

THE HISTORICAL SETTLEMENT PRUSAC

Ahmet Hadrovic

Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract: Prusac is a historical settlement in the municipality of Donji Vakuf. The Prusac Old Town of is one of the oldest towns in the Skopje Valley (Vrba River Valley). It is best known for holding the largest mass prayer ('dova') in Europe, in the locality of Ajvatovica. It has about 1281 inhabitants. It is located about 7.4 km from Donji Vakuf, 9.4 km from Bugojno, and about 132 km northwest of Sarajevo (Geographical coordinates: 44°05'34.61"N, 17°22'38.07"E, elevation: 714). The first historical record of Prusac under its current name is around 1478 in a letter from Skender Pasha to Dubrovnik. In the Middle Ages, Prusac was part of the area of Uskoplje, including the Susid and Vesela Straza fortresses. On the territory of the settlement, there are three national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Building Complex - Handanija Mosque in Prusac, Building Complex - Prusackova (Hasana Kjafije) Mosque and Historical Area - Old Town of Prusac.

The aim of this paper is a 'study on sustainability' on the concrete example of a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: Prusac, Ajvatovica, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Prusac is a settlement with about 1281 inhabitants [1] located in the central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Geographical coordinates: 44°05'34.61"N, 17°22'38.07"E, elevation: 714), (Figure 1). Material traces bear witness to the presence of people in this area as early as the Paleolithic era, and then continuously until today.



Figure 1. The Historical settlement of Prusac. Location

In this paper, the author deals with the topic of 'sustainability'. In this sense, he visited the entire area of Bosnia and Herzegovina and collected rich material, which he incorporated for the most part into his books [2,3,4] and scientific works.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an extremely complex area in terms of the natural and social environment and its population. The three most numerous ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) live here, and thanks to its rich history, numerous people of different origins: Jews, Germans, Poles, Czechs, Italians, Hungarians...

The composition of the population changed over time, but the material and spiritual traces of their life on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina remained. The complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is also visible in its architecture. Hence, for elaborating on the theme of sustainability (in this paper using the example of the historical city of Prussia), the most suitable scientific methodology was the one covered in his book: Hadrovic, A. (2007). Defining Architectural Space on the Model of the Oriental Style City House in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, Booksurge, LLC, North Charleston, SC, USA.

2. Environment

By 'environment' we mean every possibility in the space in which man can realize his existence [5].

2.1. Natural environment

By 'natural environment', we mean all those features that nature gave, and on which man (mostly) did not exert his influence: geographical location, geomorphology, watercourses and reservoirs, plant and animal life, available soil, climate [5]...

The basic natural resources that generated life in Prussia are arable land, orchards, pastures and rich forests. From the old town of Prusac, all the mentioned resources can be seen as if in the palm of your hand (Figure 2).

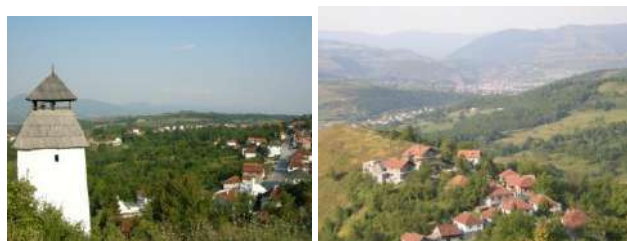


Figure 2. View from the Prusac Old Town

2.2. Social environment

By 'social environment' we mean everything that man has created and that separates him from the world of other living beings [5]. It includes both physical structures (various material, more or less ordered products of their activity) and the immaterial world that we know with the intellect (science, philosophy, religion, law, morality) through an ordered system of abstract symbols (letters, signs) [5].

History of the Prusac. During archaeological excavations in the 80s of the 20th century, material remains from the Eneolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages were found on the top of the hill (within the walls of the fort). Here was a castle settlement, which was destroyed by later constructions in the medieval and Ottoman periods [6]. It is assumed that in ancient times Prusac was connected to the surrounding settlements by some still unestablished route [7]. Archeological research has not established any ancient remains in the old town. However, some authors believe that the cobblestones in Prusac (the remains of which were still visible in the 50s of the 20th century on the main road through the settlement in front of the main gate of the town) are of ancient origin [8].

Prusac was located in the medieval parish of Uskoplje. The parish was divided into Gornje and Donje Uskoplje. The town of Susid was located in Gornje Uskoplje, and the towns of Prusac and Vesela Straža were located in Donje Uskoplje. There is no written information about Prussia from the medieval period. At the time of the battles between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the second half of the 15th century, the border in the parish of Uskoplje was unstable. The Ottomans probably occupied the city in 1463, but the city did not remain under their administration then. In the autumn of the same year, the army of Herceg Vladislav operates in the parish of Uskoplje, helping to liberate Jajce from the Ottomans. Then, probably, Prusac came under the administration of Herceg Vladislav. In the notebook from 1468, there is no Vesela Straža or Biograd, but the town of Susjed and Gracanica square are mentioned [9]. These cities are not even in the lists from 1485 and 1489. The Prusac was first mentioned by that name in the letter of the Bosnian governor of Sandzak, Skender-pasha Mihajloglu, to the people of Dubrovnik, written "On the town of Prussia on July 29". The year was not written, and Ciro Truhelka dated this letter to 1478 (more likely around 1478-1480) [10]. The Prusac, after a two-year siege, was conquered (1502) by Mustaj-bey, son of Skender-pasha [8]. According to the treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary dated August 20, 1503, Prusac remained under Ottoman rule. According to Hungarian-Ottoman treaties from 1503

and 1519, Prusac is mentioned under the name Belgrad (Biograd). In all documents and writings in the Turkish language, Akhisar is written, which is a literal translation for Biograd.

The Prusac was at the crossroads, and on the main road from the Split area to Bosnia. From 1550 until the construction (after 1878) of the new Donji Vakuf-Bugojno road, many travelers and delegations passed through it. In 1550 Katarina Zeno passed through there and calls it 'Castel bianco' (Biograd). Ever since the 16th century, Bosnian governors and Sandzaks from Klis have occasionally camped in Prusac, guarding the borders and preparing attacks into the neighboring Venetian and Austrian territories [11]. From the 16th century until the fall of Klis, Prusac was a duchy in the Sandžak of Klis. At the time when Evlija Celebija traveled through Bosnia for the first time (1660), the Bosnian Beglerbeg was Melek Ahmed Pasha (1604-1662), Celebija's patron. He also mentions it in connection with the Prusac that Beglerbeg renovated and repaired with his own money [11]. During the Cretan (Kandian) War (1645-1669), Prusac was a strategic dam in the gorge through which Venetian troops (as Celebija states-jumps) could penetrate deeper into Bosnia. Celebija writes that the town had 8 mahals with 800 hundred houses built of hard material (there is a large quarry in the area), single- and multi-storey, 8 mosques, three tekkies, a hammam and 80 shops [11].

The town was abandoned in 1838. At the time when Omer Pasha Latas (1806-1871) ruled (mid-19th century) the Bosnian pashaluka, Akhisar belonged to the Travnik district (kajmakamluka), but it remained the center of the district (mudirluka). After the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian army in Bosnia (1878), their army stayed in the fort for a short time.

Architectural cultural and historical heritage of Prusac. The architectural, cultural and historical heritage of Prusac has been preserved to this day. The complete history of Prusac is united by the legend of Ajvaz-deda and the manifestation of 'Ajvatovica'.

'Ajvatovica event'. One of the most obvious, massive and profound ways of showing respect to God for the gift of water as the source of life is the 'Ajvatovica event', in Prusac. The huge national gathering mobilizes all individual-human and collective-social potentials through a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of the source of life. The locality of Ajvatovica is located in the immediate vicinity of Prusac in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, the term Ajvatovica means one of the most important Islamic traditional religious and cultural events in Europe, which is dedicated to showing respect to God for his great gift, water. This event was named after Ajvaz-dedo, an exceptional man

who was adorned with a special piety and understanding of the structure of the Universe. According to legend, before the arrival of Ajvaz-dede, the Prussian had a problem with water supply. However, he found a strong source of water near Prusac, but a huge rock was a big obstacle to bring water from that source to Prusac. According to the legend, Ajvaz-dedo received a solution from God through sincere and long prayer, and water was brought to Prusac.

There are three national monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the territory of the settlement^[12].

1. Building complex - Handanija mosque in Prusac (Handan-begova, Handan-agina, Hajdar Cehajina or Carsija mosque). The building complex consists of a mosque and a cemetery within the harem wall, and a harem wall with an entrance gate and a fountain.
2. Building complex - Prusac's (Hasan Kjfajija) mosque. The national monument consists of Prusac's mosque, madrasa, courthouse, turbet of Hasan Kjfajija, mosque harem and movable heritage, which consists of:
 - a) levha carved in wood,
 - b) stone tablet - inscription about the restoration of Sultan Bayazid's mosque.
3. Historical area - Old town of Prusac. The national monument consists of the fortress, the enclosure, the Lower Town and movable heritage located in the Medieval Archaeological Collection of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.

The Handani Mosque, located in the center of Prusac, is an example of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Islamic heritage, with authentic architecture from the 17th century. The interior space is one room with a wooden dome covered by a hipped roof. The building is built of stone, using four types of limestone. The walls are plastered and painted. The column bases are large with subtly decorated round corners. The capital, shaft and base of the columns are carved from a single piece of stone. The strong, low proportions of the portico lack the slender elegance of other contemporary mosques. This is an expression of regional classical mosque architecture, and can be found in other mosques, such as Stolac, Travnik, although the proportions of the Handania arcade are probably the least slender. The decoration belongs to the period of high Ottoman classicism (16th-17th century). The construction of the mihrab (niche) is considered one of the most beautiful

in Bosnia and Herzegovina with carved stone decoration in seven layers of stone. The height of the minaret was 29.70 m.

The Handanija mosque was damaged during the war in 1993. The restoration work carried out by Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) was completed in 2005, when the mosque was officially reopened.

The Biograd Castle is located on a rock with a view of the entire Lower Vakuf valley. 'Bio' means 'white' in the Ikavian accent of the Stokavian dialect, and it refers to the white limestone found in this area. The fortress was surrounded by walls two and a half meters thick in some places, with loopholes and openings for cannons. The strength of the walls of Prusac can be compared to the average of medieval cities, which is about one meter. The towers were covered with limestone, carefully mixed with a mortar of sifted sand. Next to the guardhouse was a round well, which supplied the city with fresh water. On one side of the fortress there is a six-meter-wide moat, with a drawbridge leading to the entrance gate.

3. Man

Space acquires meaning only if it stands in some relation to man. This relationship ranges from the relations of the already known dimensions of space, through those that can be sensed, to those that are currently beyond the reach of human imagination. In other words, man is a being on the way, a being who continuously learns, a being of open possibilities. The term 'man' is a huge question, the essence of which he himself tries to decipher within his own limits, within the limits of the Earth and the limits of the Universe^[5]. Together with the rest of the living world, it participates in the process of circulation of matter and energy in nature, sharing the same fate with it, being born and dying against its will. Endowed with reason, will and feelings, he is the only one in the living world who can discover the given laws of the organization of nature.

It is assumed that the Bosnian script (arabica or alhimiado) was created here, which used the characters of the Arabic script, but was phonetically adapted to Bosnian speech and pronunciation.

The most famous landmark of Prusac in its history is folk legend about Ajvaz-dedo¹. Ajvaz-dedo is one of the

¹ Ajvaz-dedo spent 40 days praying to Allah that He would suggest a solution to bring water to Prusac. On the fortieth morning of prayer, Ajvaz-dedo dreamed that two white rams collided and that the rock split. When he woke up, he saw a cracked rock, that is, a passage for the water supply, from the source to Prusac. Later, wooden water pipes were

most famous and popular personalities of the Muslim people in Bosnia. He was born in the town of Ajvaza (today's Turkey), where his name comes from. He came to Bosnia (1463) with the army of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (1432-1481) and had the task of spreading Islam. The population of this region was mostly from Bogomil. Thanks to Ajvaz-dedo, the majority of the population in the Skopalj Valley accepted Islam. Folk tradition says that Ajvaz-dedo took the name 'Dedo' out of humility (in the Turkish language, the word 'dede' means pious and 'good person'). In 1467, Ajvaz-dedo built a water supply system from wooden pipes ('tomruk') and led it through this rock. Since then, Muslims from near and far have come to Ajvatovica (Figures 3-10).

Hasan Kafija Prusac (1544-1615) was a philosopher, theologian, biographer and historian from the time when Bosnia and Herzegovina was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. His full name was Hasan Kafi bin Turhan bin Dawud bin Jakub ez-Zibi el-Akhisari el-Bosnevi. Kafija is his literary name, while ez-Zibi (locality in the immediate vicinity of today's Bugojno), el-Akhisari (Pruscanin) and el-Bosnevi (Bosniak) are markers of his native and ethnic affiliation. He was born (1544) in Prussia. In the work "A Series of Scholars" he wrote an autobiography, in which he claims to be from the Vukovsko village, near Prussia. His great-grandfather Jakub converted to Islam (1463) when the Ottoman Empire conquered Bosnia. Jakub's son Davud died during the siege of Vrana in Croatia at the age of 70, and Davud's son and Kafija's father died (1585) in Prusac at the age of 96. He studied in Istanbul for nine years, and in 1583 he was appointed *cadi* of the Prusac *cadiluk*. After returning to Prusac, he began giving public lectures and writing various scientific works. He wrote at least 17 works from different disciplines. In 1587, he was the *Kadi* of Srijem. He is the most important figure in the scientific, literary and intellectual life of Bosniaks. He stood out in the cultural and educational field and with his endowments, some of which still exist today. His literary work on the organization of the state and society was translated into French as early as 1824, so since then it has become interesting to many scientists. In 1591, he went on the Hajj to Mecca and on that trip he met many scholars from various Islamic centers. He retired from the position of *Cadian* when the uprising broke out in Erdelj and began teaching students major and minor

laid through this passage. Seeing this as a sign of God's power and blessing, people began to make pilgrimages to the place where the rock had split, and this tradition has been preserved to this day. The author of this paper visited Ajvatovica twice (2007 and 2008).

subjects, religious and world sciences. It was then that he wrote his most famous work: "The Foundations of Wisdom on the Order of the World" (1596), a moral and political work with which he wanted to point out negative phenomena in the state and society. Sultan Mehmed III (1566-1603) was also interested in this work, but since it was written in Arabic, the imperial governors recommended Kafija to translate it into Turkish, which he did in 1597^[13]. He took part in the campaign against Hungary, staying in the staff of Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolović (1506-1579). After the campaign, he returned to Prusac and devoted himself to writing works and building endowments: a mosque, a madrasah, a khan, a school, and a waterworks. He died in 1615 or 1616 and was buried near his mosque in Prusac.



Figure 3. One of the old cemeteries in Prusac that testifies to the age of this settlement
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)



Figure 4. Presentation of riders and their decorated horses before departure to Ajvatovica from the center of Prusac
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)

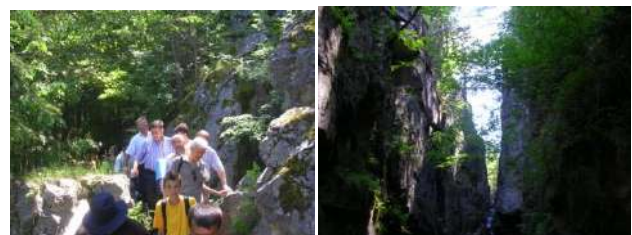


Figure 5. Entering the rock that, according to folk tradition, was 'cracked' by the prayers of Ajvaz-dede
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)



Figure 6. Pilgrim's passage through the 'cracked' rock
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)

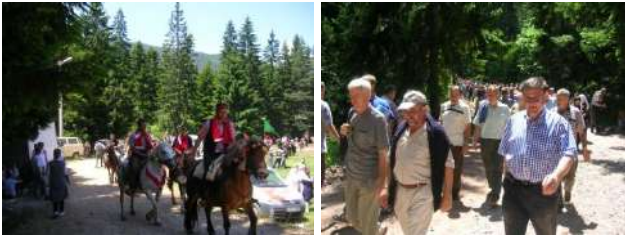


Figure 7. Arrival of horsemen and pedestrians at the end of Ajvatovica
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)



Figure 8. The author (left) with friends on the way to Ajvatovica
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)



Figure 9. Pilgrims before holding the central prayer at the end of Ajvatovica
Source: Prof. dr Faruk Mekic (6.24.2007.)

Ajvaz-dede turbe. Turbe is located near the Handani Mosque, and was built by Hasan Kafija at the beginning of the 17th century. The Turbe is a construction built with a combination of stone and wood, the base of which is 5.5 x 5.3 m. The Turbe has been renovated several times to date (Figure 10).

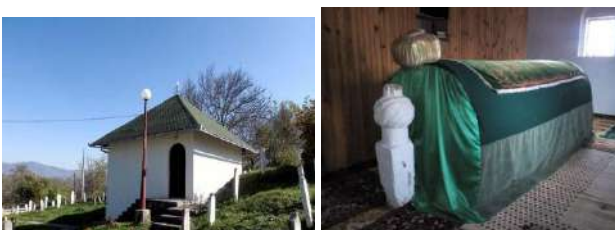


Figure 10. Ajvaz-dede turbe

<http://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/230510/legenda-oajvaz-dedi-i-odlazak-na-ajvatovicu-jetradicija-koja-vijekovima-zivi-i-prenosi-segeneracijama>

Accessed: 04.06.2018.

4. Boundaries: architecture as a framework of life

Boundaries are those places in the environment where the situations encountered 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. Borders, therefore, have the task of enabling the selection of influences. In the architectural sense, they enclose, but also include a person in the conditions of a certain environment^[5] (Figures 11-15).



Figure 11. View of Prusac from the direction of Ajvatovica

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mh73/21090559488>, Accessed: 04.06.2018.



Figure 12. View from the Prusac Old Town to the new settlement of Prusac. In the picture on the right, you can see the Handani Mosque and Hasan Kafija Prušćak Madrasa in Prusac

<http://trip-suggest.com/bosnia-andherzegovina/federation-of-bosnia-andherzegovina/prusac/>, Accessed: 6.3.2018.

<https://vijesti.ba/clanak/329786/hasan-kafija-pruscak-istaknuti-ucenjako-kojem-se-malo-zna>, Accessed: 7.27.2022.

Madrasah of Hasan Kjafi Pruscak. Hasan Kafi Pruscak (1554-1616) was one of the greatest Bosniak thinkers in the 16th century. The subjects of his interest were politics, philology, law, speculative theology and logic. His most famous work is considered to be the moral and political work „Foundations of Wisdom on the Order of the World“ (1596).

He was engaged in calligraphy and wood carving. In his native Prussia, he built a madrasa, a school and a khan. He brought drinking water to his endowments (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Madrasah of Hasan Kafija Pruscak in Prusac. To the far right is the turbe of Hasan Kafija Pruscak (right next to the madrasa building)

<https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/a117716-hasan-kafija-pruscak-istaknuti-ucenjaka-o-kojem-se-malo-zna/>, Accessed: 7.27.2022.

<https://radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala teme/pruscakova-dzamija/259337>, Accessed: 7.27.2022.

Handani Mosque. The mosque was built (1617) in Carsijska Mahala, in the center of Prusac, as a one-room building with a wooden dome (visible from the interior) and a hipped roof (visible from the exterior). We learn about the foundation of the mosque, Handanaga, as well as the year of its construction from two tarikhs (inscriptions) above the entrance door. The base of the mosque is rectangular, the sides of which are 16.2 x 12.6 m. The walls of the mosque are made of stone, then plastered and whitewashed. The complete pillars of the entrance porch of the mosque are carved from a single stone. The decoration of the mosque dates back to Ottoman classicism (16th-17th century). The mihrab of the mosque is considered one of the most beautiful in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The stone minaret is 29.7 m high.

There are cemeteries on all four sides around the mosque, with niches that, for the most part, do not have any inscriptions. The oldest (dated) sight comes from 1875.

Handania Mosque was seriously damaged (1993) by shelling during the war (1992-1995), but was completely restored (2005) [12]. During the last renovation, an annex was added at the entrance, and the stone minaret was replaced by a wooden one (Figure 14).

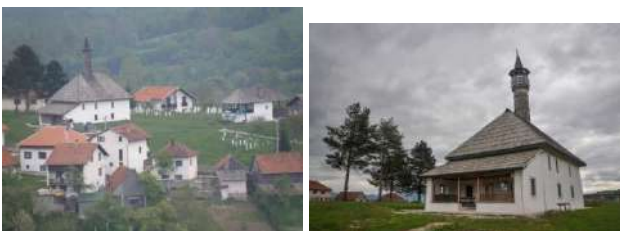


Figure 14. Handania Mosque

<https://www.radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala teme/pruscakovadzamija/259337#lg=1&slide=0>, Accessed: 7.27.2022.

<https://ka5an.wordpress.com/2009/09/05/prusac-sinonim-zalhamijado/>, Accessed: 6.4.2018.

5. Conclusion (Perspectives)

By the term 'Perspective' (within the framework of the theory of Architecturally Defined Space), we mean „that dynamic relationship that connects now - future, existing - possible, achieved - desired“ [5].

The emergence of a settlement (hamlet, village) or architectural-engineering structure is never accidental, but rather the result of a synergy between the natural and social environment-man [2].

This paper aimed to discover and document these relations. The duration of that settlement, from its creation until today, confirms the strength of these relations. The future of a settlement can be predicted, more or less precisely, based on its past and present. The perspectives of life in the Prusac settlement are open, with a wide range of possibilities. Its rich architectural, cultural and historical heritage preserves the enormous 'embodied energy' that its current and future residents 'inherit with their body and spirit'. The greatest, and in terms of its spiritual strength, heritage is the cultural and religious manifestation of 'Ajvatovica', which enriches its content year after year (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Open space ('musalla') in Prusac: venue for various cultural and religious events

<https://sw-ke.facebook.com/biljanska.org/photos/a.447588875382946/2135740103234473/?type=3>, Accessed: 7.27.2022.

References

- [1] "Populated Places 1991/2013", Statistical Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accessed: 7.25.2022 (in Bosnian).
- [2] Hadrovic, A. (2014). Water and man in autochthonous symbiosis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Avicena
- [3] Hadrovic, A. (2017). Bosnian Chardaklia House, Sarajevo, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo, pp. 55 (in Bosnian)
- [4] Hadrovic, A. (2018). Architecture in the travelogues of an architect. Book 1: The Balkans,

-
- Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo, pp. 429-439 (in Bosnian)
- [5] Hadrovic, A. (2007). Defining Architectural Space on the Model of the Oriental Style City House in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, Booksurge, LLC, North Charleston, SC, USA, pp. 8-14
- [6] Marijanovic, B. (2001). Prusac (Biograd) - prehistoric multi-layered site. Gazette of the National Museum in Sarajevo, (Archaeology), new series, volume 48/49, Sarajevo, pp. 92-99, (in Croatian)
- [7] Pasalic, E. (1960). Ancient settlements and communications in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Special edition of the National Museum, Sarajevo.
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/35947788/Pa%C5%A1ali%C4%87-Esad-Anticka-naselja-i-komunikacije-u-Bosni-i-Hercegovini>, Accessed: 7.29.2022 (in Bosnian)
- [8] Mazalic, Dj. (1951), Biograd-Prusac, an old Bosnian town. Gazette of the National Museum in Sarajevo, new series number VI, pp. 147-189 (in Serbian)
- [9] Sabanovic, H. (1982), Bosnian pashaluk, origin and administrative division. "Svjetlost", Sarajevo, p.128 (in Bosnian)
- [10] Truhelka, C. (1904), Our cities, description of the most beautiful medieval cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, p. 64-69 (in Croatian)
- [11] Celebija, E. (1967). Excerpts about Yugoslav countries (translation, introduction and commentary: Hazim Sabanovic), Svjetlost Sarajevo, Sarajevo, pp.131-132 (in Bosnian)
- [12] Commission for the Preservation of National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina
http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=6&lang=1&action=view&id=2537
Accessed: 7/27/2022 (in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian)
- [13] Mehonic, A. (1914). Bosniak thinker who announced the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Diwan-magazine of modern Bosniak thought (in Bosnian)