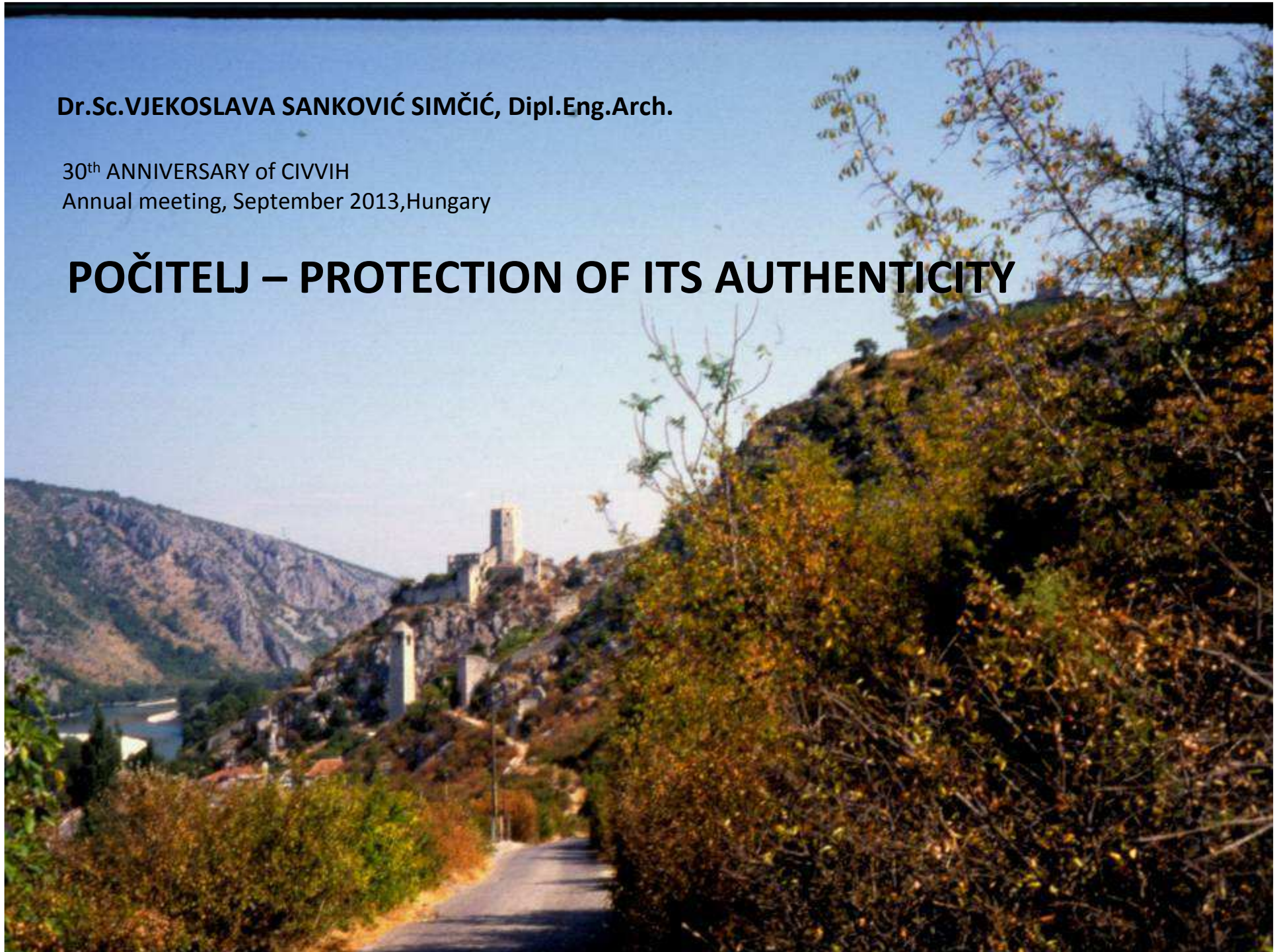


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POČITELJ – PROTECTION OF ITS AUTHENTICITY





View of Počitelj, cultural- historic site, built on the left bank of the Neretva river, having direct contact with it. The photo shows condition before the main road was built, first half of the 20th century



View of Počitelj, 1970, the main road was already built

POČITELJ is among the most important cultural and historic sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I think it is proper to present the approach to the protection and authenticity preservation of all its relevant values.

The settlement was built in a natural, craggy, Karst amphitheatre in the Neretva river valley, south of Mostar. Despite considerable archive data, it is not known who erected it and when. In the charters of Aragon king Alphonse V, issued in Naples in 1444 and 1454, as well as in the charter of king Friedrich III, issued in 1448 in Vienna, Počitelj was mentioned as a fortified town of Dubrava district and one of the properties of duke Stjepan Vukčić Kosača.

When the Ottomans conquered Bosnia in 1463, Počitelj became an important strategic defense stronghold. The head of a coalition against the Ottomans was Hungarian and Croatian king Matthias Corvinus, who took Počitelj in 1465. At that time, with a papal support and a blessing and the assistance from Dubrovnik and the Vlatkovići (the lords of western Herzegovina), a feverish race began in order to fortify the town and enlarge its town walls and towers. All efforts concerning the fortifying and equipping the town, in order to defend it were fruitless: the town fell to the Ottomans in the late summer of 1471. Losing its strategic significance, the conquerors transformed Počitelj into an oriental settlement, with an obvious division into zones (residential and economic zones). The latter one emerges close to the Neretva river, at the crossroads of 3 overland routes and 1 water route, while the residential one was created in a natural amphitheatrical slope. An important description was recorded by Ottoman travel writer Evlija Čelebija in 1664.

It was only after the Venetian conquest of Gabela- up to that time the main Ottoman fortification facing Dalmatia- in 1693, that Počitelj assumed again its strategic importance, as a result of which was strengthened and fortified. It reached its maximum, in terms of both buildings and population.

With the Austrian arrival, it lost again strategical importance and declined sharply. It remained outside the main communication roads, built between 1878 and 1914, and between 1918 and 1941. In the social and economical circumstances of that period, the population started to abandon it gradually. Počitelj got a revival chance by constructing a modern road (M17) in the valley of the Neretva river. The road contributed to it being connected and to accessibility, but destroyed direct connection between the settlement and the river. Počitelj's revival problem was made more topical in the 1960's, when attention was devoted only to the Lower Settlement (Donja Mahala), located next to the main road. Its Upper Settlement (Gornja Mahala) further deteriorated and inhabitants continued to move away.

The attitude towards Počitelj changed in 1970, when "The revitalization project of the old town of Počitelj" was made and defended in Rome (ICCROM / Scuola di perfezionamento, Facoltà di Architettura, Università di Roma).

In the war (1992-1995), the mosque was dynamited and the settlement was devastated and looted. Despite that, the settlement did not lose its fundamental values and characteristics. Thanks to the financial aid of the Federal government , the protection and restoration of Počitelj has begun in 2002 on the basis of the principles established in the Revitalization project.



Post-war restoration of Počitelj has begun in 2002, and still continues

The Master plan ensures the preservation of authenticity of the cultural and historic site in functional, structural and environmental aspects.

-The authenticity of the functional aspect will be preserved through keeping the settlement as a living organism that is populated with autochthonous inhabitants, which will keep traditional way of life, customs and their original activities (agriculture, production of healthy food, production of traditional objects...). This kind of approach enables development of both stationary and transit tourism. (Transformation of the old town of Počitelj into a hotel complex is a priori unacceptable).

-The authenticity of the structural aspect will be preserved by archaeological and scientific researches and expert conservation and restoration workson the cultural- historic structures and remains. A new purpose (cultural-educational or trading-catering one) will be given to valuable spaces and buildings, whose original function was overcome. In these contemporary transformations, all new constructions need to be carefully selected and harmoniously integrated with the existing valuable structures, that is, they have to be discernible and have to reflect our time.

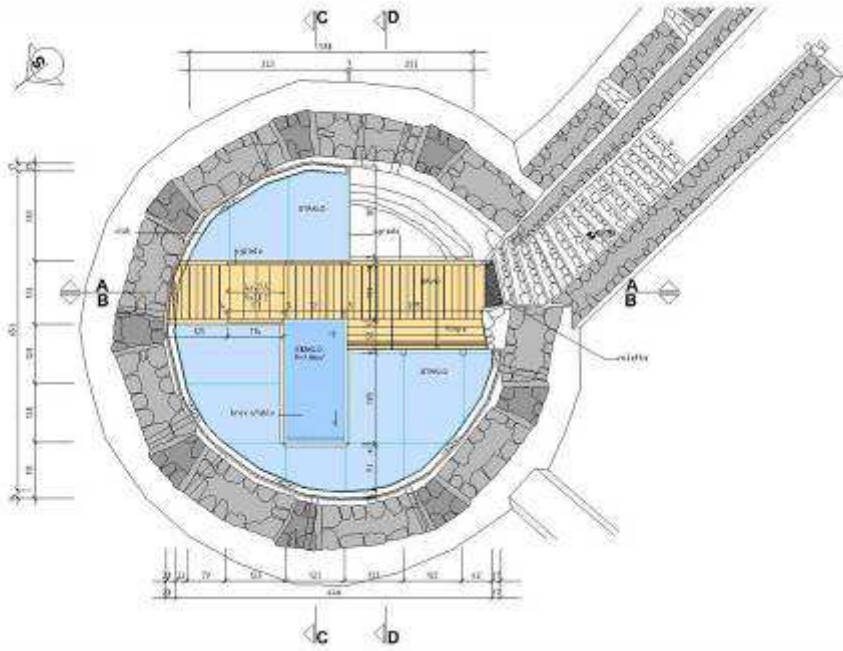
-The authenticity of the specific landscape will be preserved by prohibiting any construction on the steep banks of the Neretva river, both upstream and downstream of the settlement. The dominant gray-green color of the environment will be preserved by using autochthonous building material (stone) and planting autochthonous plants.

Kulina

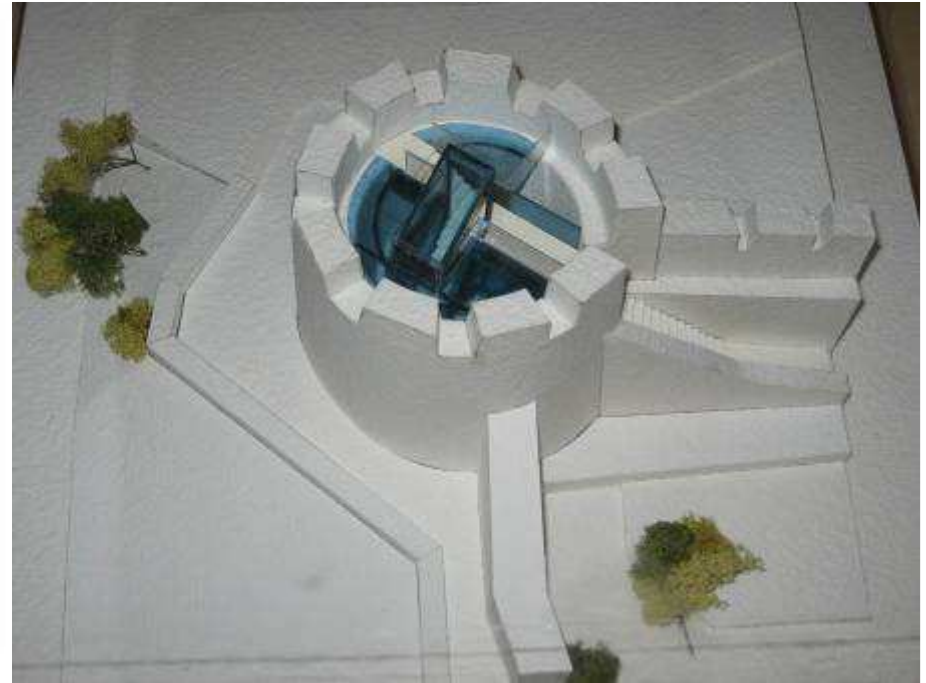




Kulina, archaeological researches

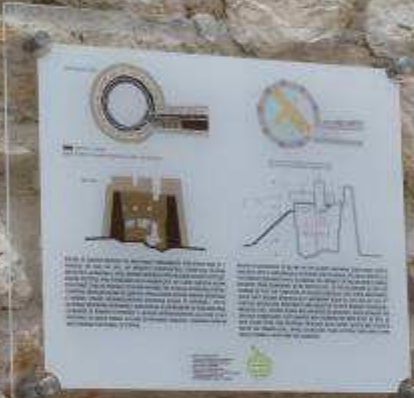


Kulina, transformation project,
(arch. A. Polić), 2010



Project scale-model

The aforementioned principles are already being applied on a part of the fortification system. The medieval Kulina was transformed into a belvedere from which commands a remarkable view of both the settlement and its environment. During the process, older layers of the monument that have been recently discovered, are presented to the public in an authentic manner, while being watched from a new construction made of contrasting material (glass and steel).







Kulina, belvedere realization







Pasha's tabija





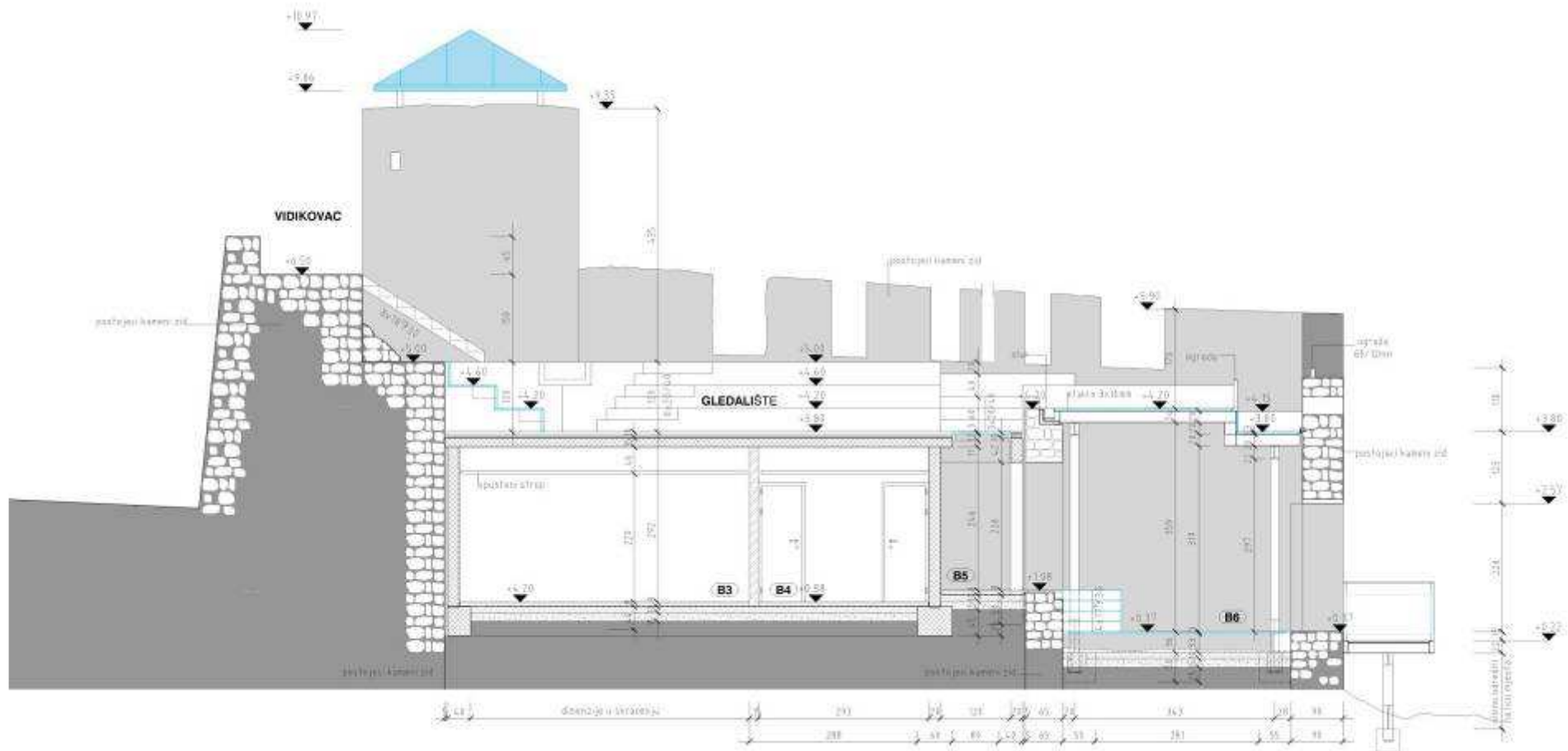
Pasha's tabija, condition before the works, 2012



Pasha's tabija, works in progress, 2013



Pasha's tabija, multi-media center, project (arch. A. Polić, 2012)



Transformation of the large bastion – Pasha’s tabija into a multi-media center with an open-air stage is currently in progress. All authentic parts of the fortification are protected and presented in an appropriate manner, while newly built portions are discernible and adjusted to the existing ones.

It is not an easy task for us to preserve the authenticity of a specific, small cultural-historic site of Počitelj, because it has been more and more exposed to various pressures, interests , illegal interventions and obstructions in the post-war period.