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Miradet Zulic*

University of East Sarajevo
Music Academy

Sonja Marinković**

University of Arts in Belgrade
Faculty of Music
Department of Musicology

SERBIAN CHORAL SOCIETIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA FROM 1886 TO 1914

Abstract: This paper emphasizes different aspects of the activity of Serbian choral societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period since the foundation of the first Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choir in March 1886 until the beginning of the First World War. The aim of the paper is to comprehensively and systematically present the available data. It was made on the basis of archival material and previous research by scholars from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The activities of the choral societies are presented chronologically, pointing out the choirmasters active in this period, the repertoire of the societies, the most important performances, anthems and flags.

Keywords: Serbian choral societies, Bosnia and Herzegovina, choirmasters, repertoire, hymns of choral societies

* The author's contact details: m.zulic@bih.net.ba

** The author's contact details: sonja.marinkovic@gmail.com

Social and political conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austro-Hungarian occupation and annexation

By the decision of the Berlin Congress of July 4, 1878, Austria-Hungary was entrusted with the mandate to occupy and govern Bosnia and Herzegovina. The following year, the Constantinople Convention was signed in Constantinople, which first emphasized the fact that the occupation did not violate the sovereign rights of the Sultanate of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This preserved the legal principle of the sultan's sovereignty in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the actual administration of the country was in the hands of Austria-Hungary. Thus, Article XXV of the Treaty of Berlin and the Constantinople Convention were the basic legal acts that regulated and defined the legal position of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first thirty years of the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, i. e. from the occupation in 1878 until the annexation in 1908. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy tried to strengthen its position in Bosnia and Herzegovina and turn the temporary occupation into annexation. The one responsible for this preparation and its execution was Benjamin Kalaj (Benjamin Kállay, 1839–1903), who was appointed to this position on June 4, 1882 after serving as the head of a department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹

The government did not have a developed concept of national policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but tried to maintain an internal balance with effective control of the national aspirations of the local population. This policy of isolation did not produce the expected results, as it was not possible to prevent the circulation of ideas. Regardless of that, the regime slowed down the development of national movements by prohibiting their institutionalization. In addition to the ban on the establishment of political organizations on a national basis, it also restricted the establishment of cultural and economic institutions. The only thing that was allowed was the establishment of church choirs and reading rooms, but their work was also a subject to strict control. In this way, the regime prevented the spread of national ideas and the organization of political movements.²

The annexation was announced by the imperial proclamation on October 7, 1908, after which Bosnia and Herzegovina formally and legally became

¹ Mustafa Imamović, *Istorija države i prava Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo, Sarajevski magistrat i Pravni fakultet Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2003, 207, 208.

² Tomislav Kraljačić, *Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini 1882–1903*, Sarajevo, "Veselin Masleša", 1987, 525.

a province of the Habsburg Monarchy. However, politically, it was in a completely dependent position in relation to Austria and Hungary. In order to carry out his annexationist policy, Kalaj needed a large number of carefully selected officials who came from the consular service. Before the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, there were only 120 civil servants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while already in 1881, Austria-Hungary had about 600 civil servants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to Kalaj's report. from 1897. During 1908, there were already 7,379 civil servants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their number increased to 9,539. For these reasons, the administration tried to create a certain cultural life for both civil and military officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as their family members, which included organizing musical events.³

Founding of the choral societies

The natural and mineral wealth of Bosnia and Herzegovina was known to Austria-Hungary even before the occupation in 1878, and even the press of that time described Bosnia and Herzegovina as a rich, exotic and undiscovered country. These riches were a significant economic motive for the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their exploitation required a modern technical and technological approach, for which it was necessary to provide a sufficient number of experienced experts from the Monarchy. Their arrival in these areas led to the first significant contacts with the Western European musical tradition.

Over time, various choral societies and instrumental ensembles were founded. Choral societies were most often founded on a religious basis, and multinational societies appeared a little later. Among the most important choral societies were the Serbian choral societies. Before their establishment, it was known that singing groups performed at many St. Sava sermons, and according to some data, as early as 1860, the Serbian choral society "Srbadija". In the same year, a Serbian reading room was opened in Brčko and it was the first Serbian reading room in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴

Among the first societies founded was the Down-Tuzla.⁵ On that occasion, the company's rules were read and sent to the Government of Sarajevo

³ Imamović, *ibid.*, 222

⁴ Монографија – *Нова искра на старом ојњишту*, Брчко, Српско просвјетно и културно друштво "Просвјета" Брчко, 2001, 24.

⁵ Serbian Church Choral Society founded on March 1, 1886.

for approval. The first assembly was held on March 8, just seven days after the founding of the society, and 22 singers joined. The Sarajevo magazine *Bosanska vila* often reported on this society. After the concert of the Tuzla society held on 26 October 1886, it was stated: "From this extensive and well-chosen program, it can be seen that the Serbian singing society in Down Tuzla is progressing nicely, and that it fully justifies the good reputation it has. The youth of Down Tuzlan show some of their awareness, and our Serbian youth can feel ashamed even in bigger places (perhaps even in Sarajevo) for not showing so much consciousness and seriousness that they could form at least a singing company."⁶

At the same time, groups of singers performed at the St. Sava sermons in Sarajevo, but the foundation of the society waited until November 1888, when Serbian choral society "Sloga" was founded. In the following month (December 18), the Serbian choral society "Gusle" was founded in Mostar, which accelerated the establishment of societies in other places as well: "Soko" in Trebinje (1889), "Vila" in Prijedor (1892), "Jedinstvo" in Banja Luka (1893), "Vijenac" in Brčko (1893), "Srbadija" in Bijeljina (1899) and many other societies. When specifying data on the years of establishment of companies, different data appear in the literature. One of the reasons is that the founding of the choral societies and the approval of the rules were often not in the same year, and the second reason is that even before the official founding of the choral societies, groups of singers performed at St. Sava sermons in many cities.⁷ There were minor changes in the names of some societies, so the society "Jedinstvo" was called Serbian Orthodox-Church Choral Society "Jedinstvo" from its foundation, and in December 1904 changes its name to the Serbian Choral Society "Jedinstvo".⁸

It is interesting that the founders and first presidents of the aforementioned choral societies in Northeastern Bosnia were merchants. The founder

⁶ Босанска вила, 2, 1886, 320.

⁷ Recently, some electronic portals for the Serbian Choral Society "Vila" from Prijedor state that it was founded in 1885, as the first choral society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although no archival sources are cited to confirm this information. There is an assumption that groups of singers performed during that period, but when analyzing the issues of the magazine *Bosanska vila*, published between 1885 and 1890, which most reliably informed readers about the holding of St. Sava sermons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the performances of this society at the St. Sava sermons are not mentioned anywhere.

⁸ Радмила Кулунџија, *Многаја љепа*, Бања Лука, Српско пјевачко друштво "Јединство", 2002, 81.

of the Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choral Society was Risto Jovanović, the founder of “Vijenac” from Brčko was Stevan Kovačević, while the founder and first president of the society in Bijeljina was Živko Ivković. The very idea of founding the society in Bijeljina was given by Serbian Orthodox priests, archpriest Jovan Novaković and Dragomir Ostojić. In most cases, the founders were wealthier citizens who, with their voluntary contributions and involvement in the work of the societies, contributed to their better and more successful development.⁹ Among those most responsible for the founding of “Sloga” in Sarajevo was Nikola Tajšanović.¹⁰

The number of members of singing societies varied. It was mentioned that the company in Tuzla had 22 singers when it was founded. At first it was only men, but the following year a mixed choir was formed. According to preserved photographs of the society from this period, it can be seen that the choir had about 30 members, while the society in Bijeljina had more than 30 members. In Sarajevo, the society had 48 members in the first year, while the following year that number increased to 60 members. Only two years after its foundation, the “Milutinović” society in Visoko had 44 members, of whom 16 were men and 28 were women.¹¹ Among the more numerous societies was the “Vila” society from Prijedor, which at one point had 70 members, including 25 girls.¹²

Other sections were also active within choral societies, and one of the more significant activities was the tambura orchestra that operated within the Lower Tuzla Serbian Singing Society. It was founded in 1897 – one year after the beginning of the society’s work. They had their first performance the same year the orchestra was founded. As stated in the archive documents of the society: “(...) on November 13, 1897, the tambourine choir took part in the siela, without a program and tickets appeared for the first time. The tambourines were members of the society (...)”¹³

At first, the orchestra worked without a leader, but the members agreed on appropriate arrangements. Only at the meeting of the society held on Feb-

⁹ Miradet Zulić, *Muzički život u sjeveroistočnoj Bosni 1878–1992*, Tuzla, Soreli, 2025, 20.

¹⁰ *Српско пјевачко друштво Слоја у Сарајеву 1888–1928*, Сарајево, 1928, 13.

¹¹ Ранко Билинац, “Српско православно црквено пјевачко друштво ‘Милутиновић’ у Високом”, *Годишњак*, 15, Фоча, Православни богословски факултет Универзитета у Источном Сарајеву, 2016, 105.

¹² Refik Hodžić, *Muzički život u sjeverozapadnoj Bosni 1878–1892*, Sarajevo, Muzikološko društvo FBiH, 2004, 58.

¹³ Архив Тузланског кантона, арх. бр. 28/I-46, 15.

ruary 8, 1899, Lazo M. Blagojević, who was the treasurer of the society, was appointed as the head of the orchestra. This was the only tambura orchestra in northeastern Bosnia at the end of the 19th century.

Choirmasters

The society “Jedinstvo” in Banja Luka was founded in 1893. The rules of the club were adopted at a meeting held in April 1894, and before the foundation, from 1888, a choir performed at the sermons.¹⁴ The first conductor who performed with the choir at sermons was Mladen Bošnjaković, and since the founding of the society, Xenofon Zita.¹⁵ In neighboring Prijedor, the choirmasters were teachers Stevo Kolarić, Vladimir Pejović, Risto Misita and Pero Radetić.¹⁶ When the Sarajevo society “Sloga” was founded, teacher Nikola Tajšanović was appointed as the choir leader. He held that position until September 1889, when Kosta Travanj was appointed on September 17.

In Mostar, Aleksa Šantić played the most important role in the organization of the society, and when necessary he took on the role of choirmaster. However, Šantić had no ambitions to be a choirmaster, but accepted this duty as needed. At the very beginning, Mladen Bošnjaković, who moved from Banjaluka to Mostar and led the choir of the “Gusle” society, performed the duties of choirmaster, in addition to Šantić. He soon moved from Mostar to Nevesinje and took over the position of choirmaster of the “Zastava”. After Bošnjaković, the choirmasters of the Mostar choir were mostly musicians of Czech origin: Josip Horki (1892), Rudolf Zamrzla (1892–1894), Viljem Sajfert (1894–1896), Hugo Doubek (1896–1897), Miloš Dozela (1899–1902), and the longest of all, Jovan Judl, until 1914. Sarajevo’s “Sloga” had a similar situation with its choirmasters, since the first choirmasters were local teachers. Nikola Tajšanović was the choirmaster from the very beginning, while Kosta Travanj was appointed on September 17, 1889. Later, the role was taken over by Czechs – Jovan Franci, Miloš Dozela, and the longest among them was Franjo Mačejovski.¹⁷

¹⁴ Кулунџија, *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁵ Xenophon Zita was of Greek origin (both parents were Greek) and was a student at the Educational School in Sombor. In addition to leading the choir, he often performed as a soloist, sometimes accompanied on the piano by his daughter Zora. He died in Banja Luka, where he was buried, in 1943 (Кулунџија, *ibid.*, 65, 66).

¹⁶ Hodžić, *op. cit.*, 58.

¹⁷ Ivan Čavlović, *Historija muzike u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo, Univerzitet u Sarajevu – Muzička akademija, 2011, 97.

The first choirmaster of the Tuzla society was Dragutin Hruza, and in the “Vijenac” society from Brčko was Risto Misita.¹⁸ The Tuzla choir had a lot of problems with the conductors. After Dragutin Hruza, the choir was directed by Emil Muza, who, with short breaks, was the conductor from March 6, 1887 to September 1, 1890. During these breaks of several months each, the choir was conducted by Karel Matejka, Aleksandar Dozel and Franjo Volanski. In the period from January 1891 to September 1892, the choir was conducted by Nikola Kus and Leopold Mikula, and in the following two years, the choir was conducted by Lazar Bordoški. After Bordoški, the choir was led by Kosta Lazarevic for a very short time, so the society once again faced the problem of a conductor. Ferdinand Grudak, who at that time was the conductor of the brass band in Tuzla, was soon appointed as the new conductor. Until August 1900, in addition to Grudak, the choir was conducted alternately by Dušan Nikolić and Kamenko Tomić. The understanding of a problem which Tuzla singing club had with conductors can be better understood from the fact that from its foundation in 1886 to 1900, it changed as many as twelve choirmasters.

It is assumed that the first choirmaster in Bijeljina was priest Dragomir Ostojić, and there is no reliable information until 1911. That year, Stevan Krnić, who received his musical education while attending the Teacher’s School in Pakrac, was appointed leader of the “Srbadija” choir in Bijeljina. In addition to leading the choir, he regularly took notes on rehearsals, performances and choir members. The manuscript of these notes is kept in the “Semberija” Museum in Bijeljina and they provide the best insight into the choir’s activities since 1911. They state that in addition to leading the choir in Bijeljina, in 1912, for a short period of six months, Krnić also led the choir of the “Vijenac” society in Brčko. At that time, the choirmaster of the “Vijenac” choir, teacher Milan Buturović, was ill, so Krnić replaced him.¹⁹

Anthems and consecration of flags

Following the example of choral societies in Serbia, it was common for societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to have their own hymns. Almost all choral

¹⁸ Risto Misita was the first choirmaster of the Serbian Choral Society “Vijenac” in Brčko; he led it for four years. During the next four, also successful years (August 28, 1900 – June 30, 1904), he led the choir of the Donjotuzlan Serbian Church Choral Society. After that, he moved to Prijedor, where he led the choir of the Serbian Choral Society “Vila” for four years. Zulić, *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

societies turned to Aleksa Šantić with a request for the text of the hymns. Among the first was “Vila” from Prijedor, which resulted in the text of the society’s anthem in 1893. In the same year, the board of directors of the society approached Josif Marinković with a request to “put the anthem in notes”, to which the composer responded with pleasure. Šantić also wrote the text of the anthem for the Tuzla society, which later issued a public invitation to which thirteen compositions were submitted. In January 1901, a composition written by Jovan Borjanović, a teacher from Sarajevo was chosen. Apart from the Tuzla society, Aleksa Šantić also wrote hymn texts for “Jedinstvo” from Banja Luka, “Gusle” from Mostar, “Vila” from Prijedor, “Zastava” from Nevesinje and others. Apart from Borjanović, who composed the music for the hymn of the Tuzla society, the composers of the hymns of other societies were Josif Marinković (“Vila”), Mita Topalović (“Jedinstvo”), J. Marinković, R. Zamrzla, D. Jenko (“Gusle”).

As an illustration of the appropriate content and a reminder of Šantić’s words, the texts of three hymns will be listed on this occasion:²⁰

“Jedinstvo” Banja Luka (Let’s Sing)
text by Aleksa Šantić, music by Mita Topalović

*O children of the glorious mother,
let us rise from our sleep
Before the thunder of the dark night
God is with us!
Into the fight!
Warmed by the holy flame of unity!
Into the fight!
No Serb has yet fallen,
without the temple of glory awaiting him!
the Knight’s song is shouting for the banner...
Hooray for the Easter dawn
God is with us!*

²⁰ Cf. Кулунџија, *ibid.*, 94–95; Мирадет Зулић, Сандра Ивановић, “Репертоар српских пјевачких друштава у Босни и Херцеговини у периоду Аустроугарске управе”, *Нова школа*, 13 (1), Бијељина, Педагошки факултет, 2018, 158; the score held at Radio Nevesinje.

“Vila” Prijedor

text by Aleksa Šantić, music by Josif Marinković

*Hey let the song voice wail!
The fairy spreads her wings,
may she spreads more for us.
Through the storm, the torments sink,
It leads us by his own to the bright temple,
fraternal harmony,
harmony of work,
salvation is in that!
Hey, let the song's voice wail!*

“Zastava” Nevesinje

text by Aleksa Šantić, music author unknown

*The hot blood, the chest full of joy
Brother to brother stand by his own under the flag of harmony and love
blessings will be given by God.
God, please protect
And bless this country, this people,
this love
give it paradise on Earth.
Oh God, give him love, happiness and earthly paradise
Our grandfathers were famous,
Prides of their families
And equal we will be
And live for our home
Those against us will be cursed by a Serbian mother
And he will not be called our brother
He will not be Serbian nor a brother
Nobody will call him his own
If a Serbian he is not
A brother also not*

In addition to anthems, Serbian choral societies had a tradition of having their own flag as a trademark. Those richly decorated flags mostly featured the images of famous Serbian poets and significant historical figures. On the flag of the “Vijenac” society from Brčko, on one side was the figure of Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, and on the other side was a lyre. The ceremonial con-

secration of the flag took place on August 30, 1897 in the Hotel “Bosna”. On the “Jedinstvo” flag was the image of Saint Sava, while on the flag of the Bijeljina community was the image of Saint Stefan Dečanski. In Tuzla society, the situation with the flag was somewhat different. Namely, in December 1898, the assembly of the society proposed that the society get a flag with the image of the poet Petar Petrović Njegoš on one side, and a lyre on the other. However, the authorities at the time did not agree with this proposal with the explanation that Njegoš was not only a poet but also a Serbian Orthodox leader in another country, and this act was considered political demonstration. Nevertheless, at the end of 1900, consent was given for the use of the flag, but with an amendment to the society’s regulations and notes that the flag can only be used for certain purposes.²¹

It was the commemoration and solemn consecration of the flags that were the occasion for many societies to organize concerts and host other societies. At the beginning of 1901, the Tuzla Society, in addition to consecrating the social flag, also celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of its existence and work. On that occasion, the mixed choir of the Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choral Society and the mixed choir of the Serbian Choral Society “Srbadija” from Bijeljina performed at the celebration. After their performance, the choir of the Belgrade Choral Society also performed, singing several songs by Stevan Mokranjac, who was also the conductor. Among other compositions, the choir from Tuzla performed the compositions *Polka* and *Oj Đurđevdane* written by Slavjanski and Doubek, the choir from Bijeljina performed the *Sixth Rukovet* (Song-Garland) by Mokranjac, while in the joint the performance of both choirs performed the compositions *U kolo* by Aleksa Šantić and *Bolje naše* by Davorin Jenko.

The Banja Luka “Jedinstvo” had a much bigger and more grandiose celebration in 1905. The celebration program lasted for three days and eight choirs were performed. In addition to the hosts, the participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina were “Vila” from Prijedor and “Pobratimstvo” from Sanski Most, then the Belgrade Choral Society and the Academic Choral Society “Obilić” from Belgrade, Šabac choral society, “Branko” choral society from

²¹ That is why the name “Njegoš” is often used in the literature for Tuzla society in the period up to 1914. Cf. Роксанда Пејовић, “Музички живот Срба у Босни и Херцеговини (1881–1914)”, *Нови звук*, 7, 1996, 80. In 1920, the Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choir Society officially changed its name to Serbian Choral Society “Njeguš” in Tuzla. Архив Босне и Херцеговине у Сарајеву, *Српско ијевачко друштво “Њејуш” у Тузли*, сигнатура – Друштва 5 39. Тузла.

Niš and Academic Choral Society “Balkan” from Zagreb. The celebration was magnified by famous composers Stevan Mokranjac, Stanislav Binički and Robert Tolinger, conductors of visiting companies from Serbia, and Mita Topalović, composer of the anthem of “Jedinstvo”. Although the celebration was attended by Aleksa Šantić, the then president of the “Gusle” society, and four representatives of “Sloga” from Sarajevo, many people did not understand why the two most important Serbian choral societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina “Sloga” from Sarajevo and “Gusle” from Mostar did not perform at the celebration.²²

“Jedinstvo” celebration program:

M. Topalović *Himna “Jedinstva”* – Anthem of “Jedinstvo” (“Jedinstvo”)

R. Tolinger *Pozdravna pesma* – Greeting Song (Šabačko pevačko društvo)

St. Mokranjac *Sedma rukovet: Makedonske pesme* – Seventh Song-Garland: Macedonian song (“Branko”)

J. Marinković *Narodni zbor* – People’s Assembly (“Obilić”)

I. Bajić *Srpski zvuci* – Serbian Sounds (“Balkan”)

Smetana *Hor seljana iz Prodane neveste* – “Choir of Villagers” from “The Bartered Bride” (“Pobratimstvo”)

*** *Sa Balkana* – From the Balkans (“Vila”)

R. Tolinger *Pod Đulom* – Under the Rose (Šabačko pevačko društvo)

St. Mokranjac *Primorski napjevi* – Coastal Melodies (“Jedinstvo”)

St. Mokranjac *Za inat* – Out of Spite (“Obilić”)

St. Binički *Čuješ dušo* – Do You Hear Honey (“Obilić”)

B. Tovačovski *Druga smjesa narodnih slovenskih pjesam* – Second Garland of Slavic Folk Songs (“Balkan”)

Stevan Mokranjac *Deseta rukovet: Pjesme sa Ohrida* – The Tenth Song-Garland: Poems from Ohrid (“Branko”)

*** *Pojmo pjesme* – Let’s Sing Songs (“Vila”)

R. Tolinger *Avaj mene* – Alas for Me (Šabačko pevačko društvo)

D. Jenko *Bože bratimstva* – O God, Brotherhood (Zora’s hymn, all choirs)²³

In addition to the company’s anthem, “Jedinstvo” presented itself at the mentioned celebration with another composition *Welcome song*, specially composed for this occasion. The author of the text and music is Robert Tolinger, conductor of the Šabac’ Choral Society:

²² Кулунџија, *ibid.*, 89.

²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

*Our Šeher Šabac sends us on a journey
with brotherly desire.*

*A rare and wonderful celebration so that Serbian can congratulate one to
another.*

*May the Serbian song bear lush fruit under the auspices of the flag,
brothers, brothers, hey!*

Repertoire and performances

The Tuzla society had its first performance immediately after its foundation in 1886. In the program organized for the opening of the railway Doboj – Simin Han,²⁴ on April 29, 1886, the choir performed two songs. Information about the first concert of the Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choral Society, held on July 20, 1886, can be found in the Tuzla Canton Archives, so this event can be characterized as the first concert held in northeastern Bosnia in this period. Unlike the first concerts held in Banja Luka and Sarajevo, where foreign musicians performed, the concert program in Tuzla was performed by the local population.

The following program was performed at the concert:²⁵

Zajc *U boj*²⁶ (To the battle)
Štos *Majci na grobu* (To the Mother at Her Grave)
Hružá *Kad se sjetim* (When I Remember)
Hružá *Tajna Ljubav* (Secret Love), Soloist – Jovan Đukić
Jenko *Nek dušman vidi* (Let Enemy Sees)
Horejšek *Tija noći* (That Silent Night)
Riharijev *Večernja* (The Night Song)
Havlas *Kolo* (Traditional dance)
Jovanović Zmaj *Ko je lola* (Who is Lola).

According to the above, it can be concluded that the repertoire of choral societies most often included compositions by Serbian composers, but also by

²⁴ Simin Han was a town at that time, and today, as a settlement, it is an integral part of Tuzla. The opening of this railway line played an important role in the development of the economy of this region.

²⁵ Surnames of composers and names of compositions in the work are not listed according to archival material, commemorative volumes, programs and invitations.

²⁶ The composition *U boj* (Vienna, 1866) is the first composition for choir that Zajc composed to a Croatian text and later included in his opera *Ivan Šubić Zrinjski*.

Czech authors who lived in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the frequently performed authors is Jovan Paču, about whom *Bosanska vila* announced: "Dr. Jovan Paču, composer of *Brankovo kolo* and many other Serbian songs well liked everywhere in our region, is coming to Sarajevo at the beginning of next month, and will live there permanently as a doctor. His most performed songs were: *Brankovo kolo* (Branko's dance, male choir), *Srpska molitva* (Serbian prayer), *Kolo naših seljana* (Our villagers' traditional dance, for mixed choir)."²⁷

Robert Tollinger was also active in this region as a composer and soloist. The composition *U noći* (At night) was written for four voices, while *Dižimo škole* (We are raising schools) was written for a four-part male and two-part children's choir. The composition was performed at a sermon in Tuzla in 1887, accompanied by "the author's piano ensemble".²⁸ In addition to compositions for the choir, Tollinger also wrote compositions for interesting combinations of instruments, such as *Začinka* for piano, harmonium and violin. The composition was performed at a sermon in Tuzla in 1888. The ensemble consisted of Ana Bek, former choirmaster of the society Emil Muža and choirmaster Karel Matejka.²⁹

Sarajevo's "Sloga" has also been active since its foundation, and one of its most significant performances was in 1892. During that period, the company received an offer from the competent authorities that, upon the arrival of Austrian railway officials from Vienna, the company's choir would participate in the program. At the reception, on May 31, the composition *Samo sloga Srbina spasava* (Only Unity Saves the Serbs) was performed, whereas the concert in Ilidža, on June 2, featured Paču's *Srpske narodne pesme bosanske* (Serbian Folk Songs from Bosnia) and Mokranjac's *Druga rukovet* (The Second Garland-Song), which contains Serbian folk songs (Mokranjac). After the performance at the reception, the government commissioner for Sarajevo Berks called the secretary and the stage manager on 29 April and informed them that they should not have performed the composition *Samo sloga Srbina spasava* (Only harmony saves the Serbs).³⁰ On that occasion, he

²⁷ Босанска вила, 21, 1887, 336.

²⁸ Босанска вила, 2, 1887, 31.

²⁹ Босанска вила, 1, 1888, 15.

³⁰ In this period, in the commemorative volumes and rules of societies, the title of *likovođa* (choirmaster) was used with a description of the duties he had. An example from Brčko: "The conductor, who is appointed by the general assembly on the proposal, is obliged by the contract to train the participating members in church singing from the

issued an order that in the last song of *Druga rukovet*, instead of –‘in Buda grad’, ‘in Konjic grad’ should be sung.³¹

With the founding of numerous Serbian choral societies in the following years, their mutual cooperation was intensified. Sheet music was exchanged, which was mostly procured from societies from Serbia. In addition, the societies organized get-togethers and joint performances. The performance of the choirs “Sloga” and the Mostar society “Gusle” was held on May 12, 1896, and the following compositions were performed:³²

Štunc *Pobratimstvo* – Brotherhood (“Gusle” – male choir)

A. Jorgović *Ao nebo* – Oh the Sky (“Sloga” – male choir)

B. M. Topalović *U boj* – To the Battle (“Gusle” – male choir)

Zajc *Gdje si dušo* – Where are You, Dear (solo Kosta Travanj, accompanied by military music)

R. Zamrzla *Vijenac čeških narodnih pjesama* – Garland of Czech Folk Songs (“Gusle” – male choir)

J. Paču *Brankovo kolo* – Branko’s kolo

(male choirs of both societies accompanied by military music)

D. Jenko *Hajd na vojnu* – Let’s Go to War (“Sloga” – male choir)

The most frequently performed compositions by the Prijedor society were: Mokranjac *Song-Garlands*, J. Paču *Pjesme iz Bosne* (Songs from Bosnia), Štunc *Pobratimstvo* (Brotherhood), Bortnjanski *Heruvika* (*The Cherubic Hymn*), K. Stanković *Uskliknimo* (Let us Shout), Hajdrih *V slatkih sanjah* (In Sweet Dreams), *Osana* – Russian folk song, A. Petrović to the text of Osman Đikić *Dva šehida* (Two Martyrs), D. Jenko *Mornaru* (Sailor), *Što ćutiš* (Why are You Quiet), *Srpske narodne pjesme Bosne i Hercegovine* (Serbian Folk Songs of Bosnia and Herzegovina) to the text of A. Šantić.³³

Joint concerts held in Sarajevo (1896), Tuzla (1901) and Banja Luka (1905) had a positive impact on the further development of choral societies

score, world singing and playing; to prepare songs for the sermon (...)” Cf. Правила Српског-православног црквеног пјевачког друштва “Вијенац” у Брчком, 1897, 9.

³¹ СПД “Слога”, 1928: 14, 15. On Mokranjac’s works in the repertoire of BiH singing societies, see: Миладет Зулић, “Композиције Стевана Мокрањца на репертоару српских пјевачких друштава у Босни и Херцеговини до 1914. године”, *Мокрањац – часопис за културу*, 21, 2019, 34–40.

³² *Педесет година Српској пјевачкој друштва Гусле у Мостару 1888–1938*, Мостар, 1938, 53.

³³ Refik Hodžić, *ibid.*, 58.

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both from the point of view of improving the quality of choirs, and from the point of view of repertoire selection. In addition to mutual cooperation, Serbian choral societies had continuous and high-quality cooperation with Croatian and Muslim choral societies. That cooperation was expressed at the local level, because various celebrations were traditionally marked by mutual guest appearances.

After 1900, among the most represented composers in Sarajevo society was Stevan Mokranjac with his *Rukoveti* (Song-Garlands). In 1904, it learned *Peta rukovet* (The Fifth Song-Garland) and later *Sedma rukovet* (The Seventh Song-Garland), while the repertoire included the following compositions: E. Pravnik *Ruska četvorka* (The Russian Four), F. Maćejevski *U bolesti* (In Sickness), J. Marinković *Srcem rodu* (To Our Relatives with Love), *Potpuri srpskih narodnih pesama* (Potpourri of Serbian folk songs) by Maćejevski, Bir *Hajkače* (Hounds), Mokranjac *Dve pesme* (Two Songs: Play alive hearts, Coastal melodies), Binički *Jesen stiže* (Autumn Arrives).

Many companies adapted the repertoire to the needs of the performance. If it was necessary for the repertoire to be of a heroic character, or war songs were needed, then the compositions most often performed were: Paču *Ja sam Srbin srpski sin* (I am a Serb, a Son of a Serb), Jenko *Sabljo moja* (O My Sabre), Mokranjac *Serbian Folk Songs from the Sixteenth Century* (Srpske narodne pesme iz šesnanestog veka), Ostojić *Serbian Folk Songs* (Srpske narodne pesme), Topalović *U boj, u boj* (To the Battle, To the Battle) (as long as its performance is not banned) and Jorgović *Ao nebo, Ljubice moja* (My Love), *Anđeo Srba* (Angel of the Serbs).

Male and mixed choirs were most often active in societies. It was a rarity that women's choirs performed, with the exception of the Banja Luka and Sarajevo societies. On October 26, 1907, the "Jedinstvo" women's choir performed Hugo Doubek's composition *Laku noć* (Good Night) accompanied by the piano, and at that celebration the following program was performed:

Jovan Paču *Pesme iz Bosne* (Songs from Bosnia), Isidor Bajić *Vinska pjesma* (Wine Song) and Stevan Mokranjac *Pesme iz Ohrida* (*Deseta rukovet*) (Songs from Ohrid /Tenth Song-Garland/). In 1906, the Sarajevo women's choir "Sloga" had the composition *Oj oblaci* (Oh, clouds) by F. Bazine in its repertoire.³⁴ 33 The most popular and represented composer was, of course, Stevan Mokranjac. The Sarajevo and Mostar choral societies had *The First, Third, Fifth and Seventh Song-Garland* movements in their repertoire, while

³⁴ Зулић, Ивановић, op. cit., 162.

the Tuzla society most often performed *The Fifth* and *Tenth Song-Garland* movements.

As time went on, the companies pushed the limits of the difficulty and variety of the repertoire. The best example is the society “Sloga” from 1911, which is described in the commemorative volume: “The program for Sloga’s Easter night is interesting, all the more remarkable because, now for the first time, it was composed with purely by artistic tendency without narrow Serbian characteristics. Those are Gluck’s *Sevaju Koplja* (“Les lances étincelantes” from *Iphigénie en Tauride*), excerpts from Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* and Gounod’s *Faust*. There are only two Serbian composers: Mokranjac with the *Hymn* to the words of Aleksa Šantić, and Marinković’s *Slavija*.”³⁵

Given that “Sloga” and the Mostar society “Gusle” had an excellent cooperation, Smetana and Gounod were also in the repertoire of the Mostar society. In this period, “Gusle” had in their repertoire compositions by many other authors that were not often represented in other societies: Malaškin, Napravnik, Satner, Novak, Sremac.³⁶

In honor of Mokranjac, in November 1912, the Bijeljina choral society organized a concert called “Mokranjčevo veće”. At the invitation of the society’s management, Stevan Mokranjac also attended that concert, and his compositions were performed. The first and last items on the program were conducted by Mokranjac, while the others were conducted by the choir director of the Bijeljina society, teacher Stevan Krnić. As Krnić stated in his manuscripts, he was very nervous before the performance. He could not believe that he would host such a composer-conductor, let alone perform his works in front of him.³⁷

Serbian choral societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina operated until the middle of 1914. As a result of the well-known events of June 28 in Sarajevo, apart from the Serbian choral societies, many other choral societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina also stopped working. The renewal of their activities will wait until the end of 1918.

³⁵ СПД “Слога”, 1928, 42.

³⁶ СПД “Гусле”, 1938, 176.

³⁷ Музеј “Семберија” у Бијељини, рукопис Стевана Крнића (без потписа). (Museum “Semberija” in Bijeljina, manuscript by Stevan Krnić /unsigned/).

Conclusion

Illuminating the activity of Serbian choral societies in the context of socio-political and cultural circumstances during the Austro-Hungarian occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper examines the process of establishing individual societies, the changes that occurred, the activity of the choirmaster, the repertoire with a special emphasis on the presentation of surviving anthems and flags. The data show that the development of choral singing was dynamic, and that the accent was gradually shifted from the social, national significance of the activities of singing societies to other, artistic goals. Although founded primarily on a confessional basis, choral societies developed mutual cooperation with Croatian and Muslim societies, joint concerts were common during celebrations, and cooperation with Serbian societies, composers and choirmasters was nurtured. This dynamic development was interrupted by the beginning of the First World War and will continue only after 1918.

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Summary

This paper emphasizes different aspects of the activity of Serbian choral societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period since the foundation of the first Lower Tuzla Serbian Church Choir in March 1886 until the beginning of the First World War. The aim of the paper is to comprehensively and systematically present the available data. It was made on the basis of archival material and previous research by scholars from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The activities of the choral societies are presented chronologically, pointing out the choirmasters active in this period, the repertoire of the societies, the most important performances, anthems and flags. Illuminating the activity of Serbian choral societies in the context of socio-political and cultural circumstances during the Austro-Hungarian occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper examines the process of establishing individual societies, the changes that occurred, the activities of choirmasters, the repertoire with a special emphasis on the presentation of preserved anthems and flags. The data show that the development of choral singing was dynamic, that the accent was gradually shifted

from the social, national significance of the activities of singing societies to other, artistic goals. Although founded primarily on a confessional basis, choral societies developed mutual cooperation with Croatian and Muslim societies, joint concerts were common during celebrations, and cooperation with Serbian societies, composers and choirmasters was nurtured. This dynamic development was interrupted by the beginning of the First World War and will continue only after 1918.