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BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND ARTS

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## **НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ 1**

**Социална и икономическа интеграция на културно-историческото наследство; Културно-историческото наследство като инструмент за местна и регионална, социална и икономическа устойчивост; Културно-историческото наследство в градските и селски райони; Уязвимост на културно-историческото наследство срещу природни бедствия и превантивни мерки за неговото съхраняване.**

## **TOPIC 1**

**Social and economic integration of culture heritage; Culture heritage for local and regional social and economic stability; Culture heritage in urban areas; Vulnerability of culture heritage to hazards and preventive measures.**

## RELATION TO THE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE – CASE STUDY OF SERBIA AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** *There is increasing global awareness about the importance of cultural heritage and about creating conditions for its preservation in the future. It represents the moral role of the entire contemporary society, not just the obligation of the competent institutions. The concept of a traditional house is emphasized in the paper as a separate part of the cultural heritage of a country. The paper deals with typical examples of a traditional house in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. The aspects of preservation, current condition and purpose of the buildings are examined, and whether the objects are in active use or are completely neglected. Through these examples, positive and negative treatments of a cultural heritage of a country were observed. The subject of this paper is the relation to traditional architecture and the case study of selected examples of a traditional house in Serbia and the surrounding area. The aim of this paper is to review and demonstrate the current state of preservation of vernacular architecture and the attitude to the cultural heritage of the area. The methods used in the paper are analysis, synthesis, comparative analysis, modeling method and case study.*

**Key words:** *cultural heritage, traditional house, preservation, vernacular architecture, traditional architecture*

### 1. Introduction

Cultural heritage represents the unique and irreplaceable cultural value of a nation. It means inheriting physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that constitutes the legacy of past generations, which is carefully preserved in the present in order to be left as the legacy for the benefit of future generations [9]. Current understanding of cultural heritage is covered through two UNESCO conventions: the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Convention for the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). Although the

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definitions of cultural heritage are not the only ones in these conventions, they are the most extensive and, as such, most affect the attitude to heritage [11].

Preservation and attitude to cultural heritage are very important aspects of the sustainability of a country's culture and tradition. This paper deals with the problem of attitude to vernacular architecture in Serbia and its surroundings in more detail, with a special reference to Romania and Bulgaria. As the Balkan countries have a long and rich history, they abound in many examples of traditional architecture. The aim of this paper is to review the current state of preservation and protection of vernacular, i.e. traditional architecture. The aforementioned problem has been analyzed through examples and the case study of traditional houses in these areas.

Traditional house belongs to the area of vernacular architecture. Vernacular architecture is based on the craftsmanship of master builders and craftsmen with no formal training, gained through experience and refined over time. It represents the architecture of the area and traditional knowledge, and depends directly on the materials available in the immediate environment, as well as on the land configuration and climate of the particular area. It represents a significant part of the architectural heritage and provides a special dimension to the immovable cultural heritage and the possibility of a layered analysis of the concept of architecture. The very concept of architectural heritage, approach to its preservation and protection, will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **2. Architectural heritage – active approach and its protection**

The term architectural heritage comprises immovable cultural property created by human work from prehistory to contemporary architectural creation. This term covers historical cities, settlements or parts thereof, old buildings and parts thereof, archaeological sites, as well as areas of historical, cultural, artistic or environmental value. One of the classifications of the architectural heritage is in the architectural entities, historic buildings and archeological sites [6]. The paper deals with the notion of vernacular i.e. traditional house which belongs to a group of historic buildings. These structures reveal to the modern man and to society as a whole the entire range of values that derive from their characteristics and functions.

Since the very process of construction, every building is exposed to certain influences. They can later mar the original appearance and characteristics of the building, both in esthetic and structural terms. The causes of degradation are numerous and are reflected in the complete or partial demolition of the building, but there may be of a different nature, due to extensions and additions of floors, and conversions of their function. They can be divided into long-term and temporary ones [6]. They include the effect of natural and climatic factors, but also the effect of man, as well as conscious degradation or deliberate destruction of the building. Particular emphasis is placed on the unconscious form of degradation, which is caused by negligence in the maintenance of the building causing the deterioration, or inappropriate use of the building that is adverse to the original values. This problem is present both in Serbia and in the surrounding countries. The cause of the problem is primarily related to changes in the social structure of the population and the economic crisis, and the departure of the population from rural areas. There is a sudden dilapidation of houses, both of their exterior and structure; they become unsafe for dwelling.

Throughout history, individuals and communities took certain measures to preserve their cultural heritage, and therefore their architectonic heritage. Protection means the systemic implementation of legal and professional protection measures, aligned with the regulations of the conservation and restoration profession, for the purpose of conservation[9]. Protecting a building requires a methodologically correct, logical and systematic approach; and certain principles must be observed. What is very important in



the attitude of one country to the architectural heritage is the organization of protection and regulation.

In many European countries, and so in the Balkans, until the end of World War II, the main protagonists of protection were exclusively conservation services; that is, experts within the institute for protection of monuments or regional institutions. Over time, the concepts of active protection emerged and developed, comprising the involvement of institutions and experts of different profiles, as well as the transfer of heritage protection competences to the authorities. Such a new organization was accompanied by the formation of legislations, international instruments and conventions. In addition to the large role played by the state itself, local authorities also play an important role in the process of preserving vernacular architecture, since a large part of decisions are made first at the local level. In addition to various national institutes, international professional organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS play a decisive role [7].

However, it is very important to emphasize that not only experts but the entire population is involved in the design and preservation of the built environment. Apart from the action of socio-political communities, the actions of individuals are very important. Therefore, in addition to research and conservation work on the study and protection of cultural heritage, the education of the population to recognize the value of heritage in their own environment, and to take active involvement in conservation processes is equally important, but not sufficiently developed and insisted on nationwide [3]. The aforementioned conventions and charters also support this view, and so the first Athenian charter indicated that "the best guarantee in the matter of protecting monuments and works of art comes from winning over the people themselves and from their respect" [5]. The population can participate in the active protection of the structures as a part of the local community, as individuals: owners, native people, visitors, neighbors; more specifically as part of different stakeholders. Also, residents can be part of active protection as volunteers. Volunteers and volunteering are a significant element of managing the architectonic heritage. However, cultural volunteering is not yet developed in our region, and there are no registers of such associations in the countries. The advantage of volunteering is that both youth, unemployed citizens and pensioners can participate. In general, there is a great need to train and educate the population and to learn about volunteerism in this area

### **3. Vernacular architecture in Serbia and surrounding countries**

Culture can be defined as the totality of material and spiritual values that humanity, or a part of it, has created and developed over the course of its history; while tradition is a way of transmitting culture from generation to generation in speech or in writing. Traditional culture is most prevalent in rural areas, less accessible and mountainous areas. One of the hallmarks of traditional culture is vernacular architecture as a harmonious blend of material and spiritual values in their original form [13]. Vernacular architecture is characterized by the use of natural materials for construction, mainly from the immediate vicinity, local craftsmen, knowledge passed down from generation to generation, simple tools and aesthetic features focused mainly on the proportion of the building and less on the finish of details and decoration [2].

Vernacular architecture both in Serbia and Romania and Bulgaria is the result of the influence of numerous Old-Slavic cultures mixed with indigenous Roman, Byzantine and Oriental cultures. Austro-Hungary also had a great influence on the development of architecture, especially in the northern parts of Serbia. A large number of older buildings have been preserved, most often small and modest houses in rural and hard to reach areas. However, there are also examples of more developed and structurally complex houses in different parts of these countries, both in rural and urban areas. Most of the houses that have been preserved to this day were built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

According to a quite rough and conditional division, monuments of vernacular architecture can be classified into two larger groups: listed monuments in the city and listed monuments in the countryside [4]. In the next chapter some examples of "urban houses" and "rural houses" and their current state will be presented.

The types and characteristics of houses vary depending on the area in which they were built and developed. What is common to these Balkan countries is the basic principle of local construction model known as the "nature knows better". This model is based on the following principles: "materialization principle (material availability principle), coloration principle (availability of color choice) and mimicry-mimesis principle (relationship to the surroundings principle -"spirit of place")" [12]. Also, vernacular architecture does not represent a set of spontaneously constructed buildings. Everything a people builds is based on experience, and over time, certain habits, patterns, and rules have been created, that are common to the entire architecture.

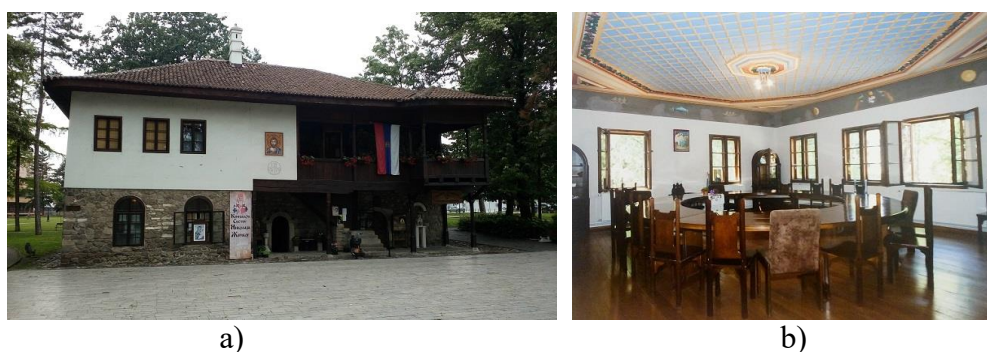
However, due attention has not been paid to the monuments of vernacular architecture in the past. The very protection of cultural monuments was mostly focused on sacral monuments, mostly to churches, while other types of monuments were more or less ignored. This resulted in the destruction of national monuments or the adaptation of buildings to new needs, which thereby lost the spirit of vernacular architecture. Although the problem of heritage conservation and restoration has been increasingly addressed in recent years, there are still a large number of houses that need to be rehabilitated.

#### **4. Examples of positive and negative practice – case study**

In order to better understand the problem of attitude towards vernacular architecture in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, a case study was conducted. Examples of good and bad practice are selected, that is, buildings that were successfully preserved and revitalized, as well as buildings that are in poor condition or were inadequately treated are presented. The traditional house of this area was taken as the reference of this study. The buildings were built between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Also, examples include both urban and rural houses.

##### **4.1 Serbia**

Master Vasa's Konak (residence) in Kraljevo, Figure 1 a), is taken as the first example of the attitude to cultural heritage. It is one of the many examples of residential and family houses that have been restored in Serbia, such as the Master Jovan's residence in Čačak, the residence of Prince Miloš in Topčider, the residence of Princess Ljubica in Belgrade, the residence of the musellim in Valjevo and the like. This cultural monument of great importance is located in the city park, across from the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin. Episcopo Janićije had it built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It was built in the style of the time of Miloš Obrenović, with elements of traditional Balkan architecture. Master Vasa's residence has been reconstructed several times and its function has been changed. Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was used for diocesan purposes. It then housed the Šumadija Field Artillery Regiment, followed by the boarding school of the Farming School. Between 1946 and 1951 it also served as a prison. For this reason, it has undergone significant changes. The porch on the floor was bricked up, it was planned for demolition due to dilapidation, purlins of the roof structure and eaves were shortened, the former wooden entrance staircase for the floor was replaced by a concrete one. The building was successfully renovated in 1951 with extensive and complex conservation and restoration work. After rehabilitation, the building became the National Museum in Kraljevo [10]. Nowadays, this building serves as the Spiritual Center, a bookstore is located on the ground floor, while on the first floor there is a large working hall and a chapel dedicated to Bishop Nikolaj, Fig. 1 b).



**Fig.1.** Master Vasa's Konak in Kraljevo: a) current condition of the building exterior; b) current condition of the interior, i.e. working hall [15]

Another example is the Katić house in Trstenik. It was built in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is a cultural monument of great importance. The original owner of the house was the merchant Stevan Katić [16]. The building basically belongs to the Moravska house type with influences of the Oriental type. The design itself is believed to have been brought from Lebanon or Syria. The building originally had a residential purpose with the Katić's business premises on the ground floor. Later, the basement of the house and much of the courtyard becomes a national restaurant. For a short period served as a gallery. Although protected by the state in 1947, it has not yet been adequately restored. It is currently abandoned and in a very poor condition, Fig. 2 a). The façade is dilapidated, while the structure is visibly damaged, Fig. 2 b). Inadequately executed works on the façade are visible from the period when it was used for catering purposes. It is currently privately owned, while the Municipality of Trstenik is planning to buy it off and begin to prepare design documentation for the restoration.



**Fig. 2.** Katić's house in Trstenik: a) Current condition of the building exterior; b) Visibly dilapidated façade and ceiling damage [16]

#### 4.2 Romania

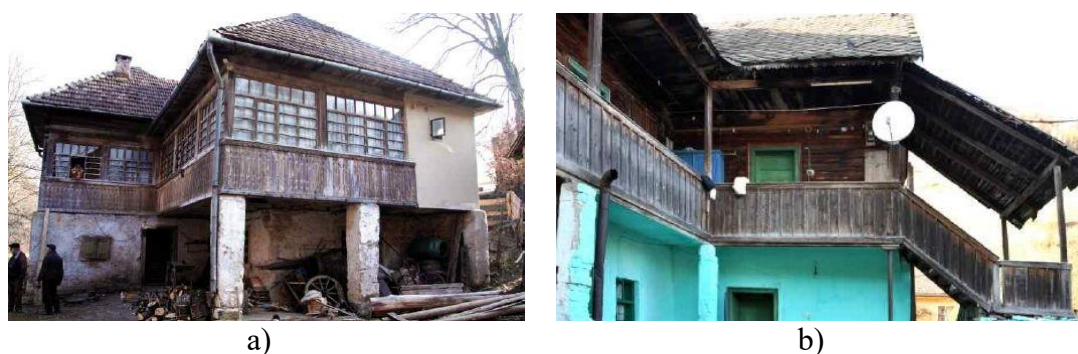
One of the most positive examples of preserving Romania's cultural heritage is the "Dimitrie Gusti" National Village Museum. This open-air ethnographic museum is located in Bucharest and extends over 100,000m<sup>2</sup>. It was officially opened on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936 in the presence of King Carol II. The museum currently exhibits 346 houses, sorted by the place of origin, Fig. 3. The museum has expanded over time, houses have been transferred from different parts of Romania and have been adequately restored and repaired. The museum was damaged in the past by two major fires, in 1997 and 2002. However, with the assistance of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and Sponsors, all damaged buildings were successfully restored [17]. Museums of this type can also be found in Serbia - the Ethnographic Museum of Sirogojno, and in Bulgaria the Ethno Museum of Etar.





**Fig. 3.** Village museum in Bucharest: a) an example of a traditional house of 19<sup>th</sup> century from Trăisteni village; b) traditional village house of Maramureş region from Berbeşti village of 1775 [17]

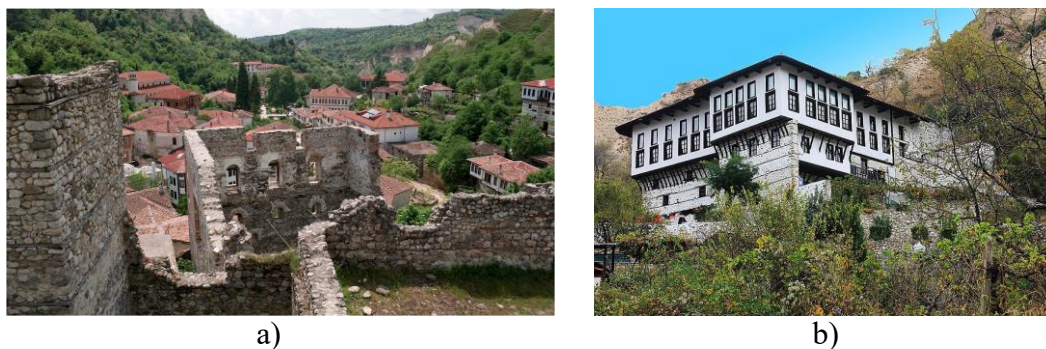
On the other hand, there is a problem in rural areas where one can see many neglected traditional houses or inadequately restored ones, Fig. 4. Many buildings have been abandoned. Also, the locals, or the owners of houses that are inherited from generation to generation, are restoring them incorrectly and so they lose their original values. The examples given below are traditional Romanian rural houses in the Tara Motilor area. A comprehensive case study was conducted in 2012 exactly addressing the restoration and revitalization of these structures with specific proposals for renovation and new uses [1]. Similar examples can be found in almost all parts of Romania, mostly as a result of leaving the countryside. This problem is present both in Serbia and Bulgaria.



**Fig. 4.** Traditional houses in the Tara Motilor area: a) one of the houses requiring restoration; b) inadequate treatment of the buildings by the owners [1]

### 4.3 Bulgaria

In order to preserve Bulgaria's rich cultural heritage, numerous architectural reserves have been formed. These reserves include entire villages, districts, or parts of the cities, and are highly visited by tourists. Some examples are Koprivshtitsa, the Old Plovdiv, Kovachevitsa, Melnik, Arbanasi, the villages of Bozhentsi, Brashlyan Delchevo, Dolen, the Architectural and Ethnographic Reserve Etara, the villages of Zheravna, Stefanovo and Shiroka Laka. One example of one of the smallest cities in Bulgaria - Melnik, was especially highlighted. The city has a rich and long history, and is characterized by its well-preserved Revival period buildings. Some of the most important houses in Melnik are the Boyar's House, as one of the oldest Balkan houses, the Kordopulova House and the Pashova House, Fig. 5. The Boyar's House has been renovated and restored several times since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Kordopulova House was built in 1754 and is one of the largest houses of this period. The Pashova House was built in 1815 and currently serves as a museum of history. All three houses are protected by the law as cultural monuments [14].



**Fig. 5.** Historical city of Melnik: a) remains of the Boyar's House; b) the Kordopulova House [14]

As in the case of Serbia and Romania, there are buildings that have been neglected despite their importance as part of the cultural heritage, Fig. 6 a). This is most often the case in rural areas. Also, the owners who inherited them increasingly sell these buildings. Their use is being promoted for the development of rural tourism, but there is no guarantee of how they will be treated by new owners. The house of Christo Karpachev is one such example, Fig. 6 b). It was restored many years ago and has until recently served as a museum [8].



**Fig. 6.** Examples of negative practice: a) Bogdan Bogdanov house, Karpačevo, completely dilapidated; b) Christo Karpachev house [8]

## 5. Discussion

Based on the examples presented above and a brief case study, one can better understand the current state of vernacular architecture in the studied areas. There is a number of well rehabilitated buildings that have been restored to their original shape. However, it can be concluded that in all three countries there is still a problem with the attitude to the architectonic. This comprises not only the problems of the attitude of the official institutions, but also of the citizens themselves. This includes various problems related to property ownership, inadequate use and attempted reconstruction by non-professional persons, as well as insufficient education of the entire population on the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

"In everyday life in Serbia, there is a gap between the theory and the wishes of members of the professional community concerned with the protection and preservation of immovable cultural heritage on the one hand, and the daily practices of a large number of Serbian citizens on the other" [13]. Expert wishes are based on theoretical postulates of protection, i.e. on preservation of the original appearance and function of the structure. While the practice in everyday life of ordinary people poses a number of challenges to achieve this "because monuments are being demolished, houses are being demolished, remodeled and altered according to the personal interests and interests of the people who live or in the immediate vicinity of the building" [13].



In the work of protecting the monuments of vernacular architecture, it is very important to solve the problem of their appropriate use in order to provide a long-term solution to the life of the monument. As can be seen from the examples above, many positive actions have been taken to re-activate the protected facilities. They are most commonly used as apartments, cultural institutions such as museums, archives, memorial houses, then cultural centers and galleries, restaurants and the like. The traditional architecture is also increasingly used in terms of tourism development, such as open-air museums, ethno villages, or historic parts of the city.

The aforementioned problem of population education is being successfully addressed in some parts of these countries, most often through projects, training programs and workshops for the renovation of traditional rural houses. Participants learn about traditional construction methods, how to properly treat buildings, and how to properly renovate them. However, mass participation in reconstruction and citizens' awareness of the importance of this problem are needed. Activities aimed at preserving the heritage of the past that conveys historical and artistic messages must, therefore, be prioritized as the community task [10].

## 6. Conclusion

The protection of cultural heritage is a topical issue both in our country and in the whole world. The paper briefly presents the current attitude to vernacular architecture in Serbia and surrounding countries, through the consideration of basic concepts and the case study. It can be concluded that great efforts are being made to preserve the cultural heritage, including traditional architecture. However, this problem has not yet been fully resolved and the formation of active conservation approaches in multiple fields is required. Also, it is necessary to raise the collective awareness of the importance of preserving our heritage in all its variety and integrity [10].

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