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**АРХИТЕКТА ЈОСИП ВАНЦАШ
И ЊЕГОВИ ПРОЈЕКТИ У
БАЊОЈ ЛУЦИ**

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АРХИТЕКТА ЈОСИП ВАНЦАШ И ЊЕГОВИ ПРОЈЕКТИ У БАЊОЈ ЛУЦИ

РЕЗИМЕ

Рад се бави архитектонским стваралаштвом најпроминентнијег архитекте у Босни и Херцеговини за вријеме аустро-угарске власти – Јосипом Ванцашем, и двама његовим најцјењеним радовима у Бањој Луци: пословницом Земаљске банке и вилом Хусеџиновић. Оба пројекта припадају стилу који је Ванцаш промовисао као "босански стил" у архитектури, а потоњи је одавно прихваћен као један он његових најбољих радова на пољу једнопородичног становања. Рад прво даје Ванцашеву биографију с кратким прегледом професионалног напретка, а потом акценат ставља на његов допринос тзв. "босанском стилу" у архитектури, као и на његове рефлексије на поменуте пројекте у Бањој Луци, оригинално доприносећи, још увијек активној, дискусији на ову тему у историји архитектуре.

Рад даје податке о оригиналном стању објеката, као и њиховом развоју кроз вријеме све до савременог доба. Закључна дискусија разматра Ванцашев допринос архитектури у периоду 1878–1918, али и промовисању нових мисли ван уобичајених граница архитектуре.

Кључне ријечи: *Јосип Ванцаш, архитектура, босански стил, Бања Лука*

JOSIP VANCAŠ AND HIS ARCHITECTURE IN BANJA LUKA

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the architecture of the most prominent architect in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian time, Josip Vancaš, and two of his most appreciated designs developed for Banja Luka: Landesbank branch office and villa Husedžinović. They both belong to what Vancaš promoted to be "Bosnian style" in architecture, while the latter one is widely accepted as one of his best single-family housing designs. The paper foremost shows Vancaš's biography and a short overview of his professional development and then focuses on the discussion of his contribution to the so-called Bosnian style in architecture, and its reflections to mentioned designs in Banja Luka, originally contributing to this still active question in the history of architecture.

The paper gives data on the original status of the buildings, as well as their development throughout history, with reflections to contemporary time. The concluding discussion reviews Vancaš's contribution to architecture in the period of 1878-1918, as well as the promotion of new thoughts outside the usual work of a typical architect.

Keywords: *Josip Vancaš, Austro-Hungary, architecture, Bosnian style, Banja Luka*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was formally decided at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, numerous preparations for the process took place, in the majority in Vienna. One of those was a structured approach to construction activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was not only architecturally deteriorated by the centuries of the Ottoman rule, but also uneducated, poor, and unaware of the ongoing situation in contemporary Europe.

Just like it was done for all other public positions, locally educated architects, civil engineers and technicians from different parts of the Danube Monarchy were sent to civil service in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of them did not leave in the country any considerably important pieces of professional work, but some still did. One of those was Czech by nationality, Hungarian by place of birth, and Austrian by education, Josip Vancaš.

In comparison to other foreign architects employed in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1878, Vancaš had not only outstanding results in the field of architecture but also a very active social and political engagement, providing him a remarkable image in the time that was yet to come. One of his greatest achievements for local architecture has a political background. It is the "production" of the so-called "Bosnian style", according to him, specifically related to architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He used his privileges as the national representative in the Bosnian Assembly to bring up that coin, that is still attracting the historians and theoreticians of architecture for strong disputes and debates.

This paper showcases the results of a research conducted on his work in the local area of Banja Luka, where he, truth to be told, produced by far the lowest number of projects in comparison to other major cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time, but still those were two remarkable, milestone projects, still appreciated as Vancaš's peaks of that time.

2. ARCHITECT JOSIP VANCAŠ

Josip Vancaš was born on 22 March 1859, in Šopronj (Ödenburg) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a place today located in Hungary, near the Austrian border on Neusiedler See. He was Czech by nationality.

First, he studied at the *Technische Hochschule* in Vienna in the year of 1881, under the mentorship of professor Heinrich von Ferstel. Afterwards, in the period between 1882 and 1884, he attended studies at Akademie der *Bildenden Künste*, at the department for architecture with professor Freidrich Schmidt, a specialist for the Gothic revival style in architecture. During his studies, besides Schmidt, Vancaš co-worked with famous Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer who were especially admitted to concert halls and theatres, their project is *Volkstheater* in Vienna. [1:253]

Afterwards, in 1883 the Government in Bosnia invited him to come to Sarajevo and participate in the construction of a new Cathedral and the Government administrative building. Professor Schmidt recommended Vancaš to carry out his own project, but when the authorities realised that Schmidt's project is too expensive, Vancaš was assigned as a chief architect.

In the first years of his stay in Sarajevo, which lasted until 1921, he designed mainly historicisms, and then slowly changed the course towards secession and, later on, the so-

called “Bosnian style”. Among all foreign architects that worked in Bosnia, and maybe until nowadays comparable to all contemporary ones, Vancaš left the biggest opus of works and ingenious amount of different approaches, designs and implemented ideas. Overall, Vancaš designed and built more than 240 buildings: 102 houses, 70 churches, 12 institutes and schools, 10 state and municipal buildings, 10 banks, 7 palaces, 6 hotels and coffee-shops, 6 factories, 7 interior designs and altars and 10 adaptations. [2:36]



Figure 6. Josip Vancaš (1859–1932) [3:49]

Vancaš's best profane designs are, besides others: Government administration building I (currently The Presidency building) (1884–1886), Grand Hotel, together with Karel Pařík (1893–1895), Central Post office (1913) all in Sarajevo, and The Grand Hotel Union (1903–1905) and The Municipal Savings Bank (1903–1904), both in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Vancaš deceased on 15th December 1932 in Zagreb.



Figure 7. Main Post office in Sarajevo: designed 1907–1910, and built 1913 according to plans by Josip Vancaš: present condition (2013)



Figure 8. The Grand Hotel in Sarajevo: built 1892–1895, according to project done by Josip Vančaš and Karel Pařík [4:18.d]

3. BOSNIAN STYLE IN ARCHITECTURE [1:224–244, 5:149–284]

Before starting about the very name “Bosnian style,” one has to be aware of the inconsistency in the leading literature about the originality and the roots of this style. Maybe the best critical and objective opinion was given by one domestic contemporary art historian. [6:170–174] Bosnian style emerged out of Josip Vančaš’s desire to affirm the possibility of modelling modern projects with elements of traditional architecture. The name “Bosnian style” first appeared in 1910, when it replaced “Pseudo-Moorish style” for design principles that combined, until then never seen, concepts of religious Islam and oriental architecture on one side and secession guidelines on the other [5:170], and officially in 1911, when Josip Vančaš, as a parliamentary deputy, submitted a request regarding exemption of the tax payment for buildings constructed in “Bosnian style”.

Vančaš strongly emphasized the importance of (re)-creation of the traditional Bosnian architecture that could be seen on remained buildings from the Ottoman period, mainly single-family houses for rich Turkish families. Yet, the style combined different secession details with a typical traditional house from the region, making this hybrid model unique.

When one takes into account general Austro-Hungarian politics, and especially the strategy towards newly occupied territories, where all existing national ideas and diverse ethnic groups should be suppressed in favour of new, in this case, Bosnian and Herzegovinian forced tradition, it becomes quite clear the idea behind this “style.” [7:67]

The new style is an expression of function, material and structure, with elements of modern architecture. Elements of traditional architecture are not taken from Bosnian house but derived from them into new elements that corresponded between each other on a higher level. [7:67]

Some would also say that Bosnian style has development continuity, unlike some “forced” styles that were to be “created” at that time, like in Slovenia, Serbia, Czechoslovakia etc.

General attributes of this style are the usage of the following elements: high plinth zone walls made in stone, windows with archivolt, steep roof in the Dinara mountain house style, roof dormers, oriel bay windows etc. The interior design, from case to case varied, but in some exceptional examples, like in villa Husedžinović in Banja Luka, all rooms have a different kind of decoration, spanning from Moorish and traditional Islam art to Art Nouveau.

Vancaš himself did the best projects in this type of architectural language: like a series of buildings for Landesbank branches or, also here described, villa Husedžinović. [5:265]

3.1. LANDESBANK BRANCH

The building was located in the vicinity of Kaiserstraße, at the beginning of the street that led from Kaiserstraße to Public Hospital. If the building existed nowadays, the address would be in Marije Bursać Street. Today, an administrative building and headquarters of one commercial bank are located in its place.

Landesbank branch was designed by Josip Vancaš in 1910 using the same language and methods that he also applied to many single-family houses. The bank in Banja Luka was one in the series of branches designed that year; the project comprises all the elements needed to understand the latest phase of Vancaš's design in the light of the new-coming "Bosnian style." [1:227–228]



Figure 9. Landesbank branch; elevation view from the east. [5:267]

The ground floor was static and strong, covered with stone blocks with windows finished in archivolts. In higher zones, walls were covered with plaster and had oriel windows decorated with wooden elements, which could be found also in the roof zone. The roof was also traditional, steep, with dormers, and emphasised chimneys.

After the earthquake in 1969, the building suffered significant damages and was torn down in 1970.



Figure 10. Landesbank branch; view of the northeastern corner [8:193]

3.2. VILLA HUŠEĐŽINOVIĆ

Villa is located in the northern part of old Donji Šeher, in the vicinity of Ferhadija Mosque, Tsar’s School and Kiraet-hana. Its backyard is oriented towards the Vrbas River. Today, the address is 34 Slavka Rodića Street.

Villa for the mayor of Banja Luka, Hamidaga Hušedžinović, is in general one of the most important examples of the neo-traditional style, later named “Bosnian style” in architecture.



Figure 11. Villa Hušedžinović; the original sketch done by Josip Vančaš [9: table 25]

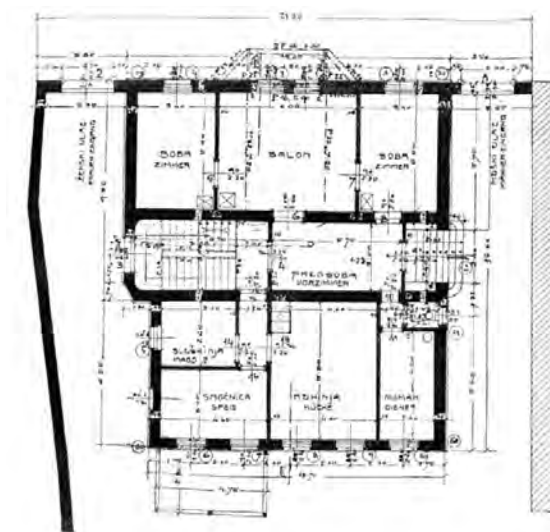


Figure 12. Villa Hušedžinović; ground floor plan [9:193]

Villa Hušedžinović was designed in 1911 [9:193–194] and built in 1913 [1:227] on the western side of the Kastel Fortress close to the Vrbas River and it still exists there. This part of the city

was not developed by the Austro-Hungarian authorities and had preserved spontaneous expansion principles, inherited from the Ottoman era, which can be easily noticed even nowadays.

The design has a similar approach and conceptual details like Landesbank branches: high plinth zone made in stone, archivolts on windows, roof dormer, oriel bay window, and also a traditional garden oriented towards the Vrbas River making a compact ensemble along with side entrance gateways and walls around the site.

One thing has to be emphasised: although it may seem that the house is a pure facsimile reconstruction of the traditional house from Bosnian towns, it certainly is not. It is for sure an attempt to set the traditional framework within the borders of contemporary architecture from the beginning of the XX century, without losing any of the characteristics of “genius loci”.

Structural properties are inherited from the traditional house from Bosnia and adapted to newer systems of construction, materials and technologies. The building has a cellar, ground floor, first floor and small attic zone.

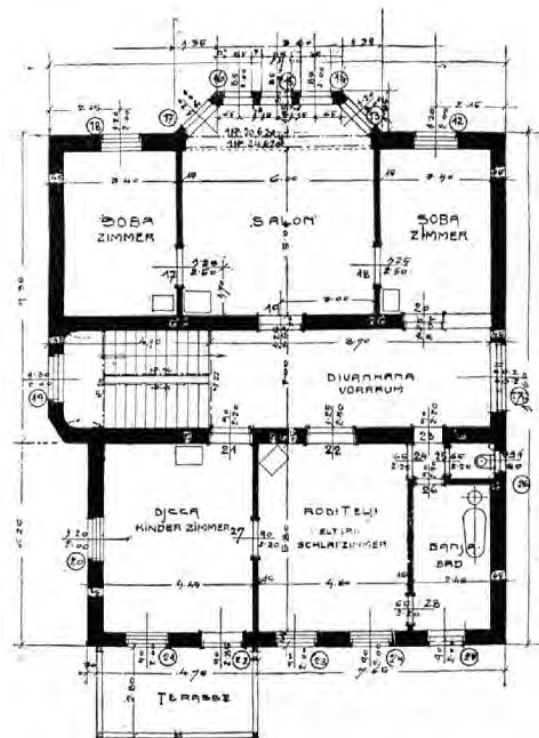


Figure 13. Villa Husedžinović; first floor plan [9:193]

The structure is simple; the cellar is made of stone, the ground floor zone is made of bricks and stone in plinth area, while the first floor is made of bricks only. Walls are approximately 50 cm thick in the ground floor zone. Floor and roof structures are also made of wooden elements. Backyard porch, attached to the house, was made of wood, but due to low material quality it was demolished and recently replaced with a new one, made of the concrete.

Three materials are dominant: ground floor zone, along with entrance gateways is covered with stone blocks; first floor zone is plastered and painted in a combination of white and green colour. Other decorative elements are wooden.



Figure 14. Villa Husedžinović. View of the northwestern façade; present condition.

The inner organization partly retained one of the Turkish house rules: a typical separation between men and women zone and that is why the courtyard has two entrances, the right one for women and the left for men. This division is not identical to the original Turkish, because zones are connected with “mabejn”. Functional disposition allows normal contact inside the house.

The house has three saloons for both women and men. Saloons for men are: Arab room, guys’ room and office. Saloons for women are: women’s “divanhana”, pink saloon, and girls’ room. [10:122–135]



Figure 15. Villa Husedžinović; “divanhana” details [11, 10:130]

“Divanhana” is the only room that preserved its original interior design, which represents a unique connection between traditional elements and imported furniture directly from Vienna. The oldest part of the furniture is the standing clock with engraving in German: “Die

Zeit ist Geld". Interesting floral decoration can be seen on upper wall zones and the ceiling, which are rare examples of preserved "al secco" decoration done in secession style in Bosnia.

Arab room is also interesting. It is, however, an unfortunate case because it was removed from the house; in 1958 it became a part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Bosnian Krajina, today the Museum of Republic of Srpska. Except for the traditional Bosnian rugs, originally named "čilim", everything was designed in Moorish and Persian style. The furniture is imported from Cairo and delivered via Vienna.



Figure 16. Villa Husedžinović; Arab room detail. [10:129]

Pink saloon is not preserved anymore. According to existing information and available photos, some references can be given; after the owner's death, it was exported to Dubrovnik, Croatia; its main parts were chairs and an "S" chair with obvious Art Nouveau influence.

Considering the fact that the house is neither under protection nor on any of the lists of protected heritage, it has preserved a satisfying amount of its original design. This, however, is not given in general, because current owners had done several add-ons and structural changes, mainly in garden sections, ruining some ideas of the original design.



Figure 17. Villa Husedžinović; furniture in style of Louis XV, "pink saloon". [11:132]

4. CONCLUSION

The significance of Josip Vancaš's works has a multi-layered context, and as such has to be analytically understood. Vancaš has established himself as the forerunner of the historic architecture exercised in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the arrival of Austro-Hungarian authorities and as a very honest reproducer of what had already been seen in Vienna earlier in the XIX century. More important is that he set the principles for works of other architects that were still to come to an occupied country and develop their work in the following 40 years.

Unlike other architects, that maintained a certain level of production, Vancaš went several steps further, achieving more than the architectural design. Vancaš proved himself as a very insightful architect and thinker, managing to go beyond everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Powering the idea of "Bosnian style" has to be acknowledged as a very brave and dare venture, especially when all social circumstances are taken into account. Moreover, one has to give credits to Vancaš for being so keen to the idea of a new national style, that he even introduced it in his own practice in a very short period of time, progressing from a quite superficial idea of reviving historical revival styles.

There is the importance of his works in Banja Luka. Comparing some other pieces of architecture, foremost in Sarajevo, then in Mostar and Tuzla, it is very easy to understand that Banja Luka did not stand out with its architecture. Moreover, in some aspects, it was quite inferior to Sarajevo. Only the "Bosnian style" had its peak in Banjaluka, with the works of Josip Vancaš. Even though there will be many disputes over the question of the "Bosnian style," it is clear that Vancaš's idea is noteworthy, overwhelming the context of a strong, repetitive story of historical styles imported from the Western world, and anyhow represents the promotion of local architecture.

Unfortunately, history played harsh with Landesbank branch, which got destroyed, while villa Husedžinović is preserved, but very poorly maintained and treated. It is still to further research and discuss the "Bosnian style" in order to properly understand it and place it in a corresponding historical stream. In such work, Vancaš's works in Banja Luka will for sure be the most prominent and important artefacts.

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