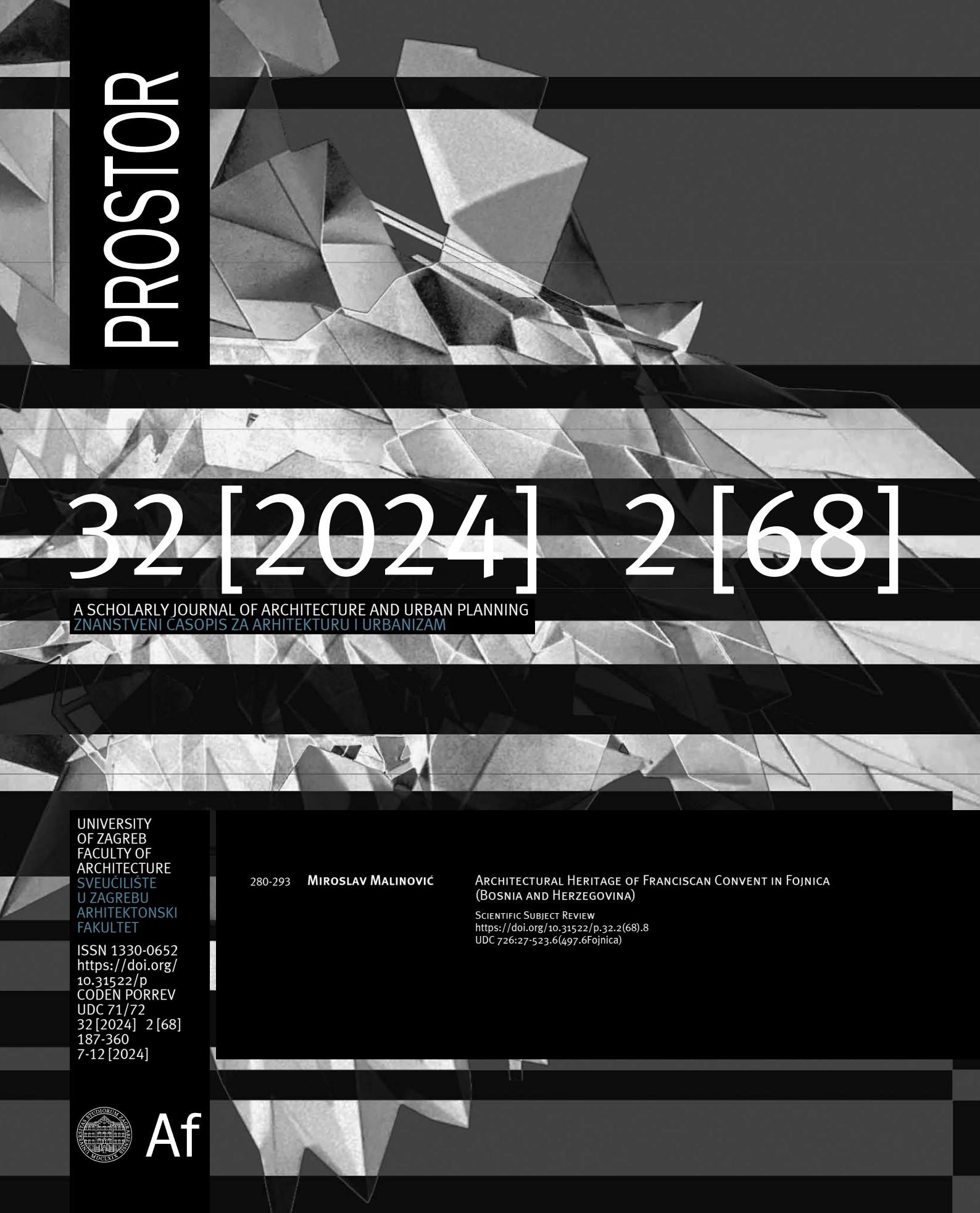

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Fig. 1 The Convent and the Parish Church devoted to the Holy Spirit are located on the eastern slope of the Križ meadow, rising above the Fojnica River valley in the town of Fojnica in Central Bosnia: landscape view from Fojnica downtown

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Architectural Heritage of Franciscan Convent in Fojnica (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

architect Josip Vancaš
architectural heritage
Convent Fojnica
Franciscan province Bosna Argentina
sacred architecture

The Franciscan Order has played a significant role in the Roman Catholic presence in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina since establishing the Bosnian Vicariate in 1340. It has profoundly influenced the region's religious, cultural, and social development. The Franciscan convent in Fojnica, founded in the late 14th century, has been instrumental in this mission. Despite facing repeated destruction and subsequent rebuilding during the Ottoman period, the convent emerged as a crucial educational and religious centre. Architecturally, it evolved with substantial contributions from architects like Josip pl. Vancaš, who designed the Renaissance-Revival Style church in 1886. This paper delves into its rich history of resilience and adaptation, highlighting its significance in Bosnian Franciscan heritage and its role in preserving Catholic traditions amidst challenging historical circumstances. It examines the historical background of architectural heritage, focusing on a systematic analysis of benefactors, involved architects, and construction masters, a review of the architectural design, and an evaluation of its features.

INTRODUCTION

Since the foundation of the *Bosnian Vicariate* in 1340, Franciscans have been guardians of the Roman Catholic establishment in the territory that corresponded to present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to numerous historical circumstances, the diocesan hierarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not established until 1882, which testifies to how deeply were Franciscans enrooted in ecclesial and profane life, playing an exclusively important role in preserving and upgrading the national, religious, and cultural heritage of the Croats, at the same time contributing to the social development of all religious groups in the country. During different historical periods, first as a vicariate, later as a province, Province *Bosna Argentina*[1] went beyond the country's borders to offer pastoral care to the Catholics, reaching as far as Hungary, Croatia, and Serbia.

The Province holds 16 convent sites in Bosnia in the present-day establishment, with three remote locations in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Đakovica. However, three sites – Fojnica, Kreševo, and Kraljeva Sutjeska – represent the most important convents in the Province, being the only ones to outlive the Great Turkish War (1683-1699; Jukić, 2023: 119; Novaković, 2023: 114). Besides that, the convent in Fojnica (Fig. 1) with one of his friars, Anđeo Zvizdović, played a historically utmost significant role in securing the freedom for Catholics in Bosnia when he negotiated the mutual recognition and safeguarding with Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror in 1463 (Gavran, 1990: 39-40).

During the Ottoman rule in Bosnia, the convent in Fojnica experienced periods of destruction and revival, each leaving its mark on the site's architectural heritage. With the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian rulers in 1878, the convent was completely revived and rebuilt to its present-day form. Following the final extension works in 1940, only interior and restoration works were carried out, leaving the Fojnica site as one of the best-preserved Franciscan sites in the Province. It still holds the original architecture dating back to the mid-19th century, a testament to its historical and cultural significance.

This paper assesses the history of architecture of known layers from the earliest documented stages of development of the Fojnica convent while at the same time showcasing the common historical facts and knowledge valid to place the architecture in the context. However, the most essential part of the complex is the church in Renaissance-Revival Style by Josip pl. Vancaš, which underlines not only the valley's architectural landscape but also the country's cultural image.

The bibliography and sources date back to publications from the Austro-Hungarian era when historians performed the first scientific research, accompanied by contemporary findings in published and archival sources with design projects. A thorough on-site analysis made the inductions and conclusions about architectural features and their assessment possible.

The Convent and the Parish Church of the Holy Spirit as a building ensemble (Fig. 1) and the mobile cultural assets within the library and museum are listed as the National Monu-

1 The etymology of the name Bosna Argentina: In Srebrenica, which refers to the "silver mine" near the Drina River on Bosnia's far eastern border, the Franciscan convent and the church of Saint Mary existed. According to its initial Roman name – *Argentaria* lat,, the name of the settlement gave its descriptive adjective to the whole Province – *Bosna Srebrena*, or *Bosna Argentina*, virtually meaning *silver Bosnia*. Moreover, the fortress that was located above the convent was named Argentina. Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror, visited the Convent of Saint Mary while returning to Istanbul (Karamatić, 1991: 7; Strażemanec and Sržan, 1993: 176-177).

2 OFM (lat. *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*), Order of Friars Minor, a branch of the Franciscan order founded by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1209.

3 Ahdname (*achtiname* or *ahidnâme* tur.) is a type of Ottoman charter commonly referred to as a capitulation. During the early modern period, the Ottoman Empire called it *Ahidname-i-Humayun* tur. or an imperial pledge, and the Ahdname functioned as an official agreement between the Empire and various European states (Aksan and Goffman, 2007: 63-64).

ment of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ensemble comprises the surrounding retaining walls, portable goods, and the graveyard with the chapel of Saint Michael. The latest addition, the third wing, does not hold the status of a national monument (*** 2023a).

The Franciscan Establishment in Fojnica

During the late 13th and beginning of the 14th century, Fojnica witnessed the establishment of its first convent and parish church devoted to Saint Mary. The construction of new convents and churches in the region was greatly aided by the contribution of Catholic miners hailing from Dubrovnik, Dalmatia, and distant Saxony, who worked alongside their priests, whose task was to retain pastoral care in their native languages: German and Italian. They were heavily included in constructing new convents and churches as well in Srebrenica, Olovo, Zvornik, and Kreševo, nearby Fojnica. While the exact details regarding the inception and timeline of the first Franciscan site in Fojnica remain ambiguous, its significance remains undoubtful (Batinić, 1913: 15-17).

The earliest reliable evidence of the Franciscan Monastery in Fojnica dates back to the year 1435. During this time, Friar Ivan, also known as Proboz, successfully negotiated his appointment as the guardian of the Fojnica convent. While some historical records suggest that the convent Fojnica might have been established earlier, likely towards the end of the 14th century, it existed after 1378. This conclusion is drawn because the convent is conspicuously absent from the earliest census records of the Bosnian Vicariate in that year.

The founding of the Franciscan convent in Fojnica itself played a pivotal role in the Bosnian Franciscan community, extending its authority over the entire left bank of the Bosna River up to the Sava River. Consequently, more than a half of Bosnia fell directly under its influence (Stanić, 1989: 64). The historical significance of the Franciscan Monastery in Fojnica cannot be overstated, and it continues to command reverence and respect.

It is unknown whether the site was destroyed during the first Ottoman campaign in Bosnia in 1463. It is recorded that the convent was repaired in 1478 but remained in modest proportions and not so crucial architectural condition. One demolition was recorded between 1521 and 1524, when the convent and the parish church were torn down. At the same time, convents in Konjic, Visoko, Kraljeva Sutjeska and Kreševo were demolished, too. Afterwards, permits for a new convent and church were requested in 1527, and only in 1594-1598 were they built. Later on, at the turn of the century, the friars moved to their current location, on the Križ hill (Batinić, 1913: 23-6; Stražemanec and Sršan, 1993: 224-227).

Unfortunately, this new site was destroyed soon after the great fire on 10th April 1664. Friars managed to rebuild the site: the convent in 1666-1668 and the church in 1669. It was consecrated on 31st August 1669 (Stažemanec and Sršan, 1993: 226-227). More than a century afterwards, the site was rebuilt, followed by the painful process of receiving permits from the Ottoman authorities. Except for the details of the new reconstruction that followed in 1798, guided by Friar Mirčetić and in 1830, no unique features, not to mention architectural data and properties, were recorded for these buildings (Batinić, 1913; Jelenić, 1915: 601; Karamatić, 1991: 56-57). The site was undoubtedly more oriented towards survival in that complicated period than introducing novelties in architecture and art production. Only in the supervening period, did friars in Fojnica manage to undertake some outstanding architecture that has been preserved until now.

Even though the fundamental rights and freedoms were secured for the Catholics in Bosnia, massive migrations followed the arrival of Ottoman authorities in Bosnia. Fojnica, along with convents in Kreševo and Kraljeva Sutjeska, managed to retain the formal and official status of the Franciscan convent, and they represented the main spiritual shelters for the Catholics in Bosnia during the centuries of the Ottoman era. That caused significant responsibilities for the friars, who had to exercise the pastoral care of Roman Catholics all over central and western Bosnia. The convent in Fojnica had a substantial role in educating the illiterate people in Bosnia. In 1847, Ivan Franjo Jukić founded a public school in Fojnica, which later rose to a junior gymnasium.

The convent area Fojnica currently holds parishes in Brestovsko, Bugojno, Busovača, and Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. The parish Fojnica is under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vrhbosna, Sarajevo.

Convent of the Holy Spirit

The Convent of the Holy Spirit in Fojnica has been in uninterrupted function since the very beginning of its existence, unlike numerous other Franciscan convents all over the Province. The convent is distinctive due to its remarkable role in the history of Bosnian Catholics and Bosnian history in general. One of the most valuable documents for OFM[2] Bosna Argentina, *Ahidnâme* tur.[3], given to Friar An-

FIG. 2 AHIDNÂME, GOUACHE PAINTING DONE BY ĆIRO TRUHELKA

đeo Zvizdović, is just one of the highlights of the Convent in Fojnica (Fig. 2).

In 1463, when the city of Jajce fell under the Ottoman siege, Friar Anđeo used the opportunity to meet Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who had been on his way from Jajce, where he executed the last Bosnian king, Stephen Tomašević of Bosnia. They met in Milodraž, near Kiseljak, where Friar Anđeo offered the Franciscan and Catholic recognition of their rule in Bosnia. At the same time, Mehmed II gave his word to protect the rights of Catholics and Franciscans as official representatives to employ their religion and maintain their freedom, buildings, and possessions. It was officially confirmed in *the Ahidnâme*, written at the time and place they met (Gavran, 1990: 39-40).

The Oath (ahidnâme) of Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror

Mehmet the son of Murat-Khan

Always victorious!

I the sultan Mehmet-Khan inform all the world that the ones who possess this imperial edict, the Bosnian Franciscans, have got into my good graces, so I command:

Let nobody bother or disturb those who are mentioned, not their churches. Let them dwell in peace in my Empire. And let those who have become refugees be, and safe. Let them return and let them settle down their monasteries without fear in all the countries of my Empire.

Neither my royal highness, nor my viziers or employees, nor my servants, nor any of the citizens of my empire shall insult or disturb them. Let nobody attack, insult or endanger neither their life nor the property of their church. Even if they bring somebody from abroad into my country, they are allowed to do so.

As, thus, I have graciously issued this imperial edict, hereby take my great oath.

In the name of the Creator of the earth and heaven, the one who feeds all creatures, and in the name of seven Mustafas and our great Messenger, and in the name of sword I put, nobody shall do contrary to what has been written, as long as they are obedient and faithful to my command.

Written on 28th May 1463

In Milodraž

The convent site consists of the church and two convent wings, placed on the site linearly, aligned with the slope of the Križ hill. Between the upper retaining walls on the western side and the convent, an inner courtyard is enclosed by the building on one side and a natural environment on the other.

The construction of the latest and the most crucial sequence in the history of the Convent began in 1863, following the journey of Friar Mijo Zubić to Bavaria and Vienna in 1860. During and after the *Tanzimat* era (1839-1876) featuring imperial reforms, the situation for non-Muslims was far better than before. Hence, Bishop Šunjić, the Provincial Superior at the time, provided permits for new convents and churches. To raise as much as possible for the funding of the construc-

4 Ante Ciciliani was born on 17th February 1815 in Trogir, a Croatian town in Dalmatia. There is little information on Cicilani's life. He participated in several constructions in Trogir and a convent and parish church in Imotski, Dalmatia (1863-1867). However, projects in Guća Gora and Gorica for OFM Bosna Argentina remain his most prominent works (Ivanišević, 1989: 356; Karamatić, 2009: 218).

5 Matija Lovrinović, construction master from Fojnica, known for his activities during the mid-19th century.

6 Johann and Franjo Holz, construction masters, uncle and nephew, often referred to as the architects from Slavonska Požega, worked at the turn of the century, mainly in Croatia and Bosnia, with several engagements for Bosna Argentina – Gorica, Tolisa, Bistrik, Plehan, Kraljeva Sutjeska etc.

7 Scholarly sources don't contain a lot of data on builder and construction master Špiro Marić. Besides his engagement in Fojnica, he is recorded as being involved in the construction of a church in Gorica, Livno.

8 Franjo Lavrenčić was born in 1904 in Ljubljana and died in 1965 in Austria. In 1923, Lavrencić started Senior Technical School in Ljubljana, and in 1928, the Faculty of Architecture in Prague. He studied for only one year, after which he abandoned the studies in favour of the "will to create the architecture". Ever since 1931, he lived and worked in Sarajevo, producing several designs in both Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade, practising early Modern style in domestic architecture. Besides two projects for OFM Bosna Argentina – Extension of the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Fojnica and the complex of Convent of Saint Nikola Tavelić, today Convent of the Exaltation the Holy Cross in Kovačici, the majority of his projects were residential and public buildings.

One of his most prominent commissions was the series of projects for the residential complex Crni Vrh, which included other designs of very well-known architects at the time: Dušan Smiljanić, Bruno Tartalja, Danilo Kocijan, Franc Novak, Mate Bajlon, and Stjepan Planić. His other single-family houses are: a house for I. Kapetanović in Podhrastovi, a house for Leon Kahij, a house for brothers Finci etc. In the post-war era, he was commissioned for several projects in Zagreb and Tuzla (Commission to Preserve National Monuments).

Fig. 3 The Convent and the Parish Church of the Holy Spirit, Fojnica: view of the link between the church and first wing from the inner courtyard

Fig. 4 The Convent of the Holy Spirit, Fojnica: view of the link between the first and second wing from the inner courtyard, on the left, wing built by Franjo Lavrenčić in 1940, on the right re-built building of the first wing, built in 2001

tion works in Fojnica, Friar Zubić left for Western Europe. Soon, he got most of the needed financing. On 18th August 1863, the birthday of Franz Joseph I of Austria, the foundation stone of the new convent was laid.

The project was done by Ante Ciciliani[4] from Trogir. Ciciliani also participated in the construction campaign of the convent of Saint Peter and Paul in Gorica, Livno, and the parish church of Saint Francis of Assisi in Guča Gora. Until 1865, Matija Lovrinović[5] led works, but not everything went according to plans. Lovrinović managed, from the spring of 1864 until 14th September 1864, to build the convent and put it under the roof, but soon, supporting walls started to collapse, and the convent was endangered. Two specialists involved in construction campaigns all over the Province, uncle and nephew Johann and Franjo Holz[6] inspected the site and discussed the measures to be implemented to secure the buildings. The friars dismissed Lovrinović and hired Špiro Marić[7] from Vis Island, Croatia, who was also involved in construction works in Gorica-Livno. He continued work in 1865 and built additional supporting walls, making the surrounding ground more solid and firm (Karamatić, 1991: 57; Batinić, 1913: 115-117). Interestingly, Johann Holz was commissioned again in 1884 to extend the wing, but the works never took place according to his project (*** 2010: 17).

In 1913, along with the repair works of the church built in 1888-1889, the convent was thoroughly repaired, too: housing premises, museum with library, furnishings etc. (Batinić, 1913: 128).

The second wing, attached to the northern side of the first one, was built in 1940, according to a project made by architect Franjo Lavrenčić[8] (Karamatić, 1991: 57). Just after the thorough analysis of poorly available data about the first wing, it can be concluded that after the construction of the first wing and second one in 1940, one part of the first building was demolished: it matches three additional window axes – which are now visible on the main façade. Architect Lavrenčić, who was at the same time engaged in a project of the new convent and theology in Kovačići, Sarajevo, did the project for the second wing. It is connected to the first one, in the place of the demolished building part, and polygonally placed on site to close the third side of the inner courtyard. However, this second wing did not introduce any contemporary architectural novelties, although it was already the era that got underway in Modern architecture. Separately analysed, it does not hold any of the illustrative details which could be related to the sacred background of the project. The prominent façade is oriented towards the town, facing the east. It reveals the central corpus, which was made as an Avant-corps. This part of the façade holds three vertical stripes of rectangular windows, outlined with arched decoration in plaster, crowned with three aligned oculi on top of each line. The rest of the building lacks identity; one could easily misplace it with a residential house.

During the period between 1949 and 1959, local authorities, in line with the policies of the communist regime in former Yugoslavia, seized one part of the Convent. However, the Convent's resilience shone through as the housing wing was thoroughly repaired and renovated between 1987 and 1990. This resilience was further demonstrated in the post-war era when all façades were refreshed and recoloured, a testament to the enduring spirit of the Convent (Figs. 3 and 4).

Interestingly, the first wing of the convent was partly demolished in 2001; it was rebuilt, retaining the main principles of the design,

FIG. 5 THE CONVENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOJNICA: VIEW OF THE PRESERVED ARCADES FROM THE OLD CONVENT ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE FIRST WING – CURRENTLY MUSEUM'S EXHIBITION

which was initially introduced in 1864. Krešimir Kolovrat, from Bugojno, did the project. The historical arcades from the ground floor, a significant part of the Convent's history, were not lost but instead included and incorporated into the museum. This preservation of the past ensures a sense of historical continuity. Furthermore, the modern design consists of one single wing, oriented with its longitudinal axis in the southeast-northwest direction (Fig. 5). It is attached to the church on the southeastern and northwestern sides of the extension built in 1940. The architecture reveals no noteworthy highlights: a simple rectangular building with a basement, two storeys, and an attic. The basement has a direct approach from the eastern side. The northeastern façade holds ten symmetrically aligned window axes, horizontally divided with cornices marking the floor levels. The matching principle in window disposition and overall decoration was used on the opposite entrance side of the inner courtyard, except for the polygonal bay addition to the ground and second floor. The roof has traditional, gabled construction, hipped towards the northern wing. The outer decoration is reduced to coloured plaster on walls and copper, applied in metal tin sheets on the roof. Lavrenčić's work on the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Fojnica, particularly with the addition of the second wing in 1940, reflects a subtle yet significant engagement with modernity. While the architectural design of the new wing did not overtly embrace the avant-garde movements of modern architecture, it demonstrated a clear departure from the more ornate and historicist styles that characterised earlier phases of the convent's development. Lavrenčić's approach was more restrained and functional, emphasising simplicity and the practical needs of the convent rather than decorative embellishments. The building's orientation and the use of light reflect a thoughtful consideration of the convent's natural surroundings and the need for a harmonious relationship between the old and the new. Overall, Lavrenčić's work can be seen as a balanced response to modern architectural trends, adopting a modernist simplicity that respects the convent's historical context while subtly introducing contemporary ideas about space, functionality, and environmental integration.

The Convent holds a massive collection of different artefacts and pieces of various arts. After the fire in 1664, the library was gradually enriched. Among others, the most valuable books are, for sure, 13 Incunabula[9] and a series of essential volumes of contemporary and old books, magazines, and other documents. The most significant paintings are dated in Baroque time – in the 18th century:

9 Incunabula refer to books, pamphlets, or other printed materials produced in Europe before the year 1501, during the early printing period with movable type. The term, derived from Latin, means "swaddling clothes" or "cradle", symbolizing the infancy of printed literature. These works are highly valuable to historians and collectors as they represent the transition from manuscript culture to print culture. The most famous example of an incunabulum is the Gutenberg Bible, printed around 1455 by Johannes Gutenberg, which is considered one of the earliest major books produced using movable type (Carter, 2004: 86, 130).

10 Franjo Moyses (Franjo Moises), construction master, sometimes mentioned as the architect, originates from Split. Moyses was active in the second half of the 19th century, with notable commissions in OFM Bosna Argentina recorded in Gorica, Livno and in Fojnica (Karamatić, 1991: 73).

11 Josip plemeniti Vancaš was born on 22nd March 1859 in Šopronj (Ödenburg) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, today located in Hungary, near the Austrian border on Neusiedler See. He was Czech by nationality. He completed elementary school and gymnasium in Zagreb before starting his studies at *Technische Hochschule* in Vienna in 1881 under the mentorship of Professor Heinrich von Ferstel. Between 1882 and 1884, he attended studies at *Akademie der Bildenden Künste*, at the Department for Architecture, with Professor Freidrich Schmidt. Besides Schmidt, Vancaš coworked with famous Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer during his studies (Krzović, 1989: 253). In 1883, the Government in Bosnia invited Vancaš to Sarajevo and participated in constructing a new Cathedral and Government administration building. Professor Schmidt recommended Vancaš to perform Schmidt's project, but when the authorities realised that Schmidt's project was 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, to the so-called "Bosnian style". Among all the foreign architects who worked in Bosnia, Vancaš left the biggest opus of works and ingenious designs. Overall, Vancaš designed and built more than 240 buildings: 102 houses, 70 churches, 12 institutes and schools, 10 state and municipal buildings, 10 banks, seven palaces, six hotels and coffee shops, six factories, seven interior designs and altars and ten adaptations (Božić, 2006: 36; Božić, 2020: 298; Damjanović, 2014b: 254-255). Vancaš was very active in social and political life in Sarajevo, founding and supporting numerous foundations, organisations, and events. In 1921, upon his return to Zagreb, he continued in the same manner. In 1929, Vancaš was elected honorary member of the Viennese architectural group Wiener Bauhütte, honourary member of the association *Braća hrvatskog zmaja* (Brothers of the Croatian dragon), and ultimately the corresponding member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU), at the time Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts (JAZU; Božić, 2020: 307).

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 Ljubljana, Slovenia. Most of his designs were in Sarajevo, but many others were around Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia. Even though his enormous talent and dedication to architecture in all spheres of life led him to outstanding designs of all kinds of projects, sacred architecture was his speciality. Most churches were different parish churches belonging to newly formed dioceses in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Archdiocese of Vrhbosna, Diocese of Banja Luka, and Diocese of Herzegovina.

St. Anne and Mary, *Madonna with Christ*, *The Crucifixion*, *St. George*, *St. Andrew*, etc. Another exciting collection is the *Fojnica coat of arms collection,* including dozens of coats from royal families, countries, noble families, and institutions (Karamatić et al., 1990: 11-13; Oršolić et al., 1984: 19-27).

The Convent Archive, due to the decisive role of the Convent in history, holds a significant number of essential documents, and besides the reprint of the original *Ahidnâme* from 1463, there are other firmans like the one given by Sultân Bayezid-î Velî in 1483, and many other documents, maps, handwritings, etc. (Karamatić, 1991: 58).

It is notable to mention a valuable number of items, once intended for everyday use and sacred events, which are kept in the Museum that operates within the site. Besides the colourful collection linked to common Bosnian and Provincial history, probably the most valuable is the fabric given to Friar Anđeo Zvizvdović during the ceremony of the delivery of *Ahidnâme* in 1463 (Oršolić et al., 1984: 19-27).

Parish Church of the Holy Spirit

The history of today's known convent church began just after the occupation crisis in 1878. On 26th August, Bishop Friar Nikola Krilić, Provincial Superior of OFM Bosna Argentina, Friar Bono Milišić, convent's Guardian, along with two other friars from Fojnica, paid a visit to Josef von Philippovich, commanding general of the Austrian troops that invaded Bosnia. Later on, one large delegation of all ethnic groups from Bosnia went to Vienna to meet Franz Joseph I of Austria, Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary, to thank him for the liberation of the country; two friars from Fojnica were representing the Bosnian Franciscans. It was all followed by the invitation from Rome in 1880, when two friars from Fojnica were sent there to submit a report on the situation in the country. It was then agreed that the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor should come to Bosnia. Indeed, it happened in 1882, when Bernardino dal Vago da Portogruaro (Porto Romantino) came to Fojnica and held the General Chapter of the Province. On that occasion, it was decided to construct a new church in Fojnica and new convents in Jajce and Rama-Šćit (Batinić, 1913: 123-6).

At first, friars offered a project to Johann Holz, after which he inspected the site more and proposed constructing the church where it stands now. Due to his serious occupation with other construction sites, he refused the job, and it was later assigned to Franjo Moyses[10], an architect from Dalmatia, who was 30 years before commissioned in Gorica. Shortly after the construction in 1884, the church was demolished owing to the inconsistency and poor quality of the works. Even though everything seemed in order, the walls cracked when the dome was erected, and the construction site was immediately closed. Soon, the Government from Sarajevo sent the architect Josip pl. Vancaš[11] will inspect the site and proceed to take action on further action (Batinić, 1913: 126).

The current church, at the same site, was designed by architect Josip Pl. Vancaš in 1886 (Figs. 6-8). He made significant changes to the original design, opting to demolish most of the previous work. His first step was constructing new retaining walls just below the plateau, followed by the church's construction. By the end of 1889, the majority of the works were completed (Batinić, 1913: 126).

The church, designed in the Renaissance-Revival Style, is a significant example of architectural trends in OFM Bosna Argentina at the turn of the century. In comparison to Vancaš's other projects for convent churches, such as those in Kraljeva Sutjeska, Bistrik, and Plehan (Damjanović, 2014a), this one stands out for its unique features and is a prime example of the use of revival styles in Bosnian architecture.

The floor plan is cross-shaped, with the central dome at the intersection between the

Moreover, during the construction of the Cathedral, he was involved in projects for parish churches in Brčko (1884-1885), Brestovsko, Bijeljina, Gradačac (1886), Modriča (1887) and Žepče (1889). Later, other churches were built according to Vancaš's projects: Tuzla (1893), Domaljevac (1892-1894), Komušina (1893); Gornji Vakuf, Guča Gora, Podhum (1894); Šivša (1895), Kiseljak (1895-1897), Brajkovići (1894-1897), Pećnik (1896-1899), Banbrdo (1899), Vitez (1900), Plehan (1898-1902), Lukavac near Tuzla (1907); Bosanski Brod, Doboj (1909); Zenica (1908-1910), Podmilačje (1910), Tešanj (1910); Svilaj, Vidovice, Morančani, Odžak, Olovo (1911); Konjic (1912), Crkvica (1913), Maglaj (1919); Pećnik, Uzdol and Novo Selo (1921); (Božić, 2006: 40). Besides churches, Vancaš was involved in designing numerous convents and parish houses, the most important being the Franciscan convents of OFM Bosna Argentina.

Vancaš had a significant oeuvre outside Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among numerous designs, some should be outlined: in Croatia: parish churches in Krapina (1899-1903) and Desinić (1901-1902), reconstruction of parish church in Oštarije (1901-1902); in Slovenia: parish churches in Bled, combined with Friedrich Schmidt (1900-1905), Prečna (1907-1910), Radeč (1910-1911), and Mirna Peč (1914-1917); (Damjanović 2014b; 252-264).

Regarding ecclesial architecture, Vancaš was intensely devoted to Historicism: Gothic and Romanic revivals, but with tumbling combinations of numerous stylistic elements from other architectural styles. This was because of Vancaš's Viennese education, international contacts, and the Church's decision to direct the architectural guidelines to Western European trends, emphasising and affirming its roots.

Vancaš deceased on 15th December 1932 in Zagreb (Božić, 2020: 277-316).

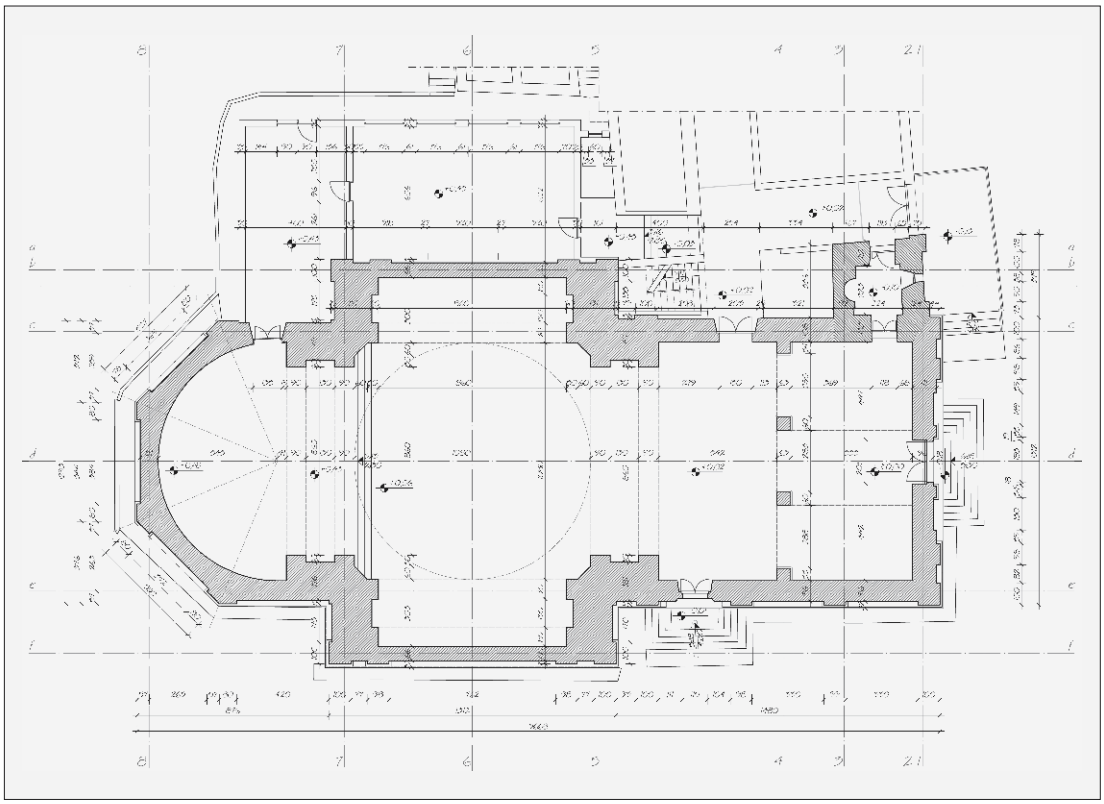

FIG. 6 THE PARISH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOJNICA: A PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR, SEGMENT OF THE PROJECT OF THE CURRENT CONDITION, DONE AFTER THE ORIGINAL PROJECT BY JOSIP VANCAŠ IN 1886

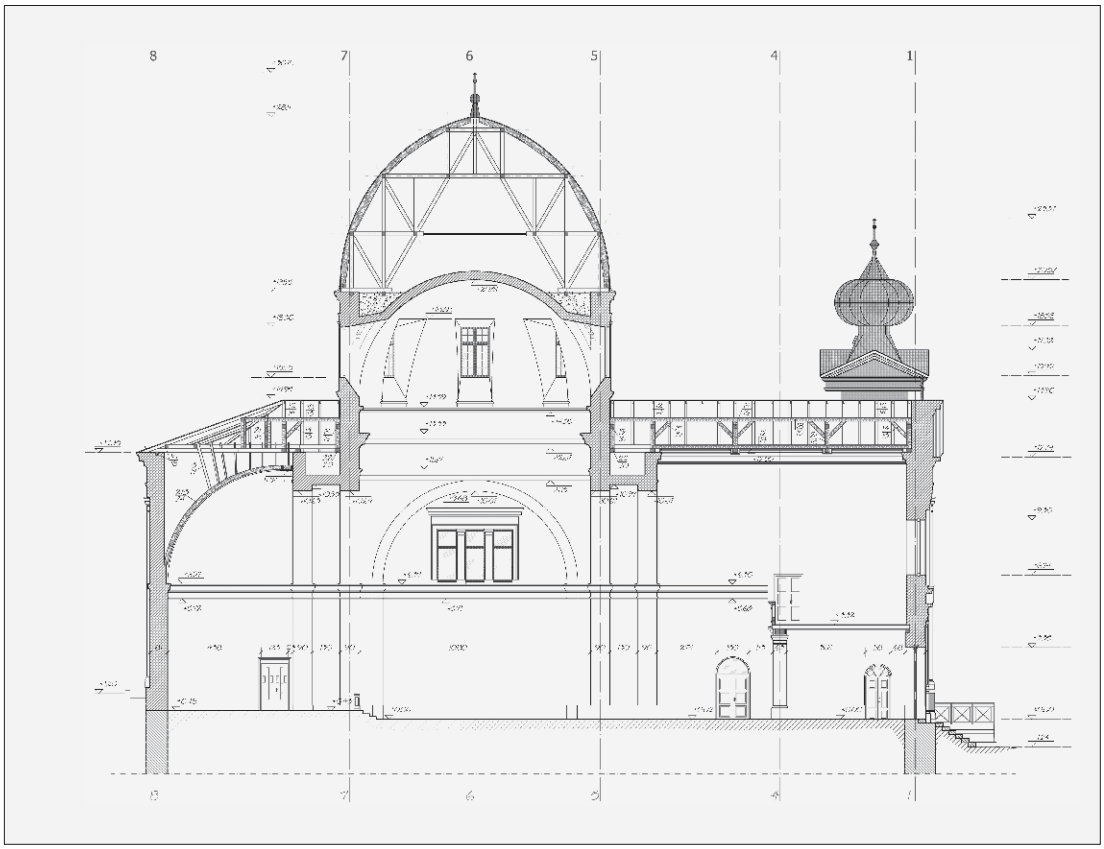

FIG. 7 THE PARISH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOJNICA: LONGITUDINAL SECTION VIEW, A SEGMENT OF THE PROJECT OF THE CURRENT CONDITION, DONE AFTER THE ORIGINAL PROJECT BY JOSIP VANCAŠ IN 1886

main nave and transept – making it the only domed convent church in the province. The main entrance is through the narthex, a simple add-on attached to the main axis of the central nave. On the northern side of the narthex, towards the convent wings, there is a bell tower, connecting the church with the first convent's wing.

The core of the structure and inner organisation is the central area: the intersection. Two pairs of pilasters hold the semi-circular arches supporting the upper construction on each of the corners of this square space. Inner pilasters and corresponding arches carry the square tambour, forming the polygonal dome's basis. In contrast, outer pilasters and opposite façade walls form the narthex, transept, and apse. Besides the main entrance from the east, the narthex holds side entrances from the south and north, directly from the convent, while other communications, also from the entrance zone, lead to the bell tower. The narthex is virtually separated from the central nave, with two columns holding the choir platform above it. In the apse, which is semi-circular, there is a connection to the sacristy, located in the later added building part, on the north-western corner between the apse and the transept.

On the second level is the choir mentioned above, which is additionally enlightened with three south-oriented rectangular windows. At the identical height, other windows are located above the east entrance door and on the transept's southern and northern sides. Furthermore, the whole church's structure is at its top, while only the central area rises above the side structure, erecting the polygonal dome structure out of the circular basis. The entire roof structural system is covered with traditional wooden trusses: gabled trusses above the narthex and transept and adapted wooden trusses above the apse, which form the polygonal roof structure – a similar outcome on the central dome.

The addition of the bell tower disturbs the symmetry of the floor plan. Its square foot is directly attached to the northeastern corner of the narthex, bridging the gap between the convent and the church. Its fourth wall above the roof allows it to rise above the church. It has an entirely different dome than the main one: here, the onion-shaped dome sits at the intersection of two small, gabled roofs.

The used materials are stone in lime mortar for the church walls, brick for the bell tower, wooden beams for the horizontal spans of the choir and roof trusses, and sheets of metal tin for roof covers. The walls are plastered and coloured dark yellow or white, depending on the element type on the façade.

Fig. 8 The Parish Church of the Holy Spirit, Fojnica: elevation view from the east, segment of the project of the current condition, done after the original project by Josip Vancaš in 1886

The church's floor is made in two segments: the upper one includes the sanctuary within the apse, and the lower one includes the rest of the church. This is done probably because of two reasons. First, to emphasise the holy place of the sanctuary and discretely raise it above the people, and second, to follow the configuration of the terrain, as it is the place of elevated zone oriented towards the western retaining wall. Those modifications form the basis for the variable height of the stone plinth wall surrounding the church's perimeter in the exterior. The exterior decoration is done following the interior. Each of the façade parts is outlined with pilasters: the polygonal outer wall of the apse holds one pilaster on each of the corners. At the same time, the narthex and transept have two pairs of pilasters, everything virtually supporting the crown cornice. Then, there is a specific break in the plastics so that another, almost the same cornice is put above, and it is the

FIG. 9 THE PARISH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOJNICA: INTERIOR VIEW OF THE CENTRAL NAVE, WITH THE MAIN ALTAR AND APSE IN THE BACKGROUND

FIG. 10 THE PARISH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FOJNICA: INTERIOR VIEW OF THE ENTRANCE AND THE CHOIR LEVEL

foot for the tympanums, obviously corresponding to the gabled roofs just behind the gable wall. Transept walls hold rectangular triforas, while the entrance façade above the entrance door has a semi-circular window on the same level. Additional pilasters are distributed along the southern border of the narthex, dividing the space between the sides as mentioned above windows. Rising above the roofs is a subtle transition between the square dome's base and the octagonal dome shape. Each of the eight walls features small pilasters and windows between them.

Surrounded by its pilasters, the bell tower boasts three subtly elongated arched windows on its eastern façade. At the exact height of the turn between the dome foot and the dome, the bell-tower structure changes to the aforementioned intersected roofs, decorated with tympanums and crowned with an onion-shaped dome. All the foreground plastics, meaning the pilasters, cornices, tympanums, etc., are white, while the façade plains are coloured dark yellow.

The inner decoration was done by the Austrian painter Josef Oisner[12] in 1894. It is among the rarest remaining examples of retained "Austrian sacred paintworks" in Bosnia (Batinić, 1913: 126-127; Karamatić et al., 1990: 11-12). Some sources, however, refer to the painter Marko Antonini[13] and his son, Otto.[14] However, as the authors of the work, it remains less likely due to the missing distinctive signature at the entrance, which Marko Antonini typically included in other churches (Oršolić et al., 1984: 8).

12 Josef Oisner, painter, originates from Graz, Steiermark, present-day Austria. Oisner is known for numerous commissions for interior paintworks for churches in Steiermark, most notable is Kalvarienbergkirche Breitwegg in Sankt Ruprecht an der Raab (Bouvier, 1999: 292).

13 Marko Antonini, painter and scenographer, Gemona del Friuli, Italy, 7th September 1849 – Zagreb, 25th May 1937 (Schneider, 1983). He studied painting in Rome. In 1875, in the service of Count A. Nugent, he restored and painted frescoes in Oroslavje and Trsat. In the spirit of academic realism, he painted landscapes, portraits, still lifes, and created frescoes in many churches across Croatia and Bosnia. For the old theatre in St. Mark's Square in Zagreb, he produced around 50 scenic decorations and equipment (Schneider, 1983).

14 Otto Antonini, painter and illustrator, Zagreb, 17th July 1892 – Zagreb, 15th February 1959. Antonini was well-known for his intricate and evocative landscapes, as well as for his illustrations in books and magazines. His paintings often portrayed peaceful and charming scenes of the Italian countryside, skilfully capturing the natural light and atmosphere. His style is characterized by a strong sense of composition and a delicate use of color. Alongside his landscape paintings, Antonini also contributed illustrations to various publications, showcasing his versatility as an artist. His work reflects a fusion of traditional techniques with a subtle modern sensibility, establishing him as a respected figure in the Italian art scene of his time (*** 2023b).

15 "Rieger Orgelbau" was founded in 1845 by Franz Rieger in the town of Jägerndorf (present day Krnov, Czech Republic). It is seated in the Austrian town Schwarzach in Voralberg.

16 The workshop "Ferdinand Stuflesser" originates from Ortisei, Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy

17 Damiani Suzana, painter. Born in Osijek, Croatia (1965). Damiani holds a bachelor's degree in painting earned at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb, and a master's degree from Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, specializing in art conservation and restoration. Damiani is a tenured professor at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb (*** 2024).

Even though it is one of the smallest convent churches in the OFM Bosna Argentina, besides the convent churches in Visoko and Nedžarići, the inner decoration was brought to an equally high level as the general architecture. As told, Oisner did beautiful paintwork, separating the internal space into two ensembles: the lower one, corresponding to the total height of the choir with the railing, and the upper one, including all the rest above. The lower zone is superficial, painted in beige and crowned with a substantial cornice following the total inner perimeter. The contrast to the plain colour is made with hanging paintings, altars, and other furnishings, which accent it even more. The more prominent is, for sure, the sanctuary, where a heavily decorated altar is brought to the foreground. The zones above are also richly decorated with floral motives and adequate displays of the saints. On all arches, separating the central space from the surrounding zones, there are inspiring Christian inscriptions – something that can be found in most of Vancaš's churches.

As described previously, the old church, built in the late 17th century, was equipped with the organ installed in 1801 – and it was the first organ in Bosnia. Unfortunately, the organ was also not preserved when the old church was demolished. However, the new church was equipped with a new organ built by "Rieger Orgelbau"[15] 1896 (Stanušić, 2005: 6). In 1894, the workshop "Ferdinand Stuflesser"[16] furnished the interior with three altars. Afterwards, the church was equipped with Via Crucis made in Vienna and two bells made in Innsbruck (Batinić, 1913: 126-127; Karamatić, 1991: 58). Currently, the church holds three bells: big and small – cast in Livarna Zvonov in Maribor in 1927, and the middle one cast in Ljubljana in 1894 by Albert Samassa.

On 15th August 1895, Dr. Josip Stadler, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna, consecrated the church (Batinić, 1913: 128). The church was repaired in 1913 and finalised by laying ceramic tiles on the floor and furnishing the rest of the interior (Batinić, 1913: 128).

The façades and the interior were restored from 2010 to 2014. The paintwork and furnishings restorations works were done under the leadership of Prof. Suzana Damiani[17] from the Academy of Arts University of Zagreb (Figs. 9 and 10), while construction works were executed by „DM Projekt Mostar"[18] from Mostar.

18 "DM Projekt Mostar doo" is a construction company from Mostar notable for commissions on various cultural heritage buildings, foremostly in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina. The company ceased to exist in 2023.

Contemporary or Obsolete?

A common topic of debate is whether architecture in Ottoman and post-Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina was contemporary or already outdated. The Franciscan complex in Fojnica, with its three construction stages belonging to different eras and a few other sites in the country, often serve as evidence of contemporary architectural influence. The development of primarily religious buildings and some communal and public structures during the Ottoman period did not align with Western European architectural trends, flourishing just a few hundred kilometres from medieval Bosnia. This disparity is evident in the sudden halt of architectural evolution seen in the preserved remnants of constructions like the late 15th century tower of Saint Luke adjacent to the Franciscan church and the convent of Saint Mary in Jajce, which exhibit Romanesque and Gothic elements. Similar characteristics are observed in the earliest preserved architecture at Fojnica, such as the stone arches on the ground floor of the first convent wing.

The advent of Austro-Hungarian rule in 1878 marked a significant shift. A wave of engineers, educated in imperial schools in Vienna, Graz, Prague, and Brno, began establishing private practices or engaging in public projects under the *Landesregierung* in Sarajevo. During this period, the Austro-Hungarian administration, still grappling with the onset of the Industrial Revolution and the move away from historic styles, promoted historic revival styles that were prominent in Vienna, Budapest, and Graz. This influence heavily shaped the architectural identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the century.

The architectural language of the church in Fojnica is a notable example of a transition to contemporary styles and influences, moving away from Ottoman traditions to embrace Western aesthetics. Vancaš's use of the Renaissance-Revival style reflects broader European trends permeating Bosnia during the Austro-Hungarian period. The church's cross-shaped floor plan, central dome, and fusion of Renaissance features with local architectural traditions indicate a deliberate effort to engage with contemporary architectural movements while addressing the Franciscan community's specific religious and cultural needs in Bosnia.

The continual rebuilding and adaptation of the convent over the centuries, particularly following the challenging Ottoman era, highlight the dynamic nature of its architecture, evolving in response to external influences and the practical needs of the Franciscan fri-

ars. Although the medieval elements were often reconstructed, they retained their original features, reflecting the contemporary heritage of their respective periods. The most recent addition to the convent exemplifies adherence to the principles of the Modern movement, which was already sweeping across Europe and influencing regional centres like Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo. Architect Lavrenčić, a proven Modernist, incorporated a design characterised by clean lines, minimal ornamentation, and straightforward material usage, epitomising modern architectural ideals favouring functionality. This contemporary approach is evident in how the new wing integrates with the existing structures, achieving visual and functional coherence without overshadowing the convent's historical components.

In conclusion, the architectural ensemble at Fojnica stands as a testament to its historical context and contemporary architectural expression of the times. Its unique value lies in the seamless integration of layers from different eras, demonstrating a continual adaptation to contemporary movements while preserving the essence of its historical significance.

CONCLUSION

The Franciscan site in Fojnica undoubtedly represents one of the most significant sites for Catholics from western and central Bosnia, and beyond – with its decisive influence on the historical streams of both OFM Bosna Argentina and Bosnia and Herzegovina. From its humble beginnings in the late 13th century to the pivotal negotiations of Friar Anđeo Zvizdović with Sultan Mehmed II in 1463, the site has weathered wars, fires, and cultural transformations, emerging each time as a beacon of hope and continuity for the Catholic community in the region. The architectural journey of the convent and church, spanning from medieval origins through Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian periods to contemporary renovations, reflects changes in building styles and the adaptive spirit of the Franciscan friars who safeguarded this spiritual and cultural sanctuary.

From an architectural point of view, with its unique position in the valley, rising prominently above the town and dominating the landscape, the Convent and the Parish Church of the Holy Spirit stand as representative landmarks. Not only is architecture from the mid-1860s preserved, but later additions – foremostly the church, introduced original novelties to the province's architectural heritage range. The church designed by Josip Vancaś highlights the architectural values, being one of the most prominent churches built by this architect throughout his prosperous career in Bosnia and Croatia.

Today, the Convent of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying Parish Church, with their rich collections of art, manuscripts, and historical artefacts, continue to inspire reverence and scholarly inquiry. They stand not just as physical structures but as living testaments to the enduring role of faith in shaping Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural mosaic.

In conclusion, the Convent and Parish Church of the Holy Spirit in Fojnica are more than mere buildings; they are symbols of spiritual resilience, cultural continuity, and the timeless pursuit of religious freedom and artistic expression. Ensemble in Fojnica remains influential in shaping the architectural landscape of the region, making them enduring icons of the intersection between tradition and modernity in Bosnian religious architecture.

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Illustration sources

Figs. 1, 3-5, 9, 10	Author's photos
Fig. 2	Rudolf, 1901: 244
Figs. 6-8	*** 2010

Author's biography

Miroslav Malinović, Ph.D. (1988), architect and associate professor. His research focuses on the history of architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the period from the late 19th century onwards. He serves as the Head of the Chair for History and Theory of Architecture and Building Heritage Protection. He was appointed Vice-Rector for Science, Research, and Development at the University of Banja Luka (2022-2023).