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THE OLD URBAN HOUSES TELL THEIR STORIES

KYUSTENDIL – DUPNITSA – KRIVA PALANKA – KRATOVO

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FOREWORD

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the cities of the central Balkans underwent a profound transformation – economic, administrative, and cultural – and although this transformation left traces in many layers of life, it is most visible in the urban environment and architecture. These traces know no present-day borders. Master craftsmen and woodcarvers from Debar left their mark simultaneously on the ceilings of Kyustendil, Kriva Palanka, and Kratovo. At that time, there was no administrative line between Bulgaria and North Macedonia: craft traditions and family networks extended freely across both sides of the mountain passes. The old urban houses serve as material memories of that era, which existed before the map divided the connections formed by life. The catalogue "Old Urban Houses Tell Their Stories" was realised within the framework of the project CULTURAL heritage community and AttRactive all-sEAson tourism (CULTURAL AREA), Project ID: BGMK0200027, funded under the Interreg Bulgaria – North Macedonia 2021–2027 programme. The project brings together the municipalities of Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Kriva Palanka, and Kratovo around a common goal: to return cultural heritage to the lives of the people and to transform it into a shared tourist resource across the border. This publication represents an attempt to document representative examples of the building stock from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in four cities. Buildings from this period are gradually losing their character and authenticity, and with them the information they carry. Digital tools – 3D surveys, photographic documentation, and GPS coordinates – have been used to preserve records of their architecture, ownership history, and artisan characteristics.

The buildings examined reflect the socio-economic development of their respective cities in the post-liberation period, including the tastes, construction possibilities, and cultural influences that shaped the local urban environment. It is telling how European architectural styles – neoclassicism and Art Nouveau (secession) – were interpreted by local craftsmen and acquired a regional character distinct both from their Western European models and from the Balkan tradition.

The documentation of these buildings has acquired an urgent character since a great number of them are threatened or have been irreversibly altered, which calls for immediate preservation efforts to safeguard their historical and cultural significance. The catalogue is conceived as a starting point for researchers, experts, and institutions engaged in the preservation of architectural heritage while, at the same time, seeking to "open up" the cultural heritage of the Bulgaria–North Macedonia cross-border region and attract the interest of tourists.

The catalogue is organised in two parallel layers. The first is chronological: the buildings are arranged in two sections.

Section A covers Revival-era houses from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, following the logic of Balkan domestic life and artisan tradition; Section B presents buildings from the early twentieth century, where European architectural fashion – Art Nouveau and early modernism – meets local building expertise. The second layer is thematic: each of the buildings presented can also be read as a stop along one of the three paths that structured the region – the Path of the Masters, the Path of Capital, and the Path of Ideas. The cultural objects on which the catalogue focuses do not exhaust the heritage of the four municipalities, nor do they claim representativeness in a statistical sense. From the buildings previously identified in the four municipalities, those that simultaneously satisfy three conditions were selected: they bear a recognisable artisan signature that connects them to a broader regional context; they are supported by sufficiently documented biographies of their owners and builders; and they are preserved to a degree that permits architectural reading. Each building is documented with an address, GPS coordinates, and information on its status and access, allowing the catalogue to be used simultaneously as a research tool and as the basis for a cross-border tourist route. To trace more clearly the internal logic of this heritage, the catalogue introduces an analytical framework that compares the objects according to several criteria simultaneously – period, social type, and affiliation with the three principal mechanisms of connectivity in the region: masters, capital, and ideas. This framework complements the narrative, allowing the reader to see both the individual stories and the structure that connects them.

Foreword by Ani Istatkova

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The four municipalities occupy a compact geographical strip, intersected by mountain ranges but linked for centuries by routes of enduring strategic significance. The ancient Via Militaris, following the Nishava Valley and its branches towards the Vardar Valley – together with their later Ottoman successors – maintained continuous communication between the interior Balkan cities and the shores of the Aegean and Black Seas. Thessaloniki, Skopje, Niš, and Dubrovnik were not merely geographical points – they were the poles between which the commercial and artisan life of the region pulsed for centuries. This living infrastructure is attested by the travel writers of the era: Felix Kanitz notes the dense network of caravan routes and active trade exchange (Kanitz, 1995), while Konstantin Ireček describes the markets of Kyustendil and Dupnitsa as integrated into wider Balkan networks (Ireček, 1974). It is precisely this infrastructure – roads, markets, and artisan networks – that built the region's cultural connectivity. It did not arise solely from a shared administrative space but from everyday ties between people, families, and communities. The rapid development of crafts and trade after the 1830s created conditions for the formation of an urban stratum with the resources and ambitions to commission a new type of home, one expressing social status and cultural aspirations (Aleksiev, p. 179; Namicev & Namiceva, 2013). The old urban houses of Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Kriva Palanka, and Kratovo are the material expression of precisely this change. This new type of dwelling is characterised not only by architectural solutions but also by a clearly structured internal decorative system. The interior of the nineteenth-century urban house was built upon a typology of motifs – geometric, vegetal, and zoomorphic – which were combined in a unified composition. Geometric motifs organise space through symmetry, and vegetal motifs introduce stylised elements from nature, while zoomorphic motifs are used more sparingly as accents (Namicev & Namiceva, 2015, pp. 343–349).

THE DEBAR SCHOOL OF ARTS AND ITS PRESENCE IN THE REGION

Among the artisan networks operating in this context, the Debar School of Arts occupies a special place. Having emerged in the western Macedonian settlements of Galichnik, Gari, Lazaropole, Osoy, Trebishte, and Tresonche, it is also known as the Galichko-Rekanska or Miyashka School – after the local Miyak master craftsmen. The craft was transmitted within family networks, and individual families worked in specific geographical areas (Trayche, 1935; Hristov, 1931). The school's chronology can be traced through dated iconostases in the region: the Lesnovo Monastery (1814), "St Spas" in Skopje (1824), "St Nikola" in Krushevo (1831), and the Bigorski Monastery (1845). These reveal a consistent decorative vocabulary – vine tendril, acanthus leaf, and rosette – that was later transferred to the interiors of urban homes (Aleksiev, p. 181). Thus a transition from the sacred to the secular environment was achieved without any substantial change to the ornamental repertoire. From the 1880s onwards, the decorative programmes in houses took on an increasingly pronounced secular character.

This change was part of a broader process of cultural transformation connected with the new urban self-consciousness

and the individualisation of the inhabitants (Aleksiev, pp. 187–188). In the region under examination, the transformation is most clearly visible in ceiling ornamentation: the carved ceilings of Kyustendil and Kriva Palanka follow a similar compositional model and ornamental vocabulary.

The Debar School did not function in isolation but as part of a wide network of mobile craftsmen. The traced lineages in the Kyustendil region (Gergova, 2017), as well as biographies such as that of the builder of the Emfiedzhieva House, show how the movement of people and skills created a shared cultural horizon. This mobility explains the similarity in the decorative language of houses on both sides of today's border.

THE PATHS OF CHANGE

The transformation of the urban environment at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century is not an isolated local process, but the result of the interaction of several parallel factors.

Trade is one of the most direct channels for the penetration of new influences. Contacts with Vienna, Leipzig, and Thessaloniki bring not only goods but also new conceptions of space. Viennese catalogues for furniture and building materials attest to the concrete and material character of these influences (Genchev, 1988).

Education complements this process. After the Liberation, an increasing number of young men from the region study at European universities and return with new professions and cultural models. Their new homes become a visible expression of this change (Genchev, 1988; Todorova, 2004).

The railway plays a key role in this transformation. The arrival of the Oriental Railway at Kyustendil at the end of the nineteenth century makes industrial materials accessible and changes building practices (Tonev, 1947). Thus, architecture begins to reflect not only tradition but also the new economic possibilities.

Trade, education, and railway construction thus act simultaneously and mutually reinforce one another, shaping the appearance of the urban environment as a visible expression of broader social change.

Transformations in the Urban Landscape: From the Marketplace to the Facade

The change in the urban environment was gradual. In the mid-nineteenth century, the city was organised around the market, and dwellings were introverted – closed to the street and orientated toward the inner courtyard. Ornamentation was predominantly interior and intended for the inhabitants (Mavrodinov, 1965; Namicev & Namiceva, 2013).

Under the influence of European architecture, this logic changed. New buildings began to display social status through their façades, with symmetry, ornamentation, and stylistic influences such as Neoclassicism and Art Nouveau. Local craftsmen adapted these styles, resulting in diverse and regionally specific solutions (Tonev, 1947; Mavrodinov, 1965).

Changes in Daily Life: From the "Odaya" to the European Room.

Architecture reflects a deeper change in the way of life. The traditional room ("odaya") gradually gave way to a new type of interior organised around furniture and objects associated with the European way of life. Photographs from the era document this transformation in clothing, behaviour, and family rituals.

This process was not uniform: the traditional and the new coexisted simultaneously, and the change proceeded at different speeds in different social groups and cities (Todorova, 2004).

REGIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A SHARED HISTORY

The processes described are not separate stories but parts of a shared regional narrative. Networks of master craftsmen, trade, and cultural influences link the municipalities on both sides of today's border. The old urban houses preserve these connections in their architecture and decoration. The present catalogue aims to document and interpret them as the basis for future research.

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THREE PATHS IN ONE STORY

The three paths are not an analytical construction imposed upon the material from outside – they are the mechanisms by which the region actually functioned: the masters worked without regard for borders, commercial capital determined what was built and how it looked, and education and travel brought new conceptions of space and daily life. This is precisely why they cut across the chronological division: their traces are equally legible in the ceilings of the nineteenth century and in the Art Nouveau façades of the early twentieth.

The thirteen houses presented in this catalogue are not merely architectural objects or testimonies to the achievements of their time – they are material traces of three mechanisms that kept the region connected across the centuries: masters, capital, and ideas.

The Path of the Masters

The Debar School of Arts operates within a unified cultural space, and its masters leave similar, often fully identical ornaments in Kyustendil, Kriva Palanka, and Kratovo – the vine tendril, the acanthus leaf, and the rosette are among the ceiling ornamentation motifs, which belong to the group of vegetal decorative systems characteristic of woodcarving in the interiors of nineteenth-century urban houses (Namicev & Namiceva, 2015, p. 349). The carved ceiling of the Emfiedzhieva House and the woodcarving of the Popgyorgina House bear the mark of the same hands – material evidence of the region's cultural connectivity, more enduring than any administrative border.

The Path of Capital

The economic foundation of the region has a twofold character, shaped by the natural and historical conditions of its individual parts. In the Kyustendil basin, and particularly in Dupnitsa, tobacco cultivation and trade become a leading branch of the economy from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, while in Kriva Palanka and Kratovo, the tradition of mining forms a durable artisanal layer — coppersmithing. Alongside this, the sustained connections with Thessaloniki, Dubrovnik, and Vienna trace the routes through which accumulated wealth enters architecture. This process is stamped directly onto the appearance of the urban houses: in the oval pediment of the Karakostova House, in the grand staircase of the Bogdanova House, in the Art Nouveau oriel of the Popnikolova House, and many others. It is no coincidence that the most richly ornamented façades belong to tobacco merchants and lawyers educated in Heidelberg and Vienna; architectural ornamentation thus becomes a visible marker of social status acquired through commercial success and European education.

The Path of Ideas

This coexistence of the Oriental and the European finds expression at the level of the individual household as well: the same family may have a minderlak on the upper floor and, at the same time, a Secession-style bannister at the entrance. The Oriental and the European, therefore, do not displace one another abruptly but exist in parallel – in the same rooms and in the same generation. The old townhouses stand as material evidence of this transition: from the enclosed courtyard with stone walls to the glazed vestibule and from the jamala to the winter garden with metal columns. In certain cases, the transition is also visible in the roof construction, where a triangular pediment with openings performs both a functional role – ventilation and natural light – and a symbolic one, as a representation of the sun; such is the case with the Shancheva and Bogdanova houses. To understand how these three mechanisms operate in practice, the following section examines the historical and economic context in which they developed. For the purposes of systematising the material, the three paths of influence are marked at each site by separate pictograms: a rosette for the Path of the Masters, a coin for the Path of Capital, and a quill for the Path of Ideas. Insofar as the mechanisms operate simultaneously rather than sequentially, a given heritage site frequently carries more than one symbol. Alongside these symbols, each site is also assigned a social type — artisan, merchant, intelligentsia, or mixed urban house. This classification makes it possible to trace how different social groups participated in building the region's cultural connectivity and how their role is reflected in the architecture.

The three paths are indicated by pictograms at each building: a rosette for the Path of the Masters, a coin for the Path of Capital, and a quill for the Path of Ideas. A heritage object may carry more than one symbol.

For analysis, each object is also assigned a social type – artisan, merchant, intelligentsia, or mixed urban house. This allows one to trace how different social groups participated in building the cultural connectivity of the region and how architecture reflects their role.

SECTION A:

REVIVAL HOUSES (18th–19th CENTURIES)

These houses were built before the European architectural fashion reached the region and therefore follow the logic of the climate and available building materials, the traditional Balkan way of life with its Ottoman elements, and the existing artisan expertise: wattle and daub, timber construction, the semi-sunken cellar, and the enclosed courtyard with stone walls. Unlike the exterior, the interior presents a more complex and ambiguous picture – the individual architectural and furnishing elements do not exist in isolation but are organised into a unified decorative and spatial system (Namicev & Namiceva, 2015, p. 343). Within this system, Debar woodcarving on the ceiling coexists with the domestic iconostasis and with furniture in the European style, which attests that Western influences enter the interior even before they affect the constructive principles of the building.

Kyustendil

Among the inhabitants of Kyustendil during this period are coppersmiths, merchants, and guild headmen - people who built their social authority through the workshop and the guild organisation. Their homes remain closed to the street, following the traditional model of the urban house, yet their interiors reveal a different disposition: ambition, taste, and deliberate connections with the wider world. In this way, the furnishings become a visible expression of the wealth and social status of their inhabitants, acquired through commercial and craft activity.

Dupnitsa

During the nineteenth century, Dupnitsa establishes itself as a city of tailors, woodworkers, and tobacco merchants – crafts whose prosperity leaves visible traces in the architecture of the urban homes. The Debar School is present here too: the iconostasis of the Church of St George the Victorious is the work of masters from the Filipovi family — the same hands whose signature is recognisable in the ceilings of neighbouring cities in the region. Alongside craft and trade, Dupnitsa also shows an interest in local historical knowledge: the Lazarkova House is associated with the name of an amateur chronicler, whose notes contribute to the preservation of local history.

Kriva Palanka

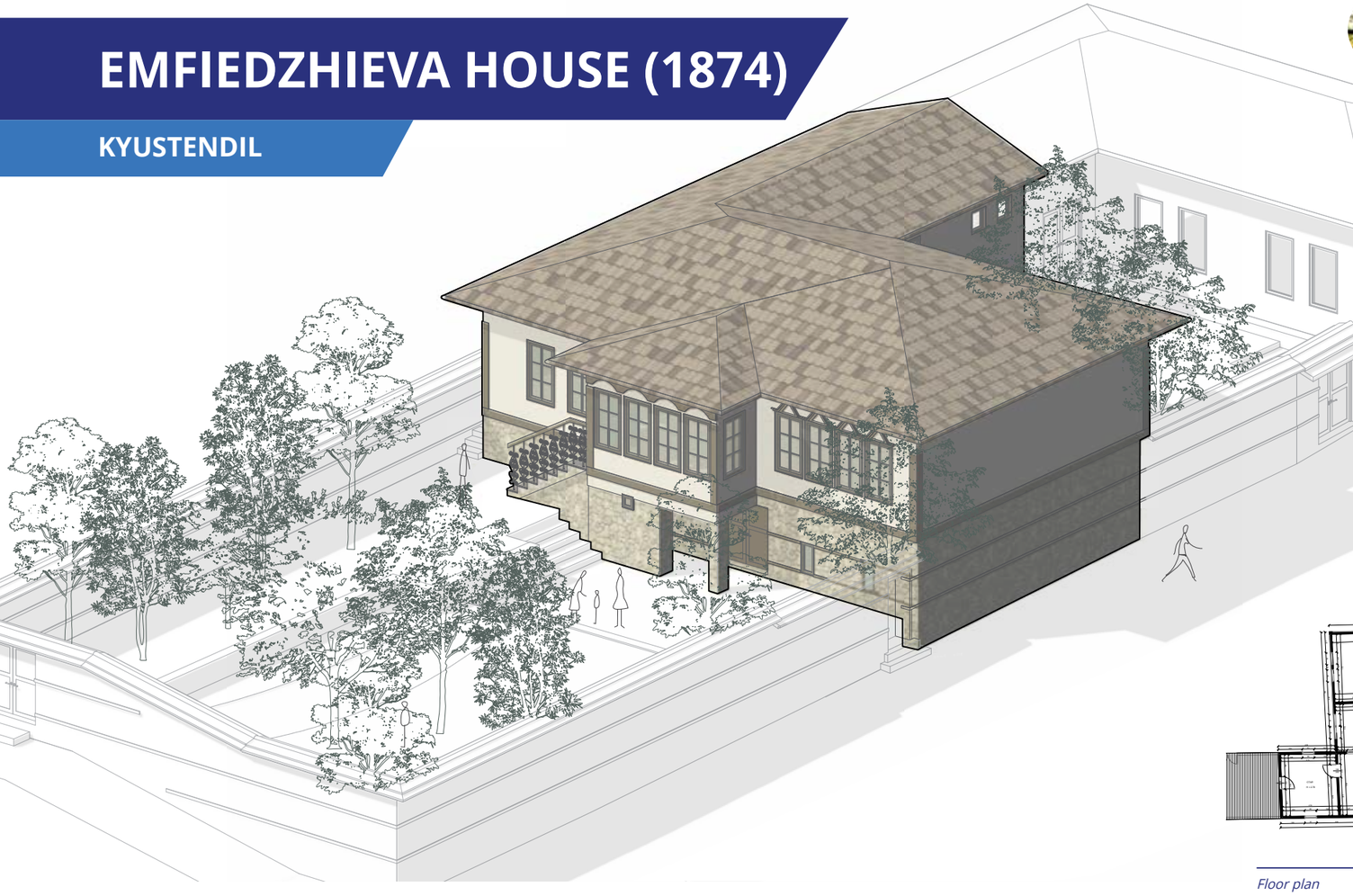
In Kriva Palanka, the Balkan-Oriental and the European do not displace one another but exist simultaneously, indeed within the same rooms: the minderlak coexists with a table set with European porcelain, the iconostasis borders the fashion salon, and the ceiling in the Debar style rises above furniture in the European style. This synthesis is not confined to the home alone — it is also visible in sacred architecture, where the Debar School and the Mijaks (an ethnographic group from Western Macedonia) leave a strong mark. A telling example in this respect is the monastery of Saint Joachim of Osogovo, painted by Dimitar Andonov Papradishki — the last Macedonian iconographer and the first Macedonian secular artist, who laid the foundations of European painting in the country.

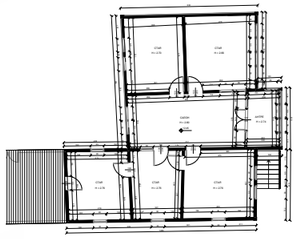
Kratovo

Kratovo is built in a river gorge, and its towers and bridges date from the Mediaeval period. The old town preserves its urban structure to a remarkable degree – the street network, courtyards, and residential architecture attest to continuous habitation over the centuries. Owing to its rich cultural heritage, the city is often referred to as an open-air museum.

EMFIEDZHIEVA HOUSE (1874)

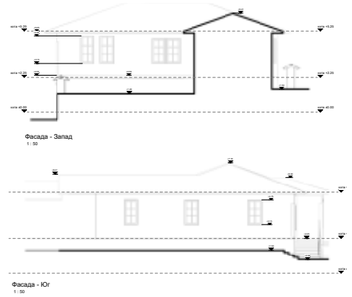
KYUSTENDIL





Floor plan

Facade - East



Facade - West and South

The most striking example of the artistic treasures in the interior of the Emfiedzhieva House is the carved and painted "sun" ceiling, crafted by a master of the Debar School of Woodcarving

The owner of the house – Hristo Lazov (the coppersmith), headman of the Kyustendil guild – was a man whose power was measured not so much in property as in artisan networks and trade routes beyond the border, inscribing his home simultaneously in the Path of Capital and in the Path of Ideas.

The story of this house begins with Hristo Lazov – a coppersmith, headman of the Kyustendil guild, and migrant from Štip, whose life unfolded on both sides of the mountain passes, leaving traces in the guild, the ecclesiastical community, and the house itself.

In January 1878, in the north-eastern room of the house, Colonel Viktor Ivanovich Ertel planned the movement of the IV Uhlan Kharkiv Regiment. The owner, Hristo Lazov, witnessed foreign officers redrawing Bulgaria's fate on his table.

The property later passed into the hands of his son-in-law, Nikola Emfiedzhiev, a dealer in emfie – a type of ground tobacco powder – from whom the building takes the name it still bears today. Among the descendants of the family is also the grandson of Hristo Lazov, the musician Petar Kazandjhiev – perhaps the most celebrated continuation of this lineage.

Address: 24a Gorotsvena Street, Lozenets ("Baglak") quarter
GPS: 42.27759, 22.68752
Status: Cultural Monument of Local Significance (1974); restored 1978. Currently, there is a museum exhibition titled "Urban Life and Culture." Under revitalisation.
Ownership: Public municipal
Access: Physical and intellectual, unrestricted

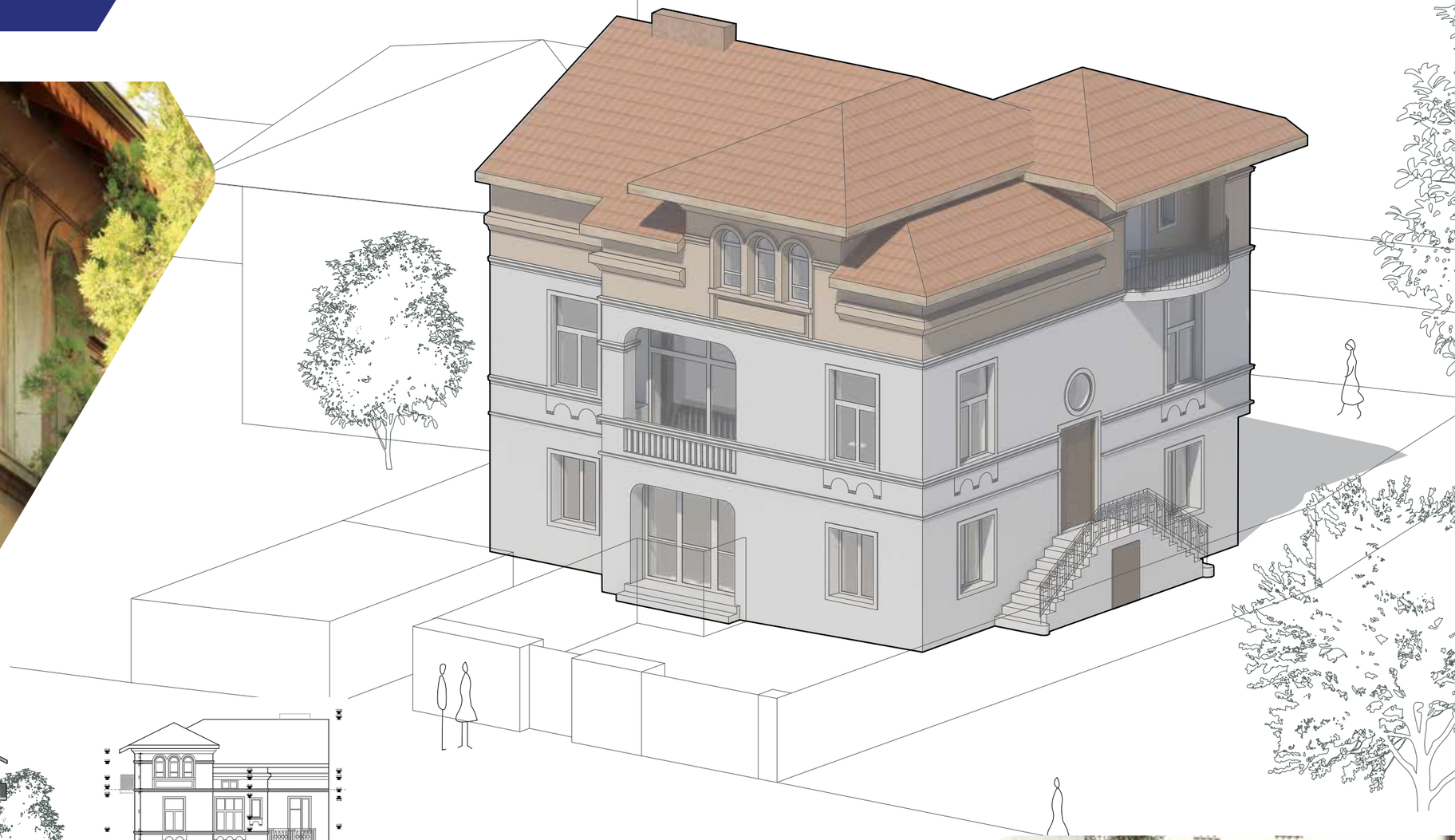
The interior of the house combines a revival-era character with European influences: the alafranga in the reception room (a painted built-in niche in the wall) and the built-in wall stoves (djamali) introduce an aesthetic simultaneously familiar from both the Balkan and the Central European traditions.

The north-eastern room (salon-reception room) is the most representative space in the interior. The room's walls are painted a flat yellow. The lower section has a plinth, coloured brown with a black outline drawn by hand. On the north wall (facing the street), there are "painted windows", framed by a double line whose outer edge repeats the shape and curves of the real windows. The west wall is the most richly ornamented. Its centrepiece is the alfranga niche. The niche contains an ellipse with a painted composition – a vase with a stepped base and elegantly curved handles, from which a bouquet of three symmetrically arranged roses emerges. The background of the niche around the ellipse is yellow, as on the walls. Symmetrically flanking the niche are two concentric compositions, each composed of two concentric cirmade uph inscribed squares.

The room also reveals a stunning polychrome carved ceiling, square in shape. In each of its four corners is a small triangular panel with painted cherubs. From the central rosette radiate eight lozenge-shaped panels with alternating floral compositions – a compositional principle in which the rosette functions as the centre of the decorative system (Namicev & Namiceva, 2015, pp. 348–349). The flowers are painted freely; in terms of colour and draughtsmanship, they resemble those found on painted chests and carts. The lozenges are separated by eight pairs of small triangular panels with bouquets. The carver-master came from Debar, where, during the nineteenth century, a school was formed that transformed woodcarving from a craft into an art form.

LAZARKOVA HOUSE

DUPNITSA



South facade

Facade

East facade

The Path of Ideas passes through here quite literally, for the owner did not merely build his home – he also turned it into a written source for the history of Dupnitsa.

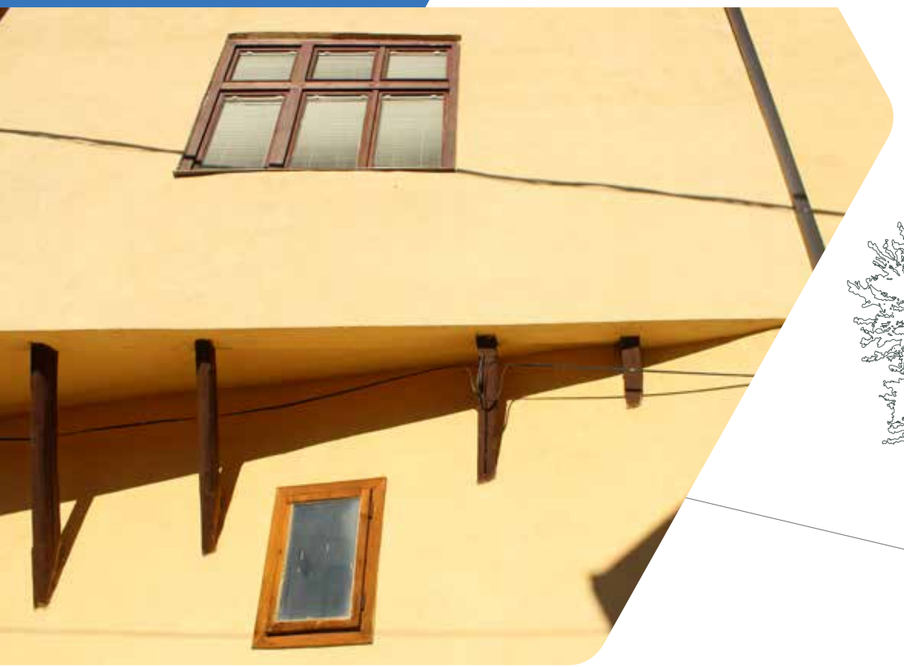
Nikola Lazarkov did not build only for himself – he also wrote. His work "Memories from Before and After the Liberation" is one of the few reliable testimonies to the events surrounding the liberation of Dupnitsa, which makes his home more than an architectural object: here, history was literally lived.

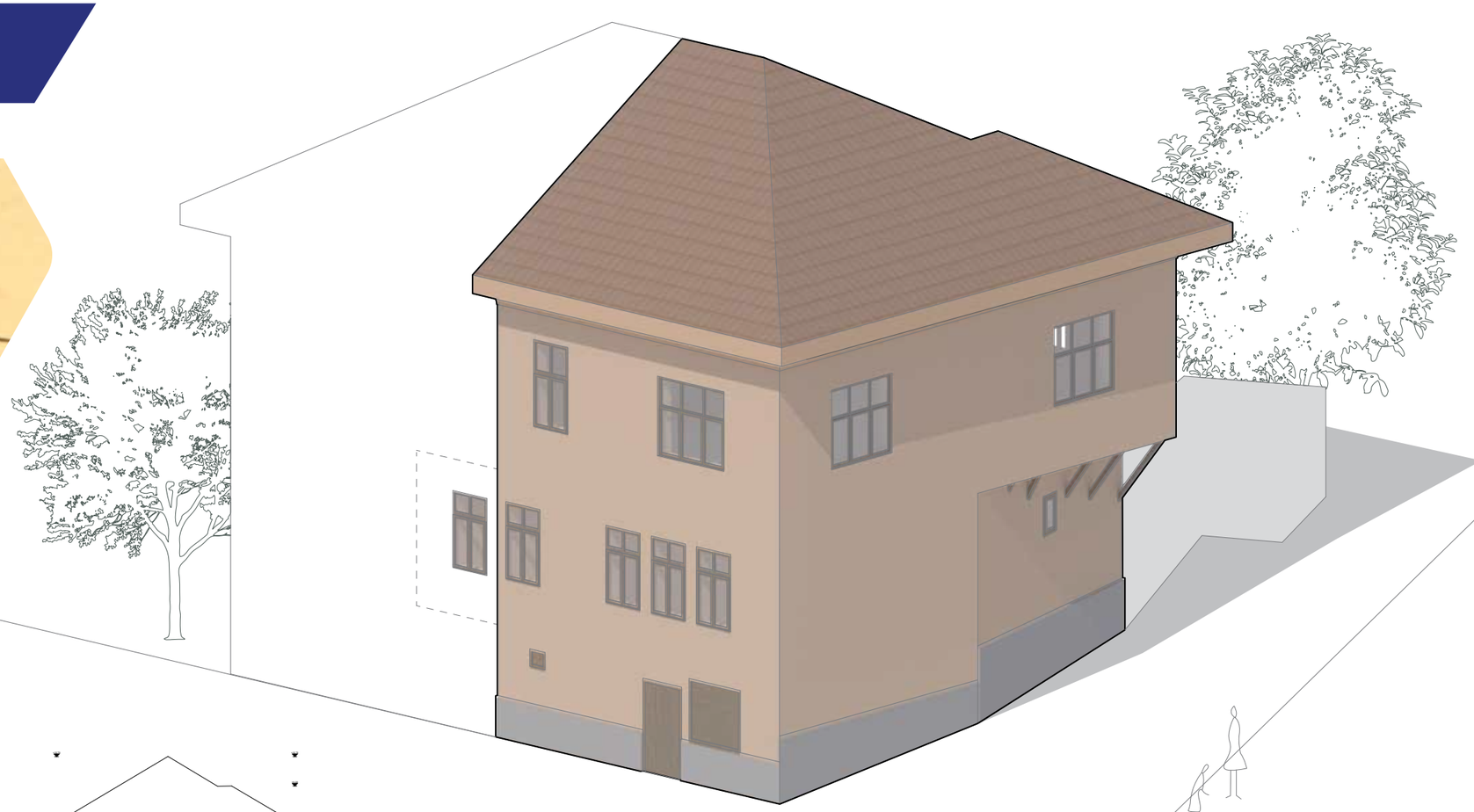
The house itself combines characteristic elements of Neoclassicism, refracted through the local urban tradition. The oriel balcony, the round window above the main entrance, and the double-sided staircase with a metal bannister create a sense of elegance. At the same time, the roof with its timber structure and wide eaves reveals the essence of this architecture: not the replacement of tradition with modern ideas, but their intertwining. The façade is rendered in a restrained yet refined style, with delicate ornamentation and a clearly expressed symmetrical composition. The roof adds to the building's overall look and feel, highlighting the shift from traditional building styles to more modern ones.

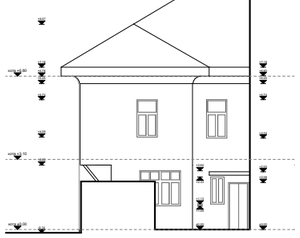
Address: 12 Hristo Grancharov Street
GPS: 42.26639, 23.11624
Status: Private property
Access: Restricted

POPGYORGINA HOUSE

KRIVA PALANKA

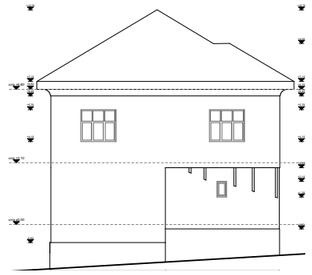






East facade

Facade



South facade

The richly decorated Debar ceiling, the work of master carvers from the school, connects this room to the artistic heritage of the region.

Beneath its roof intertwine stories connected to different fates – of the Turkish bey, of the Orthodox clergyman, of the hatter, and of the academic painter.

The Mladenovi family purchased this house from the Turkish bey, Tali Bey, and renamed it Popgyorgina – after the priest Gyorgi, whose son, Grozdan, became a hatter and introduced European fashion to the province. Decades later, during the war, the primate of the Macedonian Orthodox Church took shelter in the same rooms. Different eras, different fates – all passing beneath the same Debar ceiling.

The Popgyorgina House is the best-preserved among the old urban houses of the town. Built of adobe brick (kerpich) and timber, it has retained its authentic appearance inside and out: high ceilings, built-in minderlak seating, wooden stairs, a domestic iconostasis, and a courtyard with a wooden gate. On the second floor are the bedrooms with nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century furniture and hand-knitted curtains made by Lyubinka Mladenova – evidence that beauty was lived in here every day, not only for guests.

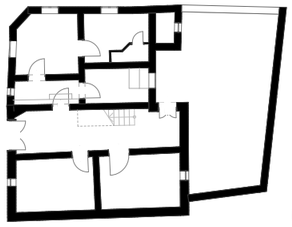
The house is also a family wellspring of artistic tradition: the academic painter Dimitar Stoychevski, considered one of the founders of modern painting in the region under European influence, was born in the neighbouring house of the same row – the grandson of the priest Gyorgi, after whom the entire quarter bears its name. This family is also known for making pilgrimages to Jerusalem across several generations, a longstanding family tradition from which they received the prefix “hadzhi”. The house has also received distinguished guests, among them Prof. Dr Dimitar Arsov, a relative of the Mladenovi family who obtained his doctorate at the Sorbonne (1936) and is considered the founder of modern internal medicine in the region.

The wooden window construction of the Popgyorgina House – rectangular with pronounced verticality and divided into several smaller glass panes, some with an internal cross-shaped division – can also be found in the Lazarkova and Bogdanova houses in Dupnitsa, as well as in the Popnikolova house in Kyustendil. This feature speaks to an aesthetic and functional element of an older architectural tradition but also to a similar type of construction shared by Balkan houses on both sides of the border.

Address: 23 Nikola Tesla Street
GPS: 42.205639, 22.337567
Status: Private property (Mladenovi family).
No protected heritage status.
Access: Restricted

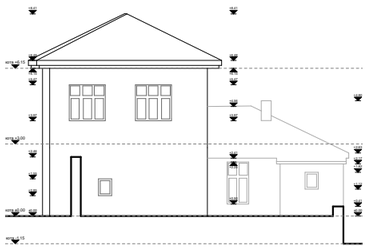
THE HOUSE OF POP STRASHKO

KRIVA PALANKA



Floor plan - 1

Facade



East facade

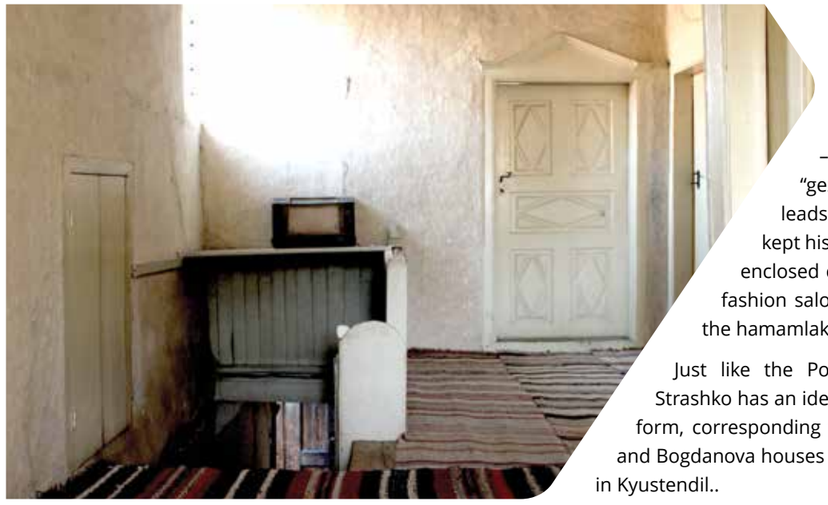
Built with accumulated wealth, attested to also by the connection with the monetary unit – ducats.

Under the same roof, generations from different worlds were born and grew up – scholars in the field of nuclear medicine, electrical engineers, people of different fates and callings, united by a shared home.

Dukatin Yovanov built this house with ducats in his belt and a reputation that preceded his arrival. Later, through the great-granddaughter of the builder, the house passed into the hands of Strashko Bogdanov – a priest and intellectual of progressive ideas – and beneath that same Debar-style ceiling, a professor of electrical engineering, a nuclear medicine scientist, and a journalist were born.

It was built by Dukatin Yovanov, who was so named because of his wealth in ducats. Later, through the great-granddaughter of the builder, the house passed into the hands of Pop Strashko, from the prosperous Kumanovo family of the Bogdanovi. The home produced remarkable people: Pop Strashko's son Momchilo Bogdanov became a professor of electrical engineering in Skopje, his daughter Vukosava a scientist in the field of nuclear medicine, and the journalist Branko Trichkovski was born in these rooms.

Address: 5 Orce Nikolov Street, Varoshka Maala
GPS: 42.200982, 22.334616
Status: Private property (Bogdanovi and Stoyanovi families). No protected heritage status. Good physical condition.
Access: Unrestricted

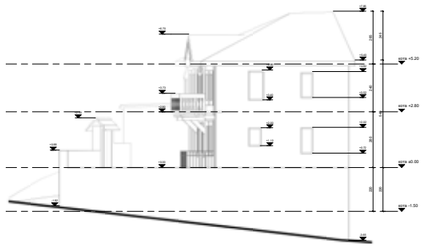


The architecture is authentic: adobe brick (kerpich) and timber, a spacious two-storey building with high ceilings, built-in cupboards, and a bathroom. The entrance corridor – the "gizentiya" (from the Turkish word "gezinti", meaning "walk" or "corridor") – leads guests to the room where Pop Strashko kept his hiding place. Up the wooden stairs is an enclosed çardak and a bedroom converted into a fashion salon. A distinctive feature of this house is the hamamlaks, which still exist today.

Just like the Popgyorgina House, the house of Pop Strashko has an identical wooden construction and window form, corresponding to this same element in the Lazarkova and Bogdanova houses in Dupnitsa, and the Popnikolova house in Kyustendil..

THE SHANCHEVA HOUSE

KRATOVO



West facade

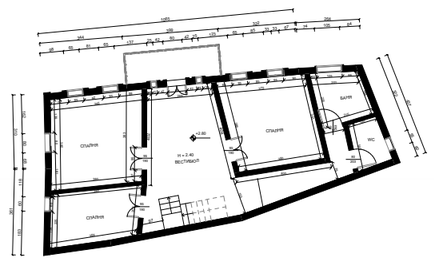
Facade

For centuries, merchants and goods travelled along this route to Thessaloniki and Dubrovnik – people of different faiths and from different eras, following the same path. This unbroken flow of people and stories has left its mark on the house in a distinctive way.

The foundations of this house are approximately three centuries old. Its first inhabitants are Catholics; after them come the Gyurginchevi merchants, whose trade routes pass through Thessaloniki and Dubrovnik and whose descendant Ivan Gyurginchev becomes mayor of Kyustendil at the end of the nineteenth century. The house is later renamed Shancheva – after Shana, described by locals as a beautiful, elegant, and modern woman for her time. Today, one can stay the night and taste k'tsana sol – the Kratovo tradition of ground herbs and sea salt from Thessaloniki, prepared in a wooden mortar according to an old recipe.

The Shancheva House moved from the Oriental to the European and back again, finally finding its identity as a place where tradition is lived rather than merely displayed. Stevche Donevski purchased the property from Zorica Ilievska in 2009 and renovated it twice. The three guest rooms bear the historical names of Kratovo: Kratiskara, Koriton, and Krater.

The façade is the most representative part of the building: a centrally placed terrace and çardak, a roof with a triangular pediment bearing two round openings symbolising the sun. The traditional furnishings reproduce the interior of the Kratovo urban home from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

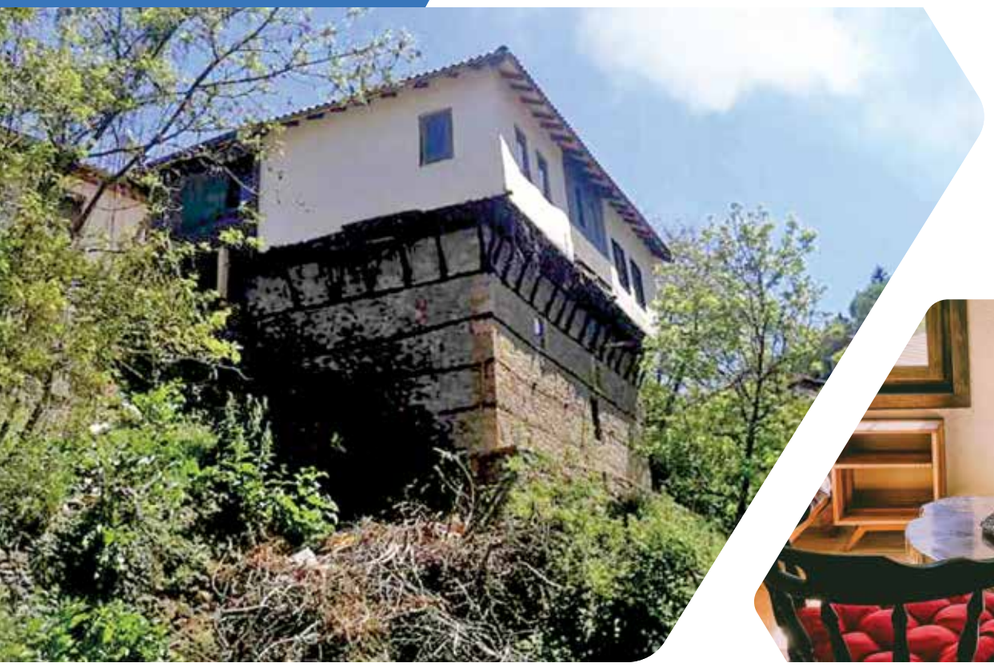


Floor plan

Address: 9 Skopska Street
GPS: 42.07726, 22.182584
Status: Private property.
Operates as an ethno-tourist accommodation.
Good physical condition.

THE SOKOLOVI HOUSE

KRATOVO



The authentic timber-and-stone construction, as well as the carved ceiling, is not here the work of restoration – it is the living presence of the guild masters who built Kratovo.

When the Sokolovi family settled in Kratovo, they chose a plot above the Mancheva River. From here, the old urban core is revealed with its bridges and towers – the full anatomy of the mediaeval city. Declared a monument of culture in 1980, this house is one of the few residential buildings in Kratovo whose authentic character has survived almost intact to the present day.

The two-storey building follows the amphitheatre-style urban composition typical of Kratovo – positioned above the riverbank, with a projecting çardak open to the panorama of the Mancheva River. The construction is timber-and-stone – half-timbered framing (bagdati) on massive stone foundations, which is characteristic of urban residential architecture in the region during the nineteenth century. The çardak is the principal organising element of the plan: it simultaneously serves as a distribution zone, a summer salon, and the public face of the home towards the street. The interior preserves built-in cupboards, closets, and carved coffered ceiling panels – elements that constitute a unified spatial-decorative system in the interior of the Macedonian urban house (Namicev & Namiceva, 2015). During the 2021 renovation, the authentic spatial solutions were preserved, and the new furnishings were crafted by hand from solid timber without the use of metal fasteners – a reference to the guild tradition of the old masters.

Address: Old urban core, Kratovo, Josif Daskalov Street No. 5
GPS: 42.077988, 22.181622
Status: Cultural Monument, declared by the National Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1980. Private property.
Access: Physical and intellectual, unrestricted (operates as a tourist accommodation).

SECTION B:

HOUSES FROM THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY (ART NOUVEAU AND EARLY MODERNISM)

After the Liberation, economic life in the region marks a perceptible acceleration. The growth of commercial capital is accompanied by an expansion of social ambitions: the children of wealthy families leave to study in Heidelberg, Munich, and Prague and return with a new vision for the organisation of domestic life and living space. The result is not a break with tradition but its accumulation: an oriel is added to the balcony with its minderlak, and European-style furnishings are arranged around the fireplace. The buildings presented in this section constitute a material document precisely of this transitional moment — of an architecture situated on the threshold between two cultural worlds.

Kyustendil

The European architectural fashion penetrates Kyustendil gradually, adapting to the existing urban fabric rather than displacing it. Art Nouveau ornaments appear in immediate proximity to Revival-era walls, which attests not to a replacement of the older building tradition but to its gradual accretion with new stylistic elements.

Dupnitsa

The tobacco trade, already identified as a leading economic branch in the Kyustendil basin from the end of the nineteenth century, leaves enduring architectural traces both in Kyustendil and in Dupnitsa. In Kyustendil, the very name of the Emfiedzhieva House refers to “emfie” – a type of ground tobacco powder – and serves as eloquent testimony to the early presence of tobacco in the city’s economic life. In Dupnitsa, where tobacco production establishes itself as the leading town-forming industry, this process finds a more pronounced and systematic architectural expression: the wealth accumulated through the tobacco trade materialises in the architecture of residential buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and their façades along Hristo Grancharov Street are among the most representative examples in the region.

Kriva Palanka

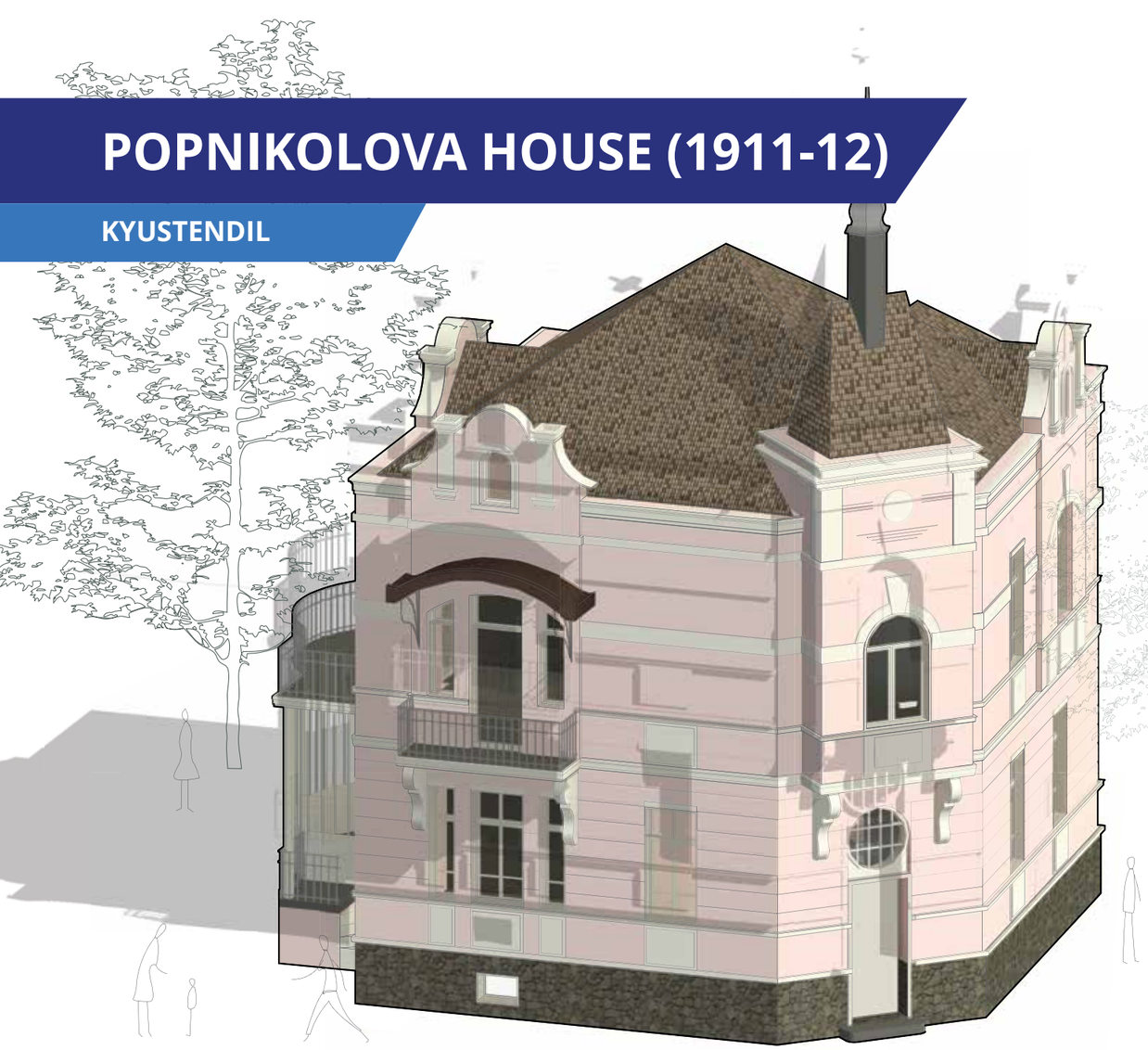
At the beginning of the twentieth century, Kriva Palanka retains its traditional urban character, but in individual residential buildings, elements begin to appear that are associated with the new architectural influences from Central Europe. These houses do not represent a complete stylistic break with tradition but rather its development — an accretion of new conceptions upon the stable Balkan model. A typical example is the urban house with a developed çardak composition, in which the traditional spatial scheme — a central çardak with rooms on either side — is preserved, while the façade begins to acquire a more representative character (Namicev, 2016).

Kratovo

Studies of the building stock in Kratovo attest to the sustained presence of the traditional timber-and-stone construction of the nineteenth century and a limited transformation of the architectural model (Namicev, 2016). The slower dynamic of architectural change is explained by the city’s peripheral position with respect to the railway network and the major commercial centres, despite its connections with Skopje and Kumanovo. At the end of the nineteenth century, against the background of declining mining prosperity, the local elite invested in residential construction with moderately emphasised but still traditionally anchored decorative solutions — the last architectural expression of the wealth accumulated from the extraction of precious metals. Thus, residential architecture remained typologically fixed within the traditional model, without a clearly expressed transition towards the representative façade aesthetic characteristic of better-connected centres such as Bitola, Veles, and Skopje.

POPNIKOLOVA HOUSE (1911-12)

KYUSTENDIL



The owner's legal practice in Heidelberg and Vienna brought him not only wealth but also a different worldview – and it was precisely this worldview that shaped his home in the Art Nouveau style, at once an aesthetic choice and a social statement.

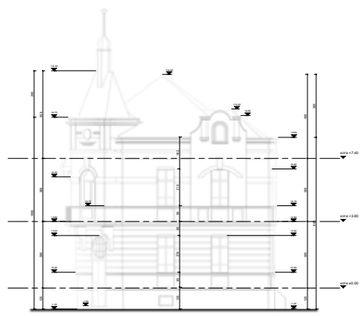
The sculptor Ivan Lazarov, whose name is associated with the capital, left his signature mark on the building's carved corbels, lending it additional artistic value.

Viennese furniture, the hand of a local master, and the artistic signature of a national sculptor meet here, at one address, to shape the appearance of this representative urban house.

The lawyer Vasil Popnikolov built this house in 1911–1912, at a moment when Kyustendil was assimilating European architectural languages with growing confidence. Architect Angel Momov was engaged for the design; for the plastic ornamentation, the sculptor Ivan Lazarov, one of the most significant names in Bulgarian sculpture of the era, was engaged. The result is a building in which legal practice and European taste found a shared architectural expression.

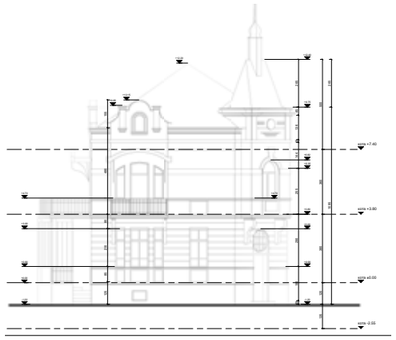
The Popnikolova House was built in the Art Nouveau style – modern for 1911. The two-storey building was conceived simultaneously as a workplace and a representative residence: the ground floor houses the lawyer's office, kitchen, dining room, and winter garden with metal columns, crowned with a terrace with an ornamented metal bannister. On the second floor are the spacious, sunny bedrooms furnished with Viennese furniture.

The façade makes an impression from two angles: from Vasil Levski Street – with clean symmetry – and from Demokratsiya Street – with the oriel carried on corbels with lion's heads. The plastic ornamentation is the work of Ivan Lazarov: the panels with vegetal motifs below the windows, the female heads above them, and the lions on the corbels compose a decorative programme rare for a provincial building of that period. The roof concludes with a pointed-corner turret – a sign of the ambition to surpass the ordinary.

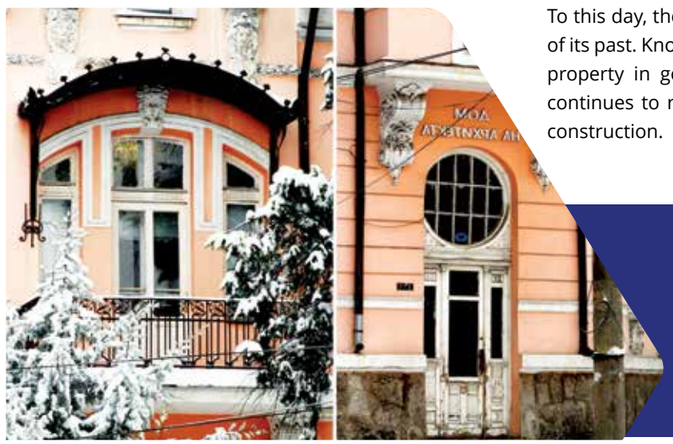


North facade

Facade



East facade



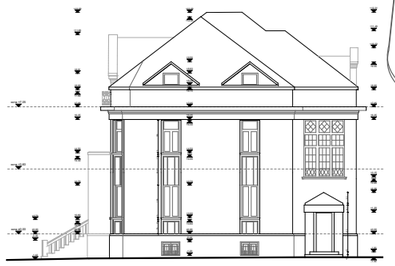
To this day, the Popnikolova House preserves the spirit and appearance of its past. Known in the city as the "Architects' Club", it is public municipal property in good physical and structural condition – a building that continues to radiate elegance and grace more than a century after its construction.

Address: 27 Demokratsiya Street / Vasil Levski Street
GPS: 42.27943, 22.68665
Status: Architectural and Artistic Monument of Local Significance (State Gazette, No. 25/1998). Public municipal property.
Access: Restricted

KARAKOSTOVA HOUSE

DUPNITSA

Facade



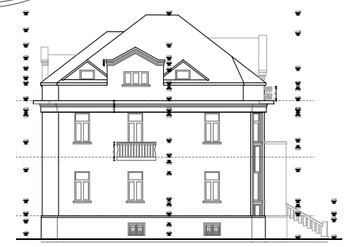
East facade

The revenues connected with tobacco created the financial conditions for the construction of this façade, allowing for the use of elaborate designs and materials that showcase the wealth generated by the tobacco industry.

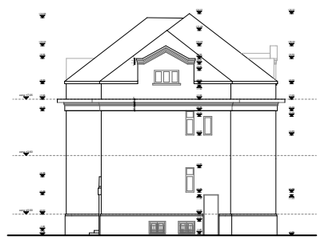
This world of tobacco capital and ambition also had an impact on literature – it was this world that inspired Dimitar Dimov to write his novel "Tobacco", in which Karakostov Senior becomes the chief tobacco expert at "Nikotiana" AD under the name Kostov.

His real home stands on the corner of Hristo Grancharov Street: the oval pediment and the curved lines above the central balcony bear the mark of Viennese and Budapest Art Nouveau, adapted to the Dupnitsa urban context.

The Karakostova House is among the region's representative examples featuring Art Nouveau characteristics. The grand staircase and the massive arched entrance create the impression of an urban villa – a type widely distributed in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Vidin in the period 1910–1930. The façade is partially damaged but retains remarkable architectural relief: delicately profiled frames around the windows, elegant iron bannisters, and smoothly modelled façade lines. The oval pediment with its decorative frame and the curved lines above the central balcony clearly reveal the influence of Viennese and Budapest Art Nouveau, refracted through the local urban context.



West facade

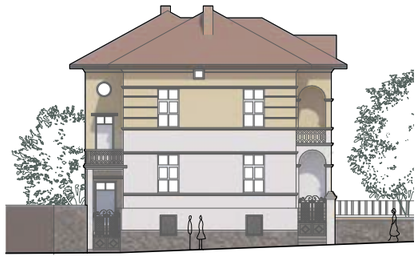


North facade

Address: 1 Hristo Grancharov Street
GPS: 42.26612, 23.11592
Status: Private property.
Access: restricted.

BOGDANOVA HOUSE

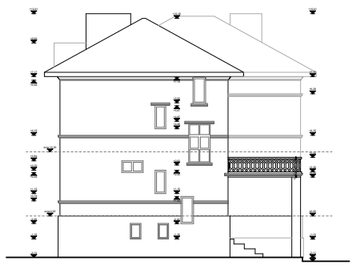
DUPNITSA



Facade

West facade

South facade



North facade

The double arch of the portal seems to sum up the path of accumulated wealth – from the boza shop to the tobacco warehouses.

The timber eave, adorned with motifs and ornamentation characteristic of the region, bears the mark of a local master whose craftsmanship influenced the Neoclassical style.

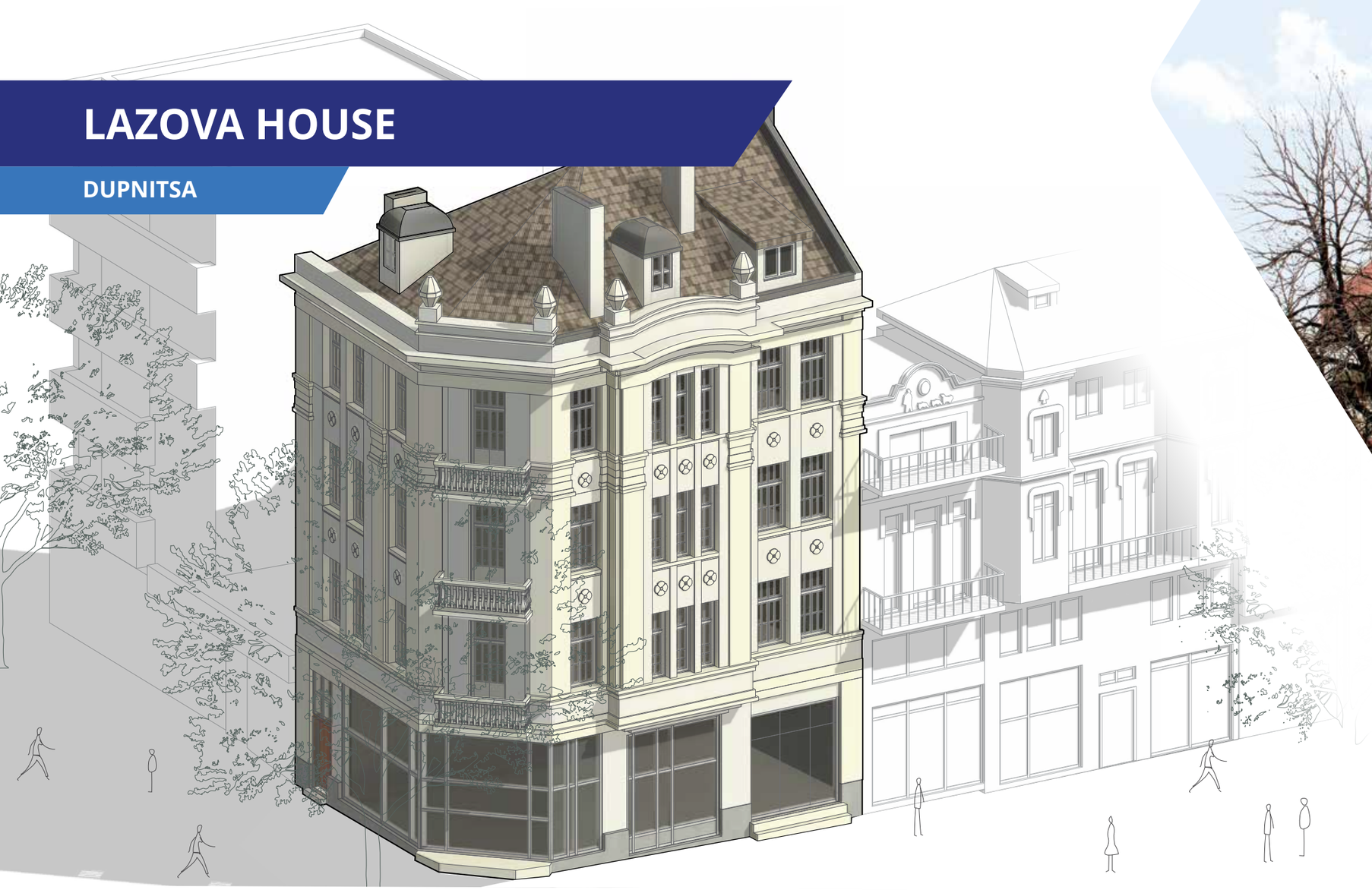
Bogdan Petrov grew up in the Rila Monastery, where he received his education, before settling in Dupnitsa and developing commercial activities – from a boza and kebab shop to tobacco warehouses, the first in the city, built between 1903 and 1905. The accumulated commercial capital found expression in residential construction as well: around 1900–1915, Petrov built this house, which in its architectural character conforms to the typical representative urban dwelling of the era.

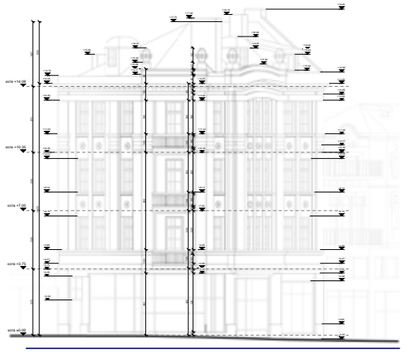
The white portal with its double arch and massive columns follows the Neoclassical canon, while the openwork balustrade on the balconies introduces elements of Art Nouveau. The timber eave with rich ornamentation in the under-roof space attests to the presence of the local artisan tradition, which coexisted with the imported architectural influences. The Bogdanova House is a representative example of the synthesis between Neoclassicism and the Art Nouveau elements characteristic of the period – an architectural moment in which the two styles overlapped before one gave way to the other.

Address: 22 Hristo Grancharov Street
GPS: 42.26705, 23.11596
Status: Private property. Access restricted.

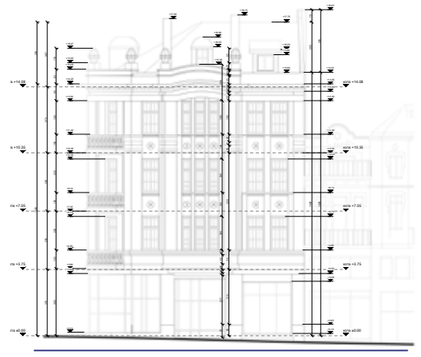
LAZOVA HOUSE

DUPNITSA





South facade



Southeast facade

The path of accumulated commercial capital comes to rest here, in the façade of the Lazova House, whose strict symmetry turns commercial success into architectural expression.

The architectural language of Prague and Budapest reached this place not through direct contact with those cities, but through architectural catalogues and models – mediated by the Path of Ideas: education, travel, and the ambition to become part of European modernity.

Lazo Velichkov (1841–1933) worked in the monastery vineyards of Mount Athos before settling in Dupnitsa and opening a boza shop that grew into a kebab restaurant. His "Dupnitsa-style kebab" was ordered specially for the royal palace in Sofia.

During his visit to Dupnitsa on 5 June 1996, Tsar Simeon II personally enquired about the recipe, preserved in his childhood memories. Few architectural monuments rival this gastronomic legacy.

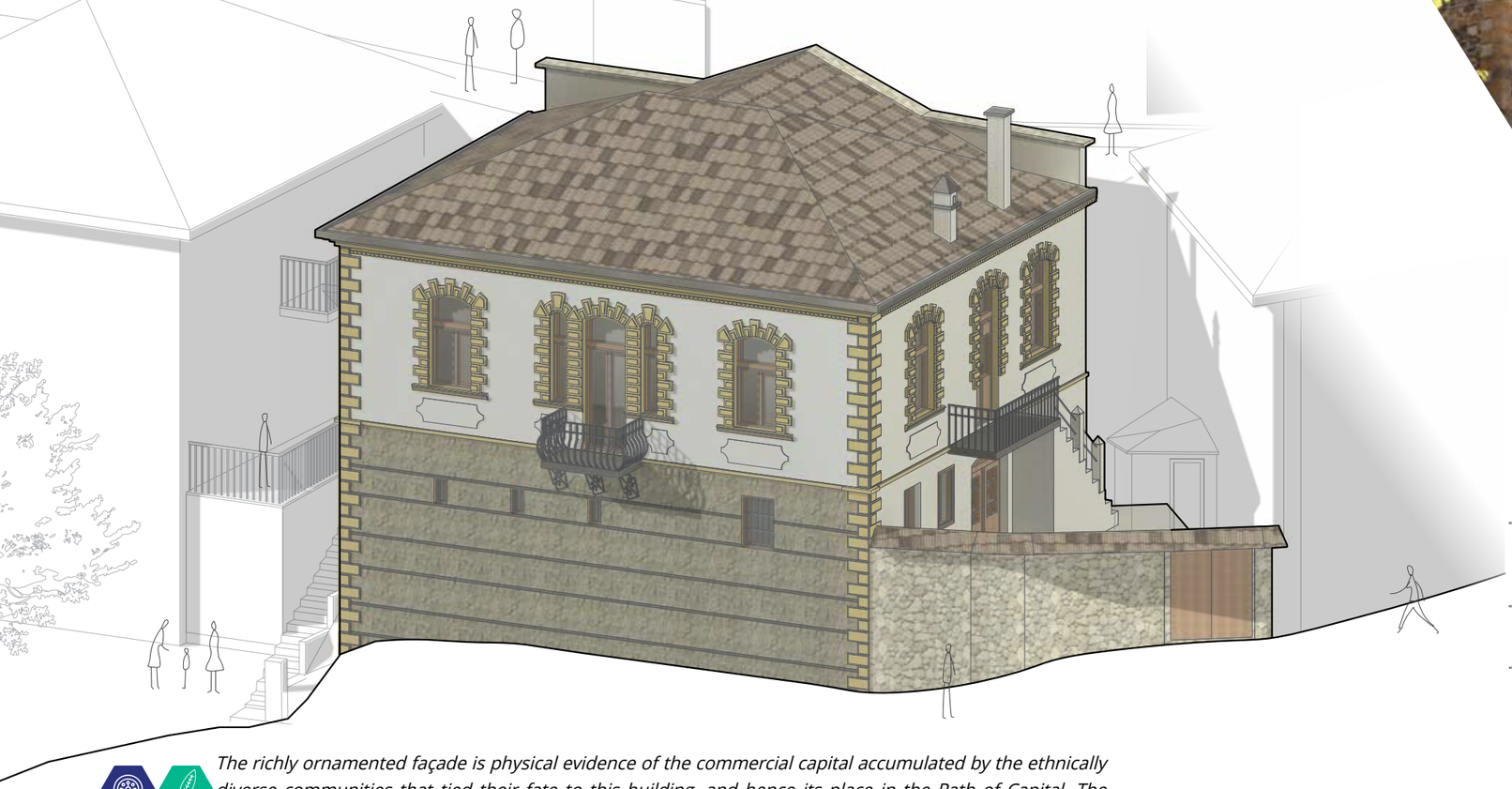
The Lazova House represents a characteristic synthesis of Neoclassicism and Art Nouveau. The symmetrically organised façade with rhythmically arranged windows, circular medallions, and stylised vegetal motifs follows an established Central European model, while the slightly curved central section alludes to Baroque influences. The roofline cornice with its frieze of dentils lends the building a monumental character.

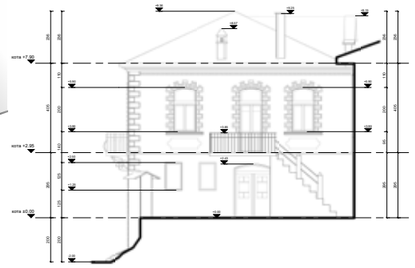
The architectural language of the façade recalls models disseminated through education and professional contacts with Central Europe during that era, adapted to the local building tradition and available artisan skills, which included techniques such as decorative plasterwork and stone carving that were prevalent in the region.

Address: 13 Hristo Botev Street
GPS: 42.26525, 23.11876
Status: Private property. Access restricted.

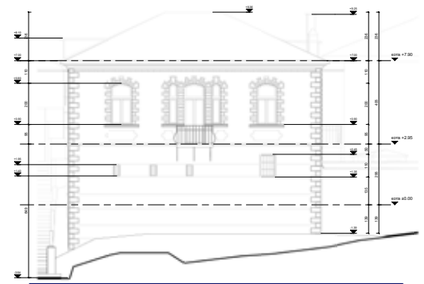
THE JEWISH HOUSE

KRATOVO





Southwest facade



Northwest facade

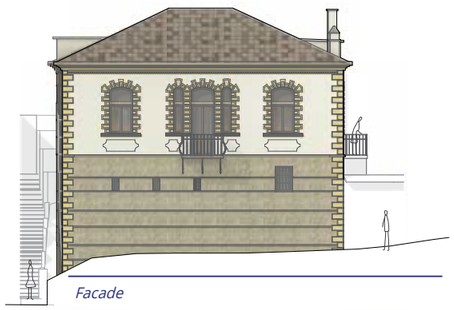
The richly ornamented façade is physical evidence of the commercial capital accumulated by the ethnically diverse communities that tied their fate to this building, and hence its place in the Path of Capital. The succession of owners of different origins and faiths, without their actions changing the character of the home, also inscribes it in the Path of Ideas: shared space as a form of coexistence.

The house is an important example of late-Ottoman urban residential architecture with noticeable elements of eclecticism and Neoclassicism, characteristic of Balkan towns around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Built of local stone, with massive walls and sharply accentuated corner quoins, it possesses a visual stability and a sense of monumentality. The façade is partially rendered, retaining the contrast between the rough stone structure and the finished, ornamented parts.

In 1911, the Jewish family left Kratovo on the eve of the Balkan Wars, leaving behind a house with richly ornamented windows and a shop selling ammonia and candles. The building changed owners: it was registered successively in the name of Abdul, then Stefan Mazhev, then Manas Manasov. For a short period, Dr Nikola Nezlobinski, a Russian physician who left for Struga in 1921, also lived there. The appearance of the building, however, remained unchanged.

Architectural typology specialists suggest a mediaeval origin with subsequent reconstructions, while the material evidence points to 1911. The house is part of the protected monumental ensemble “Old Urban Core of Kratovo” and is among the most decorative objects in the city. The interior is authentically preserved: a cellar, two floors, and windows with rich ornamentation, as well as some of those whose names were not preserved in the documents.

The Jewish House has a wrought-iron balcony, similar to the balcony of the Karakostova House in Dupnitsa.



Facade

Address: 20 Skopska Street
GPS: 42.077455, 22.182849
Status: Protected heritage within the monumental ensemble “Old Urban Core” (NCC, former EMBD 4-814-013/004). Private property (Manasovi family).

THE HOUSE OF KOLE VASEV

KRIVA PALANKA

Address: 6 Boris Trajkovski Street
GPS: 42.202359, 22.336929
Status: No official protected heritage status
Ownership: Private
Access: Restricted

Here, the Path of the Masters reveals itself in a particular way – not through a renowned school with a recognizable personal signature, but through the anonymous local craftsman, who absorbs and reworks a foreign architectural language in his own way.

This house does not bear the name of a specific individual – it is the imprint of an entire generation. Built at the beginning of the 20th century on commission from a family of the middle artisan-merchant class of Kriva Palanka, it represents not the exceptional but the typical choice: how the provincial master craftsman interprets and recreates the European architectural language with the means available to him.

The building is the two-storey urban house characteristic of the early 20th century, illustrating the transition between the traditional Revival-period model and the incoming European architectural influences. The façade is symmetrically organised, with a calm and balanced composition. The windows are distinguished by clean lines and restrained frames, while the decorative surfaces beneath the roofline introduce a geometric accent. These elements do not form a pure style but rather a carefully combined expression – a blend of Neoclassicism and local tradition.

The house marks the moment when architecture became part of everyday life for broader social strata – when European forms ceased to be a distant point of reference and became practical knowledge. Not perfectly applied, but clear enough to convey ambition, taste, and a striving to belong to the modern era.

The first owner of the house was Kole Vasev, and later it passed into the possession of Boyan Mitov, a teacher of the Macedonian language, who lived here with his family until 1965. The house was subsequently purchased by the Deyanovski family, from whom it was inherited by their son Zhivko Deyanovski, and today it belongs to a new owner. Kole Vasev's son is the prominent oncologist Nino Vasev, who holds the position of director of the Oncology Clinic at the "Mother Teresa" Clinical Centre in Skopje.

The building documents the moment when the European architectural language ceased to be an exclusive privilege of the educated and the wealthy, becoming a shared urban norm – gradually assimilated, practically adapted, and applied without academic rigour, but with clear ambition.

THE HOUSE OF HARALAMPI POPANASTASOV

KYUSTENDIL

The house is a reflection of the Path of Capital and the Path of Ideas taken together: people who received a European education return home, and their changed worldview finds expression in the façade of this old Kyustendil town house.

Yordan Popanastasov returned from Heidelberg to Kyustendil in 1900 with a law degree and, with it, a European education and outlook. He worked successively as a notary, prosecutor, and judge; he purchased commercial premises, and in 1907 built this house. The home welcomed the judge and writer Georgi Stamatov, who lived with the Haralampiev family during the period 1924–1925, as well as the folk healer Petar Dimkov – evidence that Popanastasov's home was not merely a residence but a centre of urban intellectual life..

The building was modern for its time: rusticated stone cladding on the façade and ornaments around the windows; it is built of brick masonry with wooden beam floor structures.

It fits well into the architectural ensemble of "Varosha". Nearby are the Doctor's House and the Granichka House, and opposite it stands the Mutual School "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" (which operated from 1849 to 1888).

Yordan Popanastasov came from an old Kyustendil family. His three sons – Boyan (who died young), Alexander, and Haralampi – inherited the house and continued its history.

Address: Corner of Targovski Street and Ilarion Lovchanski Street
GPS: 42.27922, 22.68820
Status: Architectural Cultural Monument of Local Significance (State Gazette, No. 25/1998). Private property – Nedyalka Haralamoieva Popanastasova.
Access: Restricted

THE OLD URBAN HOUSES TELL THEIR STORIES

KYUSTENDIL – DUPNITSA – KRIVA PALANKA – KRATOVO

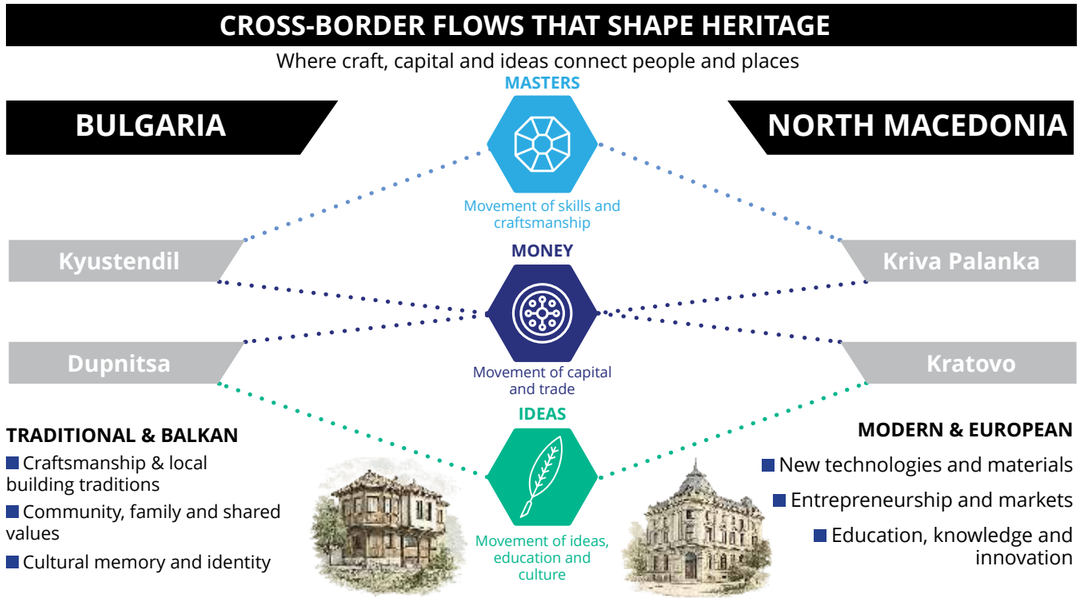
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To reveal the internal logic of the objects presented, they may be examined not only as independent architectural units but also as parts of a shared system structured by several interrelated criteria: period, social type, and affiliation with the three principal mechanisms of cultural connectivity in the region – masters, capital, and ideas. The table below summarises this distribution and allows a simultaneous "reading" of the objects in different directions.

OBJECT	CITY	PERIOD	TYPE	MASTERS	MONEY	IDEAS
Emfidzhieva	Kyustendil	19Th C.	Mixed	●	●	●
Lazarkova	Dupnitsa	19Th C.	Intellectual	–	–	●
Popgyorgina	Kriva Palanka	19Th C.	Mixed	●	●	●
Pop Strashko	Kriva Palanka	19Th C.	Mixed	●	●	●
Sokolova	Kratovo	19Th C.	Craft	●	–	–
Shancheva	Kratovo	19Th C.	Commercial	–	●	●
Popanastasov	Kyustendil	20Th C.	Intellectual	–	●	●
Popnikolova	Kyustendil	20Th C.	Mixed	●	●	●
Karakostova	Dupnitsa	20Th C.	Commercial	–	●	●
Bogdanova	Dupnitsa	20Th C.	Commercial	●	●	–
Lazova	Dupnitsa	20Th C.	Commercial	–	●	●
House "Nikola Tesla" 13	Kriva Palanka	20Th C.	Mixed	●	●	●
Jewish House	Kratovo	20Th C.	Commercial	–	●	●

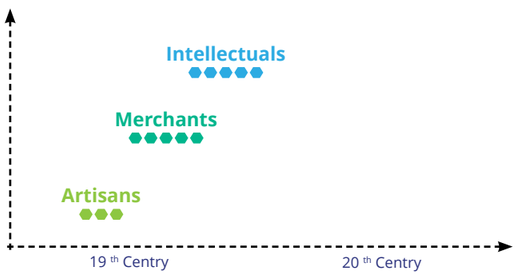
Viewed in their entirety, the data delineate a clearly expressed tendency. The revival period (nineteenth century) is more closely connected with the artisan tradition and the mobility of master schools, while at the beginning of the twentieth century, commercial capital and new cultural models – linked to education, travel, and social mobility – come to the fore. It is precisely for this reason that the mechanism of ideas proves the most widely represented, followed by capital, while the Path of the Masters, although more limited in quantity, remains the strongest carrier of cross-border continuity.

This logic of connectivity manifests not only through time but also in space. The four cities do not function as isolated points but as mutually bound nodes in a compact regional network.



In this scheme, the lines do not denote specific routes but rather the intensity of connections – the constant exchange of people, knowledge, and resources that historically shaped the region as a unified cultural space.

If this spatial network is compared with the development over time, another important regularity emerges. The transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century does not represent an abrupt replacement of one model with another but a gradual transformation in which new social and cultural strata are accumulated upon the existing foundation.



The diagram shows that the artisan house did not disappear but continued to exist alongside the new merchant and intelligentsia models. In the same way, architecture did not pass from "traditional" to "European" in a linear sequence but combined different influences within the same spaces and even within the same buildings.

Considered as a system, the thirteen objects delineate a clear model of cultural connectivity. The artisan tradition creates the stable foundation upon which commercial capital and new cultural horizons – brought through education and travel – are accumulated. This multi-layered character manifests both in the architectural appearance of the buildings and in the biographies of their inhabitants – biographies that often unfolded beyond today's borders.

In this sense, the cross-border character of the region is not the result of a contemporary interpretation but a historical reality that materialised in the houses themselves. It is they – with their similarities, differences, and accretions – that make visible the connectivity that political borders may interrupt administratively, but not culturally.

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN „MOTION“: A CROSS -BORDER ROUTE

The objects of material cultural heritage presented here are not merely archival documents; they acquire an additional dimension when viewed not only as independent architectural units but also as nodes of a connected spatial network – a cross-border route tracing in situ the logic of the shared regional heritage. They are also a starting point for a cultural route connecting four cities in two states.

The route covers approximately 167.10 km and may be completed in one to two days, passing successively through Kyustendil and Dupnitsa in Bulgaria and Kriva Palanka and Kratovo in North Macedonia.

Four of the thirteen objects have unrestricted physical access: the House of Pop Strashko in Kriva Palanka, the Emfiedzhieva House in Kyustendil, which operates as a museum exhibition, and the Sokolovi House and the Shancheva House in Kratovo, which also offer accommodation. The remaining buildings are in private ownership with restricted access but may be viewed from outside as architectural objects. The GPS coordinates of all buildings are included in the catalogue, enabling independent navigation along the route.

The route is conceived not only as a tourist product but also as an instrument for reflecting upon the shared cultural heritage of the region – a heritage that the administrative border has divided but not erased.

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MOTION: THE OLD TOWN HOUSES

A CROSS-BORDER ROUTE: Four towns. Two countries. One shared heritage.

Following the in situ logic of our common past, this route connects architectural treasures across the border – where craftsmen, merchants and ideas once moved freely. Today, these heritage sites invite us to rediscover the connections that still unite the region.

ROUTE INFORMATION

TOTAL DISTANCE
167,1 km

DURATION
1 – 2 days

BY CAR
Easy drive

ROUTE TYPE
Cultural / Architectural

NAVIGATION
GPS coordinates for all sites

ALL HERITAGE SITES (13)

All 13 heritage sites can be viewed from the outside as architectural objects.
GPS coordinates for all sites are included in the catalog, enabling self-guided navigation along the route.

- This route is more than a journey – it is a way to understand the shared cultural landscape that borders cannot erase.
- All 13 heritage sites are documented with photos, 3D scans and GPS coordinates.
- Discover, explore and experience the living heritage of the central Balkans.

THE THREE PATHS THAT CONNECT US

PATH OF CRAFTSMEN
Tradition and skills travel across borders.

PATH OF CAPITAL
Trade and enterprise build towns and opportunities.

PATH OF IDEAS
Education, culture and new styles shape our identity.

THE OLD URBAN HOUSES TELL THEIR STORIES

KYUSTENDIL – DUPNITSA – KRIVA PALANKA – KRATOVO

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY OF TIME

The catalogue “Old Urban Houses Tell Their Stories” begins as documentation. It ends as a message.

The thirteen houses presented on these pages were not chosen at random — they are witnesses to a shared regional world of masters who worked beyond administrative borders, of families who built with ambition and taste, and of towns that entered a new historical era at the same time. The recurring decorative motifs found throughout the region — the vine tendril, the acanthus leaf, and the rosette in the ceiling ornamentation — are no coincidence. They are the material imprint of the same master hands, working from commission to commission, decade after decade. The Debar woodcarving in the ceiling of the Emfiedzhieva House and the carved ceilings in Kriva Palanka and Kratovo resemble one another not by chance — they are the work of the same master lineages, an expression of the same ornamental vocabulary disseminated throughout the entire region. The old urban houses of Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Kriva Palanka, and Kratovo tell this story vividly and convincingly.

The three paths – of the masters, of capital, and of ideas – did not end with the construction of the buildings. They continue to be legible in the ceilings, façades, and interiors that have reached us: in the Debar woodcarving above the visitor’s head, in the Art Nouveau oriel on the corner, and in the hidden refuge of Pop Strashko. Each of the thirteen houses is a stop along a route whose logic precedes all borders – and continues to exist independently of them. What connects these buildings is not an abstraction: the same school, the same trade routes, and the same architectural influences, brought to provincial masters by rail from Vienna. The stories told by these houses are intertwined not because someone arranged them so, but because life connected them (Mavrodinov, 1965; Korunovska, 2005).

Today, these buildings require sustained attention - from visitors, researchers, heritage conservation specialists, and owners who recognise that the historical value of a building constitutes an asset rather than a burden. If this catalogue stimulates scholarly curiosity, encourages engagement with the proposed route, or simply prompts a more attentive examination of the front of an old building, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

Alafranga – From Turkish-Greek à la franga – "in the European manner". In Balkan architecture, everything is associated with the European urban way of life – from draped curtains to sideboards with porcelain. Contrasted with alaturka (Oriental style).

Openwork carving (Ajûrna rezba) – A woodcarving technique in which material is cut away to create an ornament of apertures and solid forms. In ceilings, it takes the form of deep relief. Openwork carving is characteristic of iconostases, ecclesiastical furniture, and other furnishings.

Amamlak – A small room for personal hygiene in the traditional Balkan house. From Turkish hamam. Found in the House of Pop Strashko.

Balustrade – A row of small turned or cast posts supporting the handrail of a balcony or staircase. Mentioned at the Bogdanova and Lazarkova Houses.

Gizentiya – The entrance corridor of the traditional Macedonian urban house – a distribution zone between the street and the living quarters. Found in the House of Pop Strashko.

The term "eam ceiling" (gredored) refers to a ceiling construction made of parallel timber beams. Typical of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Djamali – A built-in wall stove, often used to heat two rooms. Sometimes has a wide heart from The Turkish Cemal. A djamali stove is preserved in the Emfiedzhieva House, Kyustendil.

Dyukyan – A commercial or craft premises on the ground floor with a shopfront onto the street, from Turkish dükkân.

Oriel (Erker) – A projecting volume on an upper storey, carried on corbels. Enriches the façade. Characteristic of Art Nouveau.

Guild (Esnaf) – An organisation of craftsmen of one trade. It determined the rules and social status of its members.

Root cellar (Zimnik) – A semi-sunken room for food storage. Characteristic of Kyustendil Revival-era homes.

Iconostasis – In a domestic context, a small niche or shelf with icons. Characteristic of traditional Balkan homes.

Corbel (Konzola) – A load-bearing architectural element fixed at one end only into the wall. In the Popnikolova House, ornamented with lions' heads.

Cornice (Korniz) – A horizontal profiled finishing element of a façade. Both constructional and decorative functions.

Kiosk (Kyoshk) – A light-glazed superstructure or garden pavilion located on the roof. From Turkish köşk.

Medallion (Medalyon) – A circular or oval decorative relief on a façade. Typical of Neoclassicism and Art Nouveau.

Minderlak – A low divan or built-in bench along the walls, covered with cushions. From Turkish minder. Found in the Popgyorgina House.

Neoclassicism – A style of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries inspired by Graeco-Roman models. Symmetry, columns, triangular pediments.

Panel (Pano) – A decorative field on a façade with vegetal motifs or figures. Found in the Popnikolova House.

Half-timber construction (Payantova konstruktsiya / Bondruk) – A timber frame filled with brick, stone, or mud. The principal technique for two-storey urban houses of the nineteenth century.

Kerpich / Plitar – A handmade brick made from sun-dried clay mixed with chaff. The principal material in Macedonian architecture.

Rosette – A circular ornament stylised as a fully opened flower. A characteristic motif of Debar woodcarving.

Rustication (Rustika) – A façade plaster imitating rough-hewn stone. Lends monumentality to the ground floor.

Art Nouveau / Secession – A style from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, disseminated from Vienna and Budapest. Floral motifs, female heads, curved lines.

Porch (Trem) – A covered open portico before the entrance to a building. Found in the Shancheva House.

Pediment (Fronton) – A triangular, semicircular, or oval termination of a façade. Both constructional and decorative functions.

Čardak – An open or glazed terrace on the upper floor. From Turkish çardak. Found in the House of Pop Strashko.

Box tree (Chimshir) – A low evergreen shrub (Buxus sempervirens) used for shaping courtyards.

THE OLD URBAN HOUSES TELL THEIR STORIES
KYUSTENDIL – DUPNITSA – KRIVA PALANKA – KRATOVO

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THE OLD URBAN HOUSES TELL THEIR STORIES

KYUSTENDIL – DUPNITSA – KRIVA PALANKA – KRATOVO

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**CULTURAL HERITAGE DOES NOT DISAPPEAR SUDDENLY.
IT DISAPPEARS QUIETLY, WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING.
BUT AS LONG AS ITS STORY IS TOLD, IT LIVES ON.**

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