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Identity of the architecture of mosques in Russia in the late XX-early XXI century (as exemplified by Tatarstan)

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the development and identification of the architecture of mosques in Russia on the example of the Republic of Tatarstan. In the 1990-ies, after a long break, the construction of mosques in cities and villages was resumed. For the last three decades, the architecture of mosques has evolved from recreating historical buildings of mosques lost during the Soviet period to construction of modern Muslim cult structures. The architecture of the Tatarstan mosques in Russia develops compositions of the traditional types of the buildings while applying contemporary structures, materials, and extending the functions significantly. The buildings of the mosques include prayer rooms, libraries, museums, classrooms, conference rooms, auxiliary spaces, etc. A particular feature of the contemporary Tatar mosques is separate entrances and ladies' prayer rooms. Previously, women were not allowed inside the buildings. All this determines the identity of the architecture of mosques in Tatarstan and Russia. The construction of large cult structures signifies a new stage for the development of mosques in Russia.

Key words: mosque, identity, development, modern architecture, traditions.

1 Introduction

1.1 Historiography of the problem

The issue of studying the contemporary architecture of the Russian mosques determines the identity. It is topical and has practical importance. After a 70-year atheistic ruling of the Soviet authorities (1917-1987), the time has come to develop the Muslim cult architecture. The historical experience of developing traditional types of the Tatarstan mosques has been studied for the period from the X to the early XX century [1; 2]. Modern trends in the designing and construction of mosques in the present-day town-building context of Europe and America [3], distinguishing features of modern mosques compared to Medieval Muslim structures [4; 5], systematization, typology of modern mosques, traditions and innovations in the architecture [6], and other aspects of the issue are of interest for architects of Russia.

The problem of determining the identity of the architecture of mosques is studied in many countries. Some researchers consider the mosque's identity to correspond to the spirit of the place. A natural architectural identity can be defined as one which has what the modernist thinkers refer to as a spirit of the times and what present post-modernists call a spirit of the place. A building is supposed to possess true identity if it responds religiously to the idea of both spirits [7-10]. Other researchers consider identity as a condition for sustainable development of architecture [11; 12]. The authors study special factors and conditions that form a new architectural identity [13; 14]. There are studies devoted to identifying the former building identifiers of Arab and Turkish cities and their influence on modern



architecture [15-18]. The identity of an architectural work is usually assessed by its design and its correspondence to the cultural and social characteristics of the epoch [19]. Modern structures (new identifiers) should match their time [20].

1.2 Brief history of the development of mosques

Within the territory of the present-day Russia, Islam began to spread in the late VIII – early IX centuries in Dagestan, and in the early X century in the Volga and Kama region, where the present-day Tatarstan is located. From the X to the middle XVI century, in the Volga and Kama region, Muslim states followed each other: the Volga and Kama Bulgaria, the Bolgar Ulus of the Golden Horde, and the Kazan Khanate. It is known that mosques existed in each town and village of the Kazan Khanate. In the capital of the Khanate – Kazan – there was the cathedral mosque of Qul-Sharif with eight minarets. In 1552, the Kazan Khanate populated by Muslim Tatars was conquered by the Russian Princely State, where the population practiced Christianity. Islam turned from the official religion of the state into a suppressed denomination of a minority in the Christian country. Most of the mosques were ruined. However, the Muslim population survived in the Russian State continued to practice Islam, although it was forbidden. A common wooden mosque was made as a single-room building with a gable or hip roof, a two-story minaret towered on it. From the middle XVI century to the late third of the XVIII century, there were no stone mosques in the Kazan region. In 1767, Kazan was visited by the Russian Empress Catherine II. She allowed the Muslim Tatars to build mosques. In 1769-1770-ies, two stone jami mosques were built in Kazan that followed examples of the traditional Tatar mosque with the minaret in the center of the roof. These were Marjani and the Apanaevs' mosques (figures 1a, b). Since then, mosques have been built in town and villages of Russia populated with Muslims. In the middle XIX century, a dome type of the mosque appeared with the minaret above the entrance. The minaret was on the North side of the building. The mihrab was oriented towards Mecca in all the mosques of the region. In the early XX century, there were 15 Muslim parishes with mosques in Kazan. A specific feature of such mosques was a limited set of premises that only comprised lobbies and prayer rooms. Storage space was in the ground floor of the buildings. Women did not attend the mosques.



Figure 1. Historical mosques of Kazan restored in the late XX-early XXI centuries:
a) Marjani mosque (1769-1770); b) The Apanaevs' mosque (1769-1770);
c) Hay Market mosque (1854); d) Sultanov's mosque (1867).

A new blow on the Islam and the Muslim cult architecture in Russia hit in the 1920-ies, as the Soviet Union shaped up. In the 1930-ies, mosques were closed almost everywhere, minarets were demolished, and the buildings were used for various functions. No mosques were built during the Soviet period. A few mosques operated in the country. The decay in the development of the architecture of mosques lasted for 70 years.

From the early 1990-ies, when the Soviet Union collapsed, the value of the religion restored in the Russian state. Historical buildings of mosques began to be returned to Muslim communities of towns and villages. The mosques were restored, and their minarets rebuilt. The Apanaevs', Marjani, Hay

Market (figure 1c), Sultanov's (figure 1d), Galeev's, Blue mosque and other mosques were restored in Kazan. Since early Islamic centuries, Islamic art has been inspired by the valuable learning and thoughts of Islam in different dimensions; both in the early works which represent the simplicity and unadorned forms, and the contemporary works, which have a stronger multitude of decorations [21].

2 Materials and methods

In order to reach the goal set, rural and urban mosques of Tatarstan built from the late 1980-ies till present were examined. During the period, modern mosques were constructed in all towns and large villages of Tatarstan. The authors collected materials on the mosques of Tatarstan that existed in the late XX century [23; 24] and those built in the first decades of the XXI century. The research method is a systematic analysis of the architecture of modern mosques. The sources of the research were bibliographic, archival and field materials. Field surveys of mosques provided interesting materials for comparative analysis of their architectural solutions and finding the identity codes. All the mosques were photographed, measured, put on the plans of cities and villages and the map of Tatarstan. On the basis of photographs and drawings, a comparative analysis of the architecture of mosques in Tatarstan was conducted. All identified mosques were classified according to the type of compositional structure, type of space-planning solution, decorative and artistic design.

The analysis of the space-planning solutions of the mosques built in Tatarstan for the last thirty years proved that two trends can be traced in the development of the modern Muslim cult architecture: (1) traditional space-planning solutions of hall mosques with the minaret on the roof or above the entrance located in the North gable façade, with expanded functions, as well as traditional shapes and décor are used for the modern structures; (2) a creative endeavor for new forms can be observed in the architecture of mosques:

- 1) while using traditional compositional arrangements;
- 2) based on new compositional arrangements;
- 3 based on the revival of the compositional type of the domed multi-minaret mosque lost centuries ago;
- 4) based on the stylized design of examples of mosques well-known and widely spread in the Muslim world.

In the late XX century, imitations of examples of the XIX-early XX century mosques could be observed in the design and construction of the mosques. Traditional space-planning solutions of historical mosques were applied. Two types of the functional arrangement of the mosques can be found: the one with the traditional enfilade layout of the men's prayer rooms on the second floor, and the women's room on the first floor. In this case, separate entrances are arranged for men and for women. It has become a novelty in the operation of the mosques. Sometimes, instead of a separate room for the women, a balcony is arranged inside the men's room. Apart from the traditional lobby and the hall, the premises of the mosques comprise sanitary conveniences and ablution rooms, recreation rooms, classrooms, libraries, audiences. The types of the mosques differ with the placement of the minarets. The first type of the mosque had a minaret in the center of a gable roof or a hip roof of the mosque. As an example, Ramazan mosque in Kazan or Umet-Gulsum mosque in Nizhnekamsky District of the Republic of Tatarstan (figure 2a-b can be mentioned). The mosques of the second type are distinguished with the minaret located above the entrance at the North façade. These are Nur-Gali mosque in Kazan, Utyz-Imeni in Naberezhnye Chelny (figure 2c-d).

In the early XXI century, a creative endeavor began for new forms of the architecture of mosques in Kazan and in larger towns of Tatarstan. Architects sought for new compositional arrangements while preserving the traditional space-planning structure of the mosque. Thus, the shape of the hall and the traditional gable roof assumed more dynamic forms in Taube mosque in Naberezhnye Chelny (figure 2e). The type of the hall domed mosque with the axial location of the minaret (or two minarets) above the entrance in the North section has spread widely. The dome covered the men's prayer room and towered over the volume of the mosque, where decorative minarets were erected at the corners.

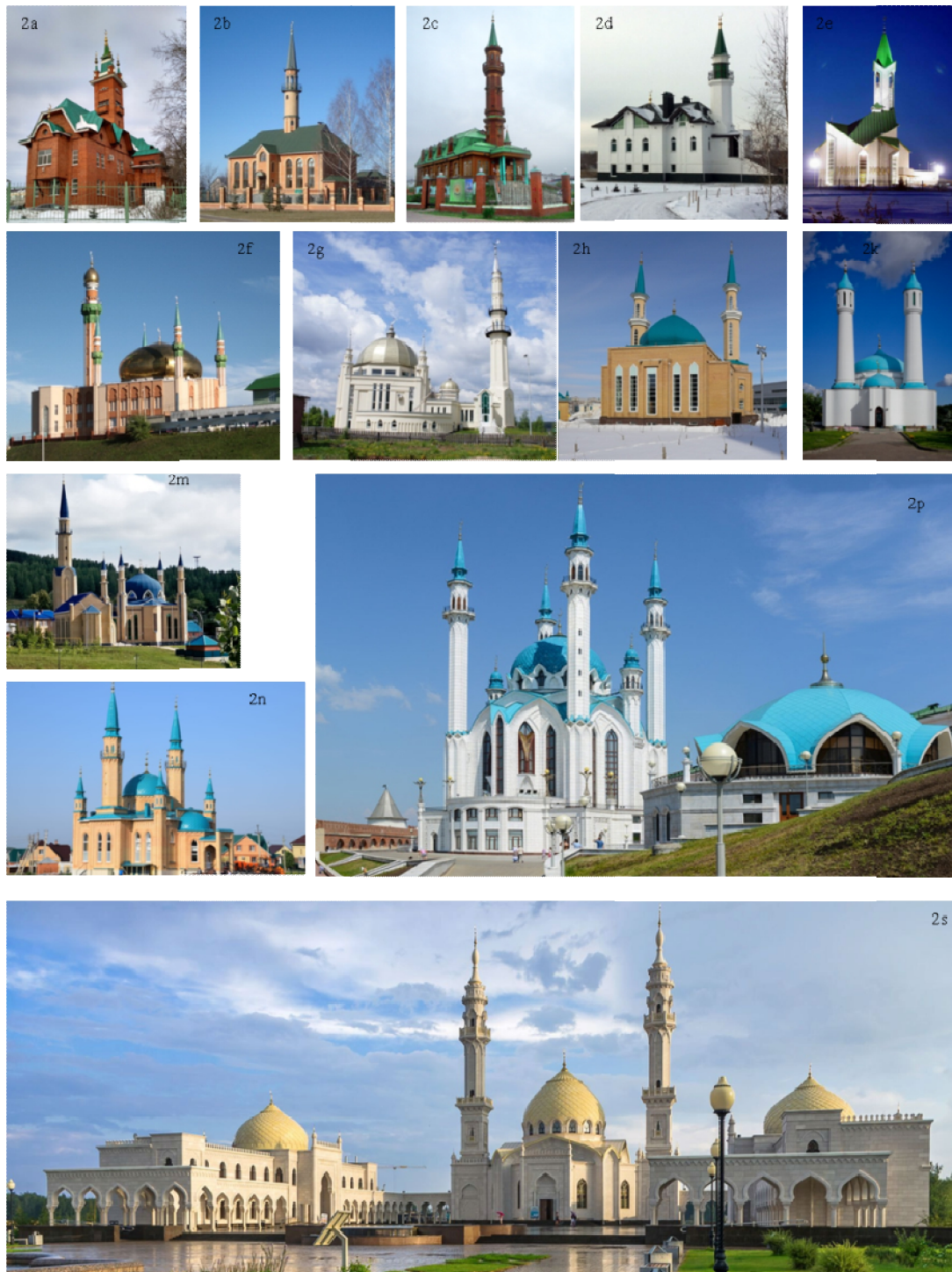


Figure 2. Modern mosques of Tatarstan: 2a – Ramazan (1994, Kazan);
 2b – Umet-Gulsum (2008, Nizhnekamsk); 2c – Kazan-Nuri (1998, Kazan);
 2d – Utyz-Imeni (2016, Arsk); 2e – Taube (1992; Naberezhnye Chelny);
 2f – Rinat (1999, Almetyevsk); 2g – Nur-Ikhlis (1993, Naberezhnye Chelny);
 2h – Gailya (2013, Kazan); 2k – Shamil (2001, Kazan); 2m – Ikhlis (2006, Leninogorsk);
 2n – Minnegel (2019, Nurlat); 2p – Kul-Sharif (2005, Kazan); 2s – Ak-Mechet (2012, Bolgar).

The compositional creativity of the present-day architecture of the Tatar mosques is reflected in the mosques shown in the figure 2 f-n. The appearance of a small Shamil mosque in Kazan resembles the motifs of the Medieval regional architecture (figure 2k). Larger urban mosques often act as cultural and educational centers (figure 2 f, m, n). Trends for the compositional added complexity of the volumes, their enrichment with expressive sculptural solutions are noticeable in the architectural arrangements of these mosques. The above manifests are vividly observed in the architecture of the main mosque of Tatarstan – Kul-Sharif – built in the center of the historical center of Kazan as a reminder of the lost Medieval mosque run by imam Kul-Sharif. The new mosque designates a revival of the compositional type of the domed multi-minaret mosque lost more than 400 years ago.

3 Results

The main results of the research are the identified compositional types, features of space-planning structures and decorative and stylistic solutions of mosques, as identifiers that characterize the identity of mosques in Russia in the late XX-early XXI centuries on the example of mosques in Tatarstan. The significance of the results obtained for architecture is the identification of the architecture of mosques in the region of Tatarstan in Russia, as a basis for the development of their new identity and sustainable development in the present and future.

Original Muslim cult architecture has been shaping in Tatarstan. It reflects the stage of evolvement and beginning of the creative endeavor after a long break in the development. During the last three decades, the architecture of mosques of Tatarstan in Russia has evolved from recreating historical buildings of the mosques lost during the Soviet ruling to the construction of modern Muslim cult complexes. At the end of the second decade of the XXI century, the architecture of Muslim cult structures of Tatarstan reflects quite a new stage of the development. It is distinguished with a vast participation of women in the activities of the mosques, which is reflected with the space-planning solutions of the buildings. A modern mosque mandatorily accounts for traditional shapes of the pasts that assume a new representation as modern structures and materials are applied [25]. The architecture of the modern mosque is often based on profound allusions to events and culture of the historical past of the people. In traditional Islamic architecture there is not a single form that could convey a universal symbolic message equally to everybody. Specific form of the minaret arises from the cultural context in which it was created. A contemporary expression in mosque architecture is not a matter of choice of a modern or regional approach to the design but a problem of its interpretation. Although certain traditional forms bring out specific spiritual states and emotions with the faithful, making replicas of monumental mosques of the past times does not correspond to contemporary Muslim society. Nevertheless, symbolic forms and individual traditional values, although created in the past, can serve as impetus to creativity. However, they should not be just a literal application but an innovative formal treatment in order to acquire an adequate contemporary meaning. Creative imagination and potential should be positively directed towards creating a contemporary architectural expression by combining the best features of the regional and universal [26]. The development of the architecture of Tatarstan shows trends of the international architecture. However, the subject calls for an independent research.

4 Discussions

The premises of the mosque comprise two museum pavilions, a library, a conference room, etc. The octagonal space of the central volume is capped with a high dome. Four 55-meter-high minarets and four smaller minarets are placed at the corners of the main volume. The shape of the main dome of the mosque is a resemblance of the crown of the Khans of Kazan. Intertwined structures of acute arches of the mosque highlight the relation to the ribbed structure of the yurt of the Tatars' ancestors. The tulip has become a motif of the mosque's décor as a token flower for the revival and prosperity. Therefore, the image of Kul-Sharif mosque is formed with the shapes and components that are associated with the historical heritage of the Tatar people and reflects the national romantic trends in the present-day architecture of mosques of Tatarstan. During the last decade, well-known and widely spread in the Muslim world mosques based on the stylized design of the cult structures have emerged in Tatarstan. A

vivid example of such development trend in the modern architecture of mosques can be observed in Ak-Mechet mosque in Bolgar (figure 2p). The premises of the mosque include the residence of the Mufti and a madrassah. The symmetrical arrangement of the U-shaped group of building is highlighted with the central dome of the mosque, two side domes of the annexed halls, and two 46-meter-high minarets. Its exterior combines features of the cult architecture of Medina and other centers of Islam.

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