



**ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AND
ART IN CROATIA: OTTOMAN AND
CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE**

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**BOOK REVIEW: ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AND ART IN CROATIA
OTTOMAN AND CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE**

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The scientific monograph co-authored by dr.sc. Zlatko Karač and dr.sc. Alen Žunić is a comprehensive study, published at the end of 2018. It represents the first significant affirmation of the Islamic heritage in Croatia. It presents not only the almost unknown Islamic heritage from the 16th and 17th centuries, but also the contemporary architecture of the 20th and 21st centuries. The book quickly drew the attention of the academic community, winning the international *Award Ranko Radović* (Belgrade, Serbia) for the best theoretical work on architecture and the city in 2018, which was soon followed by the *Radovan Ivančević Award*, awarded by the Society of Historians of Croatia and the prestigious *City of Zagreb Award*. The book was nominated for the *State Award for Science of the Republic of Croatia*.

Unlike other visual cultures, Ottoman cultural heritage has been neglected in

Croatia for a long time, even though there was enough historical distance for this to be corrected earlier. In the professional and especially general public, this cultural heritage was regarded as irrelevant, strange and fragmentary. Having not been viewed within its entire social context and historical dimension, this heritage became neglected, which has been corrected to a significant extent with the appearance of this monograph. There is scarce heritage of Ottoman monuments in Croatia now, but even in those places where there are some remains, they are very often not recognized and revalorized. Unpleasant historical memory, antagonisms, destruction out of revenge and the suppression of the “unwanted Islamic identity” resulted in a systematic destruction of everything ‘Turkish’, which was, as such, undesirable in its original state. The book underlines the causes of the ignorance and suppression

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of Ottoman cultural heritage on the soil of today's Croatia, which were reflected in the systematic and fundamental destruction of this heritage immediately after the Christian Reconquista. This was no less contributed by a series of causes of religious and ideological character and by neglecting the fact that a significant part of the territory of Croatia (150-300 years, depending on the region) was an integral part of the Islamic habitus, which left its mark on the overall social and cultural context. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Croatia was the westernmost region of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and the place of an encounter, and often overlap, between the Islamic culture and that of Western Renaissance.

The fact stands that the book does not build up on any previous studies or serious scientific research other than the doctoral dissertation of Zlatko Karač related to the medieval, Ottoman period of the construction and development of the city of Vukovar (the thesis was defended at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb in 2010). The book is divided into three chapters with the aim to shed light on the Islamic architecture and cultural heritage, from its beginnings to this day: 1) Ottoman-Islamic architecture and art in Croatia. Historical heritage of the 16th and 17th centuries. 2) Modern and contemporary Islamic architecture in Croatia. New heritage of the 20st and 21st centuries. 3) Turkish Vukovar 1526-1689 – kasaba (small town), nahiyah and kadiluk. Ottoman urbanization on the example of a Croatian city. This third section features a case study.

The first chapter of the book focuses on the preserved heritage and the heritage known through indirect sources on the Ottoman cultural heritage in the 16th and 17th centuries on the soil of today's Croatia. In this chapter, it is revalorized and observed through all the present building construction types: mosques, khanqahs (tekke), madrasahs, turbehs, maktebs, inns, caravanserais, hamams, shops, fortresses, bridges. A special sub-chapter is dedicated to sculptures, epigraphics, calligraphy and numismatics. Artistic crafts are represented by artifacts made from glass, ceramics, stone, metal, and jewelry from various materials.

The second chapter features a comprehensive presentation of Islamic

religious buildings in the 20st and 21st centuries. Beside the mosques built in Zagreb, mesjids and mosques in other Croatian towns are presented, among which the mosque in the city of Rijeka (2013) attracts particular attention and is presented in more detail due to its exceptional, representative, architectural value. This chapter also features the contemporary architectural contests for the mosques in Sisak, Pula and Osijek. It also features the construction projects of mosques that Croatian architects designed for Arab countries, since in the socialist Yugoslavia they had the opportunity to develop construction projects in Arab countries such as Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Jordan, etc.

The third chapter of the book refers to Vukovar from the Ottoman period (1526-1689). It is a detailed case-study and contains several thematic chapters. After reviewing the pre-Ottoman urban substratum of Vukovar, the constructions from the Ottoman period of its history were analyzed by determining the territorial rank, urban status, demographic, religious and economic factors. The position, borders and dimension of the city are presented and described through the layout of streets, mahalas, squares, blocks, city subdivision, the position of the downtown, the harbour, cemeteries, and the musalla. The communal infrastructure, the city periphery and the rural hinterland are also described. Based on both Western and Ottoman written sources, graphic representations, archaeological findings and historiographical interpretations, a multi-layered critical elaboration is developed. This chapter is concluded with the section on "The relation between Turkish Vukovar and the earlier urban substratum of the city", with a focus on its future development.

In addition to the book's scholarly contribution by bringing to the fore the unjustly neglected, Islamic cultural heritage, it also encourages the popularization of the heritage and positions it in relation to other cultural strata in Croatian culture. In this way, the entire treatment of this cultural layer is improved and transcends the limitations that come as a direct consequence of a cultivated ignorance, followed by the prejudice that it should not have been studied at all because Croatia belongs to Western civilization.

The book has a coherent structure and as such will be stimulating not only for further study of this matter in Croatia, but also in other countries of the Balkans, Central Europe and other areas to which the Ottoman Empire spread.

As regards the component of the valorization of Islamic cultural heritage, the book underlines that, in view of its geographical position and role in the Ottoman Empire, Croatia has no preserved Ottoman monuments of great international importance. Therefore, in the book, the Islamic cultural layer is primarily valued according to the criteria of typological and stylistic specificity. It is noted that the present state of the formal conservation protection of the Ottoman heritage is not very satisfactory, because all the important monuments of this cultural layer are still not protected. Twenty-one Ottoman-Islamic buildings currently have the status of single immovable cultural properties, while many are protected only as part of the “zonal” protection of urban settlements.

Yusuf-pasha Mašković's Han in Vrana from 1644/45 distinguishes itself as the most valuable and spatially the largest complex of Ottoman architecture in Croatia. (it is included in the List of Cultural Property of National Importance of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia). As regards mobile cultural property, the illuminated manuscripts (kept in the Oriental collection of the HAZU Archive) and Ottenfels Collection of the

Croatian State Archive are of special significance.

This monograph is a result of the authors' extensive field research in Croatian and foreign archives, primarily Turkish, and bibliographic material, which is synthesized in an original scholarly way within the cultural time frame. The book contains 432 pages of an argument-based text with photographs, technical drawings, topographic maps, photographs of models and comparative tables. It is a bilingual edition, in both Croatian and English. The book's respectable quality is, undoubtedly, contributed to by the experience and high academic competencies of the two authors, confirmed also by a series of scholarly references achieved through a series of activities in the period from 1987 to 2017.

The book relies on an adequate and comprehensive scientific apparatus, encompassing notes and comments, a review of relevant sources of all types and reference literature, a list of protected monuments from the Ottoman period and a glossary of Turkish words.

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