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Wooden Mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract
Sacred buildings (mosques and churches) built of wood are among the best examples of traditional (vernacular) architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With their architectural and spatial characteristics, construction and materialization, these buildings perfectly clearly connect the natural and social environment and man into a unique synergistic whole. Being small in size and built of material that was literally 'at hand', these buildings testify to a man who 'understands his place in nature' and expresses his respect for God. Wood is one of the natural materials with which man first began to build. From the Late Stone Age (4500-2000 BC) to the Early Iron Age (around 1000 BC), man built individual houses and entire settlements of wood, above water (houses on pylons in the water, 'sojenice'). Access bridges, pylons for founding buildings in waterbeds (rivers, lakes, seas) and buildings as a whole were built of wood. In some historical periods (the colonization of North America, for example), wood was a key building material for fast and relatively cheap construction, from individual buildings, family estates (ranches), bridges to entire cities. By designing laminated wood, wood becomes a 'modern' material with completely new performance (especially high constructive performance) that can be compared with the performance of reinforced concrete and steel. In addition, wood becomes the basic raw material for the production of effective thermal insulation and sophisticated materials (in combination with other materials) used in the materialization of the outer (and inner) final layer of building envelopes. With all that, wood remains a 'natural material' that never ends up as waste that would burden the natural environment.

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1. Introduction

In architecture, wood is used to make the basic structure of the building (vertical, horizontal and inclined supports), making opening elements, materializing the final layer of all surfaces (floors, ceilings, walls), making built-in and movable furniture, making various artificial materials based on wood, covering roofs (in traditional architecture). Such a wide application is the result of the good properties of wood: high strength (in relation to its volumetric mass), low thermal conductivity (λ), resistance to frost, resistance to chemical influences, easy workability [1] ... However, wood also has its weaknesses, which are the result of its organic nature: susceptibility to rot, hygroscopicity, anisotropy of the structure, combustibility ... Considering the degree of technological processing, wood is used in construction in three basic forms: Ordinary timber obtained by mechanical wood processing; in this form, the products retain all the authentic properties of natural wood, wood products created in somewhat more complex technological processes in which certain properties of wood are used extremely rationally (veneers, plywood, panel boards, laminated wood, etc.), wood-based products obtained through complex physical-chemical technological processes; here, in fact, wood waste is used (shavings, shavings, bark, etc.), where in combination with a certain binder (organic or mineral) quite high-quality materials with specific properties are created (durisol, heraclite, chipboard, hardboard, etc.).

All of the above wood products are obtained from wood from nature. Of the three basic parts of a tree in nature (root, trunk, crown), the trunk is mainly used for construction purposes. In the case of deciduous trees, however, the tree is usually not usable in its entire height in a technical-construction sense, but only the trunk (the part of the tree from contact with the ground to the first major branch). In conifers, however, the entire tree is usable for technical and construction purposes, from the point of contact with the ground to a diameter of 7 cm without bark. The quality of timber mainly depends on the geometric characteristics of the tree (trunk). With regard to its use in construction, the most important are the following broadleaved trees: oak, beech, ash, walnut, maple, acacia and poplar [1]. Wood is used in architecture (and in construction in general) in the materialization of all its physical segments: the basic structural system, envelopes, the construction of floors, ceilings and wall coverings, and the production of furniture. For each of these important places, wood must have appropriate performance, which is tested (verified) and for which certificates (attests) of the validity of the wood are obtained. The mechanical properties of wood, with regard to its place of application, are as follows: compressive strength parallel and perpendicular to the grain, bending strength, tensile strength parallel and perpendicular to the grain, shear strength, hardness and impact strength. All of the above properties have different values, both in relation to the observed direction and for individual types of wood, and its moisture content. The standard strength of wood is determined at a moisture content of 15%. The bending strength of wood (f_b) is tested only in relation parallel to the grain (since wood in structures only acts in this way), on samples measuring 20/20/320 mm (5 pieces) or 50/50/800 mm (3 pieces). The shear strength of wood (f_τ) is tested for cases parallel and perpendicular to the grain. The greatest practical significance is the shear strength parallel to the grain, which is 3-4 times lower than the shear strength perpendicular to the grain. It is usually 1/10 to 1/8 of the compressive strength parallel to the grain [1]. The hardness of wood varies for different types of wood. It is proportional to the density and inversely proportional to the moisture content of the wood. This property is tested on samples measuring 50/50/150 mm (5 pieces) or 30/30/20 and 50/50/30 mm, if the hardness test is performed only on cross-sections. With regard to hardness, we distinguish five classes of wood: 1. very soft wood (indentation force P = 3.5 kN), 2. soft wood (P = 3.51 to 5 kN), 3. medium-hard wood (P = 5.1 to 6.5 kN), 4. hard wood (P = 6.51 to 10 kN) and 5. very hard wood (P > 15 kN). Impact strength represents the nominal ratio of the work (A) performed by a weight dropped from a certain height onto a horizontally placed sample and the surface area on which the sample falls (A_0). The test is performed in a standardized manner. The durability of wood is the persistence of the good properties of wood during the period of exploitation. From the previous presentation, we saw that wood is durable if it is in conditions of constant properties, i.e. if it is constantly in the air or constantly in water. When we say in the air, we mean that the wood is protected from contact with water (moisture), and that it is exposed to permanent air currents. Wood is more durable in fresh water than in sea water. However, if the wood changes its environment (water - air and vice versa), i.e. if the wood in open air conditions receives moisture (from a neighboring structure or from the atmosphere), it quickly decays under the influence of various fungi and microorganisms. Different types of wood have different durability. Under the influence of chemical influences, wood behaves differently: weaker, less concentrated solutions of acids and salts generally do not harm the wood, while stronger acids (phosphoric and sulfuric, for example) lead to the degradation (charring) of the wood. To protect wood from rotting, various preparations, antiseptics are used, for example: aqueous solutions of sodium fluoride (NaF), copper sulfate ($CuSO_4$), zinc chloride (ZnCl), ivy chloride (HgC_{l2}), blue stone ($CuSO_4/5H_2O$, tar oils, tar from wood and coal, bitumen, creosote, carebolinium (...), i.e. substances that do not dissolve in water. Treating wood with antiseptics can be: surface, by soaking in a hot-cold process. In case the wood is already attacked by insects, various insecticides are used to prevent its further deterioration (for example: hexachloran, chlorpicrin, for example). Various preparations (antipyrins) are used to protect the wood, which are applied to and in the wood during some of the above procedures. Such agents are boric acid (H_3BO_3), ammonium sulfate phosphate (NH_4PO_4), for example. The fire-fighting effect of these preparations is that, after contact with fire, they create a protective membrane around the wood that prevents the flow of oxygen [1]. Bosnia and Herzegovina is rich in forests, and the exploitation and processing of wood is traditionally one of the most important economic sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. Examples of traditional (vernacular) wooden architecture in the world

Along with earth (adobe) and stone, wood is one of the materials that man has used continuously in architecture, from prehistory to the present day. In addition to its wide availability in some parts of the world, wood has extraordinary physical and mechanical properties that have given it a place in materialization in architecture, from its basic construction to the treatment of its surfaces both in the exterior and in the interior, the creation of new concepts of thermal insulation and modern composite materials to fine details in the decoration of the interior, including furniture. Wood is a renewable material and environmentally friendly to the extent that it can never be treated 'as waste', even after multiple uses in architecture. Moreover, its multiple use (visible in its 'age') gives constructions a special charm, since the wood expresses 'its memory' as a special type of embodied energy by its appearance. The examples given below confirm this.

Lakshana Devi Temple in Bharmour (India) is a Hindu temple in Himachal Pradesh (geographic coordinates: 32°26′32.31″N 76°32′14.58″E, elevation: 2185 m). The temple is from the post-Gupta period (the Gupta Empire was an Indian empire during the Classical period of the Indian subcontinent that existed from the mid-3rd century to the mid-6th century CE), dedicated to Durga in her form of Mahishasura-mardini. (Durga is a major Hindu goddess, worshipped as a major aspect of the mother goddess Mahadevi. She is associated with protection, strength, motherhood, destruction and warfare). The temple dates back to the second half of the 7th century and is partly one of the oldest surviving wooden temples in India [2]. The temple is the oldest surviving structure of the former capital of Bharmour, also called Bharmaur, Barmawar, Brahmor or Brahmapura in historical texts. Its roof and walls have been repaired over the centuries. The Himachal Hindu community has preserved its carved wooden entrance, interior and ceiling, which reflect the high artistry of the late Gupta style

and era. The design and inscription in the late Gupta script beneath the brass metal statue of the goddess in its sanctum attest to its antiquity. The wooden carvings include motifs and themes of Shaivism and Vaishnavism (Figure 1).

Source: https://hindutemples-india.blogspot.com/2023/03/lakshana-devi-temple-bharmour-temple.html, Accessed: 8 May 2025.

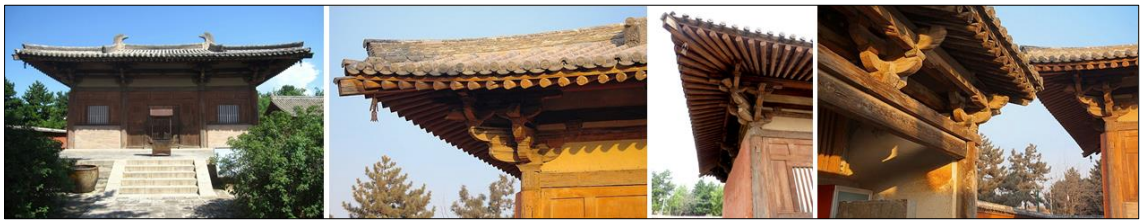
Fig 1: Lakshana Devi Temple in Bharmour (India)

Kōfukuji is a Buddhist temple that was once one of the powerful Seven Great Temples in the city of Nara, Japan (geographic coordinates: 34°41′00″N, 135°49′52″E, Elevation: 97 m). The temple was founded in Nara at the same time as the capital in 710 [3,4]. At the height of the Fujiwara's power, the temple complex consisted of over 150 buildings. The temple is the national headquarters of the Hossō school. Kōfuku-ji was founded in 669 by Kagami-no-Ōkimi, the wife of Fujiwara no Kamatari, in order to help her husband recover from an illness. Its original site was in Yamashina, Yamashiro Province (present-day Kyoto). In 672, the temple was moved to Fujiwara-kyō, the first planned Japanese capital that copied the orthogonal grid pattern of Chang'an. In 710, the temple was dismantled for the second time and moved to its present location, on the east side of the newly built capital, Heijō-kyō, present-day Nara (Figure 2).

Source: https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image?phrase=kofuku+ji+temple+nara, Accessed: August 5, 2023.
Source: https://truejapantours.com/w011/, Accessed: August 5, 2023.

Fig 2: Kōfukuji Buddhist Temple and the five-story Hōryū-ji pagoda-Buddhist temple in Ikaruga, Nara (Japan, 607)

Nanchan Temple is a Buddhist temple located near Doucun City on Mount Wutai, Shanxi, China (geographic coordinates: 38°42′04″N, 113°06′50″E, Elevation: 836 m). Nanchan Temple was built in 782 during the Tang Dynasty of China, and its Great Buddha Hall is currently the oldest surviving wooden building in China, as wooden buildings are often prone to fire and other destruction. Nanchan Temple is not only an important architectural site, but also contains an original set of artistically important Tang sculptures dating from the period of its construction. Seventeen sculptures share the interior space of the hall with a small stone pagoda. Nanchan Temple is part of the larger Mount Wutai complex, a sacred Buddhist mountain that was (in 2009) listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site [5] (Figure 3).



Source: https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Wutai, Accessed: August 5, 2023.
Source: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/461126449316745459/, Accessed: August 5, 2023.

Fig 3: Nanchan Temple, Wutai (China, 782)

"The wooden churches of southern Little Poland represent outstanding examples of the different aspects of medieval church-building traditions in Roman Catholic culture (geographic coordinates: 49°37′50.24″N, 21°11′10.00″E, Elevation: 309 m). Built using the horizontal log technique, common in eastern and northern Europe since the Middle Ages, these churches were sponsored by noble families and became status symbols. They offered an alternative to the stone structures erected in urban centres" [6].

Source: https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/gps-cs-s/AC9h4nrRHO1_cGTfZpe5lEVgUsQftiz05Ux7tQDoTUhn5K2XorzMDECXhWsJt3Dd-kB8nSsMVkgRbPOiRtZ6QsO2p0RohiQVAF29CvxyIBcmcoIhhFPZ9yYyXpviVM_WD052FYpDM=w544-h306-k-no Accessed: May 5, 2025.
Source: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1053, Accessed: May 5, 2025.

Fig 4: Saints Philip and James Church, Sękowa (Poland)

The Omo sebua is a traditional house style of the Nias people of Nias Island, Indonesia. They are built only for the homes of village chiefs (geographic coordinates: 1°11′32.16″N, 97°28′23.27″E, Elevation: 209 m). Located in the center of the village, the omo sebua are built on massive wooden posts and have high roofs [7]. Nias culture, with its former frequent warfare between villages, made the omo sebua design impregnable to attack. The only access to the houses is through a narrow staircase with a small door above. The steeply pitched roofs can reach heights of 16 meters. In addition to providing strong defense against enemies, the omo sebua has proven resistance to earthquakes (Figure 5).

Source: https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipM6uS-s33kKK1rMVwBadaf7piC6T42E-LZv0Qne=h720, Accessed:May 8, 2025.
Source: https://www.visitniasisland.com/nias-culture-gallery/, Accessed: May 8, 2025.

Fig 5: Traditional house (Nias Island House) in Indonesia (1892)

Tana Toraja (also known as Toraja) is a region in South Sulawesi, Indonesia (geographic coordinates: 2°59′59.99″N, 120°00′00″E, Elevation: 1040 m). It is a landlocked regency and is known for its Toraja homes (Tongkonan) and traditional funeral ceremonies [8]. The Toraja are an ethnic group indigenous to a mountainous region of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, called Tana Toraja, which translates as "Land of Toraja". Before the 20th century, most Toraja people lived in autonomous villages, and the vast majority practiced animism, the belief in the existence of individual spirits that inhabit natural objects and phenomena. The tongkonan is the traditional house of the Toraja people. The roof is curved like a boat, and consists of a bamboo structure (Figure 6).

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g317108-d8481790-Reviews-Kete_Kesu_Village-Rantepao_South_Sulawesi_Sulawesi.html, Accessed: May 8, 2025.

Fig 6: Toraja Village in Indonesia

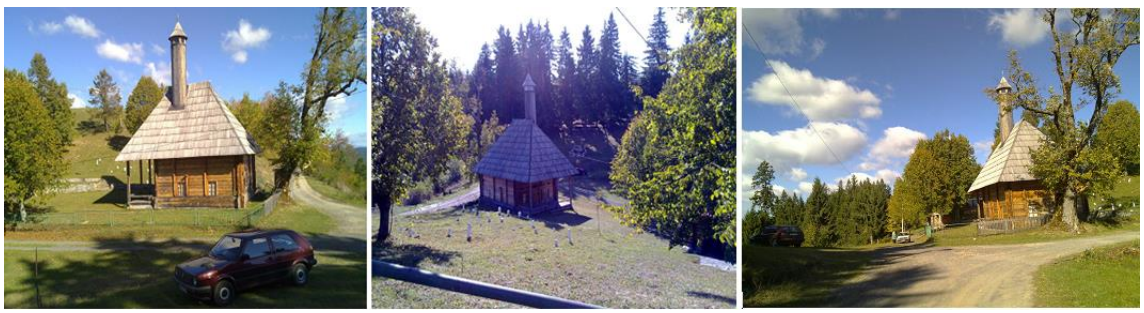
3. Examples of mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina built of wood

Wooden mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina represent a significant architectural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. About 30 of them were registered, while 786 were registered with a wooden minaret. At the beginning of the 21st century, there were less than 10 of them. In addition to houses [9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21], sacred buildings were also built from wood - log churches and wooden mosques [9,10]. In the way wood is used and its design, wooden mosques in Bosnia are connected to folklore architecture. Most of them were built from logs, by hewing round logs (logs). They were mostly built in villages, which were spared from outside influences. The wooden minaret is a characteristic element of the mosque and is usually placed in the right part of the roof. It consists of a middle wooden mast and edge pillars that form a polygon, supported on a wooden base of about 1.5 x 1.5 meters. A wooden spiral staircase is placed around the mast leading to the gallery, which can be open or closed.

The mosque in the Karici village on the slopes of the Zvijezda Mountain, in the municipality of Vares, is one of the most famous and most visited villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina (geographical coordinates: 44º06'20.28"N, 18º22'22.57"E, altitude: 1127 m). The mosque was built by a certain Hajdar dede Karić, during the administration of the Ottoman Empire [20]. This information is communicated by the text carved into the log above the entrance to the mosque and highlighted in black

"Hajdar dedo Karic built it
this mosque in the time of Sultan Fatih.
It was last burned down in 1993, rebuilt in July 2001."

In accordance with the mountain environment, the mosque is built of hewn pine logs, and is covered with shingles made of fir wood. In this locality we see a rarely seen harmony of the natural environment and the work of man. A natural glade with a dense conifer forest is the frame in which the inner courtyard ('harem') of the mosque is built, the building of the mosque (built of pine logs from the surrounding forest), trees planted by human hands (now huge trees) inside the mosque courtyard, a cemetery with niches that impress with their antiquity (inside the mosque courtyard) and an endless view in the direction of Sarajevo... The mosque in the Karici village near Vares can be reached from various directions, and along each of along the access roads, we find typical mountain fountains with wooden troughs. Water was brought to the harem of the mosque in the Karici village, and a modest fountain was built alongside the building of the complex's accompanying facilities. Next to the mosque is a large cemetery that dates back to the time of the Ottoman Empire (Figure 7).

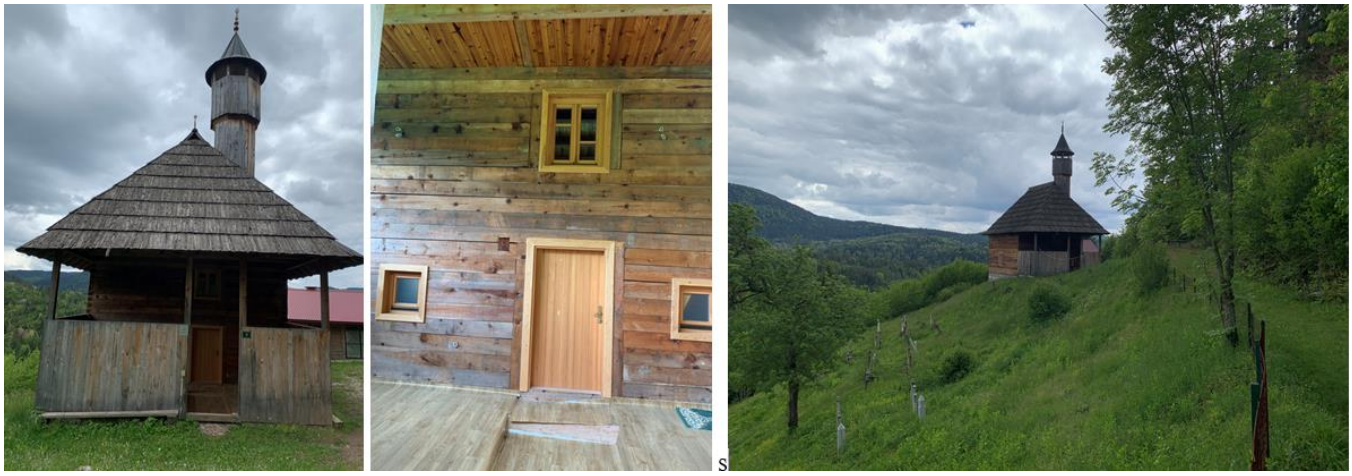


Source: Author (October 16, 2011)

Fig 7: Mosque in the Karici village near Vares

The old wooden mosque in the Miljevici village is located about 12 km east of Olovo - the center of the municipality (geographic coordinates: 44º07'47.55"N, 18º40'35.99"E, altitude: 829 m). The Miljevici village is about 8 km east of the settlement of Olovske Luke, and is a hamlet of a larger settlement - Gurdici. The mosque was built during the rule of

the Ottoman Empire (1598), but there is no concrete evidence of this, except for folk tales. It was renovated in 1936. In 1992, during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was set on fire and burned to the ground. It was renovated in 2013. The mosque belongs to the type of wooden mosques with an open porch, a steep hipped roof and a wooden minaret. The external dimensions are 10.60 x 7.00 meters. Around the mosque there is a smaller harem with about twenty niches, of which two niches have an inscription written in Arabic script. In the autumn period, a solemn prayer ('mevlud') is organized in the mosque. The mosque was declared a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina [22] (Figure 8).



Entrance facade of the mosque

Details of the mosque's construction

The mosque and a "living room" facility (tavern) with a fountain

The “qibla wall” of the mosque (mihrab, pulpit and pulpit-cursor)

Wooden staircase ('basamaci') leading to the gallery ('mahfil') of the mosque

Wooden staircase ('basamaci') for the exit to the attic space from the gallery

View of the gallery ('mahfil') from the central prayer area

Source: Author (May 17, 2025)

Arrangement of the "living room" (tavern) in the building next to the mosque

View of the mihrab and the mimber from the gallery ('mahfil')

Fig 8: Wooden mosque in the Miljevici village near Olovo

The wooden mosque in the Priluk village near Zivinice is located near Lake Modrac (geographic coordinates: 44º28'11.60"N, 18º31'58.55"E, altitude: 220). The mosque is one of the 4 remaining wooden mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 9). In the inscription found in the mosque carved on the wall of the mihrab, on the fifth talpa from the bottom, Sheikh Hasan and Sheikh Mustafa are named as the builders. Through archival documents and research, these two sheikhs were identified as the Tuzla captain Hasan and the military effendi Mustafa from the Tuzla fortress. Both of these personalities occupy an important place within the Sufi tradition. The mosque was built in 1735 on a property that had the status of Imperial Has, and which was managed by Tuzla captains Tuzlici, whose

progenitor was the Priluka vakif Sheikh Hasan, and whose secular name was Derviš Hadzi Hasan-beg Osmanpasic. Sheikh Hasan was the son of the famous grand vizier Topal Osman Pasha, who, as serasker, died in the Ottoman-Persian war in 1733. After his death, his son Hasan built a wooden mosque on the property he managed. He was the progenitor of Tuzlic, who provided captains in the Tuzla captaincy from the founding of this captaincy (around 1730) until its abolition around 1835. The mosque was originally covered with wooden shingles until 1927, when the shingles were replaced by tiles. The front entrance of the mosque was added in 1968. Recently, due to the obsolescence and rotting of the foundations, the mosque was reconstructed, but it remained the same appearance as in 1735. The wooden mosque in the village of Priluk was declared a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina [23]. According to the shape of the base, the wooden mosque in Priluk belongs to the type of wooden mosques with a rectangular base, and according to the concept of spatial organization, to the type of wooden mosques with a front mahfil. The external dimensions of the mosque are about 7.05 x 12.27 meters. The entrance area - the porch (dimensions about 3.20 x 6.85 meters) built on the northwest side of the building and the central prayer area (external dimensions about 6.80 x 8.50 meters) form one building unit connected by a steep hipped roof. In the harem complex there are also 145 oak trees, belonging to the quercus genus. These trees represent one of the few remaining reserves, which has been preserved from the rich oak forest complex that once existed in the Spreca river valley. The mosque in Priluk is characterized, among other things, by beautifully crafted motifs in the interior of the mosque on the mihrab, minbar, wooden column, entrance portal and other elements, which stand out with their special ornamentation, strong spirituality, and originate from the time the mosque was built. All these elements are authentic. The history of Priluk is also reflected in the harem itself, which is located in the courtyard of the mosque. The tombstones and inscriptions on them date from the 15th century, and there are tombstones that, by their shape and inscription, indicate that they could be even older. In the soil layers, there are also tombstones from the early Ottoman period, given that the census in the Ottoman defter from 1533 mentions Muslims in Priluk. In addition to the inscriptions on the sights, details of weapons, sheikh turbans, dervish purses, čatal turbans, maces, holsters, swords, scimitars, sabers, as well as details of various mysterious objects are carved, which all together speak of a rich spiritual and ideological life in the past in this climate. Until 1998, five daily prayers ('namaz') were held in this mosque.

Mosque built from oak logs taken on site

Around the mosque, in the oak forest, there is an old cemetery from the time of the Ottoman Empire and a new cemetery

Entrance (northwest) facade of the mosque


View of the mosque from the west


Southeast facade of the mosque


Southwest facade of the mosque


Abdesthana in the entrance hall of the mosque


Left: 'Qibla wall' - chair ('curs'), mihrab and mosque niche. Right: Mosque mihrab

Mimber of the mosque

View of the gallery (mahfil) from the ground floor of the mosque

Wooden stairs from the ground floor to the gallery ('mahfil') made of carved oak beams

Wooden stairs to the attic space from the gallery ('mahfil') of the mosque

View from the gallery ('mahfil') of the main prayer area on the ground floor of the mosque

Detail of the mosque's construction: stone foundations and walls made of hewn oak logs


Left: The central pillar supporting the gallery ('mahfil') of the mosque. Right: The central pillar and main beam supporting the roof of the mosque. This pillar is in the same axis as the pillar in the landscape supporting the gallery ('mahfil')


Construction and final finishing of the mosque ceiling

Left: Entrance door to the mosque. Right: Door from the entrance hall to the main prayer area of the mosque on the ground floor


Left: window on the ground floor of the mosque. Right: window on the gallery ('mahfil')

Source: Author (May 10, 2025)

Left: Floor of the mosque on the ground floor made of hewn oak beams. Right: Bosnian carpet in the entrance hall of the mosque

Fig 9: The old wooden mosque in the Priluk village near the poultry houses

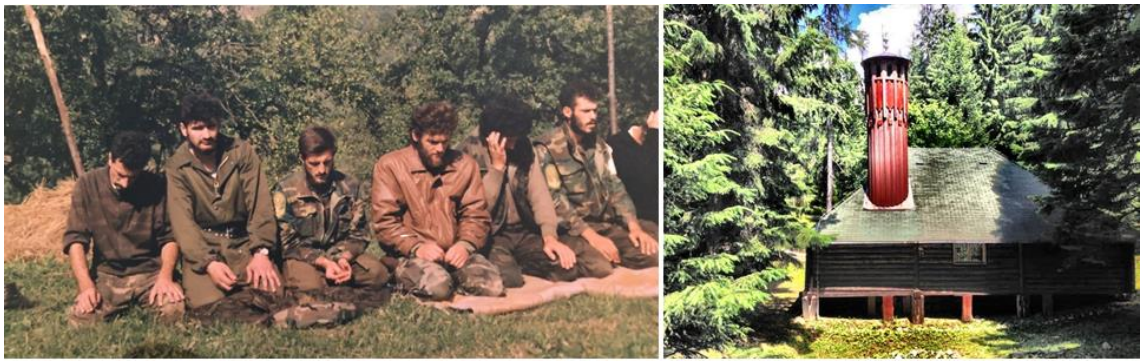
Buzim is a town (with about 2,300 inhabitants) located in the far northwest of Bosnia and Herzegovina [24]. Remains of material culture testify that this area was inhabited even before the arrival of the ancient Romans. From the 7th century, the Slavs came to this area, and for a long time this area was part of the Croatian and Hungarian kingdoms. Agriculture and cattle breeding were the main occupations of the people, and its location on important roads contributed to the development of crafts and trade. In Buzim, there was a mint in the 14th century [25]. Until the arrival of the Ottomans, Buzim meant a fortified town on a prominent hill from which a wide area could be monitored. At that time, this fortress-town was called Cava, i.e. Cavski grad. According to written documents, the fortress-town was built at the time when Juraj Mikulicic ruled this area, at the end of the 15th century. The Hungarian king Charles Robert (1288-1342) gave Buzim to Grgur Galles, who remained in his family's possession until 1425, when it (from 1429) was in the possession of the Blagajski princes. In the following period, the rule over Buzim passed from one lord to another: the counts of Celje, Juraj Mikulicic (1479-1494), and the Keglevic Buzim (16th century). The Ottomans captured Buzim (1576) led by Ferhad-pasha Sokolovic (1530-1586) and established a permanent military garrison here. It is part of the Krupa captaincy, within the Bihac sandzak [21,25]. Since the arrival of the Ottomans, the town at the foot of the fortress began to develop. The old Buzim town was abandoned by the Ottoman military garrison in 1851. During the 19th and 20th centuries, Buzim was part of the Bosanska Krupa municipality, and since 1995 it has been an independent municipality.

The Old Wooden Mosque in Buzim, a building complex, is located at the foot of the medieval fortress Buzim town [26] (geographic coordinates: 45º02'49.11"N, 16º01'46.27"E, altitude: 319). The exact time of its construction is unknown; According to a tablet from 1838 (1254 AH), it is written that in 1838 Vedzihi Pasha (Mehmet Salih Vecihi Pasha, ? - 1867) renovated this mosque and the Hudut-cesma, and the same claims are confirmed in the endowment deed from 1840 (1256 AH), which is located in the mosque. The dimensions of the building are 14 m x 18 m + 2.5 m x 18 m; the clear height (shishet ceiling) of the inner prayer space is 5 m. The walls of the building are made of oak planks (7 cm x 25 cm) which are attached to the edge wooden pillars (section 21 cm x 21 cm), (Figure 10).

Source: Author (July 20, 2011.)

Fig 10: The old wooden mosque in Buzim

The war mosque on Igman Mountain near Sarajevo (geographic coordinates: 43º45'40.79"N, 18º16'17.51"E, altitude: 1356) was built from November 17, 1993 to February 5, 1994 (Figures 11, 12, 13). Wartime circumstances imposed the construction of the building based on wood, with dimensions of 10x12 meters. This mosque with a wooden minaret was built according to the design of the architect Osman Smiječanin. The Wartime Mosque on Igman, as a value of special importance, is today an open-air facility where believers gather every Friday to perform the Jumma prayer. Frequent visitors of this cultural-historical and religious object are mountaineers and tourists who come to Igman and Bjelasnica. Additional works on the exterior decoration of the harem of the mosque, electrification and the construction of an ablution room with connection to the water supply were completed at the end of 2000. In addition to the mosque, a tekkija, musafirhan and ablution were built, and there is also a musalla, a multi-purpose open space for performing religious ceremonies and workshops. The war mosque on Igman was built by the soldiers of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina on their own initiative during breaks between regular defense tasks. For these fighters, the mosque was the center of gravity of the meaning and truth of life. In 1992, in adapted spaces for the mosque in the area of Igman and Bjelašnica, the congregation was organized and led by imams who were part of the units. The leadership of the Islamic community supported the initiative of the Muslims in the beginning of 1993 to organize the work of the organs of the Islamic community in the area of Igman, which will take care of the religious life of Muslims in the military units in the area of Igman and Bjelašnica. One of its symbolic values, because it was built in the most difficult time, when the most people perished, is that it is actually a 'mosque of hope'. As the mosque sprouted, so did new hope. The fighters started building their oasis of peace, their spiritual refuge, on Wednesday, November 17, 1993. The construction of the wooden mosque, measuring 10 by 12, was completed in less than three months, despite the lack of necessary tools and extreme cold. Then, when they were not on military duty, the fighters replaced the rifle with a carpentry tool and in such a short time built a mosque that was ceremonially opened on February 5, 1994 (Figures 11, 12). The Wartime Mosque on Igman enriched the palette of famous historical events (marked by monuments), among which the “Igman March” (1942) and the “14th Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo (1984)” where Igman hosted Nordic skiing events.



Source: https://stav.ba/vijest/ratna-dzamija-na-igmanu-njeni-su-temeli-krv-sehida-ruke-i-noge-gazija-suze-majki-i jetima/23447 Accessed: May 8, 2025.

Fig 11: The war mosque on Igman during the 1992-1995 war

Source: https://preporod.info/bs/article/14578/ratna-dzamija-na-igmanu-je-sinonim-otpora, Accessed: May 8, 2025.

Fig 12: The War mosque on Igman: symbiosis of natural environment and man

A mosque in the forest. The meadow next to it is an open space for prayer ('musala')

Mosque in the forest


Accompanying facilities of the mosque: a business building and a canopy for relaxation (also as a stage for outdoor performers)



Details of the construction and materialization of the mosque

View from the gallery (mahfil) of the prayer area on the ground floor of the mosque


Mimber Exit to the minaret from the gallery area (mahfil)

***Source*:** Author (May 9, 2025)

Levhas on the walls of the mosque

Fig 13: The War Mosque on Igmen Today

Conclusion

Mosques built of wood are some of the most striking examples of traditional architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to World Bank data (from 2022), forests account for 42.7% of the total territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (42.7% of 51,209 km^2 = 21,866 km^2). Accordingly, in terms of the diversity and quality of wood, Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the leading countries in Europe [27]. Wood is the most important material in the construction and materialization of traditional architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina, family houses and religious buildings. Mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina built of wood are small structures in terms of their physical dimensions, unlike the 'great mosques' built by wealthy donors (sultans, viziers, especially wealthy individuals). While the 'great mosques', with their layout, construction and materialization, followed the design models that personified the state and rulers, mosques built of wood are authentically Bosnian, and, above all, personify the Bosnian man, his worldview and his value system. In the design of mosques built of wood in Bosnia and Herzegovina, traces of the medieval man of Bosnia can be seen – the Bogomils, who called themselves 'good Christians', who were considered heretics by the official Catholic Church. The Bogomils did not build churches with 'pretentious visibility' but used their houses ('hiza') for collective prayer. Hence, mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina built of wood most resemble ordinary houses ('hiza') and as such most vividly reflect man – a humble respecter of nature and worshipper of God.

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