

ISLAMIC BUILDINGS AS A NEW CHALLENGE FOR CENTRAL EUROPEAN ARCHITECTS AT THE END OF THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

MAXIMILIAN HARTMUTH (VIENNA)

In 1889, the Viennese architect and engineer Ludwig Klasen published the eleventh volume of his manual *Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden aller Art* in Leipzig: *Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden für kirchliche Zwecke*. Part of a series intended to supply architects and engineers with plans and elevations of historical buildings, this volume dedicated to church architecture followed earlier volumes on dwellings and shops (I), restaurants and hotels (II), schools (III), hospitals (IV), markets and slaughterhouses (V), financial and industrial buildings (VI), clubs and theatres (VII), orphanages and other charitable buildings (VIII), government buildings (IX), and buildings for the sciences and the arts (X). Generously illustrated, these volumes were designed for practical use by architects and engineers who, confronted with a particular task, could consult the book as to how problems of form and function had been solved in the past.

Today Klasen's work seems to be most often utilized as a repository of drawings of plans and elevations of historical buildings, which its author reproduced from earlier works. This is also how I came across this series. What struck me as noteworthy browsing the volume devoted to religious buildings, however, is that it contains not only information on churches of the kind commonly built in German-speaking lands in the late nineteenth century and their historical precedents, but it also contains substantial chapters dedicated to the architectural planning and decoration of Orthodox churches, synagogues, and even mosques.

Here we should be reminded that since the Counterreformation in Central Europe harsh restrictions had been in force concerning the monumentality of non-Catholic buildings in Austrian lands. Laws had been implemented in order to visualize the supremacy of Catholicism over other confessions – a system remarkably similar to that of the Habsburg's Ottoman archenemy, in whose domain such restrictions applied to non-Muslims. Klasen's contribution was very timely, for it supplied ready models at a time when the old repressive system, softened as early as the 1780s, was finally disestablished. Even so, in Vienna the first Protestant church with a monumental belfry was erected only in the 1890s – and not in the city centre but in the recently incorporated suburban neighbourhood of Neu-Währing.

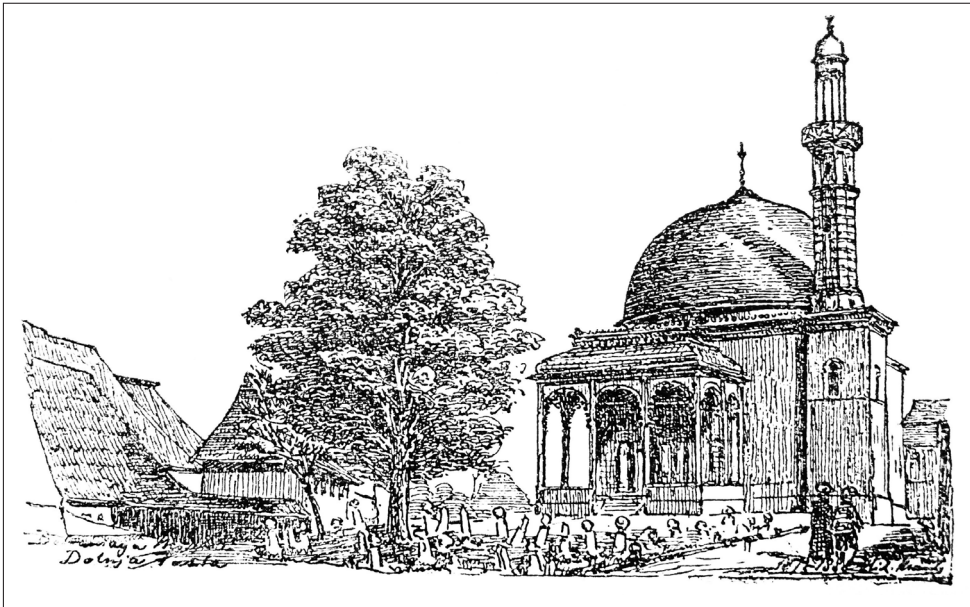
The inclusion of mosque architecture in Klasen's volume eleven was very probably related to the expansion of Habsburg territory to include Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878. Many young graduates from the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts were sent there to help transform towns like Sarajevo while communicating through orientaling façade decorations so that this would not preclude some sort of cultural continuity. Perhaps Klasen and his contemporaries also anticipated further expansion of Austria-Hungary (or Germany, for that matter) into Muslim territory, or he had noticed that places like the Ottoman capital or Cairo were becoming an increasingly attractive environment for work by foreign architects. Be this as it may, what is important is that Klasen thought that the design of Muslim buildings was a challenge architects of his day might be confronted with, and that his supplying of information on that matter might help the buyers of his book to master such challenge.

The three sections on non-Catholic religious architecture in the *Grundriss-Vorbilder* – Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish buildings – are unbalanced with regard to their chronological focus. In the first one there is almost an equilibrium between medieval buildings and those of Klasen's own day: the focus is on Russia, though recent buildings for Greek, Serb, and Russian communities in Trieste, Vienna, Dresden, and Wiesbaden are also considered and depicted. The section on synagogues is strongly focused on nineteenth-century buildings in German-speaking lands. In the section on mosques, which broadly follows the sequence "Arabs-Turks-Indians", the reader is presented with only two examples of recent mosque designs: the mosque designed for the Ottoman section of the 1867 Paris Exposition by Léon Parvillée and a little-known mosque just completed in the Bosnian town of Tuzla. Built according to design by the otherwise unknown architect "v. Michanovich", the small domed building is a curious juxtaposition of a typical Ottoman spatial arrangement overlaid with Mamluk and Moorish decoration. Klasen has little to say about it, but finds it distinguished by its "delicate architecture" and "tasteful colouration", which he thought invested it with an overall pleasant impression.

It is not known why Klasen did not include the 'modern' Ottoman mosques built during his lifetime, such as the ones at Aksaray, Dolmabahçe, Yıldız, and Ortaköy. All of these mosques were built prior to the publication of volume eleven of the *Grundriss-Vorbilder* and would have greatly benefited the book as regards the author's objective. Very probably, Klasen, who did not have a history of interest in things eastern, was simply not aware of them. It is not impossible that he merely included Islamic religious architecture so that his manual could claim to be exhaustive with regard to the diverse tasks with which German-reading architects might be confronted in the late nineteenth century. Still, the fact that Klasen thought that

mosque design might be one of these tasks, as a consequence of a new relationship with the Muslim world, seems well worth highlighting.

Ludwig Klasen: *Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden aller Art Abth. XI: Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden für kirchliche Zwecke: Handbuch für Baubehörden, Bauherren, Architekten, Ingenieure, Baumeister, Bauunternehmer, Bauhandwerker und technische Lehranstalten*. Leipzig: Baumgärtner's Buchhandlung, 1889.



Ill. 1. New Mosque and “Turkish cemetery” in “Dolnja-Tuzla”, reproduced from Ludwig Klasen: *Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden aller Art Abth. XI: Grundriss-Vorbilder von Gebäuden für kirchliche Zwecke: Handbuch für Baubehörden, Bauherren, Architekten, Ingenieure, Baumeister, Bauunternehmer, Bauhandwerker und technische Lehranstalten*. Leipzig: Baumgärtner's Buchhandlung, 1889, p. 1517; originally published in Paul Kortz: “Bericht über die Studienreise im Mai 1888”, in: *Wochenschrift des Österr. Ingenieurs- und Architekten-Vereines* XIII/36 (1888), pp. 321–327.