

The Bridge of Mehmed-Pasha Sokolović

Country or territory:
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Name of organisation
compiling the information:
Commission to Preserve National
Monuments

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<u>Name and address of bulding(s) or site:</u>	THE BRIDGE OF MEHMED-PASHA SOKOLOVIĆ IN VIŠEGRAD
<u>Inventory reference number(s):</u>	08.2-6-101/03-5
<u>Building type(s):</u>	Heritage infrastructure - Bridge
<u>Main date(s):</u>	date range from 1571 to 1577 (construction) 1664, 1875, 1911 and 1939/40, 1949-1952 (repairs)
<u>Current use(s):</u>	Bridge for pedestrian traffic

Significance:

The Mehmed-paša Sokolović Bridge was built between 1571 and 1577 over the river Drina where the road linking Bosnia with Istanbul ran (known as the "Carigradska džada" or road to the Imperial city). The construction of the bridge was entrusted to the great court architect Kodža Mimar Sinan, not only the leading architect of the Ottoman Empire but one of the greatest builders in the world. The benefactor who funded the construction was Mehmed paša Sokolović, Grand Vizier to three sultans from 1565 to 1579.

The stone from which the bridge was built was quarried in Banja, about five kilometres downstream on the right bank of the Drina. A wooden tower, used as a guard-room, with a passage beneath closed by massive oak doors on both sides, formerly stood on the middle of the bridge. The date of its construction is unknown, but it was pulled down in 1886. The tower was equipped with several small cannons known as *šibe*.

On the bridge itself, there were two chronograms engraved with the years 971/1571 and 985/1577 respectively.

General information:

The bridge is one of the most magnificent works of architecture of the fifteenth to nineteenth century in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The part of the bridge that spans the river consists of eleven arched openings, of which the end opening on the right bank rests on two retaining walls with the smallest span of 5.20 m. The other ten arches have a span of 10.70 to 14.80 m. The bridge is carried by nine great stone piers with a width of 3.50 to 4 m, and a length of about 11.50 m. On the left bank the endmost opening rests on the angle of the bridge where it grades into the ramp. The width of the road over the bridge is 6.00 m. The parapet walls

are 60 cm thick and 179.44 m. long. The access ramp is about 6.60 m wide, including the parapet walls, and about 120 m long. There are four arches in the ramp, a larger one in the angle (4.50 m wide) and three smaller ones spanning a brook that flows into the Drina. The arches are classical depressed arches with the eccentricity of the centres relatively small - about 1.00 m, with a depth of 85cm – making them almost semicircular. The piers, arches and facing walls are made of limestone from the locality of majdan Višegradske banje. Some of the stone blocks are held together by iron clamps sealed with lead. Above the facing walls, at the level of the roadway, there is a limestone cornice 30 cm high on which rests a solid stone parapet. The sixth pier is ornamented. On the upstream side, it is of triangular profile, grading into a rectangular extension bearing a blind portal with chronogrammatic inscription. On the downstream side, it is polygonal in shape, grading into a rectangular extension with built-in seats, which are still used up to this day.

Research and Conservation and Restoration Works

The extent of damage and repairs of the bridge from the 17th century till the 19th century is unknown except from what Evlija Čelebija recounts in his 1625 travelogue. There are no written documents subsequent to this date until the nineteenth century, in 1896, when the Drina rose to 15.4 m. above its normal level, or 1.6 m above the highest point of the bridge roadway. The *korkaluk* or parapet of the bridge was destroyed by the flood, but the rest of the bridge and ramps survived and were left undamaged. However, the piers, which stand on wooden grills, deteriorated with time and began to undermine the stability of the bridge, as a result of which the foundations were repaired in 1911.

The bridge is known to have been repaired around 1664, and again in 1875, 1911 and 1939/40. When the Austrians withdrew from Višegrad in 1914, one of the openings of the bridge was destroyed, and the following year the Serb army destroyed another one whilst retreating. The bridge remained in this condition until 1939 when it was repaired. During the period of intervention, 1915-1939, the sections of the bridge that had been destroyed were provided with an iron structure to make the bridge passable. When the Germans retreated in October 1943 that part was also destroyed. The reconstruction of the destroyed sections of the bridge was carried out in 1949-1952.

The hydroelectric power plant Bajina Basta, downstream from the bridge and the Višegrad hydroelectric power plant with a dam located upstream from the bridge, endanger this historical monument. (*A study on repairs to the bridge for the purpose of its preservation was drawn up by Professor Gojković, Ph.D.*)

During 1950, 1951 and 1952, the Roads Authority of the Ministry of Local Traffic reconstructed the destroyed arches, and carried out restoration works on the surviving sections. These works were carried out to a project designed by engineer Weber from the Regional Design Institute from Sarajevo, the contractor was GP «Put», and engineer Sorokin supervised the works. The restored sections were reconstructed to conform exactly to the surviving sections. The material was taken from the old quarry. The roadway, parapet, sofas and portal were fully restored. The restoration of the inscription was by M. Mujagić, and the stonemason Ivan Vrlec cut and dressed the stone.

The reconstruction of the ramp was designed by a project drawn up by the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of BiH. The works started in 1991, and the reconstruction of foundation of the pillars (towards the left river bank) was carried out in 1992. The war of 1992-95 stopped these works, but the bridge did not suffer any damage as a result of war action. Bearing in mind that the power plant is continually in operation, the bridge is regularly exposed to fluctuations in water flow and water level, which directly endangers its stability and future survival.

Categories of significance:

Of international importance

Categories of ownership or interest:

Of national interest.

Documentation and bibliographic references:

Documentation

- Ruling on the protection of the property by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments no. 1099/51 and no. 02-741-3 dated 18 April 1962,
- Technical documentation from the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of BiH;
- Photo documentation

Bibliography

1. Documentation of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments
2. Bejtić, Alija, *Sokolovićev most na Drini u Višegradu* (The Sokolović Bridge on the Drina in Višegrad) Sarajevo 1945.
3. Čelić, Džemal, *Obnova Sokolovićeve mosta u Višegradu* (Restoration of the Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad) Naše starine I, 1953.
4. Čelić, Džemal, and Mujezinović, Mehmed, *Stari mostovi u BiH* (Old Bridges in BiH) Sarajevo 1969
5. Gojković, Milan, *Kameni mostovi* (Stone Bridges)
6. Herman, K, Journal of the National Museum, 1889 . Vol. I
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9. Styh, E, *Bauwesen in B. und H.* , Vienna, 1887.

Condition:Poor

- Since the power plant is in constant operation, the bridge is exposed to fluctuations in water flow and level on a daily basis, which directly jeopardizes its stability and future survival. Temporary protection in the shape of steel panels has been erected on the second and fifth piers, intended to prevent further erosion of the stone, but the rest of the bridge remains unprotected.
- The structure is exposed to the specific risks of heavy traffic, weathering etc.

Amount of war or associated damage:

No damage

Risk:

- The bridge is at risk of rapid deterioration as a result of lack of regular maintenance,
- The bridge is at risk of further deterioration due to the insufficiency of means and will to execute the project of conservation of the bridge.

Condition risk:

Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric, solution agreed but implemented.

The construction of the Bajina Bašta hydroelectric power station and the accompanying reservoir below the bridge has diminished its aesthetic value. The construction of the Višegrad hydroelectric power station has still further altered the hydrology of the area and poses a threat to the bridge's stability.

Technical assessment and costing:

Project for urgent protection measures to prevent further deterioration needs to be done. The following measures shall be applied to the National Monument and a zone extending 100 metres upstream and downstream from the bridge:

- the construction of residential, commercial and agricultural facilities is prohibited
- all works are prohibited other than conservation and restoration works carried out in accordance with an approved project and under the professional supervision of the heritage protection authority of Republika Srpska
- the dumping of all kinds of waste is prohibited
- motor vehicle traffic is prohibited
- all infrastructure works, other than in exceptional cases with the approval of the relevant ministry and under the professional supervision of the heritage protection authority of Republika Srpska, are prohibited
- the construction of power facilities, quarries and other pollutants, the construction or operation of which could be detrimental to the national monument, is prohibited.

Costing proposals for projects and above listed works have not been done.

Ownership:

State property

Occupation:

In regular use

Management:

The provisions relating to the protection and rehabilitation measures set forth by the Law on the Implementation of the Decisions of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments, established pursuant to Annex 8 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of Republika Srpska no. 9/02) shall apply to the National Monument.

The Government of Republika Srpska shall be responsible for ensuring the legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary to protect, conserve, display and rehabilitate the National Monument – Bridge of Mehmed-paša Sokolović.

For the purpose of preserving the property and preventing its further deterioration, the Government of Republika Srpska (RS), through the Ministry of Urban Planning, Public Utilities, Construction and the Environment of RS, is responsible for acting in accordance with Ruling no. 06-362-116/90, dated 20 February 1990, issued by the Ministry of Regional Planning and the Environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina, requiring that the Višegrad hydroelectricity plant be shut down, in regard to which approval for trial operations expired on 1 August 1991, until such time as the conditions have been met for final operating approval as follows:

- the regulation of the Drina river bed downstream from the dam to the Mehmed paša Sokolović Bridge, and
- the repair of the piers of the old Mehmed paša Sokolović Bridge in conformity with the technical documentation certified by the relevant heritage protection authority of Republika Srpska.

Summary:

Based on the date of its construction, historical value, workmanship and proportions, the Mehmed paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad is an outstanding example of public buildings, specifically bridges, within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Regional Plan for BiH to 2002 classified the bridge as category 0 – of international importance.

Applying the Criteria for the adoption of a decision on proclaiming an item of property a national monument, this national monument reaches the following criteria (criteria of significance):

- A. Time frame
- B. Historic value
- C. Artistic and aesthetic value
 - C.i. quality of workmanship
 - C.ii. quality of material
 - C.iii. proportions
 - C.iv. composition
 - C.v. value of details
 - C.vi. structural value
- D. Clarity (documentary, scientific and educational value)
 - D.iii. work of a famous artist or builder
 - D.iv. evidence of a certain type, style or regional manner
- E. Symbolic value
 - E.iii. traditional value
 - E.v. significance for the identity of a group of people
- F. Landscape value
 - F.i. relation to other elements of an ensemble
 - F.ii. meaning in the townscape
 - F.iii. the building or group of buildings is part of a group or site
- G. Authenticity
 - G.i. form and design
 - G.ii. materials and content
 - G.iii. use and function
 - G.iv. traditions and techniques
 - G.v. location and setting
 - G.vi. spirit and feeling
- H. Uniqueness/rarity
 - H.ii. outstanding work of art or architecture
 - H.iii. work of a prominent artist or architect

The priority level of intervention is *high*.

NOTE:

Condition

Poor

Condition risk

Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric, solution agreed but not implemented.

Criteria employed for the Priority Intervention List:

- The monuments are designated as national monuments
- They represent a rare or unique example of the typology or chronological - stylistic corpus
- They were damaged/destroyed during the 1992-1995 war in BiH or they were endangered by the post war conditions (illegal constructions, lack of funding for restoration and maintenance, inexpert reconstruction,) and are imposed to further deterioration
- Their restoration will encourage the return process in BiH
- Their restoration will support development of the region.

Sign. and date:

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10.03.2004.