

March 2017

VISITING SOME ARCHIVES IN BANJA LUKA

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REPORT

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I. ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN THE FRANCISCAN MONASTERY OF BANJA LUKA

Our first visit was dedicated to the Archive of the Franciscan Monastery »Holy Trinity« in Petrićevac, banja Luka. We are guided by Velimir, aged 82, a professor emeritus for Divine Law. We spend more than two hours at this friendly place. Finally, we will have got an impression and are able to present the archive's characteristics.

THE OBJECTS. We are somehow astonished to realise the variety of cultural goods collected at this place:

Books

- **COMMENTED BIBLE**, Nikolaus de Lyra, Latin, 1472 – incunabula
The front- and endpages are missing. There is no binding, the sewing appears to be fragile. We find traces of adhesive tapes and of liquids on a number of folios. The book is preserved in a box made of carton.
- **REGISTER BOOKS.** The archive houses some dozens of register books. There is a corresponding typewritten list naming 26 titles. They derive from the parishes of Ivanjska (nr 1-16, 25), Vodičevo (nr 17), Stari Majdan (nr 18, 18a), Sasina (19-21, 24), Petrićevac (nr 23) and Rakovac (nr 22). The majority of these books giving information on local baptisms, marriages, and the deceased originate from the 18th and 19th c. Number 1, 2, 12, 13, 17, 18 und 18a are written, at least in parts, in Bosančica, whereas the others are kept in Latin.

The books we had the favor to see in this fund obviously had been restored in 2006 and 07 in Zagreb. They were digitised, occasionally. The quality of these b/w-images – according to what we have seen – does not meet today's quality criteria. These photographs are not indexed.

- **OTHER PAROCHIAL BOOKS.** In two armoires there are another dozens of books of different parochial purposes: documenting preachings, stole fees and the like. – These books are well preserved and in good condition.
- **QURAN**, Arabic, 32 x 25 x 7 cm, 1458 – manuscript

The codex offers a richly with gold illuminated incipit-page. The conservatory situation of the book is problematic, although earlier interventions are visible: some of the pages are pasted with transparent paper.

A remark on the inner side of the back cover testifies to the fact that this Quran has been acquired in Mostar in 1926.

- **QURAN**, Arabisch-Turkish – manuscript
This Quran offers the Aabic text and in an interlinear version the Turkish text. The script is carried out by a neat calligraphic hand.
- **HAFIZ**, Persian – manuscript
The manuscript is bound in leather and has a flap at its front side so as to keep the book closed and protected. The text is presented in both black and red ink, in one column, and in a noble layout.
- There is a not further specified number of other books in Arabic letters.

Archival documents

We did not have time or possibility to check all the documents which are kept at this place. Just to highlight three of them we have seen:

- **CHARTER**, Latin, 1754, from the Cathedral Chapter of Zagreb: »*Nos Capitulum Ecclesiae Zagrabensis ...*«.
- **LETTER**, Latin, 1699/1700, from an episcopal chancellery.
- **FERMANE** [decrees from the Turkish authorities], beginning in the 17th c.
A copy of 56 fermans (in Latin version) from the year 1903. The copies are arranged in a booklet, written in a tidy script. Incomplete at the beginning (the remnants of three folios visible) and at the end (the text is cut off in mid-sentence).

Paintings

We perceive a good number of paintings and pictures connected to this archive. These are stored in the two rooms wherever they could find some place. There is no systematic installation whatsoever.

Miscellaneous

On the floor we find deposited a range of other matters. Among them we can see a huge box containing ancient photographs at the side of several photographic albums.

SUGGESTION OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS

The suggestions hereafter may be conceived as a collection of ideas. It is quite clear that not all of them can be realised at once or in the moment.

I. GENERAL MEASURES

- 1.1 One could think of reorganising the whole archive in a physical sense. All the objects should be arranged according to their categories: a place for the books (two huge armoires are existing, bookshelves), a place for the paintings, for the photographs etc. Possibly, a number of objects have to be eliminated.
- 1.2 Connected to the reorganisation there is the necessity of inventorising every single object. Thus, each object gets its own singular and specific number. This is the moment to give answer to the question of what there really *is* in the archive.
- 1.3 This kind of reorganisation and inventorisation would be a substantial contribution to help protecting the cultural goods which are kept in this archive.

2. MEASURES TO ADDITIONALLY OPEN THE ARCHIVE

- 2.1 The most important instrument to disclose an archive is to document what there is. Thus, the key for everything else is the inventory list, the archive's table of contents.
- 2.2 All books housed in the archive could be recorded in a catalogue-like short description.
 - 2.2.1 Among the books there are the manuscripts claiming a prominent place. All the manuscripts are to be recorded and described in short according to the general standards.
 - 2.2.1 Now, there is the question which of the books would deserve being digitised. In my view, it is the register books which have to be considered, first of all. They retain the historical traces of individuals and families over the last three centuries. For many names in the region these books are potentially safeguarding a personal relationship. May be, that this does not seem very interesting in the moment for many people, but things may change after some years. However, this material has to be kept in evidence whatever the trends are or would be in future.

THE DIGITAL OPENING UP OF THESE REGISTER BOOKS CONSTITUTES A KEY CONTRIBUTION TO MAINTAIN CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE REGION.

All this could be realised in a pivotal cooperation with our institutions (Universities of Zadar and Graz), with students and trainees, etc.

- 2.3 The letters and the other archival documents could be easily digitised as well. Finally, everything depends on how much of this material would be available at place.
- 2.4 Ignoring the sales value of the paintings, it would be helpful to create a digital documentation of them.
- 2.5 The pile of photographs and the photographic albums in this archive confront us with a variety of questions conditioning further works: is it known *where* they were taken, and *when*, and *who* or *which objects* are depicted on them? Without knowing any of these aspects it would become difficult to make the photos searchable, and without information of that kind it would not make very much sense to just carry out digitisation. So, in view of the photographs everything depends on the reasonable availability of information.
- 2.6 Having once decided to digitise some objects or a group of objects in this archive the question of what to do with the created data would arise. Anyhow, it would not be sufficient to just digitise some objects and to give fundamental information on them – just to have it done. The results should be made known on websites and homepages. Only in this perspective any digitisation would prove to be helpful.

2. ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN THE EPISCOPAL ARCHIVE OF BANJA LUKA

On 28th of March, early in the morning we are going to visit this archive. There we are introduced by a Dr Pero [...] who is fluent in German. He has already prepared the books which most probably would interest us most: a handful of register books commencing with the foundation of this diocese in 1881/82. These books are of utmost importance since they preserve substantial information on documents which have been destroyed in the previous wars. It would be of main importance to have them digitised.

In the course of our conversation it becomes clear that there has not yet been done a kind of census of register books within the diocese. That is to say, it remains so far unclear how many of such books and at which places they actually have survived the cruel waves of history. We learn that respective information could be derived from the protocols of the bishop's visitations, after some research work. This seems to me a good start to gain an overview of what there is extant in the country – again a contribution to the protection of the written heritage which could help preventing further losses of core documents.

3. VISITING THE MONASTERY OF THE TRAPPISTS IN BANJA LUKA

This morning we once again try to get access to the archive of this monastery after our failure the day before. This archive is said to hold a number of documents keeping information on the history of various places of this diocese. But again, we cannot enter since we are late and the Trappist father in charge is not here any longer.

The question of finding open doors reminds us of a reality which appears delicate if not ambivalent. Entering the innards (e.g. the archive) of a monastery inevitably means to open a house for public, at least to some extent. In this case it might be considered to be in opposition with the spirituality and the philosophy of the order.

4. MEETING WITH FRA IVICA MATIĆ IN PRIJEDOR

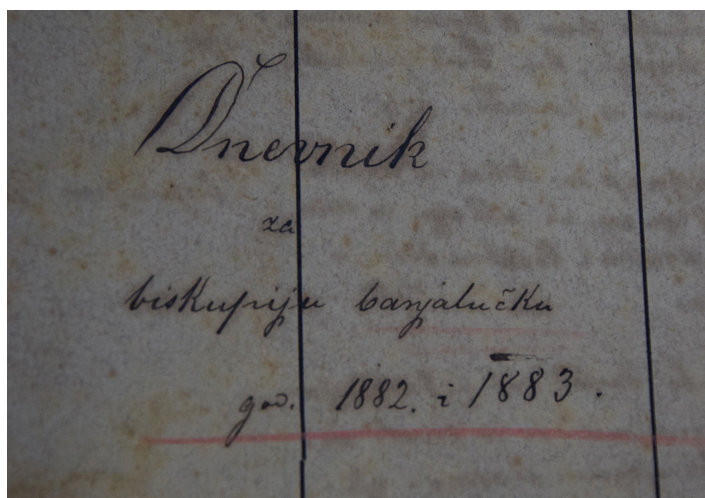
On our way to Bihać we stop at the catholic church »Sveti Josip« in Prijedor where we meet Fra Ivica. This is the person who has already digitised several register books in parishes where he had been responsible for pastoral care. We take a coffee and exchange experiences: technical questions on cameras, LEDs, and camera stands, etc. He has always been working with a selfmade stand. None of the data produced by Fra Ivica are available on the web, but he offers access via CDs – a highly passionate man with a much developed sense of history!

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5. GALLERY



Banja Luka, Franciscan Monastery: Nikolaus de Lyra, Commented Bible, 1472. Incunabula



Banja Luka, Diocesane Arhive: Register book, 1882-83



Banja Luka, Franciscan Archive: Register book, 1729 - 42
The book has been restored in 2006/07 in Zagreb.



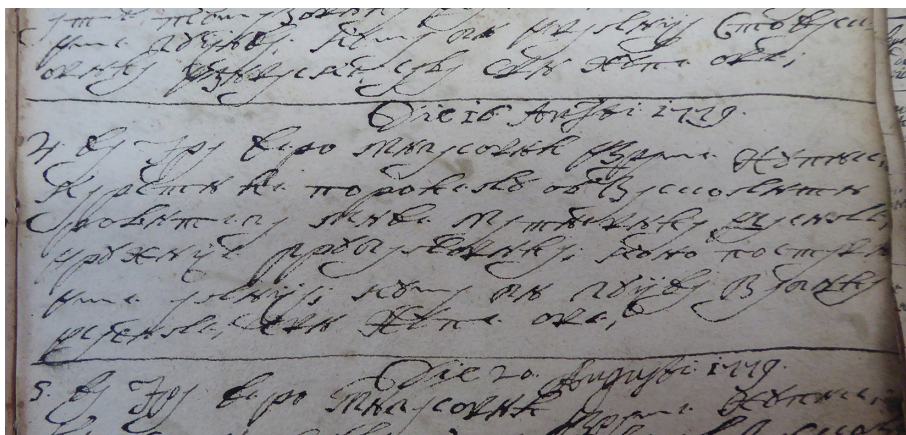
Quran, 1458, illuminated opening page
The book has been restored at an unknown date: they pasted transparent paper over the illuminations so as not to erase the colours and the gold.



Quran, 1458, sample of a standard text page
We can still see the adhesive tape in situ.



Hafiz, Persian



»Quia antecessens Liber huius Parochiae Staro-Majdanensis jam finem accepit, ...«
 [Text taken from the first page].
 Registerbook from Stari Majdan, sample of a text written in Bosančica, 1779



*Joachim, Anna and Maria. Oil painting, 40 x 32, 5 cm
Beneški mojster, 18th c.*

*The paintings in the Franciscan Archive of Petričevac/Banja Luka
have an inventory number.*