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Habsburg-Bosnia (1878-1918) condensed - The distinct architectural ensemble at Jajce

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Abstract. As the result of the decision reached at the Berlin Congress (1878), a neglected Southeastern-European, Ottoman ruled, province of Bosnia was to be ruled by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Immediately, the new government established efficient structures to enhance the educational systems as well as the public infrastructure. Through type planning, the necessary new buildings grew in a breathtaking speed. During the 1890s, the planners and responsible Austro-Hungarian politicians developed a special architectural language for the representative buildings of this region was established. The new government aimed to, through their newly emerged buildings, support the identity of the majorly Muslim population. After 1900s, private residences of the upper classes as well as some urban apartment blocks were decorated in a certain “Orientalizing” or “Pseudo-Moorish” style. After an intensive discussion on a potential Bosnian romantic-style, based on the concept of the “Heimatstil” from other European countries, some recognizable attributes of the traditional buildings, mixed with Secessionist and Art Nouveau features, resulted in a rejection of this “foreign” and “exotic” phase of the Orientalizing style, nowadays reflected with credits. On the southwestern slope of the castle hill at Jajce, located in central Bosnia, we can see buildings reflective of all three architectural styles mentioned above. Next to this distinct group of new buildings stands St. Luke’s tower, medieval monument already listed and protected in 1892 by the Austrian officials. Traditional residential houses from Ottoman-Bosnian times, frame the whole setting. Contemporary travel reports already mark this group of buildings as an “ensemble”, which is worth a closer consideration from the viewpoint of the monument protection theory. Besides, the ensemble represents a condensed microcosm located at a single prominent site – Jajce was once the capital of the medieval Bosnian kingdom but it also represents an attempt of the Austro-Hungarian administration to modernize the country. Currently this distinct cultural landscape, the Habsburg-Bosnian ensemble, in combination with the important medieval monuments and the traditional Ottoman-Balkan residential houses, is deserving of UNESCO world heritage status. This paper summarizes the overall background of the Habsburg-Bosnian building ensemble and its various architectural styles, by comparing it with other, more detailed objects, traced so far through the European Research Council Project titled “Islamic Architecture and Orientalizing Style in Habsburg-Bosnia“

Keywords: Habsburg-Bosnia, architectural ensemble, monument protection, historicism, neo-Moorish style, secession, modernization, cultural landscape

Introduction

From June 13th to July 13th of 1878, the great powers of that time, namely the Ottoman Empire, Russia, France, England and Austria-Hungary met in Berlin to reorganize the political landscape of the European region. Austria-Hungary gained the mandate over Bosnia and Herzegovina thus

replacing the weakening Ottoman Empire as the ruling power of this former province. Hence, in Central Bosnia, in the area of Jajce and Travnik fierce resistance gathered on Mount Lisina. On August 7th 1878, the Austro-Hungarian troops, under the command of Wilhelm Duke of Württemberg, have seized power over this unorganized resistance group, and marched into Jajce. The town served as residence for medieval Bosnian kings, from 1422 to 1463. The last King Stefan Tomašević (1461-1463) was captured, tortured and killed by the Ottoman Sultan Mohammed (Mehmet) el Fatih. The Austro-Hungarian custodian of the freshly established provincial museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, Ćiro Truhelka, was lucky enough to identify and excavate his grave on the mountain Hum in 1888, during his systematic exploration of the Jajce's history. Truhelka, in the same year, published the first monograph of Jajce [1]. A year before two k.k. military members, colonel Gustav Bancalari and major Reis, had discovered, surveyed, and published [2] on the so-called "catacombs" of Jajce. Truhelka carried on that site research and identified it correctly as the unfinished Christian medieval church of the Tomašević dynasty, which was cut out from the rocks underground near the medieval St. Mary's church. He later published the encompassing results in Vienna in 1894 [3].

This fact puts Jajce on the radar for the cultural tourism strategy of the Austro-Hungarian government administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1896, Heinrich Renner writes an elaborate travel book on the province [4], referring extensively to the before mentioned scientific publications about Jajce, and therewith promoting the place to the ordinary traveler. Several other travel guidebooks, published in German and English, will be circulating until the end of Austro-Hungarian rule. The town of Jajce quickly provides the adequate infrastructure in regards to the promised touristic development.

In 1892, the water supply system is finished, and the St. Luke's tower is put under national monument protection. In 1893 there opens a house for the tourists at the nearby lake Jezero. During that time, the state-financed Grand Hotel, located at the edge of the stunning Pliva waterfalls was already operating. In 1894 and 1895, Jajce gets connected to the railway system to Banja Luka and to Sarajevo. In 1897, based on the erection of a large hydropower plant, Jajce becomes the center of the chemical industry, later known as the Elektrobosna Company (Bosnische Elektrizitäts-Aktiengesellschaft). As result of this fact, Jajce was the scope of the 1903 excursion of the Austrian engineers' and architects' association (OEIAV), together with its other cultural and natural sites.

Finally, in 1904 Jajce is connected to telephone communications, and around that time also managed to install street lightning. The first Austro-Hungarian census in 1885 recorded 3.929 inhabitants while the census of 1910 already revealed a substantial increase to 33.128 inhabitants, with multiple ethnic and religious backgrounds. In 1921, still more than half of the population were Catholic Croats, a third were Muslim Bosniaks, and only one eighth of the population were Orthodox Serbs. The city's history, as well as the statistical figures, are taken from a monograph of the town written in 2007/2008 and published in 2009 in order to support its sought-after nomination as a UNESCO World heritage site [5]. As this book is entitled "photo monography", it provides us with historic views, nevertheless, without exact dating.

The development of the architectural ensemble of Habsburg-Bosnian Jajce

Before the Austro-Hungarian intervention

Various postcards from the Austro-Hungarian period show the characteristic panorama of Jajce in views taken from across the Pliva river, usually depicting stunning waterfalls in the foreground and the crenelated stone wall fortress in the background, followed by the imagery of traditional Bosnian-type houses whose steep roofs are grouped in the center. On the right side of the

protected national monument, namely the medieval St. Luke's church tower, various service buildings for the new Habsburg administration replaced an existing agrarian estate from the Ottoman-Bosnian times.

A postcard in portrait format, entitled with "Gruss aus Jajce. Lucasthurm und Castell" [6] and taken between 1878 and 1882, provides us with the imagery of the original buildings at that site. Next to the St. Luke's tower, pointed towards east, sits a small traditional Bosnian house with the typically steep and hipped roof shape, covered with elongated wooden shingles. This object of rectangular base exposes its narrower side towards the valley of the river Pliva. It is least in situ until 1896, as Renner's guidebook provides us with a watercolor drawing [7] showing the same object depicted from the east. The drawing gives us a more detailed idea of its configuration as a one-story building, with a wooden main floor on a plastered basement of stone. Its window configuration indicates that it was used for inhabiting people but it is obviously not the main residential house of the landowner's family. They however, lived in a bigger, more fashionable, typical rural-urban residence placed south of the St. Luke's tower. A traditional narrow, corn drying or hay drying structure, is in the foreground of the watercolor drawing, but no further buildings to the east are visible on the early postcard described above.

The other group of buildings seems to have belonged to a different and more extensive farm estate, which formed the main cluster of buildings that were the focus of the early photographs. They might have no longer been standing at the same spot as at the time the watercolor drawing. This farm estate contained several huge barn structures, in different configurations and heights, located east of the before mentioned small house, but none of them were serving a residential purpose. The eastern end of the whole compound, seen in the far right of the picture, a typical Bosnian landowner's residential building is visible. It stands on the site of nowadays Sarač house in Jajce, better known as Šarenica (the Colorful House). Built in 1899, it is possible it kept the footprint of the former residence or that it was a part of an even older building substance. Lovrenović et al. consider this formation of buildings as an "architectural ensemble which is an example of Austro-Hungarian architecture in the town of Jajce" [8]. The ensemble was located on a terrace shaped slope in the southern foot of the fortress hill above the Pliva valley. It consisted of the Šarenica, and west of it, the Old Primary School as well as the Finance Building. Both buildings were obviously a replacement of the various functional objects from the former agrarian estate.

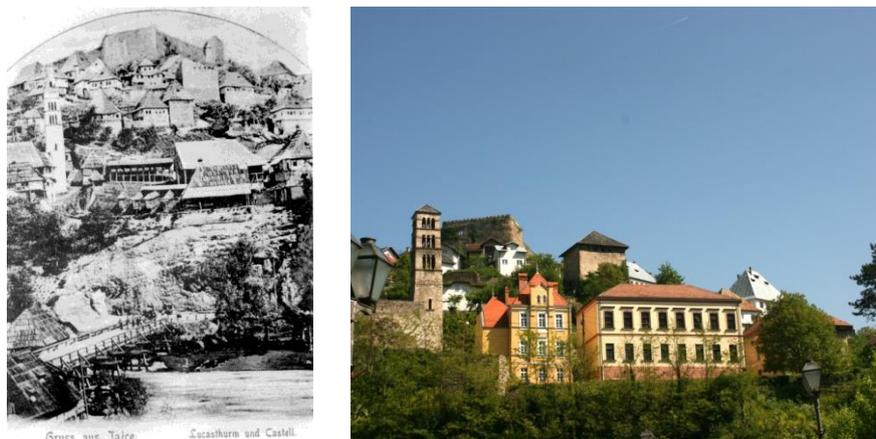


Fig. 1. Left: Jajce before the Austro-Hungarian interventions (Source: Lovrenović, et al.: Jajce, 2009, 58) Right: The same ensemble at Jajce in May 2019 (Foto: Jaeger-Klein)

Austro-Hungarian building activities

It is with certainty that the eldest of those buildings, erected during the Austro-Hungarian period, is the Old Primary School. According to different sources, it was built in a period from 1880 to 1882 [9]. It is a long-stretched, two-story object in pure Neo-Renaissance style with eight window axes towards the valley side (southern elevation), and five axes towards the street side (northern elevation). The middle axis served as the entrance, accompanied by two windows on each side. The side-elevations do not provide any openings at all. Its façade design is mainly executed as horizontal stripes in plaster, most intensively visible at the high basement on the southern side, above a rough pebble-stone foundation. Modest horizontal cornices served as a distinction between the lower and the upper floor. Ornamental segmented arches placed above the rectangular windows at the northern side, and horizontal window roofs at the southern side, accentuate the composition axes and protect the windows against the rain.

The color scheme is a typical combination of alternating yellow and red stripes, which is known as the signature element of the Bosnian Orientalizing style introduced by the Austro-Hungarians. The only colored postcard published by Lovrenović [10] shows that the façade of the historic school building was executed in the typical Schönbrunn yellow with a reddish roof cornice, also found on various public buildings of the monarchy. The overall façade design fitted perfectly into the scheme of the Viennese Historicist style of architecture, which Renate Wagner-Rieger developed in her theory during the late 20th century.

For educational structures of the humanities, during the time when the canonical Historicism of the 1870s and 1880s was at its peak, the Neo-Renaissance style was considered as the most adequate answer for the building task. A slight Bosnian twist on this style was hidden within the color scheme of yellow and red, although the decoration of the school building cannot be classified as a part of the Orientalizing style of Bosnia. The functional space placement of the Old Primary School building follows the type planning models exhibited at the Viennese World Exposition of 1873. The number of windows indicates that it contained four classrooms, one for each class, all orientated towards the south. The teacher's residence, the necessary administration, and other functional rooms were all placed in the north. The staircase is located at the north-western corner. Today, the building serves as a local National museum, housing a permanent exhibition of ethnographic as well as petrographic specimens.



Fig. 2. Left: The Sarač House in Jajce, May 2019 (Foto: Bajramovic) Right: The Austro-Hungarian ensemble at Jajce with Sarač House, Old Primary School and Finance Building in May 2019 (Foto: Jaeger-Klein)

If we proceed with our description in the chronological order, the next object to be erected as a part of the Austro-Hungarian ensemble in Jajce, was the Sarač house. It is dated through various sources to be built in 1899 (is it not 1888?). According to Vuleta, Suljaga Sarač from a renowned local landowner family, erected this house as a home for his family and also to provide free overnight stay for travelers. Without a doubt, it was composed in the distinct Orientalizing style,

reminiscent of the architectural heritage of Mamluk Cairo and Al-Andalus. It could be that through the use of this style, the Sarač house presents itself as one of the first examples of a residential unit deploying the Orientalizing style. It is also possible that its function as a free accommodation for travelers, made it into a public service building.

It is interesting to notice that Jajce, with its Hotel Grand, already had a state supported high-quality accommodation (Ärarisches Hotel), as well as all other major touristic destinations of the province. However, unlike the Hotel Narenta in Mostar, built in 1882 in official Orientalizing Style, indicating its function Hotel Grand does not express the same traits of the style.

If we went back to the Sarač house today and compared its location with the photographs of Jajce before its facelift, we could conclude that it is a double storey building, most likely erected on the same place where a traditional residential house of the agrarian farm estate stood. The fact that it was built in the same footprint as the house before, could explain why its ground plan is slightly rectangular. The slightly shorter side are following the street, and the longer sides are oriented towards east and west, maintaining its rectangular form. The layout of the house compared to the neighboring school building is twisted at a ninety-degree angle. The façade pointing towards the street contains four windows in the upper floor, slightly grouped as two by two, and on the ground floor, we see asymmetrically placed entrance. When it comes to its eastern façade, it shows five windows arranged as a composition of two flanking units and a single centered window. The southern façade, facing the valley, is composed in the two-by-two window rhythm and the western façade simply has three rather uncomposed window openings. Hence, none of those façade designs is intended to be symmetrical, in comparison to the Neo-Renaissance school building next doors, which followed strict composition rules.

Sarač house's general proportions are pretty orderly and based on the Neo-Renaissance canonical approach, reflective of a distinctive style employed by Western European architects. On the other hand, there is an abundance of elements which are reminiscent of the Orientalizing style. One of the examples are the horseshoe arched windows. Their rectangular lower parts are accompanied on both sides by half-rounded plaster columns with capitals. On the top of the rectangle sits another half circular window surrounded by murals painted to look like red and white stone arches.

The building material of the house is actually baked brick, but when observed from the outside, its painted decorations as well as plastered striped façade, make it seem as though the house was made out of stone and decorated with stucco. Pale yellow and red striped pattern is interrupted with horizontal cornice placed between the basement and the first floor. They are however almost completely faded, but if one were to look more closely it would become obvious that the cornices were decorated in an oriental crenellation motif in blue and white.

Finally, there are faded circular ornaments to be seen underneath the roof's cornice, which show the same color, scheme, and pattern as mentioned above. When it comes to the eaves of the roof, they seem to exhibit the typical wooden decoration ("hanging" Venetian-oriental crenellation motifs) cut out of the wood, which various other residential buildings of this specific Habsburg-Bosnian style do use, too.

The painted basement walls of burned brick sit on foundation walls of quarry stone with a net-like surface design, reflecting Roman opus reticulatum. This indicates that the architect in charge was well trained in classical history of architecture. The roof of the Saračeva house is the classical hipped roof with brick tiles in a modest angle of steepness, used by the Austro-Hungarian technicians to replace the traditional Bosnian wooden roof, which was much steeper.

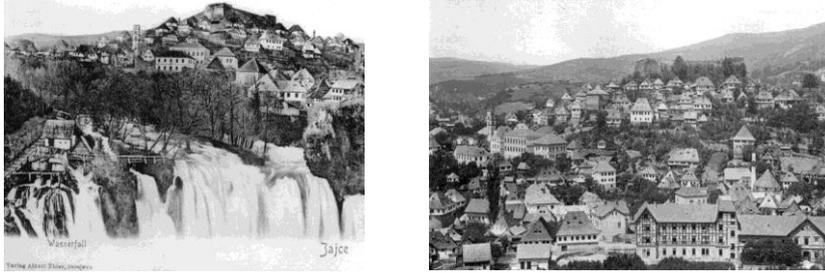


Fig. 3. Left: The still incomplete Austro-Hungarian ensemble at Jajce, without the Finance building (Source: Lovrenović, et al.: Jajce, 2009, 54) Right: The fully developed Austro-Hungarian ensemble at Jajce including the administration building from 1901 and the state-hotel in the front, undated photography (Source: Lovrenović, et al.: Jajce, 2009, 84)

The latest erected building of the Austro-Hungarian ensemble is the Finance building. Vuleta dates it with 1882, which is most likely too early, while Lovrenović is vaguer and suggests that the building was from the end of the nineteenth century [11], which may still be too early considering the style used. The objects' purpose certainly was to house foreign officers preventing and controlling the smuggling of state monopoly goods, like tobacco and alcohol. This might explain why its stylistic language is purposefully "foreign", but still adequate enough to fit into the Jajce ensemble.

Its volumetric composition, as well as its details, completely match with Southern-German and Austrian Heimatstil examples. If we consider that some Austro-Hungarian architects active in Bosnia, like Josef Pospišil (born in 1868 in Moravia and educated through Carl von Hasenauer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna) start to develop a Bosnian Heimatstil, the Bosanski slog (originated in the period between 1904-1909), it is strange, that this building is not configured that way. If we compare various historic photographs, the Finance Building is certainly not erected before 1901. As visible on Lovrenović's published historic photographs [12], the district administration building (Bezirksamt) and the Old Primary School are already built, while the Finance building cannot be seen. According to the plans from the state archive in Sarajevo, the district administration building (Bezirksamt) is dated to 1901, which proves that the Finance building could not have been built before this date.

The floorplan of the Finance building is based on a rectangular footprint across the direction of the terrace shaped slope. Its narrower side looks down into the valley, and the wider sides accompany the slope of the hill. This simple volume is crossed with a wing of modest height which extends towards the west and forms a gable shaped facade which is facing St. Luke's Tower. This gable façade is marked by a single rectangular window, and another smaller one on top which is accompanied by plaster arches. The roof of the building has a steep hip and part-hip roof's covered with beaver-tail brick plates. On the valley side, the elevation is clearly a German Neo-Renaissance composition with vertical buttresses running into the roof part and forming a false gable motif designed to achieve high visibility from a distance. The elevations are not using the typical red-yellow Habsburg-Bosnian color scheme, but a sound Schönbrunn yellow with bright white plaster accents around the windows.

All in all, the Finance building is executed in a typical German-Austrian Heimatstil, also identifiable as the National-Romantic style. It differs extremely from the Saračeva house on the other side of the ensemble, which through its distinguishable features of Orientalizing style offers a warming welcome for its potential residents. The Finance building also differentiates itself from the humanistic public-school building though the lack of pure Neo-Renaissance elements. Though the existence of this specific Jajce ensemble, although erected in close proximity, the three case studies of this paper all differ in function, style, and date. What unifies them is the fact

that they were all built under the same ruling power, which facilitated a unique form of expression that reflected a condensed microcosmos of European fashionable styles of the late 19th century.

Contemporary critical discussions of Old and New

Heinrich Renner already mentions those new European style buildings within the otherwise still very oriental and therefore – for European eyes – picturesque city panorama: “An sonstigen städtischen Besonderheiten bietet Jajce nichts; es ist ein eng gebauter Ort, der sich nach und nach etwas europäisiert, aber noch immer überwiegend Orientalisches zeigt. Dadurch ist da Gesamtbild umso malerischer und wir würden, mit Ausnahme der Amts- und Schulgebäude, auch gar nicht wünschen, dass sich da Äußere der Stadt sobald verändert“ [13]. Interestingly, also Loverenović et al. translates exactly that passage as the following: “That Jajce is a narrowly built place, which is little by little being Europeanized, but still predominately Oriental. All the more so the overall image of the town is more picturesque, with the exception of the administration and school buildings, and we wouldn’t like Jajce to change its appearance a bit”. [14]

When Renner wrote his text, there was already some awareness and discussion within the ruling scene about the new buildings, and their styles, as well as the integration into the existing traditional building substance. The chapter by Johann Kellner on the architecture (Baukunst) within Bosnia and the Herzegovina in the so-called Kronprinzenwerk, the monography-series of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its provinces, published in Vienna in 1901, discusses critically the same issue. “Wohl mußte vorerst manches morsch gewordene Object entfernt werden, um den dringend notwendigen Neuschaffungen Platz zu machen. Dadurch wurde naturgemäß das bis dahin einheitlich orientalische Bild empfindlich gestört. Das kolossale Bedürfnis an Amtsgebäuden aller Art für die sich stetig entwickelnde Verwaltung, an Schulgebäuden für die Jugend aller Religionsbekenntnisse, an Gotteshäusern für die christliche Bevölkerung, an Wohngebäuden und Humanitätsanstalten für die eingewanderte Bevölkerung, konnte vielfach nur durch Aufführung reiner Nutzbauten, welche mit der Kunst nichts gemein haben, befriedigt werden. So trat an Stelle jener schönen orientalischen Städtebilder, die den Landschaftsmaler entzückten, ein Gemisch von Neuem und Altem.“ [15]

Long before, Edmund Stix, the head of the Bosnian building department at Sarajevo, has foreseen this development, when he critically stated in 1887 that a lot of modern buildings within the first nine years of the Austro-Hungarian command have been erected, hence not always contributing to the beautification (Verschönerung), and partially already fading the “oriental character” of the towns. “Es entstehen daher insbesondere in den Kreis- und Bezirkorten zahlreiche Neubauten, welche stellenweise, wie z.B. in einigen Mahales Sarajevos, in Dolnja-Tuzla bereits anfangen, den früheren, nennen wir ihn orientalischen Charakter der Städte zu verwischen.” [16]

Finally, the renowned Austrian art-historian Max Dvořák proves that this discussion happened not only in the remote province, when he recommends in 1916: “Man zerstöre nicht Altes nur deshalb, um Neues an dessen Stelle zu setzen. Man ändere nicht ohne zwingenden Grund diese historisch entstandene Anlage der Ortschaften und Städte, die Form der Plätze, die Breite und Richtung der Straßen. Man zerstöre nicht alte Stadttore, Türme, Stadtmauern, Bildsäulen, selbst wenn sie einige Unbequemlichkeiten bedeuten. ... Man baue nicht Häuser oder öffentliche Gebäude mit falschen Präntionen als Talmipaläste in verschiedenen Stilarten, sondern einfach und praktisch, wie sie früher ortsüblich waren und durch eine lange Tradition erprobt und bodenständig wurden. Man achte darauf, daß sich jeder Neubau seiner Umgebung und dem Gesamtbilde des Ortes unterordne ...“ [17]. Even today and more than a century later, there is hardly anything to add to this. Nevertheless, Jajce proved something most important – the different styles of “modern” buildings do not disturb or destroy an ensemble, as long as the new structures keep the proportions and volumes of the existing. Jajce could exhibit in all density of

the distinct ensemble the great variety of styles, Habsburg-Bosnia experimented with. Hence, the identity of the place remained untouched, besides its dynamic development!

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