

# The architecture of the Franciscan convent and the parish church of Saint John the Baptist in Kraljeva Sutjeska

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## Summary

The paper conducts an in-depth investigation into the architectural significance of the Franciscan convent and church of Saint John the Baptist in Kraljeva Sutjeska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The primary objective is to provide comprehensive insights into architectural aspects, including the historical context and current state of this culturally and historically significant site. Notably, this site played a pivotal role within not only the local community but the broader cultural landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina – sharing the royal seat of the Medieval Bosnian rulers with neighbouring Bobovac and being one of only three Franciscan convents that outlived Great Turskih War (1683-1699).

Over the centuries, the architectural layers of this site have undergone multiple alterations and demolitions, with the earliest documented modifications dating back to the early XIV century. Presently, the complex stands as one of the largest within the OFM Bosna Argentina, comprising a convent building initially finalised in 1892 under the architectural guidance of Johann Holz and a parish church completed in 1908, designed by architect Josip Vančaš. This study is anchored in a multifaceted research approach encompassing the convent's archival records, thoroughly analysing pertinent literature in published sources and meticulous on-site investigations.

The research findings unearth many historical insights, comprehensively understanding the site's evolution and enduring architectural significance. Furthermore, this investigation underscores the challenges of heritage protection and preservation efforts, particularly in the context of a place with such diverse historical and architectural strata. This scientific inquiry contributes to the broader body of knowledge concerning historical and architectural studies while highlighting the pressing need for sustained and vigilant measures to safeguard and preserve this invaluable cultural and architectural heritage for future generations.

*Keywords:* Kraljeva Sutjeska; Franciscans; architecture; Bosna Argentina; Josip Vancaš.

## **Arhitektura franjevačkog samostana i župne crkve Svetog Ivana Krstitelja u Kraljevoj Sutjesci**

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### **Sažetak**

Rad se bavi istraživanjem arhitektonske baštine franjevačkog samostana i crkve svetog Ivana Krstitelja u Kraljevoj Sutjesci, Bosna i Hercegovina. Glavni cilj je pružiti sveobuhvatne uvide u arhitektonske aspekte, uključujući povijesni kontekst i trenutno stanje ovog kulturno i povijesno značajnog mjesta. Važno je napomenuti da je ovo mjesto odigralo ključnu ulogu ne samo u lokalnoj zajednici, nego i u širem kulturnom pejzažu Bosne i Hercegovine – dijeleći kraljevsku rezidenciju s obližnjim Bobovcem i bivajući jedan od samo tri franjevačka samostana koji su preživjeli Veliki turski rat (1683.-1699.).

Kroz stoljeća, arhitektonske slojeve ovog mjesta su prošli brojni prepravci i rušenja, pri čemu se najranije dokumentirane promjene datiraju u ranom XIV. stoljeću. Trenutačno, kompleks predstavlja jedan od najvećih unutar franjevačke provincije Bosna Srebrena, i uključuju samostansku zgradu koja je prvotno dovršena 1892. godine pod arhitektonskim vodstvom Johanna Holza, te župnu crkvu dovršenu 1908. godine, koju je projektirao arhitekt Josip Vancaš. Ovo istraživanje temelji se na višeslojnom pristupu istraživanju koji obuhvaća iscrpnu analizu arhivskih zapisa samostana,

temeljitu analizu relevantne literature u objavljenim izvorima te terenska istraživanja.

Rezultati otkrivaju bogatstvo povijesnih spoznaja, pružajući sveobuhvatno razumijevanje evolucije mjesta i njegove trajne arhitektonske važnosti. Osim toga, ovo istraživanje ističe izazove s kojima se suočavaju napori za zaštitu i očuvanje kulturne baštine, posebno u kontekstu mjesta s takvim višeslojnim povijesnim i arhitektonskim slojevima. Ovo znanstveno istraživanje doprinosi širem korpusu znanja o povijesnim i arhitektonskim studijima, istovremeno ističući hitnu potrebu za kontinuiranim i budnim mjerama kako bi se sačuvala ova neprocjenjiva kulturna i arhitektonska baština za buduće generacije.

*Ključne riječi:* Kraljeva Sutjeska; franjevci; arhitektura; Bosna Srebrena; Josip Vancaš.

## Introduction

The Franciscan site of the convent and the parish Church, devoted to Saint John the Baptist, is located on the right bank of the Trstionica River in a relatively small settlement, Kraljeva Sutjeska, near Kakanj in Central Bosnia. The convent area Kraljeva Sutjeska, belonging to the Franciscan Province OFM<sup>1</sup> Bosna Argentina, besides the parish in Kraljeva Sutjeska, administered by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vrhbosna, Sarajevo, currently holds parishes in Olovo, Vareš, and Vijaka.

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<sup>1</sup> OFM – *Ordo fratrum minorum*, The Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209, is a fraternity. In a more complete fulfilment of their baptismal consecration and in answer to the divine call, the friars give themselves totally to God, their supreme love, through profession of obedience, poverty and chastity, which they are to live in the spirit of Saint Francis.

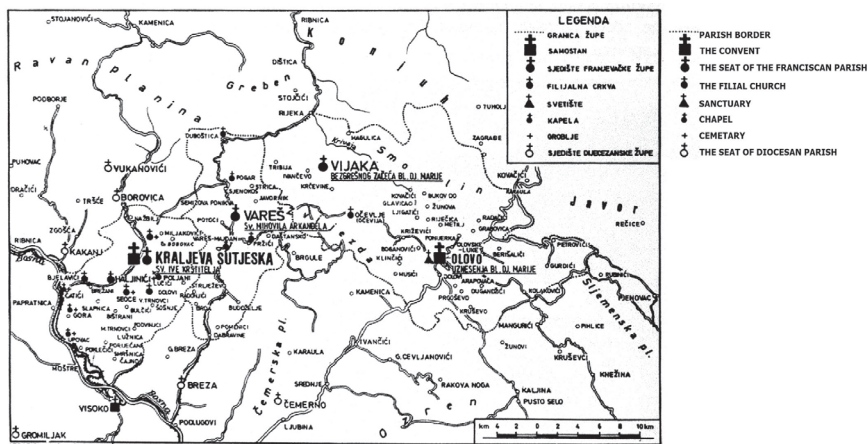


Figure 1. Convent area Kraljeva Sutjeska with belonging parishes.  
Map done by Nikola Badanković 1989<sup>2</sup>

The convent in Kraljeva Sutjeska<sup>3</sup> is only one of three Franciscan convents, besides Kreševo and Fojnica, which have functioned continuously, even during the Ottoman era, which is very well verified in the series of different papers, archive documents, journal articles, etc.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> MARKO KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam, Franjevački provincijalat*, Sarajevo, 1991., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Present-day name dates back to Austro-Hungarian time. Before, the settlement was named Curia bani (in local: *Banski dvori*), in the literal translation "the seat of ban". Ban was the title addressed to the ruling throne in medieval Bosnia. Since Kraljeva Sutjeska shared the crown seat with Bobovac, the settlement was named accordingly. JOZEFINA DAUTBEGOVIĆ, "Konceptija novog stalnog postava Muzeja Kraljeve Sutjeske", in: *Informatica museologica*, Vol. 30, No. 1-4, Zagreb, 1999., pp. 70-74.

<sup>4</sup> MIRO VRGOČ, "Kraljeva Sutjeska – Samostan i župa u 17. i 18. stoljeću prema objavljenim službenim izvješćima", in: *Zbornik radova: Stoljeća Kraljeve Sutjeske*, Kulturno-povijesni institut provincije Bosne Srebrene, Sarajevo and Franjevački samostan, Kraljeva Sutjeska, 2010., pp. 185-200; STJEPAN DUVNJAK, "Bosanični rukopisi u knjižnici franjevačkog samostana u Kraljevoj Sutjesci", in: *Filologija*, Vol. 63, Zagreb, 2014., p. 85; ŠIMUN NOVAKOVIĆ, "Paleografske osobitosti Fojničke kronike kao mogući pristup utvrđivanja mjesta njezina nastanka", in: *Hercegovina*, 9, serija 3, Mostar – Zagreb, 2023., p. 114; <https://doi.org/10.47960/2712-1844.2023.9.71>.



**Figure 2. The Convent and the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: brush and ink drawing done before 1902 by Hary Gyula<sup>5</sup>**

The first Franciscan convent in Kraljeva Sutjeska was erected probably in the first half of the XIV century, and ever since, it has been a prominent cultural, spiritual, pastoral, and artistic centre in the area. As far as written sources are concerned, it was initially mentioned in the chronicles, dated 1385-1390, of Friar Bartholomeus Pisanus,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> RUDOLF, CROWN PRINCE OF AUSTRIA, *Die osterreichischungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*, Vol. 22, K.K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, Vienna, 1901., p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> Bartholomew, a noble Pisan, was a prominent figure in the 14th century. He studied in Bologna and held teaching positions in various Italian cities. He was also known as a successful preacher. He passed away around 1401 and was celebrated for his sanctity and scholarship, remembered in the Franciscan Martyrology on November 4. His most notable work, "De Conformitate Vitae B. P. Francisco ad Vitam Domini Nostri Jesu Christi," written in 1385, gained approval from the general chapter in Assisi in 1399. It received praise upon release but faced criticism from Lutherans and Jansenists. It was challenged by Erasmus Alber's "Alcoranus Franciscanus," and a response, "Apologeticus adversus Alcoranum Franciscanorum pro libro Conformitatum," was published by Henricus Sedulius in 1607. The "Conformities" is a mixed work, with forced

known also as the biographer of Saint Francis. Kraljeva Sutjeska shared the royal seat with the medieval Bosnian rulers from the Kotromanić dynasty, being an unprotected part of the throne town together with heavily fortified neighbouring Bobovac.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, it was Bobovac that first fell in front of the Ottoman campaign in 1463. The last Bosnian king, Stephen Tomašević<sup>8</sup> of Bosnia, left for Ključ, and soon, the area was placed under Turkish control. The convent was demolished, too. However, very soon, in 1469, the convent was mentioned in one of the Ottoman inventories, implying that it was quickly revitalised after the initial demolition. Still, the succeeding era was overwhelmed by new ruins, fires, and other unfortunate events, but the Franciscans consistently managed to rebuild their headquarters from scratch. In 1521-1524, the convent was again torn down. It was rebuilt later but again demolished in the fire on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1658. Soon after, a new one was built in 1664, but the friars had to leave their homes during the Siege of Vienna<sup>9</sup> in 1683.<sup>10</sup>

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parallels between the lives of St. Francis and Jesus alongside historical content. It holds significance for Franciscan history but varies in quality. While first printed in Milan in 1510, later editions suffered from corruption. A critical edition was published in 1906. Besides the "Conformities," Bartholomew authored around thirty other works, including an exposition of the Rule of the Friars Minor, "Speculum Morin," and a book on the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. PASCHAL ROBINSON, "Bartholomew of Pisa", in: CHARLES HERBERMANN (ed.), *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1907.

<sup>7</sup> MIROSLAV ĆORKOVIĆ, "Dr. Pavao Anđelić – Bobovac i Kraljeva Sutjeska, Sarajevo, 1973.", in: *Informatica museologica*, Vol. 6, No. 29, Zagreb, 1975., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Tomašević, also known as Stephen II (Stjepan/Stefan Tomašević), died on May 25th, 1463. He was the final ruler of the Bosnian Kotromanić dynasty and reigned briefly as Despot of Serbia in 1459 before becoming the King of Bosnia from 1461 until 1463.

<sup>9</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> September 1683, the Battle of Vienna occurred on Kahlenberg Mountain near Vienna. The Ottoman Empire had besieged the city for two months before the Holy Roman Empire, led by the Habsburg monarchy, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, under the command of King John III Sobieski, fought against them along with their vassal and tributary states. It was the first time these two powers had cooperated militarily against the Ottomans. This defeat proved a turning point for Ottoman expansion into Europe as they could not gain further ground. The war lasted until 1699 when the Ottomans ceded most of Hungary to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I.

<sup>10</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, p. 118; MARKO KARAMATIĆ et al, "Blago franjevačkih samostana Bosne i Hercegovine: povijest,



Figure 3. The Convent and the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: landscape view from the east (2013)

The parish church had a similar historical stream along the convent. The first church, dated in the XIV century, was demolished between 1521 and 1524. It was restored in 1530 and later reconstructed and repaired in 1596. It was consecrated in 1607 and rebuilt twice in the XVIII century: 1728 and 1784-1785.<sup>11</sup> Some sources also mention April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1667, as the church's later consecration date.<sup>12</sup> It is recorded that it had three stonewalls, in contrast to the state before reconstruction, when it was made out of simple brick dried on the sun. In one segment, it was covered with a wooden barrel vault; the rest was covered just during the reconstruction of 1784-1785. In the

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kultura, umjetnost, turizam, prirodne znamenitosti", in: *Privredni vjesnik*, Zagreb, 1990., p. 39; MARKO ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, Udruženje katoličkih vjerskih službenika u SRBiH u suradnji sa samostanskim upravama, Sarajevo, 1984., pp. 6-7; IVAN STRAŽEMANAC – STJEPAN SRŠAN, *Povijest franjevačke provincije Bosne Srebrne = Expositio Provinciae Bosne Argentianae*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1993., pp. 220-225.

<sup>11</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrna: Šematizam*, p. 118; M. ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, p. 7; I. STRAŽEMANAC – S. SRŠAN, *Povijest franjevačke provincije Bosne Srebrne = Expositio Provinciae Bosne Argentianae*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>12</sup> I. STRAŽEMANAC – S. SRŠAN, *Povijest franjevačke provincije Bosne Srebrne = Expositio Provinciae Bosne Argentianae*, pp. 222-223.

meantime, in 1738, the floor was paved with stone. Bishop Dobretić did a new consecration on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1780.<sup>13</sup>

### **Convent of Saint John the Baptist**

More recent history of the convent in Kraljeva Sutjeska began after the return of the Franciscans in 1704. The Convent was restored in 1821 by Friar Ilija Starčević; in 1833, Friar Marijanović built an additional tract. It was all until 1889, when all buildings, except the later mentioned tract, were demolished, and new construction works were undertaken.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most engaged construction masters in the Province, Johann Holz<sup>15</sup> from Požega, carried out the project for a new convent building. Holz was very well experienced master, with wide portfolio reaching beyond the national borders.<sup>16</sup> The construction started on 19<sup>th</sup> April, and the foundation stone was blessed on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1890. The Convent was consecrated on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1892, even though the works lasted an additional five years. The Guardian, Friar Franjo Komadanović, controlled the results.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> M. ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> JULIJAN JELENIĆ, *Kultura i bosanski franjevci*, Vol. 2. Prva hrvatska tiskara Kramarić & Raguz, Sarajevo, 1915., p. 601; M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>15</sup> Johann and Franjo Holz, known as both architects and construction masters, worked primarily in Croatia and Bosnia during the turn of the centuries. They were uncle and nephew and hailed from Slavonska Požega.

<sup>16</sup> IRENA KRAŠEVAC, "Interijer požeške crkve sv. Lovre u 19. stoljeću – primjer neogotičke obnove", in: *Peristil*, 55, Zagreb, 2012., pp. 77-86.

<sup>17</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, pp. 118-119.



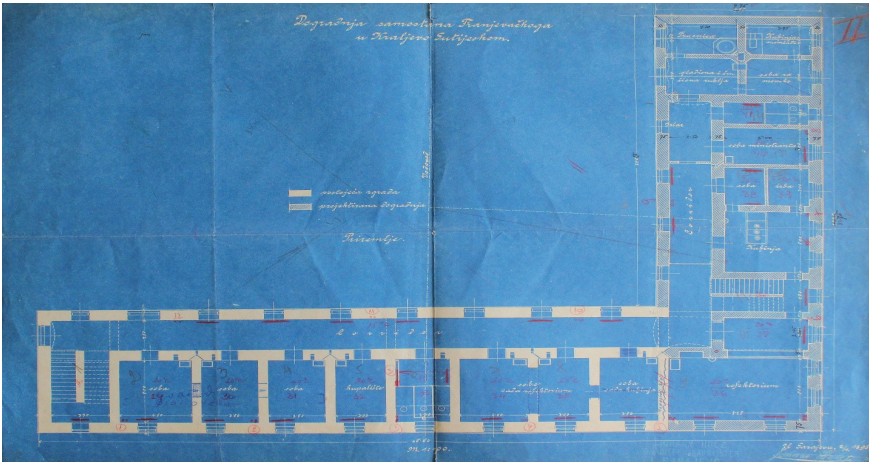


Figure 4. The Convent of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: ground floor plan, a segment of the project done by Johann Holz in 1895<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, no precise data regarding the parts of the tract mentioned above were retained after Holz's intervention. Judging from the available project data, the construction was implemented in two stages. The first one included the south-eastern wing, the one aligned with the façade of the afterwards constructed church, while the north-eastern wing was built after 1895 when the accessible project was dated. Holz developed the usual design, shaping the outline of the convent in L. The interior organisation was carried out according to known models: straight hallway communication running down the wings, with a view to the inner garden, connected to side rooms and technical facilities. The building has a basement, visible from the entrance zone, ground, and two additional floors. According to already-seen models, the materials used are stone for underground structures, brick for the walls, and wood for horizontal spans and roof trusses. The roof is gabled hipped on the end part of the north-eastern wing. The building is plastered and covered with sheets of copper tin.

According to Holz's project, the south-eastern wing had 11 window axes displaced along the façade, while the wing perpendicular to it had nine. The north-eastern branch had an extension only on the

<sup>18</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska, *Stari planovi crkve*, (not indexed).

ground floor, used for technical rooms. After one of the reconstruction works, even this ground floor addition was extended with two additional floors and one more structure attached to its north-western façade. The latter addition was definitely done in 1895-1904 because Holz did not design it, and Vancaš had already put it in the site plan for his church in 1904 – later to be discussed in the paper. The addition to the bigger wing was probably done during the reconstruction works 1982-1988: the added part is virtually cropped on the place where the retaining wall was erected. Hence, the conclusions lead from one to another. It means the former ground floor extension got additional floors and other ground floor extensions towards the courtyard. The convent was completed and consecrated in 1897 – on the patron's feast day, Saint John the Baptist, on 24<sup>th</sup> June.



**Figure 5. The Convent of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: elevation view from the north-east and longitudinal section, segment of the project done by Johann Holz in 1895<sup>19</sup>**

Exterior decoration follows the time of the initial construction, and it was not changed during that time. The most dominating elements of the convent are windows decorated with simple cornices and frames, but they are only on the southeastern main façade. Horizontal cornices divide the flat parts of the building, emphasising the floor divisions. Basement walls, visible just from the outside, are done as high plinth walls to give the impression of a strong foot for the superstructure. The colour combination differs slightly from the church: cornices and

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<sup>19</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.

second-level decorations are done in white, the façade plains are in bright green, and the plinth stone is coloured pale red.

The convent was equipped with water installations in 1914 and electrical power from its hydropower plant as soon as 1920.<sup>20</sup>

The convent was thoroughly restored in the period 1982-1988.<sup>21</sup> This project comprised the entire reconstruction of all façades, interior works, and modern facilities around the church. The Guardian, Friar Ruđer Radoš, supervised the works. As a result, a massive retaining wall was built, girding the inner courtyard. Before this intervention, the inner courtyard was closed from the north-west with the ground and a small retaining wall. The main entrance to the Convent was over the main staircase in front of the church. The inner courtyard was extended after the mentioned works, and a new retaining wall was built, allowing a direct approach to the convent from the backside.

By the beginning of the XX century, the Convent held philosophy and seminary studies. Later, the novitiate was conducted in the convent, where it stood until 1973.<sup>22</sup>

The convent holds a vast collection of artistic and other artefacts, like everyday life items or traditional clothing, recently organised in a newly designed museum. Talking about the paintings, the most interesting is *Adoration of the Magi/Christ falling under the Cross* – painted on both sides, the only preserved part of the Gothic foldable altar dated in the XV century, the oldest and probably the most valuable in the Convent, *Crucifixion* (1597) and *The Sinless Conception* (1621), both done by Stjepan Dragojlović and some XVII-century Venetian paintings: *The Baptism of Jesus*, *The Proclamation – The Nativity – The Entry into Jerusalem* – triptych, *The head of Christ with a Thorn Crown*, *Saint Catherine* etc. The sculptures are not numerous; the most important is *The Assumption of Mary*, bought in Italy in 1839. The convent also holds several other valuable and essential artefacts once used in a liturgical procession, like chalices or

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<sup>20</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

crosses, ceremonial clothing and many others. The archive contains many old and rare books and the oldest registry books in Bosnia, dated in 1641. Among many handwritings, documents, and archive records, the most important is the collection of 31 incunabula, more than half of their total quantity in Bosnia.<sup>23</sup>

### **Parish church of Saint John the Baptist**

The old church, last time repaired in the XVIII century, was demolished in 1821 due to its deterioration. It was rebuilt, allegedly in the exact dimensions and design, and consecrated on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1822. Friar Ilija Starčević supervised the works.<sup>24</sup> During the Guardian, Friar Dominik Andrijić was torn down again and replaced by a new church in 1858. This church was in function until the beginning of the XX century when a new one was built. Unfortunately, more detailed information on these churches was not preserved, not to say projects, if they existed. Only one photograph has been made, here presented, in 1889 and one year later published in the *Bulletin of the Land Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.<sup>25</sup> Another exciting curiosity about this church is the bell tower. It was erected in 1860 and was the first bell tower in Bosnia built after 1463.<sup>26</sup>

Some information about the furnishing and interior decoration of the old church exists: in the XVII and XVIII centuries, the main and five side altars were installed in the church; they were demolished after 1905. The choir in the church, built in 1858, was painted by Friar Stjepan Nedić. The church was equipped with an organ built in 1865 by the Budapest-based workshop "Orszag Sandor Ifju." It was mounted in the church on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1865.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, pp. 120-121; M. ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, pp. 13-17.

<sup>24</sup> J. JELENIĆ, *Kultura i bosanski franjevci*, p. 601.

<sup>25</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, p. 119; M. ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> M. ORŠOLIĆ et al, *Stari franjevački samostani: Kraljeva Sutjeska, Fojnica, Kreševo*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 6. The Convent and the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: landscape view of the former complex, photograph taken in 1899<sup>28</sup>**

After the demolition of the old church, already notable and established architect Josip Pl. Vancaš<sup>29</sup> was commissioned for the new project,

<sup>28</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.

<sup>29</sup> Josip Vancaš was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 studied 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 co-worked with famous Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer during his studies. IBRAHIM KRZOVIĆ, *Arhitektura Bosne i Hercegovine, 1878-1918*, Umjetnička galerija Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, 1989., p. 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 foreign architects that worked in Bosnia, and maybe until nowadays comparable to all contemporary ones, Vancaš left the most considerable opus of works and ingenious amount of different approaches, designs, and

which he did in 1904-1905. By that time, Vancaš has already completed successful commissions for Archdiocese Vrhbosna and the Franciscan Province Bosna Srebrena.<sup>30</sup> Even though it was not recorded on the drawings, his associate in this project was architect Karel Pařík.<sup>31</sup> The construction work took place from 1906 to 1908. The foundation stone was laid and blessed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1906. The construction works were taken care of by Friar Franjo Komadanović, who holds the credits for the deal with Vancaš, and the construction master Franjo Holz, the uncle of Johann Holz, who built the Convent. Komadanović, once guardian, was promoted to the Provincial Superior of OFM Bosna Argentina

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implemented ideas. Overall, Vancaš designed and built more than 240 buildings: 102 houses, 70 churches, 12 institutes and schools, 10 state and municipal buildings, ten banks, seven palaces, six hotels and coffee shops, six factories, seven interior designs and altars and ten adaptations. 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. 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. Regarding ecclesial architecture, Vancaš was intensely devoted to Historicisms: Gothic and Romanic revivals, but with tumbling combinations of numerous stylistic elements from other architectural styles. Vancaš deceased on 15th December 1932 in Zagreb. JELENA BOŽIĆ, "Novi prilog životopisu Josipa pl. Vancaša (1859.-1932.): obiteljski temelji, uzori i poticaji društvenoga i kulturnog djelovanja", in: *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru*, No. 62, Zadar, pp. 277-316.

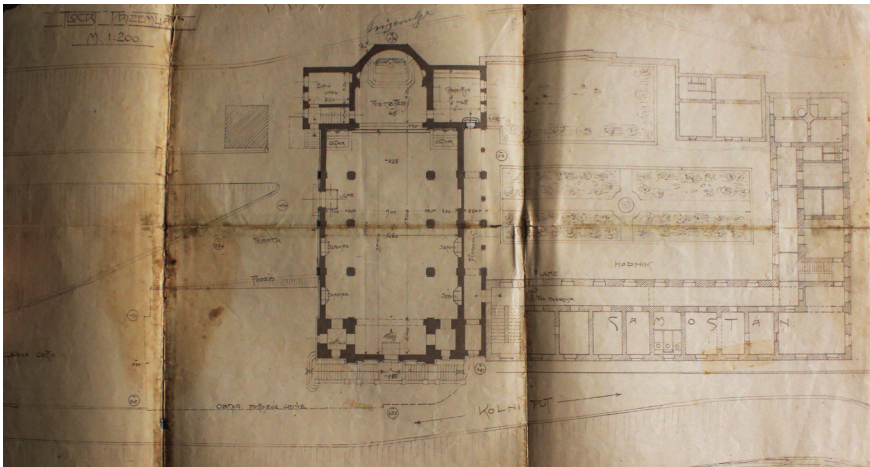
<sup>30</sup> DRAGAN DAMJANOVIĆ – SANJA ZADRO, "Arhitekt Josip Vancaš i pregradnja franjevačkih crkava u Gučoj Gori kod Travnika, na Gorici u Livnu i u Tolisi: prilog povijesti arhitekture historicizma u Bosni i Hercegovini," in: *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, 38, Zagreb, 2014., pp. 219-220.

<sup>31</sup> JELENA BOŽIĆ, *Arhitekt Josip Vancaš: Značaj i doprinos arhitekturi Sarajeva*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Istočno Sarajevo, 2006., p. 45.

during the works on the Convent but retained a high level of activities in Kraljeva Stujeska. The guardian in charge was Friar Rafo Babić.

Almost all works were conducted by locals, but in 1908, Holz brought specialists from the Austrian province of Styria to complete the advanced tasks. Masters from Vienna were brought to undertake the concrete vault above the central nave. The church was covered on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1907. 45-meter high bell towers were erected in the summer of 1908, and on 6<sup>th</sup> July, the ceremony of bell hoisting took place. Some additional works lasted until 1910, when some sources refer to extra costs for construction materials and workers.<sup>32</sup>

If one could draw attention to the best projects that Vancaš developed in OFM Bosna Argentina, then the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist would undoubtedly be in that group, along with convent churches in Bistrič-Sarajevo and Fojnica. Vancaš had certain restrictions; in the first line, he could use the existing convent buildings, site location, etc., as strengths and design remarkable architecture, outstanding in the surrounding hills and the Province.

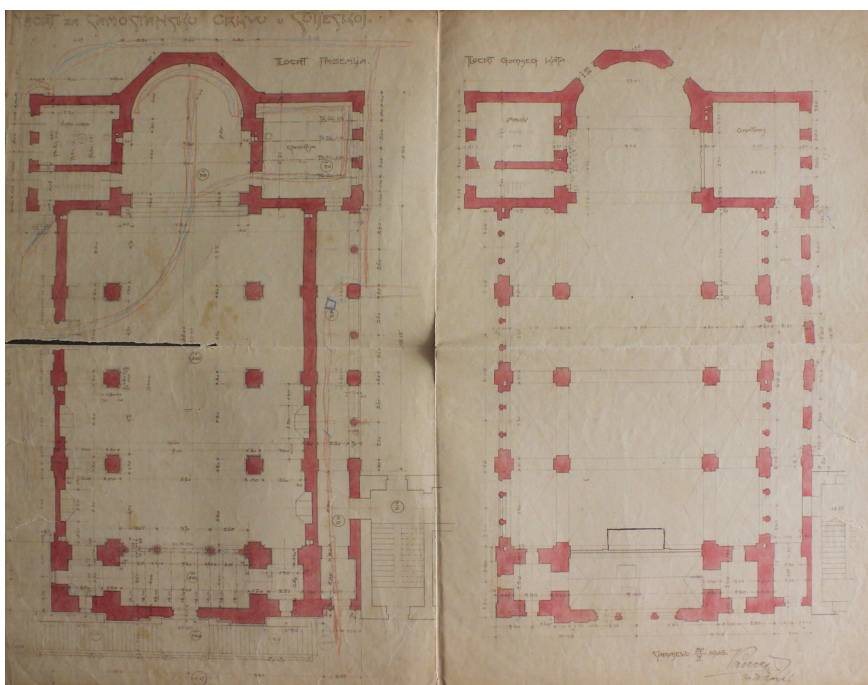


**Figure 7. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Stujeska: ground floor plan with the ground floor plan of the Convent, a segment of the first project done by Josip Vancaš, dated on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1904<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.kons.gov.ba/?lang=en> – Commission to Preserve National Monuments, *National monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (28. 9. 2023.).

<sup>33</sup> Archive Kraljeva Stujeska.

In the floor plan, the church is a three-naved basilica outlined with the apse. In addition to that, there are corner spaces between the side aisles and the apse. The church is connected with the Convent, so their south-eastern façades are aligned. It is approached over the staircase, joining the entrance platform and the ground floor level. From the entrance platform, it is possible to enter the crypt, located in the basement, and use the elevated ramp to enter the inner courtyard. Not to be confused, according to a project, the inner courtyard was not directly connected to the outside; it was done just after the reconstruction in 1982-1988.



**Figure 8. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: ground floor plan and floor plan of the choir level; a segment of the second project done by Josip Vančaš, dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 1905<sup>34</sup>**

The main corps is developed around the central nave and two side aisles, in the width of bell towers located on the main façade and incorporated within the church. The central core is separated from

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<sup>34</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.



the side aisles with three pairs of polygonal columns. A couple of columns and two smaller circular columns separate the central nave from the entrance vestibule, holding the choir platform above. The primary columns are connected with arches, making the support construction for both the central nave and side aisles. Columns have small arches connected to the side facade walls. One big arch separates the main from the side aisles, two smaller arches, and corresponding arched windows on the side facade wall are the rectangular base for the groined vaults with pointed arch in the section, covering the side aisles. Three sets of those exist in each of the aisles. The central nave is covered with vaults supported with arches stretching between the main columns and additionally opened with arched windows aligned with the same type of openings on the level below. In the main nave's width is the apse holding the elevated sanctuary, everything altogether covered with a vault built above the semi-circular apse walls, which take the polygonal outline of the façade. In the corner zones between the apse and side aisles, there are two rooms on the ground floor. According to the original project, the western one was designed to be a parish office, but it was later moved to the convent building, and the eastern one holds the sacristy. The staircase from the parish office leads to a room on the upper floor designed to be the archive room. The corresponding space on the eastern side is the oratorio, which can be approached only through the convent. The sacristy is linked to the church, and one elongated hallway leads directly from the convent. Above that hallway, another one exists, concealed within the south-eastern façade wall, connecting the convent with the oratorio above and the choir platform. From the choir platform, the bell towers can be approached, too.

One of the exciting parts of the project is the crypt, which can be approached directly from the outside. It is covering only one part of the floor plan. Its entrance was once prominently located in the vertical axis of the main façade but is now enclosed by the platform recently added to the entrance staircase built by Vančaš.

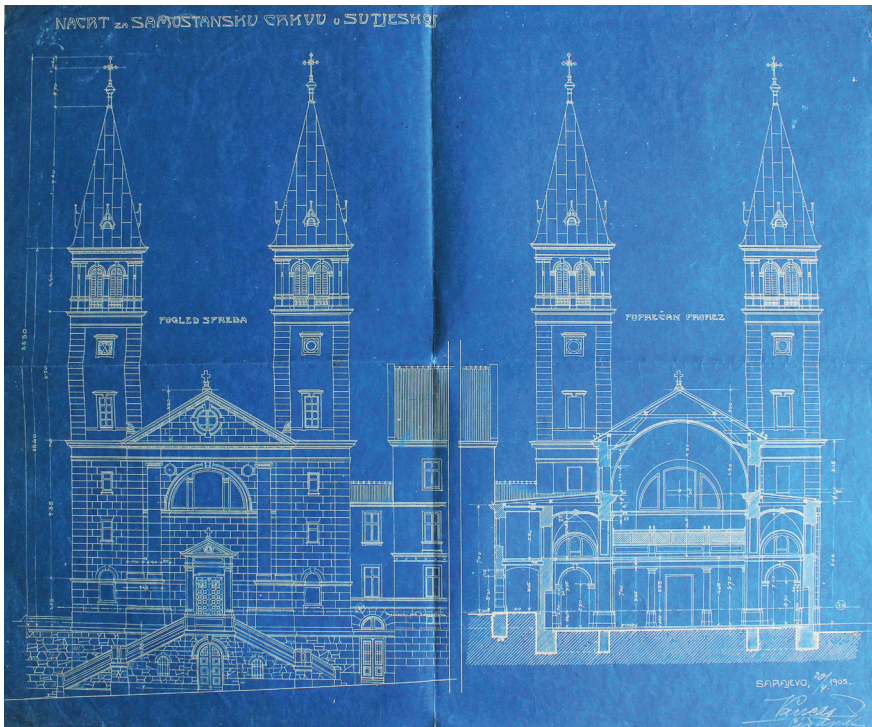


Figure 9. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: elevation view of the main façade from the south-east and cross-section through the central nave viewing the bell towers in the background; a segment of the second project done by Josip Vancaš, dated on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1905<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.



**Figure 10. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: longitudinal section view through the eastern bell tower and the side aisle; a segment of the second project done by Josip Vancaš, dated on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1905<sup>36</sup>**

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<sup>36</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.



Figure 11. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: elevation view of the main façade from the south-east; a segment of one of the alternative preliminary projects done by Josip Vancaš, dated 9<sup>th</sup> August 1904<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.

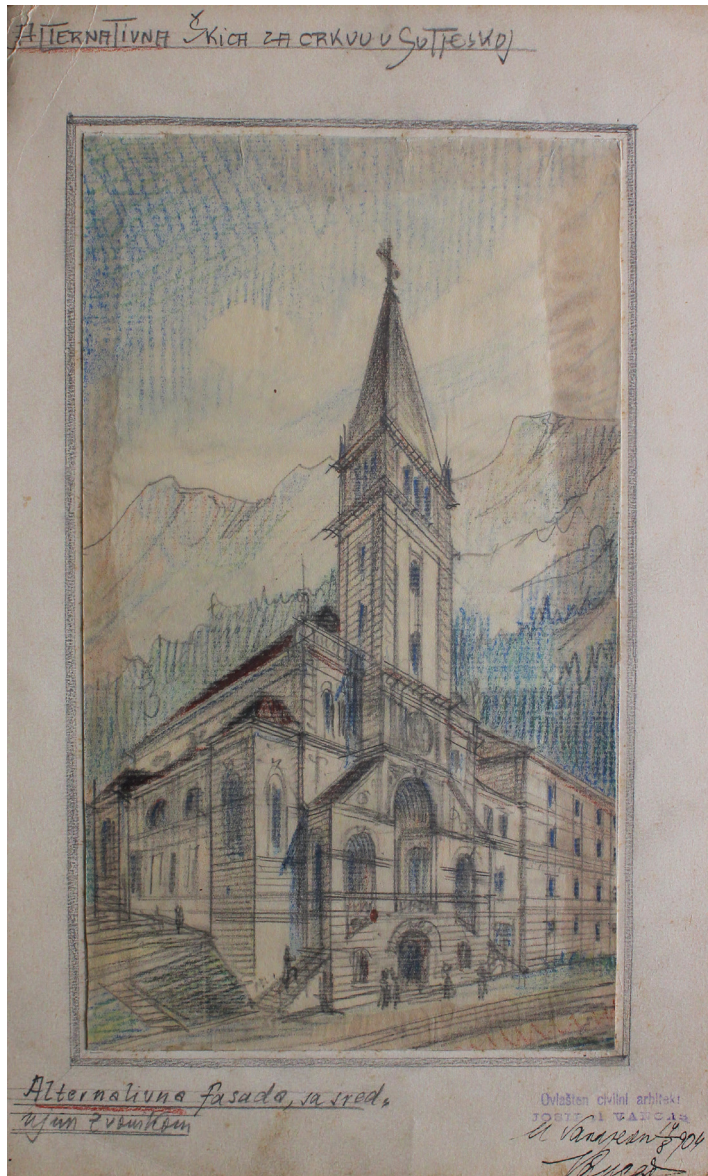


Figure 12. The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: perspective view of the main façade from the west; a segment of one of the alternative preliminary projects done by Josip Vancaš, dated 19<sup>th</sup> August 1904<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Archive Kraljeva Sutjeska.

The interior decoration is mainly done within the paintwork, but some additional plastics exist. Those are mostly the cornices, like crown cornices on the columns, great cornices outlining the vaults of the central nave, arched cornices above the sanctuary, small ones on the columns, or shallow arched cornices on the arcades separating the central nave and the aisles. The Painter Marko Antonini<sup>39</sup> was chosen to do the paintwork, which he completed on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1908.



**Figure 13.** The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: interior view of the central nave and the sanctuary in the background (2013)

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<sup>39</sup> Marco Antonini, Gemona del Friuli, Italy, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1849 – Zagreb, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1937; <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=748> – MARIJANA SCHNEIDER, *Antonini, Marko* (19. 9. 2023.).

Viewed from the outside, the architectural façade design holds the overall impression of the Renaissance Revival. Vancaš, besides this project that was carried out, developed a few other designs, like the one with a central bell tower, holding the reminiscence of his plan for the Parish Church of Saint Anthony of Padua in Bistrič, Sarajevo. In the final project, Vancaš gave quite a reasonable design in terms of links between the interior disposition and the reflections of that organisation to the façades. The central nave is reflected on the façade as one great Avant-corps, with a centrally located entrance door and a semi-circular window above. It is covered with a tympanum holding one oculus, underlined with a horizontal cornice, and framed by pilasters on both sides. Small pilasters and a smaller tympanum above the door also emphasise the main entrance.

The bell towers are slightly detached, located behind the plane of the façade of the Avant-corps. They also hold additional entrance portals, a small linking building part, and an extension of the communication hallway between the church and the convent.

Side façade walls are both different. The southwestern border facing the entrance platform is clear: it holds four semi-circular windows corresponding to four groined vaults inside. There is also the same set of windows on the level above, on the wall corresponding to the main nave. They are all vertically divided with pilasters, which comprise the entirety and the main Avant-corps. Corner rooms between the apse and the side aisles are modelled as smaller Avant-corps, with crowning tympanum and edging pilasters, holding three rectangular windows on both the ground and first floor. The polygonal apse is done similarly, with pairs of oculus windows above them. The north-eastern façade wall is aligned with the sanctuary façade wall due to the existence of the convent hallway. However, it is done discretely, and the composition of architecture and ambient impression is very well done. The prominent cornice, which underlines the tympanum on the main façade, outlines the whole church and represents the foot for the gabled roof, hipped above the apse. The bell towers, rising prominently above the surrounding landscape, are also done similarly to the rest of the church. Even though Vancaš previously designed one project that was supposed to have more decorated bell towers, those are simple. The outline is framed with corner decoration, analogue to the pilasters, and divided into three zones. The first

one belongs to the body of the church and begins with an entrance portal and one simple horizontal cornice; above are only rectangular windows. Between the prominent cornice and the tower crown, there are more oversized rectangular windows, one on each side, and clock mechanisms, but only on the western tower. The crowning part holds pairs of arched windows on each of the sides, which, along with blind arcades above and blind balustrades below the windows, represent one of the defining elements of Renaissance Revival. Roofs are done as steep, pyramidal-shaped constructions.

All mentioned decorative elements are in white stucco, while the façade plains are plastered and coloured in pale beige. The lower zones are decorated with manipulated stonework-imitated partitions, comprising the whole design idea. Besides the mentioned plaster as the covering material, the roof and all other horizontal, rain-protected surfaces are covered with sheets of copper tin. Structural properties are advanced for the time of the construction, considering the influencing factors. It is done in brick, reinforced concrete, and wood. The materials inside the church are plaster, ceramic tiles on the floor, and wood for furnishings. The final touches were constructing the choir platform and belonging columns and laying down the ceramic tiles, all done in 1908. Friar Rafo Babić finally consecrated the church.

Exciting are the contemporary artistic installations. In the church is the bronze sculpture of Blessed Catherine of Bosnia, the last Bosnian Queen, who died in Rome in 1478, by Josip Marinović. Behind the church, at the first section of the retaining wall, there is Saint Catherine's sculpture, done by Ana Kovač. On the retaining wall behind the church is a prominent mosaic with scenes from Saint Francis's life, done by Vladimir Blažanović. Svjetlana Bajanović did another mosaic of Saint Nikola Tavelić.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> M. KARAMATIĆ, *Franjevačka Provincija Bosna Srebrena: Šematizam*, p. 119.





**Figure 14. The Convent and the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist, Kraljeva Sutjeska: scenes from the life of Saint Francis done by Vladimir Blažanović in 1988, mosaic on the retaining wall in the inner courtyard (2013)**

The previously used Hungarian organ, built in 1865, is retained in the new church.<sup>41</sup> A new one was made by the workshop "M. Heferer"<sup>42</sup> from Zagreb in 1909.

<sup>41</sup> MARKO STANUŠIĆ, "Najstarije orgulje u Bosni i Hercegovini", in: *Sveta Cecilija*, Vol. 75, No. 1, Zagreb, 2005., p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Heferer, an organ workshop located in Zagreb, has been operating continuously since 1870. Throughout its history, it has constructed over 260 organs in Croatia and neighboring countries, with the majority being built between the years 1870 and 1929. The workshop was founded by Mihael Mijo Heferer (Graz 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1825, Zagreb 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1887). Some of his notable works include organs found in Gradec, Martinska Ves, Požeške Sesvete, Donja Stubica, Kraljev Vrh, Zagreb (Bogoslovni Faculty), and Marija Bistrica. Mihael was succeeded by his stepson Ferdo Heferer-Hubmann (Graz, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1853 – Zagreb, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1928), who ran the company under the name "M. Heferer, widow and son" until his death. Ferdo was a talented builder, innovator, and experimenter. His significant works include organs located in Radovečko Križovljan, Začretje, Zagreb (churches of St. Mark, St. Catherine, St. John, and St. Blaise), Pakrac, Krapina, Petrinja, and others. After Ferdo, the company was taken over by August Faulend-Heferer (Graz 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1881 – Zagreb, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1944), who was the son of Ferdo's sister. Due to changing circumstances, the company's production decreased significantly during his tenure, with projects in Legrad, the Seminary at Šalata in Zagreb, and others. August was succeeded by Ivan Faulend-Heferer (Zagreb, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1927), who furthered his expertise

After the construction, several reconstructions were undertaken. During the works 1982-1988, when the Convent was restored, the church also got a new entrance terrace, added to the previous staircase by Vancaš, a parking lot, and a retaining wall behind the church, which later received the mosaics mentioned above. The entrance terrace, with the supporting arcades, was done according to a project by Vinko Grabovac, an architect from Zagreb.<sup>43</sup>

Essential structural repairs on foundations below the southern façade walls and the foundation of the bell towers successfully took place in 2010-2012.

As a building ensemble, the Convent and the Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist are listed as the permanent national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with its movable goods.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

To conclude, the Franciscan Convent of Kraljeva Sutjeska serves as an outstanding example of the lasting effect of architecture and spirituality. Its journey through time, from its humble beginnings in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to its current state, being one of only three Franciscan convents that incessantly operated from its establishment, showcases architecture's profound impact on people's lives.

Speaking of architecture, none of the medieval structures were preserved, so the built heritage can be analysed only from the end of the XIX century, underlined with the church designed by Josip Vancaš and the original convent by Johann Holz. The complex showcases

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in construction by studying in Germany and Austria. Starting in 1970, the company has been involved in the restoration of historical organs (in Lepoglava, Varaždin, Cres, etc.) in addition to building new organs (in Kreševo, Kaštel Novi, Mostar, Zagreb, etc.). The workshop has a special focus on the organs by P. Nakić in the church of St. Francis in Šibenik. <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=24737> – Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, *Heferer*, (2. 10. 2023.).

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.kons.gov.ba/?lang=en> – Commission to Preserve National Monuments, *National monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (28. 9. 2023.).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

the exquisite fusion of architectural styles and reflects the Franciscan community's spiritual devotion and artistic ingenuity.

As we delve into the history of this extraordinary structure, we can observe how it has stood the test of time, political struggles, social transformation, and conflicts. The resilient existence of the convent in Kraljeva Sutjeska is a tribute to the power of architecture to transcend the fleeting and unite individuals with their heritage and spirituality. Although the design may not be regionally original, it still represents a well-executed project that prominently, yet in harmony, also blends with the surrounding countryside. Even if we overlook these facts, the vast collection of rare books, archive documents, artefacts, museum exhibitions, and related resources, as well as the intangible value of the site for the local people and the Province, reinforces its significance. It is an enduring symbol of cultural and architectural heritage, weaving together the threads of history, faith, and creativity.

The convent remains a place of comfort and motivation for visitors, even as society and its surroundings change. It serves as a connection between the past and the present, showing us that architecture can convey a community's values and aspirations through the use of stone and space without the need for words.