

# Oriental Style City House in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Kajtaz Family House in Mostar

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**Abstract**— *The Kajtaz family house is located in Mostar (Geographic coordinates: 43°20'07.63"N, 17°49'05.46"E, Elevation: 71 m). It was built at the end of the 17th century. It is an example of a developed type of oriental type town house in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This type of house is characterized by a highly developed layout of the horizontal and vertical plan, the richness of the contents and the separation of the male, or public part ('selamluk') and the female, or intimate family part ('haremluk') of the house complex.*

**Keywords**— *Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mostar, Kajtaz family house.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mostar is a city (with about 65,300 inhabitants) located on the banks of the Neretva River, in the south of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The presence of people in this area can be traced back to prehistoric times (Neolithic, Copper, Bronze and Iron Ages), which is confirmed by numerous sites. In addition to farming and animal husbandry, people in the Iron Age also engaged in trade with neighboring areas. Before the arrival of the ancient Romans, this area was inhabited by the Illyrians (Daorsi tribe), whose seat was the town of Daorson in Osanici near Stolac. With the arrival of the Romans at the beginning of the new era, this area was included in their colony of Narona, part of the province of Dalmatia. At this time, the famous Roman roads were built, the most important of which was the Narona-Sarajevo field. From the period 4.-5. century, the early Christian basilicas on Cim and in Žitomislíci originate. Period 6.-7. century is the era of migration of peoples when the Slavs come to this area. The Franks have supreme power, and local lords are their vassals, with a certain degree of autonomy. Prince Mihail Višević (910 - 950) was a famous local ruler at this time. This area was ruled for a short time by the Nemanjics, then by the Bosnian Ban, and during the 14th and 15th centuries by the Dukes of Hum, including Stjepan Vukcic Kosaca (1404 - 1466), who ruled in the fortress-city of Blagaj. This feudal lord received (1448) the title of Duke, after which Herzegovina got its name. In the 15th century, towers were built in Mostar (near today's Old Bridge, formerly a wooden bridge), Tara on the right and Halebija on the left bank of the Neretva, and the tower of Herceguša next to the tower of Tara, built during the reign of Duke Stjepan Vukcic Kosaca. Mostar is indirectly mentioned (April 3, 1452) in a report from Dubrovnik related to the rebellion of Vladislav Hercegović against his father Stjepan, when Vladislav "took two forts on the Neretva bridge". Similarly, the wooden bridge in today's

Mostar is mentioned (1444) in the charter of the Aragonese-Naples king Alfonso the Magnanimous (1396-1458).

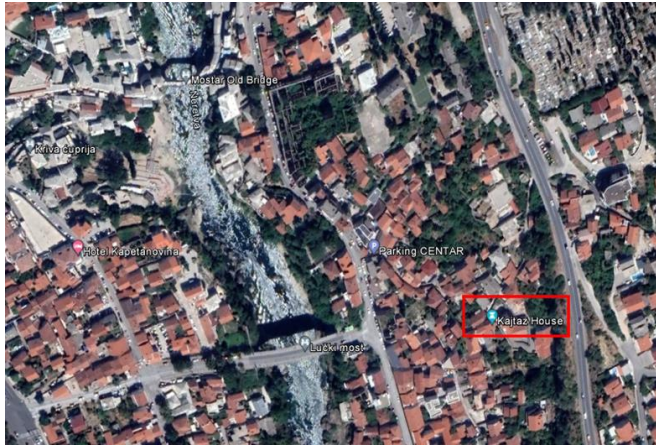
The Ottomans occupied Mostar in 1468, when the city became the seat of the Kajmekamluk, and at the beginning of the 16th century, the seat of the Sandžak of Herzegovina. Until then, the wooden bridge was replaced (1566) by a stone bridge. Mostar is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the Ottoman defter (inventory) from 1477 when it was a settlement with 19 houses located on the left bank of the Neretva<sup>[1,2,3]</sup>. During the 16th century, Mostar developed rapidly when it became the largest city in Herzegovina, with a particularly developed processing and trade of leather and leather products. Its most important buildings were built in this period: ramparts and towers, bridges, mosques, madrasas, masjids, hammams, inns, tabhanas, fountains, fountains, turbeta.

With the establishment (1833) of the Herzegovinian pashaluk, Mostar became its seat, and its first vizier was Ali-paša Rizvanbegović (1783 - 1851). Consulates of several countries (Austria, Russia, Italy, Great Britain and France) were opened in Mostar, and the Mostar-Metković road was built (1862).

With the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1878), Mostar remains an important city, with intensive construction that slowly transforms the city from a typically oriental one into a well-organized Central European city. Among the constructions from this period, the Gymnasium building stands out. After the First World War, Mostar entered (1918) into the composition of the newly founded Kingdom of SHS, and later into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, NDH, and socialist Yugoslavia (DFJ, FNRJ, SFRJ). One of the most important features of Mostar until 1991 was its multiculturalism and multiethics. This precious quality of his was seriously injured in the war (1992-1995), but he is steadily recovering<sup>[4]</sup>.

## II. SPATIAL-FORM CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOUSE

The Kajtaz family house in Mostar was built at the end of the 17th century and is an example of a developed type of oriental-type town house in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 1). This type of house is characterized by a highly developed disposition of the horizontal and vertical plan, the richness of the contents and the separation of the public, i.e. 'male' part (selamluk) and the intimate family, i.e. 'female' part ('haremluk') of the house complex<sup>[4,5,6]</sup>.



Figures 1. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Location  
Source: Google Earth. Accessed: May 27, 2023.

The Kajtaz family house in Mostar is, in accordance with the usual scheme of this type of house, developed through the ground floor and first floor. Both 'selamluk' and 'haremluk' have an inner courtyard, 'avlija', which is surrounded by a relatively high and strong stone wall. The courtyards are paved with stone cobblestones, and the greenery (fruits, vines and flowers) enriches the atmosphere of the courtyard, making it a rich private park. Almost imperceptibly, the fenced and uncovered space of the courtyard transitions into the covered space of the home porch - hayat. In the porches there are wooden staircases ('basamacı') which clearly show the way to the floor level (Figures 2,3,4).

On the floor level, we again see open spaces covered with strong eaves (sofa rooms, chambers) and basic living spaces ('chardaks').

The main living spaces are multipurpose (at the same time they are living rooms, dining rooms, reception rooms, bedrooms). Polyvalence enables the absence of furniture, which, in the European understanding, defines the purpose of the room. In fact, the main rooms, on the entrance wall of the room, have a built-in battery ('musander'), which for this type of house is standardly made up of a linen closet ('dusekluk'), a spa ('hamamdzik') and an earthen stove ('furuna') for water heating for spa needs. By 'activating' some of the contents of this battery, the space, in the European sense, becomes a bedroom or a bathroom. Along the other three walls of the multipurpose room, there is a sofa for sitting ('minderluk'), which gives the room the dimension of a living room. By introducing a low, round table ('sinija'), the living room becomes a dining room (Figures 3,4,6,13,14,16).

Since the walls were thick (especially those on the ground floor, built of stone or adobe), it was possible to install niches ('dulaf') in them, which had the role of European chests of drawers and wardrobes (Figure 3,4,15,18). Obviously, in this way, the freedom of the floor surface was obtained.

Although the disposition, construction and materialization of this house irresistibly initiates a discussion about architecture as art, architecture as a complex image of man and the society in which he lives, everything was designed and done extremely rationally, with the justification of physically proven solutions and economic expediency.



Figure 2. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar  
Source (left): Author (Drawing, 1984)  
Source (right): Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)



Figure 3. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Ground floor: 1. Men's courtyard, 2. Women's courtyard, 3. Men's halvat, 4. Mutvak, 5. Hudjera, 6. Hayat, 7. Women's halvat, 8. Mutvak, 9. Garden  
Source: A. Hadrovic (Drawing based on archival material of Stari Grad Mostar archive, 1984)

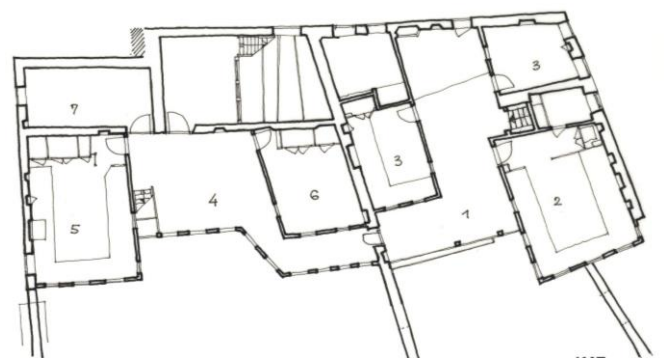


Figure 4. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Floor: 1. Divanhana in the male part of the house, 2. Chardak, 3. Small chardak, 4. Divanhana in the female part of the house, 5. Chardak of the 'first wife', 6. Small chardak, 7. Chardak  
Source: A. Hadrovic (Drawing based on archival material of Stari Grad Mostar archive, 1984)



Figure 5. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Porches on the ground floor and divanhanes on the first floor  
Source: Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)





Figure 6. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. The living room ('halvat') is a multipurpose space

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
Accessed: May 27, 2023.

### III. CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALIZATION

The thick stone walls of the ground floor are made in nature, plastered only from the inside. The walls of the floor are partly made of stone, and partly made in the bondruk system (wooden skeleton with adobe filling) [7]. We see the light walls on the first floor as a result of the expressed need of people to 'go out' with their built-up space into the free space of the inner courtyard in the form of a cantilever letting the floor past the contour of the ground floor (Figures 2, 7, 11). In contrast to the heavy stone walls that define the contours of the floor on three sides-facade, in the natural version, the light walls are plastered on both sides, painted white with milk of lime and with many perforations with windows. They look sophisticated against the stone walls. The playful contour of the floor is followed by a simple hipped roof whose volume (air space) is a good defense of the main living rooms of the floor (from low temperatures and wind in winter, and from excessive heating in summer). The basic roof structure is made of wood, and the covering is made of stone slabs (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. The cantilevered projection of the volume ('doxat') outside the contour of the ground floor

Source: Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)

The ground and first floor levels are connected by wooden staircases ('basamaci'). In the intimate and family part of the house ('selamluk') there are two such staircases: the main one, which connects the hayat on the ground floor and the divanhana on the first floor, and the economic staircase which connects the main storage room on the ground floor ('magaza') with the kitchen ('mutvak') on the floor (Figures 3,4,8).



Figure 8. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. A wooden staircase ('basamaci') connects the ground floor level with the first floor level

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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### IV. DOORS AND WINDOWS

Similar to other oriental-style city houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Banjaluka, Foca) that belong to the 'developed type of house', in the house of the Kajtaz family in Mostar we encounter a developed palette of door and window designs. The access door from the street to the inner yard ('avlija') is a double-winged, rustic design, with a canopy on both sides of the wall (Figure 9). The door has a characteristic rosette made of wrought iron ('halka') which has a ring bell that announces the entrance.

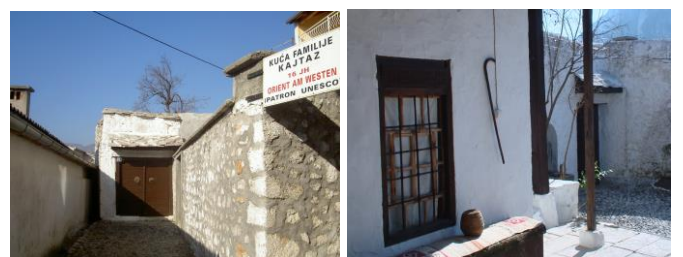


Figure 9. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Access door ('kanate') from the street to the inner courtyard of the house

Source: Haris Bradic (January 10, 2007)

The internal doors in some rooms are made of wood, of a finer design, whose profile is in the 'human scale'. It is interesting that the door on the room of the 'first wife' (kadi Kajtaz had four wives) has slightly larger dimensions, which emphasizes its importance in the Kajtaz family (Figure 10).





Figure 10. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Inside doors

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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The Kajtaz family house in Mostar is characterized by a large number of windows, especially on the first floor. The windows, in this case, are literally a 'view to the outside world', since they open wide vistas of the city of Mostar, where the Neretva River and the Old Bridge are the main parts of those views (Figures 11, 12).



Figure 11. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Many windows that open views of the Mostar city

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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The windows are mostly double-hung, single-glazed, made of wood. Most of the windows have a protective grille made of wrought iron, and the windows on the first floor have wooden shutters, as protection from the wind and from the outside view of the intimate family spaces of the house (Figure 12).



Figure 12. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Windows on the ground floor of the house

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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## V. SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF HOME EQUIPMENT

Similar to other oriental-type townhouses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the house of the Kajtaz family in Mostar also has its own specific characteristics in terms of space equipment and envelope surface treatment. The main rooms of the house, the halva on the ground floor and the conservatory on the first floor, are, conditionally speaking, 'empty'. The fixed elements of the 'furniture' are: a sofa for sitting ('minderluk'), a battery built into the wall ('musandera') with three 'compartments' - for storing bedding ('dusekluk'), a spa ('hamamdzik') and water heating for spa needs ('furuna') - a fireplace for preparing coffee ('kahve-odzak') and a service table for drinking coffee ('mangala'). Niches ('dulaf') are arranged in the thick stone walls, where small equipment, books, souvenirs are kept (Figures 13-19).



Figure 13. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Arrangement of the main chardak on the first floor of the house

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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Portable furniture elements, decorative chests ('sehara'), stand freely in the space (Figure 14).



Figure 14. The Kajtaz family house in Mostar. Arrangement of the main chardak on the first floor of the house ('musandera')

Source: <https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/putovanja/kajtazova-kuca-najstarija-kuca-u-mostaru-i-zaboravljeni-arkitontonik-dragulj/170222075>  
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construction skills of its builders. This house is one of the examples of bioclimatic architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so it is often visited by students of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo, as well as from other universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

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