

# TRADITIONAL CITY HOUSE IN NORTHEASTERN MACEDONIA

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# Traditional city house in Northeastern Macedonia

**SKOPJE, 2014**

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## Traditional city house in Northeastern Macedonia from 19th and early 20th century

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## Introduction

The material in this publication is intended for general interested public, students, professionals which dealing with the study of architectural form and all lovers of traditional architecture .

This paper presents a set of presentation materials that are implemented as a research projects, in the given city areas in the northeastern part of Macedonia . There are presented in city houses major historic urban cores of cities: Skopje, Veles, Stip, Kriva Palanka and Kumanovo .

This material will allow consideration of the architectural form of the town house of the Macedonian cities of the 19th century and early 20th century, a period in which it reaches the most creative form . Besides the basic features of the house from this period, as external form, spatial layout and program content in the main body are given basic characteristics of interior decoration and furniture .

Through the provided drawings were made in ink on paper in the period 1998 - 2012 year, includes all basic types of stores open or closed, house type -Chardaklija , external decoration and so on. The material in this publication aims to present a picture of the shape of the town house and its basic characteristic traits. The best examples are covered houses that reflect the real image of the city from this period . I hope that this material will complement expert in the field of architecture, literature that there is interest

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## Traditional city house in Northeastern Macedonia from 19th and early 20th century

Throughout centuries towns in Macedonia developed in certain social, economic and cultural conditions, based on the traditional way of living. Historical development of towns and urban structures in the Roman, Early Byzantine, Early Christian, the mediaeval period and particularly in the time of the Ottoman rule created solid basis for forming the urban structure of towns.

The greatest influence upon forming of the urban structure was exerted during the Ottoman reign. The intense growth of crafts and trade brought about increasing of the economic power of the Christian population. Christians started to build houses of higher life standards and improved functional and aesthetic solutions.

The evolution of economic and social life in towns in this period resulted in more intense construction activities. Dwelling structure was the basic element in shaping of the town panorama. Nineteenth century Macedonian towns, in their structure and urban concept, shared common features with other Balkan towns from the same period. Their population ranged from 5.000 to 40.000



inhabitants, both Christian, and Muslim. Christian population settled the hilly areas in utterly dense structure of houses, whereas Muslims lived in lowlands, where houses had large courtyards abounding with plants.

The towns of Veles, Krushevo, Ohrid, Kratovo and Kriva Palanka were located on hill slopes, whereas Bitola, Skopje, Prilep, Shtip, Struga, Debar and Strumica were situated in planes. Among smaller settlement Berovo, Delchevo and Vinica are worth mentioning. In towns houses were arranged in groups called *maalas*, which satisfied all the economic and social needs. *Maalas* usually had a central area with a fountain, shops, bakery, bridge, etc.

Central space of the town heart was the bazaar, which was also its economic centre.

## TOWN HOUSE

Traditional Macedonian town house reached the peak of its development in the 19th century, when the most beautiful structures were built. Depending on the economic power of families and their needs, houses of outstanding spatial solutions, interior design, structural system and unique façade decoration were being built. Due to the specific terrain, insolation and climate conditions, the spatial solution of typical Macedonian house developed in height, consisting the ground floor and storey or more of them. Spatial solutions or rooms for different uses were necessarily adjusted to the overall organization of house. Economic rooms, porch- *trem* and kitchen were usually situated in the ground floor. Whereas the upper storey included *odajas* and the upper storey porch – *chardak*, rooms which were used as winter dwelling in winter. Multi-storied houses had on the top storey an open *chardak* and more representative rooms for hosting visitors and for family celebrations, which were used in the summertime as summer dwellings.

Spatial solutions of houses were mostly of asymmetrical type, only occasionally symmetrical, yet, regularly with utterly rational, functional and easy access. *Chardaks* were always rooms used for the same purpose, whether open, or closed. The small surface of the ground floor was frequently enlarged on the storey by application of protruded jetties.

Macedonian houses were mostly situated on steep terrain, having been adjusted to its geography, which has brought about creative solutions with maximum use of space. The architectonic solutions were largely adjusted to human needs and measures, thus composing space for comfortable habitation.

Interior decoration was the final stage in construction of house. The aesthetic and artistic design of the interior space, i.e., treatment of ceilings, *musandras*, *dolaps*, interior doors, hearths, shelves, cupboards, banisters and other elements formed a harmonious whole.

Carved wooden ceilings were composed of decoratively treated stylized elements, which composed original aesthetic unit, having been arranged in specific geometric lay-out. Ceilings appeared in two forms, either as flat ones, or raised high. In regard to the material applied, there were wooden or combined ones, the later also including flat surfaces coated with mortar, treated earth, etc. Wood –carving was applied on ceilings, *dolaps* and *musandras*. Pieces of wood were usually carved in low-relief and this decoration was mostly used in houses of wealthy families to show their economic power and good standing.

Hearths, *dolaps* and shelves also composed harmonious aesthetic design. The harmony of the stylistic interior decoration was successfully incorporated in the other architectural forms of the house.

By transferring influences from Turkey and West Europe, wealthy town aristocracy composed outstanding dwelling forms, which united the functional and aesthetic aspect, most apparent in *minders*, *dolaps*, ceilings, banisters, doors, etc. The reception room for organizing celebrations and family festivities usually abounded with appealing wood-carving and other decorative pieces, including glass, porcelain, stroke iron, etc.

Houses were built of stone walls in the ground floor and *bondruck*- bricks in wooden framing on the storey. Basic building materials were stone, wood and treated earth. *Bondruck* structure allowed obtaining irregular volume and surfaces in upper storeyes,

harmonious solutions and symmetrical forms of facades. In building facades, rhythmic alteration of windows and doors was adhered to, as well as their accord with roofs. There are certain examples of houses that, besides the decorative motifs of structural elements of façade (windows, jetties, eaves, etc.), also had painted ornamental portions on eaves and other parts of façade.

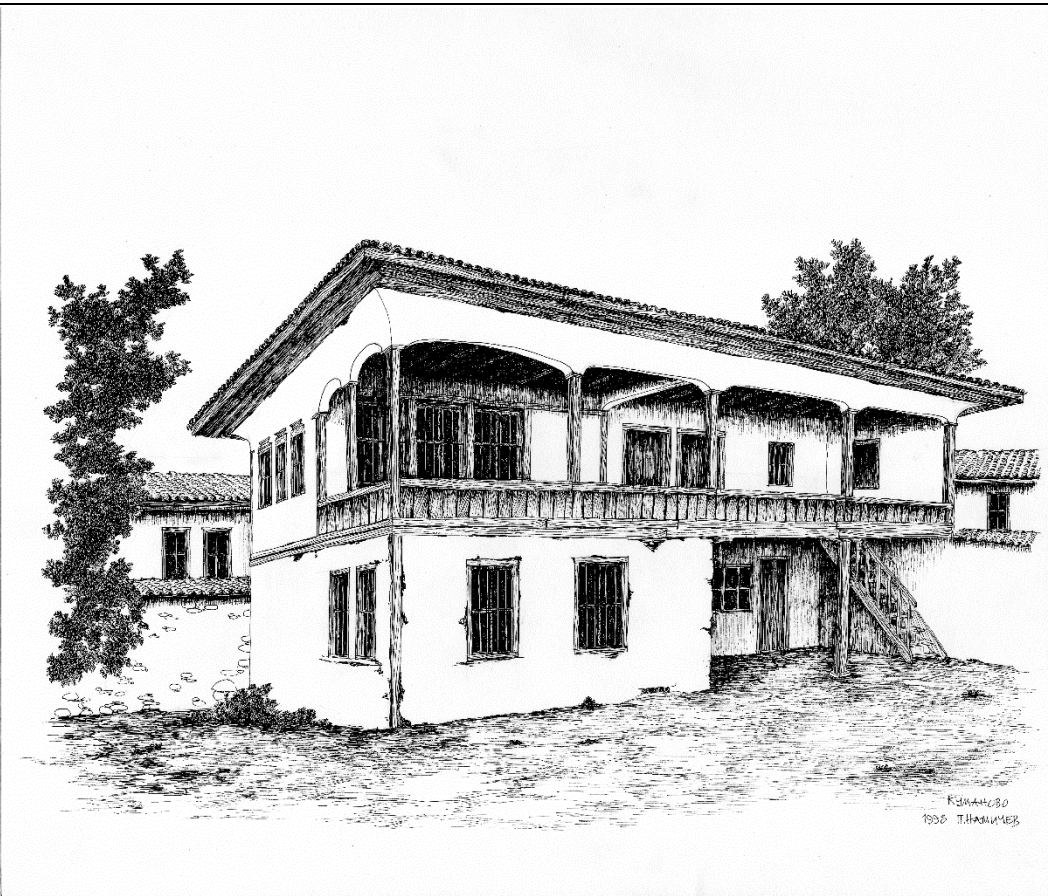
The most significant examples of houses in architectural aspect were built in Ohrid, Veles, Krushevo, Kratovo, Strumica, Debar, Struga, Tetovo, Skopje, etc.

Macedonian house, depending on the family trade, developed into various specific spatial forms. Fishermen's houses (Ohrid, Prespa) underwent in-depth development. They were located by and oriented to the lake and had husbandry premises in the courtyard. Merchants' houses had storage rooms in the yard (Ohrid, Kratovo), vine-growing families used to build special basements with barrels (Veles) and tanners had special rooms for leather drying and tanning (Ohrid, Kru{evo), whereas a workshop was part of the carpenter's house (Ohrid), etc.

Houses in Veles, Strumica and Tetovo were open to the outer space, with *chardaks* looking at the courtyard or street, i.e., town, which were used for working, having rest, hosting visitors and sleeping. *Chardaks* usually had surfaces of slightly elevated floor, which were called *tronj* or *minsofa*, and were oriented to south, with a view to the street or town, having been used for protection of the house from high temperatures. *Chardaks* were regularly the most prominent elements of facade, emphasizing the contrast between the light and dark surfaces. Contrasting effects were also achieved by the rhythm of windows and protruded jetties, by which façades became exceptionally dynamic, aesthetic and original. People used to seat in the street in front of the gate and chat about local events and family matters. On a bench by the courtyard wall they communicated with their friends and discussed important moments of their life. In Veles and Ohrid there were public social areas which were actually extensions of the ally with oak tree or *chinar* in the center (Veles, Ohrid).

Big entrance gates led to the courtyard, which was the private space of the family. Neighbouring courtyards were usually connected by a small door - *kapidzik*, which was used in the night hours.

Houses in Krushevo, Debar and Kratovo were of closed type, due to the climate, sloppy terrain and the social circumstances. Nevertheless, in both house types all the architectural elements were incorporated in the traditional mode of building, although



96. Beys house, Kumanovo, by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1998

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