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ARHITEKTURA I ISTORIJSKI
RAZVOJ SAMOSTANA U
BANJALUCI U PERIODU OD
1878. DO 1918.

THE ARCHITECTURE AND
HISTORICAL
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Miroslav Malinović*University of Banja Luka, Faculty for architecture and civil engineering, Bulver Vojvode Stepe Stepanovića 77/III, Banja Luka***ARHITEKTURA I ISTORIJSKI RAZVOJ SAMOSTANA U BANJALUCI U PERIODU OD 1878. DO 1918.****APSTRAKT**

Rad se bavi arhitekturom i razvojem katoličkih samostana, različitih redova, u Banjaluci za vrijeme austro-ugarske okupacije i vlasti u Bosni i Hercegovini, od 1878. do 1918. Teritorijalno i temporalno, istraživanje obuhvata šire područje Banjaluke, kao i godine prije i poslije Berlinskog kongresa, odnosno Prvog svjetskog rata, što je uslovljeno postojanjem veza koje sežu dalje od konvencionalnih vremenskih okvira.

Strateški, rad se oslanja na poznate metode rada i istraživanja objekata arhitekture od spomeničke vrijednosti. Diskusija dobijenih nalaza iz terenskih istraživanja, kao i detaljnih istraživanja samostanskih arhiva, te arhiva relevantnih muzejskih zbirki i zbirki biblioteka, bazirana je na valorizaciji i strukturisanom dokumentovanju nekih poznatih i većine neobjavljenih i originalnih podataka o svakom od samostana i samostanskih crkvi. Rad je obogaćen i podacima o društvenom djelovanju redovnika i redovnica, kao i njihovom presudnom značaju za razvoj slike Banjaluke kakva je danas poznata.

Ključne riječi: istorija sakralne arhitekture, katolički samostani, Austro-Ugarska, Banja Luka 1878-1918

THE ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONVENTS IN BANJA LUKA IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1878 AND 1918**ABSTRACT**

Main scope of the work is architecture and development of catholic convents, belonging to different orders, in Banja Luka during Austro-Hungarian occupation and rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, between 1878 and 1918. Territorially and temporally, the study goes also beyond area of Banja Luka, as well as beyond the years before and after the Congress of Berlin and WWI, which is caused by the existence of a relationship that goes further than official timeframes.

Strategically, the work is based on common methods of research on architecture of monumental values. Discussion on the findings from the field research, as well as detailed research conducted in the convent archives and archives of relevant museums and libraries collections, is based on a structured evaluation and documentation of some well-known and other mostly unpublished and original data for each of the convents. The work is enriched with information about social activities of monks and nuns, as well as their decisive importance for the development of the image of Banja Luka, as it is known today.

Key words: sacred architecture history, catholic convents, Austro-Hungary, Banja Luka 1878-1918.

1. INTRODUCTION

Even though Ottoman rule in Bosnia lasted until 1878, strong presence of catholic clergy was seen way before the end of XIX century. Franciscan monks, one of the first representatives of catholic clergy in Bosnia, founded Province Bosna Argentina in 1340. Formerly, covering territory between Budapest and Adriatic Sea, and being the oldest founded ecclesial organization and one of the oldest organizations at all on the Bosnian territory, Bosna Argentina managed to set very important milestones in the history of country. They were the only non-Muslim sacred organization that had Sultan's approval to profess the religion on the Bosnian territory. Besides given Ahdnama, a document that is kept in Fojnica convent of the Holy Spirit, many of the convents founded before Ottoman occupation of Bosnia were later on demolished, as well as the number of parish churches.

In the last years of Ottoman rule, when the scent of the free Europe could be felt all over the Balkans, strong influence of Viennese emperors effected Bosnia. The Franciscans, that were already settled in Bosnia, and had more or less preserved their internal organizational schemes and management, benefitted the most. Austrian Government invested huge amounts of money in both, the convent orders, and the diocesan organization, which was still to be established.

Banja Luka was, in comparison to other middle-sized cities in Bosnian Sanjak, multi-confessional city, holding the citizens belonging to Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelistic, Muslim, and Jewish confessions. Besides that, Banja Luka had specific relationship to Austria, due to small physical distance and good rail connection, two trains to Vienna daily, which existed even before The Congress of Berlin. These and many other socio-political factors influenced the arrival of many other male and female Catholic orders, which found in Banja LUka their new home and place to enrich the environment with their activities. It is quite hard to imagine Banja Luka without their strong influence and presence over the last decades.

This work gives short overview of all convents that once existed in Banja Luka. Some of them were demolished, some lost their role in the Catholic world, but all of them have had significant function in Banja Luka development, not only because of their architectural values, but also because of their influence on the society, industry, education, culture...

Technically, in formal way of understanding, work is structured to give details about location and basic historical data and background about each convent, and more detailed descriptive thesis on belonging churches and buildings, followed with appropriate figures and facts, where possible.

2. MARIA STERN

The building complex is located in Delibašino village, in Banja Luka periphery. Due to strong influence and importance of Trappists, this part of town is nowadays known under such name. Actual address is Street Slatinska N^o 1.

Understanding the international connections of complex Maria Stern is impossible without reviewing the background of the Trappist order and their links to other male and female Catholic orders and clergy in Banja Luka, in former Austro-Hungarian Empire and wider. Trappists or Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance is a Catholic order, which roots are

in La Trappe Abbey, Normandy, France; their motto “Pray and work” and are famous of their cheese and bier production, all over the Europe.

Trappists came to Banja Luka in 1869, under leadership of Abbot Franz Pfanner. At the time, he wanted to make the new congregation in the Hungarian part of Empire, in Slavonija exactly (today eastern Croatia), but the authorities did not allow it.

To be precise, after he left Mariawald, convent in village Heimbach near Eifel in North Rhine-Westphalia, today located in Germany, he spent some time in Rome reviving the Tre Fontane Abbey. After that, he came to Zagreb, Croatia and in July 1868 requested to set up the new Trappist congregation in Slavonija, which is the eastern side of Croatian part of Pannonian Basin. He was rejected and got answer that it will not be possible before February 1869. Afterwards, he accepted another proposal from one Croatian Catholic priest, and left to Bosnia. Officially, he came to Banja Luka with six more monks on 21st June 1869.

Abbot Pfanner was in touch with Austro-Hungarian consul, Croatian born, Captain Stanislav Dragančić, who had his offices in “Albania”, house owned by Tomo Radulović, the richest non-Muslim merchandiser in city [1:20-1], and was in power between 1865 and 1873 [10:120]. According to contract between Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire from 5th November 1869, Austrian citizens were allowed to buy the real estate property in Bosnia, but only as the private persons, not as clergy. That did not compel Pfanner to change his mind and he proved his persistency and determination in project. First attempt to buy properties in Klačnice, 12 km northern from Banja Luka failed. Then, Radulović offered his property Delibašino village, 4 km away from city centre. Finally, he sold it for 1400 ducats. The history of Maria Stern started.

Regarding abbot Pfanner, he became the most important person in the history of Maria Stern convent and one of the most influential people in Banja Luka at that time, not to forget one of the most important Trappists at all. He was born on 21st November 1825 in Langen, near Bregenz, Austria. He attended schools in Langen, Feldkirch, Innsbruck and Padua and lived in different congregations. Before he became Trappist in the Mariawald convent, he was the Head of parish Haselstauden in Voralberg, Austria. Pfanner made an important contribution in reference to the arrival of other Catholic clergies to Banja Luka and Bosnia. Thus he brought to Banja Luka nuns from two orders: Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul and Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

2.1. CONVENT MARIA STERN WITH CHURCH AND OTHER FACILITIES

Before the construction of solid building, their first premises were in the form of a wooden hut, whose reconstructed version still stands in the Convent’s courtyard. After rather complicated procedure and different obstructions, on 9th September 1870 foundation stone for the convent building was laid. The first wing was finished the same year on Christmas Eve. At that time, only twelve monks lived in the convent, all of them native Germans [1:22].

At the same time, due to Turkish restrictions, the church, devoted to the parish patron The Resurrection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was interpolated into the first convent building, and constructed together (Figure 1). Construction works on the church started in 1872 and completed in 1873.



Figure 1 Convent Maria Stern with surrounding industrial facilities. Photograph taken before 1925 [17]

The first church was one of the typical examples of simple gothic revival churches with a single bell tower. Not many information is preserved about this church, so all other descriptive theses are based on drawings only (Figure 2).

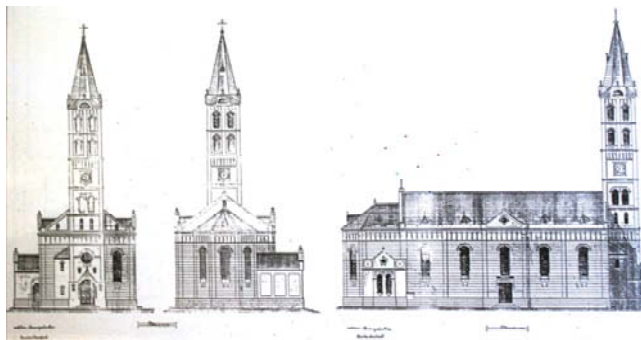


Figure 2 Church of The Resurrection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, first church; entrance, apse and side [3:192]

List of different production facilities founded by Trappists is quite long. Some of them are facilities for the production of cheese (founded 1882), bier (1873), bricks (1869), roof tiles (1877), leather (1892) etc. Besides traditional cheese, famous all over the world, and bier, today named “Nektar beer”, other important projects done by Trappists is Hydropower plant and bridge over the Vrbas, devoted to Saint Bernard, whose construction began in 1899 and 1904, respectively [1:35]. Furthermore, hospital, opened for public use was built between 1878 and 1879 and Orphanage was opened on 1st March 1878.

Regarding power plant, first there was a steam power plant powered by turbine from Viennese Company Schuckert, but due to low efficiency, they ordered a new water turbine from company Fährndrich located in Mödling, Vienna. The first bulb was introduced and activated on 27th March 1899 [5:561], railway station Banja Luka Vorstadt got electricity in 1902 and in 1910 production was strong enough to deliver electricity to the whole city of Banja Luka [1:52].

Along with other, industrial facilities, this complex is known as the “old convent,” and does not exist anymore, except the multi-storey mill. After the WWI complex of the “new convent” was built (Figure 3).

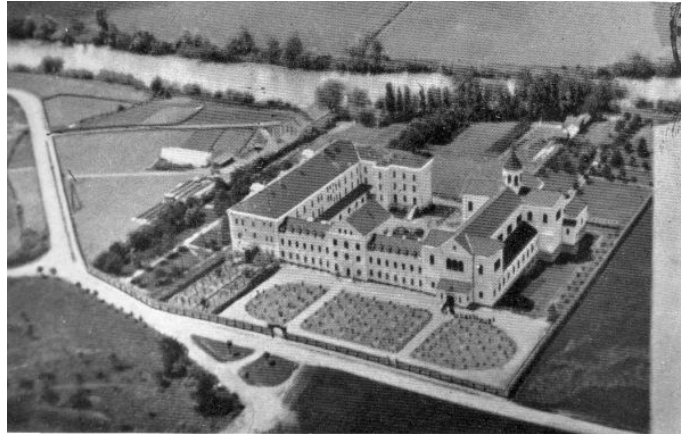


Figure 3 Convent Maria Stern; view of the new complex [18]

A new church was constructed between 1925 and 1927 according to the project done by Eberhard Wegandt, Trappist architect-monk that did several other facilities and churches in Banja Luka during the five decades of his stay. It has a bit changed orientation, same as the first one: “reversed” east-west orientation of main nave, apse on the west with entrance portal on the eastern side (Figures 4, 5). At the time, it was the biggest Catholic church in Bosnia and Herzegovina [5:557].

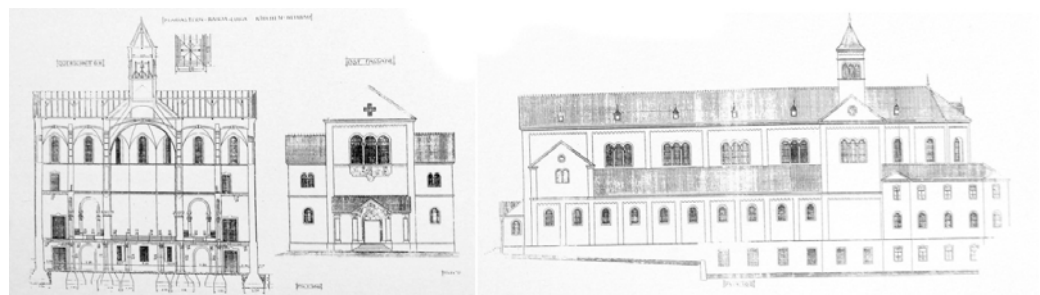


Figure 4 Church of The Resurrection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, second church; cross section, eastern entrance and northern side elevation views [3:196]

Although time of construction does not correspond to Austro-Hungarian ruling time in Bosnia, it is a part of earlier time legacy and cannot be scrutinized separately. Whole background story is directly linked to earlier period and it was built in the context that was developed and enlarged in the Austro-Hungarian times. In addition, the architect was, without doubt, a person who maintained crucial guidelines from his earlier work.

So, Wegandt did the project, which was later worked to by architect Seidler from München. Architectural language was enriched with important sculptural achievements, made by Bruno Diamant, also from München. He is famous for his design of aircraft vessel for count Zeppelin [1:72].



Figure 5 Church of The Resurrection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, second church. Close up view; present condition [20]

The Church also does not correspond to other churches within time range. It has discrete elements of simplified late classicism revival with tympanums, which are seen on the entrance portal and side transepts. Although it has fairly large footprint, the church is not dominated by a huge dome or a bell tower. Only one small bell extends beyond the roof, on the place of intersection of main and transept naves. Side façade walls are supported by uncommon counterforts, which have completely different architectural language in comparison to overall impressions.

Along with the church, a new Orphanage building was built as an extension that was actually never used for its original purposes (Figure 6). In 1924 monks moved in, and boys remained in the old convent building.



Figure 6 Convent Maria Stern; one of the later constructed wings for orphanage [18]

The situation following the WWII was almost the same for all sacred buildings. Only the church retained its function, while the main building was nationalized and given to the Orthopaedic clinic (Figure 7), which is still in place.



Figure 7. Convent Maria Stern. View of old orphanage wing, now used for medical purposes, present condition [20]

The Church was heavily damaged in the earthquake in October 1969, just a month after its thorough reconstruction.

In the peak of its era, before WWI, Maria Stern was the biggest Trappist congregation in the world, with more than 230 monks from 9 countries. Now, it is the smallest congregation, with no more than 3 to 5 monks permanently living in the community [1:31].

Disregarding main facilities, other industrial buildings do not have either architectural or hereditary value, but their importance and the role in terms of Banja Luka development is priceless.

The Church is marked a national monument on the list of Permanent National Monuments [14]. The Convent is on list of Provisional National Monuments [15].

3. SISTERS OF MERCY – SALVATORGASSE CONVENT OF SISTERS OF MERCY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

This ensemble (Figure 8) is located in Salvatorgasse, later known as Street of Fra Grga Martić, today Serbian Street N^o 30. Site is in the vicinity of Banja Luka Parish Church devoted to Quest of Blessed Virgin Mary to Saint Elisabeth, which is located just down the street, towards Herrengasse.



Figure 8 Catholic convent of Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul in close-up view and Gymnasium building in second plan; view of main façade from north-west. Photograph taken 1910 [5:569]

First nuns from this order came to Banja Luka with the help of Franz Pfanner, monk and Trappist abbot from Maria Stern Convent. Due to the fact that monks from Maria Stern Convent were educating boys only, Diocese of Bosnia had a reason to support their arrival in order to provide same conditions for girls. [12:486-510] Sisters from the order of Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul, to whom convent is devoted, were known in Banja Luka as white nuns, because of their white uniforms.

On 20th October 1872, three sisters came to Banja Luka and were temporary settled in the Austrian consulate, which had schoolrooms in the Street of Ivan Franjo Jukić. A year later, Pfanner bought them a small house in the vicinity of the parish church in Salvatorgasse. The same year, Franz Joseph I gave them an annual subsidy in the amount of 300 forints. In 1874 the admission for boys started.

The School was gradually improving and nuns along with abbot Pfanner were giving their best to enlarge the facilities: in 1875 Pfanner bought one more house with a garden in the neighbourhood, in 1880, after foreign authorities came, they added one more floor to the existing school, in 1880 they bought another household in the neighbourhood, enlarging the property. When sister Gregorija, the Head of the Convent, wanted to make new buildings and facilities for the convent, in 1885 Sisters bought the households from Maria Stern Convent, which was a legal owner. Finally, first convict and big building for the convent, along with fences around the site, were built and opened in 1889 [5:570].

The ensemble, which contained an enclosed school building and convent facilities for the nuns, was functioning until 1907 when a new Head, sister Borgija, bought more land in the vicinity and started new construction works. From that period, the most important facility is a new school building that retained its original condition.

Today, the school is a seat of Catholic school centre "Blessed Ivan Mertz" and has replaced the old convict, while a new one was built for same purposes (Figure 9).



Figure 9 Convent of Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul. View of the Gymnasium and convent facilities; present condition [20]

3.1. GYMNASIUM

Some contradictions exist regarding the design of Gymnasium building. Some authors [9:114-5, 11:89] mention Eberhard Wegandt as the architect, but some “inside” sources [5] are naming Ivan Blažeković. Furthermore it is unknown if this was the same architect that designed Metropolitan palace for Orthodox church in Banja Luka, there named as Josip Blažeković, considering the fact that in terms of some lingual differences between Serbian and Croatian, names Josip and Ivan are the same.

Nevertheless, data that remain correct for sure are dates: after buying the construction site in 1907, works started on 29th September 1910, and finished on 10th October 1910. All construction works and furnishing were finished on 1st November 1911 [5:570].

Building, alongside Convent building in the courtyard, retained its function until the end of WWII, when it was nationalised. Still, scholar functions continued in the building; 7th primary school had its seat there until 1992, then from 1992 until 2004 School for civil engineering. At that time, from 2001 to 2004, minor interventions were undertaken: main structural change was roof elevation in value of 20 cm, providing conditions for roof area utilization, and façade colour change in grey.

Process of denationalization lasted until 1999. In the meantime, the reconstruction project for Gymnasium and a new project for the Convent, which was pulled down due to bad conditions and irreparable damages, were prepared, which lead to ultimate Gymnasium reconstruction and adaptation works along with a new convent building erection [5:571].

The complex was reopened in 2005, and a new Catholic Gymnasium with belonging facilities was founded.



Figure 10 Catholic convent of Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul, Gymnasium in close-up view of main façade and courtyard side from north-west. Photograph taken 1968 [11:199]

As presented, gymnasium and convict are located in Salvatorgasse, today named Serbian Street, making the special structure disposition in the street. Gymnasium building is first in the row of later built structures, that to be honest did not follow guidelines and elevation rules provided, and along with Convent building, that also has one façade facing the street, make inner courtyard. It is partly connected to Convent building, but their interpolation is done in a clear way, so that style, structure and functions are easily divided by using visual inspection (Figure 10).

Entrance from Serbian Street is a utility entrance, while the main entrance is located in Street of Vaso Pelagić, on the opposite side.

Three zones are visible and distinctive: first zone corresponds to slightly elevated ground floor and cellar that is not completely visible from the outside, but plinth wall shows us that the second zone is divided from the first with a strong perimeter wall, now emphasised with yellow colour, just like the crown cornice change from second to third, roof zone.

The first zone has strong stucco decoration, which is aligned with heavy fence design, making the entrance and link as a whole. Second zone is more interesting: it has discrete secession decoration vertically displaced between windows, which alongside a small Avant-corps emphasises the vertical guidelines of the design. Avant-corps is completed with a decorated gable wall, extending from the hip roof construction.

In addition, small floral and rounded motives can be found in the zone under the crown cornice.

Some of the decoration elements used here can be found in the other designs in Banja Luka, like former Evangelistic church and parish house or railway station "Banja Luka Stadt", characterized as historicism supporting renaissance revival. Interesting is the transformation of the role of same elements, from situation where they had secondary role, just to frame the outlines and divide the corpuses, to design where they make the whole with floral decoration and other elements emphasizing vertical dimension of building.

Structure is in the context of time: massive brick walls in width that exceeds 70 cm. Available documentation does not give is enough information to give conclusions about floor structures, but they are possibly made out of concrete, due to several reasons: fact that no

reconstruction was undertaken on the floor structures in the meantime and visual inspection also confirms assumption and spans are larger than 7 m.

The roof construction is traditional, made of wooden elements.

The first functional organization contained rooms for boys on the ground floor, girls on the first floor and zones for handcrafts and music education on the second floor. Today, the function is adapted to the new Gymnasium function: on ground floor, common spaces for teachers and administration are situated, while each floor is accommodating three lectures rooms (Figure 11).

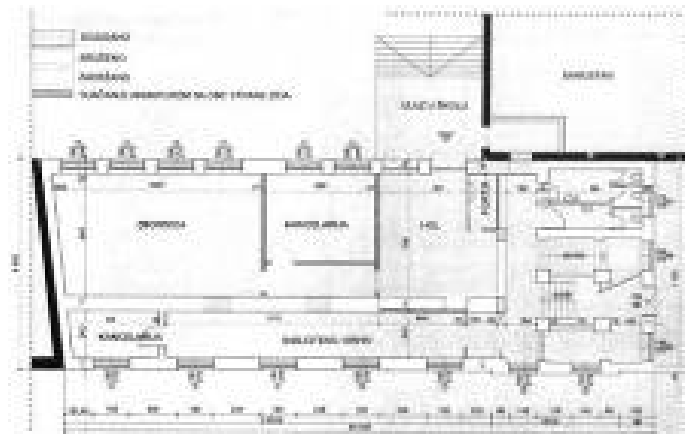


Figure 11 Catholic convent of Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent De Paul, Gymnasium building; floor plan of reconstructed building [11:199]

As it is presented, brick and concrete are main structural materials. Visible material for decoration is plaster only: walls are entirely plastered and in recent time coloured in combination of white and yellow colour. Roof is made of traditional clay tiles.

After the last reconstruction works, Gymnasium building has been in excellent condition and has been properly maintained. The Convent is in even better condition because it is a fairly new building. Compared to the old complex design, only sports hall was added behind the school, but it is not spoiling the setting and the overall expression due to its "concealed location".

The Convent with the school building is on the list of Provisional National Monuments [15].

4. PETRIĆEVAC

Seat of this Franciscan complex is in Petrićevac, district located on the northern exit from Banja Luka, on Kaiserstraße heading Gradiška, route traced with Kaiserstraße 1858-1860. Today, site is located in Street Marije Dimić N^o 4.

4.1. PARISH CHURCH DEVOTED TO SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

First church (Figure 12) was built on the site in 1884 and, according to photo documentation, was slightly different in comparison to churches built at that time in Banja Luka. Bell tower, which was erected later in 1893, was first standing alone, on the southern side of apse (north-

ern bell tower was never erected), but later, when convent building were enlarged, it was interpolated in the convent building. Bell tower had interesting, onion shaped dome, one of a kind in Banja Luka. Interpolation and connection to convent buildings was probably done in extension works from 1903-1907, when the church was reinforced and decorated.

Later, between 1930 and 1931 new parish church was erected, now with two bell towers, which marked this space as a unique spatial marker for whole Banja Luka. Project was done by architect Misita-Blaž Katušić from Zemun, Serbia (Figure 13) [2:111-226]. It was destroyed in 1969 in earthquake, but new one was erected between 1970 and 1974 [5:132]. Unfortunately, another catastrophe happened, in 1995 during the civil war in Bosnia, new church along with parts of convent was destroyed in explosion. Now, new parish church is being built.

4.2. CONVENT OF HOLY TRINITY

The first convent building was constructed before Austro-Hungarian occupation, in 1873. Building was completed in 1875 and first monks moved in May of 1876. Although monks were supported by Austro-Hungarian Empire, case of bad luck led to convent destruction in 1878. During the battles on 14th August 1878 rebels held the site of convent as the strategic point [7:120]. In the meantime, monks managed to run away and find the shelter in Maria Stern Convent, in Delibašino Village. Army bombed the buildings in order to liquidate the local forces, leading to complete convent destruction.



Figure 12 Third convent of Holy Trinity and first parish church of Saint Anthony of Padua; photograph taken before 1930, when old church was still standing and new convent already built [5:133]

Monks waited two years for new residence, when finally in 1880 construction works started. First buildings were finished in 1882, and later various extensions, in 1885, 1887, 1903-1907 were undertaken.

When, in the end of second decade of XX century Convent was not able to handle the needs with available space, new complex was built (Figure 12). Little time earlier, new church was built. It was done by project of architect Misita-Blaž Katušić (Figure 13). Church was integrated with convent building and whole complex was, first time in its history represented as an ensemble. Doubtless, it was the biggest project in Banja Luka done after WWI by Catholic church and, at least, as important as the new complex Maria Stern. Disposition on the site and articulation of the volumes retained the historically situated manner, which will be the case even in two later designs. Although Catholic church already had some more

advanced approaches to design before, Katušić used very well known language of eclecticism and combination of various elements from revival styles [4].



Figure 13 Third convent of Holy Trinity and second parish church devoted to Saint Anthony of Padua. Postcard dated in 1939 [5]

As presented, complex built after the earthquake, included convent buildings also, and these were design by Slovenian architect Janez Fürst. During the last civil war, even this new convent complex was once more demolished. The new complex is being built at the moment, according to prominent Bosnian architect, Ivan Štraus.

5. NAZARETH

Arrival of nuns belonging to Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Bosnia was again supported by abbot Pfanner, who visited sisters in spring of 1879 in Feldkirch, Austria. After difficult situation regarding their transfer and accommodation, they finally came on 8th October 1879 in their Convent of Saint Joseph in Nazareth, later named just Nazareth [5:584]. This order wore mainly black dresses, and Banja Luka citizens soon named them “black nuns,” and because of their German language, sometimes they called them “Schwab nuns.”

5.1. CONVENT NAZARETH

The Convent was located in city district Budžak, today known as Lazarevo. It was situated in where today stands Military campus “Kozara”.

With the support of Austro-Hungarian authorities, sisters started construction works on the orphanage building in 1880, and in 1887 foundation stones for a new church and convent buildings were laid. As for many other Catholic buildings in Banja Luka, monk Eberhard Wegnandt also did the project for this complex (Figure 14) [10:162].



Figure 14 Convent Nazareth with belonging facilities [21]

Construction works on church started on 5th November 1887 and lasted until 1889, but the bell tower was finished in 1896. Convent buildings were completed in 1888. Later, other premises for orphanage kids and priests were built in 1897 and 1898 (Figure 15).



Figure 15 Convent Nazareth, with church in the middle [5:590]

Church was devoted to Sinless Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary. It was built in gothic revival style and according to poor photo documentation, was richly decorated in the interior. Main façade disposition and general design guidelines are significantly similar to design of Banja Luka parish church devoted to Quest of Blessed Virgin Mary to Saint Elisabeth located in Salvatorgasse, and also cathedral church, that was demolished after the earthquake 1969. Considering that both of them were built by monk Weganddt, it all comes quite clear to understand.

Unfortunately, after WWII, new communist authorities did not allow existence of the convent, but unlike the other facilities, this one was completely torn down and on its place was built military campus, that exists now. The reasons and the background are far too obvious. Nevertheless, except being torn down, another sad fact is the one that not many official documents and design layouts for church and convent were preserved. Valorisation

and poor stylistic documentation is done mainly according to visual inspection of preserved photos.

It is believed that catastrophic destiny of the complex was affected by Austrian and German roots of nuns belonging to Order. Most of them were forced to leave the country, and remaining one left to earlier founded branches of the order. Important branches, situated in Banja Luka region are Branches Marjanovac in Rudolfstahl, today named Aleksandrovac and Branch of Holy Family in Mittel – Windthorst [8:502-7], today named Nova Topola. Later on, in 1972 new building and branch named New Nazareth, not more than 200 m far away from old Nazareth was built and is in function today [5:593-8].

Rudolfstahl and Windthorst, were besides Franz-Josefsfeld near Biljeljina, biggest German colonies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, formed mostly in order to explore the agricultural and livestock potentials [13:454-5].

Windthorst colonies (Unter, Mittel and Ober) [6:175] were inhabited by the people from Hannover, Oldenburg, Braunschweig, Rheinpreussen, Koblenz and Essen in 1879 [8:504].

6. MITTEL-WINDTHORST – NOVA TOPOLA

Convent devoted to Holy family, one of the branches founded by the nuns belonging to the order Adorers of the Blood of Christ, is located in Mittel-Windthorst, today large village named Nova Topola, some 35 km north from Banja Luka. Its official address is 78 418 Nova Topola.

Convent with belonging facilities and church, devoted to Saint Joseph, is founded in 1888 (Figure 16). Although information and detailed data about church architect and details regarding convent itself, do not appear in comprehensively researched literature, it can be assumed and concluded that church was designed by monk Wegnandt. Similarity with church in Marjanovac (Figures 18, 19) is far too obvious.



Figure 16 Convent of Holy family: parish house, church and convent building. Photograph taken 1894 by Heinrich Renner during his journey through Bosnia [8:571]

Church proportions and dimensions for sure are same, floor plans and façade design also. Differences however exist; this church originally had rough brick façade, without any covering plaster, unlike the church in Aleksandrovac. However, its gothic revival style is here even more expressive and emphasised with strong colour contrast and typical decorations on window and portal openings. Recent construction works on church provided new layer of plaster over the original bricks, and one rather unfamiliar colour markings on the place where are supposed to be the brick joints. That certainly affected the original state of the stylistic proficiency of the church. Nevertheless, gothic revival spirit and overall experience is more or less preserved in authentic level.

Beside church, on northern side, original parish house with retained brick façade exists nowadays. This building was not included in the latest reconstruction works, so it still has all the original decoration elements.



Figure 17 Convent of Holy family: parish house, church and new convent building; present condition [20]

7. RUDOLFSTAHL - MARJANOVAC

Convent Marjanovac (Figure 18), another branch of Adorers of the Blood of Christ, is located in former German colony Rudolfstahl, today fairly large village situated some 30 km north from Banja Luka, on Kaiserstraße towards Nova Topola. Its official address is 78 255 Aleksandrovac.



Figure 18 Convent with church in Marjanovac, Aleksandrovac. Photograph taken probably before 1969 [21]

Convent with church, devoted to St. John the Baptist, was erected in 1895 – 1899 according to project by Eberhard Wegandt [5:593]. Its design done in gothic revival style with expressive lines and proportions is almost the same as church built some seven years earlier in Nova Topola.

Truth to be said, church itself and convent building does not represent any significant example of architecture, nor it has some specific elements, especially in comparison to fairly better complex in Mittel-Windthorst. All the decorative elements and understanding of design principles are preserved, and that is one quality, for sure. Convent building is now adapted to be home for drug-addicts and complex is not anymore official convent, yet it is still one ecclesial unit.



Figure 19 Convent with church in Marjanovac, Aleksandrovac. View from the west; present condition [20]

8. CONCLUSION

Most important monumental values, from the architectural aspect, given here, directly guide us to the conclusion about a huge importance of these complexes for the wider area of Banja Luka. Indicated rulers and time spans cannot be reviewed only in the context of Catholic church, but clear speak of values and prominence of the listed convents.

Besides understanding fragmental stories on each of the convents, putting their superiors to real timeline and life conditions, as well as their later development phases, is also important.

Unfortunately, destiny did not favour the complexes, and as it is depicted, several were demolished, damaged or destroyed over time. During the socialist regime in Yugoslavia, all sacred organizations and their facilities were not properly treated. That era, as well as the last civil war in Bosnia, left some inerasable traces to heritage and monumental churches and convent buildings. Even though, the preserved ones, and the other that are still being reconstructed, are completing the image and confirming the undoubtable multi-layered values. Their significance is officially recognized by national Commission for heritage preservation. Unfortunately, the status of the National monument in Bosnia does not take any liabilities for local authorities and society at all. Only because of the huge level of self-awareness and understanding of the importance of remaining churches and convents, ecclesial authorities are making the additional efforts to preserve, protect and present these ensembles.

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