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**MACEDONIAN HOUSE FROM THE BEGINNING  
OF THE XIX CENTURY IN VELES**

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**ABSTRACT**

A thematic examination has been made of constructive and aesthetic values in traditional Macedonian architecture in the city of Veles, in order to endorse the architectural categories developed in all national constructive creations on Macedonian ground. Although the examination was focused on one city of Macedonia, we separated the main features of national architecture which are distinctive for this surrounding. The values that differentiate this region from the others were analyzed in detail..

This paper comprises a few methods of examination. These methods helped us to formulate all the parameters used by the national builders. The presented examination leads to the conclusion that national architecture abounds with aesthetic values. The national builder, with his extraordinary building skills, succeeded in presenting them in their true light. Our obligation today is to validate and preserve it in its originality.

**Key words:** examination, examination methods, traditional, Macedonian architecture in Veles, interior organization, rooms, positioning the rooms, building skill, national builder, meaning and value of traditional houses.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Macedonian house in the city of Veles belongs to house style that was spread throughout the Balkans in the XIX century. These houses suggest that some values from the old masters/builders are important for our contemporary architecture such as: the structures to be built with local materials, to be environmentally friendly and anthropometrically correct, to be functional, the space to be well organized etc. (Nikoljski P.E. 2016). Veles houses are mostly built on floors. The organization of space is symmetric or asymmetric depending on the porch and its position in space. The ground floor primarily functions as a basement that serves as a store room or a wine cellar. The balcony connects the architectural elements horizontally and vertically. They also connect all the rooms on the floor of the house, because almost every room has a door leading to the balcony. The guest room in the project design of the house has a special treatment, i.e. it stands out for its interior decoration, which is present in some cases in other rooms, too. The kitchen is, above all, functional, and in nearly all examples it is a "living" kitchen. It was a place where food was made, the whole family gathered to eat together and to sit near the fireplace, or just talk and take a rest. Sometimes the toilet was located outside the house, but there are lots of examples where it is part of the house, and if so, then it is obligatorily facing the north. The interior decoration was processed with special care.



Figure 1,2, 3,4,5,and 6. Some drawings of traditional architecture in Veles<sup>1</sup>

## 2. STRUCTURES, MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Construction

The construction system of traditional houses in Veles from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was as follows: stone walls on the ground floor and wooden structure of floors, in a traditional manner. The basement and the walls of the ground floor, and often the whole northern wall, were built of stones with thickness of 60cm and sometimes 80 cm. The walls represent an excellent thermal insulation, especially for Macedonian climate where summers are scorching hot and winters are

<sup>1</sup> The drawings and photos used here are part of a student's project work "Veleshka kukja" made within the Faculty for Design and Technology in Skopje.

freezing cold. As a binder mostly mud was used. Macedonian houses were organized with one or two floors. Their structure consisted of wooden pillars, beams and cane. The construction was realized by visible wooden beams in the basement and the ground floor, while the floors were covered with coatings of planks with decorative elements. The eaves of the traditional houses in Veles are large and supported by the lowered ceiling beams. Their role was to protect the house mainly from precipitations and from the sweltering sun. The roof structure is wooden, while roofs are generally made of stone slabs and tiles.

## **2.2 Decoration**

The process of interior and exterior decoration of a traditional house in Veles, just like in the other examples, has always depended on the financial capacities of the owner and the creativity of the workers. For example, the windows and doors were made of the best quality, mostly with the wood type - fir. The windows in old houses were made with vertically opening and always in special measurement - pattern of Arshin (1ARM), (Nikoljski P.E. 2016). The position of the doors in the house made them have great communication function, especially when the doors were positioned in the corner of the room. Decoration on the door was specially made with care and excellent sense for proportion (Nikoljski P.E. 2016). That particular decoration on the door was indicating which room you enter. So, the guest room door was the richest and often decorated with carvings. The doors of the kitchen and other rooms were less decorated. The ceilings of all the rooms were covered with wood panels, while the ceilings in the guest rooms were decorated with special carvings.

## **2.3 Examples**

**2.3.1.** First example is the house of the family Kasapovi, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, also known in literature as a floating house. It is positioned on a huge rock with a small yard. The interior design and the traditional decoration of the rooms was made with particular care. All the rooms were equipped with built-in furniture, lavishly covered ceilings and decorated plastic doors.



*Figure 7. Photo of the Kasapovi memorial house, Veles<sup>2</sup>*

**2.3.2** The house of family Glavinov is considered as one of the most beautiful landmarks of old Veles architecture. Organisation of the first floor shows that on the left side of the balcony is placed a guest room, and on the right side of the balcony there are two other rooms. The guest room was made

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with plenty of examples of traditional decoration, and so were the doors. The Windows of house Glavinov were executed in traditional manner, with horizontal and vertical obstacles.



*Figures 8,9,10 and 11, Interior decoration in the House Vasil Glavinov, Veles<sup>3</sup>*

**2.3.3** The house of Jordan Konstantinov - Djino<sup>4</sup>, is built on the left side of the river Vardar in Veles. The architecture of the house is dominated by stone walls, characteristic facade, wooden pillars and a wooden fence. The terrace is dynamic, on three levels and square hovering over the high stone.

**2. 3.4** The house Racin<sup>5</sup>, was organised with groundfloor and first floor. The ground floor was built of stone, the first floor with dominating facade in white and beautifully designed windows. The roof is high and covered with tiles. Wooden double doors leading to the porch are organized as a small space that spans the floor, oven, verandas and workroom. The workroom has a large area, and in its floor there is a small hiding place. The terrace of the house is attached to the oven. The opposite end of the balcony with stairs leads to the taller porch. This house was completely restored in 1962.

<sup>3</sup> The photos used are part of a student's paper work "Veleshka kukja" made within the Faculty for Design and Technology in Skopje.

<sup>4</sup> An important Macedonian educator and teacher.

<sup>5</sup> One of the greatest poets in the period between the two World Wars, Costa Solev - Racin.





Figure 12,13,14 and 15. Photos of the house that belonged to Jordan Hadzi Konstantinov - Djino<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The photos used are part of a student's project work "Veleshka kukja" made within the Faculty for Design and Technology in Skopje



Figure 16,17 and 18. Museum of K.S.Racin work; old dining room; Racin,s bedroom.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. RESULTS AND DISSCUSION

#### 3.1 Traditional values

Traditional architecture in Veles (through an example of four houses) has shown that besides carefully balanced architecture of the building and its adaptation to the landscape (context), interiors and furniture were an obligatory factor, and therefore treated with the same attention and care. The tradition was maintained by creating furniture and structures for their users' own needs. Once the model was adopted, it was understood and transferred 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.

A simple craft technique does not only come from the craftsmen's knowledge in the field of making furniture, but also from the need to emphasize the furniture's functionality. Thus, various pieces of furniture were created as well as household items, resulting from the simplest to complex nature, which were reflection of the relevant era and time in which they occurred. They possessed not only a functional or aesthetic value, but their wholeness in the home consists of characters that reflect the spirit of that time, the people and the hosts themselves, ranging from ethnicity, social status or areas from where the structure originates. That is why the traditional house in Veles is not a case or a product of individual creativity or the talent of one. These studies confirm that the existence of one

<sup>7</sup> The photos used are part of a project work "Veleshka kukja" made within the Faculty for Design and Technology in Skopje

identical motif on Macedonian land can be traced back to prehistoric eras. This fact imposes a conclusion that architecture in its very iconic design had existed and evolved as a matrix by itself on previously installed path guided by habits, traditions and a specific genetic code for our nation.

### **3.2 Proportional and anthropomorphic dimensioning**

Basic element of composing and designing the houses in Veles, was the principle of ‘good proportions’ which can be seen in the examples. Even when they were not a result of a previously well thought analysis, they carried the specific impression of the ‘good proportion’. This phenomenon of anthropomorphic dimensioning can be seen in every house and on every piece of furniture in the Macedonian houses dating from the XIX century. Based on overall analysis made with reference to the anthropomorphic measures of movable and built-in furniture, we conclude that proportioning, composing and designing furniture in Macedonian traditional house from the XIX century is in complete compliance with proportions with all other elements. Traditional architecture in Veles is anthropomorphically and ergonomically proportioned, both its exterior and interior. The interiors were realized with movable and immovable furniture where proportion reveals the mutual action between parts and elements as a whole and the parts between themselves. Therefore, using anthropomorphic module expressed in the yardstick (1ARM) which is also a proportion unit, the functional technical and aesthetic requirements were established.

### **3.3 Decoration derived from the function**

The traditional architecture of Veles from the XIX century reflects a specific sensibility for decoration, derived from their function. This especially applies to the interiors where the built-in furniture such as ceilings, cupboards, and other surfaces, with their artistic content and technical processing material, are considered priority number one. Ceilings and cupboards with their surfaces dominate the space exposing the size (expression) of the interior itself. The traditional artisans felt the power of expression in the elements of the built-in furniture and other surfaces, which resulted in artistic unity of expression to all interior components.

### **3.4 Materials and techniques in making furniture**

The houses were mainly built in stone and wood. Mostly used types of wood were the ones that were widely available (oak, chestnut, pine, beech, fruit trees) which the artisans, carpenters, carvers, knew how to work with, and especially how to prolong the life of impregnated wood. Despite the very simple basic tools for making furniture and woodworking, artisans attained good results and quality products. Particularly strong aspect of the traditional interiors and furniture was its decoration. It is characterized by a wide range of phases in processing and decoration of interior surfaces. High achievements in composing the decorative elements were primarily based on the logic of projects for built-in furniture, a sense of styling the natural forms and same choice for authentic motifs. All this generally turns the interiors of Macedonian houses from the XIX century into an artistic category of folk art. From a methodical point of view, the wealth of procedures is evident, ranging from the simplest decoration carved by shepherds, created by cutting through the shallow carving with great accuracy, something considered peak decoration technique, to painting and making intarsia of movable furniture and installation segment in terms of colour materials and designs that deserve a separate attention.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The specific relationship between tradition and modernity has always been one of the main issues for the future of furniture design. The subject of tradition and modernity will remain in the spotlight through history. Maybe the world will soon become a global village, but in that kind of world humans will not survive without their memories. Today’s designer must work in modern terms, but must have obligatory respect for all historical values, since that same respect puts them in a different position from which, they can create without this frame. History facts are not meaningful by themselves or

because of the weight of styles from old eras, but mostly because of the strength of impression that is present in the collective memory of the ultimate consumers - the people, the buyers of furniture, designed for them according to their wishes and needs. We can learn a lot from Veles traditional architecture. Those structures, houses are true examples of our history, and they have to remind us that once functionality, wellbeing, and putting the human measures first, was main way of project designing, building, thinking. Maybe that's why, looking at them today from this perspective, they seem connected to the nature and to a man.

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