

Material Culture of the Village Guri Bardhë (White stone) in the District of Mat



Anthropology

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Abstract

This paper aims to look and design the topology of the material culture of this village, as unique evidence of the Mat region and beyond this point. Among its targets depending on our possibilities, problems affecting, the use of relevant literature will be thrown a look on these aspects.

Location of White Stone

This village is one of the few in this province that is known since Antiquity, but it got a flourishing development in the middle Ages. It has about 300 houses and about 1200 inhabitants. It has five neighborhoods located in dominating countries. It's about 30 km away from Burrel, it is bordered with the white plan, with Martanesh, with the village of St. George of Tirana, with Zibrin, with Kate and with the village called Fshat.

Bridges

There are five bridges of the Venetian style. Maiden Bridge, bridge of Skura, Kulmara Bridge, and the small bridge at the end of the village. In this village was passing the road of Arberi which connected Durres with Dibra. Also in this village is found the castle of Petralba, while in the meantime it has been an honor and one of a gunpowder production centers.

Ethnographic values of this village

This village is regarded by scholars and researchers as an important center of these values across the region and beyond. Whereas Prof.Dr.Aferdita Onuzi calls it an "ethnographic island" with an original shaft in habits and customs, in dress and flats, which are typical for its citizens and which are not found in any other region in Albania. According to the Albanian researcher for apartments Mr.Emin Riza, this village dwellings are typically separated and with typical civic tendencies. They are 2 floors and surrounded by taverns with the well in the yard, with bakery and generally with 2 bathrooms within, what shows a civilization. In this village is located only one 3 storey tower called "Tower of Dezhgive". All apartments are decorated with carved stones in the corners and at their gates and with different symbols where the Macedonian Masters from Dibra, as well as domestic one put at these carved stones and symbols almost at every apartment. Symbols were different, such as "flying serpent", a pine tree, the Jewish star, where we find these symbols in other villages, too. Meanwhile there are also cases in which the doors of the houses are inscribed with the names of the owners of the house or the year of its construction. Usually these decorations begin by the end of the dwelling and up to the top climbing up to the roof and trees are also decorated. This village leaves a large space to be studied even for other researchers.

Guri Bardhë (White stone) is a village with a famous name and values in the Mat district which has attracted the attention of various researchers who have highlighted the beauty and value of material culture of this village.

There are 10 flats which are cultural monuments, there are 5 Venetian-style bridges, because there is the Castle of Petralba because the way of Arberi has passed nearby connecting Durres with Dibra, because the costumeography of this village is presiding for all other areas, because there is a village that is produced the powder and many other elements which add values and enables time and controversial opportunity for studying them.

This village is located on the southern edge of Mat district about 30 km from its center is the city of Burrel. It has about 300 families and about 1,200 inhabitants, but in the last two decades there has been a decrease in population because of the relocation of the inhabitants in urban areas.

Anecdotal and documentary evidence show that it has been inhabited since ancient times, but it got a big development in the Middle Ages.

White stone village (Guri Bardhe) is bordered by the village Plani i Bardhe, Martanesh, with the Shëngjergj village of Tirana, Xibri and Keta.

The village is divided into five neighborhoods located mainly in the dominant places, up the hills and they are collected with each other and all of which are two floors towers except the tower of Dezhgive which is 3 floors.



These houses were built near the 20th century where according to the architectural perspective they have few elements in common.

Characteristic in the construction of these apartments is because they are generally surrounded by taverns, with wells within the yard and bakeries because the family members have been up to 40 or 50.

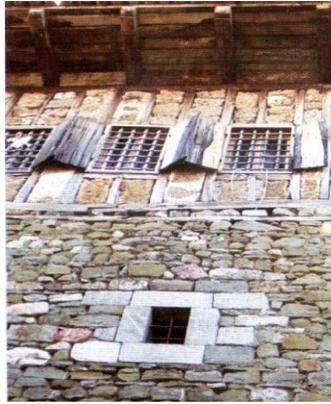
Particular thing for these flats is that they have also two bathrooms inside, one in the bedrooms of the newlywed couples and the other for other family members indicating a civilization and a civilization on the other villages of this district. These flats were built by Masters from Macedonia and Dibra known as Stonemasons who were known for their skills in carving wood and stone, as well as gates of houses with different symbols and ornaments which many of them are saved even to this day. But the major contributions have given the local Masters.

Stone engravings of the corners of the apartment have a special care but especially at the gate of the house where beautifully sculpted different decorative symbols such as "flying snake, pine, horse figure, the star and the moon, the star of Jews."

These symbols were part of the fantasy of these masters inherent in time and were also found in other villages but some of these symbols were imposed by the owners of the house where they mainly put their names in the building or the years in which they were built as well as any other symbol such as flag or eagle.

Some of these symbols we find in apartments of other villages, especially in the Mat the one of the flying serpent who is regarded by all as the protector of the house and which is called "Norja of the House".

Primarily stairs of these apartments are built from the outside but also from the inside where in the first floor people are holding the livestock and other objects which they call "decrepits" but they do not throw them. In these "decrepits" I've found many interesting objects as for example a lock of the door that closes from the outside with the dimensions of 20x15 cm which still worked but was not used by the householder who persisted on its antiquity for at least 100 years, but its origins where it had come from wasn't exactly known.



Residents of this village are known for their immigration who all their profits brought in the village where they constructed dwellings and to show that they were landlords of these houses sent elements such as entrance gate lock and cup, tray, coffee grinder etc.

The houses of this village have been with a special care in handling outdoor scenes but especially within the house, the interior. Wooden gates of the main entrance are usually divided into two parts and you are insured by two sides both within and outside with the locks. Each decorative element is also in the service of strengthening the gate. The boards are thick and the main parts are binary as having a thickness up to 7 cm and in view of its force, are stuck well with Venetian-style nail.

The windows of apartments from outside are small and with one-part column vertical as well as horizontal, and from within the windows expand like the in the shape of a funnel where they are used for household furniture placement, especially at night.

"Guest chamber" as per every Albanian it has a special attention. It is more decorated and maintained than any other room. There is a fireplace where to the left and right it has the wall shelf where it is placed "the kit" of coffee (cup, coffeepot, trays, coffee mill, coffee, sugar, etc.). These "takame" had a special significance and that were brought from abroad and which was an extraordinary competition for their values.

In these articles were labeled scripts from China, Japan, Turkey, and other countries. The White Stone Village (Guri i bardhë) has 10 apartments which are monuments of culture.

Among these stands out the apartment where the writer Major Budi was born and the only three-storey tower is that of the tribe Dezhgiu.

These flats in these last two decades have had a bad use with serious damages, where because of many displacements are left outside care.

Inter alia, members of families themselves with the damaged parts of the accommodation fix other parts of the rooms where they live almost laying it off losing its function and values. There is also a visible phenomenon where other residents of this village build new flats which are far from the previous tradition.

Derzhgive Tower is more prominent and the only one in this village, it was built entirely of carved stone and the main gate is decorated with various ornaments, such as tree horse like figure, flying serpent etc. From the bottom of the Tower up where the roof joins has 55 engraved corners but they are with different dimensions. On the top where there is a dominant view has small turret windows at each floor where they repeated.

The uniqueness of these apartments is that they are ornamented from the bottom and up with different stones carved on both the parts of the roof to the front porch of wooden columns that go horizontally from the roof. Decorative ornaments do not cease even to bands of wood that are placed on the hardness of the wall connection. These flats are typically civil and they much resemble to apartments in the city of Shkodra.

Bridges

Bridges are the works of local masters who have constructed popular apartments, too. Their stones have been subjected to chiseling with regular quadratic forms with dimensions from 50 to 60 cm thick. For the construction of bridges were needed approximately 800 blocks. Maidens Bridge is located on the Mat River between Klos villages and White stone village, it is with a bow and on the right side of the stream has a side discharge.



Its feet were set at two rocky shores of the river, the bridge is 11 meters long and the distance between its two feet is 7m long, arch height is 7 m, arch bridge was built with a double vault, the width of the bridge is 2.8 m and is paved with stones, the sides of the vault are reinforced with iron cramps. Construction of this bridge has dictated the passage of convoys that were leaving from Durres, in White stone and resulted in Debar. This bridge was built in the early nineteenth century. Skures Bridge is on a stream Dish of this village. The bridge is located between two rocky slopes on the edge of Agai Stream flow. It is formed by a circular arc, the stone is built from regular quadratic and chiseled forms, and stone connection is made with lime mortar. Skures Bridge is 9 m long and 2.5 m wide. Vault thickness is 0.9 m, the height of the roof vault to the mirror of the water is 5.5 m and the space of two feet is 5.5 m.

Construction of this bridge is connected with the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

Kalmara Bridge is set in a high rocky shore and has a pronounced slope; it is with a ringed arc. Stones are of tuff and quadratic. This bridge is 11 m long while the width is 2.5 m, meanwhile this is one of the highest bridges in Mat. Vault roof is 14 meters high from the water mirrors, while the space between the feet is 8 m.

Hoxhaj Bridge has a semi-circular staggered arc, its body is built with double vault, thickness of the bridge is built with stone and stone slates, its length is 9 m, its width 2.5 m, thickness of the vault 0.9 m, vault height is 5.5 m while the space between the legs is 5.5 m. It was built approximately by the end of the XVIII century. The bridge rises above a circular vault and is one of the smaller bridges. Its length is 6 m and its width 1.85 m. This bridge was built in the late nineteenth century.

White Stone Garments

White stone is considered by researchers as an important center of these values, while the researcher Prof. Aferdita Onuzi makes such a determination "as the only island between the garments of Mat district is the coating used in White stone village, for this reason we have presented as a district itself and according to the citizens and researchers it is typically not found in any other province in Albania and appears as a local clothing cultured in the original way from the Middle Ages on the generation of the oldest country clothing." (Emathia journal, a periodical of historical-cultural association "Dilaver Kurti" Mat, third year of publication, No. 2, 2009).



The white stone wearing according to the researchers is typically citizen and it is not found in any other province in Albania and which it appears as a local clothing originally cultured since the Middle Ages on the generation from the clothing of the old country.

A woman wearing of the white stone is worked in silk and costly pieces in which dominated the red, yellow and black color, but there are also other colors strips associating with these colors we mentioned above.

Pjeter Budi in his book "Christian Doctrine" published in 1618 proves to us at that time the value of this suit and says:

...Where are those women and girls with silky garments?

What shows for the ethnographic values of Costumeography of this village? This dress comes in the type of coat. White stone village wearing is not worked with fur like other rural garments but with fabric and silk costly pieces.

Once faced with these garments which radiate light and elegance it seems as the maidens have descended from heaven. The ornaments of these costumes is varied and starts from the underpants where in the visible parts of

the white neckband as to the white collar and on the sleeves is embroidered with taste and varied colors that are harmonized visible parts of getting in eye.

On that it is worn the little black vest and embroidered with golden threads and without sleeves, with long vest and woolen belt with flowers 3 meters tall tied on the west.

On the head they put a red handkerchief with flowers and tied under the goiter. Over this dress there is a series of ornamental jewelry. From hairs fall out and down on the chest two shaped braids adorned with beads, a necklace is put on the neck with beads ending with a row of coins that are called goiter runway since White stone girls do not wear earrings, on their chest hang down near the two shoulders three chains with coins, while on their waist with a double string with beads. All of the exposed portion of the chest and sleeves of *Libadja*, and also doublet and locks are embroidered with golden thread motifs; where each part of the dress is harmonized in such an exposure that you see decorations of her dress.

Libadja is open in the chest and allows the appearance of the doublet motives. Gershenza's sleeve descends down *Libadja* and makes it look so harmonious with the colorful decorations.

From its topological view comparing it with other ethnographic garment units of Mat where we will see not only analogy but also similarities, Gershenza is not only in its cut but also in the function to that of Ranza, Predhi especially in the decoration of the sleeves is the same.

We find braids to the wearing of Martanesh, earrings to the wearing of Karica, wearing of belts with blinkers to the wearing of Predhi, while the type of blinkers we find also in the southern provinces.

Prior to this, such wearing had its sweatshirt from wool (used even nowadays) and are stored in a symbolic way. These garments which are made with golden threads are features of rich strata of citizens. It is not used every day but it is kept in the nuptial dresses of the White stone women. This dress is indigenous, it is connected with the fact that White stone has been since antiquity, especially in the Middle Ages the city, where as we spoke about apartments of this village do not resemble with those of Mat but with medieval towns' apartments, such as Shkodra, Kruja etc..

These suits are very costly and before they were brought from abroad, but later they began to be embroidered by themselves. Girl's dresses differ from those of women because they do not wear head kerchief and they do not make their hair with braids. While women unless they tie their head kerchiefs under their goiters they decorate their braids with beads that hang down to their shoulders. Brides do inherit their costumes through generations by saving them with bigotry and by keeping them always in good condition. They rarely dress for the weddings and also for the celebrations.

Men's costumes are simple and resemble to the costumes of other villages of the region of Mat. Their underwear are from white fabric, the shirt is shorter sleeved from women's, and their underpants are from a black felt. On their heads men have white hats (Alb. qylaf) and their shoes are made of cow leather. They wear a watch with hanging circlet with a thick ring on finger.

For all these taken together White stone is considered as an important historical center, as the family residence of Kastriots, as part of the road to Arbri, and for more as the birthplace of Pjeter Budi and as a valuable ethnographic island with indisputable historical values, which still remains the focus of future researchers and for the space and possibilities offering to us this village.