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THE PHYSICAL-HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCHES OF A GREATER SIGNIFICANCE IN EAST HERZEGOVINA IN THE 16TH AND THE 17TH CENTURY

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Abstract: The physical-historical overview of the churches of a greater significance in East Herzegovina in the 16th and the 17th century implies the geographical definement of this region, a brief historical overview of the events with the emphasis on the geographical-territorial determinants which were being changed throughout the denoted period. The periodization of the historical events in the area of East Herzegovina has been stipulated reflecting on the geographical changes of the position of Herzegovina which was the part of the Serbian medieval state, then the part of the medieval Bosnian state and its position within the boundaries of Bosnian pashalik from 1482 to 1878. The Orthodox architectural shapes and forms, which were the most common in East Herzegovina, have been stipulated, as well as the influences which formed the Orthodox architecture in the 16th and the 17th century. The presence of the certain architectural elements, which have the recognizable characteristics and features of the neighboring cultures, has been noticed. These elements appeared as the consequence and result of the geographical and political changes of the country borders and the changes of cultural events. These changes also influenced the style and iconographic characteristics and features of the wall painting in the churches which were built or renovated during the 16th and the 17th century. Due to the cultural-geographical changes, different style characteristics and features appeared forming a diverse style and iconographic schemes in a small number of wall-painted churches in East Herzegovina in the period which has been studied and analyzed. The end of the work includes the presentation of the churches of a greater significance which were wall-painted, built or renovated in the 16th and the 17th century with concise geographical and time determinants.

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Introduction

Geographical term of East Herzegovina implies the south-east region of the Republic of Srpska which scopes the following administrative-territorial units: Bileća, Gacko, Berkovići, Nevesinje, East Mostar, Ljubinje and the city of Trebinje as well as 365 inhabited places. The total size of the East Herzegovina area is 3. 823 square kilometres, with the population of 73.000 (Lojović, Gnjato & Lojović-Milinić, 2016). Favourable geographical position and abundant cultural-historical heritage makes this part of the Republic of Srpska exceptionally interesting in the field of geographical, historical, touristic and cultural researches. The aim of this work has been directed to the clearer introduction and understanding of the geographical-cultural influence on the Orthodox building and wall-painting in the churches which were built or renovated in the 16th and the 17th century. The churches of a greater significance from this mentioned period are the following ones: the church of St. Healers Cosmas and Damian, the church of St. George and St. Constantine in Gomiljani, the church of Ascension of Holy Mother in Lug, the church of St. Peter and Paul in Ošanići, the church of St. Nicholas in Trijebanj, the church of St. Nicholas in Srđevići, the church of St. Archangel Michael in Arandjelovo, the church of Annunciation of Holy Mother in Žitomislić, the church of Presentation of Holy Mother at the Temple in Dobrićevo, the church of Presentation of Holy Mother at the Temple in Zavala, the church of St. Kliment in Mostaći, the church of Intercession of the Theotokos in Duži and the church of Ascension of Holy Mother in Tvrdoš.

Geographical-historical position of East Herzegovina

According to its cultural-geographical features, East Herzegovina is the area where various cultural influences meet and blend. These various cultural influences were reflected on the architecture and the wall-painting in the churches in the 16th and the 17th century. The cultural-civilizational interweaving and geographical position conditioned the appearance of various architectural features. While studying and analyzing the architecture of the previously mentioned churches, the elements which were introduced by the builders from Dubrovnik have been noticed (Korać and Đurić, 1964) as well as the appearance of some gothic elements and elements of the Raška style. Various cultural influ-

ences reflected on the wall-painting in East Herzegovina where the appearance of the Byzantine Art elements, elements of the wall-painting and icon-painting applied in Athos, elements of Cretan Art, as well as some oriental elements have been recorded.

It has been documented that the area of East Herzegovina, since its founding, or to be more precise since the first mentioning of Herzegovina, was geographically exposed to the different political and cultural influences, which resulted in the change of its geographical border. The position of East Herzegovina can be examined throughout a few periods: the position of *East Herzegovina within the Serbian medieval state*, then the position of *Herzegovina as a part of the medieval Bosnian state* and the position of *Herzegovina within the boundaries of Bosnian pashalik* from 1482 to 1878.

The name *Herzegovina* dates back to the 15th century, and it marked the area which was ruled by one of the powerful medieval district rulers Stefan Vukčić Kosača. *Hum*, *The Land of Hum*, or *Zahumlje* are the names which in the certain period implied and scoped the certain territory and the certain law-state identity of today's Herzegovina. Until the 12th century, the official name of the state was *Zahumlje*, while the name *The Land of Hum* was mentioned for the first time in the great county ruler Stefan Nemanja's chart (1190-1192). The area on which the medieval Herzegovina was established included the area from the sea to the river Lim and Bijelo Polje in today's Montenegro (Marjanović, 2001: 288). The *Hum Eparchy*, which was established in 1219 by St. Sava, at the end of the first half of the 15th century became the *Herzegovinian Eparchy*. Between 930 and 960, the Serbian duke Časlav Klonimirović joined the territory of *Travunija* to its country of *Raška*. The territory of *Hum* was ruled by the duke Mihailo Višević.

After 1034, the area of *Skadar*, *Duklja*, *Travunija* and *Zahumlje* was ruled by the Serbian duke Stefan Vojislav. His son, the duke Mihailo, declared independence from Byzantium before 1077. Beside *Doclea*, he also ruled *Zahumlje*. The pope of Rome coronated him as the king of Serbia. After 1083, Mihailo's son Bodin Konstantin joined a great part of *Bosnia* and *Hum* to his state of *Raška*. The county ruler *Desa* joined *Doclea* and *Travunija* to *Raška* after 1162. After that, in 1170 there was Stefan Nemanja's accession to the throne and he started ruling *Raška*, *Doclea*, *Travunija*, *Zahumlje* and *Metohija*. The change of political situation, which happened at the beginning of the 14th century, affected the *Eparchy of Hum*. The central authority was shaken in the Serbian medieval state. The issue of the *Eparchy of Hum's* existence was burdened with the involvement in the war with the city of *Dubrovnik* (1317-1318), as well as in the war for the Serbian crown (1318-1319). Stjepan II Kotromanić took advantage of a suchlike situation and he forced and burst upon the area of *Lower Neretva*. In 1326 he anchored Bosnian authority in *Hum*. Surrender of *Ston* and *Pešeljac* to *Dubrovnik* in 1333 affected the future destiny of *Eparchy of Hum*. It is as-

sumed that in the period 1333/4-1343, it was abolished (Nilević, 1990: 34). The gift document of the king Dušan to the monastery of St. Paula and Peter on the river Lim, from 1343 confirms that there wasn't the episcopal seat of Eparchy of Hum in this church any more. (Nilević, 1990: 35). At the end of the first half of the 15th century, on the territory of the former diocese of Hum in Polimlje, the name of the archbishop Filotej, who now was named as the archbishop „of Lim“, was mentioned. Until the end of the existence of the Serbian despotate, 1459, nobody was mentioned as the archbishop of Lim in the written documents and sources (Janković, 1985: 142, 174-175).

During the ruling period of the civil governor and since 1371 of the first Bosnian king, Tvrtko I Kotromanić (1353-1391), some other parts, which until that point were under the rule of feudalists-vassals of the Serbian tsar, were joined to the Bosnian state. At that point, Upper Podrinje, Mid Polimlje and Lower Polimlje (Prijepolje, Pljevlja, Foča, Goražde, Višegrad, Onogošt, Bileća) became the part of medieval Bosnia. A little bit later, in 1377, Trebinje, Konavle and Dračevica were joined to the Bosnian state (Čirković, 1964: 135).

During the mid 14th century, the Turks from the territory of Asia Minor, forced onto the Balkan. A huge Ottoman army, led by Mehmed II the Conqueror, entered the city of Smederevo in 1459 making the Serbian medieval state to stop existing. In 1463, the Bosnian medieval state was also conquered. During the Ottoman conquering of Herzegovina, many churches and monasteries of the Eparchy of Hum were devastated and ruined. The Turkish conquering did not interrupt the previously established creative bonds between the builders from the south Seaside and the Serbs from the inland of the Balkan, but they were rather diminished, so the village churches or monasteries of smaller dimensions were built. During the seventh and eighth decade of the 15th century, builders and stone-carvers from Dubrovnik started to arrive in order to build churches for the Orthodox and Catholic ordering parties in Herzegovina.

At the beginning of the 16th century, a particular activity in the building and renovation of the Orthodox churches was recorded. In the first years of the Ottoman rule monasteries Žitomislić, Zavala, Dobrićevo, Tvrdoš were built, as well as the parish churches in Lug, Ošanići, Trijebanj, Hum and Gomiljani (Ševo, 2002: 35). The church donors were mostly the church dignitaries or monks. With the renewal of Patriarchate of Peć in 1557, the Serbian church became entirely independent in the area of its jurisdiction and its obligations towards the sultan. At the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, the Archdiocese of Herzegovina was divided into two Eparchies, the Eparchy of half Herzegovina or Petrovska and the Eparchy of Herzegovina or the Eparchy of Trebinje. The Eparchy of Petrovska had the seat in the church of St. Peter and Paul on the river Lim while, the Eparchy of Trebinje had the seat in the monastery Tvrdoš in the vicinity of Trebinje.

Geographical position of the areas in Herzegovina was changing, when compared to the neighbouring areas, under the influence of political-state circumstances. Those changes left the trace on the cultural expression which reflected upon both, the architecture and the wall-painting.

Singularities of the Orthodox Sacral architecture and wall-painting in the area of East Herzegovina in the 16th and the 17th century stipulated by cultural-geographical changes

Single-nave churches with the elongated rectangular base, the half-arched ceiling and the apse on the east side, represent the architectural features of a great number of Herzegovinian churches which were renovated or built during the 16th and the 17th century. With these typological determinants, which are the continuation of the *Raška* physical conception, in the diminished form, there are following churches: the church of St. Nicholas in Srđevići, the church of St. George, the church of St. Constantine and St. Healers Cosmas and Damian in Gomiljani, the church of St. Peter and Paul in Zaplanik, the church of St. Nicholas in Trijebanj. There are also churches which are in the triconch or trefoil shape which originate from the oldest *Byzantine* apostolion Ošanići, the church: Ošanići, the church of St. Ilija in Mesari (Ševo, 2002: 232).

A simple church with the half-arched ceiling and *leant arches* is the most common type of the churches in Herzegovina, the building expansion of which was recorded in the period of the Turkish rule and dominance. Suchlike type of churches was represented in *Dalmatia* and the south *Seaside*, even in the 13th and the 14th century, from where it expanded into the hinterland thanks to the builders from *Dubrovnik*. In the churches of this type, the Orthodox ideas of the ordering party and the elements of the West-Christian style, introduced by the builders, have been incorporated (Korać and Đurić, 1964: 562-563). There is a great number of churches in the area of Herzegovina and Montenegro, and even the greater number of churches than the former researches showed, which is concentrated in the area of the Balkan (today's Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia). They can be divided into two types:

1. *Basic (simpler) type*- it appears in the entire Balkan
2. *Developed type* – it appears in Herzegovina and Montenegro

The body of the *simple* or *basic type* is a rectangular area ending in a half-arched apse, with a vaulted ceiling supported with leant arches. The other forms of the apses rarely appear: from the outside rectangular and from inside semi-circular (Lug, Strujići), then from the outside three-sided or five-sided, while inside, almost by the rule, they are semi-circular. The inside area of these

churches is divided into *two, three or more rooms*; depending on the number of pilasters and inner leant arches.

The dome in these churches can be reinforced by means of the transversal ribs or it can be without reinforcement. In the area of Eparchy of Herzegovina these ribs appear in the church of St. Archangel Michael in Aranđelovo, the church of Presentation of Holy Mother at the Temple in Zavala, while they do not appear in the church of Assumption of Holy Mother in Lug, in the church of St. Kliment in Mostači, in the church of St. Kliment in Dražin Do, in the church of St. John in Žakovo, in the vicinity of Trebinje. (Korać and Đurić, 1964). In most three roomed churches, the leant arches are propped against the pilasters and transversal walls, but in some churches, as the constructive element, the corner pilasters appear (the church of St. Kliment in Mostači, the church of Ascension of Holy Mother in Lug. (Okilj, 2013: 321).² Double-roomed churches which have two pairs of leant arches along the longitudinal walls are a rather rare appearance. The church in Lug belongs to this group of churches, and taking into consideration that the ceiling hasn't been reinforced with the transversal ribs, the direct influence of the Pre-Romanesque architecture of the south Seaside is here in question (Okilj, 2013: 324).

In the period of the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th century, in the area of Herzegovina, *the developed type* of the churches with leant arches was formed. In some rare cases, a slightly curved ceiling appears, like in the church of Žitomislić monastery for example, then in the church of St. Nicholas in Domaševo, in the church of Intercession of the Theotokos in Mosko, in the church of St. Healers Cosmas and Damianin in Gomiljani, as well as in the church in Dobrićevo, above the east and west rooms and the narthex. This developed type of the churches comprises the following churches: the churches of monastery Žitomislić and Zavala, the church of St. Duke Lazar in Vlahovići near Ljubinje, the church of the Birth of Holy Mother in Ljubinje and the church of St. Archangel Michael in Veličani in Popovo field.

The wall-painting in Herzegovina from the Ottoman ruling period, has been preserved in fragments in Srđevići or in a greater content in Dobrićevo, Zavala, Aranđelovo and Mostači and it also existed in Žitomislić, Trijebanj, Tvrdoš and Gomiljani.

In the territory of Zahumska Eparchy different style influences in the wall-painting in the 16th and the 17th century have been noticed. The style of the wall painting which existed in the church in Tvrdoš cannot be stipulated only according to the small existing fragment. However, a rather abundant wall-painting in Zavala and Dobrićevo reveal a theologically educated artist Georgije

² The churches built in the area of Greece have the corner pilasters as the building element, regardless of the room number; Okilj, M. (2013): *ibid*, pg. 321.

Mitrofanović who introduced the features of the art from Athos. He also relied on the patterns which can be seen in the Serbian monuments from the 13th and the 14th century. The less educated artist Vasilije, from Mostači, built his style on the examples from Dobrićevo, Zavala and Arandjelovo, but his work was also influenced by printed illustrations. In Arandjelovo, we can recognize some iconographic individualities and singularities which refer to the presence of the Greek painters, while in Tvrdoš the presence of the painter from Dubrovnik who was working in „the Greek style“ has been noticed. All the previously mentioned things lead to the conclusion that the Serbian wall-painting in East Herzegovina, in the 16th and the 17th century, was really abundant and various, due to the presence of the artists and cultural influences from different geographical-cultural areas. At the very end of the 16th century, the Greek painters pushed the local artists aside causing thus the style unevenness. The architecture of East Herzegovina in the 16th and the 17th century was primarily formed under the influence of the architecture from Dalmatia and Pre-Romanesque architectural features of the south Seaside, as the result of the geographical vicinity. The elements of the Byzantine, Greek and Raška architecture can be recognized, again as the result of the geographical position and political changes. Consequently, a great number of similar monuments can be found in the area of the Balkan, or to be more precise in today's Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia.

Overview of the geographical position and building of the churches of a greater significance in East Herzegovina in the 16th and the 17th century

1. *Monastery Tvrdoš* with the church dedicated to *the Ascension of Holy Mother*, is the oldest monastery in East Herzegovina. It is located 5 kilometres away from Trebinje in the west direction. The monastery is perched on the top of the cliff, twenty metres above the river Trebišnjica.
2. In a village called Gomiljani, in the vicinity of Trebinje, there are three Orthodox churches: the church of *St. George*, (called *Đurđevica* among local people), the church of *St. Healers Cosmas and Damian* (called *Vračevica* among local people) and the church of *St. Constantine and Jelena* (called *Konstantinovica* among local people). This village is a few kilometres away from Trebinje in the south-west direction.
3. The church of *Ascension of Holy Mother* with a Necropolis of *stećak* tombstones and old grave stones is there in the Orthodox graveyard in the village Lug, which is 15 kilometres away from Trebinje in the west direction. The building contract from 1503 from the Dubrovnik Archives refers to the building of the church in Lug in the vicinity of Trebinje.

4. The church dedicated to *St. Peter and Paul* is in Ošanići, a few kilometres away from Stolac in the north direction. The church was built before 1505, when Radoslav Hrabren Miloradović, the son of duke Petar, was buried in front of its entrance.
5. The church dedicated to *St. Nicholas* is in the village Trijebanj, approximately 15 kilometers from Stolac, in the north direction. The duke Radoje Hrabren renovated the church in 1534, probably on the ruins of the old church (Ševo, 2002: 229).
6. The church of *St. Nicholas* is in the Orthodox graveyard in the village Srđevići, 4 kilometres from Gacko, in the south-west direction, at the rim of a vast Gatačko field. The time of building of the church in Srđevići hasn't been stipulated, but it is assumed that it was built before 1598, when, according to one written record, the Turkish violence and plunder in this church happened.
7. The church of *St. Archangel Michael*, which is surrounded by the Necropolis with the stećak tombstones, is in the village Arandjelovo near Lastva, beneath the medieval town of Klobuk. It is 25 kilometres away from Trebinje. Arandjelovo is located on the territory of the medieval district Vrm, which was mentioned in the 10th century by tsar Constantine Porphyrogenetos as the city of Ormos (Vrm). During the restoration works in the church, the last archeological excavation process was done and on that occasion, the earlier archeological layers were found-the layers which testify the existence of the older cult place underneath the church in Arandjelovo. (Ševo, 2002: 180). The exact time of the building of this church cannot be stipulated, but most probably it was built at the end of the 16th century or at the beginning of the 17th century (Kajmaković, 1971: 365).
8. The monastery *Žitomislić* with the church dedicated to the *Annunciation*, is located on the road between Mostar and Čapljina, near the river Neretva. The piece of information about the renovation of the church in Žitomislić was found in the written order from 1566 which was issued by the Turkish civil judge from Nevesinje. The renovation was finished 1602-1603 according to the evidence, a signature of the master Vukašin on the capital of the pillar in the church. The inscription, above the entrance door of the naos, contains a piece of information which says that the painting of the church was finished in 1609, in the period when prior Sava lived in the monastery.
9. The monastery *Dobrićevo*, with the church dedicated to the *Presentation of Holy Mother at the Temple*, is between Trebinje and Bileća, in the village called Orah. The first original location of the monastery *Dobrićevo* was

on the right bank of the river Trebišnjica, about 20 kilometres upstream from Trebinje. Because of the construction of reservoirs for hydroelectric plant Bilećko lake, the monastery complex of buildings was relocated in 1964-1965. Rather significant and reliable data upon the building of the monastery were given by the results of the excavations which were done in 1964 during the relocation of the monastery. Below the existing church, the foundations of the very church building were found, probably dating back to the 14th century (Ševo, 2003: 57). According to the distinctive architectural elements, as well as the studying of the oldest layer of frescos, the time of building of the church in Dobrićevo belongs to the period of the early 16th century (Šuput, 1991: 67).

10. The monastery Zavala, with the church dedicated to Presentation of Holy Mother at the Temple, is located at the rim of Popovo field, beneath the mountain Ostrog (Ševo, 2002: 224). The oldest kept written document about Zavala from 1514 is actually the contract which refers to the sale of one vineyard to the monastery, and the name of the prior Serafion, who lived in the monastery at that time, is mentioned. The need for the renovation of the church in 1587 was recorded in the written order. The style, the manner of building and the construction system go in favour of the possibility that the current church was built in those years when the official written order was issued. The piece of information which says that the church was wall-painted by Georgije Mitrofanović in 1619, in the period when patriarch Pajsije governed, (Korać and Đurić. 1964: 581) contributes to suchlike conclusion.
11. The church of *St. Kliment*, which is known as Klimentica among local people, is 2 kilometres away from Trebinje in the north-west direction, in the Orthodox graveyard in the settlement Mostaći. This settlement makes the west suburbs of the biggest town in the south part of the Republic of Srpska (Ševo, 2002: 185). The inscription which is above the church entrance gives us a piece of information that the church was wall-painted in 1623, so it is assumed that this is the period of its building. (Miletić, 1954: 277).
12. The monastery *Duži* with the church dedicated to *Intercession of the Theotokos* is in the area of Trebinjska forest, in the south-west direction from Trebinje. It was mentioned only after the devastation of the monastery Tvrdoš in 1694. Earlier, on that place there was the parish church of St. Pantelejmon.

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