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**DECORATIVE VALUE OF THE BUILT-IN FURNITURE
IN BEROVO MONASTERY FACILITY FROM THE BEGINNING
OF THE XIX CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT

This paper covers a research of the architectural features and values of traditional furniture decoration in Maleshevo region of Macedonia. The subject of the research is the furniture in the Monastery facility in Berovo from the beginning of the XIX century.

The goal of the research is to analyze and appraise the values of furniture decoration that are not sufficiently explored and preserved in this region. The research is focused on two issues: the typology and decorative value of the furniture in questions, as well as the anthropological development of its users, Macedonian women tied directly to that architecture and culture, living in the vicinity of the Monastery facilities.

Key words: traditional decoration, built-in furniture, monastery code, typological analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the inspection made aimed at reconstruction of the conditions in interiors and furniture of Macedonian Renaissance period (the XIX century), we can see that interior decoration and construction of elements in built furniture had played an important role in everyday life of people from this period (Nikoljski P.E. 2016). In addition to the carefully balanced architecture of the building and its adaptation to the landscape (context), the interior and the furniture were paid great attention to, having been approached with the same attention and care as was the architecture itself. (Nikoljski P.E. 2016).

Traditional architecture, being a significant part of the material culture, has not been sufficiently researched in the region of Maleshevija. There are fewer and fewer structures and building units; consequently, the national legacy and cultural inheritance is disappearing.

After the research conducted on the field in the three nearby municipalities around the Monastery and the Church "St. Archangel Mihail", where the architecture of the XIX and the XX century prevails, a conclusion was reached that the most vibrant architecture was located in a few local villages: Star Istevnik, Bigla, Razlovci, Robovo and Umlena. On this relatively small area we can encounter various signs of different cultures of living. The villages are located in the mountains but also on the hillsides and lowlands, being either scattered or built as a whole.

Because of lack of preservation and protection of the houses in which people used to live in the villages, the structures are now in a fairly poor shape. For the sake of choosing a fair representative example of this diverse region, the chosen location is a building with a different living purpose - a monastery facility for nuns.

2. OBJECTS AND METHODS

2.1 Organization of space

Early Christian concept of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was present on the territory of ethnic Macedonia from the earliest period of the IX century until today. This concept can be also be considered as regional Christian concept of the organization of churches and monasteries that were used to accommodate priests. It is regional because the Christian concept of the inscribed cross as the basis for construction and organization of the church appeared and reappeared on the entire southern Balkan region.

The foundations of the first female monastery were laid as late as 20 years after constructing the church, by the grand-daughters of priest Peco, after they had become widows at a very early age. In the beginning they got an authorization to use the two rooms that were built during the period while building the church, but later, when more nuns joined the monastery, the grand-daughters had the whole facility built. The locals helped a lot during those years, but also the nuns' property and field grew bigger in time as the parish was growing stronger. This female monastery is the only one in Macedonia where nuns lived undisturbed ever since it was erected.

2.2 Analysis of the building materials used

Staple building materials were wood, stone and earth-soil. Our ancestors used to build with materials that could be easily found in the nature, so, prevailing building materials were the wood, the stone and the earth-soil.

The monastery was built with wooden material, woven walls with white colour in the upper half and stone walls with clay in the bottom half. In this case stone was more commonly used so that the structure would be longer-lasting, more durable and less visible in the surroundings. Regarding the wooden materials, the most commonly applied are the oak, heart of oak and ash which are in abundance in the nearby forests and possess great building material characteristics. The beech wood can also be found in the interiors. The stone used was mostly in gray and yellowish color and was not carried from other places; rather, people used local stone modified in shape to fit the structures being built. The most frequently used building material was the clay soil because of its binding feature and its being a good insulator. Therefore, it is also quite prevalent in this region. Sand was also used in construction of the walls and floors, most frequently of the ground floor.

2.3 Techniques of the walls, floors and ceilings

Due to climate factors, the walls are thick, but the windows are of medium size. The facade facing the hill has many small holes. The idea of the house is always aiming at symmetry, even when it comes to the openings in the walls (windows and doors). The technique of building walls from woven hazel twigs is very old and it's not been used for a very long time. The white color of the facade is due to the slaked lime in this region.

The staircases circle the monastery beginning from the southern side of the facility. With their simple form, they look almost like an ingrowing element of the structure in which wood prevails, and shift into the porch which is the same length as the stairs. The only detail that stands out is the fence with a continuous amorphous form.



Figure 1. Exterior look of the monastery facility "Michael"

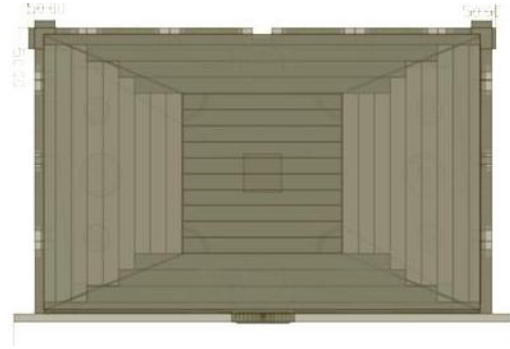


Figure 2. The church "St. Archangel Michael"



Figure 3. The porch in front of the church

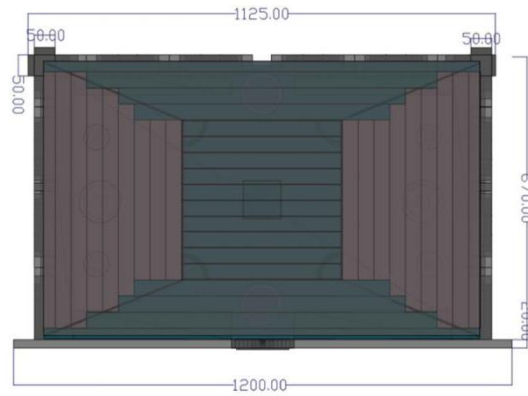


Figure 4. The ceiling of the porch (trem)

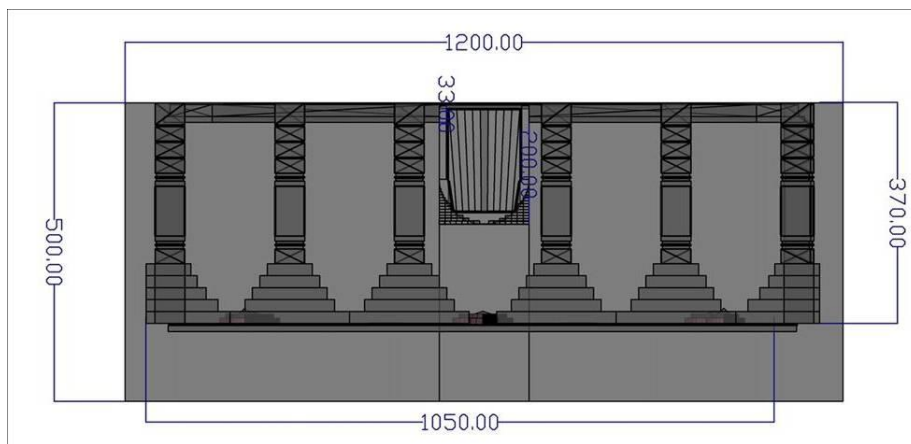


Figure 5. Lateral view

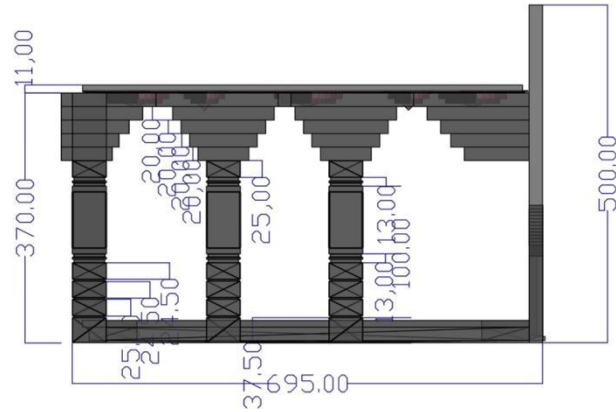


Figure 6. *Frontal view*

2.4 “Chardak”

A ‘Chardak’ is an equivalent of a terrace, folk term used in the Balkans. It’s located on the eastern side of the facility and is a kind of continuation of the guest room, having the same length and width as that room. It is a part of the first built small living space during the building of the church. It is fully enclosed with wooden panels on both sides with a little space for the entrance. In the 'chardak' there are benches placed along its entire length.

2.5 Dining room

The dining room is located on the ground floor and occupies the central part of the southern side, the mostly used living area. It is a large-size room designed to seat more than 30 people. There are large windows that overlook the courtyard of the monastery, and inside there is an oblong table for 26 people, with drawers for storing the silverware for each person separately. The table is accompanied with two oblong side benches. The length of the over-4-metre dining room is supported by three pillars, with multifaceted top and rich carvings. The room also includes a large fireplace and a furnace - the history equivalent of an oven or a bakery, implying that the room had also been used for preparation of food, not only as a dining room.



Figure 7. *The dining room, also used as a kitchen*

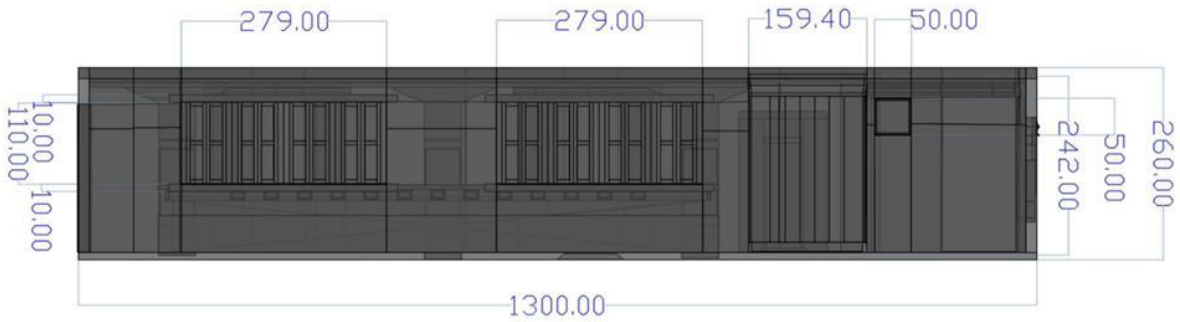


Figure 8. *Frontal view*



Figure 9. *Lateral view*

2.6 Guest room

The guest room, together with the 'Chardak', is the oldest part of the monastery facility, built during the construction of the church. It is a bright, large area on the first floor of the east side, which can be reached through the 'Chardak', and has two doors with small heights. The space between the doors is very small and dark. The guest room features a 'Musandra' - a built-in wooden closet connected to the inner door. This characteristic element is often seen in traditional Macedonian houses. The 'Musandra', the doors and the door frames are embellished with wood carving. In the past the room also featured a couple of 'Minsofa' - high benches, a common characteristic of the Macedonian Christian house, which were placed underneath the windows.

This room's purpose is welcoming guests, usually priests and sometimes outside visitors. 'Odaja' is the Macedonian folk term for a room. All the rooms are located on the southern part of the monastery facility. The monastery room does not differ much from the house room, apart from being a little smaller, designed for one person. With the small windows in the stone walls, there is a problem with the lack of light and warmth. Some of the rooms in the monastery were reused because of the reduced number of nuns in the past decade, being converted into working areas and storage rooms.

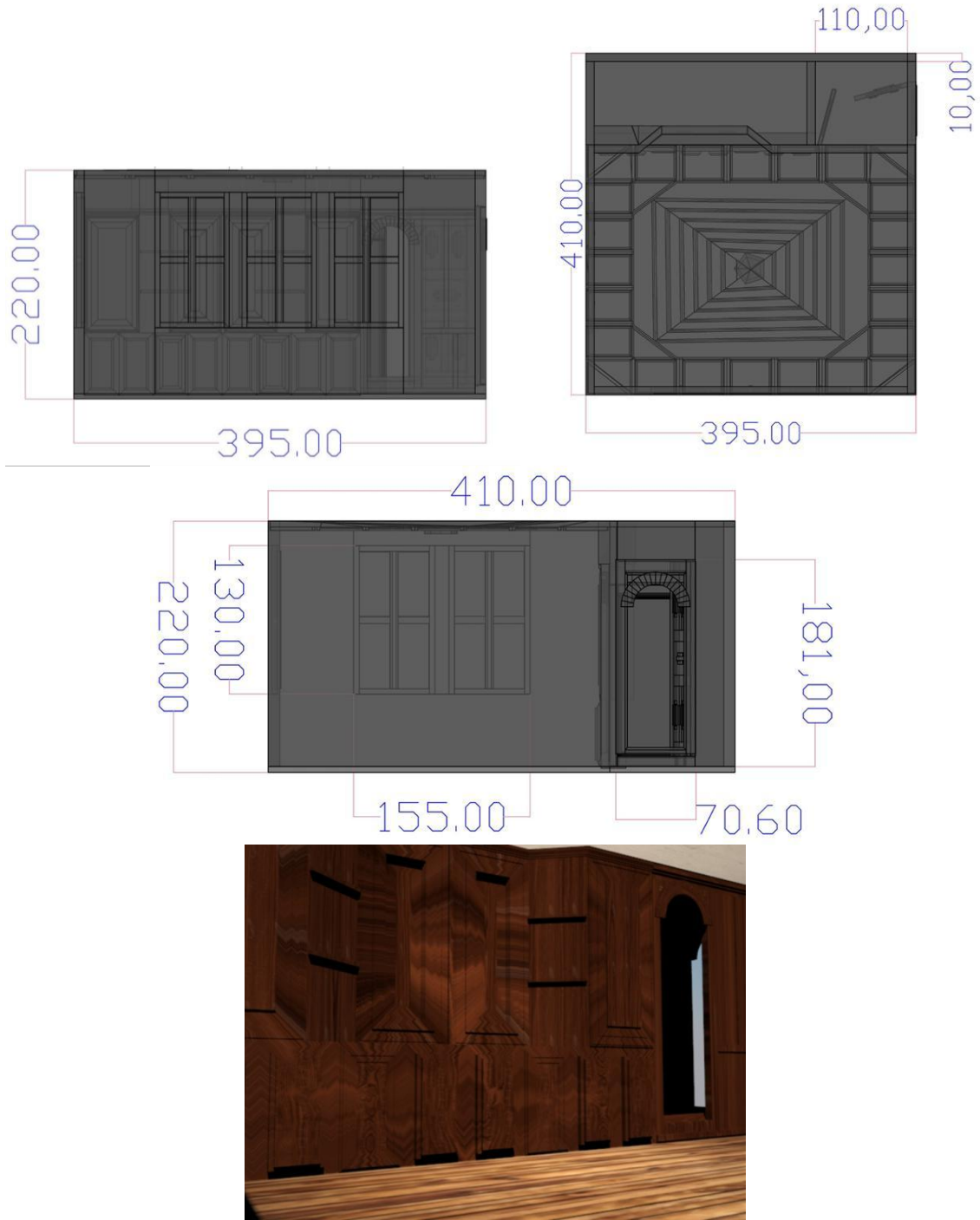


Figure 10,11,12,13. Guest room, built-in furniture (basis, elevations, and 3d)

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The primary result is analysis of the architecture and design of traditional Macedonian sacred structures and the impact of traditional architecture from the XIX century in Maleshevo region on sacred structures. Additionally, notable is also the impact of the Hellenic and Christian concept of organization and designing forms. This research should provide the information on anthropological development of the population and the local architecture, typological determination of the structure value, the interior and exterior treatment, as well as its etymological value, through follow-up and

analysis of the traditional techniques. This research strives to provide an insight into the value of the traditional, and by getting familiar with it, to create possibilities for its growth and assimilation.

From the interior and the furniture we can realize that a simple craft technique does not stem only from the makers' familiarity with making furniture, but it also lies in their need to emphasize its functionality. Thus, a variety of furniture was created, diverse household items rising out of the simplest to the most complex nature, which were a reflection of the relevant area and time in which they occurred. They possessed not only a functional or aesthetic value, but their wholeness in the home comprises characters that reflect the spirit of that time, the people and the hosts themselves, varying in ethnicity, social status or areas where the object originates from. That is why the design of movable furniture is not a case or a product of individual creativity or the talent of one. These studies confirm that the existence of one same motive on Macedonian land has been traced back to prehistoric eras. This fact makes us draw a conclusion that the furniture in its very iconic design had existed and evolved as a matrix by itself on previously "paved" path guided by habits, traditions and a specific genetic code for our nation.

We can learn a lot from the Macedonian revival house interiors, especially the way an authentic style of the nation and culture was built. These interiors, together with the furniture, are the epiphany of the definition of style, understood as a totality of symbols which, in a shorter or longer period of time, have traced the development period in history of interiors and other segments of art and culture. Our interiors show a unity between movable and built-in furniture, as well as the interior and the architecture of the structures themselves. If all of this is so, then they are representatives of our distinctive regional style. A proof of this are the wide variety of interiors in different parts of ethnic Macedonia from the XIX century, that despite different climate, natural and social factors, still carry in its matrix the unified expression upon which authentic elements come to completion.

4. CONCLUSION

Malesh House as a special type of Macedonian architectural heritage, was created during a long evolutionary path. The major factors that influenced the creating were the climate, mountainous location, religion and ethnological influences coming from different cultures that ruled the territory. Christian population used to build tall houses on small areas, leaving more land for the yards, and inside the premises had a multifunctional usage. People were more devoted to the life and work outside the house. Families always stayed to live together. They used natural and easy-to-find materials and created modest and clean outlooks. The only place that shows their artistic side is the carving in the wood surfaces. This underdeveloped area shows good resourcefulness in designing spaces, building symmetrical shapes, inspired by the Muslim households, and using benchmarking techniques for proper sizing of the space for their personal needs.

All this should be a roadmap for development of the culture of living in the country. A way of discovering more about our roots and ourselves, so that we could become better, a way to upgrade the way that we live. Seeking inspiration in the tradition can provide an opportunity for continuity of it in modernity and an ability to leave a personal mark on architectural history. The tradition was maintained by creating furniture and objects for their own needs. Once the model was adopted, it was understood and passed down from generation to generation. Analyzing this heritage today, we are still ruled by their simplicity and beauty, as if the elements were taken from the universe, and then interwoven through human thought and hands.

Authentic style in interiors of Macedonian traditional architecture from the XIX century can be instantly recognized, because we can relate to it with ourselves. Observing our ethnological items and furniture, we experience them as our own because of the moment of recognition, behind which a long tradition of familiar, seen, and experienced forms and materials is being stored even when we have not paid special attention to them. We conclude that creating (designing) furniture and interiors based on our spiritual and esthetic components brings us closer to our goal - designing furniture that will fulfill even the most subtle wishes and will meet the basic functional needs of people.

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