

**THE SELAMLUK IN VRANJE, PART II
ARCHITECTONIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STRUCTURAL
AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS**

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Abstract. *The complex of the Pašini konaci in Vranje, was built in the second half of the 18th century, and it is composed of two buildings. The pasha used to reside in the Selamluk with his entourage, while the Haremluk was a residence of the female part of the family. Due to the continuing use of these two buildings, their architectonic characteristics and historical environment were preserved to a great extent. Nowadays, the Selamluk and Haremluk have been declared the cultural property of great importance for Serbia.*

The first part of the paper about the Selamluk treated the genesis of spatial organization and architectonic form of the building on the basis of historical sources. This part analyzes the structural and decorative elements of the Selamluka in Vranje as a typical representative of the Balkan Oriental housing architecture. Cultural, historical, artistic and craftsmanship values, based on the material acquired during the field work, were discussed. The detailed study and comparative analysis of the Selamluk characteristics provided a contribution to understanding of specific values in the architectonic evaluation of town structures in this part of the Balkan peninsula.

Key words: *Pašini konaci, Selamluk, Vranje, Rauf Bey Džinoli, cultural monument of great importance, post-and-pan*

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Pašini konaci* complex in Vranje is composed by the *Selamluk*¹ and *Haremluk*,² which were, around 1765, built by the wealthy Rauf Bey Džinoli. According to the spatial plan of the town of Vranje of 1881, at the time when it was built [1], as well as nowadays, the *Selamluk* building was located next to a street, and the building of the *Haremluk* was situated behind it, in the same courtyard surrounded by a high fence. According to the testimony of elderly townsfolk, there was a skybridge between the buildings, used to pass from one building into another without going out into the courtyard. The bridge was dismantled in 1941, and its timber elements were destroyed during the years of war, since they were used as firewood [2].

The whole complex of the *Pašini konaci*, was in the 80's of the 20th century proclaimed the cultural monument of great importance, and situated at the heart of Vranje, in the block bounded by the Kralja Stefana Prvovenčanog, Pionirska, Radeta Končara and Cara Dušana streets. Until 2015, the *Haremluk* housed a business club of the Simpo company, while the *Selamluk* even nowadays houses the exhibition, administrative and storage facilities of the National Museum. It is a fact that from the construction, until nowadays, the continuing utilization of both buildings contributed to their relatively well preserved condition.

The first part of the paper about the *Selamluk* treated the genesis of spatial organization and architectonic form of the building on the basis of historical sources. This, the second part presents the research results of this specific type of functional organization and basic characteristics of the structural and decorative elements.

2. FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SELAMLUK

The *Selamluk* building is a one-storey building, of a regular rectangular layout with a setback central vertical above the entrance. The building covers the area of 255m². The staircase of three steps leads through the covered porch to the entrance of the building. The part of the floor above the porch is supported by three wood posts having cross section 16x16cm. The building is a typical representative of the symmetrical type, the arrangement of rooms at the ground floor is identical with the one at the first floor (Fig. 1-6).

The *Selamluk* represents a typical town residential house, of the oriental variety with the central arrangement.

The fundamental organization of space was achieved by grouping the rooms along the perimeter of the central area – hall, which in a house of this type has several functions. It is used for family gathering (which is one of the characteristics of a contemporary living room) as well as a communication hub which connects the residential rooms both vertically and horizontally. According to its characteristics, the *Selamluk* belongs to the variant of a central plan where the residential rooms are grouped from three sides around the centrally positioned hall, while the fourth side of the hall is open.

¹ A house or a portion of a Turkish house reserved for men

² A house or a section of a Turkish house reserved for women or private family life

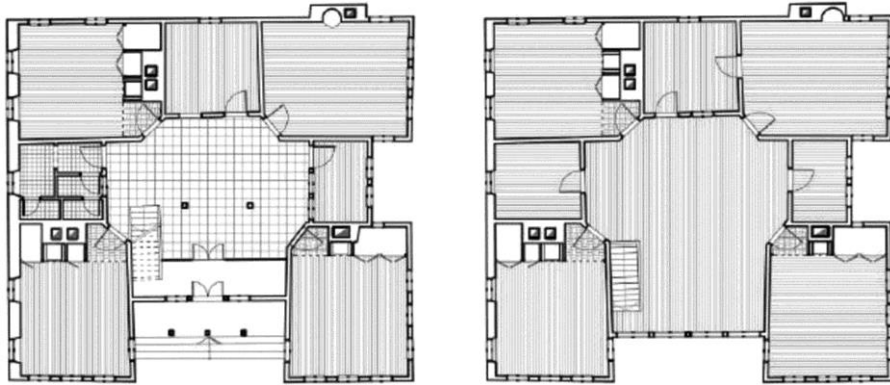


Fig. 1,2 Selamluk ground and first floor layout, A. Mirić



Fig. 3 South facade



Fig. 4 East facade



Fig. 5 North facade



Fig. 6 West facade

In terms of fixed furniture, these rooms were furnished as typically Muslim rooms for sleeping and living. Such type of the room could also accommodate *amandžik*³.

³ Turkish small home baths

Except for the level of decorations on the ceilings, the large rooms at the ground floor differ in terms of the height and treatment of entry doors. The doors were fitted on the inclined sections of wall joints in order to provide a lavish visual impression of the hall, and to efficiently use the room corners. The doors of two south rooms are higher, while the north-side rooms, those closer to the bath and on the side which once featured the skybridge between the buildings, were accessed through the 190 cm high opening. The north side rooms are 10 cm lower than the central hall. It is possible that these rooms were used as auxiliary rooms or for accommodation of less distinguished guests, while the west side rooms were more luxurious and earmarked for the higher standard of accommodation.

Large rooms, which, one atop another, occupy the north-east corner of the building do not have the characteristic niches with baths, stoves or closets; the ground floor one has a fireplace next to the northern wall, while the first floor room instead of the fireplace features a niche in the wall with another smoke duct which is filled in and which was in an intervention at a later date converted to a closet.

The attic can be accessed through the opening in the central hall at the first floor, which is active. In addition to this opening, on the ceiling of the north room on the floor there is an opening which is closed on the attic, probably during some of the previous rehabilitations of the structure.

3. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITION OF THE BUILDING STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

The *Selamluk* is a one-storey building, having a compact layout, without cellars or usable attic space.

In structural and technical terms, the building represents a typical valuable specimen of a variant design of secular oriental architecture on the Balkan peninsula, and it was built in special structural post-and-pan (box-frame) system (*bondruk* in Turkish). Such structural system, comprises assembly of a timber skeleton of a building, above the foundation zone, resembling a cage, or truss, and the walls are afterwards filled in using lightweight materials [3]. This construction method is very old, used all around the world, but it is well adapted to the available materials.

The foundations are made of stone, and the visible part of stone structure elevated about eighty centimeters above ground is made of regular dressed stones (fig. 7). Foundation beam, a timber beam laid along the foundation wall has the assumed cross-section dimensions of 17x17 centimeters and it is used to receive the load from the post-and-pan structure and redistribute it along the foundation zone. The joint of two foundation beams at the corners is mainly overlapping. The posts are fixed into the foundation beams by pegs. At the corners of the building, the posts were externally masked using decorative boards.

The south, east and north walls were built in post-and-pan system. The thickness of the plastered walls on the facade does not exceed 20cm with the exception of the west wall, which is at the ground level 50 cm wide, and made of stone, while at the level of the first floor, it is 36 cm thick.

The posts, columns, are wood, having approximate cross-sections of 14 x14 centimeters. These structural elements were set at a distance of around 90 centimeters (usually one and a half arshine) and mutually joined using horizontal timber elements –beams, forming rectangular boxes. At the places where the openings for doors and windows are located, the

posts were doubled, both for the mutual proximity of the openings and for the reasons of reinforcing the doors and windows structure. The posts on the porch have at their tops a shape resembling a capital, decorated with carved leaves of simplified geometrical form (Fig. 8). The photograph taken during rehabilitation of the west facade wall in the 70's of the 20th century, published in the first part of this paper, one may observe the timber cushions (short timber beams) where they are joined with the timber caps (see: A. Miric, G. Jovanovic, N. Kurtovic Folic, *Selamluk in Vranje, Part I, Architectonic form development based on historical sources*, Fig. 10).



Fig. 7 Dressed stones, ground level



Fig. 8 Post detail

The post-and-pan infill of the Selamluk probably consists of unfired bricks. This can be assumed based on the chronological and architectonic analogy with the Haremluk, which was fully rehabilitated during extensive revitalization works completed by the end of 1995. During the works, necessary sampling was performed on the building, whose results can be accepted as an assumption regarding the *Selamluk*, until the relevant sampling and opening of the structure are performed.

The floor and attic structures are made of timber joists laid over the beam having approximate cross-section dimensions 16/20cm at a mutual distance of one and half arshines. Usually the space between the joints was filled in with a mixture of mud and straw which served as in insulation, and whether it is the case with the *Selamluk* will be found out after the structural system has been probed.

The roof structure is made of timber, having multiple slopes, having a very complex structure with clearly identifiable later interventions, such as fitting in of two double hanging trusses. The roof cover is *ćeramida*⁴ (Turkish type of clay roofing tile) on roof boards.

The 1m wide eaves have the function of protecting the facades from the weather because of the lack of gutters. The rafters of the eaves are covered with the boards fitted at a right angle to the façade. The joints of the boards are sealed with the fillets, similar to the

⁴ Turkish type of clay roofing tile

way it was done in the interior, on the ceilings. At the corners of the building, the eaves are truncated (Fig. 9).

The chimneys are made of bricks, and the chimney caps are made as gable roofs covered with Turkish tile (Fig. 10).

Interior single staircase connects the ground floor and the first floor. The first three steps are made of dressed stone blocks, while the remaining 15 steps are made of wooden boards 3cm thick, supported by wooden beams of rectangular cross-section. The balustrade of the stairs is industrial stock, with no esthetic or craftsmanship values.

The floors of all large rooms (the rooms at the corners of the building), hearth-rooms and the hall on the first floor are made of the floorboards 10 to 15cm wide. The entrance part of the rooms is covered with masonry blocks having the 25x12cm format, while the hall in the ground level is made from the contemporary masonry blocks having 30x30cm format [4].



Fig. 9 Detail of eaves



Fig. 10 Chimney

The most important causes of deterioration of the *Selamluk* are the consequence of the long term dilapidation of material it is made of, primarily the timber which is the structural element of the walls and the roof, which in contact with the elements of different humidity swells, warps and rots. Also, the long impact of people reflected in the usage of the building for purposes it was not designed for, and subsequent interventions at building rehabilitation, by adding of new structural elements significantly alter the amount of load. Even though it can be assumed that the natural hazards affected the dilapidation of the *Selamluk* (such as the catastrophic earthquake which took place at the beginning of 20th century) there are no recorded data about their effects.

4. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS OF DECORATIVE ELEMENTS AND EQUIPMENT IN THE INTERIOR

The ceilings in the *Selamluk* are the decorative element which was paid the most attention. The hearth-rooms feature the simplest examples, the so called „*shishe tavan*“ [5], which are made of boards whose joints are covered with one profiled fillet. There is a slightly more

complex type, which is a ceiling which in addition to the lengthwise ones also has crosswise fillets, so that the entire surface is divided into square fields, similarly as the ceiling of the central hall on the first floor, which at the center has a floral rosette with 14 arms. The most complex type of ceiling is seen in the large rooms of the *Selamluk*. In the oriental architecture, it is called *gul tavan* (rose ceiling) which consists of two sections: the central one which is flat and higher, and the peripheral one which is for twenty centimeters lower. As a rule for this form, the central part is an octagon, with a rosette at the center, and geometrized, biomorphic infill around the rosette. Four corners which remain between the external perimeter of the square and the octagon are decorated using rectangular triangles of various decorative levels. Even though the forms are repetitive, each element is a unique handwork (Fig. 11-15).

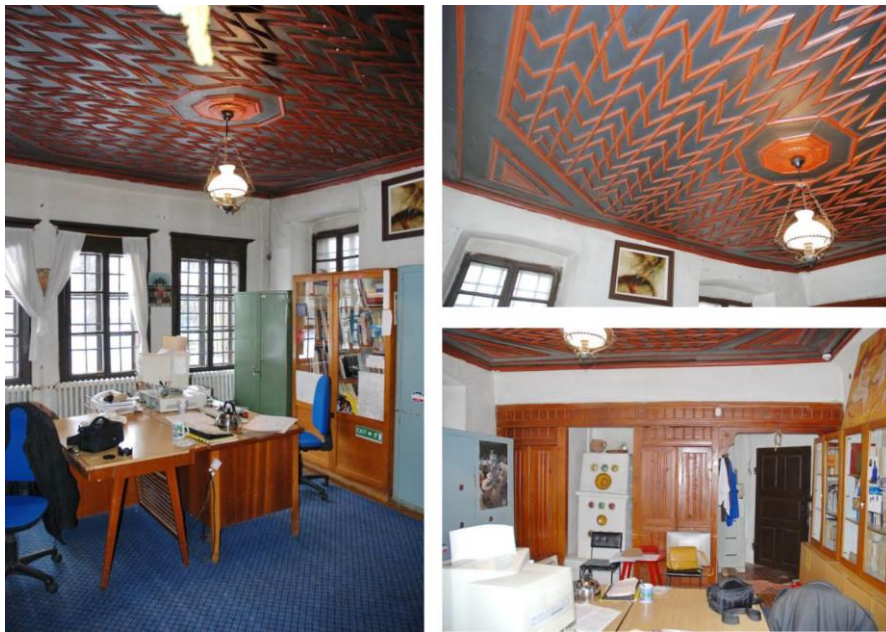


Fig. 11, 12 A general view and details of the southwest ground floor room.

The damage of lavish *gul tavan* structures at the ground and first floor can be seen in the broken fillets covering the joints of the boards, cracked boards and buckling and deflection of the boards and in lost decorative elements. All the ceilings are in two colors and they are painted with grease paints, which are in many places cracked and scaled. At the contact points with the upper zone of wet façade walls on the floor, rotting of external fillets and swelling of painted layer are noticeable.

The doors have one wing, with the exception of the entrance door which have two doors and a fanlight. The most typical and the oldest doors in the building are the wooden doors having oriental type infills with geometrical ornaments [6]. There is a characteristic motif in the upper square of the door, where the narrow fillets are laid in the form of a swastika. All the doors on the hall side have embroideries around the panel.

The *Selamluk* window frames are wooden. Insolation of the southeast and southwest corners of the structure is achieved with three windows, set in strip on the west side, and

with lateral windows on the east and west side. Northeast and northwest hearth-rooms have one, and the east one has two windows. Significant illumination of the windows was achieved with four windows along the entire south wall. The windows at the ground floor have approximate dimensions 95x150cm, and on the first floor 95x170cm, They have two wings and double panes, and the open outwards and inwards. Window wings are very simple, lined on the inner side with vertical and horizontal boards, with a goal to conceal the window frames and to prevent penetration of the cold air between the window frame and mullions. On the façade, on the top side, the windows have an embroidering lining at the level of the beam, and a small hood made of profiled fillets.

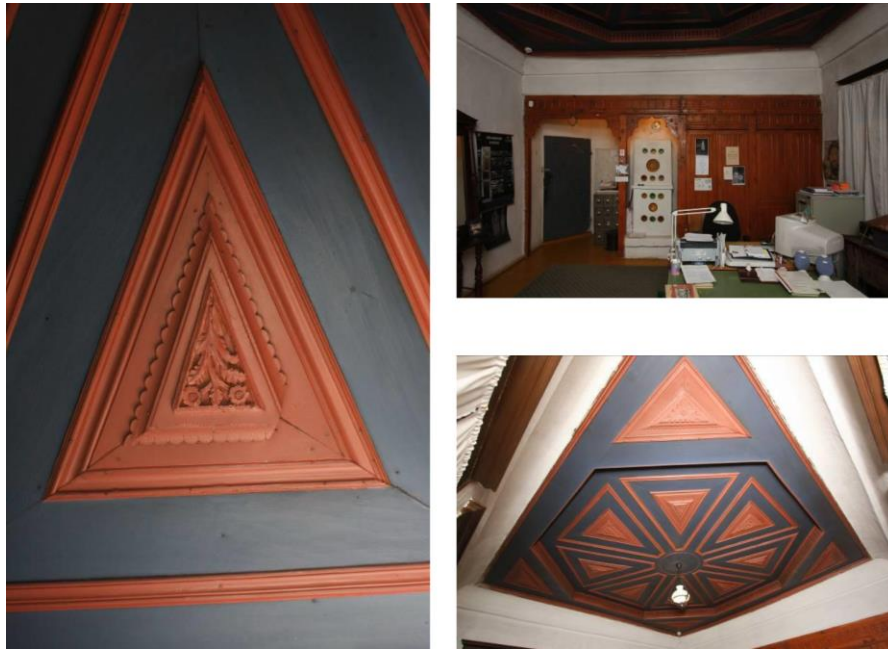


Fig. 13-15 A general view and details of the southwest first floor room

Doors, windows and other joinery is mostly not original, but even as such, it represents an important testimony of the conservation approaches and methods in the periods when the protection campaigns of the *Selamluk* were organized.

The closed doors are also a decorative element, but they are not authentic, but originating in the 50's of 20th century. They were made of low-quality machined timber. Vertical fillets divide them into regular areas having the width of 15 centimeters. The closet unit is visually connected to the partition, which in the form of an elongated arch separates the entrance to the room from the rest of the room.

The masonry stoves occupy one of the areas of the closet, and they have a very characteristic appearance. The pedestal of a cubic form tapers into a slightly narrower and truncated upper part. Numerous pieces of glazed earthenware were fitted into the stove. In addition to their high decorative value, the stoves emit immense heat, which is largely justified by a large number of windows, and by the fact that the walls of the *Selamluk* are very thin [7].

5. COMPOSITION AND TREATMENT OF THE FACADES

The concept of spatial organization of the central plan is reflected in the composition of the main, south façade, which is completely symmetrical in relation to the vertical and horizontal axes, with the exception of the entrance section. The entrance is composed of two wing doors, geometrically divided, with the fanlight and one window on each side. Above the entrance, there is a façade bearing wall with four windows in a timber frame, which run along the entire length of the central hall on the first floor and provide bright illumination of the space. The windows have wooden muntins which divide the pane into nine small panes, which makes this part of the façade, with the entrance porch at the ground level, a very prominent central motif of the building front. On either side of the setback central part, with the entrance porch at the ground level and glazed wall on the first floor, there are shallow wings with the rooms. At the ground and first floor, there are three windows. Above all windows, having two wings and being divided into three panes, there are flat boards covering the lintel, covered by the simply profiled fillets. The full symmetry also characterizes the lateral, east façade, which has narrower setback central part accommodating the hearth room. In that part of the façade, there are two windows at the ground level and the floor. On the wings, there are three windows constructed in the same way as the front ones. Up the north façade, and projecting outside the layout of the façade, there is a chimney with two ducts, *kafe-odžak*, of the north east rooms. At the level of plinth on the north and west façade, there is a discreet difference of the horizontal level in relation to the wall plane (Fig. 3- 6).

Around the perimeter of the entire building, the upper floor is delineated from the ground floor with a timber beam which marks the level of floor structure and represents a visual contrast in comparison with the white painted walls. This delineating feature makes the entire building generally elongated, in terms of architectonic form. The monolithic quality of the *Selamluk* facades are broken by timber verticals which accentuate only the corners of building. It is, in fact a board lining concealing the bearing wooden posts. The way of treatment of the façade, the combination of white plastered walls and dark vertical and horizontal wooden division elements is typical for post-and-pan architecture in the entire Balkan region.

The roof of the *Selamluk* has a gentle pitch, and it is covered with Turkish tile. The walls are protected from the weather water by the wide projecting eave which, creating a deep shadow on the facades, emphasizes its horizontality.

Good rhythm of the openings, as a consequence of the logical arrangement of the rooms and the structure and the calm wall masses create an impression of a well balanced aesthetics of the building.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *Selamluk* is a cultural monument of great importance, one the rare remaining buildings of the Balkan variety of the Oriental architecture of the secular type in this area. The importance of the building is even higher for the fact that the *Haremluk* has been preserved on the same property lot, as a part of the ambient entity. Even though the authenticity of the area is compromised, and the value of the monument as a whole is reduced because of the contemporary town planning arrangement of the immediate environment, and because of the assimilation of the courtyard shared by the buildings, it is a fact that by virtue of formation of a small plaza in front of the *Selamluk* and by construction of a fence wall, this area has been physically and symbolically separated from the environment.

Regardless of the degree of devastation, and prior architectonic interventions, almost all important decorative elements in the interior have been preserved in the authentic geometry, which represents both a potential source of information important for the understanding of architectonic characteristics of the age it belongs to and a potential to reconstruct the *Selamluk* and restore it to the original splendour and lavishness through analysis and analogy.

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SELAMLUK U VRANJU, DRUGI DEO ARHITEKTONSKE KARAKTERISTIKE KONSTRUKTIVNIH I DEKORATIVNIH ELEMENATA

Kompleks Pašinih konaka u Vranju, sagrađen u drugoj polovini 18. veka, čine dve zgrade. U Selamluku je boravio paša sa svojom svitom, dok je u Haremluku živelo ženski deo porodice. Zahvaljujući kontinuitetu upotrebe obe zgrade, u značajnoj meri su sačuvane njihove arhitektonske karakteristike i istorijski ambijent. Danas su Selamluk i Haremluk proglašeni za kulturna dobra od velikog značaja za Srbiju.

U prvom delu rada o Selamluku obrađena je geneza prostorne organizacije i arhitektonske forme građevine na osnovu istorijskih izvora. U ovom, drugom delu rada, analizirani su konstruktivni i dekorativni elementi Selamluka u Vranju kao tipičnog predstavnika stambene balkanske arhitekture orijentalnog tipa. Razmatrane su kulturne, istorijske i umetničko- zanatske vrednosti na osnovu građe prikupljene na terenu. Kroz detaljnu studiju i komparativnu analizu karakteristika Selamluka dat je doprinos razumevanju specifičnih vrednosti i arhitektonskoj valorizaciji varoških građevina na prostoru ovog dela Balkana.

Ključne reči: *Pašini konaci, Selamluk, Vranje, Rauf Beg Džinoli, spomenik kulture od velikog značaja, bondruk, đul tavan*