



The Alaca Mosque

Alaca Mosque, meaning Decorated Mosque in English but also variably translated as Painted Mosque, is a mosque located near the Pena River in Tetovo, North Macedonia. The mosque was originally built in 1438 and later rebuilt in 1833 by Abdurrahman Pasha. The architect behind the Mosque was Isak Bey. As with many mosques, a hammam was built nearby across the river. The site used to include an Inn as well as a bathhouse on the other side of the river. The current courtyard of the Mosque is filled with many flowers, a fountain and Turbe. The octagonal “turbe” houses the resting places of Hurshida and Mensure, the two sisters who financed the construction of the mosque in 1438. Abdurrahman Pasha, a great enthusiast of art who was fond of Tetovo, reconstructed the Mosque in 1833. Unlike the traditional Ottoman ceramic tile decorations in mosques, the Alaca Mosque has bright floral paintings.

More than 30,000 eggs were used to prepare the paint and glaze that went into the elaborate decorations. Another major difference between this Mosque and other Ottoman mosques is that the Alaca Mosque does not have a distinctive exterior dome, as the architecture of the mosques styles the early Constantinople Ottoman Architecture. The distinguishing feature of the mosque is its painted decorations. Abdurrahman Pasha commissioned, for this purpose, masters from Debre who painted the ornamentation with oil paints. In addition to the geometric and floral ornamentation, landscape is also encountered. Among the pictorial decorations, especially attractive is the depiction of Mecca, a rare and perhaps the only example of the illustration of the shrine.

The Mosque can be visited as part of the Old Trade Trail

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