

Dating of the Old Bridge in Mostar

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The famous arch bridge (Fig. 1) in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was built in 1557-1566 by order of sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. This single-arch stone bridge was constructed by Turkish architect Mimar Hayruddin at the place of an older wooden construction and was 19 m high, with the span of 28.7 m. The bridge was destroyed in war 1993, and has been reconstructed during last several years (Fig. 2). During the reconstruction of the Old Bridge, the remnants of two older bridges were found — a wooden construction that preceded the stony bridge, and an even older wooden suspended bridge. According to documents, mainly from the Dubrovnik Archives, the first suspended bridge crossed the Neretva River by the beginning of the 14th century, while the following wooden bridge was built during the campaign against Turks of the Croato-Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus in 1466, probably by the Ragusian architect Paskoje Miličević.

Eight wood or charcoal samples from various periods of construction of the bridge were dated by the ¹⁴C method, and were given for dendrochronological analysis. The oldest beam used in construction of the first pre-Turkish suspended bridge has been dated to 11th century by both methods. Two other beams taken from the uncovered construction of the suspended bridge, as well as two charcoal samples from the basement of the Tara tower on the left bank of the Neretva River, are dated to 14th century. The beam associated with the second wooden bridge is dated to the second half of the 15th century, and the beams connected with the reconstruction of Hayruddin's stony to 18th century. Good agreement between the calibrated ¹⁴C and dendrochronological ages is obtained.



Fig. 1. Old Bridge in Mostar



Fig. 2. The bridge under reconstruction