

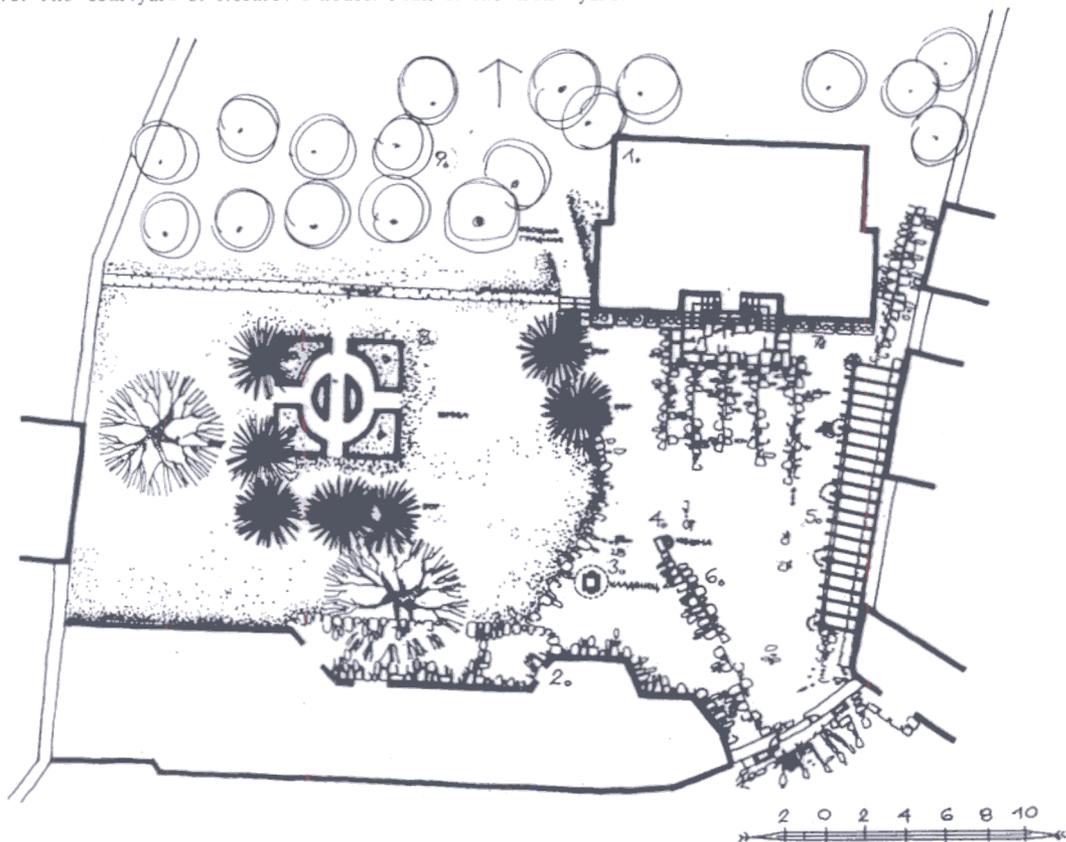
THE COURTYARD—ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE NATIONAL REVIVAL HOUSE

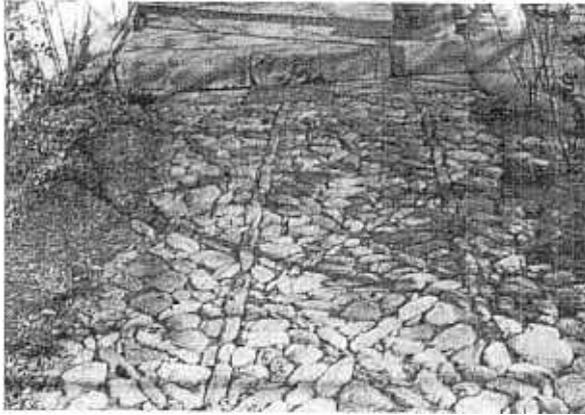
The original form of the courtyard surrounding a village house of the Revival period was determined by its links with the breadwinning activities of the owners. The house was designed to form the centre of the courtyard, and around it lay the separate outbuildings in the order logically resulting from their place in the production process. Communications — between the house and each outbuilding and from one outbuilding to another — were systematically planned. The spatial unity of the courtyard was often damaged by lack of coordination in the design of the outbuildings, but such shortcomings were compensated for by the flower-garden and the presence of trees.

In the early days of the National Revival period when the economy was still mixed the courtyard continued to preserve its original form. The outbuildings served the requirements of agricultural production, while the house accommodated craftwork. Later on, with the development of the crafts and of “cottage” industries, the prosperity of the population began to increase. Farm production likewise increased, since its products were used in manufacture. The increased prosperity of a considerable part of the population led to the large-scale building of new residential houses with better-designed courtyards.

The courtyard area thus became richer and more

1. Karlovo. The courtyard of Kozarev's house. Plan of the front yard.





2. Karlovo. Detail of the cobbled mosaic.

representative. Its design was now determined not merely by the production processes it was to house but also by the increased cultural needs of the occupants of the house.

To a large extent the courtyard of the Revival period retained the form of its medieval predecessors. It was irregular in form, small, and enclosed by high stone walls. The way out to the narrow street was through a solid doorway, set at an angle so as to leave room for farm carts to go in and out. There were usually small doors in the stone walls giving access to the neighbouring courtyards.

The distribution of space in the Revival courtyard was as follows. The area in front of the house was paved with flagstones of differing sizes and overhung with a vine pergola; it thus formed the "outdoor salon" or "open-air drawing-room". The flower-garden was in the sunniest part of the garden and was usually enclosed by clipped box-trees. It was directly reached from the paved area, together with which it formed the visitors' part of the courtyard. The design of the portion where the home industries were carried on varied in accordance with the precise means of livelihood of the occupants of the house.

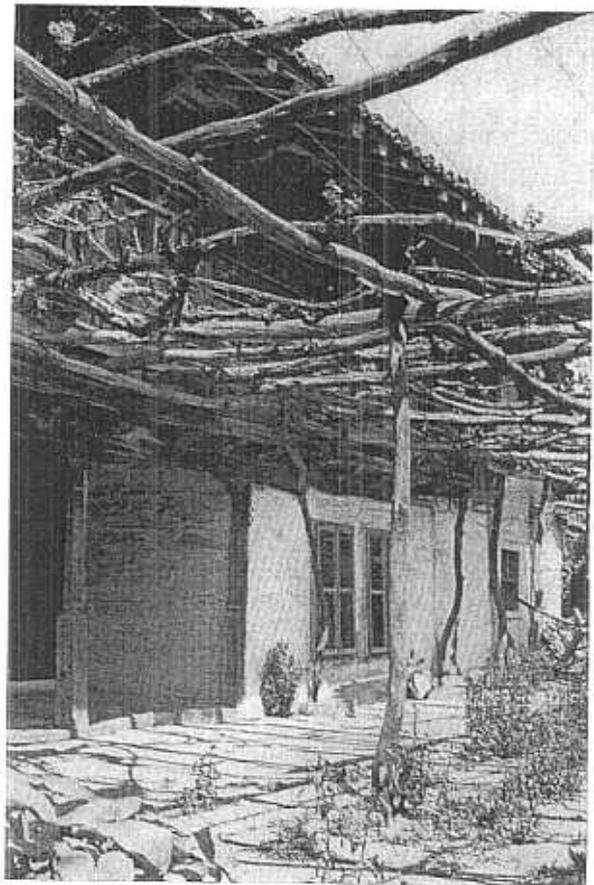
Fountains and wells were an essential part of the architecture of the courtyard. Fountains were distinctly decorative in character and were situated near the house or near the main entrance. Wells, whose use was strictly utilitarian, were in the parts of the courtyard where the home industry was carried on. Very often in the mountain settlements, where water is abundant, a runnel of water was a characteristic element of the streets and yards.

The paths leading from one to the other of the re-

maining section of the courtyard were clearly visible and logical, with the house playing a dominant role in the composition. The various parts of the courtyard were reached from the house by cobbled walks; these led to the gateway, the outhouses and the garden. The spatial link between the house and garden was the vine pergola, which formed a kind of portico, thus providing the unity so characteristic of the National Revival period: the house, together with the outhouses, the courtyard walls and the inner area containing the flower-garden formed a single harmonious whole. In the summer, the courtyard became, as it were, an integral part of the house, since the occupants led their life out of doors. Conversely, the use of potted plants brought the flower-garden into the house in summer and winter alike.

The main decorative elements of the courtyard were its green areas. Lack of space precluded the laying out of large gardens with tall trees, and the

3. Gradets: Vine pergola



greater part of the planted areas was occupied by flowers, which filled the flower-beds and adorned the walls, verandahs and window-sills.

The problem we are faced with today is how to preserve the plan of the Revival period courtyard while adapting the latter to suit the needs of present-day life. Today the functions of the old houses of the period are changing, and the traditions which governed maintenance of their structure, appearance and environment have also changed; they are being adapted to serve as museums, public buildings, places of entertainment, etc.

Where the house has retained its function as a dwelling its courtyard can more easily retain its National Revival period character; alterations will mainly have affected its production and craft-shop sections. The former, which in the days of the Revival, would have been humming with activity, has usually become an orchard or a market-garden. The outbuildings are used as living accommodation while the sheds serve as garages for modern transport vehicles. The cobbled area in front of the house, and the pergola, remain favourite places for rest. The same may be said of cases in which the house has been adapted to house holidaymakers for shorter or longer periods.

In our protected areas we have cases in which individual houses or whole groups have been turned into museums.

Ethnographical museums will exhibit all the ori-

ginal elements of the courtyard. Where the place is to serve as a historic residence open to visitors, the courtyard can well become an open-air museum for fragmentary stone exhibits: in this case we will have to tone down its local colour and subordinate its composition to the requirements of these.

If the house is converted into a place of entertainment its National Revival courtyard will lose its original make-up almost entirely. The cobbled or paved walks will be made to cover a larger area at the expense of the green plots and flower-beds; the trees can be kept, but the shrubs and flowers will be retained only along the walls.

There are some National Revival houses which have totally lost their authentic environment. Here the problem inevitably arises as to whether we should restore them as they originally were or re-plan them using new media while retaining the National Revival spirit. This is an aesthetic problem whose solution will mainly depend on the purpose for which the house is to be used. If it is to preserve its function as a dwelling or be turned into a museum it would, perhaps, be more correct to create an environment simulating the one that has vanished. If its function has changed, it will be more suitable to use new media while at the same time trying to retain the picturesqueness of the National Revival courtyard.

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RESUME

L'architecture de l'époque du Réveil national bulgare est en relation étroite avec la nature. Le jardin, constituant la transition entre le bâtiment et son environnement naturel, y joue un rôle important.

Le jardin de cette époque est entouré de hauts murs et présente un trait caractéristique, une petite porte de communication avec les jardins voisins. Il s'orne d'une pergola portant une treille, ombrageant l'allée pavée qui mène à la maison. L'endroit le plus ensoleillé est réservé aux fleurs et aux arbustes, des buis le plus souvent. Une fontaine ou un puits y trouvent toujours place. Dans les villages de montagne, on y voit parfois un petit torrent dans son lit de galet.

Les pelouses constituent l'élément principal de la composition de jardin. La superficie limitée ne permet d'y planter qu'un seul grand arbre fruitier — noyer, marronnier, etc. . . L'herbe est parsemée de fleurs.

Aujourd'hui, lorsque nous restaurons les maisons anciennes, nous changeons aussi souvent leurs fonctions, ce qui doit entraîner une harmonieuse transformation de leur jardin. Il faut toujours conserver les espaces verts et faciliter leur utilisation en y disposant intelligemment—des bancs, des chaises, des cheminées extérieures.

1. Karlovo. Le jardin de la maison des Kozari

2. Idem. Détail du pavage.

3. Gradetz. Treille.