



Oriental type city House in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Synergy in the Space of Man, Natural and Social Environment

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Abstract

Architecture is a complex human artistic, creative and practical activity that equally reflects the complexity of human needs, the natural environment, the social environment and the author who unites all these dimensions and influences through its material and spatial appearance. The legibility of the aforementioned dimensions of architecture is particularly clear in the example of an oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began to develop in this region from the end of the 15th century, and in the 17th and 18th centuries reached a high level of refinement (classical phase). Although this house is suitable for analyzing the structure of the architectural program in the context of the natural and social environment, it seems particularly interesting to us to underline the role of a woman who, with her place in the family and society, reflected the house as her metaphor, and expressed her own creativity as a direct subject through her practical work in the house itself. In order to be able to understand the spatial organization, interior and horticultural design of an oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we must a priori have insight into the general worldview of that time.

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1. Introduction

The starting point of morality, economic relations, legal norms, relation to nature, in other words, the starting point of the overall view of the world at the time when the oriental-type city house was generated in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Qur'an and Hadith (Arabic: حديث). According to these origins, the highest principle of people's life in the community is the principle of collectivity. Therefore, all those constructions that serve the collective (mosques, madrasas, khans, hammams, imarets, bezistans) are construction priorities. An individual (whoever he may be) confirms his worth through his contribution to the common good of the collective. Another great principle that directly determined life, and thus architecture as its expression, is the inviolability of the private. The house thus becomes a framework that, unlike the public bazaar, will enable the richness of the intimate life of the individual and his family. Unlike other religions, Islam does not preach asceticism: it is man's duty to learn, and he can use everything that surrounds him as long as it is not to his detriment, to the detriment of other people, that is, society and nature. The supreme reward, the reward of paradise in the 'other world', in no way means renunciation of this world, but on the contrary: the wealth of good deeds accomplished in this world is one of the prerequisites for the highest reward in the other world. Man and nature are in no way opposed to each other, but are in unity. By better understanding this unity and acting in accordance with this knowledge, man will inherit more of the natural goods. Otherwise, they will be opposed to each other with consequences that can be catastrophic for man. Created on the foundations of the above principles, the oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina could not possibly become a symbol of 'man-master', but of 'man-reasonable subject' who reveals himself through the house. In that house is a woman, a symbol of privacy, of the deepest human intimacy and of the family as the basic pillar of society. All these are categories that can sometimes be violated only by suspicion, someone's ill-intentioned word, an unmeasured step, and other times - death, money, open attack, deliberate fire and the like, remain powerless against the solid family wall. So, as the foundation of the family, privacy and human ego, a woman had to assert herself and live in the house.

Such determination of the woman will become the guiding principle that will happily tie other (rational and irrational) principles into the final appearance of the house. The separation of public and intimate zones in the houses of wealthy Muslim families in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although neither an autochthonous Bosnian nor an exclusively Islamic principle in the creation of the house, but in the basic plan of the house imposes a superposition of family intimacy against all its other dimensions. The courtyard (inner yard in the house) is primarily a communication area that connects a smaller or larger number of different functions (spaces) of the house. And while the courtyard of the public part of the house ('selamluk') is mostly an economic-manipulation yard, the courtyard of the intimate zone ('haremluk') is a family park, which shows the wealth in its processing as much as the general wealth of the family, as well as the presence of a 'woman's hand and soul in the house'. The courtyard is one of those places in the house where you feel the strong and sublimated presence of female beauty, love, attention, longing, fears, laughter... These feelings are conveyed by women through various types of flowers, which, with their color, smell and general physiognomy of the vegetation, represent metaphors of female feelings. Next to the fountain, into whose stone bed a constant stream of water flowed, a rose rose was usually planted. Thus, two symbols were found in one place: water and rose, symbols of life (health) and female beauty. Along the courtyard walls, the halva windows and discreetly in the courtyard field, unpaved places (cicekluci) were left, bordered by a fine stone arch where ornamental bushes were planted - boxwoods (*Common box*) and fairy mown (*Cuscuta epithymum*), various flowers: latifa (*Tropaeolum hybridum*), shenboi (*Cheiranthus*), sofrice (*Passiflora vitifolia*), lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*), hadzibeg (*Hydrangea*), marigold (*Lilium candidum*), and ornamental trees - lilac (*Syringa*) and jasmine (*Jasminum*). There are also selected varieties of fruit of particular beauty, behar and green crown. Until then, the defiance flowers/hedgehogs (*Portulaca grandiflora*) did not require a particularly well-organized place or attention; it found places and food for itself between the pebbles of the cobblestones, so that with its multi-colored stars in combination with the shapes, it would make the courtyard a natural carpet. The mentioned flowers, ornamental shrubs and trees, fruits and fountains contribute to a suitable conditioning of the air (in terms of its temperature, humidity, chemical composition and flow), which man registers with his physiological comfort ^[1]. However, the aesthetic-psychological dimension of a courtyard decorated in this way is far stronger, which regularly associates the visitor with a woman (Figure 1). This is best shown by the folk saying that "where there are flowers, there is also a woman of progress". The design of the floor space, that is, its relationship to the ground floor that carries it on the one hand, and the natural and urban environment on the other, can be viewed from a number of aspects, one of which is the aspect of the position and importance of women. Being home-oriented, relatively isolated from the noisy and dynamic life of the bazaar, in addition to being rich and naturally curious, the woman should have received all the prerequisites for a comfortable and dynamic life in the house.

Since the courtyard is at ground (street) level, the thick courtyard walls give it the dimension of total introversion. The floor is at a height, that is, above the horizon of normal human vision. As the basic living space, it offered women great opportunities for audio and visual contact with the mahala alley and further towards the charsija. To hear and see the world with your ears and eyes means to participate in its pulsation. Accordingly, the floor's doxat overhangs, the multitude of windows, and the divanhanas were created primarily from the position of women in the family and society. Mushebaks on windows and divanhanas are transparent curtains that enable one-way visual communication according to the same principle and purpose as the 'zar' in women's costume. The windows are also regularly decorated with white curtains ('zar') with female embroidery that give the entire window a special charm. The need to sit by each window (which, each individually, always offers different views) resulted in the minderluk as one of the basic elements of living room furniture (halvats and chardaks). Structurally, the minderluk is a 'secija' forged from an almost rough board, and its anthropometric characteristics are the only thing that, as such, could attract our attention. But the woman's work on it - 'serdzada', 'pillows' with embroidery on top, give this piece of furniture the artistic dimension by which we usually remember them. Carpets on the floor, serdzadas, 'struka' woven from wool or fabric are mostly the work of women's hands and artistic inventiveness. The battery built into the wall, musandera, is an architectural-interior value specific to an oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in all other areas of the former Ottoman Empire. It is a kind of storehouse of potential functions that give the porch and halvat the value of a multipurpose space. Mattresses, embroidered sheets, pillows, towels and the like, stored in a masandera mattress, are the work of women. However, a broader analysis would show that the other two compartments of the musandera - furuna and banjica - are in a direct relationship with the woman. Two elements of furniture are common in an intimate veranda - a bladder and a sofa. In terms of construction, it is the work of men's hands, but their function is in the most direct relationship with women. The bladder symbolizes the presence of the mother and new life, while the sehara testifies to the existence of a girl's clothing, past or future. And in other environments and time periods, women, that is, her complex essence, had an impact on architecture. This influence was largely reduced to interior elements specific to the needs of women. The contemporary culture of housing in the world has largely lost the autochthonous values of certain climates, as a result of which the specifics began to be tied more to the general social status (wealth) of individuals and the creativity of authors (architects). In the end, it should be said that in the future, the general social status of women will have its legible reflection on the physiognomy and interior of residential spaces. The author has been intensively engaged in the topic of oriental-style city houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years, publishing a number of books and scientific papers ^[2-25]. Many other authors have also dealt with this topic ^[26-42].





Source: <https://www.bosnianexperience.com/19-tekst-br03>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Source: <https://www.agroklub.ba/hortikultura/autenticni-bosanski-vrtovi-od-dulbesecerke-do-fesica/82373/>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Source: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/sarajevo-izabrane-najljep%C5%A1e-avlije-i-balkoni-u-op%C4%87ini-stari-grad/1919641> Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3532937890056298&set=pcb.1477707189066053>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Fig 1: Inner yard ('avlija') of an oriental type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina

2. Environment

By 'environment' we mean every possibility in space in which a person can realize his existence ^[2]. In addition to this fundamental differentiation of space, the demand for preserving family intimacy resulted in a series of specific solutions for the conceptualization and materialization of the elements of the house. Closed in the house, hidden from all eyes outside the circle of her family, wealthy and naturally curious, the woman was condemned to satisfy most of her needs, as a complex human being, within the domestic complex. The house was supposed to be a solution that would reconcile her need to have everything and to see a lot, while she herself remained unnoticed. Hence, it seems that the doxati are those elements of the architectural composition of the house that reflect the woman's need to 'peek' into the alley, to get involved in the events of 'public life'. That is why there is so much poetry in divanhans and cameras. Hence the abundance of greenery, water and sunlight in the gardens and courtyards of residential complexes. Given the available materials, wood was most suitable for the spatial expression of a multitude of requirements, from the utilitarian to the purely hedonistic.

2.1. Natural environment

The 'natural environment' is determined by the 'givens themselves', those elements that nature has given and on which man has not exerted his influence, or if he has, then to a negligible extent. From the aspect of scientific 'coverage', the natural environment is under the observation of natural sciences (physics, chemistry, geography, astronomy, biology, mathematics...) ^[2]. Bosnia and Herzegovina is situated between 42°26' and 45°15' north latitude and between 15°45' and 19°41' east longitude and belongs to the region of Southeastern Europe (Figure 2). Due to its location, it is considered a country in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula. Over its territory, the influences of two geographical belts of the northern hemisphere alternate, the southern parts of the northern temperate and the northern parts of the northern subtropical belt. The entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is under the influence of Atlantic air

currents. In addition, during the colder period of the year, the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina is often flooded by cold continental air masses from the north and east ^[6].



Fig 2: Geographical location of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Source: https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosna_i_Hercegovina, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

2.2. Social environment

The 'social environment' is determined by the elements of human activity, which could be called society by one name. Therefore, it is a man-made nature, which is as such changeable, which man enters at birth, which he obeys, but which he also changes in accordance with his system of needs. The social environment is the subject of research in the humanities (history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, economics, linguistics, demography...), and special forms of human consciousness such as morality and religion. All branches of art are a reflection of social relations as the artist sees them ^[2]. The history of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be traced through the following periods: Prehistoric period (Paleolithic 12000-7500 BC, Neolithic

7500-4000 BC, Bronze Age 3300-700 BC, Iron Age 700-400 BC), Ancient period, Illyrian Hellenism (300-27 BC), Celts (4th century BC), Romans (3rd century BC-3rd century), Western Roman Empire (395-475), Goths (493-535), The emergence of the Bosnian state (7th-10th century), Eastern Roman Empire (476-), Foreign conquerors, Serbs (931-960), Croats (968), Byzantium (1019), Hungarians (1102-1135), Bosnia as a banovina (1154-1163), Bosnia as a kingdom (1353-1463), Ottoman period (1463-1878), Austro-Hungarian Monarchy period (1878-1918), Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929), Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941), Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), FNRY/FPRY, SFRY ("Tito's Yugoslavia", 1943-1991), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). The transition from one historical period to another was, as a rule, dramatic, with the "new victors and masters" trying to belittle the previous masters and erase as much as possible the traces of their culture and existence. Such a turbulent history has made Bosnia and Herzegovina a specific, unique country that only a few are able to understand. It will therefore remain mysterious and attractive to seekers of truth and the meaning of life. It is important to emphasize that, along with the historically proven uniqueness of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to some neighboring countries and the world in general (ethnic and religious diversity, in particular), there is also a different view of its history, often diametrically opposed, according to certain ethnicities and religions. Hence, it is said that in Bosnia and Herzegovina "there are at least three truths, at least three histories, at least three languages"... where it is difficult for an outside observer, in view of this internal different view of the same thing, to remain objective (not to align himself with one of the three dominant views) [6].

Religion

Religion is a factor that fundamentally determines human action, in practical and spiritual life (Figure 3). The influence of religion on the spatial organization of an oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina is primarily determined by the place of the residential complex in the general social structure, i.e. architectural priorities, and secondarily in relation to the appearance of the house itself. Namely, both Muslim and Christian houses of the same social class in the city have more or less the same architectural and spatial characteristics, while their differences are manifested in those elements that are the 'diferentia specifica' of each religion: there is no abdesthana (a spatial niche, usually in the divanhana, in which ritual washing, 'ablution' was performed), and the house itself was not differentiated into 'male' and 'female' parts of the house complex. Religion appears as a decisive factor in creating the interior design of the space: while in Muslim houses there are no paintings or any figurative representations, in Christian houses the walls become a place for displaying portraits of household members, icons (images of saints), family genealogies... The spaces (main rooms) in a Muslim house are 'empty', while in Christian houses there are elements of furniture. Until the arrival of the Ottomans, the cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the European cities of the time, were military fortresses and ruling settlements, while trade and occasional larger gatherings of the population took place in their 'suburbs'. The Ottomans held Bosnia and Herzegovina under occupation for a full 65 years, from 1463 until the final conquest of Jajce (1528). The spread of Islam in Bosnia would significantly

influence all future events. This is evident in the construction and development of new cities [28], which express the Islamic understanding of the position of man in the world. According to Islam, the whole world is a masjid (the house of God, a place of prayer and showing respect to God), a place of achieving man's highest freedom - complete freedom from slavery to everything except God. This model of freedom is marked by the fundamental testimony of faith: There is no god but God! From this arises a complete scale of values, prohibitions and commands, which includes the concept of 'din' (Arabic-Romanized: 'dīn el-islām' = 'way of life'). Human society, when founded on Islam, conscious devotion to God, is governed by faith. Any place where such models and aspirations are accepted becomes a 'medina' (Arabic-Romanized: 'madīna' = 'city', 'settlement'). Unlike the found fortress cities, new cities become fully organized organizations. The need to connect with nature stems from the Islamic understanding of the world, since it bears within itself the signs of the Creator. That is why settlements and cities are built in carefully selected places, most often on the slopes of natural environments of fertile valleys, along rivers and natural passages. Cities are organized with a visible separation of the central public space (bazaar) and private residential environment (mahala). Masjid (or more of them), madrasa (that is, schools by level of education), libraries, bezistans, inns and caravanserais, hammams, fairs with fountains, clock towers and shops (production units) are the contents of bazaars. At the same time, all the listed buildings had their own water supply and sewage system. While the bazaar/market is usually on a plain, residential areas are on slopes, in a natural amphitheatre. This arrangement of residential space reflects a refined sense of natural conditions and the achievement of high family and personal requirements in the pursuit of human fulfillment. A properly chosen slope allows for good sunlight, soil drainage and constant air circulation. By moving the house units vertically and horizontally, each house unit is provided with good sunlight and a wide view. This rule was applied in all cases, in accordance with the requirements of the individual area. This followed and respected the existing landscape, while at the same time 'incorporating' human peculiarities, respecting the nature of the individual and his freedom, with restrictions only as much as the rights of others require. The home is a space of strictly protected personality and personal rights. It is defined by a house, usually with a ground floor and an upper floor, a courtyard with a flower garden and a garden with an orchard. The connection with the street is achieved by a gate - a visibly emphasized and covered door. In contemporary architecture, such an idea corresponds to the 'garden city', which is considered the highest achievement of residential architecture. But even more interesting is the content of the overall life that encompasses the entire city. These common contents are marked by the connection of streets and alleys, with a public fountain, the existence of smaller or larger squares (mejdān), with shops that meet everyday human needs (grocery store, barber shop, bakery, ...) and, especially, the 'mejdān' with mosques and mekteb (primary school) and the mahala cemetery. Prominent examples of housing units, separated from urban units, and in a certain sense also separated from the usual urban unit formed around the central mosque and charsija, are the Begovina housing units in Stolac and Velagicevina in Blagaj. The oriental-style city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its spatial layout, vertical and horizontal interior fittings,

ways of using interior spaces, and types of connections with the neighborhood, has encouraged many prominent architects of recent times to explore it as a world treasure ^[27-30]. Many

of them have assessed the oriental-style city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a supreme achievement of residential architecture ^[30].



Source: <http://www.rajvosa-x.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=6&t=1027&start=740>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=621412027990495&set=a.621411101323921.1073741867.145427778922258>

Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Fig 3: Mahala in Sarajevo (postcard, 1920)

3. Man

Space acquires meaning only when it stands in some relation to man. This relation ranges from the relations of already known dimensions of space, through those that are suspected, to those that are currently beyond the reach of human imagination. In other words, man is a being on a journey, a being that is constantly learning, a being of open possibilities ^[2]. Architectural physics will explain to us today that the *mushébak*, a fine network of wooden slats (incidentally, exclusively characteristic of oriental-Islamic architecture), is not only the result of the need to protect the intimate from outside views, but also a transparent curtain that allows for the creation of half-shade in the space of primary residential use, natural ventilation of the space, in short, regulation of the microclimate (cryptoclimate) ^[1]. Here we emphasize the fact that in the oriental-Islamic type of house there is no digging of the space into the ground (if this happens, then these spaces are never intended for living). This avoids the likely problems with humidity, poor lighting and ventilation. Likewise, the space covered by the roof shell is freed from the function of living; here it is simply an attic, or a very efficient buffer that protects the first floor from the effects of intense insolation during the summer period. In addition to houses for primary residence in the city, wealthier people, and especially landowners, also had their own, so-called, 'outhouses' on estates (farmsteads) outside the city; they are a counterpart to modern weekend houses, which means that they are intended for occasional family stays in pure nature. From this brief overview, it can be concluded that oriental-Islamic architecture is oriented towards man; in this, man is in the perspective of a complex perception of the unity of the physical and spiritual, collective and private-intimate. Water, as a symbol of purity and health, is a leitmotif that accompanies man at every step and with great temporal frequency. In the following, we will illustrate through several examples how foreigners who lived in different cultural environments see all this.

"People lived in such houses who, wherever they could, looked for a connection with the nature of a green yard or

garden with flowers and trees and with water, and also with a panorama of wide vistas. Their *divanhanas* made this connection possible with their many windows. And all of this is only proof of the more aesthetic needs and aspirations of the people of those environments and those times" ^[27].

"The Turk does not build where the tree does not grow" ^[31]. (Le Corbusier, architect of modernity).

... "there were few houses that did not have their own garden, and each of them was full of fruit trees, especially apples". (French travel writer Quiclet, 1658) ^[30].

"The houses in Sarajevo are more beautiful than the houses of other cities; painted on the outside, they give the appearance of cleanliness and freshness, which characterizes this city; they give this city a shine and freshness that we do not find in other Turkish cities" (Charles Pertusier) ^[30].

... "Sarajevo presents a very picturesque appearance ... Next to each house there is a garden planted with trees which, outlined among the buildings, make a very beautiful impression. The large mosques and the many minarets contribute to the diversity of this picture" (Chaumatte Des Fosses, 1807) ^[30].

... "a rich amphitheater where the shadows with the workshops and minarets are arranged in a picturesque, very strong composition, while the wide plain, which spreads like the front of a stage and into which waters converge from all sides, as well as the hills that frame this vast basin (Sarajevo, author's note) and contributed strongly to its colorful appearance, complete the picture, which borders on the magnificent" (Charles Partusier) ^[30].

We add to this a few impressions of foreigners about the people of these areas, who lived at that time.

... "I do not know whether the beauty of their clothes or the desire to see what they hid made the vision sharper; but I know that never did the satyrs of the comedy *Amaryllis* speak with more enthusiasm about the charms they found in the beauty of the nymphs, whom they wanted to surprise, than a man would feel the charm of seeing these nymphs" (meaning women and girls in Bosnian cities). (Traveler Pullet, 1668) ^[30].

... “Women usually have a beautiful figure; many of them are distinguished by regular facial features, a beautiful color and whiteness of the skin, which shades the eyes” (Chaumatte Des Fosses, 1807 ^[30]).

Accordingly, the richness and diversity of architectural programs is a reflection of the richness of the spirit of a people. Wherever the cult of water and greenery has risen to a level that exceeds bare existence, we meet a man of the highest standards of life.

4. Boundaries

Boundaries are those places in the environment where existing conditions are controlled according to very specific human needs. Conditions are all those discovered and undiscovered phenomena in space that have a stimulating or degrading effect on humans. Boundaries, therefore, have the task of enabling the selection of influences. In an architectural sense, they enclose, but also include humans in the conditions of a certain environment ^[2]. Some architectural programs (residential architecture, for example) are the best known and most valuable examples of traditional architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.1. City-level boundaries

The widest boundaries that, in terms of architecturally defined space, confirms the authenticity of the considered period (end of the 15th - end of the 19th century) is the city. Before the arrival of the Ottomans, cities were represented by

fortifications - seats of powerful feudal lords; with a primarily defensive role, without the contents and equipment that normally make up a city, these forts were rather individual, rich habitations of feudal lords than a complex economic and social community of people. We link the appearance of cities to the development of trades of a market character, trade (money) and specific social relations that are institutionalized. With the arrival of the Ottomans, craft bases were created at the crossroads of important roads, first in the service of military service, and later for the needs of all travelers - passers-by. Along with craftsmanship, there was also trade; next to them, buildings are springing up - dwellings of merchants and artisans located here. Everything that was a danger and a limitation for the previous feudal fortifications (roads, waterways, open terrain) became a condition of existence for the cities, and advantages for the fortifications (inaccessibility, isolation) - a limitation of their development. Hence, cities spring up in naturally predetermined places: river valleys, lake shores, basins, crossroads of earlier civilizations (Figures 4, 5, 6). In accordance with socio-economic relations, philosophy of life, morality, etc., a unique scheme of the city developed within the entire former Ottoman Empire: the nucleus of the city (bazaar) consisting of public facilities (sacred - mosques and madrasahs, and profane - shops, bezistans, inns, hammams, imaret, etc.), and the belt - a residential area, formally arranged in the form of mahals ^[2].



Source: <https://www.bosanskehistorie.com/historija/bosna-od-1878-1918/mapa-sarajeva-iz-1905-godine/>, Accessed: 20 April 2025.

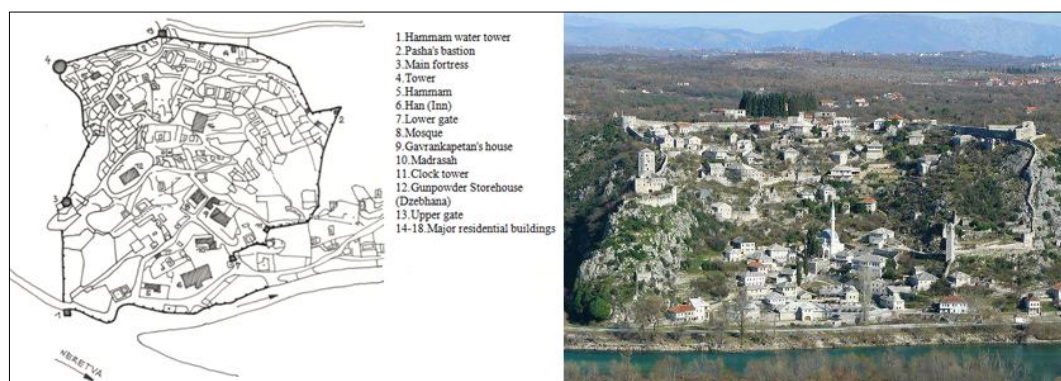
Source: <https://smoc.ba/en/lokacijamapa/>, Accessed: 20 April 2025.

Fig 4: Top left: map of Sarajevo in the 16th century. Top right: map of Sarajevo in 1905. Dole: orijentalni dio Sarajeva danas: 1. Gazi Husrev-bey's Mosque; 2. Old Orthodox Church; 3. Museum of the Jews; 4. Latin Bridge; 5. Brusa Bezistan; 6. The Despic's House; 7. The Svrzo's House; 8. The Cathedral Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos; 9. The Sacred Heart Cathedral; 10. City Hall



Source (left): Juraj Neidhardt (1972). Extract from the magazine Arhitektura, no. 113-114/72, Rijeka Printing House, Rijeka
 Source (right): Husref Rdzic (1983). Studies on Islamic Architectural Heritage, Veselin Maslesa, Sarajevo

Fig 5: Left: Charsija/Bazaar in Mostar (situation). Right: Foca in the 17th century (situation)



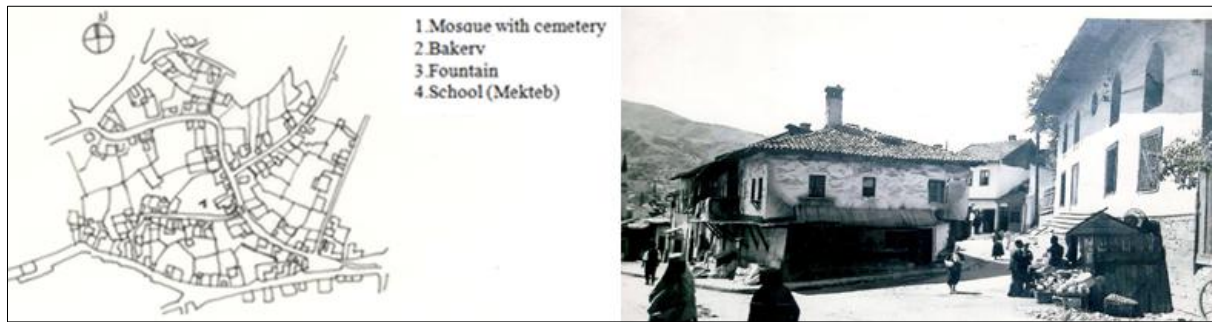
Source: Dzermal celic (1960). Pocitelj on the Neretva river, Our antiques, No. VII, Sarajevo
 Source: <https://forum.klix.ba/bosansko-hercegovackeutvrde-stari-gradovi-itd-t59072.html>, Accessed: 20 April 2025.

Fig 6: Left: Pocitelj on the Neretva river (situation). Right: View of Pocitelj from the Neretva river

4.2. Boundaries at the level of residential districts-mahals

The mahala is the basic unit of the residential fabric. Its formal organization is not conditioned by a simple accumulation of housing units, but by a whole series of common facilities: a fountain, a greengrocer, a bakery, a barbershop, a mekteb and a mosque (with a mahala cemetery). The main condition for a residential agglomeration (among members of Islam) to formally become a mahala was the construction of a mosque. It was usually built by a wealthy individual (a former soldier, merchant, imam, etc.). Both the mosque and the mahala usually bear the name of their founder. Similar to the macro-urban concept of a city, a mahala also has a public (alleys, fountain, mosque, greengrocer, bakery, barbershop) and an intimate zone (individual house complexes). The

development of the residential fabric took place without a previous plan, as a reflection of the specific configuration of the terrain and basic moral principles (Figure 7). This is the reason why there is no schematism in this urbanism, which gives it the special charm of a natural, spontaneous, and at the same time well-designed human work ^[2]. In sociological terms, this concept of a residential community necessarily led to the establishment of human contacts; the alley meant a kind of stage for events; the house complex was the stronghold of the intimate life of the family, which was not allowed to be disturbed. Due to the organic interweaving of these opposing demands, there existed between them that extraordinary tension that experienced rich expression in its materialization ^[2].



Source: Extract from the magazine *Arhitektura*, no. 113-114/72, Rijeka Printing House, Rijeka, 1972.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/OpcinaStariGradSarajevo/photos/-stare-slike-starog-grada-znate-li-koji-je-ovo-dio-starog-gradaopcinastarigrad-s/1210374072395890/>, Accessed: 23 April 2025.

Fig 7: Topal Inhan's mahala in Vratnik, Sarajevo. Left: situation. Right: Vratnik mejdan in the early 20th century

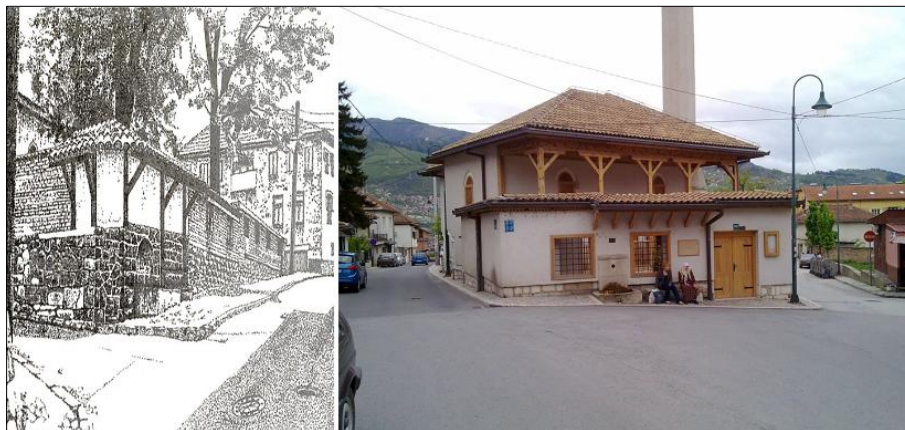
Architecture is one of those concepts that is most accessible to analysis and evaluation by the widest, we could say all classes of people: from the poor to the rich, from the ignorant to the most educated ^[4]. Every person thinks about the issues, meaning and significance of architecture and participates in life through solving and securing one of the pillars of their existence – a roof over their head. A skilled merchant, restaurateur, craftsman participates in its definition when he thinks about how to best monetize his work, a benefactor when he builds a public fountain, a soup kitchen for the poor, a bridge or a place of worship, an architect/engineer when he realizes his design idea, a philosopher when he places architecture in the context of possible meanings and dimensions of space, a rich man who wants to express his power in the most obvious way, a thief when he thinks about how to get rich, a sociologist when he explains certain dimensions of the behavior of a person or a social group, a prisoner in a dungeon, a politician, or the government when he wants to present a picture of himself, a doctor when he searches for the causes of a disease, a soldier when he thinks about how to protect himself from the enemy or how to threaten him... Each of the mentioned (and not mentioned) representatives of a broad human class has their own definition of architecture, has their own dioptr for looking at architecture, and therefore their image of what is seen. Hence, the usual definitions of architecture, such as: architecture is the art of building; architecture is the artistic design of space; architecture is a space built to serve a purpose, etc., are insufficient to cover all its dimensions. We will make the least mistake if we say that 'architecture is a frame for a picture of life' ^[4]. That is why analyzing the architecture of a nation is the best way to get to know it. By analyzing architecture, we will learn a lot about social organization, economic structure, outlook on the world, relationship to God, relationship of man to man, relationship of man to nature, relationship of man to himself, then about skill or construction knowledge, about the art of the architect, etc. The stamp on the architecture of the oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina gave a view of the world - philosophy and religion. Due to historical circumstances, the most influential was the philosophy and religion of Islam. Fundamentally eclectic, the philosophy of Islam was created by the synthesis of the philosophy of ancient Greece (Aristotle, Plato and Epicurus) and the philosophy of the peoples of the East - China and India. The essential dimension of this philosophy is the emphasis on collectivity as an essential principle and the only way for human survival. Thus, for example, the philosopher Al-Farabi points out:

“Happiness can only be found in a social community and intellectual life can be perfected only within a community” ^[26]. This principle was also accepted by religion, and the future ruling form of consciousness consistently implemented it in all phases of life. In terms of architecture, this principle set a sharp boundary between buildings for collective use: sacral (mosques and madrasahs) and social standard buildings (hans, hammams, bezistans, imareta, bridges) and buildings intended for personal use - residential houses. The first group of buildings was built according to the established laws of the era, mostly the same for the Ottoman Empire at the time. Since they are intended for collective use, they are made of durable material (stone) and with such a constructive assembly that they last forever. And indeed, all those objects that escaped the action of the human destructive hand are still standing today; the tooth of nature, except sporadically, has not eaten away at them.

Islam is a religion of belief in one God, Allah; according to Islam, God is one and unique, the creator of all that is; nothing can be assumed of Him, He is above all. He gave form to everything, breathed movement into it. This ultimate exposure of God puts man in the background; since he can never be compared to God in anything, no matter how much he knows and can, man is left to be content with 'another place'. Here, it seems, is the key to the personality profile of people who followed the religion of Islam: adaptability and patience. Chaumatte Des Fosses wrote about them in 1807: ...”They are sincere and hospitable, fierce, they value above all that they are Bosnians and they are very steadfast in their sympathies ... but also in their hatred, they are extremely stubborn, iron-headed and stony-hearted” ^[30]. Understanding their life as a moment in eternity, the man of that time did not want to 'waste time' on things that were 'uncertain'; since everything is arranged by God, man should follow necessity and spend the life given to him in the most comfortable way possible. This man has no ambition to adjust the world according to his imagined projects and needs, to create a history in which he will be glorified and great; his basic preoccupation is life; since it is transient, he tries to arrange it as expediently as possible, and this means: to enter into unity with the wealth and beauty of nature, with the wealth and beauty of the lives of other people, to live moderately, healthily and spiritually as richly as possible, to leave behind a family and some lasting work for the benefit of all people. Therefore, a man who follows Islam is not an ascetic, but a seeker of the beauty and secrets of this world, of the beauty and secrets of his own body and spirit. The attitude towards life, as well as the life of people in the widest range of its

manifestations, can best be observed in a residential complex. Here we will encounter an unusual paradox: since the ruling philosophical-religious consciousness highlighted the principle of collectivity in the foreground, and expressed it through architectural programs of high spatial and structural values, we would expect the spaces intended for the individual to be poor. However, only here will we understand the true attitude towards life. According to the oriental-Islamic scheme of separation of the public and the intimate (individual), public facilities (mosques, bezistans, hammams, imarets, madrasas, khans, etc.) are located in the plain, next to the roads, therefore, maximally exposed to the human eye, ear and service, while the individual is moved towards the periphery, on the slopes of the natural amphitheater. Only contemporary architectural physics (a discipline that seeks the empirical foundations of a healthy and pleasant life) will explain that it is a natural, rational scheme that provides the prerequisites for arranging a healthy environment for human life^[1]. The residential complex is arranged in the form of smaller or larger residential districts-mahals. These are agglomerations of about 30-40 houses; in fact, the mere number of houses, no matter how large it may be, does not presuppose the existence of a mahalla; only when the mosque is built (and it was built by a rich individual - a landowner, a soldier, an imam, and today the people as a whole), is it formed and waved. This fact should not be reduced to a

purely religious level, but to a broadly sociological one, given that Islam is not only a religion but an overall model of life. In addition to the mosque, there are other public facilities in the mahal: a mekteb (primary school), a bakery, a greengrocer, a barber shop, a cemetery, and a public fountain, thus facilities that cover a wide range of human utilitarian, spiritual and hedonistic needs^[4]. We especially emphasize the public fountain, that is, water, as a symbol of health and life; it is not only a place where passers-by could quench their thirst, wash and rest, but also a place to gather, talk, get to know and gaze upon their future life companion. Public fountains are one of those contents that, in terms of its layered meaning, surpasses any individual human activity and even architecture. At its core, public fountains are a purely utilitarian program whose expediency comes down to supplying people (and their livestock) with water, a basic prerequisite for life. All settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both villages and towns, were founded on this basis. However, the way in which public fountains are situated in the settlement, their design, especially their mental and aesthetic-psychological meaning for each individual and human community, gave public fountains an exceptional place in the overall life of people. Public fountains in residential districts (mahals) are usually built on the edge of the mahal square, mejdan, or at street intersections (Figure 8).



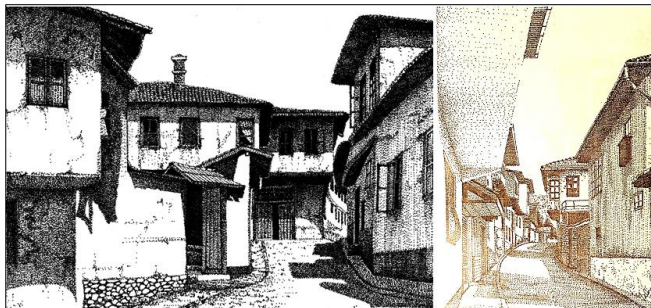
Source: Author (Drawing, 1983.; May 3, 2011.)

Fig 8: Public fountain. Left: public fountain in Glodjo's street in Sarajevo. Right: public fountain in Sarac Alija's mahal in Sarajevo

The main street of the mahala also had a similar functional charge; in architectural terms it meant an 'exhibition display of architectural volumes' and specifically treated surfaces (Figure 9). And the architecture of the house, the last instance of an individual's life, made it possible to view the streets and the city as a whole. Walking from the charsija along the mahala street, images of a colorful palette alternate before us, left and right: emphasized entrances to house complexes, courtyard walls over whose lovely, tiled roofs discreetly sprout vines, roses, cypresses, apples, quince, and sour cherries. This is a beautiful hint of life that flourishes on the other side of the wall. The impression of the richness of life is enhanced by the boldly protruding volumes of the floors, the chardaks, which, with their many windows, warn the passerby that someone is watching him: a wise old curious woman, a girl in love. At the mahala fountain, even if we are tired and thirsty, we can sit down and rest. There is always a cafe somewhere nearby, where one can stop by, more for a conversation than for the usual consumption of coffee or tea.

If we want to enter one of the houses, we will show our intention by clinking a large iron ring on the carefully decorated courtyard doors, khanates. When the door opens, a more or less spacious courtyard will appear before us. The white stone pebbles in its floor hint at cleanliness and elegance, which is also confirmed by the fountain in the courtyard. We will soon understand that it is not about dry 'medical cleanliness', but about the purity and refinement of the spirit of the people who live there. A climbing rose, usually next to a fountain, vines, selected varieties of apples, cherries, and many colorful flowers, carefully and expertly arranged around the courtyard, tell us that we have stepped into an intimate family park. These people have no need to show it to someone in order for that person to admire them. The order and wealth of beautiful scenes is due to them, it is they themselves. This is confirmed by the covered sofa in the shade of the quince, the fountain whose bubbling water enlivens the whole picture to a feeling of fertility and spontaneity. Superimposed divanhanas and chambers on the

first floor confirm this assessment. In the somewhat lower courtyard wall, we can see a double door covered with an eaves. They lead us to the garden. There we meet an orchard and a garden. We will find out later that neither that orchard nor the vegetable garden is there for the owner of the house to harvest a safe harvest and prepare for winter, but above all to enjoy nature, to have the sweet fruit of the fruit tree within reach, to pick it himself, when he wants. The real orchards and fields are outside the city, on estates. If we want to enter the house itself, the accentuated staircase - wooden balustrades - will help us understand our possible path: to the lower chambers or to the veranda. The spacious hall in the continuation of the courtyard arranges in us the image of what we have seen and prepares us for new images. The carved door indicates the main room, while the unadorned one does not attract our attention.



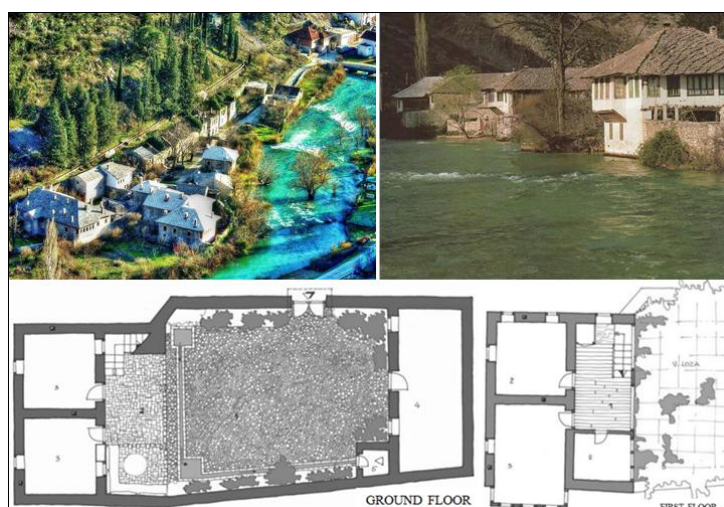
Source: Author (Drawings, 1984)

Fig 9: Motifs from the neighborhoods (mahalas) of Kovaci and Sadovic's streets in Sarajevo

4.3. House-level boundaries

The boundaries at the level of the house are that instance of architecturally defined space where the tension between man and the environment is manifested in its most sublime expression. The house is the archetype of all human constructions; and while many human activities have long since 'moved out' of the house, it still retains the role of basic human protection, the focus of man's intimate and family life. Man most often identifies his existence with the house [2]. Precisely because these mentioned criteria belong to the environment, and as such necessarily influence this

architectural program, we will adhere to the spatial-constructive and formative criterion, as an architecturally universal method, especially since the house in the area of the former Ottoman Empire, as we will see, was based on certain constant principles, while certain inputs from the natural and social environment only nuanced the main principles. The house is approached through a door in a strong courtyard wall, which was noticeably emphasized by the contrast of the dark, natural color of the wood against the whitewashed courtyard wall, and by a gabled roof. Upon entering the courtyard door, we are greeted by a more or less spacious courtyard, which is a pleasant aesthetic and psychological surprise due to its breadth of contents and processing of details after the directed views of the Mahal street. The courtyard is the space of the first degree of intimacy of the home complex, functionally defined as the intersection of individual functional groups and spaces. Since it is very busy, it had to have an adequate materialization of the walking surface that will guarantee high hygiene standards. This was made possible by cobblestones made of fine white stone pebbles, which were durable, suitable for maintaining cleanliness and - beautiful. Unpaved areas (tsicekluci) were left discreetly in the courtyard field, bordered by a fine, white stone arch, as well as along the courtyard wall and elsewhere where the owner judged that latifa, shenboj, pejsamberčić, carnation, hyacinth, narcissus, yawn, sofrice, lily of the valley, grafted rose, hadjibeg, zambak, lilac, jasmine or some other decorative tree or flower would enrich the courtyard space; and the defiance-flowers (tongues) that grew spontaneously between the stone pebbles made the courtyard floor a particularly beautiful carpet, a kind of symbiosis of the work of human hands and nature [4]. A fountain placed somewhere around the front door of the courtyard gave a special note of the pleasantness of the courtyard area; water was constantly flowing out of it; the removal of water through a fine, stone-made channel that meanders through the courtyard was a special sight, especially in sunny weather when the Sun is reflected in a thousand figures in the flowing water (Figure 10). Therefore, water is also a symbol of life in the courtyard, literally alive, which the visitor will immediately notice upon hearing its most recognizable sign - the murmur [2] (Figure 11).



Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g303195-d8415405-Reviews-Begovina-Stolac_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.html, Accessed: April 21, 2025.

Source: Author (Photograph Drawing, 1983)

Figure 10. One of the houses in the Begovina complex on the Bregava river near Stolac



Source: Author (Drawing, 1983)

Source: <https://www.muzejsarajeva.ba/priroda-koju-volim-u-svrzinoj-kuci/>, Accessed: April 21, 2025.

Fig 11: Fountain in the courtyard of the house. Left: Hadzi-Sabanovic family in Sarajevo. Right: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo

In wealthier houses, the courtyard, like other spaces, although on the whole an extremely private space, is nuanced in terms of spatial organization and content into a more public ('selamluk') and an extremely intimate part ('haremluk'). It was about those cases when the owner of the house was a particularly business man (merchant, craftsman, landowner), and therefore rich, and that meant a greater frequency of people from different parts of the world. Hospitality was shown to these visitors by the owner of the house, and all services by his servants. Thus, the selamluk represented a content-spatial organization of purely utilitarian spaces (pantry, ahar, special warehouses, kitchens, etc.) and

residential spaces for servants, as well as spaces for the reception and stay of guests. He represented that last spatial sequence in front of extremely private spaces. In rich houses (Babic's house on Bentbasa in Sarajevo, Biscevic's house in Mostar, for example) instead of the usual fountain we have fountains, thus an even greater revival and aestheticization of the cult of water (Figure 12). Vegetation enrichment of the courtyard is done with flowers, evergreens, trees of vivid behar colors, while utilitarian trees (fruit) are mostly cherry, apple and quince. (The fruit was normally found on farms on the outskirts of the city).



Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g295388-d7003059-Reviews-Biscevica_Kuca_Biscevic_House-Mostar_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bos.html, Accessed: April 17, 2025.

Fig 12: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Inner courtyard ('avlija')

In the courtyard of the harem, a primarily hedonistic space, continues the garden where vegetables were grown for daily household needs. The living space itself is regularly developed vertically, which is an architectural response to climatic conditions, i.e. ensuring a comfortable stay both in winter and in summer. Namely, the spaces of the ground floor, with a relatively compact shell of thick walls, are intended for living in the winter period because they provided good conditions for defense against the low temperatures of

the external environment. At the same time, when providing heating elements, not only the bare function was taken into account, but also the aesthetic and psychological dimension of fire, next to water, another symbol of life. In the halvat, the basic residential unit of an oriental-Islamic house, in a wall closet ('musandera') designed in a specific, unique way for this type of house, three symbols of life were found next to each other: water, fire and clothes, spatially represented in the form of a spa ('hammamdzik'), furuna and duschekluk. In all

Muslim houses without exception, the basic living space had these three contents, which, depending on the wealth of the owner, had a higher or lower degree of aesthetic refinement. Such a high level of living standards of the broadest strata of a people is unique for that time, and has not been surpassed to this day. Although it originated from the philosophy of Islam, we must not reduce it to a purely religious level, because, for example, ritual washing took place in a specially arranged and designated space for this purpose only - the *abdesthani*. Even in rural areas (where Muslims lived less often) we encounter these criteria; for example, the householder could not marry his son if he did not have his own room, which could be literally empty, but had to have a bathhouse. On the floor, which was intended for summer residence, we encounter one, two or more basic units, symmetrical in function to the *halvats* on the ground floor. Considering the pleasant conditions of the external environment, the floor was made of thin, light walls (wooden skeleton with adobe filling), which provided the possibility of an imaginative, architecturally very daring, development of the horizontal plan. All limitations of spatial development in contact with the ground are corrected here by boldly projecting the volume into the space. The popping of white cubes, completely dissolved in their materialization, has its rational explanation in capturing the sun, sky and horizon, and on the other hand, in the aspiration to observe the pulsation of life on the *mahal* alley from a deep intimacy. On the first floor there are living spaces in the most intimate contact with nature; we are talking about *kamaris* (knot, wing). They are materialized in such a way that they have excellent protection against excessive insolation, while the appearance of humidity is simply not possible due to the achieved air circulation (which is made possible by its elevation and gentle transitions of sunlit surfaces into partial shade and shade).

Spatial concepts: horizontal and vertical plan of the house. An important feature of an oriental-type city house in the observed space is the development of functions both horizontally and vertically; in this case, those purely human needs (residence, rest, entertainment) always tend to emerge on the highest horizontal plane. From the aspect of architecture, a house is a program that, with its spatiality, materialization and general relationship to the natural and social environment, reflects its owner: his wealth, social status, philosophy, religion, morality. In short, a house is a metaphor for man. An oriental-type townhouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina is developed through a ground floor and an upper floor. This scheme in itself indicates the presence of people with high and complex spatial requirements. From the cobblestone courtyard, we first enter a more or less spacious porch whose stone paving tells us that we are still outside, and the strongly protruding parts of the floor, supported by wooden columns, prepare us for the interior space. Wooden steps in more or less rich wood carvings point to the contents on the upper floor. Although primarily a communication area and a place of preparation for the spaces that follow, the porch is also a place of entertainment in direct contact with nature. The porch is connected to the *hajata*, an anteroom from which the residential and service rooms on the ground floor are accessed. In cities with a warmer climate (Mostar, Stolac, Počitelj, Trebinje, for example), the *hajata* is a semi-open space that serves for recreation and rest in deep shade on sunny and warm summer days. The richness of the wood

carvings on the doors in the walls that frame the *hajata* can be used to judge the significance of the space behind them... The *halvat* is the largest room on the ground floor, which, with its contents and surface treatment, defines the concept of a residence in a much more complex way than the European understanding of a residence. In fact, the *halvat* is a multi-purpose space that is equally primarily a living room, a dining room, and a bedroom, but according to how the potential functions of the *masandera* are 'activated'. The *masandera* is a built-in closet with three basic compartments - the *dušekluk*, the *furun*, and the *hamamdžik*. *Dušekluk* is a storage room for bedding, and by 'activating' it, the *halvat* turns into a bedroom. *Furuna* is an earthen stove that, with its enamel pots in a particularly decorative order, specific 'music' and light effects of the fire, gives the space much more than mere utilitarianism. In its place, in the houses of the cities of Herzegovina, there is very often a '*kahve-odzak*', a Bosnian version of the fireplace, with which the psychological-aesthetic dimensions of fire and a tasty hearth are given precedence over mere utilitarianism. *Hamamdžilik* is a sanitary battery, an oriental version of the bathroom, in which the water for bathing is heated in a cauldron specially built into the furnace. The connection and functioning of the individual compartments of the *masandera* is a sublimated and witty solution in the engineering sense, and in terms of design and understanding of the interior, it is an example of superior aestheticization of utility objects. *Minderluk*, in terms of construction, is made of a rigidly forged board that has hard 'stilts' on the seating surface, while the back is made of a series of hard, so-called 'moulded cushions'. This seating set is enhanced with a *serjad* made of woolen weave with a typical Bosnian pattern, while a series of molded cushions covers a one-piece curtain with an ornate edge in the form of lace or feminine embroidery with lots of colors. Considering the realized dimensional relations and applied materials, the *minderluk* is ergonomically perfect, so as such it has become a metaphor for comfort, and a place to rest and have a long relaxing conversation. By bringing in a blue, low round dining table, the *halvat* is transformed into a dining room. The enclosing surfaces of the *halvat* - walls, floor and ceiling - with their treatment strongly contribute to the particularly pleasant atmosphere of the *halvat*. The walls are whitewashed, which gives the space airiness and freshness. *Dolafs*, small niches in a thick wall, with or without wooden doors, a wooden shelf at the top of the walls, are basically a supplement to the basic function of the pantry. However, due to their discretion on the white wall surface, they seem more like places for displaying copper and clay enamelware, therefore, like a living picture on the wall. With the exception of a few *lehva* - a quote from the Qur'an written in stylized Arabic script, there are no other images in the *halvat*, which is in accordance with the Islamic faith and tradition. The ceiling of the *halva* is mostly wooden, of finely profiled boards in a parallel stack, or of a centrally oriented composition with more or less rich decoration in wood carving. The floor is covered with a Bosnian carpet, with a specific geometric pattern or floral motifs, or the expensive Persian carpet. *Halvati* are places to stay in the winter period of the year. On the first floor we find spaces with similar purposes to those on the ground floor: the *divanhana* corresponds to the *hajata*, the *kamerija* to the porch, the *halvat* to the *chardak*, while the *mutvak* corresponds to the air space that extends to the attic to ventilate the smoke. However, the spaces on the first floor have a more pronounced hedonistic

component that is enlivened by the elevation of the floor. The desire to capture as many views as possible, while following the movement of the sun across the sky, resulted in the exceptional playfulness of the first floor. It is regularly lighter in its materialization than the ground floor, which, along with the desire to capture good views, also resulted in a wealth of windows. As openings through which a lot of view from the inside to the outside is needed, while simultaneously interrupting views in the opposite direction, the windows were given particularly transparent curtains, 'musebak'. In addition to this primary task and the aesthetic qualities that give the oriental-type townhouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina its specific characteristics, mushebak are very effective protection against excessive insolation and elements that provide the spaces on the first floor with pleasant diffuse lighting. Above the jagged floor of the first floor is a more or less regular hipped roof, which with its calm roof horizontality enhances the liveliness of the floor below it. The reddish color of the tiles gives the roof a special warmth. The materials used – stone, adobe, white brick, tiles, used in appropriate places of the house and in accordance with their best qualities, make the oriental-type city house balanced, natural and intimate. The spatial richness, the architectural

skill of constructing the complex and the achieved comfort are the reasons for its half-millennium duration. It is not only one of the greatest artistic-creative and practical-active achievements of Bosnian and Herzegovinian culture to date, but also the basis on which future cultural efforts will be realized. The most famous examples of oriental-type city houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina that have been preserved today are in Sarajevo (Svrzo's house, Alija Djerzelez's house, Sabura's house and Panjo's kula), Mostar (Biscevic's house, Kajtaz's house, Muslibegovic's house, Alajbegovic's house), Stolac (Begovina residential complex on Bregava), Pocitelj (Gavrankapetanovic's house), Blagaj (Velagic's residential complex on Buna), Banjaluka (Seranic's house) and Foca (Alagic's house). The plans of the oriental-type town house in Bosnia and Herzegovina are never treated separately (as a simple superimposition of the same functions vertically, or as a row horizontally), but are understood as a whole of one space with a multitude of different functions (Figures 13-28). This resulted in rich spatial relationships, which required a good knowledge of materials, constructive assemblies, dimensional relationships (anthropometry), and of course, creative inventiveness.

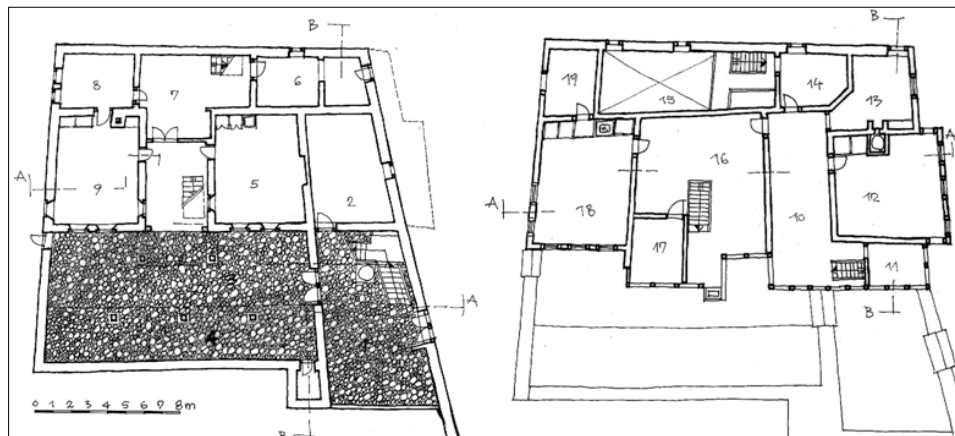


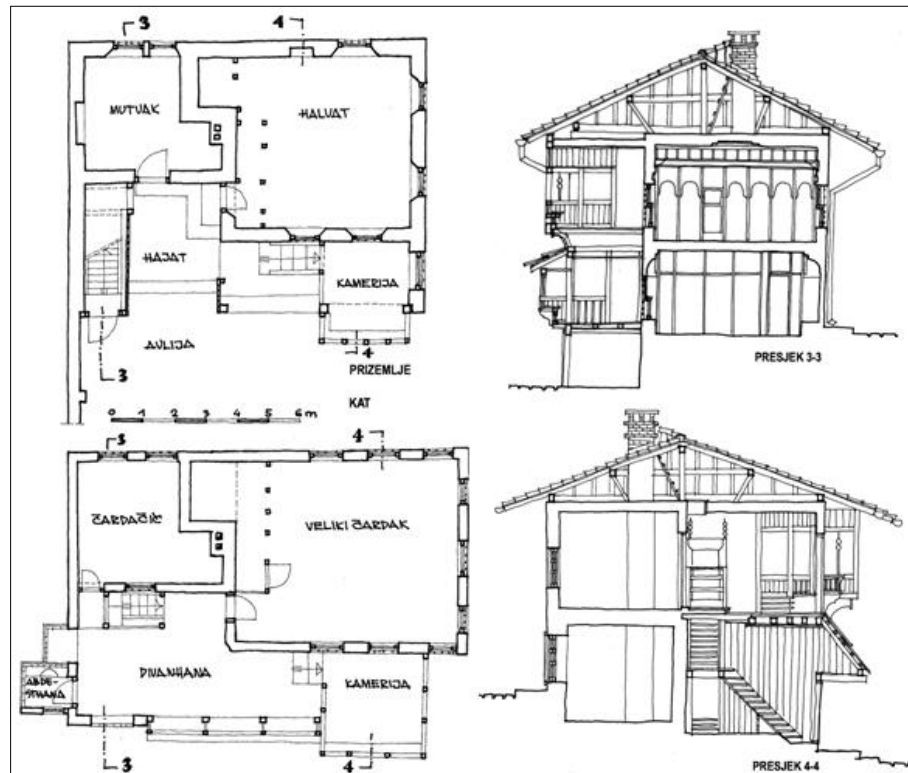
Fig 13: Djerzelez's house in Sarajevo. Left: Ground floor: 1. men's courtyard, 2. storeroom, 3. women's courtyard, 4. summer mutvak, 5. halvat, 6. hudzera, 7. mutvak, 8. small halvat, 9. halvat. Right: Floor: 10. men's divanhana, 11. kamarija, 12. men's chardak ('cosak'), 13. kahveodzak, 14. small chardak, 15. dimluk, 16. women's divanhana, 17. abdesthana, 18. women's chardak, 19. small chardak.

Source: Ljilja Pehar, Graduation thesis, Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo (1984)



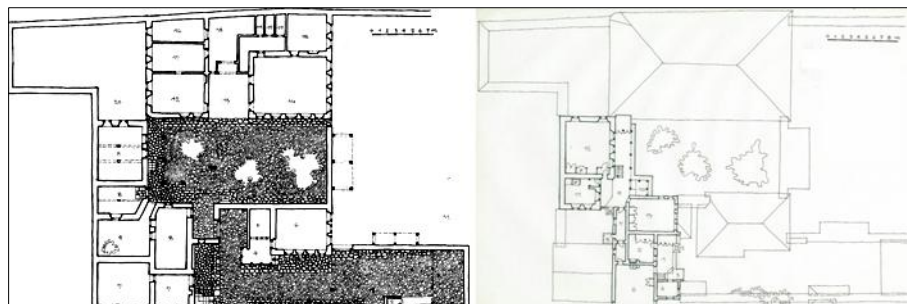
Fig 14: Alija Djerzelez's house in Sarajevo, view from the courtyard of the divanhana

Source: Authr (Drawing, 1984)



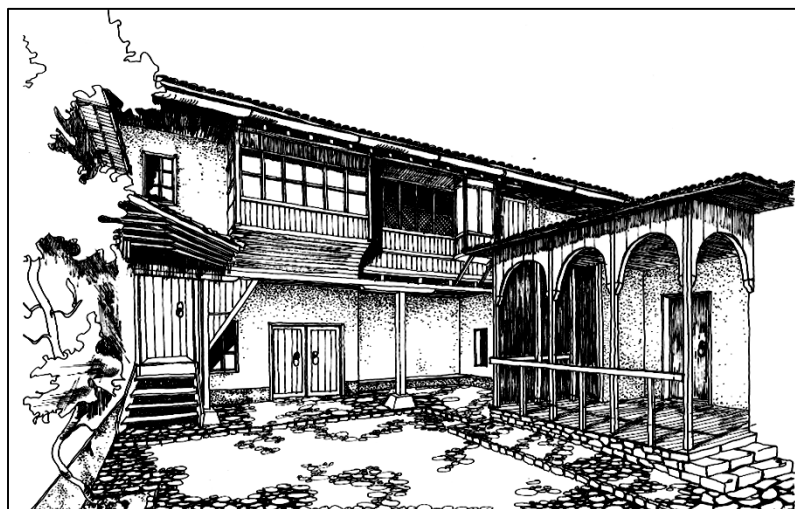
Source: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the City of Sarajevo (1984)

Fig 15: Sabura's house in Sarajevo



Source: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the City of Sarajevo

Fig 16: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Left: Ground floor: 1. men's courtyard, 2. toilet ('kenifa'), 3. woodshed (odunluk), 4. hajat, 5. coffee hearth, 6. men's halvat, 7. horse stable ('ahar'), 8. storehouse. 19. toilet ('kenifa'), 20. Garden. Right: first floor: 1. men's divanhana, 2. abdesthana, 3. room, 4. bachelor's room, 5. hearth, 6. men's chardak ('cosak'), 7. mubedin, 8. toilet ('kenifa'), 9. women's divanhana, 10. room, 11. small chardak, 12. chardak, 13. Chardak



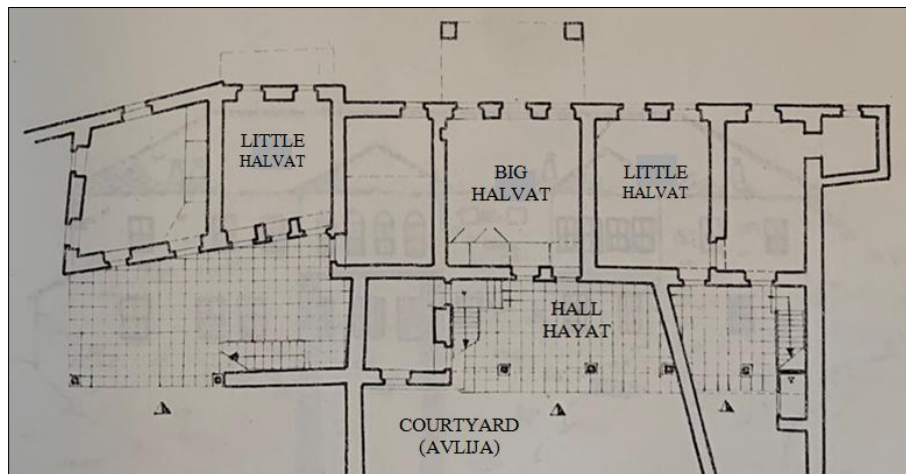
Source: Author (Drawing, 1983)

Fig 17: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. View from the courtyard



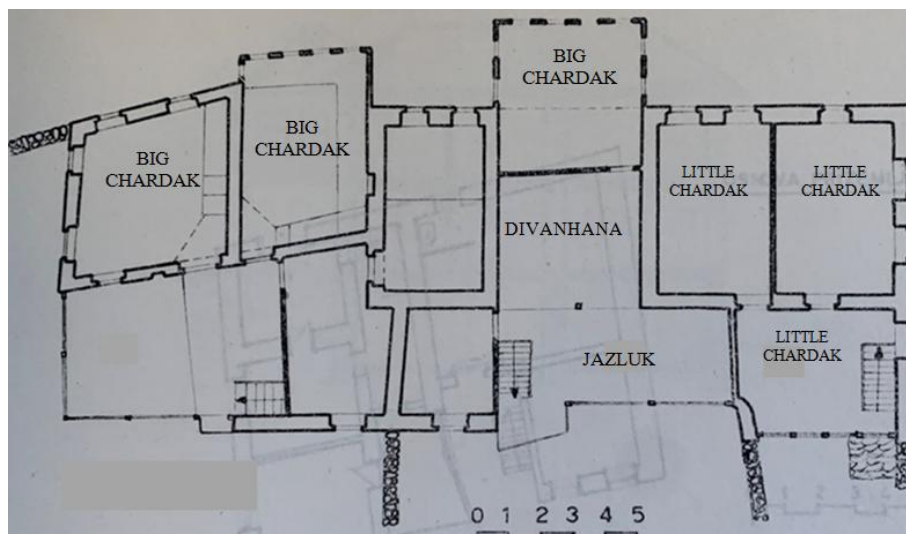
Source: <https://www.islamicarchitecturalheritage.com/listings/biscevic-lakisic-house>, Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 18: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Situation



Source: Pasic, A. (1989). Contribution to the study of Islamic residential construction in Yugoslavia using the example of Mostar, how old is the residential architecture of Mostar an indigenous phenomenon (doctoral dissertation), Zagreb

Fig 19: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Ground floor



Source: Pasic, A. (1989). Contribution to the study of Islamic residential construction in Yugoslavia using the example of Mostar, how old is the residential architecture of Mostar an indigenous phenomenon (doctoral dissertation), Zagreb

Fig 20: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Floor



Source (left): Author (Drawing, 1985)

Source (right): https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g295388-d7003059-Reviews-Biscevica_Kuca_Biscevic_House-Mostar_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bos.html, Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 21: House of the Biscevic family in Mostar. Left: view of the divanhana from the courtyard. Right: the view from the divanhana to the courtyard



Source: Source: <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: April 18, 2023.

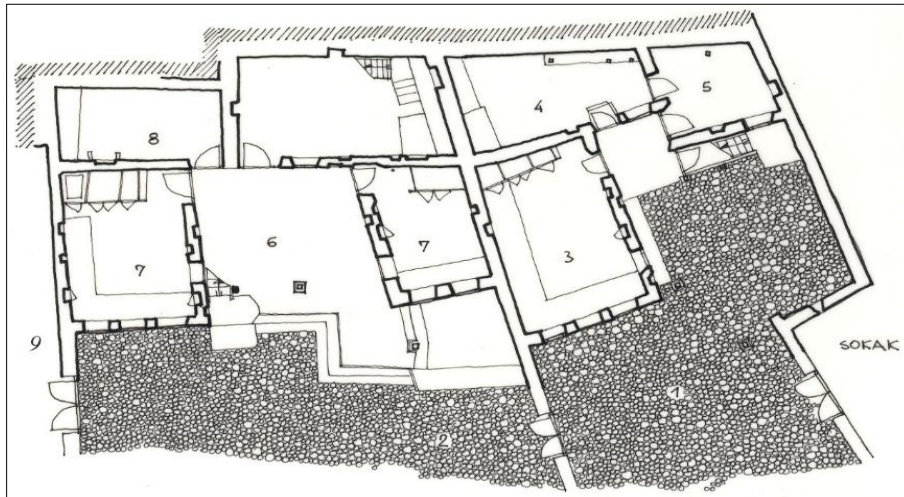
Fig 22: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Hall (hayat) on the ground floor of the house



Source (left): Author (Drawing, 1985)

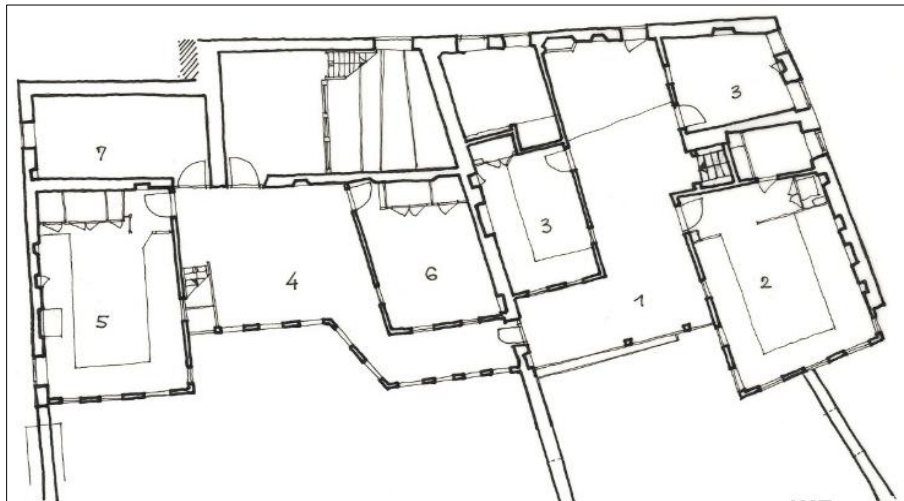
Source (right): <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: 18 April 2023.

Fig 23: Biscevic family house in Mostar. View of the house from the Neretva river



Source: Author (Drawing based on archival materials of the Stari Grad Mostar Archives, 1984)

Fig 24: Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Ground floor: 1. Men's courtyard, 2. Women's courtyard, 3. Men's hall, 4. Mutvak, 5. Hudzera, 6. Hayat, 7. Women's hall, 8. Mutvak, 9. Garden



Source: Author (Drawing based on the archival materials of the Stari Grad Mostar Archives, 1984)

Fig 25: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Floor 1. Divanhana in the men's part of the house, 2. Chardak, 3. Small chardak, 4. Divanhan in the women's part of the house, 5. Chardak of the 'first wife', 6. Small chardak, 7. Chardak



Source: Author (Drawing, 1984)

Source: Haris Bradić (January 10, 2007)

Fig 26: Kajtaz family house in Mostar. View along the courtyards ('avlija')

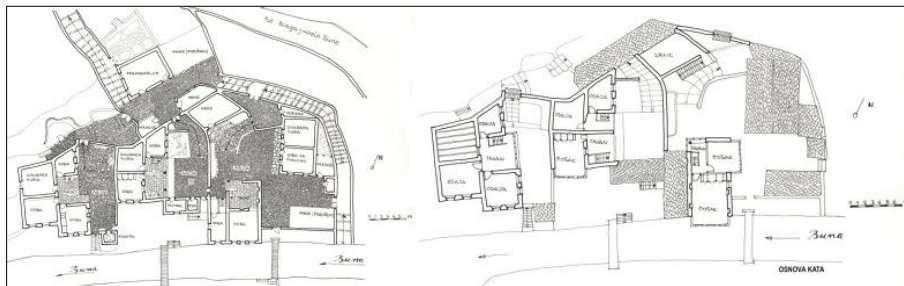


Fig 27: Residential Velegic's complex on the Buna river in Blagaj near Mostar
Source: Author (Drawing, 1983)



Fig 28: Left: Gavrankapetanovic's house in Pocitelj. Right: Djulhanuma's house in Stolac
Source: Author (Drawing, 1983)

Construction and materialization of an oriental-type city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina

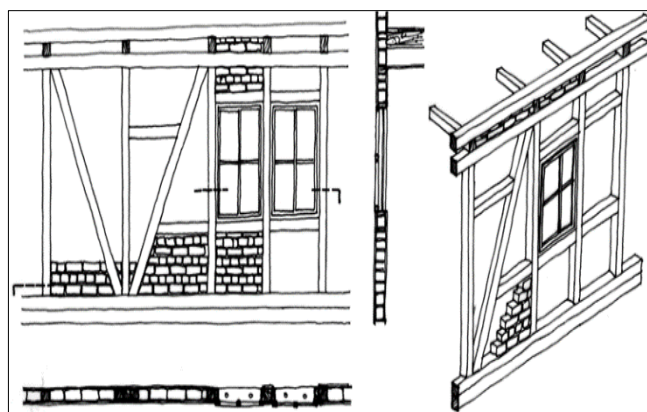
The thick adobe walls of the ground floor ensured outstanding performance of the space (halvat) for living in the winter period thanks to good thermal insulation, heat accumulation and ensuring a stationary flow of water vapor in the parodifusion process (Figure 29).



Source: Author (March 19, 2016)

Fig 29: Alija Djerzelez's house (left) and Svrzo's house (right) in Sarajevo

The first floor was intended for living in the summer. Freed from the task of thermal insulation, the external walls could now be thin, light and with many perforations for windows, which ensured a strong penetration of the external and internal space, i.e. more natural light within the space and achieving wide views towards the natural and built environment outside the residential building (Figure 30).



Source: Author (Drawing, 2016)

Fig 30: Oriental-style townhouse in Sarajevo. Bondruk construction

The spaces of the first floor, in addition to the function of housing (sitting, sleeping, dining...), also provided the function of entertainment, divan and aksamluk (pleasant, relaxing conversation). The precise projection of the floor beyond the contour of the ground floor and its floating above the alley (street), avlija (inner courtyard) or garden is not characteristic only of the oriental-type townhouse in Sarajevo, nor of oriental architecture as a whole. Doxats can also be found in Western architecture, both in public and residential buildings (where Gothic residential architecture is particularly represented). However, the doksats of oriental-type city houses in Sarajevo are particularly specific in their elegance, closeness to the natural and built environment, which is why we could call them 'Sarajevo doxats' and thus have a clear idea of them, completely different from the image of 'doxats' or 'bay windows' in general (Figure 31).



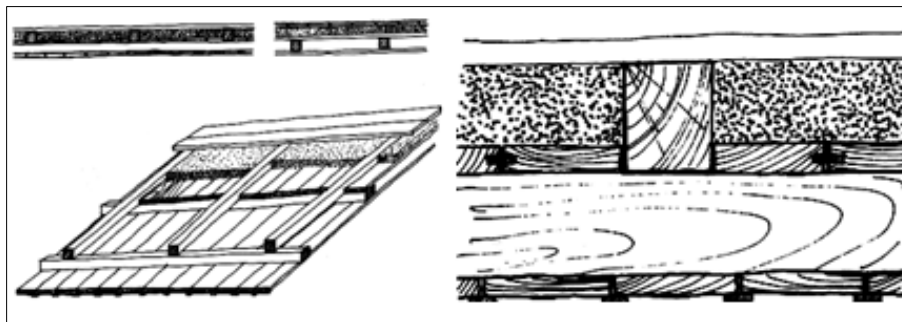
Source: Author (December 19, 2015)

Fig 31: Svrza's house in Sarajevo. Doxat towards Glodjo's street

The walls of the first floor, both external and internal, are made of a wooden frame (bondruk) with brick or wooden inlay ('dizma', 'ukobica'), (Figure 30). A staircase is, by definition, a special construction that ensures the connection of space vertically, into a single whole, with a more or less

differentiated purpose of individual rooms. Far more than its basic utilitarian function, the staircase in an oriental-style townhouse has the role of a symbol of mastery of space, designed in the manner of an attractive piece of furniture. Placed in such a way that it immediately 'catches the eye' whether approached from the street into the courtyard or viewed from any position within the courtyard, the staircase contributes to the 'legibility' of the building. F. L. Wright's idea of 'flowing space' finds an illustrative example here. The staircase 'flows' the first floor into the ground floor, the ground floor 'rises' to the first floor, without a visible boundary between open and closed space. In the Sarajevo's city house in the oriental style, the staircase is, as a rule, single-flight, straight or in the shape of the letter "L", most often made of wood. These are Basamaci. Special emphasis is placed on the staircase railing, which is often decorated as a real wooden drapery.

The ceiling structure is made of wooden beams, as the basic structural elements. The primary beams, which rely on the load-bearing walls, are placed at a distance of 80-120 cm from each other. Secondary beams are placed orthogonally on them, at whose height a mound of fine sand, slag or clay 'reinforced' with straw and chaff is made. This mound served to ensure sound insulation between the spaces separated by the interfloor structure (Figure 32).



Source: Author (Drawing, 2016)

Fig 32: Oriental-style townhouse in Sarajevo, interfloor construction

On the secondary beams, on their upper side, a floor made of treated wooden boards 2.5-7 cm thick is placed. The floor covering boards were often treated with slots on the narrow sides (sipil) in which a thin lath was installed, which ensured better continuity of the floor covering. The primary beams were usually cantilevered over the outer wall, outside the ground floor contour, in order to ensure the construction of a doksat, one of the specific features of the oriental-type city house in Sarajevo. From a structural aspect, the cantilever of the interfloor structure reduced ('extracted') the positive bending moments in the field of the main span of the beams, thus reducing the possibility of their deflection. But more than that, the idea of the folk craftsman was to 'exit into free space' with the first floor, to create a light, airy and comfortable 'observatory' for observing the surroundings and enjoying the view.

Staircase

Given the fact that emphasizing verticality is one of the most important characteristics of the oriental-type city house, the role of the staircase, as a structure that ensures the connection of the horizontal plans of the house, is extremely important. The placement of the staircase in the space of the house is

always guided by the principle of achieving its functionality and the spatial functionality of the house as a whole. In doing so, the opportunity is never missed to give the staircase additional importance and meaning, which are in the sphere of philosophy, psychology and aesthetics. In most cases, the staircase in the oriental-type town house is placed in such a way that it is quickly noticeable when considering the architectural physiognomy of the house. In addition, the arrangement of the staircase results in the construction of an entrance porch on the ground floor level and a divanhana on the first floor level. The porch on the ground floor and the divanhana on the first floor, both elements made of wood, contrast with the white color of the walls of the main body of the house, and this is the most striking image of the house by which it is remembered. Since the staircase is both a practical and symbolic reflection of vertical movement, its position and significance in the building tells us the most about the significance of the vertical continuity of the architectural object. In an oriental-style townhouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the staircase is given a place where it will be most noticeable, right from the entrance to the house complex (Figures 33,34).



Source: Author (December 19, 2015)

Fig 33: Wooden stairs ('basamaci') in Sabura's house (left) and Svrzo's house (right) in Sarajevo



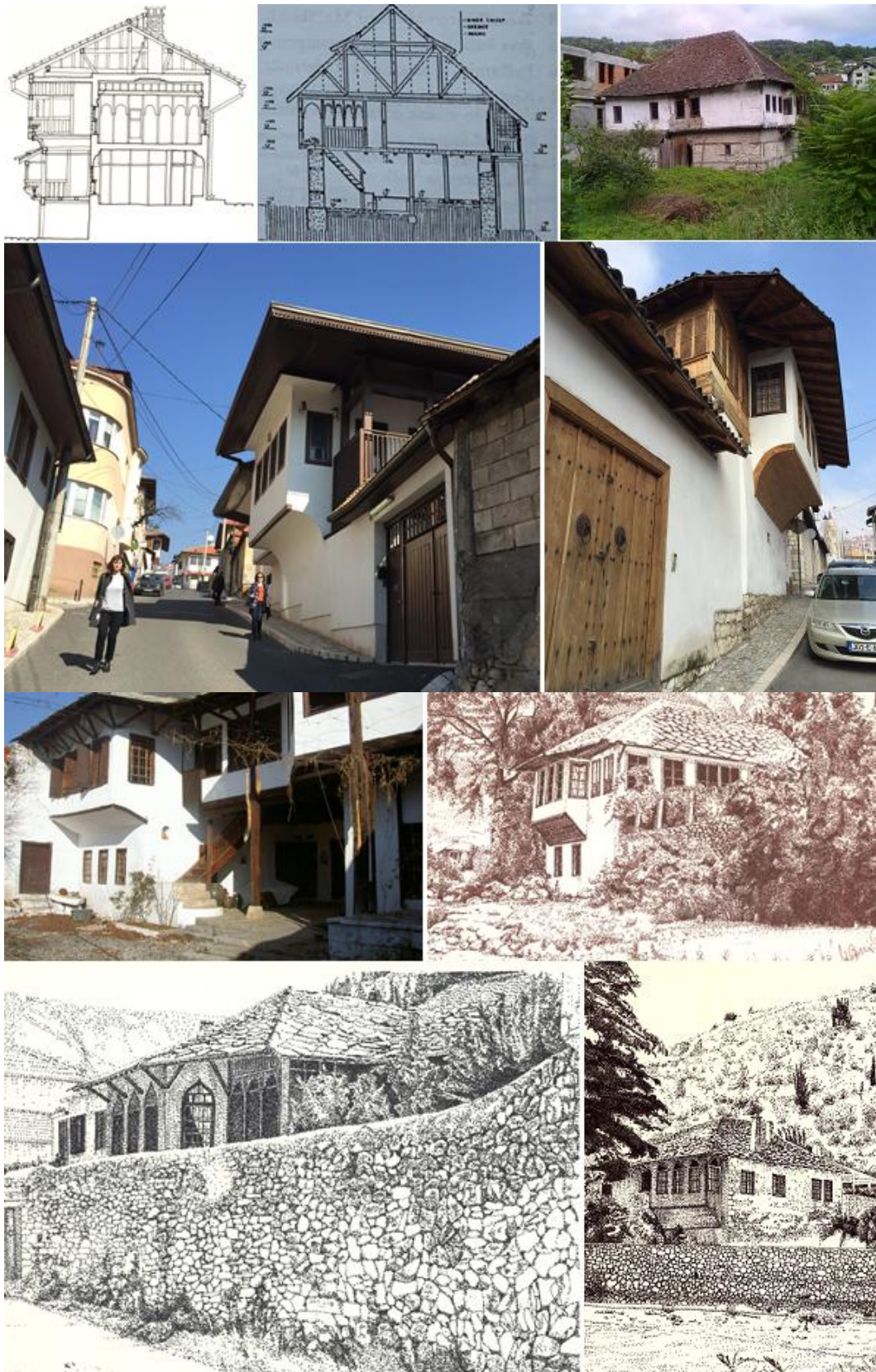
Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>
Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Source: <https://ill.ba/biscevic-house/>, Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 34: Wooden stairs ('basamaci'). Left: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Right: The Biscevic family house in Mostar

Roof. The space covered by the roof had an exclusively architectural and physical function; it was a protective buffer against the effects of weather, low and high temperatures, etc. Therefore, the construction of the roof depended primarily on the influence of external environmental forces (rain, snow, wind, choice of material), and less on the requirements of internal needs (of man). The roof, as a rule, had a simple geometry - a square or rectangular base and a higher or lower peak, depending on the covering or atmospheric influences of the environment; bays in the roof were avoided, both because of potential problems with leakage and because of a cheaper solution (avoiding sheet metal). Over time, the roof, with its shape and final covering, reflected not only the city-village status, but also its economic status: a simple, four-pitched and high roof covered with shingles is a symbol of a rural, economically weaker environment, while a complex roof covered with ceramic tiles or tiles reflected an urban, economically stronger environment. Structural solutions for

the roof are various forms of roof trusses, more or less complex. The solutions are very often not 'clean', which is understandable when one knows that the attic space was not planned to satisfy some of one's needs. The covering, due to the specifics of the environment and the economic power of the owner, is made of tiles (Banjaluka), ceramic tiles (Sarajevo, Foca) and stone slabs (Mostar, Pocitelj, Stolac), (Figure 35). On the Sarajevo townhouse of the oriental type, the space occupied by the roof is free from any utilitarian purpose. This fact, as well as the fact that tiles were mainly used as a roof covering, resulted in its gentle slope and relatively low peak height. The obvious tendency to 'catch' the playful floor level and cover it with the regular quadrangular contour of the roof resulted in a strongly (in places) protruding eaves (Figure 35). The calm horizontal line of the eaves further emphasizes the liveliness of the floor.



Source: Author (March 18, 2016)

Source: Author (March 19, 2016)

Source: Husedzinovic, Sabira (2005). Documents of survival: (values, significance, demolition and restoration of cultural heritage), Zenica City Museum, WORKS XV, Zenica, pp. 167-170 (in Bosnian)

Source: Author (1. August 2011.)

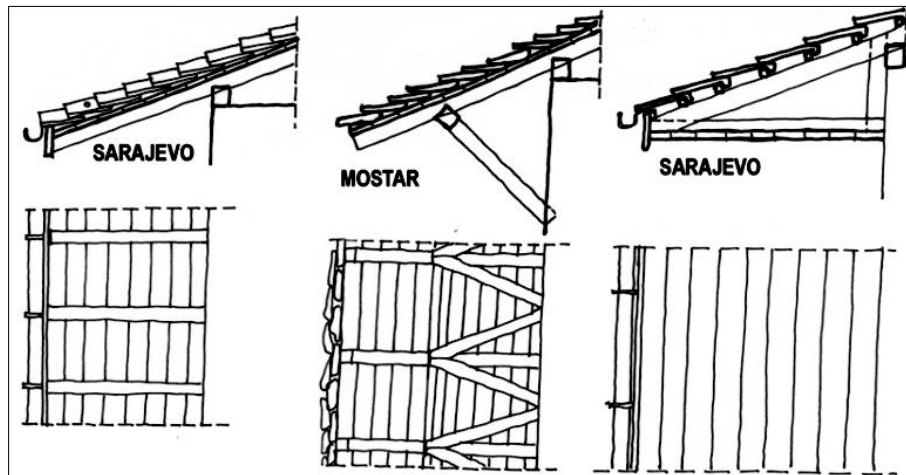
Source: Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)

Source: Author (Drawings, 1983, 1984, 1985)

Fig 35: Roofs on an oriental-style townhouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From left to right, top to bottom: Sabura's house in Sarajevo, The house of the Seranic family in Banjaluka (two images), House of the Semiz family in Sagardzije street in Sarajevo; Djerzelez's house in Sarajevo, The Kajtaz family house in Mostar, Houses in Stolac (three images)

Structurally, the roof was solved with a double or triple upright or inclined roof. There is no example of a roof hanger on an oriental-type city house in Sarajevo. This 'engineering' solution was not known to local craftsmen, nor was there a

need for it given the usual dimensions of the spatial units that had to be covered. The most common roof covering is tiles on wooden battens. Tiles were used less often (Figures 35, 36).



Source: Author (Drawing, 1984)

Fig 36: Types of eaves on an oriental-type townhouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Opening elements are those places within the boundaries of an architecturally defined space where it is included (excluded) from the environment. These are extremely important points where a 'great change' occurs between two environments, and as such they are extremely complex, with many levels of meaning. From their design, materialization, position within the boundaries of the architectural space, number, (...), one can 'predict' the content within the architectural space, judge the owner of the house, judge the artistic talent and technical skills of specific performers-folk craftsmen... Opening elements (doors and windows) of oriental-type town houses in Sarajevo are quite specific. With their construction and materialization, they greatly contribute to the overall aesthetic expression of the house.

Doors

Depending on the place where they were to ensure contact between two spaces, the doors were given dimensions, construction, material and degree of aesthetic refinement. At the entrance from the alley (street) to the courtyard (inner courtyard) there are double doors. The dimensions of the entrance doors ('kanat') from the street to the courtyard are determined by the size of a horse loaded with cargo (Figure 37). These doors are made of spruce, less often oak. Since the courtyard door is a transition from the public world to the world of family intimacy, they represent a major event in the space, and are therefore adequately emphasized. The

courtyard wall above the entrance has a canopy in the form of a double-sided console (external and internal) or a strongly emphasized canopy. Great attention is paid to the details of the door's construction: instead of ordinary nails, special forged nails with large oval heads are used, which, in addition to giving the impression of the door's solidity and rusticity, have a decorative effect in themselves. Instead of a bell, an iron ring knocker was used on the doors (both those at the entrance gate and the interior doors). The mechanism for closing the door is specific and is a true masterpiece of product design. The doors connecting the male ('selamluk') and female ('haremluk') parts of the residential complex are treated in the same way as the doors at the entrance gate of the residential complex. The interior doors are structurally simple: boards about 5 cm thick are connected by wooden bars that connect them to a single surface of the door leaf. Depending on the representativeness of the space in which the door is located, or the financial status of the home owner, the doors are given a higher or lower level of decoration. Sometimes the decoration is reduced to carved grooves that follow the profile of the door, and sometimes it is an extremely rich wood carving (Figures 39-42). The motifs of the decoration are generally geometric, although stylized floral motifs are also found. The doors on warehouses (basements, storage rooms dug into the ground) are made of wrought iron.



Source: <https://stav.ba/vijest/konaciste-za-legendu-kuca-alije-derzeleza-u-sarajevu/15554>, Accessed: 18 April 2023.

Source: <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: 18 April 2023.

Fig 37: Entrance gate to the house complex. Left: Djerzelez's house in Sarajevo. Right: Biscevic family house in Mostar



Source: Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)

Fig 38: Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Entrance gate to the courtyard of the house complex



Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g295388-d7003059-Reviews-Biscevica_Kuca_Biscevic_House-Mostar_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bos.html#/media-attf/7003059/142073742:p/?albumid=-160&type=0&category=-160
 Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Source: <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 39: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Interior door



Source: http://kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=6&lang=1&action=view&id=2581, Accessed: April 18, 2025.

Source: http://www.galenfrysinger.com/bosnia_mostar_turkish_house.htm, Accessed: April 18, 2025.

Fig 40: Left: door on the porch in Alija Džerželez's house in Sarajevo. Right: door on the chardak in Kajtaz's house in Mostar



Source: Author (December 19, 2015)

Fig 41: Sabura's house in Sarajevo. The door in the hayat area

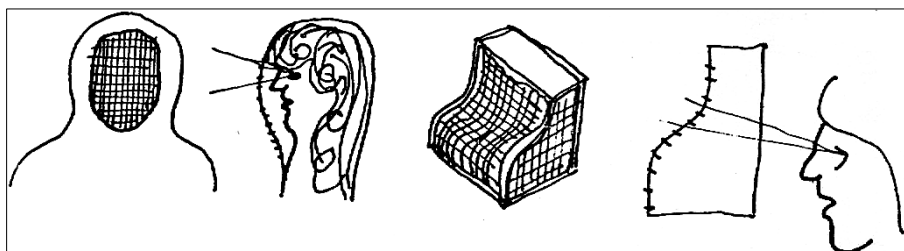


Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitentonik-dragulj/170222075>
Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 42: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Doors on the čardaks

The windows ('pendzeri') of townhouses in Sarajevo are relatively small in size (most often 80 x 130 cm). This is a direct consequence of the structural system of the building. On the ground floor, where the walls are made of adobe, the windows only serve the function of minimal natural lighting and ventilation, since each perforation of the wall reduces its structural performance. The walls of the first floor have a skeletal structure (bondruk), are less loaded, so the number of windows is significantly larger, and their dimensions are created by the structural assembly of the skeletal walls (bondruk). The windows are single or double, double-leaf or compound. The window sashes generally open around a vertical or horizontal axis, although one can also encounter the demanding construction of vertical-sliding window sashes, 'windows on the surma'. The window profile is rectangular, less often with an arch, semicircular or spiral. Even when the wall perforation for the window is overcome by an arch (as a constructive solution to relieve the cavity), the window is reduced to a rectangle, where, obviously, the decision for the simplicity of the window design prevails over the 'aesthetic power' of the arched window profile as a whole. The main reason why oriental-type townhouses in Sarajevo

do not have complex window profiles (which are always more expensive than simpler, rectangular ones) is the already mentioned second-rateness of this architectural program in the sphere of oriental-Ottoman culture as a whole. The fragmentation of the glass panels in the window is a consequence of the low level of glass technology, i.e. its scarcity and high price at that time. Formally, the fragmentation of the 'hatching' on the windows creates the impression that the windows are larger than they actually are. On the ground floor, windows regularly have physical protection in the form of demir (a grill made of wrought iron bars), while windows on the first floor have demir and musebak (a special network of wooden slats). Mushebak is a specific creation of oriental culture (although it is also found in Western cultures). This window element in Oriental-Islamic culture has, above all, a symbolic meaning: it is a transparent curtain that enables one-way visual communication, that is, it ensures visual communication from the intimate to the public, while at the same time preventing visual communication from the public to the intimate (Figures 43,44).

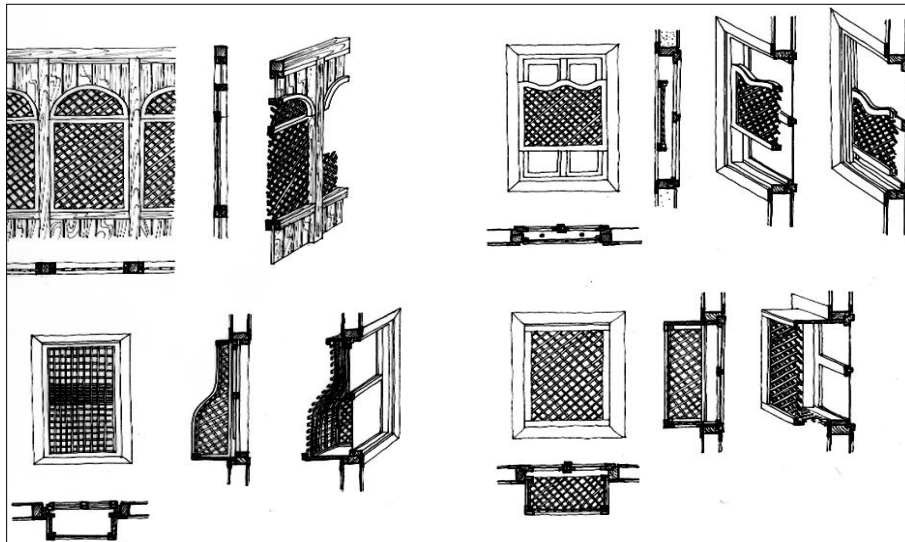


Source: Author (Drawing, 1984)

Fig 43: Woman's veil ('burqa', 'zar') and mushebak on the window

Musebak emerged from the philosophy of inviolability of the personal and intimate. If one were to search for what most personifies the personal in the oriental-Islamic world, then it is a woman. We dare to say that precisely its position in the

Oriental-Islamic society of the time had the largest share in the spatial organization of the house. Several basic types of musebaks oriental-type townhouses in Sarajevo are shown in Figure 44.



Source: Author (Drawing, 1984)

Fig 44: Mosebaks on the windows



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>
 Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 45: Kajtez family house in Mostar. Many windows that open views towards the courtyard and the city of Mostar

Specific equipment elements

If we exclude the economic group of spaces (magaza, mutvak/hudjera) whose functions are unequivocal, the spaces of the oriental-type townhouse in Sarajevo are polyvalent and serve a stay in all the complexity of the meaning of this term: rest, pleasant conversation while sitting ('muhabet', 'eglen') and drinking coffee, sleeping, dining, entertainment, in order

for one space to be able to provide all this, it must be 'empty', and for a certain 'program' it must be provided with appropriate furniture that will define it. The only permanent piece of furniture in such spaces of an oriental-type townhouse in Sarajevo is a seating sofa ('minderluk') which, placed against the walls, frames the space with all but one of its edges, i.e. the floor as its measure (Figures 46, 47, 48).



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>
 Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 46: Left: Kajtez family house in Mostar. Arrangement of the halvat on the ground floor. Right: chardak in Svrzo's house in Sarajevo: the living room becomes a bedroom by adding sleeping equipment



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>
 Accessed: 18.April 2025.

Source: <https://bljesak.info/lifestyle/flash/video-posjetili-smo-kucu-u-mostaru-u-kojoj-se-zivi-po-istilahu/454652>, Accessed: 18.April 2025.

Fig 47: Arrangement of the chardaks. Left: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Right: Muslibegovic's house in Mostar

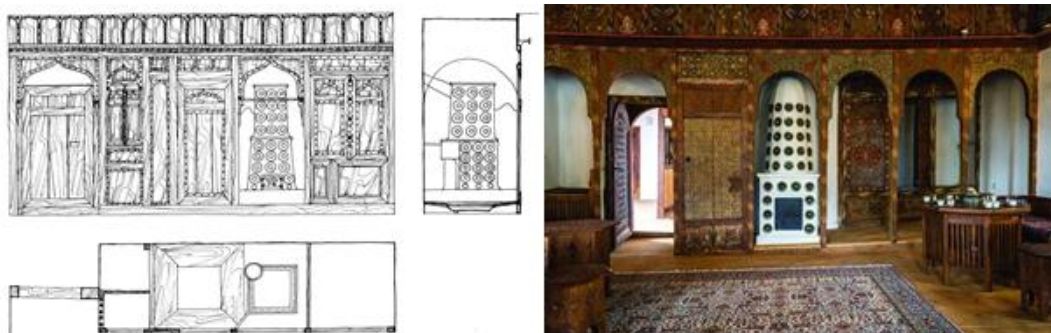


Source: <https://www.nickkembel.com/things-to-do-in-mostar/>, Accessed: 18.April 2025.
 Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckmKTf4hlu4&t=87s>, Accessed: 18.April 2025.

Fig 48: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Arranging the veliki cosak ('big corner')

This edge and the corresponding surfaces in the floor and wall were left for the installation of the musandera, a special functional 'battery', specific only to the oriental-Islamic type of house. The musandera is a wooden cabinet with three basic 'compartments', a bathtub, a furuna and a mattress (Figure 49). The 'hamamdzik' is the equivalent of a modern bathroom, the furuna (an earthen stove with glazed clay pots) was used to heat the space and water for bathing, while the 'dushekluk' is a storage space for mattresses and bedding. In addition to the large concentration of potential functions that it implies, the musandera is also a surface that defines the space in the manner of a carved wooden drapery. The three basic functional groups of the musandera are visually separated by spiral arches in shallow plastic, and special decorative motifs. As a rule, the musandera is placed on the

surface of the space where the entrance door is. At the same time, the door does not interrupt the continuity of the musandera, which, with its height, transitions into a wooden entrance arch, which in the overall composition of the room looks like a ceremonial entrance arch under which one enters the hall. The decorative motifs on the musander are geometric: in squares, rectangles, hexagons, triangles (...) arranged in primary plastic, abstract motifs of concentric circles are carved, the closest association of which in the real world would be a flower. As a complement to the wooden decoration, elements of iron fittings, links and nails with large oval heads made of wrought iron were subtly added to the musander. In the contrast of these two materials, the wood appeared even warmer, and the iron elements gained in strength and constructiveness.



Source: Fatima Mehić (architecture student), archive of the Department of Architecture Development

Fig 49: Left: Musander in the Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Right: musander in the Sabura's house in Sarajevo



Source: <http://bosnjaci.agency/svrzina-kuca-uzor-bosnjacke-gradanske-kulture-stanovanja/>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Fig 50: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Arrangement of the girls' chardak



Source: <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: 18 April 2025.

Fig 51: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Arrangement of one of the chardaks



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arhitektonski-dragulj/170222075>
Accessed: April 18, 2025.

Fig 52: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Arrangement of the main chardak

The 'sinija', a low round wooden dining table, is only there when dining, otherwise it is stored in the pantry ('hudjera'),

(Figures 53,54,55). In the past, the sinija in the form of a large copper pan on a wrought iron stand was a permanent part of

the furniture in the room, as was the mangal, a specially shaped copper vessel with embers on which coffee was roasted. In the home pantry ('hudjera'), the specific solution of the built-in cupboard ('dolaf') for storing dishes and food is particularly interesting. It is a niche hollowed out in a thick wall, which is closed with wooden shutters with regular application of ornaments in wood carving. The room that was used for the intimate residence of female members of the family (the queen's or maiden's room) had, in addition to a chest of drawers with three compartments, a spacious wooden cupboard for the maiden's wardrobe. A wooden chest, a sehara, served to store a girl's fine handicrafts (embroidery), jewelry, and as a shelter for her 'intimate world'. It was once a simple chest made of beech or spruce wood, and sometimes a lavishly decorated chest made of expensive walnut, ash, or mahogany. Particularly valuable versions of the sehara included decorative iron fittings with precious stones. In addition to its primary utilitarian purpose, the sehara was a metaphor for girlish youth, innocence, inviolability, longing, hope... In an oriental-style townhouse in Sarajevo, the use of wood on dishes and cutlery is visible.



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitentonik-dragulj/170222075>
Accessed: 18. April 2025.

Fig 53: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. By bringing in equipment from the pantry and kitchen (hudjera and mutvak), the living room (halvat and chardak) is transformed into a dining room



Source: <https://www.safarway.com/en/property/biscevic-house#gallery>, Accessed: 18 April 2025.

Fig 54: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Dishes in the pantry ('hudjera')



Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitentonik-dragulj/170222075>
Accessed: April 18, 2025.

Fig 55: The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Pantry equipment ('hudjera')



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n1SNW15wUA>, Accessed: 18 April 2025.

Fig 56: Iron with embers in the house of the Kajtaz family in Mostar

Surface treatment. It was said earlier that the first and basic impression that a person gets when they find themselves in the spaces of an oriental-style city house in Sarajevo is simplicity, intimacy and the omnipresence of human scale. In order to create a certain, appropriate atmosphere of space, individual elements of furniture that, when attached to the floor, ceiling or wall, would name the space were not used here: living room, bedroom, dining room, work niche, fireplace niche, giving the furniture only a designated role (after use, put it away so that it does not get in the way), the local architect solves the issue of the global relationship of the surfaces that make up the space. The floor is the surface on which you walk, sit and sleep. For this reason, the floor is never bare, but is regularly covered with a rug, thicker or thinner, more expensive or cheaper (Figure 57). Depending on the space and the wealth of the homeowner, the floor can be made of goat hair, woven from linen or woolen yarn, more or less expensive woolen celima (domestic or imported from the East).

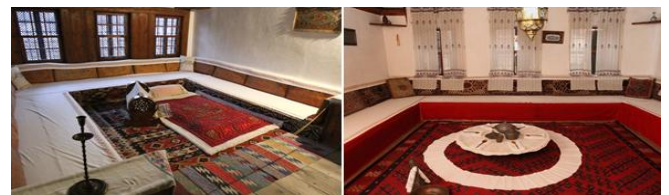


Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g295388-d7003059-Reviews-Biscevica_Kuca_Biscevic_House-Mostar_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bos.html#media-atf/7003059/142073742:p/?albumid=-160&type=0&category=-160 Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 57: House of the Biscevic family in Mostar. The floor of the Divanhana (on the first floor of the house) is covered with 'Bosnian carpets'

The walls of the oriental-style city house in Sarajevo are mostly bare, painted ('duvarovi'), without any paintings (Figures 58,59). There are no hanging paintings, souvenirs or similar decorations such as we encounter in the West. The whiteness of the walls gives the space more light and contributes to the impression of cleanliness and airiness. One wall of the main rooms of the house (halvat and čardak) is always made as a musander. The natural dark color of the musander wood goes perfectly with the whiteness of the walls. Thanks to this contrast, the emptiness of the white walls and the richly decorated musander (in which a large number of potential functions are concentrated) is emphasized. Wooden window sills, especially in the rooms on the first floor (winter gardens) where there are a large number of windows, stand out strongly against the whiteness of the wall, emphasizing the penetration of the surface and the connection with the environment. The ceiling of the room is most often made of wood (Figures 60,61,62). In an oriental-style townhouse in Sarajevo, the wooden ceiling is called a 'šiše'. Sometimes it is a piece of roughly processed boards, and sometimes it is a real treasure in wood carving. Even when the owner of the house does not have the opportunity to make a richly decorated ceiling, he does not deprive himself of the need for a beautiful ceiling: he gives

the board a simple profile in the form of a groove, enough to create a play of perspective, lines and rhythm. Of the six gojskih surfaces, which define a parallelepiped space (which is most often the living space of an oriental-type city house in Sarajevo), three are made of wood. This, in itself, creates a warm, 'natural' atmosphere of the space. If it was smooth, the question arises why the other surfaces were not processed with wood to make the atmosphere even 'warmer'? Of course, we can assume (and simulate with the project) such a possibility. There is no doubt that the space in such a case of surface processing would not be much 'warmer'. In that case, the space would lose the brightness, clarity and freshness that the painted surfaces give it and would become 'stuffy'. If we want to highlight something special, we use contrast and be careful. The builder of the oriental-style city house in Sarajevo was well aware of this.



Source: <http://faktor.ba/svrzina-kuca-u-sarajevu-dragulj-kulturno-historijskog-naslijeda-foto/>, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Fig 58: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Decoration of the chardak



Source: http://kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=6&lang=1&action=view&id=2581, Accessed: April 18, 2025.

Fig 59: House of Alija Džerzelez in Sarajevo. Surface treatment in the interior



Source: http://www.bhsavez.org/portal/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=413:svrzina-kuca-uzor-bosnjacke-gradanske-kulture-tvoranila&Itemid=144, Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Source: <http://www.source.ba/clanak/Cooltura/387978/Svrzina-kuca--Sarajevski-dragulj-kulturno-historijskog-naslijedja> Accessed: April 20, 2025.

Fig 60: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Surface treatment in the interior



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckmKTf4hlu4&t=87s>,
Accessed: 18 April 2023.

Fig 61: Biscevic family house in Mostar. Wooden ceiling in the first floor hallway ('visiting room')



Source: <http://faktor.ba/ozivljena-nakon-260-godina-saburina-kuca-u-sarajevu-govori-o-velicini-nasih-predaka-foto/>
Accessed: April 18, 2023.

Fig 62: Sabura's house in Sarajevo. Space arrangement and surface treatment in the interior

In the following, we will deal with the physiognomy of the building, or the psychological relationship between the building and the observer from the outside. Looking at an oriental-style city house in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the outside, the observer usually notices only two colors: the white color of the painted walls and the natural color of the wood in various elements of the house (Figures 63,64,65). The builders of oriental-style city houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not use color as a means of decorating the building. They model the space according to the logic (wide complex of properties) of the materials they use and the functional requirements of individual rooms. In doing so, every shape, every function is visibly emphasized by the wood itself, or by the contrast of the color of the wood and the white color of the wall. At the junction of the street and the house complex, there are large wooden doors ('kanate') that, with the color of the wood from which they are made, stand out from the painted wall, forming a barrier between the public world of the alley (street) and the intimate world of the house. The structure that carries the strong eaves above the entrance door is made of wood, and since it is located above the horizon of a person's movement (especially in steep streets when moving down the street), it is visible. The exact projection of a part of the floor over the courtyard wall (ie the contour of the ground floor wall) into the space of the alley is noticeable enough in itself. However, wood is used here as well, not in the surface treatment of the doxat sub-view (which would be correct from a constructive point of view), but as an elegantly shaped transition from a vertical to a horizontal surface. Thus, the plasticity of the building is emphasized even more, and the alley, although an external

(public) communication, acquires a series of warm tones that give it a humane dimension. On the docks that protrude into the space of the alley are wooden windows that dissolve the white surface of the wall in a dense rhythm. Often these outward-facing windows are covered with curtains, which makes them stand out even more. Viewed from a greater distance, the windows with protruding windows appear like holes in the white wall, and from close up like fine wooden lace. On the first floor of the house there is a divanhana and a bedroom, spaces exclusively intended for rest, leisure and enjoyment in close contact with the yard and garden and the spacious views. This is a space that is a functional complement to what the doksat represents and therefore should be highlighted. Since people sit here only in good weather and on summer nights, a wall (as a barrier against the cold) is not needed. A fence made of finely processed boards and a network of boards are enough to create a boundary of space, visually permeable in only one direction, from the inside to the outside. Since these are the largest outdoor wooden surfaces, special attention was paid to the design and materialization of the surfaces of the sofa and bedrooms (Figure 24).



Source: Author (March 18, 2016)

Fig 63: Svrzo's house in Sarajevo. Exterior surface treatment



Source: Author (March 18, 2016)

Fig 64: House of Alija Džerzelez in Sarajevo. Exterior surface treatment



Source: Author (Drawing, 1983), left
Source: Author (December 19, 2015), right

Fig 65: Sabura's house in Sarajevo, view of the house from the street

5. Conclusion (Perspectives)

The social environment was considered and acted as a relatively uniform factor throughout the entire geographical area of the former Ottoman Empire [2]. A harmony of natural surroundings - social environment - man was achieved. The philosophical view of the world (man is a transient in this world, like all other living beings and things) made man not oppose nature, but act in accordance with its flows. Man,

when building a house, must not commit 'violence' over nature, but should enter into a 'symbiosis' with it, where he will have 'benefits' and nature a beautiful superstructure. Society is above the individual man, and thus social (collective) needs stand above individual-human needs. Buildings that serve to satisfy collective needs are primary, occupy more suitable locations, are built from more durable materials and are intended for long-term use. In contrast to them is the individual house; it is built to serve the 'human lifespan, which is evident from the materials used (mostly more perishable - wood and adobe), if nature has not provided an abundance of stone. Religious-philosophical and aesthetic principles made the house the medium where man could express himself in all his dimensions. Since it was a townhouse (a house of a privileged, wealthy class in society, with pronounced hedonistic needs), it reflected all the richness of these needs. Respect for the neighborhood is a basic moral principle of life in a community. This necessarily led to the humanization of man's built environment ^[2]. An important question remains: what should our current relationship be towards this house? In short: our contemporary architecture should be tailored to the needs of modern man and harmonized with the natural and social environment, with the projection of true human values; in this case, the oriental-type townhouse forms part of that (social) environment as a cultural and architectural tradition. Today's man, compared to the man of a hundred to five hundred years ago, has significantly expanded his creative dimensions: he has mastered new knowledge about himself and about nature; social assumptions (socio-economic relations) inaugurated him as the greatest value and thus created a whole series of conditions for the development and affirmation of all people in the community. Here, however, man remained a natural being, that is, with his organic constants (housing, food, clothing). On the other hand, the system of economic activity and the system of social relations changed his way of life; many functions are no longer performed in the house as they used to be, they have become 'socialized' (childcare, work, hobbies, entertainment, recreation, and the like). Women participate in social and private life on an equal footing; with the development of technique and technology, the share of live labor has decreased, and man has gained much more free time. He has equipped the house with means that save his labor and time. In a word, certain assumptions have been created for an incomparably more comfortable life. New circumstances that are appropriate to this time (the economic development of cities) entail a sharp increase in the number of inhabitants; the terrain for construction becomes limited; new building materials, the level of technical knowledge and technology allow for building in height; Man creates a new environment (urban environment) that often turns against the natural environment. In addition, the work zone and the residential zone are often far from each other, which entails a whole series of problems: economic, health-hygienic and social. All this has led to certain conditions that are beyond the human essence: social alienation, the problem of free time, the splitting of the complex family (into so-called nuclear families), various traumatic conditions, wasting time on the work-housing relationship, etc. The issue of owning one's own apartment often remains open for a long time. At the same time, building an individual house in urban conditions becomes a special privilege, especially an expensive one. New social circumstances have placed much more complex tasks before the architect: he must be aware of

the essence of man (both a natural and social being and a creator of beauty); he must know all the complexity of the natural and social environment; finally, he must be technically educated and have that innate need to create beauty. Today, some spatial issues are decided by plebiscite: the construction of settlements, factories, urban plans, regulatory plans, hydropower projects, etc. This means that the issue of space is not only in the hands of 'professional' individuals, but also of the widest social base. This base needs to be educated, made capable of understanding and solving certain issues about space. The role of the architect will not be diminished in the slightest; in his hands will always remain that final characteristic - defining the boundaries of architectural space. Regardless of whether they want to build an individual house or a megastructure for the collective housing of thousands of people, the essential problems will always be the same: to enable man to express his generic nature, to express himself in all the richness of his possibilities. At the same time, an oriental-type city house can serve, if not with its concrete constructive-spatial solutions, then with the genesis of its organization, that these requirements can still be fulfilled ^[2].

6. References

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