

## CONNECTION BETWEEN MOORISH ARCHITECTURAL STYLE AND BULGARIAN INTERIOR DESIGN STYLE XVIII-XIX

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### Abstract

The architectural style formed in Bulgaria during the period known as The Bulgarian Revival Period between XVIII-XIX – is a specific architectural style which is in many aspects connected to or influenced by the Moorish style and shares some of its main characteristics. Those similarities are referable to the fact that Bulgaria was under the Ottoman rule for more than five centuries, therefore it is not surprising that Bulgarian architecture is a mixture of the styles of its conquerors, the Byzantines and the Ottomans. Bulgarian architecture was inspired by both the Byzantine style, and lately in the 18th century the Ottoman or Islamic influenced architecture became more and more visible. It is impossible to isolate Moorish or Ottoman architecture from the totality of Islamic architecture as a whole. Islamic, Byzantine and European elements subjected each other to mutual influence of varying intensity on the fertile soil of the new revival art and architecture of the National Revival Period in Bulgaria forming a new style which can still be observed today in some regions in Bulgaria.

This research traced some of the main correlations between the Bulgarian Revival architecture and Moorish architectural style, such as the posthumous dynamic of the development of geometric patterns, the application of specific materials and the special position of color in the interior space. Some of the most representative works of this style will be examined.

**Keywords:** Moorish architecture, interior design, Bulgarian Revival period style, patterns, geometric design

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Although Moorish architecture has been studied extensively, the attention that has been paid to its main characteristics and the present undisputable similarities with some other styles formed separately-like the Bulgarian revival has been insufficient. The importance of Moorish art in particular has left a lasting impression on both Christian Spain and Islamic art as a whole. The interactions between the North Africa and Andalusia have produced a variety of influences on the Moorish architectural style. While the style of the Bulgarian Revival period is strongly marked by the Ottoman art- following the Turkish conquest-seen as a form of Islamic art. In this paper some of this connections will be pointed out but a larger study need to be explored even further.

This paper first discusses why is this connection even possible to occur, after that it will follow several examples of the most common design practices in Moorish style, then goes on to some of the great example of Bulgarian Revival period decoration techniques. And by some direct comparison the link between the two is outlined.

## 2. CONNECTION

The development of the new architectural style in Bulgaria during the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century and the connection to the Moorish style. The main and most obvious reason for influence is the fact that Bulgaria was under the rule of the Turks for more than four centuries. But it is not the only reason. Moorish style has its impact all over Europe not only in the newly independent Bulgaria. How did the interest in medieval Moors evolve in these countries? The first significant expressions of the oriental theme were seen in the works of writers and artists during the 18th century. In parallel with the development of art, the architectural style would eventually copy the Moorish design. The Alhambra Palace, which was built in Granada during the 13th and 15th centuries, became an example of European architectural style. World exhibitions in France also helped spread the neo-Moorish style. Famous artist were recognized in Europe for their work on the Alhambra. Their work allowed other European architects to create their own style based on the original Moorish design. The second half of the 19th century saw the spread of the Moorish style throughout Europe. Its developmental features were widely exhibited in various countries. Each country would eventually develop her own versions of this style using its main characteristics as an inspiration and a solid base for further interpretations and enrichments.

## 3. GEOMETRIC PATTERNS

Religious text, geometric patterns, and stylized flowers are always the motifs for arabesques, one of the most typical forms of decoration in Moorish style, or surface decorations constructed with precise patterns. In general the prohibition of representational images of God, and the usage of other human and animal figures is strongly discouraged. For the same reason, the motifs of flowers and vegetable figures are extremely stylised and geometric. This led to the development of traditions of rich geometric complexity. Simple foundation shapes are repeated in symmetrical arrays in Moorish patterns for adornment. It's a work of art with strong mathematical roots that's more cerebral than emotive. The Moorish style is rich of variety of repeated plant based patterns combined with geometric patterns that can be seen using simple polygons. They are often identified by their shapes and sizes.

There are many forms of Islamic art that are made from simple geometric shapes. These patterns are commonly used to create elaborate designs. Moorish geometric patterns are made from four basic shapes: circles, stars, squares, and multi-sided polygons.



Fig.1. *Examples of geometric designs in Moorish style*

The shapes can be combined in an unlimited number of ways. The simple elements can create complex designs that can be repeated and expanded. The geometric patterns used for decoration have a balance and equilibrium. Early examples featured isolated figures and eight-pointed stars.



Fig. 2. *Examples of geometric patterns-repeated and taseleted in Moorish style origin, found also into examples of Bulgarian Revival Period designs*

In Bulgarian Revival works those geometric patterns can also be found. The use of highly conventionalized flower and plant imagery is widely spread in Revival art. There is no prohibition of imagery so images such as birds, the sun...from the everyday life are also common.

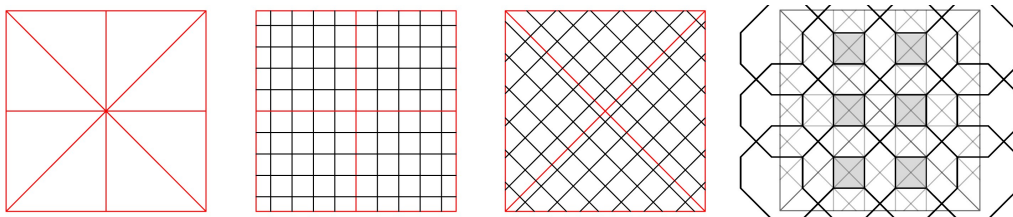


Fig. 3. Examples of geometric designs in Moorish style found in houses typical for the Bulgarian Revival period in Plovdiv, Old town, Hindlian House, interior, Bulgaria

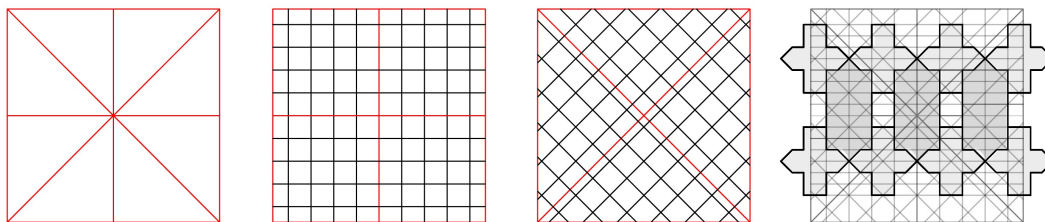


Fig. 4. Examples of geometric designs in Moorish style found in houses typical for the Bulgarian Revival period in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Examples of the strongly geometric patterns can be found mainly in the intricate ceiling carvings of the reception rooms of Bulgarian homes during the late 18th and early 19th centuries but also into some of the textiles used in interiors of the houses. This wide use of decorations and ornamentations was at testimony to the growing wealth of Bulgarians during and mostly after the Ottoman era.



Fig. 5. Picture of ceiling of typical house from the Bulgarian Revival period- the Kordopulova house in the town of Melnik, Bulgaria -in similar to the Moorish style geometric design



The artists from this period used as a base in some cases the strictly geometrical patterns but enriched the decoration with new typical patterns like Kanatitsa, Elbetitsa, Makazi- those are some of the names of the most common used symbols mostly formed by the tessellation of triangles. Widely used symbol was the sun, birds-all strongly stylized, plant ornaments, round patterns, undulating rays etc.

Most of those symbols were seen as a simple geometric shape or a reminiscence of the ancient deities were believed as a symbol of happiness, longevity and protection from evil forces. The patterns can be combined in an unlimited number of ways. They can also be repeated and expanded to create complex designs.



Fig. 5. Examples of geometric symbols typical for the Bulgarian Revival Period works- makaz, and the forming of katanitsa- symbol of health and prosperity

The embedded symbols found in carpets and not only have a significant role in the lives of the weaver and their communities. Like abstract art, the meanings of these symbols are still a mystery open to interpretations.

In the interiors during the Bulgarian Revival period the preference for 'star' motives and geometrical patterns on the ceiling was Turkish, whereas Bulgarian builders preferred '

#### 4. TEXTILES AND USE OF COLOURS

Most Bulgarian Revival houses were elaborately decorated. Walls, ceilings and parts of the façade were painted with floral motifs; ceilings, porches, doors and furniture were carved out of wood and painted.

During that period one of the design of typical carpets. Main colours red and black after that included some more variation green, yellow, and brown, blue mostly when the textile is concerned.

Cobalt blue, bright red and emerald green are typical colours used in Moorish tiles and inject stunning uplifting hues into the colour scheme.



Fig. 6. Examples of a.) Left -geometric designs-carpet in Moorish style and b.) Right- typical Bulgarian revival period- Chiprovski carpet

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

It is possible to conclude that the influence of local building traditions continued during the second half of the 19th century. The various sources of inspiration for architectural styles emerged from the West European and Oriental traditions.

The acceptance of the Moorish style's decoration heritage is linked to the recognition of its aesthetic and social values. Through the images that were presented, it was revealed that the period of the Ottoman rule in the region of Bulgaria did not necessarily have social and mental representations. The research allowed us to understand how the Bulgarian population values the architectural heritage that was issued from the Ottoman period just to take some of the well-developed techniques and by the genius of the local artist to enrich and develop the new and unique style in architecture and art as a whole -known as Bulgarian Revival period. It is of great importance to know in detail the past to build the better future.

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