



The most significant values
of the cultural and natural heritage

PAINTED MOSQUE - TETOVO



Zoran Pavlov M.A.

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FOREWORD

MACEDONIAN CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Over the past 4.5 million years since the creation of Earth, the ancestor of the modern man, “the wise man - Homo sapiens”, appearing on the African continent 150,000 years before this day, quickly settled throughout the territories of the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

His cultural evolution is recorded in the Republic of Macedonia, as well.

While travelling through the prehistoric era of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, as well as the historical epochs of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, man created civilizations on the soil of the Republic of Macedonia by introducing and using the natural resources. He established the magnificent kingdoms of the Agrianians, Paeonia, Pelagonia, Lyncestis, Macedonia, and the principalities of Deuriopus, Dessaretia and the Penestae.

The Roman Empire, Byzantine, the medieval states - all left a powerful civilizational imprint.

The belief in the natural phenomena, followed by the belief in the many gods, to finally worship our only God - all left indelible cultural traces.

All this enormous cultural and natural heritage of the Republic of Macedonia was subject of the capital project of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, “Publications of the most significant values of the cultural and natural heritage,” carried out by the Cultural Heritage Protection Office.

130 monographs featuring the Archaeological Heritage, Sacral heritage, the Treasures of the churches and monasteries in Macedonia and the Natural heritage were created.

Macedonia - the high forest land in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, as the name suggests, furrowed by the deep valleys of the Vardar tributaries and the river Drim, adorned with the blue - green waters of Lake Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran, with the proud giants Kozuv, Shar Mountain, Korab and Jablanica, Selecka Mountain and other mountain ranges, today lights 130 torches of its own, as well as the world's, cultural and natural heritage; a legacy to preserve, use wisely and pass on to future generations of the Macedonian road to eternity.

Prof. Viktor Lilchikj Adams, Ph.D.

ŠARENA DZAMIJA (PAINTED MOSQUE), TETOVO

The city of Tetovo, situated at the foot of Shar Planina (Shar Mountain), falls under Ottoman rule in the period 1382-1392 and in a time frame of five centuries it grows and develops into an important urban centre. The size of the city is reflected in the abundance of architectural buildings - mosques, hamams (baths), tekkes, bey konkas (villas) that were erected in the Ottoman period, especially in the late 18th and early 19th century. Many travel writers describe and admire the saray (manor) and the palaces of Tetovo's pashas in their notes. Ami Boué (1836-1838) mentions the two bazaars, the clean streets, but also the four great villas of Tetovo's pashas. He noted that the konak of Havzi Pasha in Tetovo with its wooden verandas resembles the houses in Bern. Abdurrahman Pasha's konak is also mentioned by Edmund Spenser (1850), noting that it is a copy of a Tyrolean hut that the pasha decorated with bouquets of flowers, arabesques and quotations from the Koran.



The complex of Painting mosque, an old photo



The complex of Painting mosque, an old photo



The front door of the harim

One of the most significant and certainly the most recognizable symbols of the city is Painted Mosque (Šarena Džamija), also known as Pasha's Mosque, located near the city centre, on the right bank of the river Pena. We learn about the mosque and its builders from the founder's dedicatory inscription made of marble and placed above the entrance to the prayer hall, sized 2.20 x 0.80 cm.

The inscription, translated by Kemal Aruči, states:

1. "Commander, with a character of "Kjerrar" namesake of "Ibn Avf"
2. Who endeavours to lead (people) toward good and prevent evil
3. The great among rulers - Abdurrahman Pasha.
4. With his good deeds became a consort of the honest "ashab" (gentlemen).

5. *This distinguished gentleman is hospitable, protector of Kalkandelen.*
6. *He is fourth in generosity after Fadil, Dzafer and Dzatem*
7. *He is an esteemed gentleman of gentle character and noble origin.*
8. *He is the overall modest commander of his time.*
9. *(Starting) from creation, he follows the path of good deeds*
10. *His grace inspires thousands (of people) each day.*
11. *His efforts are consumed in the creation of good deeds*
12. *His honest heart is not satisfied with God's kind rewards*
13. *Among other (good deeds) he restored this temple (mosque) starting from its foundation*
14. *(Thus) removing what caused the demolition of this building*
15. *This building is given a new shape and colour, which, in fact, is this.*
16. *By granting it holiness, it (the mosque) became the ninth among eight heavens.*
17. *Always in this (temple) is the holy Quran studied with sincerity.*
18. *(It) is heard by chosen angels of the high "Arsh".*
19. *Each side (of the temple) is decorated with embroidery paintings and paintings,*
20. *The lustre marble illuminates the minbar and the mihrab.*
21. *The beautiful place of the ones designated for reciting the Koran, before announcing God's service,*
22. *Blesses the pure soul of the most perfect "Kurra", the esteemed "Nafi".*
23. *During fasting, look! The light in its lanterns is of candles*
24. *The wonderful and shining glow, which spreads all over its windows.*
25. *If for God's mercy a visitor makes four "rek'ata"*
26. *(It) will cause thousands of injustices to be removed from him.*
27. *Now with this (mosque) there is prominence in the city of Kalkandelen.*
28. *This is the call. Let the people of the city who will perform the divine service come.*
29. *After each divine service the faithful should pray.*
30. *Let their voice (word) "amen" overcome the seven heavens*
31. *Each time the believers perform God's service, day and night*
32. *Each time a muezzin or an imam rises his voice*
33. *Let the creator of beings bestow happiness upon the benefactor and prolong his life,*
34. *With all his children and brothers.*
35. *May God honour his pure soul with bliss on both worlds*
36. *And (let) him in this world not clash with the tragic event until the Day of Judgment.*
37. *Thus I watched the beautiful new shape of this rarity (mosque) and*
38. *The pen of my eloquence wrote the interpretation of what happened.*
39. *Thinking of God's reward, I wrote this praise on the magnificent plate*
40. *(By which) my pure spirit scattered the pearls that flowed.*
41. *Oh, Sejfi! When coming to the five daily prayers let people utter the (one) chronogram:*
42. *Abdurrahman Pasha coloured (in many colours) and restored this mosque.*
43. *A deed by the pen of Dervish Muhammad Murad*

The reading of the chronogram with an abjad calculation gives the year H. 1249/M. 1833/34.



The inscription above the entrance to the prayer space

According to the inscription, the mosque was built by Abdurrahman Pasha, known as the son of one of the most influential pashas and the Sultan's mandator - Redzep - Pasha. His mother is the Serbian girl Miljana captured during the suppression of the Gjilan rebellion against the Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) and became the second wife of Redzep Pasha. In addition to Abdurrahman Pasha, Redzep Pasha had two other children by the same wife – Veli Bey and Dzeladin Bey, as well as two more children by a woman - slave brought from Greece - Havzi Pasha (later pasha of the Skopje pashaluk (province) and Hassan Pasha (governor of Shtip). Each of the children governed their own territory. Abdurrahman Pasha inherited the Tetovo area after the death of his father in 1822. He continued the construction of the fortress and the residence on the Bal-tepe hill, which was started by his father.

After mutual disagreements which started around 1842, between Abdurrahman Pasha, Havzi Pasha and Hasan Pasha, they were summoned by the Sultan Abdülmecid I (1839-1861) and soon after were sent to Anatolia from where they never returned.

However, as a testimony of that period remained one of the most beautiful buildings of Islamic culture in Tetovo erected during the Ottoman presence, and that is the Painted Mosque ((Šarena (Aladza) Džamija)), also known as Pasha's Mosque after its builder.

Science refers to several dates regarding the time of its foundation. According to the tombstone inscription, whose upper part is missing and cannot be deciphered, in the last verses is written the year of the death of Hurşide Hatun H.930/M.1524. Some scientists believe that the mosque could have been built about 30 years before the death of Hurşide, i.e. in 1495. According to a different opinion, the mosque was built in 1675 by the sisters Hüsnüye and Mensure who came from a wealthy family and at the age of 40-50 erected the mosque with the inheritance from their father. Of course, none of the two beliefs is supported by material evidence. The only data we have with certainty is that today's mosque was *"restored, with a new shape and colour and*

what caused its collapse has been removed." Most likely, the original mosque, upon whose foundations Abdurrahman Pasha built today's mosque, was destroyed at the end of 17th century, when during the breakthrough of the Austrian army led by Piccolomini along the valley of the river Vardar and the burning of Skopje, both Tetovo and Kumanovo suffered (in 1689). This suggests that today's Painted Mosque in Tetovo was not built in the 17th century as stated in some research papers, but that information refers to the demolished mosque. There is no data regarding the shape, size, layout and elements that were contained in the oldest mosque.

Painted mosque is an example of single - space type of mosque architecture with an almost square plan (measuring 10.12 by 10.05 meters) and a porch from the front (northwest) side. It is characterized by harmony of volume, surfaces and lines, and elements present even in the classical period of Ottoman architecture. Above the central prayer hall (harim) is built a blind wooden dome which is not visible from the outside and represents a characteristic architectural solution applied in mosques in Tetovo during the 19th century. The dome, placed directly above the main prayer hall, signifies the vaults of heaven and the sky.



The south - eastern facade of the mosque

The two-story porch that stretches the entire northwest width of the building is carried by eight circular columns with simple bases and profiled square capitals. In the middle of the west wall is the portal - main entrance door to the prayer hall, which is framed with moldings cornices stucco decoration. Above the portal dominates the marble inscription containing information

about the building of the mosque. On both sides of the door, between the lower rows of windows is placed a semi - circular mihrabs niches. The lower section of the porch is open and elevated above the surrounding space by three steps, while the upper floor is closed and serves as a madrasa (religious school). The communication with the upper floor of the porch by means of wooden ladders placed in the western part of the porch. The porch concept characterized by the proportionally distributed rectangular windows on the top floor (five on the frontal facade and two on each side) closed by wooden window guards (turkish: *pencere parmaklığı*), follow the architectural shape typical of the urban house in Tetovo in the 19th century.

Inside the harim (prayer hall) dominate the magnificent mihrab, placed in the centre of the south-eastern wall, and the minbar², which is next to it, and which, like the mihrab (prayer niche)³, is made of white marble. The mahfil⁴, which is inside, immediately at the entrance, differs in shape from the standard mahvil. This is due to strong western building influences which were present at that time and which contributed to the shaping of the mahvil in the form of three semi-circular balconies surrounded by wooden fences.

The minaret, one of the most visible aspects of



The porch of the mosque



Painted ornaments on the middle mahvil



The porch of the mosque from the north

² Minbar - It is a pulpit in the mosque where the imam (prayer leader) stands to deliver sermons - the raised steps from which the imam delivers the sermon at the Friday prayer.

³ Located in the qibla wall which is oriented toward Mecca (the holy city of Islam). Muslims face the qibla wall during prayer.

⁴ Balcony built inside a Mosque, used by the women to pray.



The interior of the mosque



A mahfil



Marble mihrab



The minaret

mosque architecture, from which the call to prayer is announced by imam, according to architectural concepts of building mosques is placed immediately next to the west corner of the porch. In contrast to this concept in this case the minaret placed in the middle of the southwest wall. This is due to the fact that the minaret is the only element preserved from the old mosque. Its location suggests that today's mosque has been expanded in comparison to the one that previously existed and was destroyed. The minaret, which was built of carefully carved stone blocks, has a hexagonal basis which slightly develops into a polygonal body by means of so-called *Turkish triangles* with a şerefe (balcony) near the top under which there are simple profiled circles.

The interior of the harim is lit by 26 windows (placed in two rows of four windows on the side walls and the mihrab wall and two windows in the lower area toward the porch). As a

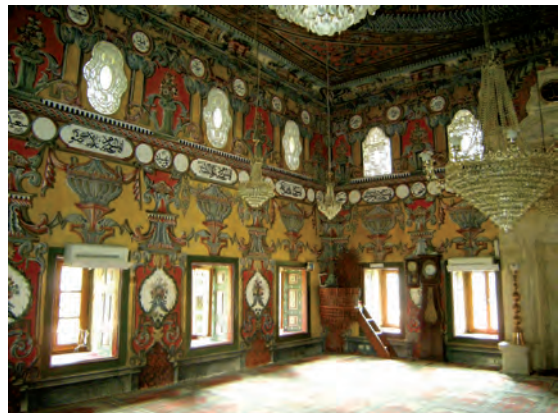
completion of the decorative element that adorns this mosque are the ornate geometric lattice work (transenna) from gypsum placed on the inside and outside of the semi-circular windows in the top row. This complements the picturesque appearance of the mosque, letting the light in as the symbol of divine unity. The lower windows, which are rectangular, have been closed by wooden window guards from the outside, and wooden shutters from the inside. The prayer hall and the porch are covered by a hipped roof with Turkish tile.



The mosque from the east



Decoration on the porch of the mosque



Painted decoration in the harim



Ornaments on the gypsum transenna on the mihrab wall



Written hadiths on the mihrab wall

There is no information of the builders and painters of Painted mosque. It is possible that they were masters from Debar that engaged in prolific architectural activity in a wider area of the Balkans during the 19th century. They were very familiar with construction and the use and handling of building materials such as wood and stone. Being high - quality builders, the Turks often trusted them with constructions of mosques, tekkes, konaks, bridges etc. (The Hakki Pasha konak in Tetovo was built by the master Mirce Despotov of the village of Osoj, who also built and decorated the New (Yeni) Mosque in Debar).

The simple architectural spatial solution of the mosque is complemented by the rich decorative treatment of the facades and the interior of the entire facility, by which it becomes one of the rare highly artistic decoration achievements of the Ottoman period in Macedonia. Its decoration represents the unifying factor of architecture and design.

DECORATION



The south-eastern facade of the mosque



Facade decoration of the west wall of the mosque

19th century - the period of construction of Painted mosque in Tetovo is characterized by penetration of European influences not only in architecture and painting, but also generally in culture. The painted decoration on the facades of the mosque is executed in fresco technique and as a motif it features framed rectangular fields set in four rows, in whose middle part (other than those at the same height with the windows of the second row) are painted multi-pointed stars of a round basis. The fields are mutually divided by pillars which are painted simply and in the last row under the eaves are painted in the form of the letter "S". The polychrome which is dominated by ochre, green, burgundy and brown highlights the vibrancy of the facades by alternating each field. This thematic presentation is repeated on the northeast, southeast and southwest facade to the minaret. The area above the second row of windows is decorated with painted stylized leaves of acanthus, while on each of the facades the desire to imitate marble as a decorative element is obvious. The colourfulness of the building is enriched by the coloured ornaments present on the wide wooden eaves where in a wreath of holly on each side is inscribed "Maşallah" in calligraphy. It is interesting to note that on the facade of the minaret to the porch the last two rows under the eaves are decorated differently from the rest of the facades. Leaning on five elegant pillars are wavy acanthus leaves, and above them there is a garland of floral arrangements. The reason for the different decorative motifs on the facade is not known to us, but we can assume that it is due to different artists implementing different artistic approaches.



Facade decoration of the west wall of the mosque (detail)

The decoration on the porch differs from that of the facades of the mosque by its thematic concept (except for the facade of the porch to the minaret on the southwest facade). Here dominate intertwined forms of plant motifs, leaves, rosettes, flowers in pots, columns and verses from the Koran inscribed in calligraphy. The mihrabs niches are framed by a painted pillar which ends in vases with flowers in the upper part. The symbolism is used in the decorating of the central part of the ceiling of the porch in front of the entrance door where a six - pointed geometric star is painted (Star of David) as a symbol of merging the visible and the invisible, the union of Heaven and Earth. The entire decoration of the porch, other than the wooden ceiling, is executed in fresco - secco technique and the colouration is identical with the other facades. The presence of the intertwined plant ornamentation is visible on the interior of the top floor of the porch, where on the painted vases with flowers prevail ocher, red, gray and green on a white background. Between the semi-circular holes by means of which one reaches the three semicircular mahvils are painted polygonal mihrabs niches arched with a stalactite decoration (mukarnas) which function as auxiliary mihrabs. The



"Star of David" in the porch of the mosque



Decoration at the ground floor of the porch



Painted decorations on the upper floor of the porch



Painted decorations on the upper floor of the porch

six-pointed geometric stars as a symbol of union are painted on the arches of the openings to the mahvil, as well. The flat wooden ceiling is divided into square fields and in each of them are painted two flowers. The stylistic features of the painting on the floor of the porch indicate that it is a different type of painting from the rest of the mosque. The motion of the brush is uncertain, the motifs are simple and leave an impression that the painter was only trying to fulfill the empty space on the walls. They were most likely artists-students of the same workshop, but with less artistic knowledge and experience.

The wooden wings of the front door and the wooden shutters of the lower row windows in the harim are characterized by simple processing and geometric forms which interrupt the flat surface on the wings. On the wooden shutters are painted bouquets of flowers and floral motifs, which complement the feeling of beauty in the harim of the mosque.

The wall decoration inside Painted mosque, mainly, contains the characteristics of the Turkish traditional decoration expressed by means of the arabesque.

The quite distinct arabesque motifs of plant and geometric ornamentation as well as the architectural elements under the windows of the bottom row executed with intensive colouration can be observed. Throughout the presentation of the floral ornamentation the drawing is clean and inventive without tension and monotony, the decoration is serious, with a fine sense of measure

and the geometric ornamentation bears a remarkable degree of freedom and rhythmic movement.

Under the second row of windows in the form of bordura - frieze in circular and elliptical fields in Arabic are written hadiths (sayings of Muhammad). Like other Islamic decoration, calligraphy here is closely related to geometry. The plant motifs represented on all four walls in the harim are, in fact, a multitude of intertwined acanthus leaves that subtly reiterate, filling each space of the walls. The acanthus, which is observed in painting since the old Egyptian and Greek styles, is reiterated and



Bordura with landscape representation, a detail

applied in each subsequent style, including the Islamic. Its frequent and varied application in the example of Painted mosque is due to the extraordinary ornamental appearance and distinctive leaves, without any special symbolic meaning. The arabesque, which is characterized by reiteration of geometric forms and plant ornamentation, presents a way of decorating where the beauty of an unbroken sequence has been used, thus symbolizing eternity.

In addition to the abundance of colourful geometric and floral ornaments, landscape is also present as a frieze-bordura in the transition from wall to ceiling. It represents a motif bearing expressive colouration depicting sequences of imaginary cities, mosques, palaces, mansions, rivers with sailing ships. The presentations of the single-storied and two-storied palaces and mosques are certainly inspired by the great imperial buildings and recognizable city motifs from the capital Istanbul. The entire landscape is two-dimensional. By using the same pattern of placing the items in the front and in the background is emphasized the desire to level the area rather than create depth. The linear perspective characteristic for the artists from the West in the representation of the landscape in Painted mosque is replaced by the contrast between light and shadow. It is interesting to note that the identical representation of the landscape as a decorative element is present in the Başçavuşoğlu mosque in Yozgat (H.1215 / M.1800), which suggests that western influence in the artistic expression penetrated deep into the Ottoman Empire, as well.

The dome surface is filled with intertwined stylized versions of the acanthus, with its emphasis on leafy forms, and various floral motifs with 12 circular fields in-between. In the fields are alternately painted urban environments (palaces, mosques) and flower vases that en-



Bordura with landscape representation, a detail



Bordura with landscape representation, a detail



Bordura with landscape representation, a detail



Bordura with landscape representation, a detail



Painted decoration in the dome

chant with the precise drawing and sense of aesthetics. In the central part of the dome framed by a bordura of a circular form consisting of pleated braids of geometric precision and a drapery, dominate the acanthus leaves presented in various curved shapes thus creating an extremely impressive rosette.

A rare, and at the same time, unique example in Macedonia and furthermore in the Balkans, is the depiction of Mecca on a wall painting in the southern mihrab wall – qibla wall⁵ (in the wider area of the Ottoman Empire the depiction is observed in Hızır Bey Mosque in Soma, Turkey (H.1206 / M.1791-



Painted decoration in the dome, a detail



92), Dzhihanoglu Mosque in Kocaeli, Turkey (M.1756), Kurşunlu Mosque (Tower) in Manisa, Turkey (M.1780) and others.

The colourful splendor of wall painting is interrupted by the lavishly crafted mihrab and minbar whose decoration executed in white marble is on par with major works of the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the profiled geometric ornamentation the monumental mihrab is also decorated by eight circular fields with calligraphic inscriptions (levhas) of quotations from the Koran and the names of Allah and Mohammed, as well as the names of the four caliphs (Abu Bakr, Ali, Osman and Omar), followers of Muhammed.

The creator of the art of Painted mosque creates a decoration that emphasizes the importance of unity, logic and order by using elements of the classical tradition.

Painted representation of Mecca



Painted representation of Mecca, a detail

It is assumed that Abdurrahman Pasha summoned masters from Debar for decorating the mosque, who, most likely, also created the wall paintings of Harabati Baba Tekke, and even some bey konaks in Tetovo, which is evident from the stylistic and artistic characteristics of their painting. But the technique, as well as the similarity with the selected themes, point to the painting in Hadzi Ethem-Bey Mosque in Tirana (H.1208 / M.1793-93, decoration completed in H.1238 / M.1822-23). In both mosques the painting is an excellent example of a local variety of oriental art complemented by baroque elements with a wealth of vigor and inventiveness, but still connected to main streams Late Ottoman art. Certain similarities in regards to the character of this type of painting which bears the hallmarks of the Levant baroque, can be found in the décor of the Bekar Mosque in Berat, Albania (H.1243 / M.1827-28). If we compare the painting from the meydan⁶, the Tower of Fatima and the tomb of Harabati Baba in the complex of Harabati Baba Tekke in Tetovo, on the one hand, and the painting in Painted mosque, on the other hand, we see major similarities in the selection of themes, and manner of expression and colouration. The decorative geometric shapes in the meydan are almost identical to those of the facade of Painted mosque, while the plant and landscape elements from the Tower of Fatima are identical to those of the harim (prayer hall) in the Painted mosque. Given the fact that a wall painting near the tomb of Harabati Baba bears the signature of Usta (master) Zerze Haki (1813), we can say with great probability, that the wall painting of Painted mosque was the work of the same master or his painting workshop.

In the painting of Painted mosque in Tetovo were created geometric patterns of complexity and sophistication not previously observed in the Ottoman buildings in Macedonia. This is probably due to the interest in repetition, symmetry and continuity with skillful use of color and a variety of tones which overlap with extraordinary accuracy. The reproduction of nature conveyed by means of the flower as a motif bears a great deal of accuracy. The proximity of Italy and the painting workshops in Florence, certainly played a significant role in shaping the artistic expression of painters who worked in the region of Albania and Macedonia, hence in Painted mosque in Tetovo, as well. Therefore, the western influences that prevail in the selection of motifs and their presentation become an inevitable part of the painting designs during the 19th century not only in religious buildings, but also in the embellishment of many profane buildings, konaks and palaces, as well.

On the north, next to the mosque, there is a turbe (mausoleum) which, according to the discovered tombstone is presumed to be the burial place of Hurshide Hatun, although there is no specific inscription or any written data. According to the year of death of Hurshide Hatun (H.930/M.1524) the probability that the turbe was established no later than the first half of 16th century is also accepted. It is an open type of turbe with a basis in the form of an irregular octagon. On four of the sides are openings in the shape of vaulted windows. From the massive wall via the elegantly crafted arches and squinches one enters the open upper section, which represents octagon drum. The turbe is built of carefully carved stone ashlar masonry with tiles placed on the cornices around and on the drum. The building material is identical to that of the minaret, which indicates the same period of construction, probably from the late 15th and early 16th century.

In the courtyard of the mosque there is a high stone fountain with profiled frames and fountains



Today's appearance of the mosque complex



The interior of Hurshide Hatun's turbe



Hurshide Hatun's turbe

on each side substituting a sadirvan and serves for taking ablution (cleansing ritual) before prayers. The fountain is covered with a hipped roof covered with Turkish tiles. On each side are present subdued decorative elements in low relief typical of Islamic art - rosettes and a crescent. The used building material of the fountain indicates that its probably constructed in the same period as the turbe and minaret (15-16 c.).



A fountain in the courtyard of Painting mosque

The entire complex is enclosed by a stone wall with many openings for wooden lattices, which leaves a distinct impression and defines the ambiental environment of Painted mosque.

The painting of Painted mosque in Tetovo, which possesses many important values, largely reflects the artistic influence of the Western countries which was transferred to our region via the centers of the Empire. The use of vivid colors and the precise brush motion (especially in the painting of floral elements) speak of a commitment to detail with elements of the "*Turkish Baroque*" which also appears as a reminiscence in some of the Ottoman buildings from the 19th century in Republic of Macedonia. Despite the fact that the painted landscape does not have a perspective, there is a clear tendency of the artist to capture the ambience and uniqueness of the painted palaces.

The painters of this art are unknown, but we can assume that it could occur only at the hands of connoisseurs of classical artistic expression and interpretation.

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