Tuzla has been preserved. The peculiarity of this is the circumstances that led to changes in the late 19th century and are not adequately documented. Based on the results of research work performed by the official state institution, architectural design implied interpretative rehabilitation of the building. In this case, this included the reconstruction of authentic parts and the appropriate interpretation of the remaining parts about which there is no reliable data, such as the roof and porch at first.

If the designer decided to reconstruct lesser-known parts based on sparse information and speculation, the result would be a poor imitation. As a result, the designer opted for a modern interpretation while adhering as closely as possible to what is reliably known as the traditional values of similar structures from the same period. In this light, it is reasonable to conclude that the reconstruction strategy was well-founded.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was declared by the author.

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